

FATHER JOHN McCOURT. SDB.

The death took place at Limerick on November 4th 1936 of the Very Rev. Fr. McCourt, one of the best known members of the Anglo-Irish Province of the Salesian Congregation.

Fr. McCourt went to Ireland for a brief holiday at the end of September but had only been there a few days when he was seized with serious heart trouble. He was immediately moved to Milford House Nursing Home, Limerick, and appeared to be making progress until the beginning of November, when he had a relapse which proved fatal.

The deceased priest was born in Clapham, London on the 22nd March 1920. His parents later moved to Wandsworth and they regularly attended the Sacred Heart Church, Battersea. John started his secondary education at Clapham College but when Fr. Macey decided to start a Secondary School at Battersea John became one of the first pupils there. John also told Fr. Macey that he would like to eventually join the Salesians. Fr. Macey allowed John to start his novitiate year at Battersea in December 1892 and he made his religious profession the following December. He made his final profession in December 1893. From 1893-6 John helped with the teaching in the Primary school whilst at the same time doing his Church studies under the guidance of Don. Bonavia. His abilities quickly brought him to the fore and, after completing his training at St. Charles Teacher-Training College at Hammersmith, he was appointed at an early age, as headmaster of the Sacred Heart Elementary School at Battersea. He held this post until May 24th 1902 when he was ordained a priest. Under Government law it was then not possible for a priest to be head of an Elementary school so Fr. McCourt became headmaster of Salesian College, Battersea, a position he held for seventeen years. During this time hundreds of boys enjoyed the benefit of his kindly rule and guidance.

In 1919 he was appointed to succeed Fr. Sutherland as Rector of the Salesian College, Farnborough, where he remained for three years. In 1922 he again succeeded Fr. Sutherland, this time at the Salesian Agricultural College, Pallaskenry, Limerick. From there he went, in 1925, to commence the Salesian work in the north of England, where he became the first Rector of Thornleigh Collège, Bolton. The College grew fast under his care, and within three years had secured recognition by the Board of Education. He left Bolton in 1931 to return to Farnborough, again as Rector, and held this position until his death. He was a great educator, a model religious and a kindly Rector and friend, he will be sadly missed by his religious confreres and by all who knew him. Prior to the departure of the body from Ireland, Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated at Copsewood College, Limerick, by his brother, Fr Hugh McCourt, the parish priest of Somers Town, London. Fr. John was later buried at Farnborough.

May he rest in peace.