

Extract from *Fishy Tales* - memories of New Hall

*Prelude - Excerpts from the Archives*

S. Antony Magdalen (Frances Russell) 1894-1898

There were still Fishes who did not go home for Christmas and the great excitement was the Feast of the Holy Innocents. New uniform was worn and the Fishes all went to the Community Workroom for 'Court'. Reverend Mother stood while the Fishes 'processed' in, the last two being the two youngest dressed in the full habit as 'Reverend Mother' and 'Mother Sub Prioress'. The youngest, the 'Reverend Mother', made a speech asking for the privileges and ended by saying, 'I promise to take great care of the Community while you sit by the fire and warm yourself.' The four Fishes who were leaving school and had been there the longest were dressed as Novices. All meals were in the Nuns' refectory and groups of Fishes with their Angels went to a room for quiet conversation, the day ending with 'nun-night' in the Community workroom.

The ensuing 'Grey week' was a quiet time involving a few lessons but mainly preparing for the plays at Kingstide, one in French followed by a farce in English. The next day one or two lighter English plays, and on the third evening the Great Play. It all involved dressmaking, casting, learning, and rehearsing and was very hard work.

The following term began sadly with the death of a pupil; only the previous year three pupils had died of diphtheria, this entailed the closure of the School while the drains were examined and renewed, all were in good condition but every precaution was taken. The winter of 1894-5 was exceedingly severe, the house was not well heated and whatever the cause there were six Community funerals between November and April.

Term ended about July 14 and the school returned early September. 100 marks were given to all who came back on the right day, many did not. The Easter holidays were a sore point as some went home and those that did not did lessons.

The last year was spent in the Great Class with S.M. Joseph Falls as Class Mistress. The subjects were, Latin, General History, English Literature, History of Italian and Dutch painters and of Architecture, Chemistry and Logic. Arithmetic was not taught as it was supposed to be finished within the Second Class. An excellent grounding in Christian Doctrine was given and old Fishes used to attend some of the lessons . . .

Isabella Arundell, wife of Richard Burton, visited us at this time and Sir Evelyn Wood came with the hunt.