



SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

ST. JAMES',
CHESTNUT GROVE,
BOOTLE L20 4LX.

January 1990

Dear Confrères, Family and Friends,

On Friday 26th January 1990, we laid to rest in our plot at Ford, the body of Fr. Barry O'Brien S.D.B. Born in Birkenhead in 1915, he went in his early teens to the Salesian Missionary College, Shrigley. There his vocation was confirmed and after Novitiate and First Profession in Cowley, he set off for the Missions in 1934. He sailed on the S.S. Vittoria from Genoa in November of that year in a group of 15 or so young missionaries, including several from this Province. Remember that Genoa is where Christopher Columbus was born! Barry was to travel a good bit further and stay a good bit longer, than Christopher did. He was, in fact, to work in four of the five continents. His first mission was Assam, but he was to move to Burma after ordination in 1945 and later he served in England, Malta, Swaziland, Rome and U.S.A. in a magnificent variety of works. 'Magnificent' is a superlative word but his tasks included teacher, deputy head, headmaster, rector, editor, guide in the Catacombs, broadcaster and translator. We should try to envisage him alongside poor Indian children, orphans, missionary sisters, buddhist monks and Catholic bishops, and from basic missionary chapels and typically Salesian workshops to magnificent cathedrals.

The opportunities provided for him were many and varied and the talents given were not wasted. While in the Far East he added at least 3 Oriental languages to the French and Italian in which he was already fluent and the Spanish and Portugese he could read. While in Malta he wrote in the local newspaper and broadcast on Our Lady, Don Bosco, St. Patrick, etc. While in New York, working on the Salesian Bulletin, he acted as friend and guide to many visitors. He had probably seen more of Salesian life and work and met more Salesians than anyone still working in our Province.

His love for Jesus and Mary and many Saints, his powerful voice and extrovert character made him a much sought after and sympathetic retreat giver. His friendliness and wisdom made him a popular confessor and it was in this last role that he was to work up to the week of his rather sudden death. His health had deteriorated further during the last two months of his life but one of his greatest skills was concealing from us any needs or illnesses he had. The illness he had picked up more than 50 years ago in the East recurred all through his life, but in no way prevented him from pursuing vigorously and successfully the vocation he had received from the good Lord so early in life. May he rest in peace and may the memory of his life, work and cheerful spirit sustain us all for many years to come.

Fr. Michael Duggan, S.D.B.

For the Necrology: Fr. Barry O'Brien born in Birkenhead on September 23rd, 1915. Died on January 20th, 1990 aged 74 in the 45th year of his Sacred Priesthood and the 54th year of his Profession as a Salesian