

Hedge-Schools

Before National schools were erected, the children of the district assembled in what were styled "Hedge-Schools". Not more than sixty eight years ago a hedge-school existed in this district. Its site was a few yards from Monasteraden church and opposite to the Monument.

Here a small hut stood where the teachers and pupils met. It was a stone structure having a thatched roof and white-washed walls. It was built beside a white-thorn bush, which is to this day known as "The School-house Bush".

During the summer months the pupils sat on the walls surrounding it, while the teachers faced their class of usually over a hundred pupils. Mr. and Mrs. Casey - grandfather and grandmother of the late Master Casey of Coolavin N. S. - taught in this school. The male teacher taught the boys and the female taught the girls. Writing was done on slates, with slate-pencils. English reading was learned from first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth class readers. Arithmetic, a little Geography and Catechism were taught there, and often the lessons were conducted out in the open air. The junior pupils generally learned English reading and spelling

from cards which hung on the walls. On these cards were written the Alphabet and other little words. The girls, while learning needlework, sat under the tree, which I have already mentioned.

If any punishment needed to be given the victim was put on his neighbour's back and scourged with what was called a "cat-o'-nine-tails". This punishment was very severe and thus, was not administered but very seldom and for grave reasons. The pupils of the school usually turned out to be distinguished and popular men and women to the end of their days. Every three months the parents had to pay what was called a school fee for the education of their children, but that is not practised now-a-days in the National School

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