

OUR FIRST NATIONAL SCHOOL

Rev. Father Charles Bourke, P.P. made his first application for the establishment of national schools for males and females in his parish when he wrote to the Commissioners of Education on 16/9/1849. He said that his parish of 4,000 people was "in dire need of national schools". A school in operation at that time under Denis Kilmartin catered for 100 boys. The nearest national school was Lowtown N.S., Galbally, which was then the postal town for Ballylanders. He also applied for a girls school. Denis Kilmartin (age 21) and Mary Kilmartin (23) were proposed as principal teachers.

Approval was forthcoming for the two schools, which were housed in a two storey building where Michael Buckley's shop now stands. The dimensions of each room were 30'x16'x10', and they were able to cater for 100 boys and 180 girls.

Ballylanders Boys School was approved on 21st February, 1850. Denis Kilmartin was confirmed as Principal. Denis left the school on 30/6/1858 and was succeeded by John Gallagher on 1/8/1858, who came here from Ballyorgan. Other teachers employed in the Boys School included John Murray, John Hackett (1859-61), Michael Dalton (1865-74) and Thomas Herr (1867-90). The latter married Jane Kilmartin, daughter of Denis, who was Principal teacher of the Girls School. Other teachers were Owen Buckley, Thomas Ryan. By 1890 Walter Fitzgerald was Principal, James Dalton assistant and Wm. Buckley Senior Monitor.

During the years up to 1892, the school was closed for some time in 1858 until placed in a proper state of repair. On 29/6/1861, it was agreed that the room be whitewashed and a map of Europe supplied!

In 1888 the children of the local constabulary were boycotted by withholding of local pupils - possibly as a result of Parnellite agitation. An enquiry was ordered but the situation seems to have been resolved.

By 10/4/1891, the parish priest was applying for a new school building as he stated that the building was unsuitable and he intended building a new one.

During the years from 1849/1891, the Girls School was staffed by Mary Kilmartin, Mary Kiely and Ellen Halloran, Johanna Kennefick and Jean Kennefick (monitoresses), Nancy Tierney, Jane Herr, Kate Buckley and Julia O'Dea. Kate Dalton was Principal on //11/1890 at £27 per annum. Helena Herr (daughter of Patrick Herr and Catherine Dineen and granddaughter of Thomas and Jane Herr), was appointed assistant on 1/11/1890 and taught in the new Girls School.

EVENTS OF 1893

Jan 19th

- Michael Logue, Archbishop of Armagh created Cardinal

Feb 13th

- Gladstone introduces Second Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons.

April 6th

- New Orleans, the longest boxing bout in the history of the sport, between Andy Bowen and Jack Burke, ended after seven hours, nineteen minutes, with no winner.

April 21-22nd

- Disturbances in Belfast, as a result of news of second reading of the Home Rule Bill.

May 16th

- Electric tramways begin operating in Dublin suburbs from Haddington Road to Dalkey.

1893 All-Ireland Football Championship won by Wexford (Young Irelands) 1 - 1, beat Cork (Dromtarriffe) 0 - 1, Match unfinished.

1893 All-Ireland Hurling Championship won by Cork (Blackrock) 6 - 8, beat Kilkenny (Confederation) 0 - 2.

July 31st

- Conradh na Gaeilge (Gaelic League) founded by Eoin MacNeill.

Sept. 2nd

- Home Rule Bill passes third reading in House of Commons by 301 to 267.

Sept. 9th

- Home Bill defeated in House of Lords by 419 to 41.

Sept. 16th

- Oklahoma Territory six million acres of Cherokee land opened to settlers caused a rush of over 100,000 white settlers.

Dec. 24th

- In Detroit, Henry Ford and his wife, Clara, start and run a two cylinder engine, using the "theory of points".

In May, 1870, a meeting was held in Dublin where a body of representative men assembled to make a fresh effort to help the national cause. The unopposed return of Isaac Butt to Westminster for Limerick City in September, 1871, was an important step in the rise of Home Rule as the dominant force in Irish politics. Among the speakers favouring Home Rule was a young curate, Father Edward O'Dwyer, afterwards the celebrated Bishop of Limerick. He was often seen on the platform with Isaac Butt during the Election Campaign.

In the beginning not much notice was taken of the Home Rule Party. Butt was a kind, unselfish man but weak in character. He tried to improve industry and railways in Ireland but did not succeed.

PARNELL :

In 1878 a new leader was found in the person of Charles Stewart Parnell, the first to appear since O'Connell, to wage a successful battle against the enemies of his country. Within two years Parnell had reached the peak of his power. The Freedom of Limerick was conferred on him in 1880.

THE LAND WAR :

Michael Davitt appeared on the scene after his release from prison and by his sturdy action on behalf of the farmers, succeeded in saving the situation. The Land League was founded in 1879 and rendered help to the farmers and labourers. A Branch was formed in every parish where local grievances were debated. The Limerick Branch had rooms near the Augustinian Church in O'Connell Street. In 1884 the Freedom of the City was conferred on Davitt.

In some parts of the diocese of Limerick, evictions were pressed and cattle were seized. Father William Casey, P.P., Abbeyfeale, figured largely during the Land War, acting on behalf of his people and obtaining reasonable terms for them from the landlord. After his death, a statue was erected in his honour in the Square, Abbeyfeale, on the very spot where he had so often delivered stirring speeches to the tennantry, during the stormy days of the Land League.

THE G.A.A.

The G.A.A. was founded in a room in Hayes' Hotel, Thurles, on November 1st, 1884, when seven men sat down to lay the foundation, of what is today the greatest amateur association in the world. The first President was Maurice Davin, and Michael Cusack was appointed Secretary.

The first meeting of the association in Limerick was at a County Convention held at the City Hall in January 15th, 1887, with Anthony Mackey of Castleconnell presiding, Patrick O'Brien ("Twenty") was elected Chairman, and Michael Looney, of Caherconlish, Secretary.

In the early days the Markets Field was the City venue for all big games, but in 1929 the Limerick County Board bought its own grounds at the Ennis Road. These grounds have been developed into the modern stadium known as Páirc na nGael.

A Limerick team was the first to win the All Ireland Senior Football Championship under G.A.A. rules. They beat Louth at Clonskeagh in 1887. Limerick teams have won to date fourteen All-Ireland titles and down through the years men of this city and county have proved their worth, off the playing fields, in administrative and organising capacities.

It has often been related that before the memorable Thurles meeting, hurling took place in different parts of County Limerick. The oldest popular form of the game was called "Hurling Home". The ball was thrown in between two groups from different parishes. The side which hurled the ball home over ditches and dykes won the day. When rules were first introduced the number of players in each side was twenty-one and in 1892 the number was reduced to seventeen a side. It was in 1913 that fifteen a side came into being.

THE GAELIC LEAGUE:

In 1893, a group of patriots, saddened and alarmed by the decline in the use of the Irish Language, founded in Dublin a new movement, which became known as Connradh na Gaeilge. Its aim was to promote and restore Irish as the first language in all parts of the country. The first President of the League was Douglas-de hÍde. Others closely associated with the new movement were Eoin Mac Neill, an tAthair O Gramhna and Pádraig Mac Piarais, who wrote: "The Gaelic League will be recognised as the most revolutionary influence that has ever come to Ireland."

Branches of the new movement sprang up all over Ireland. There was great enthusiasm and a new interest was awakened in every facet of Gaelic Culture. In 1898 a Branch was formed in Limerick with Pádraig Cíosog as first President and Seosamh O Néill as Rúnaí. Classes were started in the Christian Brothers' School, Sráid an Droichid and in Halla na Cathrach. The first meeting was held in a house in Sarsfield Street and the movement gradually spread in Limerick. The Committee was then able to purchase a house in Thomas Street which has remained the head-

quarters of the Limerick Branch down through the years. A hall, Halla Ide, was added later where Céilidhthe, lectures and plays in Irish were organised by the members.

Many of the members of the Limerick Branch were prominent in the Sinn Féin and Irish Volunteer Movements. They fought in the War of Independence and two of them are mentioned with particular pride in the roll of honour of the Limerick Branch. These were: Seán Heuston, executed in 1916, and Seoirse Mac Flannchadha who was murdered by the Crown Forces in his own home in 1921,

CHAPTER XIV

EARLY 20th CENTURY

Founding of the Irish Volunteers in Limerick; Limerick during the years 1916-1921; Some prominent figures of that period; Reaction to Rebellion of 1916; Limerick City Curfew Murders.

FOUNDING OF THE IRISH VOLUNTEERS:

With the founding of the Irish Volunteers in 1913 the old Fenian spirit was re-awakened and a great change was gradually taking place in the country, specially among the younger generation. Tom Clarke describes this in a letter to his old Fenian friend, John Devoy, in America: "The change that has come over the young men of the country who are volunteering! Erect, heads up in the air, the glint in the eye, and then talent and ability that had been latent and is now being discovered. 'Tis good to be alive in Ireland these times! For what has happened is that this aged people has renewed its youth."

On the 14th of December, 1913, a conference was held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Limerick, to consider the advisability of inaugurating a corps of the Irish Volunteers in the city. Informal invitations were conveyed to all cultural, friendly, political and labour societies in the city. There were two organisations primarily interested in the project—The Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. The first meeting was held on 17th December. Later at the Athenaeum Hall (now Confraternity Hall), on 25th January, 1914, a crowded audience cheered as Pádraig Pearse and Roger Casement appealed to them to enlist in the Irish Volunteers.

Offices were opened at No. 1 Hartstonge Street, where enrolments took place nightly. The Butter Market Hall, and the Corn Market, were used for company drill. In August, 1914, Seán McDermott addressed them there after their drill. It is estimated that there were about 1,400 Volunteers on roll at the time.

Then the Home Rule Bill received the Royal assent in September, 1914, but with the proviso that it was not to come into operation for a minimum period of twelve months. Those who believed in John Redmond's policy took one path; those who adhered to the original constitutions of the Irish Volunteers, the other. At the first recorded parade held after the Split, about 200 were present. Mr. M. P. Colivet was appointed Commandant.

Captain Robert Monteith from the Dublin Brigade, now took up residence in Limerick where he acted as instructor and