

June 29

Fr PHILIP WIDDOWSON 26 May 1892 – 29 June 1962

Fr Widdowson was born in Nottingham, educated at the Mount and entered the Society in 1911. He found the studies in Latin with a French accent in Holland unintelligible. He did his regency in Stonyhurst and Preston and was ordained in 1924 and was at St Aidan's from 1927 to '30.



As often happens in these short biographies, details of his time in Africa are hard to come by, but as also happens one can build up a picture of the man from his English experience. A schoolboy who knew him in Stonyhurst later wrote, 'Mr Widdowson was a schoolboy's dream, dark handsome, athletic and vigorous, with an attractiveness and vitality which differentiated him from the majority of the Jesuits whom we looked on as dull, grey men, at odds with themselves and the world, uninterested and uninteresting.' He taught by persuasion and incentives – one of which was a 'bank'. Good marks built up your 'credit' in the bank and there was an occasional 'auction' where you could use your credit to buy things he collected here and there. It may not sound much but for schoolboys the auctions were 'exciting.'

He had a gift for reading stories during the last period on a Friday afternoon and the boys were spellbound. He took a great personal interest them.

In 1930, on his return to England, he taught at the Mount and Stamford Hill before going to Boscombe on the church staff in 1939. He did wonderful 'parlour' work there counselling people. One remembers him saying, 'Stop worrying ... Can't you see God is like a father and wants you to trust him like a child does.' He was later in Wimbledon and Manresa where he died.