

Ballyoughter National School Centenary
1889 - 1989

We are celebrating the centenary of Ballyoughter National School. One hundred years ago in 1889 the Board of Commissioners of Education finally gave their approval for Ballyoughter to become a State-supported school. However a building had been in use as a school since 1842 and indeed before that date it is possible that a hedge school existed.

On March 1st. 1842 Alice O'Neill was officially appointed as the first teacher in Ballyoughter School and one week later Rev. H. Williams applied to the Board for sanction of the building as a State-approved school. However the school then was very different from what it is to-day. It did have a slated roof and 'finely plastered' stone and mortar walls, but the floor was of clay, there were only two small windows, no blackboard and there was no form of heating. These points were given by the Inspector as the reason for his rejection of the application. Fr. Williams' successor, Fr. Thomas Staples, was not easily deterred by initial failure. Between the years 1886 and 1889 he made numerous applications and received numerous rejections in his battle to gain recognition for the school. Each report would outline faults with the building which he would subsequently rectify, only to be told that something else was wrong.

For example, Fr Staples spent a considerable sum replacing the clay floor with one of concrete, only to be told that he must spend more money uprooting the concrete floor (and the desks embedded in it) and replacing it with floor boards. As can be imagined he was not amused!

Eventually, the changes paid off. A wooden floor, three new windows, a stove, a blackboard, a teacher's desk and extra pupils' desks were installed which left the Board with no option but to give official approval for the building to be used as a National School.

The finance needed to do this work was obtained by borrowing £240 from the Bank to be repaid at the rate of £20 per annum. Live stock were purchased at £1-17s each to help Fr. Staples recoup his money. A nominal rent of one penny per annum was paid to Lord Bourtown. The fact that the school was multi-denominational at the time also helped to secure its sanction.

A fire place and chimney were added in 1907 when an Assistant Teacher was appointed for the first time. A second room for junior classes was built in 1948 and at the same time running water and flush toilets were installed which was very advanced at that time for a rural school. Very Rev. James Canon Doran P.P. was the school Manager responsible for this work. An oil fired central heating

system was fitted in 1946 and finally an extension was added to the school in 1984 which included a teacher's room and a new toilet block.

The teachers of the early years would be astonished at the facilities in the present day school — electricity, central heating, running water, video televisions, photo-copiers, computers etc. Ballyoughter School has come a long way in the past hundred years and it is hoped that even greater progress will be made in the next century.

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