

Extract from the Chantress Book 1940

May 1940

25th Because of the capitulation of Belgium which gives Germany air-bases so near us - the danger of invasion especially by parachutists of "troop carriers" has become great and we are warned authoritatively that New Hall is in a very dangerous position.

27th Evacuation to a safer zone is judged imperative. The Germans have seized Boulogne and are pushing towards Calais. The Midlands or Cumberland are being considered.

28th We are advised to go to Newnham Paddox near Rugby. Negotiations towards this end are going on. Yesterday Reverend Mother told the Community that we were to move - a shock to us all - but faced calmly. Packing goes on apace.

29th At mid-day the Procuratrix announced that we secured Newnham Paddox. The Earl of Denbigh's place near Rugby, that the first party were to leave early tomorrow morning.

30th The party of four sent to get Newnham Paddox ready for the School and Community arrived there first after 3 o'clock while the 1st Vespers of the Feast of the Sacred Heart were being said at home - to find that the lovely Church attached to the House was dedicated to the Sacred Heart. During the period of packing at home the nuns said the Office in Choir - all other spiritual duties were "excused" and talking was allowed everywhere and all day, which greatly relieved the strain.

June 3rd The children (about 30 of them), a few nuns and sisters arrived at Newnham in the afternoon. Fr Collingwood SJ came with them so that the Chapel could be opened at once Mass said.

4th The Mass this morning was the first to be said in the Church for 3 years. Fr Collingwood offered it for "New Hall in exile". It was a thrilling moment when the Sanctuary lamp was re-lighted after Mass. The rest of the Community arrived in the afternoon having stood the journey better than those of the day before. Both parties came by coach direct from New Hall. One of the coaches on Monday was held up by soldiers with fixed bayonets. They were required to show their "identity cards" and allowed to go on after having thrown (by children) chocolates and buns to the soldiers.

5th Reverend Mother who had stayed behind to make final arrangement for the closing of New Hall arrived today amid great rejoicing. We are to have a few days to settle in and get used to new surroundings before we start regularity. The Procuratrix still remains at New Hall. There is now question of letting the School to the County Council who want it for a Hospital.

More interesting accounts of life at Newnham Paddox can be found in the 1940s Chapter of Fishy Tales - Living Memories of New Hall 1930 - 2012.