

14 December

Br THOMAS ASHTON 30 August 1875 – 14 December 1961



Thomas Ashton was a cotton spinner from Golborne, Lancashire, who entered the Society in 1900. He became a cook at St Aidan's in 1904 and moved in the same capacity to St George's, Bulawayo, in 1913.

He became a farmer at Empandeni in 1915 just after the appalling years of drought. They had to beg money from benefactors and corn from the government to ward off starvation for the people fifty of whom died. Thomas Ashton set himself to rebuild the herd. It was not easy, especially when there was an incompetent superior who replied, when he wanted to buy a new

bull, 'you've had good service for ten years from the one you have, why do you need a new one?' He also reared poultry with great success so much so that the mission became almost self-sufficient from poultry alone.



MSGR. BROWN AND BR. ASHTON
on the march in N. Rhodesia.

Msgr Brown, the Prefect Apostolic, chose him as a companion on his two and a half months visit to Northern Rhodesia in 1926. Brown wrote, 'I chose Br Ashton because he was a veteran of the mission and a good cook – an important consideration on an arduous journey – and he was also a good shot when we needed game. Besides this Lancastrian had a good constitution and was full of sound common sense.' Ashton left accounts of his journeys with the prefect and his scrapes with lions, antelopes and snakes.

He returned to England in 1937 and became a cook, a sacristan or a gardener in different places. He died in Stillorgan, Dublin.