



Standing room only as the girls await General Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Education to open a new wing at the Salesian primary school at Fernbank

# A busy day advancing cause of education in Limerick city

■ A new school in Hassett's Cross and an extension to the Salesians Fernbank were opened and a foundation stone laid for a new school in Ballynanty in one day in 1955

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October 5, 1955 must surely have been one of the most momentous days in the history of education in Limerick.

On that day, General Richard Mulcahy, T.D., Minister for Education, visited Limerick for a series of engagements which included opening the new CBS National School for boys at Hassett's Cross, laying the foundation stone for the new girls' school at Ballynanty and opening a new wing at the Salesian primary school at Fernbank.

The Limerick Leader's photographer, Donal MacMonagle was on hand with his trusty camera to record the day's events. Most of the photographs which we bring you today have never previously been published.

Massive changes in the demographic of Limerick City necessitated the building of these schools. Large swathes of the city centre population had moved out to the suburbs. St Munchin's Parish had seen a fivefold increase in its population in the previous 25 years.

Until the building of the new school at Hassett's Cross the educational needs of the boys of the parish were very poorly catered for in the cramped old building on the High Road.

Younger children were educated at the Infant School at Killeely and there was no nearby school at all for girls until the extension at Fernbank and the new school at Ballynanty were completed.

In those days when a parish needed a new school, the clerical manager (usually the Parish Priest) made a case for the new school to the Department of Education, indicating that the parish could provide a suitable site.



The Minister opens the new extension at the Salesian Primary School in Fernbank as thenuns, local clergy and other local dignitaries look on



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In those days when a parish needed a new school, the clerical manager (usually the Parish Priest) made a case for the new school to the Department of Education, indicating that the parish could provide a suitable site.

Once approval was granted, the new school was built using a combination of public money and locally-raised subscriptions. Monsignor Moloney was the parish priest of St Munchin's and he worked tirelessly to secure the new schools.

Minister Mulcahy, on his visit to Limerick, first opened the Hassett's Cross facility, after a special Mass celebrated at St Munchin's Church.

The Minister was presented with a specially designed scroll as a memento of the occasion by 12-year-old, Anthony Finn of Killeely, then a sixth class pupil. The scroll was designed by Br P.C. Redmond.

In his speech, Minister Mulcahy emphasised the importance of education in the realisation of each child's potential. "Until people are equipped with proper knowledge," he said, "they will not have the strength to do the work put before them by God."

Br. E.F. Clancy, having thanked all concerned, is quoted in the Limerick Leader of the same day, as follows: "The Christian Brothers are proud to be placed in charge of such a noble building and proud also to be associated with another step forward in the uplifting of the intellect of the Irish people."

Minister for Posts & Telegraphs, Michael J. Keyes suggested during his speech that "Ireland can take her place with any country in the world in the matter of schools, hospitals and housing". He was referring to the boom which was taking place in public sector building in Ireland at the time.

Mr Keyes then went on to make himself the most popular man in



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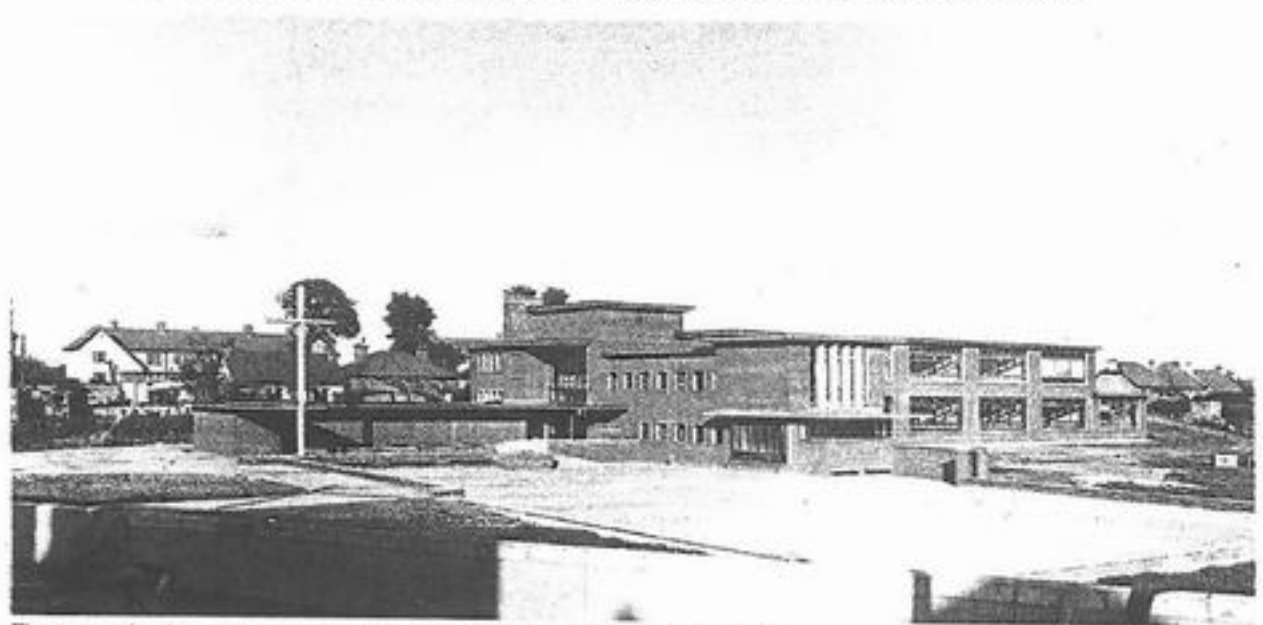
Minister for Education General Richard Mulcahy surrounded by local clergy and dignitaries at the opening of the new school in Hassett's Cross. The minister is holding a specially designed scroll as a memento of the occasion presented to him by 12-year-old, Anthony Finn of Killeely, then a sixth class pupil

Limerick that day by suggesting to the Minister for Education (amid loud cheering) that the boys be given a free day. When Mr Mulcahy agreed, Mr Keyes mooted a second free day and again Mr Mulcahy acquiesced, to whoops of delight and rapturous applause.

The Hassett's Cross school cost £60,000 to complete and was built by E. & J. Doran of Limerick.

The architects were Dublin-based Robinson, Keefe & Devane who had a Limerick connection in the person of Limerickman, Andrew Devane. The school could accommodate 500 boys and the Ballynanty school was later to accommodate 700 girls.

Mayor of Limerick, G.E. Russell exhorted the boys to be proud of their school, the building of which had been funded in great part by their parents and grandparents.



The new school at Hassett's Cross had just been completed in this picture