

21 July

Br PETER SCHAFER

24 February 1881 – 24 July 1921

Peter Schafer was born in Germany at Johannisberg, near Wiesbaden, on the Rhine. He joined the Society in 1897 and worked in Holland for a time before going to South Africa. Trained as a blacksmith and sometimes mentioned in catalogues as ‘blacksmith and cook’ – an odd combination – he began his work in Africa at Chishawasha in 1905. He went to Driefontein in 1907 and remained there, with some time at Hama’s, until 1914. In 1915 he moved to Dunbrody and two years later to St Aidan’s.

In these different places he soon added the tasks of wheelwright, gardener, plumber and painter to his skills and he developed an irrigation scheme in Dunbrody. See photo.



But at some point, he caught black water fever, a virulent form of malaria, and is described as gradually becoming deranged. He became nervous and restless and was moved to St Aidan’s in the hope that the change would help him and he did put up an iron fence around the school playground. It did help him for a while but his general condition worsened and one day he simply walked out of the house and could not be found until, after a long search involving the police, his body was found in a reservoir.

Seemingly, no one knows what happened but the ‘official version’ was that he had a fit, induced, I suppose, by his condition, and slipped into the water.