

23 April

Fr PHILIP STAPLETON 28 January 1874 – 23 April 1938



Born in Souldron in Oxfordshire, Philip Stapleton went to Stonyhurst for his education and joined the Society in 1890. For some reason he did seven years regency at Wimbledon College which would explain why it took him 18 years to reach ordination.

In 1914 he was at St Aidan's where he became rector in 1922 until 1929. He was said to be a strong character but liked to remain in the background. He pursued his interest in archaeology with which he 'ventilated the school curriculum' and explored many sites around Grahamstown.

In 1930 he moved to St George's in Salisbury and continued his archaeological explorations, this time with Fr Thomas Gardner. They came to national attention for the work they did around Gokomere and he had a write up in the Rhodesian Scientific Association journal which, while praising him for his work, noted 'his absurd humility which made him more interested in other people's undertakings rather than drawing attention to his own.' But, as David Dryden notes, he is known as the 'father of archaeology' in Zimbabwe.

Appointed superior of the Salisbury Mission, he pleaded ill health and asked to be relieved of the task. But he did do a visitation of St Aidan's on behalf of the superior, Fr Philip Beisley, and died of *angina pectoris* at Harrismith when on the way back with Fr Bernard Weaver.