

20 February

## Fr JAMES ROWLAND

2 June 1888 – 20 February 1961



‘Jimmie’ Rowland was one of those Jesuits many of us, I suspect, have wondered at. Born in Manchester and educated at Stonyhurst, he seems to have been good at everything; cricket, soccer, swimming, diving, singing (classical and ballads), playing the viola in the orchestra, the fife and bugle in the band. ‘He had all-round talent’, wrote a contemporary, ‘but seemed unconscious of it. ... He was surprised to see himself leader of a group.’ But in later life, though he did steady work and was much appreciated, he never seems to have shone. Given the accolades showered on him in his youth, we might expect his name were

better known.

He joined the Society in 1908 and was ordained in 1922. He was a minister, and sometimes superior, in a succession of houses; Wimbledon, Liverpool, St Helen’s, Glasgow, Farm St, Preston, Edinburgh and Blackpool. He features in this collection as he spent two years in Southern Rhodesia, mainly at Kutama, where the attached poor picture of him was taken. But there is no comment this writer can easily find of his time there.

A visitor to Farm St, London, noted, after Jimmie’s death, “I always found his somewhat astringent approach to religion refreshing ... I once told him I had a devotion to Ste Therèsè de Lisieux, and he said, rather bleakly, ‘Yes, she was good girl’.”

He was ‘at his best on wine days’ when he let his gift as a *raconteur* have full rein, drawing on his fund of stories from the past.

In Blackpool, it was noted by the sacristan, he could be something of a martinet. The candles on the high altar had to be exactly perpendicular and the candle sticks had to toe the line, literally!