

17 December

Br WILLIAM LOVELL 8 August 1901 – 17 December 1978



Fr Henri Depelchin, in the first year of the Zambezi Mission, drawing on his experience in India, asked for someone with knowledge of printing to come out on the mission. It took fifty years for his request to be answered in the person of William Lovell. Born in Olney, Buckinghamshire, Br Lovell entered the Society in 1922. Briefly at Campion House in the 1920s during which time he studied printing at the Salesian Institute at Cape Town, he went to Chishawasha where he remained for the rest of his life.

It took time to obtain the machinery from Europe and he busied himself in the garden for a time until the Chishawasha Press finally started in February 1930.

Over the years William Lovell produced thousands of Shona Catechisms, Shona Readers, excerpts from the Old and New Testament, Saints' lives, Prayer books, Hymn books and Baptismal Registers. But he felt it that the press was 'nobody's baby' – neither the superior at the mission nor the Mission Superior took an interest until Fr Bevis Coillings arrived in 1943 and worked closely with him including getting new machinery from Europe.

Br Lovell also learnt how to tan leather and make shoes and other leather work all the while teaching others his skills.

But he was a shy person and would rise at 4.00 each day and do the sacristy work and hardly appear for meals or community recreation. But he took an interest in everything in the mission from blocked drains to light bulbs. His sacristy work extended to elaborate flower and fern decorations for the Corpus Christi Processions. He also took care of the cemetery and made the iron crosses, which are there to this day on every grave. On Sunday after Mass he would go to the cemetery to 'visit the old chaps'. He also made swings and roundabouts for the children and was a great favourite with them. He had a miniature railway until one of the big boys decided to crash it. He loved telling stories about the older brothers he had known, pioneers like Br Breiten. He would walk to Salisbury for something he needed, have lunch at Campion House and walk back to the mission, 17 miles each way.

In his old age he was looked after by Br Bvukungwe and spent his last days, very confused, at Nazareth House.