

Primary Education in the Parish of Killymard

Killymard is an ancient parish in the Diocese of Raphoe. The first reference to the parish in ancient Roman documents is dated 5th December 1427. According to the old Irish way of reckoning territory, the parish contained two ballibetagh's which made it one of the smaller parishes of the diocese. Killymard runs from the Bluestack Mountains in the North to Donegal Bay in the South. Bounded on the East by the River Eske, Lough Eske and the Corabber River and on the West by an intricate system of streams it also takes in part of Donegal Town north of the River Eske. Up to 1866 the parish extended to and included The Croaghs and Silver Hill.

The name Killymard in Irish is "Cill na mBárd" – "the chapel of the Wards". It is believed that the Wards, still strong in the Eglisish area, were the Bards of the O' Donnell clan who had their castle in Donegal Town. There are about 700 families in the parish – a mixture of rural and urban. The parish has about 50 townlands, ranging from Donegal Town to the heart of The Bluestacks. Some of the names translate themselves: -

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Meenacally (Min a'Chailigh) | The smooth place of the river meadow |
| Meenataggart (Min a'tSagairt) | The smooth place of the priest |
| Ballyweel (Baile Bhaoill) | The homestead of the O'Boyles |
| Edergole (Eadar Ghabhail) | Between the two cliffs |
| Eglisish (Eglais) | The Church |

See Appendix 1: Townlands and Streets of the Parish of Killymard

There is reference of historical significance to a townland in Killymard in the early 17th century. It is believed that, after an explosion destroyed the Abbey of the Franciscans in Donegal Town in the year 1601, the Friars sought refuge among the trees around Lough Eske. The townland where the Friars settled is called Friary. There is a path close by Lough Eske, known as Casan na mBrathar, where the friars are believed to have gone walking. St. Oliver Plunkett, in a letter to Rome dated 17th September 1671, tells how he visited the Franciscan Friary at Lough Eske. He says that there were eight Friars in the community and added "it is the best formed convent that I have ever seen. They have choir and sleeping quarters kept very much in accordance with the regulations of a formed house. Those among them outstanding for learning and good sense are the Guardian, Fr. Stephen Comgall, Fr. Anthony Doherty, who was Provincial and Fr. Paul O Ferenane."

This information is further substantiated by an expression used by Brother Michael O Cleirigh, one of the Four Masters, who came originally from Louvain to Ireland to compile a history of the lives of the Irish Saints: - "in the wilderness of our residence" (in deserto nostrae mansionis). This is believed to refer to the residence of the Franciscans at Friary, Lough Eske. A good argument can be made for the contention that the Annals of the Four Masters were written in the Friary at Lough Eske. The annalists do not state clearly the name of the place where the Annals were written. The used expressions such as "In the Convent of Donegal" or "The convent of the Friars of Donegal". The writers of the Annals were guests of the Franciscan Community, so it can be reasoned cogently that in the period 1632-1636, when the Annals were written, the Community of the Donegal Franciscans resided at Lough Eske.

The beginning of the Hedge Schools date back to the 17th century. The Cromwellian records say "The Popish School Masrs taught the Irish youth training them up in superstition, idolatry and the evil customs of the nation". But it was in the early part of the 18th century when the Penal Laws rendered teaching a dangerous calling that the Hedge School really took root. The term "Hedge School" was then really first used. Behind some shelter the teacher sat the pupils around with one pupil posted at a vantage point to warn of the approach of strangers. If these were law officers the class was disabled to meet again in some more hidden spot.

At one time there were six schools in the parish – two classified as Catholic and four as non-Catholic. However, it appears that children of different religions attended all the schools. Lacrum and Ballydevitt are the two schools which are connected with Scoil an Linbh Íosa, which is now the only Catholic school in the parish. Both were built with the help of the landlord of the time. Lacrum was opened in 1872 and contained a single room. There were usually about 30 children in the school however, around the year 1926 the number increased to 60 and a second teacher was appointed. Only thirty children could be seated at any one time so the arrangement was that half the children would stand for a lesson while the other half sat and vice versa for the next lesson. The numbers began to dwindle and by 1971 there were only six or seven pupils attending the school. In that year, 99 years after it opened, Lacrum was closed and the teacher, Mrs. Mary Muldoon, moved with her pupils to Ballydevitt. The old school building in Lacrum is now home to Mr. & Mrs. Neilly and Ann Ward.

The following are the Hedge Schools in the parish of Killymard in 1824 as listed in the second report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry:

EDRIM - Master Joseph Smith (Protestant): free to pupils; £9 paid by the Wesleyan Missionary Society; stone lime and slate; pupils: 28 Est. church; 2 Pres., 14 R. Catholics; Kildare Place Society supervision; scriptures read.

WINTER HILL, HAUGH – Master John Scott (Protestant); free to pupils; £9 by Kildare Place Society; pupils: 28 Est. Church; 6 Pres., 4 R. Catholics; scriptures read.

DOONAN – Master Wm. Carr, (Protestant); free to pupils; £12 by the Hibernian Society; stone and lime; rented; pupils: 27 Est. Church; 6 Pres., 3 R. Catholics; connected with Hibernian Society, scriptures read.

HENRY'S – Master Ed. Scott, (protestant); free to pupils; £7.75; stone and lime; rented; pupils: 20 Est. Church; 8 Pres., no R Catholics; connected with the Hibernian Society; scriptures read.

CHAPEL SCHOOL, HAUGH – Master Daniel Lynch (R. Catholic); pay £8 by priest and 6 ½ d from each pupil; held in chapel; pupils: The Protestant and Catholic records give no non Catholics, but give 150 R. Catholics; no connection with any society; scriptures read

DRIMKEEHAN – Master Thomas Monagsan; R. Catholic; pay £8 by priest and 6 ½ d from each pupil; an office house; both Protestant and Catholic records give no non Catholics, but 50 R. Catholics; parish priest pays £6; scriptures not read

GRENINS – Master Alexander O'Boyle, R. Catholic; pay £6 and 6½ d from each pupil; a rented house; both records C. and P. give no non Catholic pupils; 27 R. Catholics; parish priest pays £6; Scriptures not read

GOLANS – Master Mark Timoney, R. Catholic; pay£8 paid by the parish priest and pupils a poor mans kitchen; both records give no non Catholic pupils; and 19 R. Catholics; parish priest pays £8; Scriptures not read

The first Ballydevitt School was built in the year 1842 and opened on 9th October 1843 on a site of 20 perches. It consisted of one room, measuring 30' x 16' and there were two teachers. A fire was lit at one end of the room. According to Gerard Sweeney, who attended the old school, the children had to pay one shilling (1/ =) per year towards the cost of coal. Records shows that fees collected ranged from one shilling to two shillings and six pennies (2/ 6), three shillings and in some cases four shillings. Some families appear not to have paid a fee at all.

The number of pupils attending the old school seems to have always been over 60 and sometimes much higher. In May 1938, for example, there were 47 boys and 45 girls enrolled. When it was decided to build the new school in Ballydevitt, dances were held in the old school each Sunday night to raise funds. Admission was six pennies (6d). The field on which the new school was built was bought for forty pounds (£40) from Andy White, grandfather of Norman Duncan, who lives in Ballydevitt. It measured almost an acre. The school opened on 20th April 1940. There were 82 children on roll and Mr. Charles Mundy and Miss Cassie Brogan were the teachers. A receipt dated 08/11/1947 for nine pounds, four shillings and six pennies (£9-4-6) made out to Mr. Mundy was found for four tons and two cwt. of turf delivered to Ballydevitt at a cost of forty-five shillings per ton. Added to this was 2/6 to the driver of the lorry, which is presumed to be a tip and a further 2/6 for a 1/2lb. of sweets "for big boys (pupils) for stowing turf in shed." Mr. Mundy retired around 1950 and was replaced by Mr. Hugh Gallagher about whom an interesting story is told. Seemingly, before his time, families had to pay 5/= per year to cover the cost of fuel for heating the school. Mr. Gallagher organised the senior boys in the school to go to the bog on Saturdays and during the holidays to win a supply of turf. The boys went to Mr. Gallagher's house in Drumark for breakfast and then travelled by railbus to the bog in Barnesmore. The railbus made a special stop at the Dearg Bridge to accommodate people going to the bog.

In 1986 the Board of Management applied to the Department of Education to build a new school. This was duly approved by the Department and building started in 1987 on parish property in the townland of Gortloskey adjacent to the new chapel and parochial house which were built in 1984. Scoil an Linbh Íosa, a modern five classroom school together with staffroom and general purposes room opened its doors to 156 pupils and their five teachers on Monday 18th January 1988. Two more classrooms were added in 1991 and 1994 when in each case the Board of Management accepted the price in lieu of a pre-fabricated classroom and parish funds were added to meet the construction price shortfall. In 2004 two more classrooms were built together with a new staffroom, toilets and a basement storage area. Again the Board of Management received the cost in lieu of one pre-fabricated classroom (€70,000) from the Department of Education and the shortfall was met by the parish and the Parents' Association to meet a total construction cost of €270,000.

In September 2015, Scoil an Linbh Íosa, enrolled 42 Junior Infant pupils. This represents the highest single annual enrolment in the history of primary education in the parish of Killymard. It brings total enrolment in the school on 30th September, 2015 to 232 pupils which translates to the appointment of our 9th mainstream teacher in September 2016. The planning foresight of the Board of Management back in 2004, with the building of a classroom over and above what was required at the time, is now being rewarded.

Appendices:

1. Townlands and Streets of the Parish of Killymard
2. School Enrolment from 1955
3. Enrolment Statistics since 1987
4. Permanent Staff from 1940
5. Patrons and Chairpersons of Boards of Management

Appendix 1: Townlands and Streets of the Parish of Killymard

| Names of Townlands and Streets (According to O.S. map) | Commonly Used Name/Spelling (if different) |
|---|---|
| Drumcliff | Drumcliffe |
| Revlín | |
| Milltown | |
| New Row (Milltown) | |
| Mullans | |
| Tírchonáill Street (Mullans) | |
| Marian Villas (Mullans) | |
| St. Mary's Park (Mullans) | |
| Meetinghouse Lane (Mullans) | |
| Bridgend (Mullans) | |
| Waterloo Place (Mullans) | |
| Drumroosk | Drumrooske |
| O'Cleirigh Avenue (Drumroosk) | |
| O'Maolchonaire Avenue (Drumroosk) | |
| O'Duignan Avenue (Drumroosk) | |
| Railway Park (Drumroosk) | |
| Orchard Park (Drumroosk) | |
| Orchard Drive (Drumroosk) | |
| Ashdoon Brae (Drumroosk) | |
| Haugh | |
| Drummeenagh | |
| Heneys | Heeneys |
| Drumnacarry | |
| Tawnyvorgal | |
| Friary | |
| Greenans | |
| Edergole | |
| Altilow | |
| Winterhill | |
| Ogherbeg | Orbeg |
| Lackrom | Lackrum |
| Burns Mountain | |
| Eglísh | |
| Meenataggart | |
| Meenawilderg | |
| Owenboy | |
| Sruell | Suchill |
| Meenaguse | |
| Meenacally | |
| Altídoó | |
| Clanboorhin | |
| Newtowndrumgornan | Newtown |
| Drumgornan | Drumgorman |
| Ballydevitt | |
| Doonan | |
| Drumark | Drimark |
| Rossylongan | |
| Ballyboyle | |
| Summerhill | |
| Drumgun | |
| Beefpark | |
| Drumstevlin | |
| Drumkeegan | |
| Dromore Lower | |
| Dromore Upper | |
| Eddrim Glebe | Edrim Glebe |
| Glencoagh Lower | |

Appendix 2: School Enrolment from 1955

| School Year of Sept. | Enrolment |
|--|------------------|
| <i>Ballydevitt N.S.</i> | |
| 1955 | 88 |
| 1956 | 82 |
| 1957 | 73 |
| 1958 | 74 |
| 1959 | 69 |
| 1960 | 77 |
| 1961 | 67 |
| 1962 | 69 |
| 1963 | 56 |
| 1964 | 53 |
| 1965 | 46 |
| 1966 | 40 |
| 1967 | 39 |
| 1968 | 30 |
| 1969 | 29 |
| 1970 | 26 |
| 1971 | 33 |
| 1972 | 58 |
| 1973 | 51 |
| 1974 | 60 |
| 1975 | 63 |
| 1976 | 63 |
| 1977 | 65 |
| 1978 | 65 |
| 1979 | 77 |
| 1980 | 82 |
| 1981 | 103 |
| 1982 | 106 |
| 1983 | 115 |
| 1984 | 124 |
| 1985 | 128 |
| 1986 | 142 |
| 1987 | 156 |
| <i>Scoil an Linbh Íosa, Killymard</i> | |
| 1988 | 155 |
| 1989 | 165 |
| 1990 | 184 |
| 1991 | 188 |
| 1992 | 195 |
| 1993 | 212 |
| 1994 | 199 |
| 1995 | 215 |
| 1996 | 210 |
| 1997 | 203 |
| 1998 | 201 |
| 1999 | 196 |
| 2000 | 190 |
| 2001 | 194 |
| 2002 | 210 |
| 2003 | 221 |
| 2004 | 226 |
| 2005 | 230 |
| 2006 | 224 |
| 2007 | 230 |
| 2008 | 230 |
| 2009 | 230 |
| 2010 | 225 |
| 2011 | 211 |
| 2012 | 220 |
| 2013 | 214 |
| 2014 | 217 |
| 2015 | 232 |
| 2016 | 225 |
| 2017 | 210 |
| 2018 | 212 |
| 2019 | 211 |
| 2020 | 225 |
| 2021 | 231 |
| 2022 | 258 |
| 2023 | 247 |
| 2024 | 266 |

Appendix 4: Permanent Staff from 1940

| Teaching Staff | | |
|--|--|------------------------|
| Year | Staff | No. of Teachers |
| <i>Ballydevitt N.S.</i> | | |
| 1940 | Mr. Charles Mundy, Principal Miss Cassie Brogan (2 nd teacher) | 2 |
| 1950 | Mr. Hugh Gallagher, Principal (replaced Mr. Charles Mundy) | 2 |
| 1957 | Mr. Boyle, Principal (replaced Mr. Hugh Gallagher) | 2 |
| 1958 | Mr. John Diver, Principal (replaced Mr. Boyle) Mrs. Sweeney (replaced Miss Cassie Brogan) | 2 |
| 1971 | Mrs. Mary Muldoon (replaced Mrs. Sweeney) | 2 |
| 1980 | Ms. Loretta Campbell (3 rd teacher) | 3 |
| 1982 | Ms. Paula Mc Groarty (4 th teacher) | 4 |
| 1985 | Mrs. Marie Cassidy, Principal (replaced Mr. John Diver) | 4 |
| 1987 | Mr. Enda Nolan (5 th teacher) | 5 |
| <i>Scoil an Linbh Íosa, Killymard</i> | | |
| 1988 | Mrs. Catriona Boyle (replaced Mrs. Mary Muldoon) | 5 |
| 1991 | Mrs. Mairead Mc Loone (6 th teacher) Miss Anne Galligan (Mrs. Reid), 7 th teacher (shared Remedial) | 7 |
| 1992 | Mr. Enda Nolan, Principal (replaced Mrs. Marie Cassidy) | 7 |
| 1994 | Mrs. Noeleen Quinn 8 th teacher (shared Remedial) | 8 |
| 2000 | Miss Elaine Farrell (shared Remedial) (replaced Ms. Paula Mc Groarty) | 8 |
| 2001 | Mrs. Martina Cunningham (9 th teacher) (Enda Nolan to Administrative Principal) | 9 |
| 2002 | Miss Marian Langan (Mrs. Carr) (replaced Mrs. Martina Cunningham) Mr. Rory O'Donnell (10 th teacher) (Mrs. Mairead Mc Loone to Resource Teacher) | 10 |
| 2003 | Miss Annette Mc Groarty (11 th teacher) | 11 |
| 2006 | Ms. Catherine Meehan (Learning Support) (replaced Ms. Elaine Farrell) Ms. Marianne Comack (12 th teacher) (Mrs. C. Boyle to L.S./Res.) | 11 12 |
| 2007 | Ms. Tina Mc Daid (replaced Mr. Rory O' Donnell) | 12 |
| 2008 | Mrs. Anne-Marie Mc Cann (replaced Ms. Marianne Comack) Ms. Maria Gallagher (replaced Ms. Tina Mc Daid) | 12 12 |
| 2009 | Ms. Collette Langan and Mr. John Gillespie | 12 |

| | | |
|------|--|----|
| | (replaced Ms. Loretta Campbell & Mrs. Mairead Mc Loone both retired) | |
| 2016 | Mrs. Donna Mc Groarty (post lost for 2017 due to falling enrolment) | 13 |
| 2017 | Mrs. Donna Mc Groarty (replaced Mr. John Gillespie on 28/10/2017) | 12 |
| 2019 | Mrs. Lisa Daly (replaced Ms. Maria Gallagher who resigned) | 12 |
| 2021 | Ms. Katie Regan | |
| 2021 | Mrs. Quinn | 12 |
| 2020 | Ms. Oonagh Campbell (Cluster) | |
| 2020 | Ms. Alannah Mc Donnell (Cluster) | |
| 2022 | Ms. Oonagh Campbell – additional teacher (13 th teacher) | 13 |
| 2022 | Ms. Alannah Mc Donnell – additional teacher (14 th teacher) | 14 |
| 2023 | Ms. Sinead Mc Cormick – (15 th teacher) | 15 |
| 2023 | Ms. Carol Barrett | |

| Special Needs Assistants & Ancillary Staff Scoil an Linbh Íosa, Killymard | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1999 | Ms. Siobhán Mc Namara (P/T Secretary) | |
| 2000 | Mrs. Dawn Mc Ginley (F/T SNA) | |
| 2002 | Mr. Tony Killilea (P/T Caretaker) Mrs. Pauline Mc Groarty, (P/T SNA) Mrs. Noreen Devlin (P/T SNA to June 2005) | |
| 2003 | Miss Erica O'Donnell, (P/T SNA to June 2004) | |
| 2006 | Ms. Gráinne Ward, (P/T SNA) Ms. Susan Mc Cahill(P/T SNA) Mrs. Mary Doogan (P/T Secretary) Mrs. Anne O' Callaghan (P/T SNA) | |
| 2007 | Ms. Gráinne Ward (P/T SNA) Ms. Aoife Keeney (P/T SNA) Mrs. Eileen Griffin (P/T Secretary) | |
| 2021 | Ms. Katie O'Grady | |
| 2021 | Mr. Francis Gallagher | |
| 2020 | Ms. Kerrie Mc Hugh | |
| 2023 | Mrs. Sinead Mc Ginty | |
| 2024 | Ms. Karen Kelly | |

Appendix 5: Patrons & Chairpersons of Boards of Management

| Patrons (Catholic Bishops of Raphoe) | |
|---|---|
| 1923 – 1963 | William Mac Neely |
| 1965 – 1982 | Anthony Mac Feely |
| 1982 – 1994 | Seamus Hegarty |
| 1995 - 2017 | Philip Boyce |
| 2017 - 2024 | Alan Mc Guckian |
| 2024 - | Monsignor Gillespie – Administrator for Raphoe Diocese |
| 2025 | Bishop Coll |

| Chairpersons of Board of Management (established 1975) | |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1975 – 1981 | Dean John Glackin |
| 1981 (Jan.–Oct.) | Fr. Bernard Mc Cafferty |
| 1981 – 1982 | Fr. Peter Mc Mahon |
| 1982 – 2005 | Fr. Eoghan Ó'Frighil |
| 2005 – 2007 | Mr. Jack Keeney |
| 2007 - 2015 | Fr. Francis Mc Loone |
| 2015 - 2019 | Mrs. Sally Bonner |
| 2019 - 2023 | Mary Doherty |
| 2023 - 2027 | Caroline Feeney |