

6 October

Fr JOHN LEA

4 January 1838 – 6 October 1990



John Lea was born in Wigan, NW England. He went to school at the Jesuit colleges of Mount St Mary's and Stonyhurst before joining the Society in 1855.

He did his regency at St Aloysius Glasgow which was still in its founding years and seems to have taken great trouble to improve the students handwriting. Perhaps people were immediately judged by their handwriting in those days? He was said to be a 'plodder', one who just got on with the work in a steady fashion.

In 1976 he joined the newly founded St Aidan's College in Grahamstown and he

describes in a letter the warm reception they received on arrival. He noted how popular Bishop Ricards was among all the people - not just the Catholics. Three years later he became rector. He was very much 'with' the boys, even sweeping their classroom, and again was insisting on good handwriting. He also acted as a link with those in the interior on the Zambezi Mission and 'interpreted' a letter in 1880 to the Socius in which the writer said 'we are prisoners' of King Lobengula. What the writer meant was they could not do anything or go anywhere without his permission. They were not, literally, prisoners.

But he had poor health, a liver complaint and in 1884 he returned to the UK, to Glasgow. He died in Edinburgh six years later.