

20 January

Fr PHILIP BEISLY

31 July 1895 – 20 January 1949

Born in Fulham, London, Philip Beisly went to Hodder, the preparatory school for Stonyhurst, where his direct approach to life showed itself. Asked a question in Rudiments, the beginners' class, he simply replied, 'we haven't done that yet.' He was 'severely factual' and a teacher 'twitted him for his lack of imagination.' He 'never got excited' and approached life without 'fuss or friction.'



As soon as he finished tertianship he was made rector of St George's. He was only there for two years as he was made Mission Superior in 1931. He had no time to do anything but was remembered for making life pleasant for the community.

On becoming superior, money matters troubled him. There was never enough and he had to send away many empty-handed. 'He redeemed his impotence by the charm with which he did nothing.' To make matters worse, the Society was taken to court over Dunbrody which had to be sold at a low price.

Unlike his predecessors, he was not an ecclesiastical superior with the prestige and authority of a prefect apostolic while at the same time he was responsible for finding men and money for the expanding work of the 1930s. He refused to lose sleep over these issues and remained calm and factual.

He travelled the country every year to visit the missions, hospitals and schools and he was highly appreciated for he had an easy conviviality and an infectious giggle which put the shyest child at ease.

He never learnt Shona but he thought much, and explored what to do, about 'the colour problem', as the issue of white/black relations were called in those days by the dominant classes in the colony. He even went to the USA, in 1937, to learn what was happening there.

He stayed on as superior far too long, sixteen years, and it had an effect on his health. He died only two years after coming off the job. He was only 53.