

26 August

Br JOSEPH CONNOLLY 18 January 1851 – 26 August 1911



Born in Liverpool and trained as a stonemason, Joseph Connolly tramped all over England looking for work before ‘his eyes were opened’ and he entered the Society in 1875. He was so full of fun his contemporaries told him he should go on stage. He later confessed he nearly did. He worked in Manchester, Preston and Liverpool before volunteering for the Zambezi Mission. He left England in 1899 but the Boer war held him up in South Africa and he only reached his destination, Empandeni, half way through 1900.

He spent the next eleven – and his remaining – years at Empandeni and Embakwe, where he built the church. He was brick maker, builder, plasterer and painter. The photo shows his grave at Empandeni and the church he would have helped to build there too.

He spoke a barbarous concoction of the local language which made his workers laugh. Sometimes the laugh was on him as when he was looking for a snake that one of the workers had spied near where they were working and trod on an iron hoop which rebounded and hit him from behind. Thinking he was bitten he gave a huge jump and his fellow workers rolled on the ground with laughter.

Eventually his ‘angelina pectoris’, as he called it, got the better of him and, while building stables for the horses at Embakwe, he had a heart attack which gave him great pain but he eventually died peacefully.