

BALLYOUGHTER SCHOOL

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Recollections by Oliver J. Murray.

Not having kept a diary, I am not a great historian on this matter. I started school from my then home at Toberanerin Rock and was brought on day one by my late brother Jim. There was then not much Secondary Education unless by the Brothers in Gorey and most children finished in Primary School.

Ballyoughter was then a one roomed, two teacher school. Miss Mc Gloin was the Head Teacher- a native of Sligo and a native Gaelic Speaker. Her assistant was Miss Julia Brennan (later Mrs. J. Lawlor) who taught Infants, First and Second Classes and occupied the lower part of the room with three desks and forms round the walls. Heating was by a number Eight Stanley Range at one end of the room while an open fire was the provider of heat at the other end which was occupied by 3rd., 4th., 5th., 6th., and 7th. classes. It was a mixed school of boys and girls in all classes.

The head teacher had a big table at which she sat or stood as required on the right when you entered the porch which is in a similiar position to the present entrance. The fire place was on the left a few feet further on and the class for standing lessons was in a semi circle.

Firstly let me say that we had an attendance of around 50 pupils. They came from a wide area - Moneylawn, Moneycross, Clough, Ballinclare, Ballyclough, Cranacrower, Boley, Bellcarrig, Medophall and Ballymore. I regret to say that most of my class mates are either dead R.I.P. or gone away. The following were in school during my days - Murphys Moneylawn, O'Briens Moneycross, Laurence D'Arcy, Murphys Cranacrower, Grahams Ballyoughter, O'Reillys Ballyclough, Turners Medophall, Roches Clonmore, Redmonds Tomcoyle, Morris Family Clough, Dempsey Family Bellcarrig, Corrigan Family Ballyhast, Fortunes, Flahertys, Levingstones, Murphys Clonmore, O'Learys Medophall, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Duggan, Mrs. Walshe, Sadie Byrne now Mrs. Barrington Gorey, Doyle Family Ballyoughter, and Kenny Family Clonmore. I also went to school with Tom Dempsey, Lizzy Leary, Bill Redmond and George Graham and Mrs. Ireton (Barnes). I always could learn a lot from Miss Brennan as she had a great way of imparting knowledge. She was also very fair. There were a number of us lads who were not in the Head Teachers Good Book and we in turn stood on our own rights. Owing to the position of the fire we were never too hot in class so we decided to discontinue giving "coal money" for a few winters. The teacher occasionally picked on one of us to ask if we were going to pay the "Coal Money", invariably with the same answer. So this particular April morning I got a good wetting walking to school. When I arrived the first question was "Are you going to pay for the coal?" I replied as usual "I am not". I was then sent to stand by the back wall. Soon after Canon Mernagh came in. He spotted me and asked "Why are you here Murray?" I said "Because I didn't pay for the coal Father". "And why didn't you?" says the Canon. So I told him that I didn't pay for the coal because I never got near the fire. The Canon then felt my wet clothes and said "You are right you need not pay for the coal". For the last eighteen months of my school days there was no communication between me and the Head Teacher. The only way I could get redress was at reading time. The class read from right to left, girls first. So I always stood next to the left hand girl and when teacher said "Next" I read all the time to the end of the lesson so no one on my left ever got to read!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Having said all this I must say it was a great school, where Science, Cookery, Algebra, Geometry, Sewing, Knitting as well as other subjects plus physical drill and of course Catechism were taught which filled in for most Secondary Education. Irish was taught in a better manner

than later even though we got seven weeks holidays and more while the teachers were on an Irish course as that was the start of the Free State. I am criticising the system and not the teachers as I think our legislators did more to hinder the learning of our native tongue than they did to promote it and now I would say there is less Irish used in Dail Eireann than in the late twenties. We were taught Irish History as it happened and not a watered down version as has been the case since.