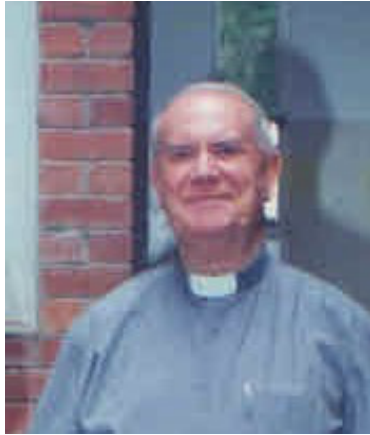


14 March

## **Fr LESLIE McKENNA** 1 November 1922 – 14 March 2014



Leslie's day of death seems to be 14 March, not April as listed in LL&NN. He was born in East London, South Africa, and came into contact with the Society through a retreat. But he did not arrive at the novitiate in North Wales until four years after he was accepted in 1939. The war intervened.

Eventually he secured a place on the Queen Mary which was carrying 12 000 men (and one woman) to the UK. The enormous ship zigzagged its way up the Atlantic and was able to evade German U boats

because of her speed. She made it to Glasgow in 12 days. Les noted he arrived on Good Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 'the latest it can ever be', a comment, it was noted by his obituarist, showing 'a touch of precision that seems to me vintage accuracy of the kind dear to him.' But he was highly strung, fellow novice Anthony Bex remembered, with a tendency to depression.

He did his regency at St Francis Xavier's, Liverpool, where he was well liked. After ordination he was at St Aidan's for two years and then moved to Salisbury where he was Cathedral Administrator (1959-65). He was always welcoming to visitors and took an interest in the scouts and guides. He moved to Braeside in 1968 for 22 years and built the clubroom (1974), the Church (1979) and the church at St Martin's (1985). The clubroom was the fund-raiser as many whist drives and fetes were organised to raise money locally. In meetings he was 'meticulous and slow', trying the patience of his loyal collaborators.

On the anniversaries of weddings he performed, he reminded the husbands to buy their wives flowers for the event! He had an uneasy relationship with his assistant, Fr Bill Thomas, and Les is the source of the information that they communicated by notes. He gave an amusing self-deprecating homily at Bill's funeral.

His tendency to depression has been mentioned and he was a quiet and lonely man. He tells us simply, in his account of his journey on the Queen Mary, that 'there was only one person I got to know' on the boat. He was saddened that few parishioners from Braeside visited him when he retired to the House of Adoration. Sr Kostka, in charge there, says he was devoted to the care of the sisters and visited them regularly blessing them and giving them the sacrament of the sick – almost to excess! (Not her words). In 1908, he retired to Preston in the UK; a strange decision which accentuated his loneliness as he knew no one.