

May 13

Fr THOMAS GARDNER

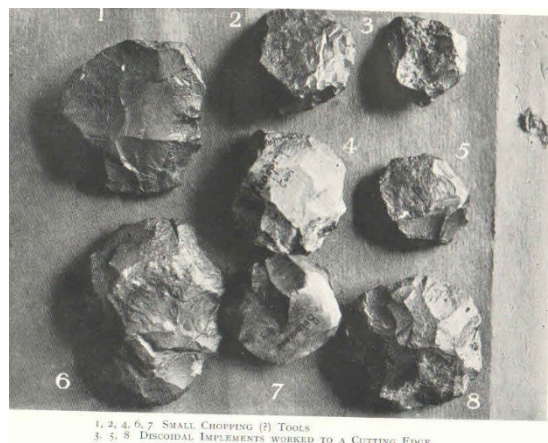
10 October 1866 – 13 May 1944



The seventh of a family of thirteen, Thomas Gardner was born in Preston and started school there before continuing at the Mount. He entered the Society in 1886 and was ordained in 1899. He came to Africa in 1903 and never left. He started at St George's in Bulawayo, a town then that was described by a brash American as 'half the size of New York cemetery and twice as dead'.

He is remembered in the school, apart from the ordinary duties, as one who, because he was a bit deaf, insisted on clear diction. This served the students well in later life. He also liked to go with the boys on outings and would gently wean them from 'camping, picnics and random roving' to paying attention to the 'memorials of a vanished culture', that is, archaeology! I doubt if he is the origin of the pronouncement, 'the proper study of mankind is man,' but he said it and it was his philosophy.

He first became interested in the subject at St Beuno's 'exploring the mounds and caves' there. He wanted his students to look at stone implements and have a 'thirst for the evidence they reveal'. He 'instilled germinal ideas into his students' heads and made them 'more susceptible of formative instruction in the classroom'. He was also enthusiastic about the Officer Training Corps at St George's.



By 1918 he was exhausted and moved to Monte Cassino after some months of rest. He continued to combine his pastoral work – he learnt the language well – and his archaeology. By 1927 he was in Gokomere where he stayed for twelve years. He worked there with Fr Philip Stapleton and their work reached a wider audience when their researches were published in the 1940 *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa* (Vol 28). One of Gardner's conclusions was in the evidence he found of Sotho

culture at Gokomere before the arrival of the Matabele. A colleague at the time made detailed drawings of their work and many of the specimens he collected are now housed at St George's College in Harare.

He spent his last years at Makumbe and he died in St Anne's in Harare.