Banagher Royal School

MICHAEL QUANE, Member

At a very early date Banagher came to be settled, because at this point on the Shannon the river was readily fordable and the banks free from flooding at all times, in contrast to the areas for some miles farther up and lower down which were subject to seasonal submergence. St. Reynagh, sister of St. Finian of Clonard, founded a convent here, and here too the passageways from Munster and Leinster to Connacht converged. The invading English readily recognised its strategic importance and occupied it during the military incursions from the mouth of the river under Elizabeth I. It was fortified by them and called Fort Frankford. The fortifications were later strengthened and the name changed to Fort Falkland. Henry Cary, Lord Falkland, had come to Ireland as Lord Deputy in 1622. Fearful of the incursions on the southern parts of the Pale by the “four nations as they term them, the Butlers, the Birnes, the Cavenaghs and the O’Tooles,” he set up a fort in Co. Wicklow to restrain the raiding O’Byrnes from Glenmalure and the O’Tooles from the Glen of Imaal. This base in a wild and unpopulated part of the County, he had created a borough, sending two members to Parliament; and with an eye to possible infiltration from Connacht, he decided to raise the status of the military garrison at Banagher and to incorporate the settlement there on the same lines as that at Carysfort. Accordingly by charter of Charles I, dated 16 September 1629, the Borough of Banagher was founded. Among other provisions, this Charter contained the following:

and further granting to the sovereign, burgesses and free commons of the borough and town, and to their successors for ever, forty-three acres arable land and pasture, and twenty-five acres wood and moor, with the appurtenances in the town and lands of Buolmarge, next adjoining to the town and lands of Eglis and Ballycollan, in the barony of Eglisse; eighty acres of arable land and pasture, with the appurtenances, in the town and lands of Ballynecurry, next adjoining the town and lands of Derry; and seventy-two acres of arable land and pasture, and sixty acres of wood and moor, with the appurtenances, in the town and lands of Derry, next adjoining the town and lands of Ballynecurry, in the barony aforesaid, containing by estimation two hundred acres of arable land and pasture, and eighty-five acres of wood and moor, with the appurtenances, with all castles, houses, messuages, tofts, edifices, structures, stables, pigeon houses, orchards, gardens, lands, tenements, fishings of what kind soever, loughs, pools, mines, quarries, and all other hereditaments whatsoever, in or within the premises, before by these presents lastly granted, and the reversions and reversions, remainder and remainders of all and singular the premises, with all and singular the appurtenances, and every part and parcel thereof; to have hold and enjoy all and singular the appurtenances, to the sovereign, burgesses and free commons of the borough and town, and their successors for ever.

to the use and behoof of such schoolmaster as the Deputy, or other chief governor or governors of Ireland, for the time being, shall appoint to reside and teach in the town; and for want of such schoolmaster there to be appointed, to the use and behoof of the sovereign, and burgesses, and their successors for ever, towards the maintenance of a free school in the town, and of such schoolmaster and schoolmasters as they, or the greater number of them, shall place and appoint to teach school there, for ever, until another schoolmaster shall be appointed by the Lord Deputy, or other chief governor or governors of the kingdom for the time being; to be held as of our Castle of Dublin, in free and common socage, for all services and demands, and not in capite, nor in socage in capite, nor by knight’s service.1

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1 Morrin, Calendar of the Patent & Close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland, Dublin 1863, pp. 361-5.
The State Papers contain the names of the two individuals appointed to represent the Borough of Banagher in the so-called Parliament of Ireland which was assembled in 1634, but there is no record, so far as the present writer can trace, of any appointment to the post of schoolmaster in the Borough at any time during the seventeenth century. In an account of the state of the Diocese of Meath under Bishop Welbore Ellis (1732-34), a reference to the Free School at Banagher indicates that "The Schoolmaster is James Cunningham, who is at present at Gibraltar, a chaplain in the army. He employs the incumbent as a substitute and allows him £20 per annum." It would seem however that this payment was for service as collector of the rents of the school lands. In 1761 Rev. William Shewbridge, A.M., was appointed master of the school during pleasure" to have and hold the lands &c. to his own sole and free use." On his death, he was succeeded in 1777 by Rev Richard Warburton. In 1788 he was examined by the Commission set up under an Act of Grattan's Parliament to inquire "into the state and condition of all schools in this kingdom on public or charitable foundations." The Commission, in its Report which was suppressed and not published till 1858, stated with regard to Banagher Royal School:

The lands belonging to this school contain 204 acres of profitable ground and produce £163 yearly. They were let by the present master for twenty-one years, provided his incumbency should so long continue. There have been some encroachments upon these lands by the neighbouring tenants in the time of a former master. There is not any schoolhouse belonging to this School. The master ... resides in the glebe house ... Mr Warburton had not a single scholar.

The Commission recommended "that proceedings should be had for vacating the offices of such schoolmasters as had deserted or grossly neglected their duty"; and they singled out the masters of four endowed schools for such treatment—including those of Cavan and Raphoe Royal Schools. By implication however, and for reasons undisclosed, the Master of Banagher Royal School was to be continued in the enjoyment of the revenues of the School although he had no pupils and there was no school. Warburton died in 1802 and the Honourable and Reverend Richard Ponsonby was appointed to succeed him. His patent of 2 July provided that he was to hold the post of master of the school during pleasure. He promptly let the lands for £163 13. 0. a year, so ensuring a substantial augmentation to the revenue derived by him from the letting of his glebe of ninety-four acres adjoining the town. He did not take pupils or open school.

It would appear therefore that the rents of the school lands were appropriated as a perquisite of office by successive incumbents of the parish (Rynagh). In their first report, dated 9 July 1807, the Commissioners of Education in Ireland stated:

There is not, nor has there been at any time, that we can discover, any Schoolhouse belonging to the Endowment, nor does it appear that any School has been kept at Banagher for several years.

3 Geo. II. c. 5.
5 H. of C. Paper No. 93, 1820 : Papers relating to the Established Church of Ireland.
These Commissioners had been appointed under an Act of the British Parliament which had resurrected the similar Act passed by Grattan's Parliament in 1788, and on which no action whatsoever would appear to have been taken by that assembly. The new Act was entitled 'An Act to revive and amend an Act made in the Parliament of Ireland, for enabling the Lord Lieutenant to appoint Commissioners for enquiring into the several Funds and Revenues granted for the purposes of Education, and into the State and Condition of all Schools in Ireland.' The proposals for this legislation so forewarned those responsible for the misappropriation of the funds accruing to the project of the School at Banagher, that immediate steps were taken by them to regularise the position. The Honourable and Reverend Richard Ponsonby was dispossessed and a new Master was appointed on 17 September 1806—the same year as the Bill for the new Act was introduced at Westminster. In their Report of the following year, already cited, the Commissioners grossly understated the actual state of affairs when they said that there did not appear that there was any school at Banagher for several years—they must have been quite well aware that no school had been established there at any time since the passing of the Charter of 1629.

The Master now appointed was Rev Thomas Morris. He had been educated at the Classical School kept by John Casey at Banna, Ardfert, Co. Kerry. His father, Richard Morris, was an adherent of the Crosbie family of Ardfert Abbey. Thomas Morris entered Trinity College, Dublin at the age of twenty-one in 1771. He graduated B.A. in 1771 and subsequently obtained a Master's Degree. His patent of appointment to the post at Banagher reads:

George the third, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland King, defender of the faith and so forth. To all to whom these presents shall come Greeting
Whereas the office and place of the School Master of the Free School of Banagher in the King’s County is now vacant and in our disposal by the resignation of the Reverend Richard Ponsonby late Master thereof—Know ye therefore that we of our Special Grace certain Knowledge and mere Motion by and with the advice and consent of our right trusty and right entirely beloved Cousin and Councillor John Duke of Bedford our Lieutenant General Governor of that part of our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland called Ireland have given and granted and by these presents do give and grant unto the Reverend Thomas Morris Master of Arts the said office and place of School Master of the Free School of Banagher and him the said Thomas Morris School Master of the Free School of Banagher we have nominated constituted and appointed to have and to hold the said office and place of School Master of the said Free School of Banagher unto him the said Thomas Morris during our pleasure together with all lands tenements profits benefits emoluments and advantages thereunto belonging or in any wise appertaining in as full and ample manner to all intents and purposes as the said Richard Ponsonby or any other persons formerly held and enjoyed the same

And our further will and pleasure is and we do hereby strictly charge and command the said Thomas Morris that he duly resides and keep and maintain a School in the town of Banagher aforesaid and in his own proper person do execute the duties of School Master therein and diligently attend to the business thereof and that he be not absent therefrom more than thirty days at any one time nor more than sixty days in any one year without the licence of the Lord Lieutenant or other Chief Governor or Governors of Ireland for the time being for that purpose first had and obtained

And further of our like special grace certain knowledge and mere motion by and with the advice and consent aforesaid we do for us our heirs and successors give and grant unto the said Thomas Morris that these our letters patent or the enrollment thereof and every clause

7 Geo. III. c. 122.
8 Burtchaell & Sadlier, Alumni Dublincenses, p. 600.
article and thing therein contained shall be in all things firm and effectual in the Law unto
him the said Thomas Morris according to the true intent and meaning thereof as well as the
Courts within that part of said United Kingdom called Ireland as elsewhere wheresoever
Provided always that these our letters patent be enrolled in the Rolls of our High Court of
Chancery in that part of our said United Kingdom called Ireland within the space of six
months next ensuing the date of these presents
In witness whereof we have caused these our letters to be made patent—Witness our afore-
said Lieutenant General and General Governor of Ireland at Dublin the 17th day of Septem-
ber in the 46th year of our Reign

GRANARD.

Inrolled in the offices of the Rolls of his Majesty's High Court of Chancery in Ireland the
18th day of September in the 46th year of the Reign of King George the Third and ex-
amined by

Richard Curran (Deputy Keeper of the Rolls).

As there was no school-house, Mr Morris was obliged to seek for premises in which to
assemble his school. He eventually succeeded in obtaining:

a spacious and commodious concern, in a truly eligible situation in the town of Banagher
consisting of two contiguous houses, with an extensive rare and excellent garden, and a field
containing nearly three acres adjoining, at a rent of one hundred a year for the one and,
fifty guineas a year for the other, making an annual rent of one hundred and fifty-six
pounds seventeen shillings and six pence, nearly absorbing the whole of the income arising
from the endowment which is but £165. 15. 0 yearly.

The arrangements for opening the School gave satisfaction to the Protestant Bishop of
Meath “as it promises to remove a very great abuse in my diocese, which I have long
lamented, and, at length, to answer the purposes of these institutions, which have been
almost uniformly sacrificed to parliamentary influence.” Mr Morris issued the follow-
ing announcement of the opening of his School:

TERMS OF

Banagher School


Entrance, Six Guineas.
Board and Tuition, Thirty-five Guineas per Annum.
Washing and mending, Three Guineas ditto.
Writing and Arithmetic, One Guinea per Quarter.
Stationary, 6s 6d. per ditto.
French, One Guinea Entrance, and ditto per Quarter.
Dancing, ditto, ditto.

Such Pupils as may be destined for the University
will be instructed in the Hebrew Language (for good
Answering in which a Premium is now given at En-
trance) in Logic and Euclid.

9 State Paper Office, Carton No. 209, paper no. 5—letter from Bishop of Meath dated 31 August
1805 from Kilmainham Wood.

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It will be noted that, at the outset, Mr Morris contemplated opening his School at Banagher for boarders only, but local pressure obliged him to receive day pupils resident in the town and immediate vicinity. He held a public examination at the School in July 1807. This was attended by the Protestant Bishop of Confort, the Earl of Rosse, Lord Ashtown “and the principal gentlemen of the neighbourhood.” These “expressed their approval of the general answering and the mode of conduct of the School,” in which there were then thirty-two pupils—seventeen boarders and fifteen day boys.

The Commissioners of Education appointed under Lord Greville’s Act of 1806 continued their investigations till 1812. In the interval they presented fourteen Reports. In their final Report they suggested the appointment of a Board for superintending the education of the poorer classes, but they made no recommendation as to the establishment of a board of control for the various educational endowments both public and private then in operation. In 1813 however, Sir Robert Peel, then Chief Secretary for Ireland, acting on the recommendations of the Commissioners of 1788-’91, introduced a Bill for the appointment of Commissioners to control and supervise the administration of these endowments (with some curious exceptions—notably the Erasmus Smith Schools and the Charter Schools). The Bill became law as “An Act for the appointment of Commissioners for the Regulation of the several Endowed Schools of Public and Private Foundation in Ireland,”10 and under it Banagher Royal School came under the jurisdiction of these Commissioners. At their first meeting, held on 30 November 1813, the Commissioners considered the reference in the Report of the Commissioners of 1788-’91 to the deficiency in the lands allocated under the Charter of King Charles I for the support of the School, and they directed the Master to inquire into and report on the matter. Operating from their boardroom in Dublin Castle, it seems strange that the Commissioners consisting of highly placed legal and ecclesiastical personages should have required a whole-time busy school-master in an obscure provincial town to undertake this research when they had available to their hands in Dublin all the necessary sources to enable them to conduct such inquiry as was requisite and which it was clearly their duty to undertake. In compliance with the direction received by him, Mr Morris approached Messrs. Sherrard and Brassington, Blessington Street, Dublin, to examine the Down Survey while he made local inquiries, but their joint efforts failed to unearth the causes of the discrepancy in the acreage of the school-lands. The Secretary to the Commissioners, John Corneille, wrote to Mr Morris:

I am sorry to find that nearly seventy-seven acres of the original grant to the School are now lost to you, thro’ the negligence of former Masters and the encroachments of the neighbouring landholders

—and so the question of the missing acres was allowed to go unresolved. In their first Report, dated 25 March 1814, the Commissioners set up under the Act of 1813 stated that:

there is not now nor ever has been any School House belonging to Banagher School, also of Royal Foundation, but the present School is now kept in the town of Banagher in two large houses which adjoin each other, and which are rented by the present Master out of his income . . . . .11

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10 Geo. III. c. 107.
The Commissioners asked Mr Morris to furnish particulars of ‘The System of Education’ adopted in the School and he replied:

A Boy of the age of eight or ten years comes generally to School as well taught in Reading and Spelling as to admit his being put immediately to the study of Latin Grammar, to which his attention is closely (though of course not exclusively) directed until an accurate knowledge of the principles is attained.

In the morning from 6 to 9 (in summer) he is taught to read and spell by the English Assistant, and exercised in parsing by the Classical Assistants from half 10 to 11; in the afternoon he is again exercised partly in parsing, and at 2 o’clock sent to Writing and Arithmetic, which Department is conducted in the Schoolroom under my own inspection. In this Class the exercises are derived from Hooles Terminations and from Clarke’s Introduction, by which the rules of Syntax are illustrated. When a sufficiently accurate knowledge of grammar is acquired by the constantly repeated exercises (which are never wholly discontinued during the course of school education).

The Second Class commences with Swaynes Sentences still accompanied with lessons in Grammar and Clarke’s Introductions prefaced by the formation of some verb through all its inflections. In this Class they are introduced to Phodrus’s Tables which with the concomitant exercises already mentioned employ them during the remainder of the year.

In the Third they read Ovid, Burrow’s Schola and Nepos, and begin the study of Greek Grammar and Prosody—the lessons in the two last I reserve exclusively for my own hearing, illustrating the rules contained in the ordinary School Books from the Port Royal Greek and Latin grammars. In the course of this year they read the Gospels of John and Luke and write exercises from long sentences of Clark, accompanied by Latin Verses, Hexameter and Pentameter, but at first constructed with a regard only to the rules of Prosody.

In the next Class they read Virgil, Caesar, the Acts of the Apostles and Lucian’s Short Dialogues and their morning exercises are taken partly from Clarke’s Greek and Roman History and latterly from Goldsmith’s Roman History, which they translate into Latin, increasing the number of Latin verses which accompanies each exercise. They now also begin the study of the astronomical part of Sharp’s Geography (having previously learned through other more familiar parts of it) constantly illustrated by the help of the Artificial Globes.

In the Fifth Class they read the odes, satires and epistles of Horace, Sallust, the Long Dialogues of Lucian and Epictetus. They also write Themes on Monday at first in English, which they translate on the following day into Latin; on the other days they continue to translate Goldsmith into Latin and occasionally into Latin verses on a given subject. During the Vacations they are required to translate certain portions of Psalms into Latin Verse.

In the Sixth Class they read Homer, Juvenal and Terence; and are likewise instructed in Elrington’s Euclid, Murray’s Logic and the Hebrew Grammar. It sometimes happens that Boys are prepared for the University at an earlier age than their parents think it expedient they should enter. In such cases in addition to what is called the Entrance Course, they read Cicero’s Orations and the five first books of Livy.

I have for greater clearness stated by itself what relates to the classical part of the system—of the other parts it remains that I should speak.

With respect to that branch of education which is the most important of all, Religion—I am to state that on entering school after breakfast, some boy reads aloud a chapter in the Bible and this they all do in their turns.

The English Lessons of most of the Junior Classes are generally from Sellon’s Abridgement of the Bible, and they are occasionally examined in the history of it. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, which are always devoted to what, in School Phrase, is termed English Business, they are examined in Mann’s Catechism and Seeker’s Lectures and obliged to repeat the Church Catechism attended with familiar explanations. Their other employment on these days consist in reading of English and reciting passages from approved authors; in Arithmetic, writing Roman and Grecian History. In Ancient and Modern Geography they read Goldsmith’s Roman History and Staigan’s Grecian. I have it in contemplation to introduce lectures in Kennet’s Roman and Potter’s Grecian Antiquities. I have also introduced lately Greek exercises, persuaded that writing any language is the most effectual exercise for the attainment of a competent knowledge of it.
All my Assistants are boarded and lodged. Mr William Wallace, educated at Parsonstown in this County, is my Writing Master, and besides instructing all the boys in Writing and Arithmetic instructs those who are not designed for the College in English Grammar and Geography and book-keeping. His salary is £40 p. ann. of which his Learning and Diligence render him worthy.

The French Master also resides, and besides board and lodging has a salary of 40 guineas per annum, with permission to attend to private tuitions in the neighbourhood. His name is McPevy having but lately succeeded the Master I had employed until last vacation. I cannot speak very confidently to his merits—he has however brought me very powerful recommendations from a Fellow of the College.

I have two Classical Assistants, both good classical scholars and diligent in the discharge of their respective duties. The first is Mr John Powell, a native of Portarlington where he was educated by Mr Lyons. He is a former Sophister in the College. His salary is 50 guineas a year besides board and lodging—there are no other advantages annexed to his situation of which he faithfully discharges the duties, and by his exemplary conduct in the care of the boys merits my warmest commendation.

The second Assistant, Mr McGoughnan, a Senior Freshman of College, is a native of Tralce where he was educated by Mr Donovan. His salary is £40 per annum. The shortness of his residence here will not permit me to say more of him than that from his conduct hitherto I entertain hopes I shall find much satisfaction in him.

I have at present forty-one boarders and thirteen day scholars—to the number of the former I expect an increase; most of the day scholars are the sons of gentlemen of moderate fortune who have come to reside in Banagher for the convenience of being near the School. In consequence of the high price of provisions the charge for Board and Tuition is 35 guineas a year; there are extra charges for French, Dancing, &c. of a guinea a quarter each. The charges for day scholars are two guineas per quarter.

With respect to the last topic that remains, viz. the degree of personal attention which I devote to my School, I can truly say to the Commissioners and if necessary can produce satisfactory attestation to the truth of my affirmation that nothing but the unavoidable interruption caused by the concerns of such an establishment ever deprives my pupils of my personal superintendence. I reserve exclusively for my own hearing, the lectures in Greek grammar and prosody, Ancient and Astronomical Geography, Greek, and Roman History, English, Logic and Hebrew. Besides the weekly repetition of every class in the School, I hear all the classes at least once in three days each, and always the lessons of the upper class. An honest discharge of these duties, it will easily be believed, will not admit much absence from the School, and I hope to be indulged in expressing the hope that the circumstances of the School before long will enable me to engage a gentleman of such standing in the College and character for scientific as well as classical attainments, as may justify me in delegating to him a part and occasionally the whole of these weighty occupations which I often and seriously detrimental to a constitution naturally delicate, and to which, as life advances, I may not be always wholly adequate.

I have a public examination once a year at which the Lord Bishop of Clonfert attends and generally examines in the material parts of Horace's Odes and gives a premium to the author of the best Latin verses. To stimulate the ambition of my pupils to distinguish themselves in College, I give a Gold Medal of the value of five guineas or Books to the same amount, at the election of the pupil, to the boy who obtains a premium at the first examination after he enters College.

I hope to meet the indulgence of the Board for the delay in obeying their commands, and for the desultory and imperfect manner in which I have done it from the consideration of the cause of it.

(signed) Thos. Morris. 31 March 1814.

At about this time the proprietor of the two houses in Banagher, which Mr Morris had rented for his School, gave notice that he desired to have the premises surrendered to him. The search for other accommodation for the School finally narrowed down to the choice of a large mansion known as Cuba House near the town, then held under lease by the Director General of Hospitals of the Army Medical Board. The building was but little used as a hospital, and the Medical Board was quite willing, subject to
Government approval, to assign the premises to the Commissioners of Education for the purposes of the Royal School. These premises (Pl. V : 2) had been rented to the Medical Board by the owner and occupier, Denis Bowes Daly, on 20 January 1804 for a term of sixty-one years. Immediately on the transfer of the premises to the Commissioners of Education by the Director of Hospitals in July 1817, Mr Morris entered into occupation. In subsequent negotiations with the owner the Commissioners concluded an agreement with him whereby he assigned, 10 February 1818, the premises to them and their successors

for and during the natural life and lives of his Royal Highness Adolphus Frederick, Duke of Cambridge, her Royal Highness Mary Duchess of Gloucester and her Royal Highness The Princess Sophia. 13

There was a convenant for the renewal of the lease on payment of a pepper corn fine on the death or "failure of any of the lives," and the annual rent was fixed at £113 15. 0. In that year (1818), because of the dilapidated state of the buildings, a loan of £298. 18. 9 was advanced out of the Consolidated Fund of Ireland for the purpose of carrying out certain necessary repairs. It was stipulated that this loan was to be repaid by yearly instalments of £29. 17. 6. For some reason the change in the location of the School seemed to operate against the enrolment of new pupils. Availing themselves of the Shannon navigation most of the boarders had come from north Kerry, Clare, Limerick, and north Tipperary. When the School was in the town, Mr Morris had an average of forty-five boarders. In 1819, a year after the change to Cuba House he had only thirty-seven boarders and three day boys. In addition to himself, the teaching staff included two classical masters—Michael Mills and Michael McNamara—who were each paid £50 a year with board, J. Jos. Niculus was part-time teacher of French at £45. ro. 0 a year, and the 'English Department' was in charge of John Kiely who was paid £50 a year with board. Kiely was the son of William Kiely, Master of the Endowed School at Bandon.

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12 Denis Bowes Daly, who died in December 1821, was throughout his life a prominent member of the local ascendancy. The following extract from the Ennis Chronicle of 1 October 1789 is of interest:

Letter from the King's County dated September 23—Yesterday morning, CUBA, the seat of Dennis Bowes Daly Esq., presented a novel and most agreeable exhibition. It was the first field-day of the corps of Volunteers, who are to be reviewed on the 4th of November next.

The Banagher Light Infantry, Col. Daly, were under arms at nine o'clock shortly after the following corps marched into the field:

The Salmon Cutters, Col. O'Moore; the Pallas Dragoons, Col. Malone; the Mount Pleasant Chaffeurs, Col. O'Connor.

The Shregan Horse, Col. Briscow Armstrong, kept the field. Major John Hubert Moore was exercising officer, and displayed his usual abilities and activity in that department.

They were sumptuously entertained after the field-day in the house of CUBA, that noble fabric, so long the residence of Mr Daly and his family.

The following toasts were drunk with three cheers: 'The King—The Prince of Wales and disappointment to his enemies,' 'Prosperity to Ireland,' 'The Volunteers,' and 'May no man ever represent this country who did not distinguish himself in that honourable body.'

'The Glorious Memory.'

This latter was the most fervently honoured of the standing toasts of the dominant minority at their various social and other gatherings then and subsequently. The full text is "To the glorious, pious and immortal memory of the great King William who saved us from Popery, slavery, brass money and wooden shoes, and left us the great House of Brunswick as a legacy."

13 Leasing for lives was the common practice at that time. The Duke of Cambridge was born in 1774, the Duchess of Gloucester in 1776 and Princess Sophia in 1777.
There were a total of thirty-seven pupils in the School in 1821. The rental of the school lands was £251. 11. 6, out of which Mr Morris paid the annual rent of the School premises and the instalment repayable on the loan from the Consolidated Fund. Mr. Morris had a curacy on his appointment as Master of the School and this he continued to retain. Physically he was not strong, and he now sought further church preferment with the intention of relinquishing school cares. Through influential connections he obtained appointment to a rectory. With the alleged connivance of the Commissioners of Education, he sold the mastership of the Royal School to Rev. Alan Bell for the sum of £1,000, having previously resigned. The purchaser, Bell, was then master of a classical school at Downpatrick where he had a three-teacher classical school with, in 1819, thirteen boarders and nineteen day boys. He was the son of a county Antrim farmer and entered T.C.D. in 1810, graduating B.A. in 1814. He had also the degree of LL.D from Glasgow University. He proceeded to an M.A. degree at Dublin University in 1832—ten years after becoming master at Banagher. The Commissioners of Education had the following reference to his appointment in their Annual Report dated 25 March 1823:

Since our last Report, the Reverend Doctor Alan Bell has been promoted to the Mastership of the School of Banagher, on the resignation of the Reverend Mr Morris, and we have appointed Doctor Bell the agent and receiver of the School rents, with a direction to examine and inquire into the circumstances and solvency of the tenants, and the nature and duration of their several tenures (having recourse to the surveys made by order of the Board), and to report to us specially on such matters, in order that the School Lands may be set to advantage, so that we may allocate a sufficient salary to Doctor Bell, and make a better provision for the School.

Having appointed Dr Bell as their agent for the collection of the rents of the school lands, the Commissioners of Education considered the possibility of increasing the rents, and with this purpose in mind they served notices to quit on all the tenants. A bundle of these notices in blank, signed by the Secretary, Cham. W. Walker, is still in existence—here is one:

To

YOU are hereby required to quit Possession of the Premises which you hold under "The Commissioners of Education in Ireland," situate in the Townland of Banagher School Lands, on the 1st day of May, next or at the expiration of the Current Year of your Tenancy, in case it shall not expire on said day.

Dated this 13th Day of October, 1823.

CHAM. W. WALKER
Secretary to the said "Commissioners of Education in Ireland."

14 This very irregular transaction was described by Rev. James A. Bell in his evidence to the Endowed Schools (Ireland) Commission at the Four Courts, Dublin, on 23 April 1879:

Q4284 — . . . . my father paid Dr Morris £1,000 for the appointment, and for the transfer of the school...

Q4285 — To whom did he pay the £1,000? — To Dr Morris, his predecessor, with the consent of the Government. He was appointed by letters patent.

Q4286 — Was the practice of purchasing the schools common in those days? — I do not know whether it was commonly done, but I know it was the Secretary of the Commissioners who suggested it, and it was through him the arrangement was carried out . . . . (Report 1881, p. 146).

These proceedings resulted in some very considerable unpleasantness for the Board, and in their Annual Report for 1924/5 they stated that:

having been under the necessity of evicting the interests of the tenantry by ejectment, and feeling the difficulty of managing such a tenancy by agents, we deemed it expedient to demise the School-lands to the Master, during his incumbency only; leaving him to bargain with such of the occupying tenants as could be dealt with, and this arrangement has been satisfactory to the Master of the School.

There were exaggerated ideas in Banagher town as to the gross amount collected in rents by Dr Bell and some resentment that no free pupils were being admitted to the so-called 'Free School.' Eighty of the inhabitants, through Rev. Kieran Egan, Administrator, protested to the Commissioners "that such a large sum of money originally intended for the benefit of the inhabitants should not go into the pocket of any private individual, and that the Commissioners should plan such a course of gratuitous education as will afford to the poor children who show signs of talent, as well as to the children of the wealthier classes, the advantages intended by the Royal Charter, that of a classical education." These representations however made no impression on the Commissioners.

In 1824 Dr Bell, whose fees for boarders were thirty to thirty-five pounds a year, had thirty-five pupils. These numbers were maintained in succeeding years. In the period 1830 to 1835 his enrolment was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Boarders</th>
<th>Day Boys</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>1833</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fees payable in respect of day boys were eight guineas a year. The school hours were 7 to 9 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. to 3 p.m., and for boarders 6.30 p.m. to 8 p.m. The curriculum included Latin and Greek, French and English, Algebra, Euclid, Arithmetic (Goughs) Geography and English History.

Considerable expense was incurred in necessary repairs to the school buildings in the years 1830-1832, with a consequent diminution in the balances available for the Master. To meet this situation the Commissioners of Education, in their Annual Report dated 16 May 1834 indicated:

that a Salary of £200 per annum has been conditionally allocated for the Master of Banagher School out of the surplus rents of the Estates belonging to the Royal Schools of Armagh.

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16 The majority of the pupils then attending the School were the sons of clergymen of the then Established Church, army officers, doctors and other children of the wealthier middle classes of Connacht. Typical of these was William Wilde, afterwards Sir William Wilde, husband of 'Speranza' of the 'Nation' and father of Oscar Wilde, the famous writer.


18 Report of Select Committee (H. of C.) on Foundation Schools & Education in Ireland, 1836. Part II, Appendix, pp. 560-1.
Dungannon and Enniskillen, pursuant to the power vested in the Board of applying the residue of the funds of any of the Royal Schools in support of any one or more of them that may stand in need of such aid, the funds belonging to this School being barely sufficient to meet the payment of the rent of the Schoolhouse and the expense of its ordinary repairs, on the terms, that the Master, who has been tenant of the school lands for some years, shall surrender all his interest in the lands, to enable the Board to place them under the superintendence of a local and qualified agent.  

At the time when material for a government Report, published in 1835, was being accumulated, the number of pupils in the School was stated to have been eleven—five boarders and six day scholars. The attendance was stated to be "diminishing considerably." In fact, however, the reduced number of pupils was caused by an outbreak of cholera in the town. This was followed later by typhus, by which many of the pupils and the Master himself were afflicted. Dr Bell's illness at this time seriously affected him and his death a few year's later may be attributed to this cause. The publication in 1836 of the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Foundation Schools in Ireland (already cited), of which Thomas Wyse (member for Waterford) was Chairman, publicised the fact that though the Royal " Schools are denominated Free Schools, this provision has been carried into effect but very partially." The Report gave particulars of the numbers of free pupils taken into each of the Royal Schools, with the exception of Banagher—which had none. This undesirable publicity coerced Dr Bell to admit some free boys into his School. In 1836-7 of twenty-six pupils, eighteen were boarders and, of the eight day boys, five were free. In 1837-8 he had nineteen pupils, fourteen boarders and five day boys (of whom four were free). In 1838 there were twenty-one pupils—fifteen boarders and six day boys (four of whom were free). In 1837 he employed Frederick French, a past pupil of the School, who had been prepared by him for Trinity College, Dublin, as Classical Master. He had graduated M.A. from the University, and was paid £50 a year, with board, by Dr Bell. Another assistant master, who taught English and French, was Richard Monck. He was paid £63 a year but did not live in. Frederick French obtained a post elsewhere in 1837 and was succeeded as Classical Master by Arthur Nicholls. He was paid £50 a year. He was a relative of the Master. He was still employed in the School in the following year. In the next year he held a teaching post in Bandon Endowed School. In 1839 there was a fierce storm in Ireland during which Dr. Bell over exerted himself in his endeavours to restrict the damage to the school premises. He became seriously ill and came to Dublin for medical attention. He died at the residence of his brother-in-law, Captain Adamson at Kingstown on 3rd June 1839.

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21 He was a student of Trinity College, Dublin at this time. He was a past pupil of Banagher School and had been tutored for entrance to the University by Dr Bell. He was the future husband of the English novelist, Charlotte Bronte, author of Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre, Villette, &c. Arthur Nicholls graduated B.A. in 1844.
22 In a letter dated from Cuba House, Jany. 7, 1839, Dr Bell gave this account of the storm, or ' Big Wind ' as it was afterwards remembered, of the previous night:

This house suffered great damage from the storm last night. About nine o'clock the wind commenced and it continued to increase till about twelve o'clock, when it ceased for about twenty seconds, not having done much injury; then it began more furiously than before carrying everything with it—slates, glass, &c. from windows in the house, and one in the school-room has been driven in totally and the wood broken. In the front of the School-room one hundred and thirty-
At the time of Dr Bell’s death the rent-roll of the School-lands was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>10a</th>
<th>2r</th>
<th>21p.</th>
<th>£14. 4. 1d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Kennedy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Coonan</td>
<td>11a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£13. 18. 4d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Molloy</td>
<td></td>
<td>3r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Madden</td>
<td>4a</td>
<td>2r</td>
<td>23p.</td>
<td>£4. 16. 9d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Meara</td>
<td>4a</td>
<td>1r</td>
<td></td>
<td>£4. 14. 3½d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Madden</td>
<td>4a</td>
<td>1r</td>
<td></td>
<td>£4. 14. 3½d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Molloy</td>
<td>4a</td>
<td>1r</td>
<td></td>
<td>£4. 14. 3½d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Fletcher</td>
<td>3a</td>
<td>3r</td>
<td>20p.</td>
<td>£5. 0. 9d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Corigan</td>
<td>2a</td>
<td>3r</td>
<td>25p.</td>
<td>£3. 1. 2½d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David McEvoy</td>
<td>1a</td>
<td></td>
<td>25p.</td>
<td>£1. 9. 3d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kelly</td>
<td>4a</td>
<td>3r</td>
<td>23p.</td>
<td>£4. 19. 4½d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence Keating</td>
<td>97a</td>
<td></td>
<td>27p.</td>
<td>£118. 12. 4d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Clonan</td>
<td>18a</td>
<td>1r</td>
<td>12p.</td>
<td>£27. 1. 5d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hackett</td>
<td>6a</td>
<td>2r</td>
<td>28p.</td>
<td>£10. 3. 3d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Sweeney</td>
<td>31a</td>
<td>1r</td>
<td>35p.</td>
<td>£41. 14. 4d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£200. 3. 5½d.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In addition, bog lots were let to the tenancy of the school—lands and their neighbours, for rents totalling £15. 2. 0 bringing the gross rental to £275. 5. 5½.

In July 1839 Rev James Hamilton, M.A., was appointed Master of Banagher Royal School in succession to Dr Bell. Hamilton was Master of the District Diocesan School of Meath and Ardagh. When he went to Banagher in July 1839 he found the school buildings in very bad disrepair and a badly leaking roof. He saw no prospect of immediate and effective repairs and declined to assume the duties of his new post. The mastership of the School was then (September 1839) conferred on Rev John Brown, LL.D., Master of Bandon Endowed School. When he went to Banagher to organise the School, he found Cuba House “uninhabitable and in such a bad state that parents could not be induced to send their children to it.” He decided to continue with his School in Bandon in which he had then eighty pupils and relinquished the appointment to Banagher. James Fahie, LL.D., Master of the Endowed School called ‘The College’ at Fermoy, now applied for the post. Before going to Fermoy he had been classical master at the Feinaigian Institution, called ‘The Luxembourg’ in Dublin, for three years. He had been for ten years principal of the boarding school founded by Dr Adair at Fermoy. He was strongly recommended for appointment to Banagher by the Protestant Bishop of Killaloe, Ludlow Tonson (afterwards Baron Riversdale), and the Protestant Bishop of Cashel, Stephen Creagh Sandes. His

one panes broken; in the house between sixty and seventy. Part of the wall between the schoolyard and the playground with the door and door frame were blown into the schoolyard. Two doors and their frames of the offices were blown out and broken into pieces. The coal house door was also broken as also the doors of the offices. Altogether the place has a most dilapidated appearance—to add to our discomfort I understand a foot of glass is not to be gotten in Banagher, all bought up for repairs after last night nor can lime be gotten to repair the slating, though Duffy says he has sent in all directions. This damage to the windows is so much more than ever known before!

The storm last night has left thirty-three families in Banagher without a house—besides the promiscuous injury to slating, thatch and glass of many others. Eight houses were burned by the wind driving fire about. Fifteen were blown down, two of them on families ill in fever. The appearance of the town and neighbourhood is most melancholy, and I fear the news from sea will be bitter. There is scarcely a room in this house habitable.
application for Banagher was approved and his patent of appointment reads:

VICTORIA by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith and so forth, to all to whom these presents shall come Greeting: Whereas the Office and Place of Schoolmaster of the Royal School of Banagher in the King’s County is now vacant and in our disposal by the death of the Reverend Allan Bell, late Master thereof, know ye therefore that We of our special grace, certain knowledge and mere motion, by and with the advice and consent of our right trusty and entirely beloved cousin and councillor, Hugh, Baron Fortescue, commonly called Viscount Ebrington, our Lieutenant General and General Governor of that part of our said United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland called Ireland, have given and granted and by these presents We do give and grant unto James Fahie, Esquire, Doctor of Laws, the said office and place of Schoolmaster of the Royal School of Banagher in the King’s County, in that part of the said United Kingdom called Ireland, and him the said James Fahie, School Master of the Royal School of Banagher, We have nominated constituted, and appointed, and by these presents We do nominate constitute and appoint TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said office and place of Schoolmaster of the said Royal School of Banagher in the King’s County aforesaid unto him the said James Fahie as aforesaid during our pleasure, together with all Lands, Tenements, Profits, Benefits, Emoluments and Advantages thereunto belonging or in any way appertaining, in as full and ample manner to all intents and purposes as the said Allan Bell or any other person or persons formerly held and enjoyed the same or of right ought to have held and enjoyed the same.

AND our further will and pleasure is, and we do hereby strictly charge and command the said James Fahie that he duly reside at and keep and maintain the said School in the town of Banagher aforesaid, and in his own proper person do execute the duties of Schoolmaster therein and diligently attend the business thereof, and that he be not absent therefrom more than thirty days at any one time nor more than sixty days in any one year without the licence of the Lord Lieutenant or other Chief Governor or Governors of Ireland for the time being for that purpose first had and obtained.

AND further of our like special grace, certain knowledge and mere motion by and with the advice and consent aforesaid We do for us our heirs and successors hereby give and grant unto the said James Fahie that these our Letters Patent or the Enrollment thereof and every clause and thing therein contained shall be in all things firm valid and effectual in the Law unto him the said James Fahie according to the true intent and meaning thereof as well as in all our Courts in Ireland aforesaid as elsewhere—PROVIDED always that these our letters patent be enrolled in the Rolls of our High Court of Chancery in Ireland aforesaid within the space of six calendar months next ensuing the date of these presents—

In witness whereof We have caused these our letters to be made patent—

Witness Hugh, Baron Fortescue, our Lieutenant General and General Governor of Ireland at Dublin the twenty-sixth day of February in the third year of our reign.

Dr Fahie now wrote to the Commissioners of Education:

After having received my Patent of Appointment I repaired to Banagher and beg to state that I was never more astonished in my life. Having been assured that the Board were spending 'a considerable sum in repairs,' I naturally concluded that the repairs were in progress and when my Patent arrived imagined the house was fit to receive me. But instead of that I found only one day's work done by two carpenters and the place a complete ruin. It was undoubtedly a fine house but it has been. So far from introducing into it the sons of the most respectable men in Ireland who will accompany me when the place is fit to receive me, I could not think of putting a servant to sleep in it. It is dismal gloomy and the basement storey not fit to lodge felons in. Surely had the Board any idea of its ruinous and unwholesome state they would not, fathers themselves, expect that any man, accustomed to anything like decency or comfort could or would sacrifice his family by thrusting them into such a dungeon. When the gaols of the country in these days of improvement are kept in such decent order for the reception of criminals, what should be expected from a Royal Endowment intended for the comfort of the scions of aristocracy. The house should be newly roofed and the basement requires an Augéan cleaning.
However having dispersed his School in Fermoy and given public notice of his intention to open School in Banagher, Dr Fahie had no option but to proceed there. His fees for boarders at Fermoy were forty guineas per annum but in order to induce some of them to go with him to Banagher he set the fees there at thirty-six guineas per annum and he issued this prospectus:

Banagher Royal School
Cuba House.

Doctor Fahie, Ex-Scholar, T.C.D.
Master.

The course of Education embraces the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Italian and English languages, Euclid, Algebra, Globes, Mensuration, Book-keeping, History, Geography, Composition &c. &c. &c.

Terms.
Day Pupils, 8 Guineas per annum—Boarders, 36 Guineas per annum, including Washing, Stationery and mending of shirts and stockings.—Each Boarder is required to bring two pair of linen sheets and six towels.—A quarter commenced must be paid for in full; and no allowance will be made for absence, unless caused by indisposition.

The strictest attention is paid to the comforts and the literary, moral, and religious improvement of the Pupils; and Dr. Fahie solicits attention to the following extracts from letters, written by two most distinguished Prelates, in connexion with his appointment to the Banagher School.

1st EXTRACT

"I have known Dr. Fahie for many years, as Principal of the Fermoy School, having long resided in his immediate neighbourhood, where he always stood, deservedly, in the highest estimation for first-rate Classical attainments and unimpeachable moral and religious character."

2nd EXTRACT.

"I shall feel great pleasure in stating, (if applied to) that in your progress through Trinity College, Dublin, you obtained great distinction as a Classical Scholar—that your conduct was unexceptionably correct and that you have had great experience and success as a Teacher.... I do not know who the other Candidates are, though I admit that it will not be an easy matter to find one more highly qualified than yourself."
Dr Fahie strenuously endeavoured to re-establish the School. He employed a resident classical assistant—Thomas Goodwin to whom he paid £36 p.a.; a French master—Monsieur Legard who also lived in and was paid £36 per annum, and a non-resident mathematical master—Roche who received £35 per annum. The School opened with nine boarders and seventeen day boys, the charge for whom was eight guineas a year; and there were nine free day scholars. In 1841 there were twenty-five boarders and ten boys but no free scholars. Dr Fahie had a new resident classical assistant (Mullins) and a new French Master (M. Desmanoins). The ruinous condition of the roof and the consequent discomforts in the dormitories affected the enrolment of new pupils, and in 1842 the number of boarders had been reduced to fifteen and there were only eight day boys, none of whom was free. Desmanoins was still French Master, but there was a new classical master (Hare) and a new non-resident mathematical Master (Scott). Dr Fahie was preparing for the opening of the school-year 1843/4 when his health broke down completely. He died on 10 September 1843. His widow, left with five young children (the eldest was twelve) attributed his death to his exertions on behalf of the school and to physical disablement consequent on the damp and discomfort of the living conditions in Cuba House.

The new Master of Banagher Royal School was Henry Owgan, who had been prepared for entry into Dublin University by John Turpin, Master of Midleton Endowed School, and from which he graduated B.A. in 1836. His appointment to Banagher was made on 25 October 1843, but as he had no money to pay the required fees of £27 6. 8½ his official patent was not issued to him till February 1844. The ruinous condition of the house precluded the reception of boarders and Mr Owgan recruited very few pupils in the town. In 1844 he had three boarders and one day boy. In that year too there was considerable distress among the tenantry of the school lands. The Commissioners of Education contributed a sum of £5 to the local Relief Committee. In May 1846 the tenants petitioned the Commissioners "praying that in consequence of the potato disease they would forego the half-year's rent now about to be collected."23 The reply was "that the matter having been discussed, the Commissioners are of opinion that they have no power to comply with the prayer of the memorial and that they must require payment of the rents." The matter was however taken out of the hands of the Commissioners as in the following year (1847) the complete failure of the crop, all over the island, reduced the tenants of the school-lands to beggary. A few managed to get away to America, but most, particularly those with young children, took refuge in the Workhouse—John Corrigan and David McEvoy surrendered possession of their holdings and died in the workhouse. Martin Meara and Peter Molloy also gave up their holdings before taking their families into the workhouse. They were joined there by their neighbours Thomas Whoolahan, James Nowlan, John Madden and James Molloy. The families of these poor victims were decimated by famine fever before the survivors were enabled to return to their homes.

In 1845 Mr Owgan had thirty boys on the rolls of his school—sixteen boarders and and fourteen day boys of whom two were free. The curriculum included Latin,
Greek and Hebrew; English, French, Italian and German; and the science of the undergraduate course of T.C.D. He had two assistants—Hugh Murphy for mathematics and Frederick Tollhausen for modern languages. Each received £30 a year plus board and residence. Mr Owgan's remuneration from the endowment was £100 a year. In the following year (1846) J. R. Caffrey was employed as assistant classical master. In that year there were nineteen pupils—ten boarders and nine day boys, of whom two were free. The school hours were 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The school fees were the same as those charged by Dr Fahie. Mr Owgan, who had by then acquired the degree of LL.D., dispensed with pupils in 1847 and informed the Commissioners of Education:

Dr Owgan begs to state that in consequence of the long time occupied in the partial repairs of this School house, the consequent suspension of business, and of his having earnestly solicited another appointment under the Crown, he has not thought it advisable to incur the pecuniary liabilities necessary to the revival of an establishment which he hopes to be enabled to leave in a short time.

Dr Owgan evidently was under the impression that he had sufficient influence to procure an appointment in one of the so-called Queen's Colleges at Belfast, Cork or Galway proposed in connection with Sir Robert Peel's scheme for a federal Royal University for Ireland. At this time the school at Banagher was reduced to six pupils—four boarders and two day boys. Dr Owgan's teaching staff was reduced to one assistant—Richard Monck who had been employed as an assistant under Br Bell. Furthermore the Master was in very serious pecuniary difficulty, mainly because he had failed to organise a thriving school.

On 5 July 1847 the Rector of Banagher writes to the Bishop of Meath in the following terms: My dear Lord, I have just received your letter and am sorry to acquaint your Lordship that poor Dr Owgan is at present a bankrupt and waiting the operation of the Insolvent Act in the jail of Cork. He has served notices to that effect upon all his creditors in this neighbourhood. I hope the poor man will not be removed from his situation as Master of the Royal School of Banagher until he receives his promised appointment to a Professorship in one of the Provincial Colleges in October next; his present dismissal would involve his helpless family in deplorable ruin, if indeed anything can add to their misery and destitution. I hope your Lordship will kindly interfere to prevent such a consummation of distress, and leave him in possession of the income for a few months longer—(sgd) J. J. Fletcher.

Mr Owgan continued to receive the salary of Master of the Royal School till the end of 1848. He and his family vacated the school premises on 26 January 1849 "and went this day to Dublin never to return here." His appointment as Master of the School had been disastrous, and did not justify the forecast contained in the Annual Report made by to the Commissioners of Education to the Lord Lieutenant for the year ending 25 March 1844, viz.:

The selection to fill the vacancy in the Mastership of the Royal School of Banagher of a gentleman bearing such a high literary character as that appointed by your Excellency, will we trust ensure to that neighbourhood the benefit of a good and efficient school.24

For some very considerable time before Dr Owgan's departure from Banagher, it was

accepted locally that he would be succeeded by Mr James Adamson Bell, son of Rev Dr Alan Bell who had been Master of the School from 1832 till 1839. He had been prepared for Dublin University by Mr Brown and entered T.C.D. in 1842, two years after his father’s death. He had taken his B.A. degree in the summer of 1847. He told the Endowed Schools Commissioners at their inquiry at Tullamore on 8 September 1855 into Banagher Royal School that “At twenty-one years of age I was appointed to this School as Master, and I had not experience.”

His warrant of appointment 30 March 1848 is as follows:

VICTORIA by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith and so forth, to all to whom these presents shall come greeting, Whereas the office and place of Schoolmaster of the Royal School of Banagher in the King’s County is now vacant by the resignation of Henry Owgan Esquire late Master thereof, Know ye therefore that We of our special grace, certain knowledge and mere motion by and with the advice and consent of our right trusty and right well beloved cousin and counsellor George, William Frederick, Earl of Clarendon, G.C.B., our Lieutenant General and General Governor of Ireland have revoked determined and made void and by these presents We do revoke determine and make void the Letters Patent whereby the said office and place of Master of the Royal School of Banagher in the County aforesaid was granted to the said Henry Owgan, and know ye further that We of our special grace, certain knowledge and mere motion by and with the advice and consent aforesaid have given, granted and by these presents We do give and grant unto James Adamson Bell Esquire, Bachelor of Arts, the said office and place of Schoolmaster of the Royal School of Banagher in the King’s County in that part of our said United Kingdom called Ireland, and him the said James Adamson Bell, Schoolmaster of the Royal School of Banagher in the County aforesaid We have nominated, constituted and appointed and by these presents We do nominate constitute and appoint to have and to hold the said office and place of Schoolmaster of the said Royal School of Banagher aforesaid unto him the said James Adamson Bell during our pleasure together with all lands tenements profits benefits emoluments and advantages thereunto belonging or in any wise appertaining in as full and ample manner to all intents and purposes whatsoever as the said Henry Owgan or any other person or persons formerly held and enjoyed or of right ought to have held and enjoyed the same—

And our further will and pleasure is, and We do hereby strictly charge and command the said James Adamson Bell that he duly reside and keep and maintain the said School at Banagher aforesaid and in his proper person to execute the duties of Schoolmaster therein and diligently attend the business thereof, and that he be not absent therefrom more than thirty days at any time nor more than sixty days in any one year without the licence of our Lord Lieutenant or other Chief Governor or Governors of Ireland for the time being for that purpose first had and obtained—

And further of our like special grace, certain knowledge and mere motion by and with the advice and consent aforesaid We do hereby give and grant unto the said James Adamson Bell that these our Letters Patent or the enrollment hereof and every clause article and thing herein contained shall be in all things firm valid and effectual in the law unto him the said James Adamson Bell according to the true intent and meaning hereof as well in all courts within Ireland aforesaid or elsewhere—

Provided always that these our Letters Patent be enrolled in the Rolls of our High Court of Chancery in Ireland aforesaid within the space of six calendar months next ensuing the date of these presents

In witness whereof We have caused these our Letters to be made Patent—

Witness George William Frederick Earl of Clarendon our Lieutenant General and General Governor of Ireland at Dublin the thirtieth day of March in the eleventh year of our reign.

(enrolled 30 March 1848).

On 1st May 1849 Mr Bell had twenty pupils—thirteen boarders and seven day boys, but no free pupils. In their Annual Report dated 9 April 1849 the Commissioners of Education had stated:

The School of Banagher has since our last Report been opened by the new Master appointed by your Excellency, with a number of pupils greater than during any period of his predecessor’s incumbency.

In their Annual Report dated 14 April 1851 the Commissioners stated:

The Masters of Cavan and Banagher Royal Schools report that during the past year the number of their pupils have been somewhat augmented.

On 1st May 1852 there was a total of thirty-six boys in the School, of whom four day boys were free. In that year Mr Bell became a clergyman. In 1853 he had thirty-one pupils and in 1854 he had thirty-five. Arthur Nicholls, who had been an assistant teacher in the School in 1837 and 1838, married Charlotte Bronte in 1854. They spent their honeymoon in Ireland and stayed in Cuba House during their visit to the Bells and other relatives of Nicholls in Banagher. The School was inspected on 24 April 1856 by George Whitley Abraham, Assistant Commissioner to the Endowed Schools (Ireland) Commission, 1855-58, who reported that there were thirty-one pupils then on the rolls; and that the fees for boarders were £36 per annum (day boys £8. 8. 0). The report continued:

I examined classes in Homer, Xenophon, Terence, Virgil and Sallust, and found the pupils to translate pretty accurately in most instances; but they were all deficient in such elementary notions of philology as might have been expected from them, and in the collateral reading of ancient history and biography, to which so much importance is attached in the University, and without which classical studies lose half their value. This, I think, is attributable in a great measure to the want of a small library containing the more scientific grammars, and approved editions of the school classics. I observed other faults of a less excusable description, the general answering being defective both as to parsing and prosody. The accent and pronunciation of such as I examined in French, was of average badness, but I had no reason to complain of their translation. Two or three pupils only had learned a little German, but they knew that little sufficiently well. The result of the examination in Euclid and Algebra was such as to satisfy me that the principle of the operation is better understood here than in several schools I have visited. The dilapidation of the schoolhouse must be, in my opinion highly injurious to the tone of feeling that ought to prevail amongst the pupils. They cannot, in afterlife, fail to look with contempt and aversion upon the dirty and ruinous place in which they followed their early studies. It would surely be desirable, in a country like Ireland, that the children of the middle order, from whom the classes beneath them are expected to learn decency and regularity, should themselves be habituated to something of the kind, while most capable of forming enduring tastes and habits.

The schoolhouse is in perfect keeping with the town of Banagher, although it would surely it would seem to be the duty of those who are charged with the oversight of the school to keep it in as absolute contrast as possible with the squalour and decay in its neighbourhood. According to the explanation offered by Mr Bell, the Commissioners of Education have directed him to make no further repairs than may be necessary to keep out wind and rain, as the interest of the Commissioners in the lease under which the school premises are held,
expires with the life of the Duchess of Gloucester. It would appear, however, that they are entitled to a renewal, if they think proper to claim it; but under any circumstances it is a pauperly economy to keep a public institution in such a disreputable condition.\textsuperscript{30}

In their general Report, dated, 1st February, 1858, the Commissioners stated:

In 1788 there was no schoolhouse and there were no pupils in Banagher, and the Commissioners of Education Inquiry found that seventy-seven acres of the original grant had been lost to the endowment by the encroachments of neighbouring proprietors.

The School was not in operation in 1807, though at that period, as well as in 1788, the master was in receipt of the salary. Since 1818 the Commissioners of Education have rented the present schoolhouse. As the endowment was connected with the Corporation of Banagher, it came under the notice of the Municipal Corporation Commissioners in 1833. They reported that they found no free scholars in the establishment, and that the Master insisted he was not obliged to receive any.

We received a communication from the Rev Mr Egan, the parish priest of Cloghan, which was read in court, stating that 'the school had long ceased to be a free school for the class of persons for whom it was originally intended,' and that 'Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants appeared unwilling to send their children there.' The Master, when examined before us, said that he had two free pupils, but that he was in no way bound to receive any. When, however, the extracts from the charter and other documents were read by our direction in the public court, he stated that his opinion was changed. He also stated that he had never received any instructions from the Commissioners of Education as to the admission of free pupils. He mentioned that there was no interference with the religion of the pupils, and that the pupils, all but one Roman Catholic, were Protestants. We visited the School and were much dissatisfied with the want of neatness and cleanliness in the schoolroom, and inadequate supply of school furniture... Our Assistant Commissioner reports that the state of instruction is not satisfactory and that the buildings are in bad repair... We are of opinion that the Commissioners of Education should take steps to provide, out of the funds of the other Royal Schools, a suitable schoolhouse permanently secured for the trust. They ought, in the mean time, to require the present schoolhouse to be kept in a suitable state of neatness and order.\textsuperscript{31}

In their Annual Report for the year 1856/7 the Commissioners of Education stated that they had succeeded in obtaining a new lease of Cuba House at a considerable reduction in rent,\textsuperscript{32} and in their Report for the following year they recorded that they had effected such alterations and repairs as to ensure that the premises were now in "a very satisfactory condition."\textsuperscript{33} In 1860 there were twenty-eight boarders and three day boys in the School (one day boy was free). The Annual Report of the Commissioners of Education for the year 1863/4 had this:

As regards Banagher Royal School, we beg to report that very strong representations having been made to us by the Master, that a transfer of this endowment from Banagher in the King’s County to Ballinasloe in the County Galway, would be likely to lead to a more numerous attendance of pupils at the School; and an eligible offer of a school-house at a moderate rent in the neighbourhood of Ballinasloe having been made to us, we very fully discussed the proposal, but came to the conclusion that we could not comply with the prayer of the memorial, as the patent establishing this foundation would not warrant us in changing the site of the Royal School of Banagher from the King's County to County Galway.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} op. cit. Report, pp. 56-57.
\textsuperscript{32} Parly. Paper No. 457 (1858).
\textsuperscript{33} Parly. Paper No. 177, Sess. 2 (1859).
\textsuperscript{34} Parly. Paper No. 461, 1864.
This matter of the removal of the School from Banagher first arose in 1854, when because of the success of a residential Collegiate School started in Parsonstown by James Weir, Scholar of T.C.D., Rev Mr Bell felt that this new School in the near-by town would attract pupils who would otherwise be his. He had therefore obtained from Lord Rosse a house—Woodville—in Parsonstown to which he endeavoured to obtain the sanction of the Commissioners for the transfer of his School. Having failed in this attempt, largely because of the opposition of the 'gentry' of Banagher, Mr. Bell turned to the Committee of the Irish Missionary College at Ballinasloe and secured their consent to the transfer of their premises to him. This was the resolution of the Committee:

Resolved that the Committee of the Irish Missionary College at Ballinasloe, understanding that Banagher has been considered an unsuitable locality for a Royal School, are willing to offer to the Commissioners of Education a lease of the school premises built for the Missionary College, rent free for a period of twelve years, resumable by the Committee at the expiration every three years, due notice being given to the Commissioners; the Committee undertaking to keep the premises in repair during the existence of the lease provided it can be arranged to transfer to these premises at Ballinasloe the School at present located at Banagher.

Rev Mr Bell advanced a variety of reasons in favour of the change. He submitted that:

In former years the boarders at this school came chiefly from the districts adjoining the Shannon, namely from the Counties of Clare, Limerick and Tipperary, and found cheap and easy access to the School by the steamers plying on the river. But some years ago the steamers were removed and their place not being supplied by railway communication—schools having been established in Ennis and Tipperary—our connexion with these districts has nearly ceased. Thus whereas in 1853 I had fifteen boarders from the counties already mentioned, this year 1863 I have only one from Tipperary, one from Limerick and none from Clare.... Banagher is a declining town—the houses are tumbling into ruins—and the population which fell from 1846 in 1851 to 1480 in 1861 is still rapidly diminishing. The effects of this decline have been felt in the School. No visiting masters now reside in the town; no teacher of music or of drawing or of foreign languages. The market once well supplied with meat has vanished and I am obliged to buy that article in Birr six miles distant.... For these reasons respectfully submit that Banagher is not a suitable place for a Public School and that the sooner this endowment is removed from it the better it will be for all parties interested in its prosperity.

Frustrated by the failure of his effort to have his School transferred to either Birr (Parsonstown) or Ballinasloe, the Master decided to abandon the profession of schoolmaster and to seek a living in the Church. On August 1865 he secured a nomination from the Lord Lieutenant to the perpetual curacy of Ballymore in the Diocese of Meath. He had then sixteen boarders (of whom one was a Catholic) and three day pupils—total nineteen. He dismissed the boys before the end of the year and closed the School as from Christmas 1865. He continued however with his family in occupation of the school premises. He continued also to draw the salary of the post till he left. The Commissioners of Education reported to the Lord Lieutenant on 26 May 1866:

At the Banagher Royal School, it having become known that the present head-master had been nominated by Government to a benefice, but that in consequence of some legal difficulty he had not, as yet, been put in possession of it, and had not resigned the Mastership of Banagher School, which he holds under patent from the Crown, the attendance of
pupils has considerably fallen off; this inconvenience to those resident in that locality will it is hoped, soon be overcome by the resignation of the present Master, and the appointment by your Excellency, of a successor to his post.

The statement by the Commissioners that “the attendance of pupils had considerably fallen off” was not in accordance with fact; there were no pupils but the Master continued to receive salary from them as if there were. One of the then principal national daily newspapers had this to say on the matter in a leading article in December 1866:

In the report of the Royal and Endowed School Commissioners, published in the *Irish Times* some months since, the following suggestive and curious passage occurs—‘The School of Banagher is not in a satisfactory condition.’ Few, from this paragraph, would infer that there was no school whatever, although there was a schoolhouse—a remarkably fine building, a schoolmaster, and an endowment. The facts connected with this school could have occurred in no country but Ireland, the very country which more than any other needs schools of the class to which Banagher was intended to belong. There is, as we have said, an excellent school mansion constructed to accommodate a large number of boarders. There is an endowment which, if not unusually large, is much greater than those of many others which are vigorously flourishing schools, and there are nine or ten acres of capital land. Altogether the appointment to Banagher School gives to an active and well educated man a fair start in life, and a grand opportunity for realising a handsome fortune. But the School is wholly useless to the gentry and people of the country round Banagher, for whose benefit it was founded. It is useless also to the residents in any other part of Ireland who might be induced to send their sons to Banagher for education, if the School were managed as it ought to be. The circumstances we are informed are these—the late Lord Carlisle appointed the Rev Mr Bell to be head-master of the School, and it was fully expected that under his management this celebrated School would recover its ancient prestige. Some months since the Rev Mr Bell was nominated to a living in Westmeath. He could not, of course, hope to carry on his School and retain his benefice at the same time. The gentry, the education of whose sons was delayed and thrown back, expected that a new appointment to the duties as well as to the name of head-master would immediately be made. Last Christmas however the Rev Mr Bell dismissed his School, and sent his boarders home to their friends. Since that time he has kept no School. He lives, however, as we are informed, in the schoolhouse, receives the emoluments of the endowment, and the profits of nine or ten acres of capital land belonging to the School. For all this, whatever it may amount to in the gross he does not give any return whatever in the way of schoolwork. Surely the law does not permit that a gentleman on being appointed to the endowed School should dismiss all the scholars and yet take the endowments. An excuse has been put forth in reference to Banagher School which is very unsatisfactory. . . . Among the Commissioners of Royal and Endowed Schools are the Archbishop of Dublin, the Bishop of Meath, the Lord Chancellor, and many other influential and powerful personages. But, surely, they have no right as a body of Commissioners to permit a public institution entrusted to their care and guardianship to fall into decay, and the endowments to be alienated from educational purposes, for which they were solely and strictly designed. ‘The matter will be forthwith settled;’ ‘the affair is on the point of adjustment,’ are the answers given by the Commissioners to inquiries respecting this School. But an entire twelvemonth had passed away, and during that period—a most valuable time for youth—parents were compelled either to send their children to schools at a distance, or to delay their education altogether. If the facts be as they have been stated to us, and as they are described above, they reflect little credit upon any person connected with them. The Bishop may refuse to induct Mr Bell into his benefice for many a year. Are the young people of Banagher and the country round to be deprived of the means of obtaining education in order to convenience Mr Bell? That

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The *Irish Times*, Saturday, 15 December 1866. The *Express* of 4 December 1866 contained a letter deprecating the fact that the School was not in operation, “so depriving local children of a service to which they were entitled.”
gentleman should be called upon to elect, whether he will surrender his School in the hope that the Bishop will induct him, or resign his appointment to the living and re-open the School.

The publication of the foregoing comment on his behaviour constrained Mr Bell to resign the mastership of the School—which he did on 7th January 1867, three weeks after the newspaper had divulged the situation created by him in Banagher, and in their Annual Report, dated 8 June 1868, the Commissioners of Education stated:

The Mastership of Banagher Royal School being still vacant, and the School in abeyance, we have only to report that the caretaker placed therein by us remains in charge of the School premises until your Excellency shall appoint a new Master. 36

Rev. J. A. Bell, former master of the School and now curate in Banagher, was a signatory to a petition of local residents that Rev. A. Williams, M.A. of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who had a connection with Banagher, should be appointed to the vacant post of Master of the Royal School. Representations were however made to the Lord Lieutenant on behalf of Thomas McNally, LL.D. curate of St. Luke's and St. Nicholas in the city of Dublin, in connection with the appointment. One of the letters recommending him for the post stated that “In appearance and manner he is, very evidently, not a gentleman, but he looks very good natured and amiable, and is testified to be a good disciplinarian. On the whole I think your Lordship is not likely to find a better man and I believe he would really do very well for the post.” 37 He was aged thirty-six and had some experience as a tutor in Trinity College. He was given the appointment, and his warrant reads as follows:

By the Lords Justices General and General Governors of Ireland. Whereas the place of Schoolmaster of the Royal School of Banagher in the King’s County is now void by the resignation of the Reverend James Adamson Bell and the power of disposing thereof being lodged in us, We now know ye all men by these presents that We the Lords Justices General and General Governors of this part of Her Majesty’s United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland called Ireland have constituted, ordained and appointed, and do hereby constitute, ordain and appoint the Reverend Thomas McNally, Master of Arts, who is a person fitly qualified for the same to be Schoolmaster of the said Royal School of Banagher, to have and to hold the same, with all emoluments thereunto belonging, to him the said Thomas McNally during his good behaviour.

In witness whereof We have hereunto set our hand and Seal of Arms at Her Majesty's Castle of Dublin the 22nd day of July 1868.

By their Excellencies command, T. A. Larcom.

Mr McNally engaged two assistants, but because of the rivalry of another classical school in the town opened by Richard Monck, a former assistant in the Royal School, this school attracted few pupils. At the beginning of 1869 there were only twelve boys in the Royal School and the numbers did not increase .... In 1872 a prominent resident of Banagher, Mr Brinsley Purefoy, complained to the Bishop of Meath that Mr McNally was bringing the School into disrepute because of his drunkenness. In forwarding the complaint to the Commissioners of Education the Bishop stated that “The case is, I believe, notoriously scandalous.” Anonymous letters from Banagher.

36 Parly. Paper No. 426 (1868).
37 N.L.I. MS. No. 11228.
reached the Commissioners which contained serious allegations concerning the Master's addiction to drink and other misconduct. The previous Master of the School, Rev James A. Bell, wrote from the vicarage on 22 November 1872:

In reply to your letter of the 20th instant which I received last night on returning from Dublin, I beg to state that Eliza Woods, who is at present servant of Mrs Bird of 22 Hatch Street, is the most important witness on the list; as she was in Mr McNally's employment for several months and can testify to his frequent intoxication, violent treatment of Mrs McNally, and his common use of foul language in the presence of his Wife and Children and Servants. With regard to Miss Louise McNally, who is at present a domestic servant at the address I have given, the best course I can take is to forward to you a letter I received some weeks ago from her mother. It is rumoured that she left her Father's house for a reason too horrible to mention in plain English, but which, if true, would place Mr McNally in the category of those whom Virgil consigned to the lowest pit of tortures—Hic thalamum invasit notas velitoque hymenacos.

In virtue of the powers held by them under the Act of Parliament by which they were constituted, the Commissioners of Education decided on a visitation of the School and nominated as visitors Dr Samuel Butcher (Bishop of Meath), Rev Edward Fleetwood Berry (Archdeacon of Meath) and Cartaret Andrew Armstrong, J.P., as visitors. Notice of the impending Visitation was posted in the town of Banagher and published in the public press. Before it could take place however Mr McNally resigned. The circumstances are set out in the Annual Report of the Commissioners for 1872-73 as follows:

In reference to the Banagher Royal School Endowment, we beg to state that certain rumours having reached us which, if true, must in our opinion prove prejudicial to the interests and well-being of the School, we appointed and duly authorised Visitors to hold, at Banagher, a public investigation into the truth or falsehood of these reports. The Visitors, acting under the instructions of our Solicitor, took all the necessary preliminary steps for the investigation, and published in Banagher a notice stating the day on which the Visitation would take place; but previously to that day the Master forwarded his resignation of his office to your Excellency, and all proceedings came to an end in this matter.38

For the first time in the history of the Royal Schools, a Catholic was appointed to succeed Mr McNally. It has been stated that the new Master owed his appointment to the fact that a Liberal administration was then in office. The new Master was Patrick King Joyce, who had graduated B.A. from Queen's College, Galway in 1872. He had been trained as a National School teacher at Marlborough Street Training College, Dublin; after which he was given a teaching post in St Mel's College, Longford. When he obtained his degree he taught in Clonmel Catholic Intermediate School. The warrant of his appointment to Banagher is as follows:

By the Lord Lieutenant and General Governor of Ireland
SPENCER

Whereas the place of Schoolmaster of the Royal School of Banagher in the King's County is now void by the resignation of the Rev Thomas MacNally, and the power of disposing thereof being lodged in Us. Now know ye, all men, by these presents that We, the Lord Lieutenant General and General Governor of this part of Her Majesty's United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland called Ireland have constituted, ordained and appointed, and do hereby constitute, ordain and appoint Patrick King Joyce, Esquire, who is a person fitly

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38 Parly. Paper No. 300, (1873).
qualified for the same, to be Schoolmaster of the said Royal School of Banagher, to have and to hold the same with all emoluments thereunto belonging to him the said Patrick King Joyce, during his good behaviour.

In witness thereof We have hereunto set our hand and seal of arms at Her Majesty's Castle of Dublin the 24th day of January 1874.

By His Excellency’s Command,

T. H. Burke.

Immediately on his appointment to his new post, Mr Joyce issued the following advertisement through the public press:

Banagher Royal School, King’s County. This School will be opened early in March, with a staff of eminent masters, and under Roman Catholic management. P. K. Joyce, B.A. Senior Scholar Natural History. Head Master. Late of St Francis' Academy, Clonmel.

Mr Joyce’s appointment was popular among the Catholic population of Banagher, and many of the Catholic boys were sent to his School—within a year he had an enrollment of forty. However, he resumed his attendance at University College, Galway, with a view to obtaining a degree in medicine. He also prepared Catholic pupils of his School for entrance to that College. He thus incurred the displeasure of the local Catholic clergy and the matter was brought to the notice of the bishop who communicated with Mr Joyce:

January 10, 1877.

Dear Sir—I am unable to see how you can consider yourself ‘unduly and unjustly humiliated’ or ‘subjected to the indignity of answering slanderous questions’ because your bishop, who finds himself described in some of your advertisements as patron of your school, has sought to learn whether the school is such as he can conscientiously recommend to his flock.

His reasons for making the inquiries were these—

He believes that the Queen’s Colleges are not fit places for the education of Catholic youth, and he has frequently warned his people against these Godless institutions. He heard that you, the head-master of a school of which he is described in the public journals as patron, were yourself attending lectures in the Queen’s College, Galway, and that some of the boys in your school were making preparations to enter the same College. Under these circumstances he felt it to be no injustice to you, but rather his plain duty, to inquire how far your connexion with the Queen’s College had affected the Catholic character of your school, and through whom could be more properly made such inquiry than through the clergymen who have the pastoral charge of the parish in which the school is situated?

I write this to assure you that it would give me the greatest pleasure to see your school flourish as a good Catholic school. I thank you for the pains you have taken in writing to me at such length, and I am willing to make every allowance for some expressions which I am sure you now regret having permitted yourself to use.

I am, dear sir, yours faithfully,

Geo. Conroy.

At about this time most of the Catholic children who were attending as day-boys removed to a school of their persuasion in Birr, and the Commissioners of Education in their Annual Report dated 7 August 1879 stated:

Recently we had an inspection made, and the number of pupils on the day of inspection was only seven, of whom four were day-boys and three were boarders from what the Head Master, who is a Roman Catholic, stated to our Inspector we infer that his School has not the support of the clergy of his own persuasion.39

The School was inspected by Rev. John Pentland Mahaffy, F.T.C.D. (afterwards Sir J. P. Mahaffy, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin) on behalf of the Endowed Schools Commissioners of 1881. His report, dated 7 October 1880 reads:

Four boarders, nine day boys: no assistant masters.—This school is a complete failure, nor do I think the appointment of a Protestant head master, or any internal change, will make it recover. The buildings were dirty and in decay, and I found only eight or nine boys preparing for special competitions, such as Civil Service or bank appointments; in fact rather private pupils over the ordinary school age than ordinary scholars. But if the School were removed but a few miles to Parsonstown—a town of a similar character to Armagh, and always the residence of gentry—it would, doubtless, become a large school. This might be more efficiently be secured by amalgamating it with the present good preparatory school flourishing at Parsonstown. The present Head-master of Banagher is intellectually a competent man, nor could any charge of inefficiency be sustained against him. 40

The suggestion for the removal of the School to Birr is of more than passing interest, as it appears that as early as 1626 there was a Free School there. It is stated that Sir Laurence Parsons, 41 on his petition, obtained for a while a grant of 200 acres for the schoolmaster. Sir Laurence died in 1628. The Endowed Schools (Ireland) Commissioners of 1855-58 stated, without citing any authority, in reference to the lands of Banagher Royal School that “It would seem that they were given in 1626 to a schoolmaster at Birr during the pleasure of the Crown, but in 1628 they were appropriated to their present object by Royal Charter.” 42

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41 Thomas Lalor Cooke in his Early History of the Town of Birr, Dublin 1875, has the following, for which he too cities no source:
The petition was as follows:
To the Right Honourable the Lord Deputy, the humble petition of Sir Laurence Parsons—declaring that there was allotted upon the division of Fercall 200 acres for a Free School to be erected in that plantation, which lieth still in His Majesty’s gift.
The premises considered, and forasmuch as there is a schoolmaster in your petitioners town of Birr, who teacheth the youth of that country to the great good thereof, your suppliants therefor humbly prays that your Lordship will be pleased to grant him a custody of the said land for the use of the said schoolmaster, until such time as your Lordship shall otherwise dispose thereof, and your suppliants shall pray.—8th July 1626.

On the foregoing petition, an order, signed by Lord Deputy Falkland and the Council was made as follows:
The land allotted for the Free School in the King’s County being yet undisposed of, we are pleased to grant the same unto the petitioner to the use of the Schoolmaster residing at Birr, and the Sheriff of the King’s County is to put him in possession, to continue for and until such time as we shall otherwise dispose thereof.—pp. 46-7.
The following notice of the school-lands of Banagher in ‘the account of the publique schools’ prepared in 1673 by the Protestant Archbishop of Armagh, James Margetson (1663-1678), is of interest:

I find there is also about 200 acres of land, or more, sett out about Bannagher att sflt falkland in the King’s County within the diocese of Meath, which land is diverted to the maintenance of a schoole in the towne of Birr or Parsonstown within the diocese of Killaloe, about five miles from Bannagher, and whereas there is great want of a schoole in that part of the diocese of Meath, that being farre from Mullingarre or Trim—It is desired accordingly to his Maties Royall intention for the endowing a schoole att Bannagher or thereabouts in the diocese of Meath, that the land allotted for it may be disposed for that use only within the said diocese: The diocese of Killaloe being left that provision for a Free Schoole by the Bishop Clergy and others as by the Act appointed.—B.M. MS. Sloane No. 202, as set out in the Ulster Journal of Archaeology, 2nd ser. 9 (1903), 54-56.

Shortly after the receipt by the Commissioners of Education of a copy of Rev. John Pentland Mahaffy’s report on Banagher Royal School, they caused a special inspection of the School to be made on their behalf by Mr. C. Winston Dugan of Parsonstown. He submitted in December 1880 a detailed report on his examination of the pupils in English, French, Latin, Geography and Mathematics (Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry). The eighteen pupils in attendance were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior Grade</th>
<th>Middle Grade</th>
<th>Junior Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Terence Doorly</td>
<td>James Coghlan</td>
<td>John Armstrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Madden</td>
<td>Edward Dolan</td>
<td>Reginald Armstrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas J. Coyne</td>
<td>Patrick Grogan</td>
<td>J. Milo Burke</td>
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<td>Michael Carroll</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Timothy Carroll</td>
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<td>Joseph Claffey</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In 1884 Mr. Joyce secured election as Pog Law Guardian for the Electoral Division of Doon in the Parsonstown Union. His participation in the administration of the Workhouse was unwelcome to Lord Rosse and other members of the King’s County Constitutional Association, and efforts were made by that group to have his election declared invalid. When these failed, the Commissioners of Education, who saw eye to eye with the Association, came to its aid by reopening with the British Treasury the question of the repayment from the funds of the School of the balance outstanding of the loan from the Consolidated Fund advanced in 1818 for necessary repairs to the school buildings. Payment of the yearly instalments on this advance had been in abeyance for some years, but liability for these should have been discharged long before 1884. The loan had been obtained long before Mr. Joyce’s appointment, and he had derived no advantage from it. The Annual Report of the Commissioners for 1888-90 stated:

We mentioned in last year’s Report that the Treasury had informed us that they were about to commence legal proceedings for recovery of the sum of £225. 18. 11, balance of an old debt due to them from the Banagher estate since the year 1819. They have since obtained judgment for the full amount of their claim, and have had a Receiver appointed over the estate. We have consequently been obliged to surrender the lease of the school-house, and to close the School.43

Mr. Joyce surrendered possession of the School-house after a public auction of the contents on 18 June 1890. The school furniture realised a total of £6. 6. 6 (net). The benches were sold for 3/6 each; thirteen maps at 1/- each; blackboards for 1/-; the master’s desk for 12/6; and two globes for 6/- and 4/- respectively. Under the terms of his appointment, Mr. Joyce was entitled to the continued payment of his salary “during his good behaviour.” A scheme (No. 90) was framed under the Educational Endowments (Ireland) Act, 1885, for the future administration of the endowment. This scheme, dated 28 January 1896, provides for the application of the annual income to the Schools in the locality (King’s County) giving Intermediate Education. A schedule to the scheme states that the school lands known as the denominations of Boolnarig, Ballinacurra, Derry Upper and Lower, contain 377 acres 3 roods and

27 perches let to tenants at a rental of £181. 3. 10 per annum. The scheme provided also for the termination of Mr. Joyce's post as headmaster "in consideration of a reasonable retiring annuity or allowance to be paid out of the Banagher Royal School Endowment." The Commissioners of Education did not wake up to this provision for several years and Mr. Joyce continued in receipt of £100 from the endowment till a year or so before his death, which occurred on 22 December 1914. Shortly before this even the Commissioners had arranged to pay him a life annuity of £60.

Diligent search has failed to unearth the life stories of any of the many past pupils of this School. Arthur Nicholls, already mentioned in this paper, received his early education there, afterwards holding a teaching post for two years before going to a similar (and better paid post) at Bandon Endowed School. He is best remembered as the husband of Charlotte Bronte. Sir William Wilde, the antiquary and father of Oscar Wilde, also had his early education at Banagher before proceeding to Bishop Hodson's School at Elphin nearer his home. In more recent times the name of William Bulfin, one of Mr. Joyce's pupils has become widely known as that of the author of *Rambles in Erin*. Bulfin, who became editor of *The Southern Cross* of Argentina, died in 1910. He was a close friend of Arthur Griffith, in whose paper *The United Irishman* the *Rambles* first appeared.
2. Banagher Royal School (Cuba House), closed in 1890 and since demolished.