

28 April

## Fr ANTHONY BOOS

31 January 1855 – 28 April 1899

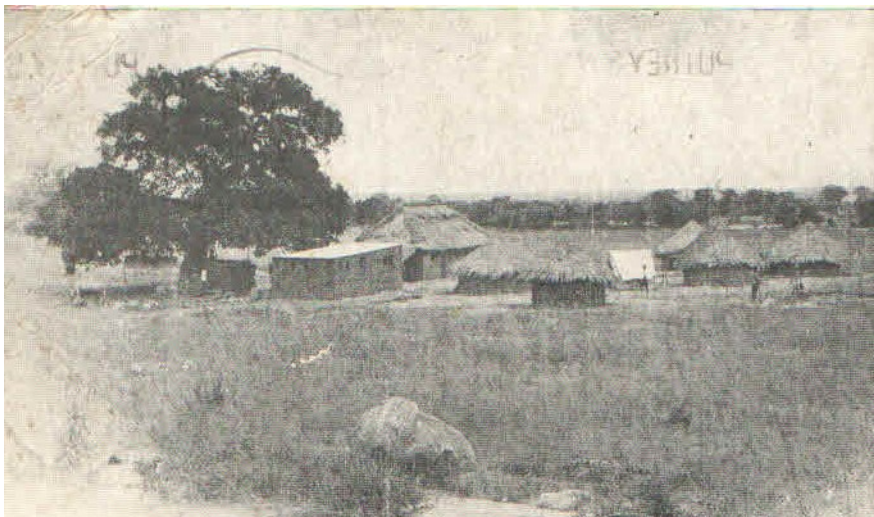
Anthony Boos was born near Koblenz on the Rhine in Munstermaifeld and joined the Society in 1876. In 1892 he was one of the party from Germany who came out and went straight to Chishawasha where they worked indefatigably – despite Boos being laid low four times by fever - to establish the first mission in the Shona area of Southern Rhodesia. Visitors in 1895 remarked:

‘The energy of the Fathers (sic) can only be properly gauged by an inspection of the extensive and substantial buildings, workshops, outhouses, farm buildings and large tracts under cultivation, all of which are the results of the personal work of the Fathers and Lay Brothers of the Order, assisted by raw native labour.’ (*Dachs and Rae, p 48*)

It was a huge disappointment when the rising of 1896 led to the attack on the mission and the Jesuits and their helpers were besieged in a barn and had to defend themselves. A letter of Boos survives in which he vents his bitterness about it but also, he realises that the missionaries have learnt much from the experience. ‘Prejudice against us is not so deep rooted as we thought and there is now a hope for a new springtime.’

He had shared the current view about the MaShona and their ‘barbarous superstitions’ but soon realised the implications of their courageous resistance. He noted the place of traditional religion in inspiring their fight against the whites and concluded; if such a religion could do so much what could Christianity not do?

He also noted the displacements of the war removed the local opposition to the education of girls and enabled the Dominicans to open a school at Chishawasha.



Elizabeth Musodzi, the celebrated pioneer of women’s rights in the black townships of Salisbury in the 1920s and ‘30s, was one of those girls.



After six years in Chishawasha, Anthony Boos was asked to help in the founding of Mzondo's near Fort Victoria (Masvingo) in 1898. (Photo over page). It was a fever

ridden place, full of 'sand, swamps and rock with hardly no timber' and Boos searched for a better site. Eventually Gokomere (being built in photo above) was chosen but by that time Boos succumbed to fever, dying aged 44, just when he was within reach of medical help at Fort Victoria.

Boos had recommended the formation of catechists to the Prefect, Richard Sykes, in 1898, but Sykes was cautious, 'lacking the confidence to recruit them and rely upon their work.' (*Ibid*, 101)