

Memories of Fr. Francis Nolan C.Ss.R

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Published: 26 May 2014

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Fr. Francis Nolan who died a member of Bishop Eton in 1976, although his actual death was in his sisters' house, two of his sisters who took him in, for the last couple of months or couple of years of his life, when he needed intensive care.

Fr. Nolan had a brother Thomas who also joined our Province, and the family was a Dublin family

They came over to England when Francis was about 12 years of age, he totally lost his Irish accent and had developed a rather upper class English accent. He joined our junior seminary at a time when the boys were not educated in Bishop Eton, they lived there and studied there but they went to for their classes and schooling, they went to the Jesuit school of St. Francis Xavier, which in those days was in town or just fairly near the centre of town not in its present situation in Woolton.

This connection with the Jesuits I think ran roughly from the beginning of the century maybe 1899 till the end of the First World War in 1918. The only other one I know for certain went there during that time was Fr. Bernard Keaton.

Fr. Nolan was a missionary, he was Rector at Perth and then after the Second World War, 1947, he became Provincial for three years. He came off Provincial and was Rector of Bishop Eton during which time he was appointed official visitor on behalf of the General himself to go to the Canadian Province of Toronto, but he became quite sick and had to cancel that visitation and when the triennium was up he was taken off his position as Rector and went to Sunderland for a few years.

In 1959 he became Rector of the House of Studies, Hawkstone, he was noted there for a particular peculiarity he had. In those days we had reading at table, and if the student who was reading mispronounced a word the Rector corrected him, but Fr. Nolan was well known always for having his own pronunciations. A word like centenary which most people pronounce with the accent on the second syllable, he would insist on "cen – tenary" with the accent on the first syllable. In every case that we checked up with the dictionary, his was an alternative, but the less common of the two pronunciations.

Later on he spent time at Bishop Eton, and when he, in his older age, got sick his two sisters, two remaining sisters who had a house in Kent took him in and nursed him until he died.