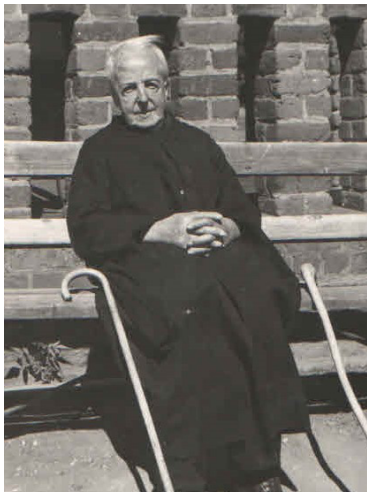


15 October

**Fr GERARD PFAEHLER** 14 August 1870 - 15 October 1960



Gerard Pfaehler was born in London and entered the Society in 1889. Ordained in 1903, he moved to Southern Africa in 1912 where he spent the rest of his life. He was in a succession of places as the need arose: St Aidan's, Mutare, St George's, Empanjeni, Semokwe, Mvuma, Gweru, Monte Cassino, the Seminary, Mutoko, Kutama, Martindale and Chishawasha. An accident in a mule cart in his early years led to a broken pelvis that gave him trouble and pain for the rest of his life. He used to have blackouts and falls. Still, he would travel by train, bicycle, mule cart, horseback and eventually he was given a car. With the first beginning of the church in Hwange, he used to go by train from Bulawayo for the week-end once a month to serve the handful of Catholics there – many of them from what is now Malawi.

At one time he was the novice master for the new congregation of Peter Claver Brothers, Bishop Chichester tried to start. It was not a success. He was greatly loved by children who enjoyed his catechism classes full of stories.

There is a letter he wrote from Semokwe (St Joseph's) on the 28 May 1924, where he was starting a new outstation. The first thing to do (i), he wrote, is to 'capture land' presumably before another denomination, especially the Salvation Army(!) gets it! Then having taken possession (ii) hold on tight until people settle and (iii) draw people by example in the way you build and furnish your house. His chapel was 14 x 13 feet. He slept on the floor on a tarpaulin with a cork mattress. The young people 'find delight in the Sunday Mass' but the old are apathetic. The school went well in the dry season but when the rains come everyone disappeared.

Any new missionaries should be taught to shoot as game is plentiful and buying meat is expensive. They should also learn the elements of First Aid and be able to extract teeth. People are amazing the pain they will put up with. He was sometimes paid for his dentistry with a basket of eggs or a chicken.