

May 22

## Br HENRY MERCER

29 August 1886 – 22 May 1963



Born in Accrington, Lancashire, England, Henry Mercer started life as a general labourer. He entered the Society in 1906 and was a cook in Glasgow until he left for Southern Africa in 1912, never to return.

He was at St Aidan's for his first twelve years before coming north to Empanjeni in 1924. He moved after three years to Bulawayo where he was in charge of the church and the house. Then he went to Mutoko in 1930 but did not stay long as he was in St George's from 1931 to 38. It was in that latter year that he moved to Campion House where he

remained for twenty years. All the time he seems to have been doing essential general work wherever he was – in the house, the sacristy around the grounds. They had a petrol pump at Campion House in those days and he was forever up and down the stairs responding to requests for fuel. When he went away – which he only did for his annual retreat – ‘things fell apart’. He was patient with the endless demands.

He was not easy to engage in conversation and used as few words as possible. His comments were often pessimistic but said with a twinkle in his eye. ‘How are you, Brother?’ ‘Worse’. And on returning from hospital he was ‘incurable’. His community quoted Shakespeare to describe him, ‘Brevity is the soul of wit’

“My liege, and madam, to expostulate  
What majesty should be, what duty is,  
What day is day, night night, and time is time,  
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time;  
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,  
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,  
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad...”

[Hamlet](#) Act 2, Scene 2.

But he had ‘an unerring skill in judging people.’

When I saw his photo, I wondered about the unusual full side profile. Mark Hackett explained. Cancer affected the whole left side of his face. It must have been a huge burden to carry in his last years. He died at St John's, Avondale.