

BR JOHN LEDDA (1904-1971)



John Ledda was born at Santalussurgui, Sardinia, the youngest of four children, on 16th August 1904. He attended the local school for his primary studies and then helped out with the family farm.

At the age of 24 he went to Cumiana as an aspirant and spent the 1928-1929 scholastic year getting some further training in agriculture. This House had been set up the year previously by Fr. Ricaldone for the very purpose of training prospective Salesian Brothers to work in Agricultural Schools in Italy and overseas. John was, therefore, one of the first to benefit by the set-up.

He was accepted for the 1929-1930 novitiate at Villa Moglia and made his first profession on 14th September 1930 into the hands of the Rector-Major, Fr. Philip Rinaldi.

At this time Fr. O'Grady was urgently requesting the Superiors for men to help run the newly opened Agricultural School at Sunbury. Br. John Ledda was one of those chosen to help out and so, after a trip home to say farewell to his parents and family, he joined a party sailing from Italy. Another member of this group was Br. Sebastian Durando. They arrived at Sunbury on 15th November, 1930.

Br. John lost no time in getting acquainted with the farm. He found the task difficult. There was a strange new language to learn. There was a different climate. There were vastly different methods of farming than what he had learnt at home or at Cumiana. Besides this, very limited finance made it necessary to go without everything that was not considered absolutely essential and apply oneself to more than one job. Br. John soon found himself helping out in the kitchen as well.

In May of 1936 Brother met with a serious accident. Whilst putting a saddle on a horse he was kicked in the chest and had to spend some time in hospital. This also meant the end of the heavy work of the farm and so began his thirty years of dedicated service as a cook in various communities. At Sunbury until the end of 1944; then at Brunswick from 1945 to 1946; Oakleigh until 1965 and then to Chadstone until 1970 when his poor health would not allow him to go on any longer. He spent the last 18 months of his life at Sunbury on light duties. He passed to his reward on 23rd December 1971.

Br. John Ledda was typical of that band of heroic men who came out to Australia in the pioneering years of the Province. Men totally dedicated to God and to the service of their neighbour, ready to tackle any and every job and to work under the most difficult of situations. It could be taken for granted that they were quite sick if they were not found at their daily meditation and Mass. They had learnt to live with the minimum of comforts. They had absorbed all the fundamental elements of the Salesian vocation. It is due, in great part, to this band of heroic Brothers if the work in Australia not only survived but flourished. They sought no accolades nor did they expect any for they knew they were working for God Who would reward them in due course.