

17 September

Fr FELIX JACKSON 7 September 1908 – 17 September 1978



In 1928 Eric Edmonston and Felix Jackson were the first locally born Jesuits to enter the Society. Felix was born in what was then West Nicholson on a ranch and was educated at St George's (Bulawayo). He was already an accomplished tennis, cricket and boxing sportsman when he sailed for 'dirty, dark' Britain and he missed the open spaces of his homeland. Novices are expected to 'hand in' property they bring with them that is not on 'the list' and cricket bats, tennis rackets and the like were not so included. Felix held on to such items in a forlorn attempt to hold on - for a while – to the life he left behind. His novice master, Peers Smith, was wise enough to give him time.

After regency at St George's, Jacko, as he was called, was ordained in 1939 and served in one of the parishes (Bloxham) around the old Heythrop, during his fourth year of theology. The war found him in Liverpool during the blitz (1941) but in the same year he made his way back to Africa. He hoped to return to St George's but found himself in St Aidan's which he quickly adjusted to and loved the place. He was there until it closed in 1973 (32 years). He taught Maths, cricket, boxing and chess. He was 'spiritual father' to the boys and the staff. Described as a 'gentle affable, welcoming spiritual man, his room was always full of boys – on his bed, on the floor, reading magazines, playing chess. It was also full of stencils as he used them constantly in his teaching and never threw one away.

He loved umpiring cricket and would spend all the hours allotted to the task. The same was true with boxing and St Aidan's 'won the cup' year after year. A generous man, he shared his skills and enthusiasm with all who asked, for example, sisters from the neighbouring convent school struggling to teach Maths. He spent much time each day being available for confessions which, no doubt, included counselling. He collected money from the boys for the poor, gently chiding the stingy ones, and developed feeding schemes for them.

He was devastated when the school closed in 1973 but he quickly found he could continue his work at the De La Salle College nearby. He was conservative in his views and would have nothing to do with concelebration when it came into practice. He also supported Ian Smith '110%! And a final word; he never ordered any punishment in all his years as a teacher.

For those of us who never knew him, he comes across as delightful generous man and we have to put his conservative views in the context in which they were developed.

Mark Hackett adds: 'Jacko always drank two tumblers of wine at the main meal. St. Aidan's got barrels of wine, officially altar wine and therefore very cheap from long back in time. He always made you feel welcome'.