

18 January

Fr JOHN DAVIES

11 March 1917 – 18 January 1995



John, also called ‘Toots’ possibly because of his prominent front teeth, Davies was born in St Helens, NW England and educated first at Jesuit schools in the area (St Francis Xavier in Liverpool and Stonyhurst College). He entered the Society in 1935, aged 18, and did a regency of five years at St George’s from 1941. Long regencies were frequent at the time as many priests were chaplains away in the war.

After theology in England he returned to Rhodesia to teach in the seminary and later did pastoral work in the Chishawasha out schools (Seke, Mabvuku, Goromonzi). He moved to Kutama in 1964 and Makumbe in 1968 before becoming rector at St Ignatius in 1970. Fr Jim Berry was headmaster at the time and spoke highly of John as a terrific support and good community man. He took an interest in everything the students were doing, even being infirmarian for a while. He taught French, Latin, English, history and religion – all with verve and careful planning. He was an avid reader, especially of history.

He was also a good musician and composed (or compiled?) a Mass which included Shona music.

He had a haggard look which betrayed the rheumatic fever he suffered in his young days but whatever the frailty of his health, he was a keen sportsman and ‘the best golfer in the province’. The Irish Carmelites called him a ‘mean’ golfer, an ambiguous term, but it seems to refer to his measured strokes where others were hard hitters. While his frequent companion, Pat Makaka, tried to get on the green with his first stroke, Toots was happy to get there in stages – which proved more effective in the end.

After St Ignatius, he went to Mabelreign/Dzivarasekwa and Mount Pleasant. His illness caught up with him in the early 1990s and he spent time at Canisius House in semi-retirement before being admitted to St Anne’s in early 1995 where he died.