

16 November

Br HENRY TRYERS

2 February 1888 – 16 November 1974



Harry Tryers was one of four brothers who entered the Society – two as priests, two as brothers. He was born in Liverpool and joined in 1904. The tributes we have are from St Aidan's where he was on three occasions. Henry Townsend tells us he was 'dapper... the best dressed on the staff. He was shrewd and practical, never in a flap. ... There was a gentle ease about his relations with domestic staff of whom he had charge and he gave them a yearly bonus to thank them for their honesty. ... He kept the boys' refectory with gentle ease (that word again) and had fun with the boys though they knew the limits. ... He was plainly a happy man and influenced us all in the community. He would have found it a huge joke if anyone accused him of being holy.'

Felix Jackson said, 'Harry had a fund of stories'. He once complained, on going to a local store where the girl assistant was slow in giving him what he wanted, 'This sort of thing won't do, you know, I ordered these toilet rolls two weeks ago and the Fathers are all waiting.'

Mark Hackett says he got to know Harry quite well at St. Aidan's where he reputedly emptied the main street of cars when he went down in the truck to collect the post. 'From him I heard of the journey of the brothers to Driefontein for their annual retreat.

The night train to Gwelo (Gweru) and a long wait there for the Fort Victoria train and being left until picked up at Ngoni siding. He also told me two stories about the early days at Embakwe. One was about a huge dust devil which sucked up fish from a local river and dumped them on the mission. The other was about a labourer on the mission who was suspected of stealing the wages that were to be paid. Against the protestations of the mission superior, the brother (not Harry, of course) constructed two posts to which the ankles and wrists were attached and a fire prepared underneath. Eventually the unfortunate man told where the wages were hidden and was then sjambocked. This story was told in a very dramatic way with the brother insisting he knew what he was doing to an apparently rather ineffective superior.

Dick Copeland called him 'one of the Society's greats. He was totally selfless; ready for anything that needed doing – stoker, cook, sacristan, refectorian. Dick tells the story of going with Harry to visit the place where Br Feeley collapsed while out on a walk. They met a local who waxed eloquent about Feeley ending 'he had the face of an angel.' Harry thought for a moment and said, 'where was his hat?'. 'Lying there', said the enthusiast pointing to a spot nearby. As they walked away, Dick asked Harry why he asked about the hat. 'He never wore a hat' Harry explained. Harry also served at Campion House, Bulawayo, and Gokomere where he looked after the garden and the farm. By 1971 his health was collapsing and he died in St Joseph's Hospital, Port Elizabeth.