

Tales from the Tower

J.M.Wilson (1848-53)

"There was no bathroom, but in a small room on the first floor in the tower was a room with benches and iron basins, and once a week we were supplied with what was known as "tosh-water" to wash feet.

...We formed a company to salt and store herrings. Edward and I contributed three shillings each, which bought loo on Castletown pier, and Steenie gutted and salted them somewhere. They were packed in one of the "tosh-water" footpans, described before, and then conveyed to the far end of a long tunnel, under the Chapel, in which ladders were kept. The key of the door was missing, and one of us would crawl in, in the dark before lock-up, and bring back the precious herrings, which we fried over the fire.

But where could we conceal the frying-pan? If that study is still in existence, it will be found that one of the boards which formed the partition between it and the study to the south is neatly cut, and a piece about a foot long is pivoted, so as to open like a door. In the space between the boarded partition of the two studies there was room for a cupboard, large enough to conceal a frying-pan and other necessaries. Never were herrings as good as those, with adventure for their sauce as well as hunger."

N.J.T. Quayle (1955-63)

"A word about the studies:" wrote Canon Owen, "they were first in the Tower, and tales are told by old boys of happenings up there, of geese (poached, I fear) cooked, of an inquisitive junior master who violated the sanctuary and was neatly netted by a string lightly tied across the stair. But the end came when the principal of the day took some ladies up to inspect the studies and was met by a pet snake coming down. They were then (the students) removed to a site behind the Tower block."

E.S Beesly (1846-47)

"...Farrar and I were both fifteen, he being a few months my junior. He had been there for several years, and had just reached the highest form. I was placed in the same form, and we shared the same study. We at once became great friends. I had been taught entirely by my father, and had read, in a loose, slovenly way, a great deal more Latin and Greek than Farrar had ; but he was the more accurate scholar, and he always beat me in examinations. Our study was a tiny room high up in the tower, just big enough to hold our two chairs, a table, and a wooden coal box of cubical shape with a cover, which furnished a third seat. The table must have been a very small one, for I remember that our two writing-desks, when opened, completely covered it. The room was lofty, relatively to its other dimensions, and in winter very cold. Our coal box was filled up once a week, and its capacity was not great, for one of us used to carry it up to the study. We could, therefore, not afford to have even the smallest fire, except in the evening; and very cold we often were as we sat at our work. Everything was on the same Spartan scale. For breakfast and tea we had thick pieces of buttered bread: for dinner one very scanty helping of meat, with boiled rice or swedes instead of bread or potatoes. Bread was very dear that winter, and the potato crop had perished. On Sundays there was pudding, and on Thursdays treacle roll; on other days no second course, my recollection of those dinners is vivid. 'I used to rise from them almost as hungry as when I sat down. Silence was strictly enforced. If a boy was observed whispering to his neighbour he was "stood out," and lost the remainder of his meal.

