

FR. JAMES O'DONNELL. S. D. B.

Fr. James was born in Limerick on the 13th September 1904.

In September 1922 Fr. James left Ireland and started his year of novitiate at Oxford. He made his first religious profession on the 15th September 1923.

Fr. James made his final vows at Burwash in 1927 and he was ordained in London in 1933.

Fr. James, as all but the young will know, spent almost all his Salesian life in various houses in England and this Province is very much in his debt. One remembers how, in 1945, when Battersea had moved from Cowley back to London, so many boys wanted to go to Cowley that it was decided to continue the College there and Fr. O'Donnell, as Rector, had the job of making it viable and efficient. Staff was short, material, in the sixth year of the war was hard to get, and the fact that some 250 boys speedily made application, was daunting enough for any man. Fr. O'Donnell brought into play his particular gift for getting on well with public authorities and public men and soon the school was launched and began to flourish.

He will, of course, be remembered for his Rectorships of Burwash, Farnborough and Battersea, before he returned to his native land to be appointed Rector of Pallaskenry.

Increasing arthritis eventually meant that he had to have metal plates in both hips; but with his remarkable courage he fought to overcome his disabilities, eventually to be able to walk quite well again. He will not be forgotten for his courage, for the cheerful acceptance of difficulties and for the simple humanity that characterised his Salesian priesthood.

Fr. James was on a visit to his sister in Limerick City, she herself being gravely ill, when his heart gave way. All our sympathy goes out to his family and to the confreres in Ireland at the sudden loss of a Salesian of outstanding quality. He would never agree with this description of himself; yet any man who shows courage such as he has done over the years must surely stand out among his fellow-men.

May he rest in peace.