

28 October

Fr WALTER BRIDGE 19 November 1834 – 28 October 1901



Walter Bridge was the first superior of the Jesuits in Southern Africa – as distinct from the Zambezi Mission - having come out with Frs Lea and Law and three brothers in 1875 to found St Aidan's College of which he was also the first rector. He was born in Manchester, educated at Mount St Mary's and Stonyhurst, entered the Society in 1853 and was ordained in 1867. Both before and after ordination he taught in various schools in England as well as a year in Austria. He also was a minister gaining experience as an administrator. He was not considered brilliant by his contemporaries but they recognised his energy and commitment.

When he reached St Aidan's he found 'not a single window in the place' and doors leading from one room to another. There was no dormitory, refectory or chapel. Yet soon after he arrived, they opened the school with 25 boys. Besides all the building work needed he also taught in the school. Four months into the first term there was an outbreak of measles.

He was 'loved by all' and the students appreciated that they knew where they were with him. Seemingly he had a certain 'presence'. It was enough for him to walk into the study hall and put his birretta on the table for order to be restored!

He returned to England in 1882 when his term as rector was over and became 'the best of ministers' in a number of houses. Once he opted to live with Fr Ralph Cooper, whose mind was gone, at Parkstown near Bournemouth. Walter Bridge died at Boscombe.