

18 January

Fr HENRY BOOMS

11 June 1853 – 18 January 1890



Born at Valkenswoerd, Holland, we first hear of Henry Booms at Pandamatenga on the border of modern Botswana, in 1883. He was one of the second group to arrive for the Zambezi Mission in 1882. Emil Holub, an Austrian traveller, called him 'a jovial and kindly man who would willingly share his last crust if it was needed'.

Booms certainly shared in the difficulties of those early days where food was short and they relied on Br Vervennes' garden. And hostility developed between the Jesuits and the trader/hunter George Westbeech, who tried to curtail their building and gardening and, more importantly, manoeuvred to block their way north to the Lozi, opening the door instead to François Coillard, the Protestant missionary. Booms wrote to Weld, who was the superior of the Zambezi Mission after Depelchin, that Westbeech actually admitted to the Jesuits he had worked against them in favour of Coillard,

He returned to Grahamstown in 1886 but, that same year, headed north again when Peter Prestage secured permission from King Lobengula to open a mission at Empanjeni. He remained there until they had to withdraw in 1889 and he died at Mafeking in 1890.

