

25 March

Br THOMAS ARNOLD

9 October 1860 – 25 March 1935



There are solid grounds for saying Thomas Arnold died in August 1935, not March, from a letter to Fr Anthony Bex and the fact that he was in Driefontein and Chishawasha in 1935 – two places in three months?

Born in South Africa in Somerset West, he started out as a tailor but found it confining and joined the police where he had his cannon-ball moment. He was escorting a suspect on a long horse ride in the heat of the day and the man asked Arnold to release his hand cuffs for a while as they were chaffing his wrists. Arnold agreed and immediately the man turned on him and knifed him just missing his jugular vein. The suspect fled and Arnold had a hard time reaching help. His superiors judged he had no vocation to being in the police and dismissed him.

Arnold somehow came in contact with Fr Weld and after a time joined the novitiate in 1886, first at Graaf Reinet and then Dunbrody. In 1889 he went to St Aidan's as a tailor and in 1903 moved to Dunbrody where he remained until 1934. He worked mainly on the farm there though he was also an apothecary and made pills from natural juices and herbs.



His farming involved caring for ostriches and these are contrary birds. A cock, if provoked, can land a mighty kick and even kill someone. Thomas Arnold learned the best way to handle them, if they threatened one, was to set a small yapping dog on them. This confused them and they ran away. The implication is a big dog could be kicked to oblivion but the bird can hardly see the small one. There is a considerable treatment of the subject in the *Zambezi Mission Record*, Volume I.

In 1935, Arnold moved to Driefontein but shortly afterwards went to Chishawasha where he fell sick and died.