

A Garden Party at Valentines in July 1906

When Mrs Ingleby died on 3 January 1906 much was made in the local press about her charitable work. She supported all sorts of good causes, welcoming them to invade the privacy of the beautiful grounds at Valentines during the summer months. Although Mrs.Ingleby's "effects" were sold by auction at Valentines within a couple of months, it seems her home was not entirely neglected in this respect. In July 1906 "a highly successful fete and garden party came off on Saturday afternoon in the charming grounds of Valentines", in aid of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Ilford. "Fine and warm weather prevailed, and a gathering that probably numbered some 2,000 persons assembled." The guest of honour was the Duchess of Newcastle (Henrietta Pelham-Clinton) who at that time lived at The Oaks, Woodford Wells, and was a generous and influential figure in the local Catholic community. The church of St.Thomas of Canterbury and the adjacent Franciscan friary were built at her expense in 1895.

The programme of amusements included two bands playing alternately, a cricket match (Married v Single) and races for boys and for girls in various age groups. There was then an interval for tea, which was served at "numberless little tables in the open" by "a bevy of volunteer ladies" under the supervision of Mr.Henderson. "Various local tradesmen kindly assisted with gifts of milk, cream, butter, sugar, etc."

This was followed by an exhibition of fencing, a tight-rope act and then races for the adults. The Duchess of Newcastle presented the prizes and there were various speeches of thanks to the Duchess, the organisers, the helpers etc. Surprisingly there is no mention of the Ingleby family nor any thanks for permission to use the gardens.

"It was now quite dark, and presently the fairy lamps and Oriental lanterns began to glow in the shrubberies and flower beds and among the trees, and amid these weirdly picturesque surroundings large numbers of ladies and gentleman indulged in dancing on the lawn in front of the ancient mansion. A fine display of fireworks by James Pain and Sons put a period to the festivities at about ten o'clock.

Extracts from the *Ilford Recorder*, 27 July 1906.

Article written by Georgina Green