

20 April

Fr CHRISTOPHER WILMOT 10 June 1868 – 20 April 1957



Born in Port Elizabeth where his parents were recent immigrants, Christopher Wilmot was the first former St Aidan's boy to become rector of the college. He had witnessed Depelchin and Law and company set out for the Zambezi in 1879. But he had health problems and was sent to Mount St Mary's in England for part of his schooling. He raided the kitchen there one night when he was hungry but unfortunately ran into the First Prefect. He pretended to be sleep walking and walked straight into him. The Prefect fell for the ruse and invited him to his room for a whisky.

In 1902, his formation completed, he became a chaplain in the Boer War. Though he lived until he was 89, he seems to have had health problems all his life. He became socius to the Master of Novices in 1907 and featured in Denis Meadows' book, *Obedient Men*, as Fr Motley, 'a dapper little priest' with 'a sharp quizzical glance.' He was respected as a socius but showed some harmless snobbery by treating novices from Stonyhurst and Beaumont, the cream schools of the English province, differently from 'those from the provinces'. Mark Hackett writes: 'When I was at Heythrop from 1955 – 1958, I had to read to him in the infirmary where he was blind and in bed. I can confirm that he seemed to lose interest when I was not from Stonyhurst or Beaumont.'

He wanted to be a chaplain in the war but was made rector of St Aidan's instead. After doing considerable renovations, he came up with radical idea of transporting the whole school to a more favourable site in Cape Town. Had he had his way the school might be existing still! 70% of the boys went down with the Great Flu of 1918 but such was the care he oversaw that there were no deaths. He also installed electricity in the school – a first in the town.

On finishing his term, he went back to England as parish priest of St Aloysius, Oxford, and later of Bournemouth where he initiated improvements. Finally he retired to Farm St in London.