

Primary Education in the Parish of Killymard

by Enda Nolan

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 Dearn 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

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 Groary (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 (replaced Ms. Loretta Campbell & Mrs. Mairead Mc Loone, both retired)	12

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

**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)

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 -	Alan Mc Guckian

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