

Memories of Fr. John Charlton C.Ss.R

by Fr. Beverley Ahearn C.Ss.R

Fr. John Charlton died in Bishop Stortford in 1963.

John Charlton was Provincial of the English Province as it was then known as, during both world wars. It was an appointment that had some difficulty as there was practically no recourse to Rome at the time, so he was left in the position of being almost the Superior General as far as the Province was concerned in both those difficult times.

After he came off Provincial he was moved to Bishop Stortford and he just lived quietly, helping out a bit there at the parish, but he used to visit Hawkstone occasionally. When he came to Hawkstone he always spent a little time with the students at their recreation. Now I remember one day he was talking to us and he spoke about his early life when he was professed, now that's going back to 1897 there was no house of studies in the English Province, and he was sent abroad to Austria to a community in a place called Mautern, and he did his studies there, and he was ordained back in England in 1901.

But, and this is the interesting point, he said that while he was in Mautern he met a lady, an old lady, who was sick, who was dying, a very, very old lady and she spoke to him about her time as a girl and how she could just remember the retreat of Napoleon's troops from Moscow in 1812. Now John Charlton was telling us this in 1949 or 1950 and he then said which I've never forgotten. I wonder whether any of you will be alive in the next century to tell this story, as if you are then it means for nearly two hundred years there will be yourself, then me, then this woman in Mautern which takes you back to Napoleon in 1812. It's now April 2013 so it's just over the two hundred years spanned by three people.