

NOTES

ON

The History

OF

St. Wilfrid's School,

Fox Street, Preston,

1814—1914.

BY

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The terms per quarter, as we read in the prospectus that was issued at the time, were:—

	s.	d.
1st Division, comprising reading and spelling	5	0
2nd Division, comprising the above, with writing and arithmetic	7	6
3rd Division, comprising the above, with English grammar, geography, history, mathematics, &c.	10	6

The entrance to this School was the first door in St. Wilfrid Street, while the boys of the Lower School used the entrance in Fox Street Court. There was a small yard walled off from the large yard as a playground for the Upper School. From a memorandum written in 1849 we find that at that time there were about seventy boys in the Upper School, and about two hundred and thirty in the Lower School.

About the same time that the Higher Grade School was opened for boys, a Higher or Select School was opened for girls, in the premises formerly occupied by the Christian Brothers. The entrance was the second door in St. Wilfrid Street: the older girls were in the long room with the two stained glass windows, formerly the Chapel of the Brothers, and the junior children were taught in the room then overlooking the cemetery.

Thus at Fox Street School about that time there were four distinct schools: 1st, the Boys' Elementary School, occupying the large lower room; 2nd, the Higher School for Boys, in the upper room; 3rd, the Select School for Girls in the adjoining premises in St. Wilfrid Street; and lastly, the Infants' School carried on in the room that now forms the stage in the upper schoolroom. The Girls' Elementary School for St. Wilfrid's Parish still remained at St. Ignatius'.

In 1849 or 1850 the Irish Sisters of Charity, who had had charge of the Girls' School at St. Ignatius' since its opening, left Preston, and after their departure the School was carried on for a short time under secular teachers, and for at least a year by the "Filles de Marie."

In 1853 the nuns of the Society of the Holy Child came to Preston to take charge of the Girls' School, arriving on February 15th of that year, and they occupied the Convent adjoining St. Ignatius' School, which had formerly been used by the Sisters of Charity. The year after their arrival in Preston the Boys' Higher Grade School in Fox Street,

apparently not proving a very great success, was discontinued, and the upper room again became a Girls' Elementary School, the girls belonging to the St. Wilfrid's Parish being withdrawn from St. Ignatius' Girls' School, and this new Girls' School was placed under the charge of the nuns. Thus, after the lapse of fourteen years, St. Wilfrid's Parish had again a separate Elementary School for Girls.

After the coming of the Holy Child nuns, and their taking over the charge of the Girls' Elementary School at Fox Street, the Select School for Girls continued for a time under its former secular mistresses, but in 1855 the Sisters took over the charge of it, and made it a regular Convent School, of which they took over the entire responsibility. The following is the circular they issued at the time:—

“ A. M. D. G.”

“ UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE CLERGY OF
PRESTON.”

“ The Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus
“ have opened a Day School for Young Ladies in St. Wilfrid
“ Street.

“ The Course of Instruction comprises all the usual
“ branches of a solid English Education, with French and
“ Drawing. Music is extra.

“ The terms are 7/6 per quarter for children under seven
“ years of age, 15/- per quarter under eleven years of age,
“ and £1 1s. for all above that age. The pension is to be
“ paid in advance.

“ The Parents of the Pupils are at liberty to pay annually
“ £1 1s. for the use of books, or to pay for the class books as
“ required.

“ For further particulars application may be made to the
“ Superioress at St. Ignatius' Convent, or to any of the
“ Clergy.”

For the first few years after their arrival in Preston, the Holy Child nuns all lived at St. Ignatius' Convent, but in 1859 they took another house in St. Wilfrid Street, and those who taught at Fox Street lived there. A third convent was also commenced later on at St. Walburge's for the nuns who taught in those schools.

The coming of the Holy Child nuns to Preston, and the re-establishment at Fox Street School of the three departments for boys, girls, and infants, brings our history

down to comparatively modern times, times within the memory of many still living. The ordinary routine, too, of school work was fairly definitely fixed, and regular, so that there is not very much concerning subsequent years to record in this sketch. We may, however, add a few more notes, and for convenience we may divide the remaining years of the history of the School into two periods, the first from 1855 until about 1871, during which time it was an ordinary elementary school with the three departments for boys, girls and infants, and the second from about 1871 till 1914, during which years it has been conducted as a select or Higher Grade School.

About the commencement of the first period, there were about one hundred and sixty in the Girls' School, over two hundred in the Infants' School, and about two hundred and fifty in the Boys' School, and these numbers remained fairly stationary for some years. We might consider that this was very satisfactory, especially when we remember that at that time there was no compulsory attendance at school and no such things as school attendance officers; but evidently those at the time responsible for the school were not at all satisfied, and in the Log Books, which began to be kept in 1863, we find numerous entries complaining of the bad and irregular attendance of the children. Whether this was in any way the fault of the parents we do not know, but certainly in the case of the boys, it was in part due to the habit of playing truant, which at one time was very rife, and which had to be dealt with with considerable severity. Thus in the Log Book for October 27th, 1864, we find the following entry:—
 “Playing truant has become rather prevalent of late; obliged to have recourse to the birch rod.”

Whether this treatment put an end to playing truant, we do not know, but we find no subsequent complaints on this matter entered in the Log Book. Another complaint that we find frequently made, was that children were constantly being changed from one school to another, so that real steady progress was made impossible.

Yet in spite of these drawbacks, the schools were doing excellent work, and received great praise from H.M. Inspectors, as may be seen from the following extracts from the various yearly reports about this time:—

“The Infants are well taught and effective discipline is maintained.”

“ The condition of the Infants’ Department is very satisfactory; the writing is remarkably good.”

“ In the Girls’ School, the methods of instruction and the care devoted to this school are all that could be desired.”

“ The girls passed a very creditable examination in every standard and in every subject, and were very well conducted while under examination.”

Such very gratifying results were of course due in very large measure to the devoted work of the various Sisters who had charge of the schools. Unfortunately we have not the complete list of the nuns who have been at the head of the Girls’ and Infants’ Departments of Fox Street School, but those whose names we have, are certainly deserving of mention here.

In the Girls’ School there were Mother Mary Anastasia, afterwards Rev. Mother at Winckley Square Convent, *Capef*
 Mother Gabriel, Mother St. John, Mother Mary Fidelis, and
 Mother Lucy Ignatia. *Williams* *Clearer*
Cassidy

In the Infants’ School there were Mother Stanislaus, *Cooper*
 Mother Theresa Xavier, now at St. Leonard’s, Mother de
 Britto, now at Layton Hill, Mother Ignatia, still doing great
 work in Preston, Mother Gonzaga and Mother Angela. *Berritt*

One practice which certainly did much for the efficiency of the school, was the system of quarterly examinations. These were occasionally conducted by the Managers themselves, but generally by Mother Lucy, the Rev. Mother of the Convent, who also at times examined the Boys’ School. *Woolley*
 These examinations were always followed by little exhibitions on the part of the children, at which a number of parents were always present.

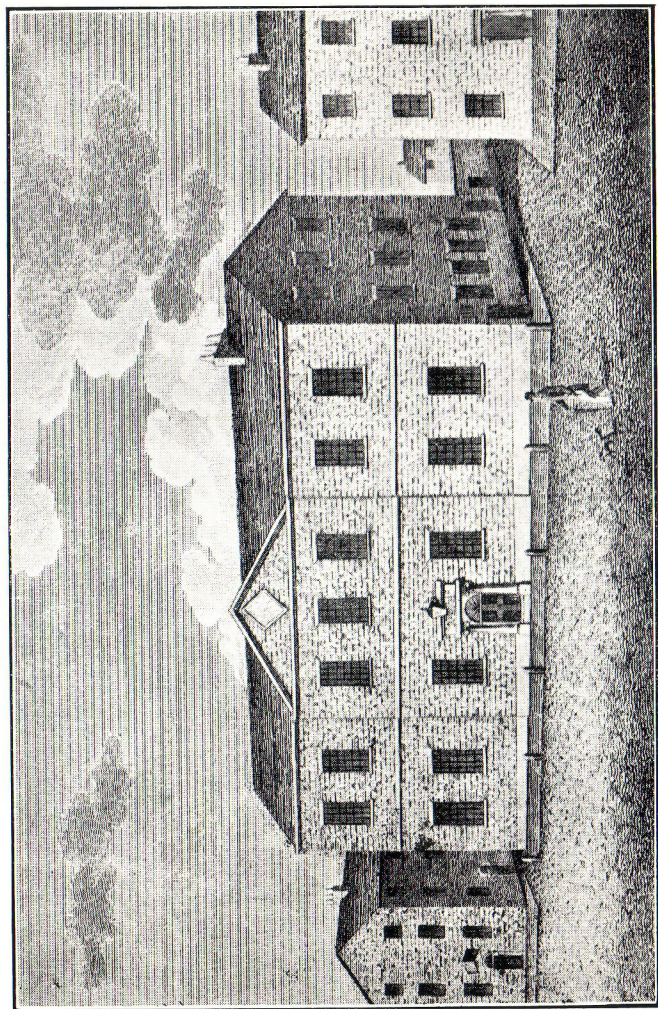
The Boys’ School too, in spite of the truants, was very successful.

From 1856 until 1869 this department was under the charge of Mr. Bulmer, a man who had a wonderful hold over his boys, and though strict, seems to have entirely won their affection.

During the period of his headmastership, the school received most excellent reports.

“ The state of the Boys’ School reflects much credit on its teachers.”

“ The first standard was ready and accurate, the rest of the school was equally satisfactory.”



ST. WILFRID'S SCHOOL, FOX STREET, PRESTON.
1815.