

June 24

Fr BERNARD BREWER

18 December 1934 – 24 June 1999



Bernard (seen here on the right) was born in East London and after school at St Aidan's worked with his father on the railways for a time before joining the Society in 1954. He studied Afrikaans at Rhodes, did his regency back at his old school and was ordained in 1967. He was at St George's from 1972 to 84 before going back to South Africa where he was chaplain to a Marist school.

He arrived at Heythrop with a reputation of being a boxer but, as David Dryden pointed out in his homily at the funeral, it was not a slam/bang time of boxing but an art form 'straight, direct, intelligent and effective', a 'training in character'. He used his energy in the old Heythrop by cleaning the swimming pool and on one occasion ran foul of Poop (Fr de Trafford) for cutting down a rare Japanese tree whose offence was dropping leaves in the pool. 'Vandals', Poop called him and his accomplice, Paddy Connors.

Bernard was a 'boys' priest as one parent called him. He was with the boys all the time, getting them up in the morning, sharing their meals, their sports and 'cracking the whip' when necessary. That they appreciated him was clear from the constant round of baptisms, weddings and funerals he was asked to do for former students. He would sit up till all hours to listen to a boy speak about his girl jilting him, or some other boyhood sorrow. He would visit the families of boys caught up in accidents and war.

But it was hard to get through to this fast-moving, chain-smoking, always neatly dressed man. He seemed to be always fighting some internal tension and 'his dudgeon days cast a gloom over the whole community' (O'Halloran). The community at St George's felt the strain of the war. They were perhaps more torn apart by it than some of us, who could be critical of them, realised.

Bernard was a South African and O'Halloran remembered he was 'white-lipped with anger' when his country was expelled from the Commonwealth.

In 1998 cancer was diagnosed and he died the following year.