



## LIONEL WILKINSON – MEMORIES OF BLAISDON

I shall always remember Blaisdon for the joy and happiness I felt, and for the understanding and patience that I received there.

My first memories are of going into the dining room and seeing all these tables – all set out with a tablecloth on them with a knife, fork and spoon neatly arranged and a glass at the side. I thought, “Wow this is great!” Then the dinner was brought to us on ‘china’ plates. While we were eating a Brother came around and filled our glasses with cider. Food, always has pleasant memories for me, but that dinner was superb!

The next day four of us were taken up to the stables. On the right, after going through the big archway leading to the stables, was Brother Gleeson’s abattoir. This was where the animals were slaughtered and the chickens had their necks wrung. It was funny for me to see headless chickens running around the yard. Then we came to Brother Eddie McAvoy’s carpenters’ shop. Unfortunately for me he had as many boys as he could take, so we went next to Brother Martin’s shoe shop.

I must have liked it, for I never went along to Brother Anthony’s tailors shop. I thereby settled for repairing and making shoes. There was another chap around named Hissey and another one called Jones. I really liked it in the shoe shop and I found Brother Martin very likeable and interesting. He was a football fan and he used to mention a player called Cliff Buston. I think it was Arsenal he played for. Brother Martin was very good to us and very helpful and I got on in leaps and bounds. By the time I left I was making boys’ shoes under his guidance.

Other memories I have, one of which, was going through the woods to a lake that was in them. When we got there the Brothers left us to do what we liked; nobody forced us to do anything. For myself, I was nervous of the water, but after talking to a boy I had seen swimming on the far side of the lake I asked him who had taught him to swim. He said “nobody”, so that gave me confidence to learn - and I did. I was very chuffed about it.

I also have memories of going to a place called Barry Island for a day. I think there was a big fun fair there that was the big attraction. We also had a coach trip along the river Severn to watch the “Bore”, as it came up the river. You could hear it coming before you saw it. It was an awesome sight. Then there was football and cricket. The Priests and Brothers joined in everything.

In the evenings, after dinner, we went to a room where Brother Patrick used to take us all on at table tennis. It was great fun trying to beat Brother Patrick, but I never did. Then at 9 o’clock we would stop for night prayers in front of a picture of Mary Help of Christians. The it was “Apples and Pears” (stairs) to “Uncle Nod” (bed).

I never went down to the village, and the Salesian farm seemed miles away. It was one evening about dinner time that we were told that we had declared War on Germany, not that it seemed to register with us very much for life went on much as usual.

There was a very large Priest who used to give powerful sermons during Mass, full of fire and brimstone. I used to look forward to his sermons, and ones about Don Bosco, his Mother and the children that he took under his wing.

Then one day I was called into the Priest's room and there was a lady sitting there. The Priest asked me if I would like to go with this lady, whose husband was a dentist, and he would teach me to become a dental-mechanic. What could I say after all the Priests and Brothers had done for me, after only a year? I said, "Yes", but my heart wasn't set on it – I wanted to be a shoe repairer. Brother Anthony, of the tailors' shop, was asked to make me a suit, a sort of russet colour. It fitted a treat. Then the lady came back and took me in her car to a place called "Droitwich" in Worcestershire. I couldn't settle and about a year later I left and went home to my Mum in Hayes, Middlesex. I had a bit of luck (Don Bosco's kind), as a friend of my Mother worked in a shoe shop in Ealing and he got me in there right away. I was very happy there. Then I got my Call-up papers for the Army in 1944. When I came back in 1947 I went back to the shop and stayed there until 1966, when the Gov'nor told us all that he was selling the business. I loved being there, but in April '66 I left, but I have to thank Brother Martin for those happy years. I went to see him years later at the Battersea Salesian House, and he hadn't altered.

I would like to say once again **"Thank you to Blaisdon and Brother Martin for all that I received there"**. I can honestly say I never had a 'Monday Morning Feeling' ever. So I wish, also, to thank God for guiding me to Enfield and Blaisdon.



**Lionel Wilkinson  
Outside the back Parlour  
of his beloved  
ALMA MATER  
Salesian School Blaisdon Hall**

More



**L to R: Lionel and Doris Wilkinson, Daughter Mary,  
and Son in Law Charles, at an annual Catholic  
Children's Society Benefactors' Mass at  
St. Etheldreda's Church in London—2007**

Lionel and his family are loyal attendees at this beautiful event. It is always well supported and we are blessed to have Bishop Bernard Longley as Celebrant. We also have children from Catholic schools in the Chiswick area to provide most delightful singing as part of the celebration.

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