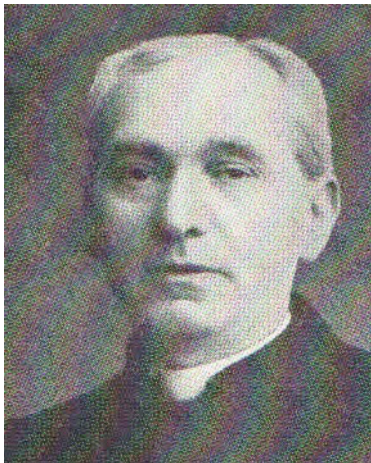


25 November

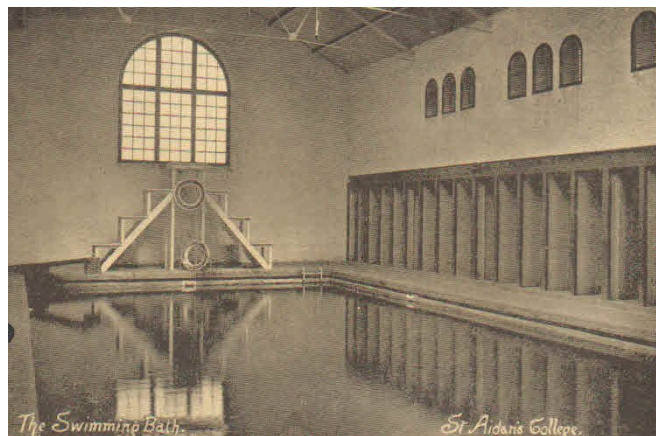
## Fr WILLIAM FITZGERALD 10 February 1861 – 25 November 1949



Born in Ballyneety, Co Limerick, Ireland, William Fitzgerald went to Mount Mellary (Cistercian) school in Ireland and Mount St Mary's (Jesuit) in England. He lived until he was 89 and 'never had a day's illness in his life,' (his words). He entered the Society in England in 1880 and served his regency in St Aidan's and Dunbrody and was ordained in 1895 during his theology at Stonyhurst. He wanted to work with Africans in Africa but was posted back to the all-white school, St Aidan's.

Soon he became rector and served for the unusually long time of almost ten years. He levelled the playing fields and built an indoor swimming pool (the only one in South Africa at the time. See below). He doubled the number of students but the community considered this 'a specious rather than real' advance. He was casting the net for vocations but many were unsuitable and their parents did not pay the fees. They dragged the school down. But when he left, in 1916, he received a warm send-off and many gifts as marks of appreciation. Before leaving for Europe he paid a quick visit north of the Limpopo and was being driven to the train from Empandeni when the car got stuck in a river. It was flogging rain but he and his companion walked to the station (8 miles) and arrived just before the train was due. But it was ten hours late.

In 1933 there was a serious plan to close St Aidan's but the bishops protested and appealed to Fr General. He sent out Fitzgerald, then many years in the UK, to assess the situation. As expected, he warmly encouraged its continuation, which it did for forty more years.



Fitzgerald moved to St Joseph's, Leigh, Lancashire, in 1917 and made many improvements there. In 1926, he went to Glasgow where, for the third time, he was in charge and followed through on a number of projects. For his last eighteen years he was a curate in Preston and used to go to St Beuno's in North Wales to rest from time to time. It was on one of these visits that he died in 1949.

