

AN OLD SCHOOL

SOME TIME AGO an American visitor called at the Limerick Chronicle office to enquire the location of Scabby Lane. He had been told his parents were born there, but he found it difficult to believe that a lane could be so inelligantly named.

Everyone else also found it difficult to believe and the stranger abandoned his quest. Though there is no trace of Scabby Lane now, it really did exist, and one of Limerick's oldest citizens tells us that it was located off Broad Street. And, if further proof were needed, the writer found the lane mentioned in a school register of the 1850's. The register was kept at the old St. John's C.B.S. School, John Street. The building is still intact today and in use but the school has gone.

The book carried much interesting information, too, on many of Limerick's old laneways long since swept away by the winds of social change. And there were the names of hundreds of pupils long dead and forgotten, with details of the ancient crafts their fathers followed and now long extinct too.

But first, let us have a look at some of the old place names mentiuned. There was Milk Market, Town Wall, Ball Alley Lane, Magdalen Lane, Purcell's Lane, Flag Lane, Curry Lane, Pencil's Lane, Bowles' Lane, Repeal Alley, Forker's Lane, Mungret Lane, Joshue's Lane, Cassidy's Lane, Garvey's Lane, Barrack Lane, Fitzgerald Lane, Cornwallis Street, Scott's Land, Clam-pett's Bow, and Mass Lane.

What place did Father Quin occupy in Limerick's lesser-known history? Whatever it was, he must have been a popular pastor in his day, for his name was enshrined in Father Quin Lane. And where, too, were Sheey Lane, Smith Lane, Moloney Lane, Williams' Lane, Monaghan Lane, Barrett's Lane, Hogg Lane?

The register continues with name places such as Miller's Row, Blackbow Lane, Gallows Green, Careys Lane and Brennan's Row.

Some of Limerick's history is recalled in many of these old places. Playhouse Lane, for instance, was named after the theatre which stood at the corner of this lane and Gerald Griffin Street. And how did White Wine Lane get its name? It was so called because the farmers met there to sell milk well over a century ago, before the Milk Market was opened in Cornmarket Row. In those far-off days milk was known to the poor as "white wine".

As for the others ... well, I won't be a spoil-sport; try their origins for yourself!

The pupils listed in this old register were drawn from many walks of life. Thei fathers were salesmen, brickmakers, carmen, coach drivers, tanners, wool-card makers, bellows makers, rope makers, tobacco spinners, soldiers, weigh masters, varnishers, tinkers, ston-masons, bootmakers, police constables, last makers, scavengers, peddlars, nailors, tinmen, millwrights, dyers, blacksmiths, confectioners, ragmen, glaziers, gravediggers, auctioneers, brass founders, coffin makers.

Included, too were rag gatherers, thatchers, wheelwrights, lime burners, chandlers, cagemakers, pavers, pipers, fiddlers, railway guards. And there were snuff grinders, weavers, candle makers, pensioners, mendicants, fishermen, butterbuyers, sawyers, masons, farmers, cornbrokers, foundrymen, slaters, coopers, watchmen, laundresses, dairymen, stagekeepers, labourers, whip makers and basket makers.

by Dick Naughton



John Street C.B.S.

In the register, the proficiency of pupils in reading, arithmetic, grammar, geography, book-keeping and mathematics was noted. And there was a special column for "general observations". Here are a few from the latter.

Six-year-old Michael Dwyer of Garryowen was "continually mitching", and so were six-year-old John Sexton and his eight-year-old brother Dan, of Blackboy Pike.

Ed. Crotty, Clare Street, was "gone to America". George Hayes (5) and his brother Richard (6), of John's Square, were "gone to England", and Jno. Greatrick, of John Street, "gone to Australia". Young Pat Fogerty, of Palmerstown, was "minding his mother", but not so good was 10-year-old Jno. Madigan, of Miller's Row. The observation read: "Parents dead. Ran away and never returned."

Some other observations in this intersting column of the register read: "A mitcher confirmed", "in ignorance about him", "at home, very poor", "went to the country", "gone to Miss Burke's", "remained at home", "kept at home", "gone to the workhouse", "gone to 2nd school", "at home sick", "left, a bad boy". An 11-year-old boy was noted as having "gone to work".

But perhaps the most poignant entry of all referred to a little 7-year-old boy named John Holihan, of Garryowen. The date, September 12, 1859, was given in the column. "Date of Leaving School", and under "General Observations" were the words "buried on this day". I may be wrong, but the master's copperplate writing was blurred with what might have been a tear.

And that's what this century-old school register had to tell of the sons of bellows makers, coach drivers, snuff grinders, weavers, and of how they mitched, emigrated or died, and of the quaintly named placed where they lived; surely a very interesting piece of human history.