

FATHER PATRICK BURNS. SDB.

A telegram arrived from Shillong, NE India giving us the sad news that Father Patrick had passed peacefully away on Sunday the 17th May 1981. The shock was that we could not imagine the vivacious ever-smiling energy-bubbling Paddy "gone down into the silence"!

Patrick Burns was born on the 17th January 1916 in Belfast, in the shadow of St. Paul's Church on the Falls. It was a large family and the little terraced house in Hawthorn Street was bursting at the seams.

After completing his primary studies in St. Paul's school he took up the challenge thrown out by Fr. Joseph Cianter, SDB and decided to try out his vocation. He went to Shrigley in the latter half of 1930. The next four years set the pattern of Paddy's life - cheerfulness, eagerness in studies, cultivating companions, and developing his skills on the games' fields. Then in September 1934, he went to the Salesian novitiate in Cowley, Oxford, and the following year, after making his first profession, he asked to go "to the missions"

Assam was his apostolic field, especially the Brahmaputra Basin. Here his cheerfulness, zeal, and constancy proved useful factors in acclimatising himself to weather, dietary, and languages. He applied himself with a will to the Urdu tongue and became a fluent speaker in it; he also conquered Khasi, the language of the hill tribe of Shillong.

He wrote two books, biographies of fellow-missionaries, Brother Denis Cavanagh SDB (from Enniskillen) and Fr. Constantine Vendrame SDB, he also wrote many articles for Salesian magazines. His own character comes out clearly - though unbeknown to himself - in these writings: besides cheerfulness, zeal, vivacity, Fr. Pat was also noted for seeing the best in his fellow Salesians and his reluctance to criticise anyone.

It may sound like a cliché, but we believe that Fr. Pat has indeed "gone to his eternal reward." His apostolic spirit and endless energies on behalf of the Gospel merit this for him. May he look down on us and assist us who are left behind that we too may imitate those good qualities that were like a constant beacon throughout his life.

Fr. Hugh McGlinchey. SDB.