

*Tony Brady has been inspired, by the reactions of members of the Blaisdon Brotherhood to the two Newsletters he has issued since becoming our President, to create a story (**numerous Names mentioned**) about Christmas down on the Stud farm. A place where Tony spent many happy years during his time as part of the Blaisdon Hall Family. The farm boys were a unique family who have retained remarkably close ties over the years.*

## *“A Christmas Story”*

Christmas Day was a normal, if slightly shortened working day on Stud Farm, Blaisdon. The evening of the great Feast Day would have been spent with Lawrence “Curly” Stanton, Roger Allen, Alan Ferry and Jim Meenaghm putting up decorations in the farmhouse kitchen. Sundry sheltering wayfarers, taken in by Father Dan Lucey, were included. The holly and mistletoe would have been gathered earlier in the day with the aid of the tractor lifting front loader - (Johnny Dunbar) up, utilised as a platform, from orchard trees and hedgerows. Then up to the Hall to



Stud Farm drive looking towards St. Michael's Church

attend Midnight Mass. I remember the aftermath: a clear cold frosty night walking with chums down The Drive, cutting across the Church Field and on down to a logs and coke fire in the farmhouse. Before turning in we had coffee and bread toasted over the open fire.

About 6.30.am I was up and out to feed the pigs: all 300 or so head. Normally I did that twice daily on my own but Father Dan, Brother Joe and John Wrigley who, at that hour, would normally be at daily Mass in the farm chapel, turned out to help me. Fresh sawdust and straw was spread for the baconers, porkers, sows, boar and piglets. After that we all went down to the 40 standings byre to help complete the milking, muck out and hose down.



**Johnny Dunbar - Tony Brady - holding Pinky & Perky - Jim Meenaghm Christmas Day 1957**



Feeding the pigs - Stud Farm Blaisdon on Christmas Day 1957. L to R: Dermot Hayden, Billy Udell, Tony Brady, Lawrence Stanton, Tom Mahonney, Roger Allen

The 30 or so calves were fed and freshly bedded. Then the 100 gallons or more of milk were tractor and trailered up the farm drive and left on the milk stand for collection by The Milk Marketing Board lorry. I must not forget the attention to the hens - though the flock of several thousand was greatly depleted due

to the Christmas market. The bovine selection of more than a hundred steers, bullocks not forgetting the bull, all got their rations of hay and nuts plus fresh straw bedding.

Breakfast was made by Brother Joe Carter: porridge, bacon, sausages, fried eggs and bread. Father Dan presided as about a dozen people fed. After tidying up and clearing away we rested and entertained visitors from the Hall: out walking Priests and Lay-Brothers - making them tea and chatting. Invariably, a group of boys would call in. Towards



Fr. Dan Lucey SDB (RIP) & Br. Joe Carter SDB (RIP)

3.00pm. the morning animal feeding/milking/caring ritual was repeated and all was finished early enough for everyone to get smartened up for Christmas Dinner in the Old Boy's Refectory.



Salesian School of Agriculture and Trades, Blaisdon Hall. Glos.

Father Rector, Henry Mullaney, Fr. Bill Boyd and Fr. George Hilton looked in to wish us all - among those mentioned earlier - Billy Udell, Dermot Hayden, Mike Turnbull, David Bastable, a Happy Christmas. The Chef always came in with the turkey and Christmas Pudding and revelled in the compliments. Wilfred Higgingbotham was one in a long line of chefs from Mrs. Grace/Maskell, John "Jacko" Jackson, Cyril Higgins "Wiggins" because

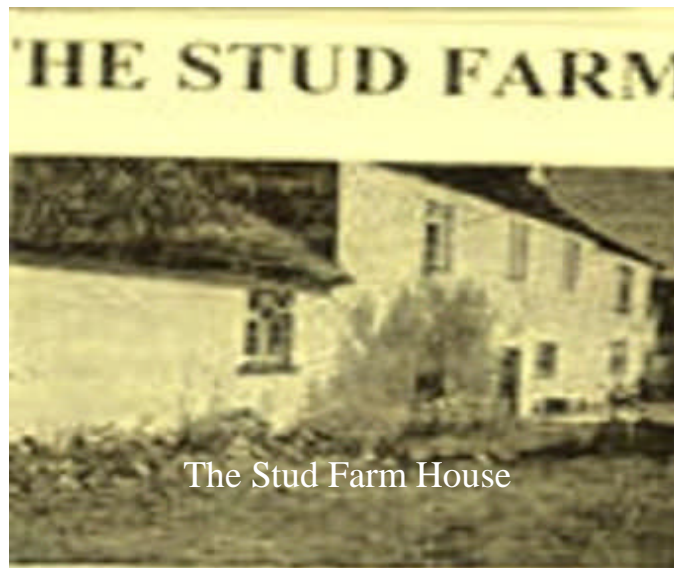
of his toupé "Nobby" Clarke, Barry Sabine and latterly Joe Hurley. Wilfred, famed culinary creator of "FLOP" a sort of light Madeira cake that collapsed in on itself, was a rotund Mancunian. He would sing a rendering of an operatic

aria (à la Harry Secombe) and finish with the deftest performance of a soft shoe shuffle after Fred Astaire.

He would share our Benedictine & Chartreuse liqueur supplied by “Curly” Stanton and smoke Havana cigars. Then we all joined Salesian staff, boys and guests in the Concert Hut for a suitably inspiring film. The “Goodnight” took place in-situ. On Boxing Day we had supper served with all the Priests and Lay-Brothers in the Community Refectory.

In the final paragraph of his book: ‘A Moveable Feast’, Ernest Hemingway writes of a very special time of his life in Paris. From it I paraphrase:

There will never be an ending to my memories of Blaisdon. Each person who lived or visits there differs in their experience of it and that cannot be compared to any other. In memory, I constantly return to Blaisdon no matter where I am or changed or what difficulties or ease contains me. Blaisdon was always worth it and I received greater return for whatever I brought to it. For this is how Blaisdon is and was at a time of my life when I was young and happy. Now, that I am old, I learn that it is never to late to discover new and lasting impressions of Blaisdon through renewed contact with Salesians and companions who were there, that I could not have possibly anticipated.



Tony Brady Christmas 2009