

June 25

Br JOSEPH BUTWILLO

3 April 1883 – 25 June 1966



Br But was born in Kunigishkes, Kurland, Latvia, when it was still part of the Russian empire but his family was Lithuanian and he considered himself such. Throughout his life he corresponded with one of his sisters in Lithuania. He came to London as a young man without a word of English and took up a job in a restaurant. He entered the Society in 1903 and by 1906 was in Dunbrody. The following year he went to Bulawayo as cook and stayed until 1911 when he returned to the UK. After a while at Manresa and St Mary's Hall he went to St Ignatius, Stamford

Hill where he remained for 32 years before going to Heythrop for the rest of his life.

We have just a single sentence about his life in Africa – that he was a cook – but we can build up a picture of him from accounts of him later in life and that was how he would have been in Dunbrody and Bulawayo. Archbishop Markall was a boy at Stamford Hill in his time and remembered how, ‘for a few pence it was possible to fill the internal chasm daily at the mid-morning break. There was mass demand at the small tuck shop window for hot rolls with saveloys (highly seasoned dried sausage) and coffee.’ Cardinal Heenan was his ‘tuck shop boy.’ In the days when it was possible to keep chickens for meat and eggs in central London, Br But had a range of them which he delighted in serving to the community.

Besides his work in the kitchen he was a keen Arsenal fan and the community got extra special fare when they had a big win. By contrast, the community groaned when the team lost for it meant starvation for supper. He also learnt chess and became such an expert he became the *Tablet* correspondent for the game. He was always welcoming and an observer commented, ‘the life of a Brother in the Society, led in an unassuming way, was very obvious for all to see and ponder.’ Wilfred Paine, the greengrocer who supplied St Ignatius, had high regard for Br Butt and often chatted to him when there was time. He remembers Brother's delight at his (Paine's) protest when there was no time and his words, ‘I've no time to indulge in acrimonious polemics’. Br Butwillo had his jokes and stories; one was about an Irishman's definition of marriage; ‘It is only for women. It is no good for men and they should keep away from it.’ Paine said, I have always felt that a man has no more religion than he acts out in his life. By this standard, Br Butt was a very religious man and I am glad I knew him.’

This writer knows Br Butt lost a leg at some point but it is not recorded in his obituary.