Secondary School Education in Ireland

History, Memories and Life Stories, 1922–1967

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Judith Harford

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Historical Studies in Education

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Contents

1

Introduction to Secondary School Education in Ireland: History, Memories and Life Stories, 1922–1962

The year 1967 is very significant in the history of education in Ireland, marking the introduction of what became known as 'the free education scheme'[1] that led to a great increase in attendance at post-primary schools across the country. Up until then, only a small number of those who left primary school continued their schooling. For the vast majority of this minority, what this meant was attendance at one of two types of schools, namely, vocational schools and secondary schools. The smaller proportion of the group attended vocational schools, which were run by local vocational education committees and offered a two-year course which was essentially practical and oriented towards the world of work. The larger proportion, albeit still very small in number relative to those who left primary school, attended secondary schools.

The general pattern of post-primary school attendance in the early 1960s had been established in the days of the British administration of the country and was maintained during the first four decades following Independence in 1922. In 1924, the number of students in secondary schools was a mere 5 per cent of those enrolled in primary schools in the State, and by 1960, the figure had increased only to 16 per cent.[2] The majority of those in secondary schools attended Catholic schools; there was a small number of Protestant schools, and a Jewish school was established in the 1950s. In contrast to the situation in many other countries,[3] there were no State-established secondary schools in Ireland until 1966, when the first of a very small number of comprehensive schools was opened.

Secondary school education prior to 1967 was, then, very much for a minority. While the reasons for this are considered in the next chapter,

there are also many related areas of research deserving of attention. In particular, there is a great lack of exposition on the experience of schooling by those in attendance at secondary schools in the decades immediately prior to the introduction of free secondary schooling. This book, focusing on memories of that experience over 50 years later, is offered as one attempt to address the deficit. It is recognized that there is also a great need for a similar book on those who attended vocational schools. Hopefully the present work will stimulate others to engage in a project to that end.

In conducting the associated research and in writing this book, we were motivated by our view that it was essential to commence the documentation of memories of students' experiences lest, after a few more decades, these might be forgotten. On this, we were, in turn, influenced also by the small number of accounts available on the period between the early 1920s and the mid-1960s, which indicate that the experience of secondary schooling by students,[4] as well as by teachers and parents, was far from homogeneous. This, of course, should hardly surprise us, since a range of categories of secondary schools existed in the country at the time, albeit with much in common in terms of management structures, the curriculum offered and the pedagogical practices employed. Also, while it is true that in the secondary schools the children of professionals, managers and employers heavily outnumbered the children of those from lower status occupations,[5] many of their families were far from wealthy. Furthermore, even though the children of semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers were in the group to benefit least from secondary school education, not all were deprived of the experience. In some cases, this was due to Catholic religious orders of nuns, brothers and priests providing tuition free of charge. In other cases, it was due to parents making great financial sacrifices to pay the necessary fees. In other cases, yet again, it was thanks to scholarships provided by county and urban councils for a tiny cohort of students across the country.

A realization of all of the foregoing brought home to us the need to try to capture the range of experiences across the overall secondary school student cohort. On this, we could have commenced with an exploration of the field by seeking out such sources as students' diaries, accounts in school magazines, and letters to parents and friends. However, we concluded that the most immediate task should be to capture the memories of a cohort of those who commenced Irish secondary schooling at various times during the two decades prior to 1967. As a result, we undertook a series of interviews with a wide range of people for whom

this was the case. The remainder of this chapter locates the resulting accounts within the broader corpus of work on the history of education in Ireland and provides an overview on the nature of the research approach adopted.

* * *

The history of education in Ireland is a well-researched field. Much of it relates to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but previous centuries have also received a reasonable amount of attention. The greatest emphasis in the existing corpus of work is on what might be termed 'the high politics' of schooling, dealing with such matters as who provided education during different time periods, for whom and to what ends.[6] Central to this corpus of work are analyses of Church–State relations before and after Irish Independence in 1922, the churches in question being the Roman Catholic (RC) Church and the Protestant Churches, especially the (Anglican) Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church.[7] Attention has also been given to analysing the nature of school attendance patterns over the years and the administrative structures in the various categories of schools established. Furthermore, a small but important body of work has been generated on the history of access to education,[8] on the prescribed curriculum[9] and on official positions on pedagogy at all levels of the educational system, as well as on teacher preparation,[10] on school inspectors[11] and on the State-run national examinations, namely the Intermediate Certificate examination and the Leaving Certificate examination. We know much less, however, about some of the individuals and groups central to the system, including school managers, parents, teachers[12] and students.

The latter point is especially striking when considered in relation to former students' memories of schooling. This is not to say that no works whatsoever exist. There are, for example, a number of autobiographical accounts which portray memories of primary schooling in rather romantic terms.[13] At the other extreme, and also especially in relation to primary schooling, is a host of works which recall experiences of abuse, both physical and sexual, particularly in orphanages and industrial schools,[14] as well as in more regular school settings. Some of this work is autobiographical,[15] some is in the form of academic expositions[16] and some yet again is in the form of testimony given to government commissions. Little, however, is available in relation to the large territory that lies between the romantic accounts and those of horrendous abuse, particularly in relation to secondary schooling. Furthermore, what does exist is usually not in the form of lengthy solicited narratives. Rather, it

consists of various sections in works of reminiscences that, in most cases, span the broad range of human life experience.[17] As already indicated, this book constitutes a first attempt to begin to address the deficit by outlining accounts of individuals who attended Irish secondary schools in the decades prior to 1967, the year in which free secondary school education was introduced.

* * *

The accounts presented in later chapters were deliberately solicited from individuals whose memories were not dominated by a view that the experience of secondary schooling was totally idyllic. Also, there was no deliberate seeking out of participants whose recall of being brutalized overshadows all else. Furthermore, the selection of individuals was undertaken to capture a wide range of categories of schools, including schools catering for both Catholics and Protestants, and schools that differed in terms of their cultural ethos.

As this was the first attempt we know of to engage in such a project, we also deliberately sought to have amongst our participants individuals we considered would be likely to have reflected on their schooling. Thus, quite a number of our accounts are based on the memories of former teachers and of academics in the field of education studies. These are complemented by accounts from individuals who responded to a number of advertisements which explained the nature of the project and which requested people to volunteer to be interviewed. This purposive sampling approach allowed us to spread the range of participants widely.

We tried our best to have a gender balance and to have the memories of those who were boarding school students recorded alongside the memories of those who were day students. Also, all of the accounts are based on interviews with those currently in the 'middle classes'. It is difficult to see how this situation could have been otherwise since a main function of secondary school education was to provide the credentials necessary either to maintain the middle-class position into which one was born, or allow one to move into this position. In saying this, we recognize that we could, in a larger project, explore the memories of those who did not succeed in moving up the social ladder as a result of their attendance at a secondary school, those who dropped out after attending for a year or two and those who remained in school for five or six years, but ended up failing the Leaving Certificate examination.

Rather than being oral history, where the aim is to gain information about the past, the research which eventuated in the solicited accounts

presented in this book can be seen as being in the life history tradition. A life history is 'the history of an individual's life given by the person living it and solicited by the researcher'.[18] It makes extensive use of the in-depth interview in order to encourage participants to reveal, in their own words, their perspectives on their lives, experiences and situations. Accounts that emerge from the adoption of this approach are mediated by the researcher's interaction with the person during the telling of the story. Thus, one overcomes, to some extent, the problem in the traditional autobiography that what we read is what the author wishes us to know.[19]

Life history research in relation to education has become very popular over the last four decades. A relatively recent overview on scholarly contributions in this tradition has been provided by Rolls *et al*.[20] Teachers' careers constitute one area of focus, with early comprehensive studies having been conducted by Lortie,[21] Sikes *et al*.,[22] Huberman[23] and Fessler and Christinsen.[24] There is a related tradition of recording individuals' memories of schooling which has a much longer history. An example recounted by O'Donoghue[25] concerns Count Giovanni of Porcia who, in the early 1720s, invited a number of Italian intellectuals to tell the story of their lives. They were asked to describe the methods by which they were taught grammar and other subjects at school and university. The project led to the writing of *The Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself* and was published in a Venetian journal in 1728.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Abbs[26] also demonstrated the potential of another related approach in his work *Autobiography in Education*. He focused on the manner in which education affected individuals by asking the fundamental question: where is it that education takes place? Education, he argued, cannot take place without reference to the individual; it is essentially an enterprise concerned with interior states and conditions. He then went on to use exemplary autobiographies from such notable figures in history as Augustine, Rousseau, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Gorky, for the purpose of studying the processes of childhood, education and growth.

Other significant studies making use of autobiography as a method in educational research were carried out by Goertzel and Goertzel,[27] who utilized published autobiographies of various eminent twentieth-century personalities to identify psycho-social factors influencing childhood formation. Similar work was carried out by Benjamin Bloom at the University of Chicago and was published under the title *Developing Talent in Young People*.[28] Here Bloom relates the results of his attempt to examine the processes by which highly talented individuals in the

arts, business, sport, mathematics and science reached the highest levels of accomplishment in their chosen fields. In his studies, he placed great emphasis on investigating participants' recollections of their educational experiences, with tape-recorded data forming the main source material for the research.

In the last two decades, accounts of research on other groups have also been written. These include those of adult dyslexics recalling their experiences of schooling,[29] as well as of those who attended segregated schools[30] and schools for students with moderate learning disabilities.[31] At this point, however, it is important to recall that the investigation that led to the production of this book, while influenced by the research methods underpinning such studies and those of the other studies mentioned above, had, as its primary focus, highlighting various individuals' memories of secondary schooling in Ireland, rather than seeking acontextual generalizations in relation to the educational process. To this end, guidance was also provided by a number of significant oral history projects, including those undertaken by Gardner and Cunningham,[32] Leight and Rinehart[33] and Punch.[34]

And yet, as has been mentioned already, the book is not the product of an oral history study. Rather, it is based on 'topical life stories' located within the life history research tradition. On this, it is apposite to recall the distinction drawn by Allport,[35] and reiterated by Denzin,[36] between the complete, or comprehensive, life story, and the topical life story. The complete or comprehensive life story is concerned with all aspects of the individual's life from birth and is usually a long and complex account of the overall flow of life of an individual. In contrast, the topical life story focuses on only one phase, aspect or issue in the individual's life. It involves, as Goodson[37] sees it, the soliciting of a person's life story in relation to that one phase, aspect or issue. Drawing on these distinctions, the accounts presented in this book are offered as topical life stories, where the focus is on the participants' memories of their secondary schooling.

Recognizing a compelling view that gender is a significant variable in the conduct and outcome of interviews,[38] we ensured that, where at all possible, the interviews with the female participants were conducted by the female author of this work and those with male participants were conducted by the male author. We also recognized that the selection of memories told to an interviewer and the ways in which they are narrated can be influenced by the intersubjective relations between the interviewer and the participant.[39] This prompts us to suggest that the memory stories that each of us solicited from each participant might

vary somewhat if conducted by different interviewers. We went some way towards addressing this by ensuring that not only are the accounts that we present topical life stories, they are also edited topical life stories. The decision that they should be edited was made in the light of Allport's[40] advice that while unique styles of expression, including argot and colloquial phrasing, should remain unedited, editing for the sake of clarity or to remove repetitious material, is justified. The editing was conducted in conjunction with the participants. Each interview was reconstructed into a first-person essay by the authors and then returned to the participants for reading and responses. This co-construction process continued until each participant arrived at an account which he or she felt could be made public.

Finally, there is no suggestion that one can generalize with regard to all who attended secondary school in Ireland for the period reported in the individual accounts of participants here. Also, as has been made clear already, those interviewed constituted a convenience, or purposive, sample. Thus, not all readers may agree with the trends and directions indicated. Indeed, we can hear many a reader legitimately saying: 'I had a totally different experience and I went to a similar type of school.' Far from being a weakness of the book, we see this as a strength; disagreement is to be encouraged to stimulate cogitation of alternatives and contribute to debate on them. The outcome, we hold, could be the sowing of the seed for engagement in a much wider project, where the aim would be not only to capture the full range of experiences, but also to try to calibrate within it what was general, what was specific and what was idiosyncratic.

* * *

The next chapter sketches out the broad background to secondary school education in Ireland from 1922 to 1967. The expositions on the memories of a cohort of those who commenced Irish secondary schooling prior to 1967 are then presented in the seven chapters which follow. Six of these chapters relate to particular categories of schools: Catholic diocesan colleges; schools run by the Irish Christian Brothers; schools run by other Catholic male religious orders; schools run by the Presentation Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy; schools run by other Catholic orders of female religious sisters; and schools run by the Protestant Churches. Chapter 9 relates the memories of those who received their secondary schooling in a variety of schools that do not fit neatly into the categories dealt with in the previous chapters. Chapter 10 brings the book to a close with a general conclusion.

2

The Broad Background to Secondary School Education in Ireland, 1922–1962

Introduction

This chapter sketches out the broad background to secondary school education in Ireland from 1922 to 1967, so that the expositions in the remaining chapters on the memories of a cohort of those who commenced Irish secondary schooling prior to the introduction of free secondary school education in 1967 can be understood in context. Five aspects of the background are outlined. First, the extent of the provision of secondary schooling in Ireland over the period is described. The categories of secondary schools which existed are then detailed. This is followed by an outline of the nature of the State-prescribed secondary school curriculum. An overview on the nature of the secondary school teaching force is then presented. Finally, some perspectives on the 'general' approaches used in teaching are considered.

Provision of secondary schooling in Ireland up to 1967

A variety of educational traditions developed in Ireland throughout the course of history.[1] During Europe's 'dark ages', the bardic schools were aimed at preserving and transmitting the country's rich Gaelic tradition.[2] Alongside them were the monastic schools which were focused on biblical scholarship, conversion to Christianity and the spread of the Christian message beyond Ireland.[3] This pattern changed when schooling in the country became an instrument of the Tudor conquest and of the associated process of colonization.[4] It is also during this period that the first major decline in the Irish language as the language both of the majority and of the politically powerful set in, as it came to be associated with poverty, ignorance and lack of opportunity.[5]

Catholicism, on the other hand, continued to be the Church of the great majority of the population, notwithstanding the growth of a significant Protestant minority. Indeed, loyalty to Catholicism strengthened in the country over the centuries in response to being subjected to constant threat from outside forces. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a series of draconian 'Penal Laws' was passed aimed at depriving the 'native' Irish of all rights to property, religion and education.[6] The response of many of the 'native' Catholic gentry was to go into exile, and those who remained often sent their children to Catholic schools in Europe. Some elementary education was made available by itinerant teachers for those of the poorer Catholic class who could afford it, in what came to be known as 'hedge schools', and which were usually private houses or barns.[7] Protestant schools of various categories were also established by a number of voluntary groups, primarily to educate Protestant children,[8] but a number of them had as their objective the conversion of children from Catholicism.[9]

By the latter half of the eighteenth century, the pattern of schooling was to change again, primarily due to the relaxation of the Penal Laws. A variety of Catholic schools provided by individuals and religious orders were now established, initially to offer primary school education.[10] Some of these schools expanded to also offer secondary school education to a small number of the children of the Catholic middle classes. This became possible because, by the early 1800s, the political situation was no longer hostile to the Catholic Church (the Church), which was rapidly replacing a chaotic structure of ecclesiastical administration with a high degree of organization.[11] As a new and powerful interest group, the Church cooperated with the British government in trying to realize a mutual interest of pacifying the majority of the population so that they would give allegiance to both Church and State. The conduct of education was a notable example of the mutual dependence which developed in this regard.[12]

In 1831, a State-sponsored primary (national) school system, overseen by a board of commissioners, was established. Initially intended to be multi-denominational, with strict delimitation between religious and non-religious education, it had developed into an almost totally religious-managed system by the late 1870s.[13] This was due to the sustained agitation undertaken by the Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church. The outcome was that while the State paid the bulk of the capital costs of running the primary schools, the vast majority of them were run by parish clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, and the buildings were the property of the Church bodies.

Protestant children, in the main, attended schools under the ownership and management of their respective Protestant denominations. However, because the majority of the population was Catholic, the bulk of the primary schools throughout the country became, de facto, Catholic schools. A small number of these, especially in the larger towns and the cities, were managed and staffed by religious orders. In the case of most of them, however, ownership was vested in trustees who included the local bishop. The parish clergy also controlled appointments to teaching positions, as well as promotion to school principal. With the education of primary schoolteachers being almost entirely a Church-run affair and with intake to the primary school teacher-training colleges being on a denominational basis, the clergy rarely had to worry about the religious conviction of those they employed. Furthermore, all primary schools, regardless of denominational affiliation, operated a State-prescribed timetable and curriculum, and religious instruction was permitted as a school subject.

There was a move on the part of the State at the beginning of the twentieth century aimed at introducing a system of local education committees with local rating and using as a model the system adopted in England under the 1902 Balfour Education Act.[14] The Protestant Churches indicated that they favoured the move. Opposition, however, was mounted by the Catholic Church. The origin of this, as Coolahan has put it, was a realization that the replacement of the boards, which had evolved as vested interests over time, spelt overt danger for the Catholic Church, while the functions of the local committees were 'an infringement by the State through a democratic structure on the monopoly of power held at local level by the school patron and individual manager'.[15] The outcome of the Church's vigorous campaign was the defeat of two major reform bills, The Irish Councils Bill (1907) and the McPherson Education Bill (1919). The Church also managed to preserve the status quo in the case of secondary or intermediate schools, which meant that from the passing of the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act of 1878, through to Independence in 1922, direct government influence in the sector was kept to a minimum. Education at this level, in the case of both Catholics and Protestants, was very much a middle-class preserve.

The Irish Free State was established in 1922. Two years later, in 1924, the government's responsibility for almost all kinds of education apart from that offered by the universities was vested in a Minister for Education who headed up a newly created Department of Education.[16] No changes were introduced to the existing system of ownership and

management of primary schools. With the great majority of the Protestant population on the island of Ireland being located in the new Northern Ireland State, the vast majority of primary schools in the newly independent southern State were Catholic schools. For the same reason, the vast majority of secondary schools in the south were also Catholic schools. Furthermore, all secondary schools continued to receive government financial assistance and to remain firmly in private hands. In the case of Catholic schools, this meant that the vast majority of them were run by diocesan priests and members of religious orders, while the headmasters of most boys' Protestant schools were clergymen and the headmistresses were devoted members of their respective churches.

Both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches were happy with the arrangement regarding secondary schools since they were provided with State subventions while preserving their managerial control. The State, for its part, wanted no controversy with the churches; the Department of Education stated in its first annual report that the State had assumed no responsibilities for the appointment of principals, teachers or managers.[17] While the department inspected schools and exercised a certain degree of supervision through its powers to make grants to secondary schools as a result of inspection, it was not concerned with founding secondary schools, or financing the building of them. Also, because of the State's reluctance to take a leadership role in education up until the 1960s, it was almost impossible to engage in national planning to address social and geographical disparities in the provision of secondary schools.

In 1924, while there were 493,382 students in primary schools in the State, the secondary school system catered for only 22,897 students.[18] The number of secondary school students increased gradually over the next four decades, until by 1955–1956 it had reached 59,306.[19] Overall, however, a great imbalance still existed between the number of students attending primary schools and those attending secondary schools. Also, apart from a small minority of students (as considered in the previous chapter), secondary schooling was closed to those in the poorer sectors of Irish society; as late as 1961, the children of professionals, managers and employers heavily outnumbered those from lower status occupations in the secondary schools, yet their parents constituted only 13 per cent of the workforce.[20] Children of the unskilled or semi-skilled manual workers benefited least from secondary education.[21] Students from the lower classes also were the least likely to obtain a university education and the most likely to drop out of secondary school at an early age.[22]

The level of provision of local authority scholarships was totally inadequate as an aid and as an incentive for those in the lower social groups to pursue a secondary school education. In 1950, the number of scholarships awarded expressed as a percentage of the number of students in the sixth class of primary school was only 1.54 per cent. Also, scholarships were not distributed equitably on a regional basis.[23] For example, in the school year 1950–1951, Dublin County Borough offered one scholarship for every ten students in sixth class of primary school, Offaly County Council offered one scholarship for every 28 students and Laois County Council offered one scholarship for every 30 students. At the other end of the spectrum were Counties Dublin, Galway and Cork, whose county councils offered only one scholarship for every 202, 227 and 281 students, respectively, in sixth class in primary school. Furthermore, the value of these scholarships was only barely sufficient to pay the annual school fees. All other expenses had to be paid by parents, or were made available through the benevolence of those who managed the schools.

In many cases attendance at secondary school was prohibitive, not just because of the fees that had to be paid, but because potential students were needed at home to work on farms, or had to seek employment in Ireland or overseas. This situation persisted throughout the 1920s, '30s, '40s and '50s. The author, Frank Delaney, born in 1952, summed up the situation as he saw it in County Tipperary in his youth:

> The poverty of our parish was such that keeping the bodies and souls of many of the schoolchildren together was often as much as many parents could do. Where my four brothers and sisters were concerned, we received a secondary school education, perhaps the first entire family in our locality to do so.[24]

Also, availability of secondary schooling was not evenly provided throughout the State, with some areas being particularly disadvantaged. The north-west and south-west of the country, with their large stretches of poor land and very heavy emigration, stood out in this regard.[25] A small number of students in these areas were amongst those in the 30 per cent of the student population throughout the State who were boarders, but the parents of the majority of those of secondary school-going age were unable to afford to pay boarding school fees.

Consideration of the numbers attending the 12 secondary schools in Counties Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan and Longford in 1940 gives an

indication of the extent of regional under-provision in secondary school education.[26] In only one of these, St Patrick's Diocesan College, Cavan, did the number of students exceed 200, while in three of the schools, namely, Ballybofey, Lifford Prior and Raphoe Royal, the number in attendance in each case was less than 50. Ballymahon Girls' School and Cavan Royal School had only slightly larger numbers.[27] The remaining schools, namely, Loreto Girls' School, Letterkenny, Coláiste Admhnáin, Letterkenny, St Mary's Convent, Carrick-on-Shannon, St Mel's College, Longford and Loreto Convent, Cavan, each had less than 150 students in attendance. This meant that, in all, there were only 1,200 students in attendance at secondary schools in these four counties.

The areas that stand out in terms of having very few secondary schools were, in general, also the areas with the lowest provision of vocational schools in the country. Officially termed 'continuation schools' and 'technical schools', the vocational schools had been established under the Vocational Education Act of 1930.[28] Over the years, they took on a definite character. They offered courses which were essentially practical in focus, oriented towards the world of work and geared towards early school leavers. Their full-time continuation course was one of only two years' duration and was not designed to allow for transfer to secondary schools. Other problems included the Church not being as closely associated with vocational school education as it was with secondary school education, the core practical subjects (manual instruction and drawing) not being promoted as compulsory subjects at primary school level and the lack of standardization with regard to teacher training for vocational education. These matters, along with the fact that many of the schools were unable to employ a range of specialized staff since they catered for only a small number of students, did little to enhance the public perception of vocational education. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the overall student population of these schools was at all times less than that at secondary schools.

Many of those who attended both secondary and vocational schools were also faced with other difficulties. In particular, quite often a lot of time and effort were required to reach a school on a bicycle or on foot, as most parents did not have motor cars. The experience of one student who attended Roscommon Christian Brothers Secondary School in the 1950s has been described as follows:

> While attending CBS in the 1950s, for a period he cycled daily the 40 miles round-trip from his native Kenagh. Mid-way through his career at CBS, a special school bus provided by the Past Pupils' Union

> eased his burden, but he still cycled the nine miles to Lanesboro to make the connection to Roscommon.[29]

As late as 1962, 26 per cent of the day students at secondary school had a daily round trip of between 10 and 20 miles.[30] The bicycle was the mode of transport used by 40 per cent of day students in getting to secondary school, while 27 per cent travelled by foot, 21 per cent by public bus or train and 8 per cent by private car or other means.[31] As already indicated, it is true that problems like these were overcome by some through attendance at secondary school as boarders; in 1955–1956, 31 per cent of secondary school boys and the same percentage of secondary school girls were boarders.[32] However, this solution proved to be a practical one only in the case of those children whose parents could afford to pay boarding school fees.

Finally, a pattern was established throughout all of the period under consideration of a certain proportion of those attending secondary schools commencing for a year or two and then dropping out. In fact, as the number of boys attending secondary school increased over the years, so also did the rate at which they dropped out after a short period of attendance. For example, of the 4,527 boys who entered the first year of secondary school in 1932–1933, 21 per cent had dropped out by 1934–1935. This rate of dropout increased in the 1940s and 1950s; of the 5,244 boys who entered the first year of secondary school in 1943–1944, 25 per cent had dropped out by 1945–1946, and of the 6,971 boys who entered first year in 1953–1954, 27 per cent had dropped out by 1955–1956.[33] On the other hand, while approximately two girls entered the first year of secondary school for every three boys throughout all of the period under consideration in this book, most of them were still in secondary school three years later.

Categories of schools

Within the secondary school sector overall, which consisted almost totally of Catholic schools and Protestant schools, a variety of categories existed. One type of school within the Catholic sector was the diocesan college. All 28 of these schools, which offered the standard secondary school curriculum, had been established by the Catholic bishops during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to encourage students to consider becoming priests for the respective dioceses in which they were located. They were all large purpose-built boarding schools located in fine parkland settings. The chapel and the study hall were their central

features while, in general, each also had a library, a ball-alley and playing fields. On average, by 1940, each college catered for about 170 boys, who were generally the sons of shopkeepers, business people, those in the lower level professions and those farming medium-sized farms.

The children of the wealthier class who were not enrolled in diocesan colleges attended a small number of fairly exclusive schools run by religious orders. These included the Dominican Fathers' Newbridge College, County Kildare, the Benedictine boys' school at Glenstal Abbey, County Limerick, St Vincent's Vincentian College, County Dublin, Clongowes Wood Jesuit College, County Kildare and the Benedictine girls' school at Kylemore Abbey, County Galway. Middle-class girls also attended schools run by such religious orders as the Loreto Sisters, the Dominican Sisters and the Presentation Sisters.

The majority of secondary schools were managed by the Irish Christian Brothers and the Sisters of Mercy. Most of the schools of these religious orders were small, with an average enrolment of only 150–200 students.[34] Also, they had only very basic facilities. A small number of schools run by Catholic lay men and women also existed (although not all of them defined themselves specifically as Catholic schools) and were conducted in equally challenging circumstances.

As with Catholic schools, the small number of Protestant schools in the country also varied in terms of size and facilities. Of the 42 Protestant schools in 1962, 22 were in the Dublin area. The remainder were scattered unevenly across the Republic, with the exception of a group clustered along the boundary with Northern Ireland. The one Jewish school in the country, established in the 1950s, was also in Dublin.

In 1958–1959, the Department of Education's annual report noted that some of the secondary schools around the country were getting very old. Also, they did not contain enough space for the number of students in attendance.[35] Five years later it was reported that 21 per cent of all secondary school classrooms in the State were 100 years or over in age and a further 18 per cent were 80 to 99 years old.[36]

Before leaving the matter of school provision, the tendency which existed for a certain percentage of students to remain on at primary school needs to be noted. Collectively, the classes in which they were located were officially termed 'secondary tops'. Here, students usually studied a maximum of six core secondary school subjects for a year or two before leaving, although some did proceed to sit for the Intermediate Certificate examination. The number of 'secondary tops' increased throughout most of the period under consideration and were attended much more by girls than by boys. For example, in 1939–1940, the

number of secondary tops in the State was 61, with 3,627 girls and 259 boys in attendance. By 1956–1957, there were 87 secondary tops with 5,570 girls and 511 boys in attendance.[37] This development was encouraged by the State as it provided a relatively cheap way of extending the provision of secondary school education without the State becoming directly involved in the building of new secondary schools and having to meet the associated capital expense. By 1961–1962, there were 6,641 students in secondary tops, of which 94 per cent were girls. However, while this represented an increase in actual numbers yet again since 1956–1957, it was also the first time an overall decrease took place in the number of students in 'secondary tops' as a percentage of the total number of students in attendance at secondary schools.

More extensive change was also underway. In October 1959, Sean Lemass, then Taoiseach (prime minister), announced that the government was going to finance an increase in facilities for second-level education.[38] This resulted in an extensive scholarship scheme being introduced in 1961 to facilitate attendance by the less well off at second-level schools. By now, there was also a significant expansion taking place in the number of students enrolling in secondary schools. Between 1956–1957 and 1961–1962, the number of secondary school students increased from 62,429 to 80,000. This 28 per cent increase over five years was accompanied by a 14 per cent increase in the number of secondary schools, from 474 to 542.[39] The bulk of the increase in student numbers, however, was absorbed in existing school buildings by using all available space and converting other buildings on school grounds into classrooms.

In 1964, the State undertook, for the first time since Independence, to give building grants to the secondary school authorities for the expansion of secondary schools. Then, in 1966, it was announced that the State was going to provide free secondary school education, commencing the following year. Changes that were eventually to have an influence on the Catholic Church's control of much of secondary schooling followed. Between 1970 and 1981, there was a dramatic drop in individuals joining the religious life in Ireland. This was particularly marked in the case of teaching orders, with the number of nuns involved in primary school teaching declining by one-third and in secondary school teaching by one quarter. Teaching brothers declined by a few percentage points more.

The long-term outcome of the developments initiated in Ireland in the 1960s was reflected in the pattern of school attendance in the country in 2008.[40] The great majority of students in the primary schools were

now proceeding to a second-level school, where they remained for five or six years. Of these students, 55 per cent were attending secondary schools, belonging to the tradition of classical grammar schools that have been the main focus of concern in this chapter so far, but they had broadened and modernized their curricula, while an additional 30 per cent proceeded to vocational schools, which by now were offering the complete range of secondary school subjects and entering their students for the same State examinations as the secondary schools. 'Community schools' and 'comprehensive schools' had also been established, with the same broad curriculum as the secondary and vocational schools, and the designation 'community colleges' had come to be used to describe many recently established, or expanded, vocational schools with new management structures.[41]

The secondary school curriculum 1924–1967

Shortly after Irish Independence, it was declared officially that educational policy in the new Ireland would be strongly influenced by a determination to revive Irish as the national language and to promote Irish history, music and other traditions from the Gaelic culture. In accord with this position, primary schools sought to develop basic skills of literacy and numeracy in Irish and English, and to teach religion. Much the same emphasis was evident in the curriculum for secondary schools, where the focus was on a general academic education in the grammar school tradition. Generally, students studied Irish, English, another language, history and geography, mathematics and at least one other subject from an approved list.[42] These formed the core of the curriculum which prepared students for two new secondary school examinations, namely, the Intermediate Certificate examination, usually taken after three years of study, and the Leaving Certificate examination, usually taken after another two years.

The State gave additional financial support to schools that used the Irish language as the medium of instruction.[43] This led to a growth in the number of schools where Irish was the medium of instruction in all subjects, in the number of schools in which it was the medium of instruction in a variety of subjects and in the number of schools in which it was the medium of instruction in a select few subjects. Together, these three categories of schools never came close to being in the majority. Nevertheless, by 1960, 16 per cent of secondary school students were in all-Irish-speaking schools, 14 per cent were in schools where as much Irish as English was being taught and 19 per cent

were in schools where at least one subject apart from Irish was taught through Irish.[44]

Not only was it compulsory under the new regime for schools to teach the Irish language, the curriculum for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations also emphasized what was seen as being important for the Gaelic development of students, in contrast to the indifference to this tradition in schools in pre-Independence days. In particular, it was now compulsory to teach history and geography, and to do so with an Irish orientation. This use of schools to reshape national consciousness through a linguistic and cultural revival arose from a desire to give the children of the nation possession of what was seen as their national heritage.

The teaching of Irish history in particular was seen as crucial in the State's gaelicization policy. While the history of Western Europe was well covered in Intermediate Certificate history and was included under 'special topics' in Leaving Certificate history, Irish history received high priority, especially since the balance of the examination questions strongly favoured it. The approach reflected the concurrence of dominant ideologies of Catholicism and conservative nationalism. On this, the novelist John Broderick has commented as follows:

> The idea of history that we got was that we had been oppressed by our neighbours, the British, for seven hundred years; that the Catholic religion in particular had been suppressed and was persecuted; that there had been a great revival in the nineteenth century with Catholic Emancipation through Daniel O'Connell, and that Catholicism thrived under that, but that coming into the twentieth century we were being Englified and we were becoming more and more part of the United Kingdom and that was why 1916 came about; this had to be broken, the Irish people had to be shown what their heritage was. In a capsule this was the history of Ireland.[45]

Educators encouraged the teaching of this perspective on Irish history through narrating accounts of the lives of those deemed to have been outstanding individuals in Irish nationalist history and through studying perceived significant incidents. Teachers were informed that the desire was 'to establish a legitimate continuity for Irish separatism'[46] and that students should be imbued with the ideals and aspirations of Irish revolutionaries of the past.

The other side of this emphasis on Irish language and culture was a bias against Protestant Anglo-Irish culture. This exclusion was blatant

with respect to the teaching of English. Certainly, there was an emphasis on 'Shakespeare's Historical Dramas and other suitable plays of the same period', and on the poems of Scott, Byron, Longfellow, Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson, but no recognition was given to contemporary Anglo-Irish dramatists, poets, essayists or novelists.[47] Professor T. J. Corcoran, SJ, the main architect of the secondary school programme, defended this lack of attention on the grounds that it protected students from exposure to a body of literature which was 'rarely good in structure' and was 'strongly influenced by a Protestant ethos and materialist values'.[48] This rejection of works such as those of Berkeley, Goldsmith, Swift, Shaw and Wilde was part of a process of strengthening the connection between Catholicism and the nation-building enterprise. The fact that it might also contribute to feelings of rejection on the part of the minority Protestant population was of little concern to either the Catholic Church or the State.

The Protestant Churches did raise objections in the early years of the State to what they saw as the compulsory promotion of the Irish language and of Gaelic traditions that were not part of their cultural inheritance.[49] The objections became public when it was announced that a pass in Irish would be necessary from 1928 onwards in order to pass the Intermediate Certificate examination overall and from 1934 in order to pass the Leaving Certificate examination overall. The Church of Ireland Bishop of Cashel, for example, expressed his belief that this was not only unjust in relation to his flock, but was also ill-advised from a material point of view since continental languages would be of more benefit in the promotion of the nation's economic development.[50] Such objections, however, were to no avail and also faded away in later decades.

The Catholic Church was well satisfied from the early years of Independence that its educational interests were safeguarded by the administrative and curricular structures of the State. In turn, it cooperated with the State in its gaelicization project. It soon became clear, however, that it was not prepared to accept the process beyond a certain level, with fear being expressed in the 1920s that too much emphasis on teaching the Irish language might threaten the place of the classical languages in the curriculum. The Church also argued that it needed to be always kept in mind that it was English that had helped to make Ireland 'an apostolic nation'.[51] Concern increased in 1934, the year in which a pass in Irish became essential for passing the Leaving Certificate examination overall.[52] The argument was that any further increase in emphasis on the language could push Latin out of the curriculum of boys' secondary

schools. When this became a possibility in 1936, the Catholic Headmasters Association objected in a lengthy public statement in which it was argued that the secondary school programmes in Latin provided the necessary groundwork in an essential subject for seminarians. The matter arose again in 1937, following speculation about the reconfiguration of the compulsory subjects in the secondary school curriculum in the interest of promoting further gaelicization. Catholic and Protestant headmasters were at one in expressing opposition to any such move.

The severity of the Church's opposition was such that curriculum changes over the next 30 years upheld the pre-eminence of Latin and English. This, however, was only one of the ways in which the Catholic Church safeguarded its interests in the secondary school curriculum. It also played a part in marginalizing, if not completely neutralizing, other educational interest groups, most notably parents, from contributing to the development of curriculum policy and practice. It also cooperated with successive governments to stifle attempts to establish a national forum where curricular and managerial proposals could be discussed by members of various interest groups.[53]

All secondary schools, both Catholic and Protestant, were free to teach religion in the schools and to permeate school life with their particular religious ideas and practices, and this they did to great effect. Within Catholic schools, there was a significant degree of uniformity in the nature of the religious climate that prevailed because of the domination of the teaching force by the religious. Priests, brothers and nuns taught religion daily in classes lasting about 45 minutes. They imparted dogma, morals and Church history in all grades, with Catholic doctrine being viewed as received truth handed down unchanged. Senior students were also taught apologetics to help them defend their faith through systematic argumentation.

The role of the teaching of religion in Catholic girls' schools deserves special mention. Women, while excluded from decision-making in the Church, were viewed as central in perpetuating allegiance to the institution. As mothers, the argument went, they had a major responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the members of their families and for encouraging their children to enter religious life. To safeguard their children against the temptations of modern life, girls were told that when they became mothers they should bless their homes, dedicate them to the Sacred Heart and pray for the protection of the Virgin Mary. Also, domestic science, a school subject taken by most girls, was afforded a special place in their education. This, as the annual Conferences of the Convent Secondary Schools stressed throughout the 1940s and 1950s, was because a woman's role in life was to be a good wife and mother.[54]

Turning to consideration of extra-curricular activities in schools for boys and girls, both Catholic and Protestant, this was an area in which there was some variation from school to school both in the nature and extent of what was provided. The most expensive schools, such as Newbridge College, were able to advertise that they could provide 'ample facilities for all outdoor games'.[55] Choral singing and piano lessons were extras in a number of schools of this nature, both for boys and girls. Clongowes Wood College advertised that it had 'a flourishing Dramatic Society and orchestra' and a 'Debating Society founded by Thomas Francis Meagher',[56] while the Society of Friends co-educational Newtown School in Waterford prepared students for 'awards in music and life-saving'.[57] The latter school also offered a great variety of practical subjects, including domestic science, dressmaking, art, physical training and handicrafts, Belvedere College offered games, public speaking, art, music and photography,[58] and Alexandra College had a geography club and a Gaelic Society to foster a love of the Irish language and Irish drama and music.[59]

When it came to extra-curricular activities of a non-religious nature, most of the schools outside of the cities, with a few exceptions, concentrated only on sport. In boarding schools, games were generally played in after-school hours. Day schools also promoted games, usually during one afternoon a week, sometimes renting a field to provide the necessary facility. The results of hurling, Gaelic football, soccer, camogie, rugby and hockey school-championship games were reported in the local and provincial press, often at the request of the winning school, which saw the publication of success as a way of enhancing its public image and wooing extra students. Also, from the 1930s, army and ex-army gymnastics' instructors taught Swedish drill in some schools around the country and put on drill displays for the public at annual school sports' days.

Some schools also organized an annual concert or opera, and entered students for inter-school debating competitions. However, such activity was confined largely to students in boarding schools and to day students who lived near their schools. For those day-school students who did not live near the school, the priority once the hours of formal schooling came to an end was to dash on foot, or bicycle, often in bad weather and over rough roads, in order to get home before the onset of darkness.

Teachers

In the middle of the 1960s, 55 per cent of all secondary schoolteachers in Ireland were Catholic nuns, brothers and priests.[60] The majority of the remainder were Catholic lay people teaching in the schools of the

religious, while the minority were lay people teaching in lay schools and in Protestant schools. This section considers some of the characteristics of these different groups of teachers.[61]

Most of those who taught in schools who were termed 'nuns' were, in fact, religious sisters. In considering the different 'types' of female religious orders, Armstrong has pointed out that, traditionally, Canon Law has defined nuns as belonging to an enclosed 'order' of women, remaining in convents throughout their lives and devoting their time to prayer and spiritual contemplation.[62] Religious sisters, on the other hand, take simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and devote themselves to 'prayer and good works'.[63] The popular practice in Ireland throughout the period under consideration, however, was to use both 'nuns' and 'religious sisters' as generic terms and not to bother with the finer ecclesiastical distinctions in terminology.

A significant number of the female religious orders who ran schools in Ireland were originally founded amongst the growing Catholic middle class in the country at the end of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries. Within most of these orders, as in the case of most of those which originated in Continental Europe, a distinction existed which reflected class divisions within the wider society. For many years, only those who paid a dowry were permitted to become 'choir sisters' and train to become teachers or nurses. Those from poorer homes became 'lay sisters', wore more humble clerical garb and were restricted to doing domestic work within the confines of the convent.[64] In the case of some orders, lay sisters, when attending Mass, had to remain out of view of the choir sisters in a separate section of the church. On this, Magray has commented as follows:

> Although Irish convents were primarily the stronghold of the middle class, they also attracted women of the lower classes. Typically from farming or poor urban backgrounds, these women were allowed to enter, but as 'lay' sisters who took nonbinding vows, as opposed to the choir sisters who took solemn, life-long religious vows. Such women comprised from 10 to 20 percent of the total number in a community, and they took responsibility for the domestic duties of the convent (i.e., cooking and cleaning for the rest of the sisters). Along with the elevated status that religious vows brought to these women in society at large came the understanding that they would hold an inferior status within the community.[65]

The general attitude towards the lay sisters was that they provided essential support so that the choir sisters could devote themselves fully

to the apostolic work of the congregation, which was usually either teaching or nursing. It was not until the mid-1960s that the distinction was completely abolished as a result of the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council.

Priests who conducted schools were outnumbered by female teaching religious and by teaching brothers. A minority of them were diocesan priests teaching in the diocesan colleges, while the majority were members of religious orders. The latter had the same powers as diocesan priests in that they could celebrate Mass, remit sins, preach and administer the sacraments. However, like female teaching religious and religious brothers, they added the vow of poverty to the vows of chastity and obedience taken by the diocesan clergy.

Amongst some of the religious orders of priests involved in teaching, including the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the Jesuits and the Augustinians, was the lesser rank of 'brother'. In a number of ways, these non-ordained religious brothers were the counterpart of the lay sisters, as their work consisted of domestic duties. To this was usually added heavy maintenance work such as carpentry and painting, and, in some cases, farm labouring. They differed from lay sisters, however, in a number of ways.[66] In some instances, they acted rather like teacher assistants, especially through involvement in coaching school sports' teams. They also differed from lay sisters in that their allocation to the lesser ranks had nothing to do with whether they were financed or not by their families. Rather, these religious brothers were individuals whose membership of an order was welcomed, but who were deemed not sufficiently highly qualified to be ordained as priests. Finally, their situation differed from the lay sisters in that they sat with the priests at meals and partook in recreation with them.

Religious brothers who were members of religious orders of priests should not be confused with those who were members of such religious orders of brothers as the Irish Christian Brothers, the De La Salle Brothers and the Marist Brothers. Like religious orders of nuns and priests, these religious orders of brothers also lived in a community with fellow members and took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They differed from priests mainly in the fact that they were not ordained and consequently were not empowered to administer the Seven Sacraments of the Church. The great majority of them in all religious communities were involved in teaching, with a small number being involved in nursing or some form of social work. Occasionally a community also had one or two 'domestic brothers'. These were individuals whose membership of an order was welcomed but, like their equivalents in religious

orders of priests, were deemed not suited to teaching, or to other professional activities of the orders. Their principal duties were to prepare meals for the community and to keep the house clean, while some also worked on farms attached to schools. As with lay sisters, they were seen as being important because they allowed their colleagues to concentrate on their professional duties, including teaching, without being distracted by domestic chores. At the same time, safeguards were in place to ensure that lay brothers did not become marginalized. These safeguards included the expectation that they would take their meals with the teaching brothers and join with them at recreation.

The Church preferred to staff Catholic schools with priests, brothers and nuns, claiming that their years of spiritual preparation conferred on them a special stamp not held by lay people.[67] Largely, the argument was that the 'religious personality' of the teacher who was a member of a religious order rendered him, or her, ideally positioned for the shaping of young Catholic minds. What is being referred to here is not one's 'natural' personality but, rather, the personality which was formed through a period of special religious training, of which teacher training was an integral part.

Considering this background, it is not surprising that the official manuals produced to guide the actions of members of religious teaching orders indicated that lay teachers were to be viewed as being of lesser status.[68] The nature of the rhetoric, regulations and practices which sanctioned this marginalization provides insights regarding the self-image of those in religious life, particularly the way in which they were psychologically oriented to consider themselves to be much more fitted for teaching than were lay people. For example, in excluding lay teachers from the development of school policy, the standard argument of the nuns, of religious brothers and of priests was that they themselves were eminently more suited to administering and guiding the schools because of their religious commitment, their total devotion to their work and the fact that they were not distracted by family demands and problems.

Various safeguards were instituted by the different religious orders to facilitate the maintenance of this situation. One such safeguard was embodied in those rules and regulations of the orders which made explicit the need for their members to distance themselves from the lay teachers. The reasoning behind this was that lay teachers were 'seculars' and that 'it is by unnecessary communication with seculars, that the religious spirit departs from Communities, and that the spirit of the world enters with its train of abuses and relaxation.'[69] On this, the 'rules'

of the Loreto Sisters simply stated that no sister was to speak with seculars, 'or call others to speak with them, without a particular or general leave of the Superior'.[70] Other religious orders went further, particularly in highlighting what were perceived to be the dangers involved. For example, the 'rules' of the Irish Christian Brothers required members to 'abstain from frequent and unnecessary conversations with seculars' and to avoid 'engaging in political conversations with assistant teachers'.[71] By 'assistant teachers' was meant lay teachers. What was being made clear through this terminology was that a lay teacher was to be employed in a school only when no nun, religious brother or priest could be found to fill an essential teaching position. The 'rules' of the Irish Christian Brothers also demanded that members ensure 'the same conscientious discharge of duty from the lay teachers, who ought not to be allowed to bring newspapers into the classroom, much less to read them therein'.[72]

Some members of religious orders were anxious that their lay counterparts would enjoy good working conditions and be happy in their schools. Even so, their approach was that of benevolent employers towards their employees, rather than one informed by a view that they were partners with the lay teachers in the provision of Catholic education. It was well into the 1960s before the official literature of the religious orders ceased to view lay teachers as fulfilling an essentially inferior and supplementary role.

The small number of non-Protestant lay schools in the country were owned and staffed largely by Catholic lay teachers. In the case of nearly every one of these schools, which often only had three or four teachers on staff, the teaching team consisted of the founder of the school and sometimes a spouse or relation. As already indicated, the headmasters of the male Protestant secondary schools were usually Protestant clergymen and the headmistresses of Protestant girls' schools were committed members of the church to which they belonged. A particular issue for Protestant schools as a group by 1963–1964 was that they were unable to obtain all of their staff members from the Protestant population; of the total number of teachers in Protestant schools, 290 were members of the (Anglican) Church of Ireland, 116 were RCs, 31 were Presbyterians, 16 were Methodists and 12 were classified as 'Others'.[73]

Teaching

The vast majority of the secondary schools, as has already been pointed out, were Catholic schools and were staffed by teachers who were

nuns, brothers and priests, or who had themselves been taught by such personnel.[74] Accordingly, it is not surprising that there was a strong relationship between training for the religious life and the teaching that went on in schools. In particular, the training, or 'formation' as it was called, was organized on a uniform programme, where inflexible rules regulated every detail of daily life under an authoritarian internal government.[75] This situation provided the broad parameters within which teachers were informed on how they should conduct their work. In particular, they learned at a very early stage that they were not supposed to promote any serious questioning of the Church amongst students.

In making the latter point, one, of course, has to recognize that not all showed absolute fidelity to this position. Also, it had certain positive features. In particular, it served to ensure that an emphasis was placed on ensuring that teachers would value order, attend carefully to the preparation of school programmes and lessons, and work hard for their students. At the same time, it presented difficulties for those in religious life who felt that knowledge should be presented in a personalized way. Indeed, a significant rule of religious orders held that friendships should not be permitted to develop between members.[76] This rule grew out of the notion that spirituality could only be built up by laying aside one's sensitivity and one's need for love and affection.

Overall, the cloister or monastery experience was limiting. McElligott has described the life of priests who taught in diocesan colleges as follows:

> A priest in a diocesan college may enter college as a boarder at the age of twelve, remain on after the age of seventeen or eighteen as s clerical student and, after ordination, continue to live within the walls of the college until released by the bishop to take up a curacy.[77]

As with members of religious orders, they were bound by rules forbidding them to discuss everyday dimensions of their lives, tensions of communal living, their reactions to instructions with which they did not agree and other strains of religious life. Furthermore, they were discouraged from being curious about happenings in the neighbourhood and were instructed to avoid reading magazines.

The discouragement of reading for pleasure amongst the religious, some have claimed, had a special impact on schooling. The novelist, John McGahern, reflecting on his own secondary school education, stated that reading a book was considered 'dissolute, a waste of time'[78]

unless it was to help pass examinations in order to get a job. In the diocesan colleges, students were long subject to a rule which forbade them even to read newspapers or periodicals. Several papal and consistorial instructions at the beginning of the twentieth century laid particular stress on this rule[79] and were relaxed in the 1940s only to the extent of allowing Catholic weekly newspapers and magazines to be available in school libraries.

The nature of the preparation of priests, brothers and nuns discouraged the posing of questions about their way of life. Teachers who underwent such a religious formation were not, in turn, inclined to seek to develop a questioning approach towards life amongst students. Although some students were educated by such intellectually oriented orders as the Jesuits and the Dominican nuns, the great majority were discouraged from engaging in critical debate. The poet Thomas Kinsella, who attended O'Connell's Schools run by the Irish Christian Brothers in Dublin, argued that while the teaching process was efficient, 'inspiration was not necessarily inherent in the system . . . it was a matter of running into exceptional people'.[80] Fellow artists, Thomas Murphy, Charles Harper and Robert Ballagh have also attested to a lack of encouragement of a questioning attitude to religious beliefs.[81] As the academic and poet Professor Brendan Kennelly has put it, 'Catholicism introduced me to the notion that everything was answerable.'[82]

Textbooks did little to compensate. They contained plenty of information, but lacked illustrative material which might have appealed to the creative and imaginative powers of students.[83] The texts for Irish were grammar-oriented and were based on a notion that selections of prose should be committed to memory and then be drawn upon in the writing of letters, essays and descriptive passages. Geography texts were geared towards questions of the 'name', 'state' and 'describe' type that demanded rote learning, while neglecting to promote personal investigation, the handling of sources and the development of powers of empathy. The standard history texts of the time were equally content-dominated. They presented history as an accumulation of facts and 'correct' interpretations of 'revealed' knowledge. This 'closed' approach to knowledge and the promotion of the view that 'certainty' existed served the Church well in the development of loyal Catholics.

Various rituals in the secondary schools also played a part in developing loyal Catholics. The Irish Christian Brothers stated that on entering the classroom in the morning a brother should kneel and recite privately the 'Prayer before School', with each student following suit.[84] Likewise, they were told that every hour the clock struck in school, they should

get their students to stand and say the Hail Mary. In similar vein, the Presentation Sisters required students to engage in spiritual recollection at noon each day. Commenting on the impact of this approach on his life, the dramatist, Thomas Kilroy, a first-year student at St Kieran's Diocesan College, Kilkenny in 1945, described how the school week was punctuated with prayer, how each day began with morning Mass and how weekends were 'dominated by Sunday's religious duties'.[85]

As part of the effort to develop their loyalty to the Church, students were also enrolled in school branches of such organizations as the Legion of Mary and the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association, which encouraged regular prayer and the value of 'good works'. Furthermore, they were required to partake in religious ceremonies and processions and to go to Confession regularly. Also, there was an emphasis on developing their loyalty to the Church through the use of religious icons and symbols. On this, novelist Maeve Binchy has described how secondary school students were led to view reality in a special way through her characterization of the classroom world of statues, holy pictures and little altars to the Sacred Heart and the Little Flower in her novel *Light a Penny Candle*.[86] Cards carrying images of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin and the saints were used as prizes and encouragement awards. Schools also had rituals specifically designed to encourage students to become priests, brothers and nuns. The annual school retreat was particularly important in this regard. It generally lasted about three days, during which students immersed themselves in prayer, religious reflection, spiritual exercises and the reading of religious works. Students were introduced to the lives of the founders of the religious orders whose schools they attended and to the history of the religious orders themselves.

Catholic schools invited guest lecturers from time to time to speak on 'vocations', and each year many religious orders sent representatives to schools to encourage students to become priests, religious brothers, or religious sisters, a campaign much assisted by the fact that most schools were single-sex institutions. Throughout the period, the Church insisted on segregation of the sexes, except in a few rural areas where low enrolments made it unviable. On this, a special meeting of the bishops in May 1926 declared: 'Mixed education in public schools is very undesirable especially among older children.'[87] The following month, the Minister for Education concurred, stating that there was a very strong objection 'to having boys and girls taught in the same school'.[88]

Titley has characterized a major component of the motivation behind this policy as follows:

> The segregation of the sexes in church-controlled secondary schools was directly related to their principal function – the recruitment of clergy. It is only by deliberately limiting opportunities for the development of relationships between the sexes that the constant flow to cloister, monastery, and seminary could be maintained.[89]

Church policy was galvanized with the publication of Pope Pius XI's *The Christian Education of Youth* in 1929. Emphasizing 'modern aberrations', the encyclical criticized 'co-education' as 'a promiscuous herding together of males and females on a completely equal footing'.[90]

The system of recruitment of personnel for the religious life through the Catholic single-sex schools was successful. Along with supplying priests, religious brothers and nuns to meet needs at home, the Catholic Church in Ireland became the second largest per capita contributor of missionaries in the Church, Holland being the largest.[91] School magazines played their part in assisting this contribution by publishing articles appealing to the idealism of students with photographs of missionaries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and with accounts of heroic activity in foreign lands.

Some former students have argued that, in their experience, the overall religious ethos of schools created an environment of contentment rather than repression and anxiety. The writer, Mary Lavin, recalled her love of the retreats, the incense and all the ceremony associated with religion:

> The rituals of the Child of Mary medal had all kinds of sentimental things about it. You asked somebody to pin it on for you. I went for all of that. The holy pictures and the chapel; they were lovely. And we would perhaps go to Rathfarnham to see a veiling – a nun being received.[92]

Similarly, the poet, John Montague, has recalled 'pleasant memories of devotions and processions' and travel writer, Dervla Murphy, has stated she was happy as a boarding student at the Ursuline Convent, Waterford in the mid-1940s, enjoying 'the anonymity of it all'.[93] Edna O'Brien has made similar claims, stressing that she is not the central character in her novel, *The Country Girls,* and that although the bleakness of the convent and the regimented life she portrayed illustrated life at the boarding school she attended in County Galway, she was happy there and 'keen on learning'.[94] Others, however, have claimed that they found the authoritarian approach to schooling claustrophobic.

Professor Thomas Kilroy, for example, has contended that 'rigid codes of behaviour coupled with a moral code which operated on a level of guilt and fear rather than reason or love' were damaging.[95] Similarly, poet Eithne Strong has argued that although she got a good education at Scoil Mhuire in Ennis, County Clare, there was 'not enough space for contact with the outside world' and the 'religious ethic was much too closed and narrow and crushing and stuffy and limiting'.[96]

The relatively small number of Protestant schools in the country also had a strong, albeit somewhat different, religious ethos. While religious emblems were, because of Church doctrine, largely absent from such schools, religious instruction occupied a most important place on the school timetable. The school chapel was a central feature of Protestant boarding schools and school magazines contained accounts of the work of clergymen and lay missionaries abroad. Also, students were encouraged to join such Protestant organizations as The Boys' Brigade and The Girls' Brigade. The aim of these organizations was to promote obedience, reverence, discipline and self-respect through Bible study and through engaging in such extra-curricular activities as physical drill, first aid, wayfaring and sport for boys, and home-nursing, needlework, housecraft, cookery, verse speaking and choral singing for girls. Some Protestant schools also had their own branches of the Irish Girl Guides and the Boy Scouts of Ireland, while charitable organizations like the Alexandra Guild in Alexandra College undertook charitable work in tenements and visited the sick and the elderly.[97]

Last, and most certainly not least, most secondary schools, both Protestant and Catholic, placed great stress on preparation for the public examinations. In doing so, they were responding to the general expectation of the great majority of parents and of the students themselves regardless of the school attended. All were very much cognizant of the fact that the possession of an Intermediate or a Leaving Certificate was a passport to a job in a bank, the civil service, a county council office or an insurance company. For those who could afford to pay to attend university, the door was also opened to the professions, with their long and costly period of preparation. Many who could not afford to take this career path became primary schoolteachers or nurses, or entered religious life.

Given this situation, it is not surprising that schools advertised the emphasis they placed on obtaining success for their students in the public examinations. In the 1930s, for example, St Kieran's Diocesan College, Kilkenny, let it be known that it placed great stress 'on studies, with examinations and results closely scrutinized'[98] and The Society of

Friends' Newtown School advertised itself as an institution that had a distinguished record in public examinations.[99] While one might have expected a different approach from the Jesuits, it has been noted that at Belvedere College in Dublin there was 'no rigid following of the Ratio Studiorum'. Instead, the emphasis was on the most efficient means of getting the students good results in the public examinations 'due to a pragmatic awareness of the demands of parents'.[100]

The students were on a straight and narrow road and knew what had to be done. As one former teacher from the 1940s put it:

> The pupils lapped up the education. There were few idlers or smart alecs. The would-be class disturbers got a quick shift from the other members. They were paying for their education and they would see to it that they got value for money.[101]

The same individual recalled that teachers approached the task by not necessarily teaching all of the prescribed syllabus in any subject:

> The difficulties involved in having students accepted to do exams without having completed a full course was surmounted. The ball was thrown into my court. With a few selected students in each grade, we got down to the work of doing commerce for the Intermediate Certificate and accountancy for the Leaving Certificate. I was lucky. The students were lucky. They all got through their respective grades, some with honours .... A study of past papers revealed the mind of the examiner.[102]

Given such an approach, it is not surprising some have suggested that the consequence for students of the over-concern with examinations was that they ended up lacking in some degree a well-rounded personality.[103] Dr Jeremiah Dempsey, a distinguished Irish Christian Brothers' product, has commented in this vein, stating:

> If the education was intensive, it was also narrow. For years after I left I was unaware of anything around me that didn't belong to the work in hand.[104]

Professor Basil Chubb also suggested that amongst the intellectually able it produced a stereotype which was hard working, but rather narrowly practical in approach and inclined to be concerned with the short-term objective.[105]

Former students from the literary and artistic world have recalled in similar fashion. John McGahern has described the heavy emphasis placed on trial runs of the public examinations that were held at Christmas and Eastertime,[106] while fellow novelist, John Banville, has spoken about 'the diligent rabbiting away at the work' and commented on the dedicated attitude of the Irish Christian Brothers who brought boys back to school on Saturday mornings for extra tuition that incurred no extra fee.[107] Similarly, Bob Geldoff has given the following description of the traditional system of weekly assessment operated by the authorities at Blackrock College in County Dublin:

> Blackrock College had a weekly system of assessment. Each subject was marked out of nine. Six was considered average and there was a blacklist for everyone who got three fives or under and an honours list for anyone whose marks in every subject was seven or over.[108]

For some, this approach and emphasis in schooling led to unhappiness. On this, Charles Harper recalled:

> I remember feeling tremendous unhappiness at not being one of the people who did what was expected, reaching particular standards in particular subjects that you had to reach, standards in such as maths and Irish and various other subjects, and if you didn't reach these standards you were considered a failure.[109]

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that all students reacted in this manner. In fact, there are other artists who have argued that the approach stood them in good stead later on since it taught them how to study and how to organize knowledge.[110]

* * *

To conclude, this chapter has provided a broad sketch of key aspects of secondary school education in Ireland from 1922 to 1967. General trends in the provision of secondary school education and of the categories of schools which existed were outlined. This was followed by an overview of the prescribed curriculum. A broad profile of the teachers in the schools was then presented. The chapter finished with a brief exposition on the general approach to teaching used in the schools. Throughout, extracts from various reminiscences on schooling during the period were provided to illustrate and illuminate different points made. It is important to stress, however, that these reminiscences are not

offered as a 'true' representation of the situation. Rather, they should be seen as stimuli to provoke us to consider how a wide variety of people has remembered their experience of schooling at various points throughout the period. The accounts which follow in the next seven chapters of this book are offered in the same spirit.

3

Secondary School Education in Diocesan Colleges in Ireland, 1922–1962

All 28 of the diocesan colleges which operated in the country at the time of the introduction of the free education scheme in 1967 offered the standard secondary school curriculum. Most of them had been established by the Catholic bishops following the relaxation of the Penal Laws. They grew out of a response to a Tridentine decree which argued that each bishop should have a junior seminary in his diocese. Along with providing secondary school education for Catholic boys, they were charged from the time of their establishment with encouraging students to consider becoming diocesan priests.

As Chapter 2 has pointed out, the colleges were large purpose-built boarding schools located in fine parkland settings, with the chapel and the study hall being their central features, while they also had a range of other educational facilities. The provision of some examples helps to illustrate the general pattern of what they were like. St Patrick's College, Cavan, which was opened in 1874, was a spacious building and had additional accommodation provided in 1939.[1] This included an assembly hall, a library and new dormitories. Coláiste Mhuire, Galway, which was opened in 1912, was built on 19 acres of land and had a gymnasium added in 1915.[2] Colásite Mhuire, Knockbeg, County Carlow, was also a fine purpose-built school on spacious grounds.[3] An infirmary was added in the late 1920s and domestic and nursing arrangements were under the charge of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary. St MacCartan's College, Monaghan, was a three-storey boarding college with well-planned additions.[4] St Joseph's College, Garbally, County Galway, was along similar lines and a new wing was added in 1939.[5] A new college established in the twentieth century was St Munchin's Diocesan College, which was built in County Limerick in the 1950s.[6]

The colleges became intimately involved in the public examination-oriented secondary school education system from 1878, the year of the passing of the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act. This act defined intermediate (what later became known as secondary) education as that stage of education which intervened between primary instruction and professional or higher studies.[7] It also led to the establishment of the Intermediate Education Board of Ireland, which aided intermediate education through the award of results fees to school proprietors and prizes to students based on their performance in the public examinations. The legislation included a conscience clause to safeguard pupils' religious affiliations during religious instruction classes. In reality, however, what evolved was a mechanism for supporting denominational secondary schools which were privately owned, managed and staffed.

Doyle[8] states that in the year the board was established, the diocesan colleges, through their representative group, the Catholic Headmasters Association (CHA), made it clear that they would strive to be the leaders in the competitive examinations. This strong emphasis on examination achievement, she notes, extended right through the twentieth century. She also states that 'this does not deny a long tradition in sports, debating and a broader educational experience for students.'[9] Furthermore, she claims that the CHA 'was also interested from its foundation in teaching methods and special training for teachers'.[10]

The general pattern established under the British administration continued after Independence, with the diocesan colleges simply switching their curriculum focus to the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations. Also, following Independence, they now concentrated almost exclusively on Gaelic games. Furthermore, as pointed out already in Chapter 2, each college catered, on average, for about 170 boys, right up to the introduction of the free education scheme in 1967. As also pointed out, these boys were generally the sons of shopkeepers, business people, those in the lower level professions and those farming medium-sized farms.

The remainder of this chapter details the accounts of the memories of secondary schooling of three individuals who commenced attendance at a diocesan college prior to 1967. The first of these attended Coláiste Mhuire Diocesan College in Galway. The original school, which served the Diocese of Galway, was established in 1844. Then, in 1910, work commenced on the building of a new school on spacious grounds, which opened two years later. The college continued to function as a diocesan college throughout all of the period under consideration.

The second individual whose account of his memory of secondary schooling is presented here attended St Brendan's Diocesan College in Killarney. This diocesan college serving the Diocese of Kerry was founded in 1860. The original school was located on the ground floor of the Bishop's House and boarders lived in lodgings nearby. The school which functioned for the rest of the period consisted of extensive buildings which were erected adjacent to the Bishop's House, initially in 1870, again in the 1890s and yet again in the 1930s, 1950s and 1960s.

The third individual whose account of his memory of secondary schooling is presented here attended St Patrick's Diocesan College, Cavan. This college was established in 1871 both as a junior seminary and a senior seminary for the Diocese of Kilmore. It ceased to be a senior seminary in 1886, but continued to function as a minor seminary, or diocesan college. Over the next century, various additions were added to the existing building.

Coláiste Mhuire, Galway City: The memories of Frank Johnston

I was born in Kiltimagh, County Mayo, in 1947. We lived in a house in the town. My dad was a mechanic and my mother was a primary schoolteacher who also ran a newsagency. She was required by the State to give up teaching when she got married, but she used to provide tuition privately for pupils who were preparing for county council scholarship examinations. While she was from Kiltimagh, my dad was from Carnew, County Wicklow. His mum and dad died during the great flu of 1918 and his first cousin reared him. I am the third youngest in the family, with three sisters older than me and three younger.

I started school in a primary school in Kiltimagh run by the St Louis Nuns. They also ran a boarding school and a secretarial school for girls. After completing the early years, I transferred, like all of the other boys, to the local primary school, which had an all-lay teaching staff. Many pupils finished at the end of sixth class, which in fact was at the end of eight years of primary schooling, but I did an additional year, in seventh class. I think it was because I was considered to be too young to go on to boarding school.

Four others boys also completed seventh class and then the five of us went to Coláiste Mhuire, the diocesan college for the Diocese of Galway. It is located in the city. It was one big school building in my time. It was my mother and father who decided that I should go there. I think that the fees were about 65 pounds a year and paying them

involved a great sacrifice on the part of my parents because they didn't have a lot of money at the time. The fee included the cost of boarding. There was no such thing as going home at weekends because the school didn't allow it. The majority of students were boarders but about 100 local lads also attended the school. A number of lay teachers taught in the school and some of them lectured part-time at University College Galway (UCG), which was nearby. Most of the teachers, however, were diocesan priests. Their job was just to teach; they did not have any parish duties.

From the beginning, I became great friends with lads from other parts of County Mayo, and some of us are still friends to this day. We tried to make the best of it. One of the things that helped us pass the time away was that we played football, hurling and handball. We also had small duties to attend to. We had to have our own towels and every week we had to put them in our laundry bags along with our socks, our underwear and our vests. They were collected to be washed and were returned to us in our bags again.

There were two hours of study every night. We also had school on a Saturday morning. We got up every morning at half past six, washed and went down to Mass about seven. By then you had to have your bed made because both it and your locker were inspected. Everything was regimented. We had no curtains separating us in the old dormitory so everybody could see everybody else, but the new dormitories did have partitions. The accommodation was comfortable enough but it used to be bitterly cold in the winter because one or two of the priests on duty insisted on windows being kept open. Some nights were freezing. I think it was in 1961 or 1962 that we had bitter frost for about 16 weeks. On the other hand, it was very pleasant in the classrooms as they were heated by big radiators.

After Mass every morning we went directly to breakfast. We were served by women who came around with trolleys. Usually there was a prefect sitting at each table and he made sure we behaved ourselves. When we finished our breakfast, the plates were passed up and the prefect would see to it that they were put on the trolleys and brought into the kitchen. After that, at about eight o'clock, we said the Grace after Meals.

Before class began at 8.30 am we used to do what we called 'the walks'. It involved walking on a pathway around the two football pitches. Others used to have a quick game of handball or basketball. Then the bell rang telling us to go to class. We had a morning break around 11.00 am and lunch break was around 12.30 pm, when we went back to the

refectory and had the principal meal of the day, just like we would have had if we were at home. Then it was back to the classrooms again until about 3.30 pm.

The school ran a great system of football leagues, hurling leagues and basketball leagues in the afternoons. We were organized into teams and every evening we played and points were accumulated; at the end of a term there was usually a grand final between the teams who had accumulated the highest level of points. I think the bell used to ring around 5.00 pm and we'd come in and go to the showers. After that we went to the school chapel to recite the Rosary. Then we had our evening meal, after which we went to a building which had four big classrooms that could be made into one hall by opening a number of concertina doors. Two of the married teachers and two priests took it in turns to supervise our study there. They used to go around making sure that we were on task. That went on for a few hours. If you had an assignment, you could ask them about it; you were able to have a conversation. There wasn't total silence.

I have no memory of school being dull and boring. Also, I have no memory of being lonely. My sister had completed a science degree at UCG and she was working as a laboratory technician at the regional hospital nearby. She used to come to visit me on a Saturday afternoon. The other lads from home used to meet her with me, and then when their mum and dad used to come, I would get to meet them. Saturday mornings were taken up with formal schooling until about 1.00 pm. We were not allowed to go to the city unless we needed to see a doctor or a dentist. Sometimes we were able to use that as an excuse to get out. But, most of all, Saturday was sport, sport, sport, sport. A lot of neighbouring schools used to come in and play games against us. Sometimes games were played against older fellows who resided at a local seminary. We also had an outdoor basketball court and at the end of spring, some of the priests and lay teachers used to put lines down around the football field to make lanes for athletics. However, there was absolutely no soccer, no rugby, no cricket and no hockey played in the school. These were considered to be English games and not in harmony with the school's ethos.

The language of instruction in the school was Irish. The only subject taught to us through English was English. I liked that set-up even though I was not a native Irish speaker. There was something special about it. We used to learn Christian doctrine through Irish, along with mathematics, geography, history, Latin and Greek. Some of the teachers, both priests and lay men, were native Irish speakers. Also, quite a

number of pupils were from the Connemara Gaeltacht and from the Aran Islands. So, we had two languages being spoken in a natural way in the school. Also, we had no sense of difference in any way between those who spoke Irish as a first language and those who did not.

We never studied anything like drawing or woodwork in the school. There was no teaching of technical subjects at all. Furthermore, none of us studied science and there was no sex education whatsoever. Also, there was no great pressure put on us academically on a day-to-day basis. There certainly was no practice of continuous assessment. Now, having said that, we did have exams at the end of each term and the results were mailed home. They were telling your folks how you were doing. There was a lot expected of you. And if you were not doing well, you would be reminded that your folks were making sacrifices for you. As the time to sit for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examination grew closer, the teachers organized tutorials and they browbeat you with questions extracted from previous examination papers. It certainly does not compare favourably with modern teaching methods. But you had to know your stuff and understand it.

We did have a certain amount of extra-curricular activity other than games. I remember we were allowed to watch TV at the time of the Cuban missile crisis and again on the day President Kennedy was shot. However, we did not have regular access to a TV set. Sometimes it was wheeled out, put on a big stand and switched on as a reward for good behaviour. We particularly looked forward to the chance of viewing 'The Fugitive' on a Friday night. Films were never shown in school, but two or three times a year we were allowed to go to the Savoy Cinema. We used to march down the street with our school caps and blazers on us. Also, some fellows had transistor radios, but we were not supposed to have them. We would switch them on under the bed at a very low volume at night and listen to Radio Luxemburg and Radio Caroline and hope we would not be heard.

Every year we put on a light opera, usually a Gilbert-and-Sullivan production, and the parents came to see us perform it at Christmas. You could go to the school library regularly and play chess and draughts. There was also time available to go into the library to read. However, we never had any school dances or any contact with local girls' schools. Anything of that nature happened at holiday time. We used to have summer jobs and would earn enough that we could afford to go to local *céilís* on a Wednesday night and 'a hop' on a Friday night. And sometimes we went to dance halls. This was also the only time we smoked or watched TV nightly.

We were not allowed to smoke in school. Fr Maxwell, a teacher of English, used to stand out on the back steps of the building with his hands behind his back when on duty. The boys' toilets were quite a bit away and if somebody said, 'Father, they're smoking in the toilet, they're smoking in the toilet', he'd say, 'I wouldn't bend so low to catch so little.' Then he would turn his back and walk away. He tried to discourage us from smoking through the use of his fine voice rather than through dishing out any kind of physical punishment. In fact, the priests never used the leather, but some of the lay men did when we misbehaved.

In our Leaving Certificate year we had occasional talks from one of the priests on what we might do when we would leave school. We were continuously advised to keep studying for the Leaving Certificate examination and also to do the Matriculation examination of the National University of Ireland (NUI). As a result, I did both examinations. And I remember that they were two completely different examinations, based on completely different syllabi. I also remember being told that if you had graduated with distinction but couldn't mix with other people, then your qualifications weren't worth the paper they were written on. That was constantly impressed on us. We were told about the importance of having good social relations with each other and with people outside of the school. It was as important, we were told, to be respectable and tolerant in life as it was to be successful academically.

Occasionally we had visits from religious-order priests. They used to talk to members of the senior classes about doing missionary work overseas. But I never remember them handing out any leaflets. They made it clear that they would be around for a while if we wanted to have a talk with them about possibly joining the order, but there was never any compulsion. And yet quite a few lads in my class went on to be priests. Most of them became diocesan priests. I sometimes wonder what the influence was. There was no great emphasis on it at school. Perhaps it came from their parents, but I really don't know. Sometimes when on walks they would talk freely about their plans to join the priesthood.

St. Brendan's Killarney, County Kerry: The memories of Ciaran Sugrue

My very early schooling was in Drangan, in South Tipperary. It was a convent school where I was taught by the Presentation Nuns. One of my earliest recollections is of falling foul of the system. I cannot remember if it was in junior infants or senior infants, but myself and another guy from a neighbouring village were out in the schoolyard. It was towards

the end of the year. There were benches outside with children's building bricks laid out on them. We ran our hands along the benches and flung the bricks all over the yard. So we got hauled up before the school principal who was a very forbidding looking woman and in her hand she had a 'slapper' which reminded me of an aging edging stone for sharpening a scythe. It was a couple of feet long and it was flat with rounded edges. She put us kneeling on the steps of the classroom door in front of what was probably first class and we got six whacks each on our hands. I remember that I cried. My friend was much more defiant than I was. An early lesson in how such matters were interpreted by female authority figures was provided when the principal pronounced that because of my tears I was repentant, while my partner in crime was deemed not to be remorseful; feeling pain or sorry for one's self was not part of the thought processes! However, I also have very fond memories of the same school. My senior infant teacher, Sister Leila, was a very motherly woman. I have a distinct recollection of standing at the top of the class, she with her arm around me and I feeling very secure, lost in what were very large habits, with the Rosary beads and the belt attached.

I left that part of the country in the summer of 1957 and the rest of my primary schooling was in the village of Moyvane in North Kerry. It was a very different situation. It was a regular primary school in that the teaching staff was comprised totally of lay teachers. The boys and girls were totally segregated, in separate but adjacent buildings, with separate playgrounds also. It was forbidden to cross from one playground into the other. My first teacher there, a male, was from Ballylongford, which was five miles away, and he cycled to school every morning, not uncommonly arriving clothed in rain gear. When I was in his class it was fun. I sometimes hung clothes pegs off of the tail of his coat. He never got angry about it. He could see the child's humour in it.

I think that I enjoyed primary school. My mother used to say that I couldn't get out of the house quickly enough in the morning, especially in fifth and sixth class, to go to school. There was no central heating in the school building so I used to go in early in the morning to light the fires that had already been set by the local cleaning lady. I enjoyed doing that. Fuel for these two open fires (one in each room) was provided by the parents. It was mostly turf and was brought to the school in a cart drawn by a donkey or pony. We used to be delighted when it arrived. The turf was deposited at the school gate and a group of us would be allowed out to bring it into the school porch where we practised our turf-clamping expertise. We often spent half of a morning bringing in the turf, in no hurry to complete the task. Often by about

the month of February, the fuel would have run out, so we used to go around with a pony and cart collecting bags of turf from people. Again, such an exercise could be stretched over the entire school day. As far as we were concerned, it was great to be out of school.

Occasionally, also, we were required to make ink in earthenware jars. These were the days of the inkwell and the pen. We'd end up with ink up to our elbows by the time we had made it from powder. The operation used to take place out in the schoolyard or in the porch. We'd have so much ink on ourselves we used to have to go to the lady who cleaned the school and get washing powder to clean ourselves. Half a day was spent making the ink and the other half was spent trying to clean ourselves as a consequence.

I also remember being involved in a dilemma one Easter, involving the local curate and the female teacher in the school who played the organ in the church and looked after the church choir. I was an altar boy, but because I could sing, I was also in demand for the choir. The local curate wanted all of the altar boys to line up in the sacristy for the Easter ceremonies. I remember being caught up in a sort of tug of war as I was required to be present in both jurisdictions. I also remember from being an altar boy that priests used to visit home on holidays from America and other places in summertime. It was a lucrative practice, as these priests often gave me a half-a-crown or a two-shilling piece after serving Mass for them. In similar fashion, I also made a bit of money when, again as an altar boy, I had to attend a funeral or a wedding.

A major event was when the proprietor of a small electrical shop in the village bought a radiogram. This was during the late 1950s, or early 1960s. I remember the teacher who organized the choir brought about 12 of us down to his kitchen to record us singing. It was around St Patrick's Day. It was a big deal at the time. We were getting our five minutes of fame, even if it was only in somebody's kitchen. We then recorded what we later sang in the local hall for the St Patrick's night concert. These largely out-of-school stories suggest that what has lodged in my memory is not the more mundane routines of the regular school day, which was primarily a diet of the 3Rs (English, Irish and maths) with a sprinkling of history and geography thrown in.

Of the 13 of us boys who completed sixth class together, five went to secondary school, and this was a higher than usual proportion around the country. Others went into seventh and eighth class in primary school. They were capable of succeeding in secondary school, but the nearest school was seven miles away in Listowel and the only way they would have had of getting there would have been on a bike. I remember

the principal at the time pleading with them to get up on a bike and go into the secondary school. Otherwise, he told them, they could end up hanging around the corners of the village. For some, however, family circumstances did not make attendance possible.

I wasn't particularly interested in school. I did the minimum I had to do in primary school to get by. I have no recollection of any sense of ambition to go to secondary school, but I knew from an early stage that that is what I would be doing. As it transpired, I was sent to Killarney as a boarder at St Brendan's, the diocesan college. It was about 40 miles away, but in the context of the time, it might as well have been Outer Mongolia, given the general attitudes to travel, lack of transport and poor roads. A particular advantage I had on arrival at secondary school was that my competence in Irish was good. All of my way through secondary school, given a choice, I would have preferred to have been asked to write an essay in Irish rather than in English. St Brendan's was an 'A school'. Thus, apart from English, all other subjects were taught through the medium of Irish. Both of my parents, products of cultural nationalism in post-independent Ireland, were fluent speakers and we often had conversations at home in Irish. My uncle, a priest, was teaching in the school at the time. He was one of the more enlightened teachers in the place. He looked after the choir and he conducted debates in Irish to provide us with outlets other than Gaelic football. It complicated my relationship with some teachers who were given to corporal punishment and abuse and sarcasm. He wasn't so disposed. Many still say that about him.

Mention of choir reminds me that, as a first-year student, I continued to learn to play the piano, very definitely a minority pursuit. The only piano in the entire place was located in the 'parlour' in a location that was not usually accessible to students. On a number of occasions, when I left the study hall to tinkle the ivories for a practice period, I was met by the then college president who enquired: 'Tell me, are you doing any work at all?' Alas, my engagement with formal music was short-lived. As I recall this, and to put it in a somewhat wider context, I am reminded of Finbarr Dwyer from Castletownbere, who departed this world in 2014, and who was then a senior in the school, as well as being a prefect. This latter point is important to the story, as he had a key to gain access to the dormitory for which he had responsibility, and in this manner, he could 'disappear' in order to practice his accordion playing. As early as 1969, he was all-England accordion champion, but I have no recollection that he was ever provided with an opportunity to play for his peers. He went on to have an outstanding career in terms of

performance, recording and composition. Also, I have to say that provision for music as an extra-curricular pursuit in the school did improve in subsequent years.

There were two things that counted during my time in St Brendan's. One was academic achievement and the other was Gaelic football. You had status if you had prowess in one or the other. Some fellows excelled at both. I was lucky enough to be good at Gaelic football and to play on the team that won the all-Ireland colleges' trophy, the Hogan Cup, in 1969. Recently, a lifetime later, at a gathering of teachers, I was introduced as 'this fella who has a Hogan Cup medal', a comment that serves to reinforce the perception of how important football was in the school. On that also, nobody needs to be told how important football was, and still is, in County Kerry, yet St Brendan's in 1969 was only the second Munster school ever to win the Hogan Cup; Coláiste Chríost Rí in Cork won it a couple of years beforehand. The general explanation that is provided for that is that some of the schools in Connacht, like St Jarlath's in Tuam, had larger numbers of pupils. Also, the Ulster schools, which dominated the championship for many years, had six years of secondary schooling, which meant that they had older fellows in the final year who were bigger and stronger than the likes of us.

Memories of the daily pattern of schooling itself remain with me. Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays used to seem like an eternity because each involved having a full day in class. We had a half day of classes on Thursdays and again on Saturdays. By the time you got to Thursday you felt that the grind of the week was over. Thursday came as a huge kind of relief. I also noted a little change as I progressed through school. In my early secondary school years it was compulsory to play Gaelic football. However, in my later years, some fellows who had no interest in playing used to refuse to play and they got away with it. At the same time, it was unpleasant for them if they weren't interested. A fellow who was in the army used to come into the school a number of evenings a week to inflict drill on those who refused to 'tog out'. So, if you weren't playing football you got dragooned into doing that stuff. I remember two brothers who were sent to do it all of the time. It was torture for them because, like the football, they had no interest in it. Additionally, they did this in their regular clothes, a matter about which health and safety personnel would take issue today.

Corporal punishment was pervasive, something that initially was a shock to me since it was not very prevalent in my primary schooling experience. When doing the 'Inter Cert' (Intermediate Certificate examination), we had the same teacher for Latin and Greek. He would

do the round of the class examining vocabulary. Often he would go around more than once. You would be sitting there warming your hands between your legs while trying to learn this vocabulary. If a psychologist wanted an example of negative reinforcement, this was definitely it. If you 'failed' the test when your turn came, you sat there consoling yourself while anxiously wondering if another round was in prospect or the torture would come to an end on completion of this particular round. Sometimes he would go around up to half-a-dozen times. Neither was it a unique experience confined to this teacher only.

Some teachers' use of sarcasm was also prominent. I remember one classmate of mine was regularly told that he came from 'the land of bogs and grottos'. This was said as a put-down, an insult. I also remember another teacher picking on a guy saying: 'Lads, take a good look at this guy. We have a budding Romeo in our midst.' Again it was intended to humiliate. Another classmate, this time from West Kerry, was harangued repeatedly when, in a state of nervous anxiety, he was unable to respond to questioning in a manner considered sufficiently timely by the teacher. In such circumstances, he was referred to as 'the cagey man from the West', the implication being that he was too shrewd to answer, when in truth he was being intimidated into silence while stammering to get the words out.

I sometimes smile wryly when I hear of all the pressure contemporary students are under regarding public examinations. We had more than three hours of study each night and even more at weekends – on Saturday and Sunday – and for the most part, there were no distractions, as we did not go home at weekends. Thus, going home from September to Christmas was not an option, except for one day at Halloween.

We slept in dormitories. As you progressed from year to year you changed dormitories. In each case the dormitory was overseen by a prefect. I remember a lot of bullying going on within them. Some of it is understandable, with a whole bunch of adolescent boys herded together and unsure about who they were, of where they were in the world, and all kinds of hormonal stuff going on. Even at an older stage, when you had graduated to having your own cubicle as opposed to being in an open dormitory, you could suddenly find yourself with three or four fellas who would up-scuttle you and grab you by the testicles. While this generally passed off as 'horse play', with hindsight, I have often wondered if it had any homosexual undertones. If it had, it was not talked about by ourselves or anyone else. It was also a relatively common practice for an older fella to befriend you. The 'official' story was that he had an interest in your sister, but this did not preclude those without

sisters from participating. After supper at night, there was a recognized area where you could walk and talk. I partook in this like several others and certainly there was never any advance made on me.

I never really cracked the classics at school. I think I became particularly interested in fifth year in the romantic poets in English and really got engaged with them. In some ways, fifth year was a kind of a watershed for me. Partly it was to do with achieving success in football and partly it was because I engaged with learning in a new way. The latter was due in particular to the inspiration of a teacher of English. During this year too, a small group of us, along with two of the clerical staff in particular, made history by putting on the first play ever in the history of the school. I was fortunate to have been cast in the lead role in *The Year of the Hiker*, something that I really enjoyed.

Of course, amongst adolescents, breaking the rules is tantamount to being a rite of passage. So, along with pals, going downtown illegally and meeting up with some of the local girls and those from the Presentation Convent which was located over the wall from our school, became part of our practices in our senior years. One of the things we perfected in the Leaving Certificate year was to stuff our beds and disappear downtown. A casual inspection of a bed by the priest in charge, with the aid of a torch, could be made to look convincing that it had an occupant when stuffed with a certain degree of thought and skill! Such craftsmanship facilitated heterosexual rendezvous off-campus.

Streaming was standard practice, with attendant curriculum priorities that, to the contemporary eye, may appear rather strange. In particular, if you were in the A class you did Latin and Greek, while you did science if you were in the C class. Such priorities spoke clearly to the very foundation of our school as a junior seminary and thus a recruiting ground for the clerical life. In my own case I had no idea what I wanted to do. I knew that university was out there, but I didn't have any real sense of where that might lead me. Also, I think I was afraid that somehow I wouldn't hack it. So I got the offer of a place to become a primary schoolteacher at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, and to coin a phrase, I answered 'the call'. The application process for St Patrick's is worth recalling. In those days you had to do oral examinations at Eastertime in oral Irish and 'singing'. I had no bother with either of them.

Overall, the regime in the school was very rigid. The results in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examination were published every year in the county newspaper, *The Kerryman*. I found much of it intimidating. It was only when I got out of there and spent two leisurely years at St Patrick's College, where I could choose when to engage and

when not to, that I became much more interested in learning. Now, of course, having said all I have, I also recognize that in the larger scheme of things I was very privileged to have been given the opportunity to attend secondary school at all.

St Patrick's College Cavan: The memories of Donal Brady

My parents were married in September 1950. My father, Donald, worked in the family business in Ballyjamesduff and my mother, Maura, was a nurse. Shortly after their marriage, they purchased The White Star, a significant pub right in the heart of Cavan town. They operated the business for almost eight years.

It was in Cavan town that I was born in 1954. Following the sale of the pub, we moved to a very rural area of the county known as Omard, near Kilnaleck. In 1962 the family returned to Ballyjamesduff after my father had acquired a job as a sales representative for Concrete Products of Ireland, a job for which he was singularly suited and which he greatly enjoyed until his eventual retirement.

The relatively short periods spent in such disparate geographical areas in the early years of our lives ensured that both my brother Frank and I had extremely dislocated experiences of primary schooling. The schools I attended were St Clare's Convent, Cavan Town; Ballyheelan, a school near Kilnaleck and also nearly two miles from our house; and The Old and the New Boys' Schools in Ballyjamesduff. In consequence, I have little recollection of individual teachers and believe their influence was minimal. My brother, by contrast, has stated that he was 'devastated' by the move from Cavan town. In my own case, while anomie might have been anticipated from a primary school experience in four different schools, it led instead to the development of a staunch independence, individualism and self-reliance. It also, however, meant that no 'lifelong' friendships were generated during the primary school period.

On completion of primary schooling, I enrolled, in 1966, at St Norbert's College, Kilnacrott, which is located about three miles from Ballyjamesduff. I studied there for three years and did my Intermediate Certificate examination in 1969. My brother had already started at St Patrick's College Cavan as a boarder and at that time my parents were unable to finance the attendance of both of us at boarding school. St Norbert's College was operated by the Norbertine Order which had had an abbey near Lough Oughter in Cavan prior to the Reformation. Members of the order had returned to Ireland following an invitation by the

Bishop of Kilmore in 1924. They purchased Kilnacrott House and associated lands and later erected a new abbey, which was opened in 1952. In 1959, a second-level boarding and day school was opened and operated for just over ten years. Though the abbey later became notorious due to the activities of Fr Brendan Smyth, one of its priests, he was then but a shadowy and somewhat suspect figure for the local community. He was not on the teaching staff and his presence was negligible to the student community, but I do recall my parents advising me to avoid him.

The school was small, with only one class for each study year. As a result, it suffered from curriculum narrowness. In these final years before the introduction of free education in Ireland, and specifically the commencement of free school transport, it was necessary to cycle to school each day during my first years there, an experience that I remember with great fondness and absolutely no sense of discomfort despite the fact that it was almost always done alone. Also, as study preceded the return home, the journey was frequently undertaken in the dark. At this time the school week was spread over six days rather than five. In St Norbert's, lay teachers wore black robes which today appear to be solely used by those in the legal profession such as solicitors, barristers and judges. To the students, these robes appeared as ludicrous, archaic and unnecessary accoutrements calculated to create differentiation and status based on superficial appearance rather than serving any useful purpose. They were generally untidy and when, as was generally the case, they became covered in chalk dust, they added immeasurably to classroom humour.

Though history and English were even then my favourite subjects, I have little recollection of the courses completed with the exception of carrying to this day a deep affection for Maurice Walsh's classic novel, *Blackcock's Feather*. Our teacher for Irish, a member of the order, was of a nervous disposition but had an obvious *grá* for his subject. It is perhaps our Latin teacher, John Meade, that I remember with most gratitude. He imbued in me a great interest in Roman history and an awareness of the importance of Latin to the development of European languages. The phrase *his rebus factis* from Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* is indelibly etched on my memory.

Science had just been added to the subject list on my arrival and a brand new science laboratory had been erected, but my recollection is that the lab had more to do with the satisfaction of the curriculum requirements and our teacher's need for 'toys for boys' than contributing any great educational benefit. A new female teacher of French was recruited and in a school community comprised entirely of boys

and men I believe she had the greatest difficulty in adjusting to the environment. Our maths teacher, affectionately known as PQ, as in a mathematical equation, had a singular propensity for nipping students on their cheeks between two fingers when they had answered some question incorrectly.

I have little remembrance of the teaching of religion, but I do recollect that attendance at various services was mandatory and the discovery of an unauthorized absence was one of the few occasions that I can recall being the recipient of corporal punishment. I have no recollection of bullying at this college. Corporal punishment was banned in Irish schools in 1982, and my memory of it varies significantly with regard to the two secondary schools I attended. In the case of St Norbert's, my recollection is associated with two occurrences. The first one – the imposition of punishment for skipping Mass – was carried out without there being any attempt to illicit the rationale for absence or to explain the need for attendance. The second case involved a total loss of control on the part of one teacher, who was then on medication, and engaged in a vicious whipping of perhaps the quietest, most inoffensive and most hard-working of my classmates. In the event, I believe that the punishments applied were generally considered by the pupils as irrelevant and seen as a reflection on the system, rather than in any way being associated with a need for behavioural modification in order to avoid future application.

There are only a few other events which I recall vividly from my days at St Norbert's. During my first year, I initially attended drawing classes, a subject for which I had absolutely no aptitude, and had purchased an expensive set of drawing tools. On arriving at my desk for evening study, I discovered that the tools had been stolen. Conscious of my parents' financial position, I went to the priest who was then supervising to inform him. His response was immediate: 'What the fuck do you expect me to do about it?'

Lough Sheelin was, during my youth, one of the greatest recreational facilities for the people of the county. However, it became badly polluted by intensive pig farming and one of the largest of the farms in the area was operated by the abbey. This fact I still find difficult to balance with the religious ethos preached by the order.

I do not recall a library existing at St Norbert's, nor do I recall books and reading as central educational precepts for the school. On completing my period there, I viewed the Intermediate Certificate examination as a logical end, a 'moving on' rather than a source of any great importance. In a similar vein, I saw my imminent transfer to St Patrick's

Diocesan College Cavan (St Pat's) as a natural progression rather than as a source of regret.

I transferred to St Pat's in 1969. The Bishop of Kilmore's Palace was located immediately proximate to, and within the grounds of, the college. My grandmother, who was an avid poker player, played regularly with two of the 'bishop's girls', as those females who worked for him were known, and it was in the kitchen of the palace that as a child I myself learned to play, participating in many poker sessions. On becoming a student at the college, I could never view the palace without having a smile, as it evoked the most pleasant of memories.

There were several obvious and major differences between my experiences at St Pat's and those at my previous school. First, I was now a boarder, which meant that not only could I not avoid the 'school atmosphere', but the food was by no means what I had been used to. Indeed, my mother has frequently reminded me over the years that shortly after I went to the college I called her aside and stated: 'If you don't get me out of here soon I will starve!' Also, St Pat's was both physically and population-wise a much larger institution. With three classes in each year, student competition was infinitely sharper than I had been used to. Though I topped my class with my results at St Norbert's, I now found myself with the poorest results in my class and surrounded by many gifted classmates. These included P. J. Rudden, now a partner in a major engineering firm and a former president of the Institute of Engineers in Ireland; Myles Dungan, later broadcaster and author; P. J. Fitzpatrick, late Director of the Irish Courts Service and Chair of the Croke Park Agreement Implementation Body; Michael Harding, author; Cathal Magee, late Director of the Health Services Executive (HSE); and Peter McBreen, Professor at Université Laval (the oldest centre of higher education in Canada) and Director of the Surface Chemistry Laboratory there. In addition, there were significant and perceptible differences in the quality of teachers in terms of their skill, commitment and knowledge.

Fr Raymond Brady, our teacher of English, was one of two of the most influential teachers in the college. He was young and charming, with a penchant for grooming himself well. His approach was wide-ranging and he displayed a great willingness to discuss literature with his students. His room became a haven for conversation. Indeed, in what is described as the era of bleak censorship, I can recall no occasion when any book was placed off-bounds. He explored the newly expanded English curriculum to the full and *The Charwoman's Daughter, A Handful of Dust, The Shrimp and the Anemone, Lord of the Flies* and *Wuthering*

Heights were all studied with great interest. *Hard Times*, a core text, was greatly disliked by most of the pupils. I also remember that, during fourth year, when discovered reading *Martin Chuzzlewit* by other members of the class, I was greatly lampooned for reading such 'a depressing writer'.

Through Fr Brady's intelligent approach, the work of T. S. Eliot, and specifically *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,* together with *Murder in the Cathedral*, became, and still are, amongst my favourite texts and amongst those I consider to have had the most influence on me. Indeed, a trip to Maynooth to see *Murder in the Cathedral* performed by the college players and organized by Fr Brady led directly to my decision to take a degree at the National University of Ireland (NUI), Maynooth, once I had left school. My first encounter with Joyce was also precipitated at this time when, on a trip across the border to Enniskillen for a college football match, I purchased a copy of *Ulysses* which I smuggled back under my coat with very little concern for consequences. I must admit that it was several years later before I managed to read the text, but my recollection is that Fr Brady did not even frown at my enterprise and indeed my parents informed me that he was singularly impressed with the breadth of my reading.

Fr Dan Gallogly, our teacher of Irish and history, who later became president of the college, was no less influential. His teaching skills were subordinate to those of Fr Brady but his breadth of knowledge and enthusiasm were galvanizing. In the immediate aftermath of the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising, *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising: Dublin 1916* by F. X. Martin became a virtual bible to our teacher and all in the class. Our Irish classes, however, were frequently visited by universal fear as the intricacies of grammar and the return of our essays were regularly punctuated by exhibitions of rage; I can recall one occasion when a copybook was hurled by Fr Gallogly from one end of the classroom to the other while informing the owner that although the essay was beautifully written and in perfect Irish, it was without any worthwhile content. Our history classes were altogether more placid and my interest and knowledge of the subject placed me in a privileged position. Like Fr Brady, Fr Gallogly was open to non-book influences and it was he who organized a trip by the class to view the *Battle of Britain*, although I do not recall that the visit was followed by any discussion of the merits or demerits of this film.

I attribute the good results achieved by students in the public examinations to the fact that our team of teachers remained unchanged during the two years of our senior cycle. Amongst the members of

this team, our science teacher, my cousin, Fr Benny McGuire, was more committed to the Gaelic Athletic Association than to his subject, yet charisma and empathy with the students made him a successful professional. While maths was necessary for matriculation, only those studying the honours' course approached the subject seriously. While I had studied French for the Intermediate Certificate examination, I found that my standard was so far behind my classmates that I dropped the subject and so gained some free time for additional study. Our Latin teacher was not of the standard of my previous master and my interest in the subject waned in consequence.

I do recall some incidences of bullying at St Pat's. On arrival at the college, I was placed in a dormitory with other recent arrivals, including several with obvious physical prowess and others who were physically and socially vulnerable. During a 'visit' by the 'locals', two new students were picked upon. In the case of one of the two, nettles were placed in his bed, with one of the key perpetrators being a neighbour. The unfortunate boy who was bullied reacted so badly that he decided to leave the school after a few days. The inaction of his fellow newcomers, including myself, was dictated by self-preservation or lack of interest. As best I can recollect, corporal punishment was non-existent in the classroom, but was exercised for breaches of other rules and particularly for 'sleeping in' and non-attendance at religious services. Indiscretions in the classroom were frequently punished by dispatch to the general corridor, where one was seen by all teachers and most of the students.

One event I remember vividly occurred during my first year in St Pat's. On a particularly bleak autumnal day, my class was dispatched to pick potatoes on the college farm. The field was bleak, the wind perishing, and by the time we had completed the task, all were frozen stiff. While acknowledging that such a task would today be considered abuse, this, my only experience of potato picking, undoubtedly helped me fully appreciate the suffering of our ancestors during the Great Famine, as they not only battled against the destruction of their basic foodstuff, but endured the perishing cold, exasperated by their severe hunger.

While the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were at the heart of student musical tastes, each year the college musical society performed a show, and during my period, it included *Oklahoma* and *Oliver*. Although I played no part in either of them, I remember them with great pleasure. Also, the music did much to broaden musical tastes and improve awareness of the effort and skill involved in the production of such shows. A significant additional interest was generated by the attendance of pupils from the nearby Loreto Convent at some of the performances.

While there were certainly liaisons between the pupils of both schools, I must admit that, unfortunately, I was not a participant. Also, apart from sisters of pupils, I do not recall any other female visitors to the college and in fact the few female workers who lived in college accommodation were located on what was defined and operated closely as 'the forbidden corridor'.

While athletics and basketball were numbered amongst the activities for the students, Gaelic football was at the heart of everything sporting. College team matches in Northern Ireland were particularly eagerly anticipated and supported by the entire student body. In addition, matches by the county team in Breffni Park were frequently the source of many an enjoyable visit to Cavan town. These trips were greatly welcomed because, unlike today, when the very few remaining boarding students in Irish schools can return home each weekend, we could do so only at Halloween, Christmas and Easter.

During my final year, my best friend, P. J. Rudden, became head prefect and during one term suffered a bout of serious illness. During that period he was allowed the luxury of listening to a cassette recorder. The music supplied to him by a classmate included the infamous *Je t'aime*. Because his room was located on the 'President's Corridor', I took infinite pleasure, despite P. J.'s protestations and obvious discomfort, in continuously playing the piece when I thought the president might be near. At the same time, I also believed confidently that not only would the president be unaware of the record's nature, but would certainly not expect P. J. to possess such material.

The food was, as I have already suggested, very average, but one feature etched in my memory concerns the rare provision of chips or salad at tea time. I can remember with absolute clarity that when either was provided, three classmates would individually go up to the kitchen area, return with one sliced pan each, proceed to butter the entire pan and, without much ado, devour it all with their chips or salad. A major feature of Christmas at the college was the provision of a special dinner for all of the boarding students. This dinner was, somewhat uniquely I would say, served by the entire religious teaching staff. Another central part of the occasion was the singing of *Adeste Fideles* with the greatest of gusto and enthusiasm by the entire body of students and staff. This was the most moving and unifying moment in the entire academic year.

The teaching of religion in St Pat's was largely centred on daily Mass, at which the students were regularly delegated to serve as altar boys. Also prayers were said before bedtime. As with Mass attendance, the occasion took place in the small and intimate college church. Services were

but segments, be they central ones, in a process designed to create an atmosphere conducive to reflection and contemplation. Other devices centred on the magnificent walks throughout the college grounds and the elongated study periods which were as core a part of the learning process as formal classes. The Old and New Testament were encountered as intensely interesting narratives and, rather like the work of Homer, transmitted their messages through metaphor, simile and allegory. In neither of the secondary schools I attended do I recall even rudimentary sex-education sessions and in fact I cannot remember there ever being even a reference to the subject.

Following the completion of the Leaving Certificate examination, I visited the college shortly after the results were announced and one of my most vivid recollections of how I was perceived followed an encounter with the Dean of the College. He congratulated me heartily but then informed me that my results, which placed me approximately eighth in the school, were 'not as anticipated'. In conclusion, while I enjoyed my period in both schools, I do not consider them as having been 'the happiest days of my life', nor do I consider them as having been 'my apprenticeship'. Rather, they were an essential preparation for my 'real' apprenticeship, which occurred at the NUI, Maynooth.

4

Secondary School Education in Schools of the Irish Christian Brothers in Ireland, 1922–1962

In response to its continuing loss of temporal power from late in the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church became involved in reasserting its spiritual authority around the world. As part of this project, the Church insisted it had the right to organize its own schools, staff them with its own appointees and teach distinctively denominational doctrine. Heavily represented amongst the personnel involved were members of religious teaching orders, including members of orders established in Ireland. These new Catholic religious teaching orders, founded and run by middle-class men and women in Ireland, played their part alongside long-established orders and the diocesan colleges in the spread and consolidation of official Catholic doctrine, and in the associated process of class formation and class consolidation through using schools for 'the imposition of bourgeois values and beliefs on the lower classes'.[1]

The principal male Irish teaching order was the Irish Christian Brothers, established in 1802 by Edmund Rice, a Waterford City-based middle-class merchant who made his fortune on the Waterford–Newfoundland provisions' trade.[2] Officially called the Congregation of Christian Brothers, the order quickly became known in Ireland simply as the Christian Brothers. This nomenclature sometimes causes confusion, particularly in the USA, where the De La Salle Brothers are often also known locally as the Christian Brothers. Consequently, this chapter refers to the Congregation of Christian Brothers as the Irish Christian Brothers.

Rice's first school was a converted stable in Waterford and opened in 1802, with a second school opening to cater for increasing enrolments. The following year, in 1803, the existing schools were relocated to a new educational complex in the city termed 'Mount Sion'. In 1820, the order was established as a pontifical order, which meant that it was answerable

directly to Rome rather than to a local diocesan bishop. A group of brothers, later to be known as the Presentation Brothers, however, preferred the latter option, and still exist today, albeit now as a pontifical order also.

New schools were soon opened in Carrick-on-Suir, Dungarvan, Cork, Dublin and Limerick. Later, the order spread to many provincial towns. Eventually, it became known for its provision of primary schools, secondary schools, technical schools and orphanages, and for its school for the deaf. Also, it spread to England, Australia, New Zealand, Gibraltar, Italy, the USA and Uruguay. The order also ran its own teacher-training college for primary schoolteachers at Marino in Dublin. All teaching brothers were expected to attend this college initially, even if some later went on to study for university degrees and take out university qualifications, primarily through attendance at the colleges of the NUI, to qualify them to teach in secondary schools.

Specifically regarding secondary schools in Ireland in the decades leading up to the announcement of the introduction of free education in 1967, the schools of the Irish Christian Brothers at all times constituted the largest group of Catholic schools for boys. In 1930, they had 64 secondary schools catering for 8,067 pupils. The next largest group, as already pointed out, consisted of the diocesan colleges, the 28 of which catered for 3,377 pupils. Also, while the number of secondary schools in the State run by religious orders of priests, brothers and nuns increased from 255 to 353 between 1941 and 1956, in the case of boys' schools, it was brought about primarily by the Irish Christian Brothers. Also, the increase continued from the mid-1950s into the early 1960s; the number of Irish Christian Brothers' secondary schools increased from 66 to 74 between 1957 and 1962.

Like the diocesan colleges, the majority of the Irish Christian Brothers' schools (CBSs) emphasized Gaelic games in the decades following Independence, holding that this was an essential element in the development of Gaelic civilization in Ireland. They also placed great emphasis on the teaching of the Irish language. Furthermore, a large proportion of schools in the country using Irish as the medium of instruction were schools of the order. At the same time, it is often overlooked that a small number of Irish CBSs catered for the better off sectors of Irish society and displayed their distinctiveness by promoting rugby, a game otherwise associated with Protestant schools and the elite Catholic schools. Amongst the schools of the order in this category were Christians College in Cork, Waterpark College in Waterford, and Christian Brothers' College Monkstown, in Dublin.

The secondary schools run by the order varied in terms of facilities. Some, like the North Monastery Schools in Cork and O'Connell's Schools in Dublin, were in large purpose-built buildings. In many cases, however, facilities were very basic, in accord with the fact that fees were low and parents were often not in a position to raise substantial sums of money to facilitate developments. A sense of how basic some of the school facilities were is conveyed by the following description of the CBS in Clonmel, as it was in the 1930s:

> The old Irishtown school, which was both primary and secondary in those days, consisted of three large and one small classroom. Each of the former contained three or four classes. The latter was originally a cloak-room . . . The overcrowding and the din of traffic passing by was a constant source of annoyance to the Brothers . . . . It was usual for us to stand on the side of the street to eat our lunch or to sit on the window-sills of the houses opposite.[3]

Portaoise CBS was along similar lines, but the pupils were able to avail of a field rented in the vicinity of the school for the playing of hurling; the only sporting amenity on the school grounds was a ball-alley.[4]

Some of the order's schools were also relocated from time to time from cramped conditions to vacated primary schools. For example, in 1938, the Brothers opened a new primary school in Carlow town and four years later they moved the secondary school pupils out of the existing secondary school and into the old primary school, which was in better repair than the building they had been occupying. At the same time, the secondary school pupils continued to receive instruction in science in their old science rooms.[5] Similarly, in 1951, the Irish Christian Brothers in Enniscorthy moved all of their secondary school pupils into a primary school which had been built in the middle of the previous century and which had been handed over to the Brothers by the Department of Education in 1945. Up until then, the secondary school pupils shared the same building with the boys in the Irish Christian Brothers' primary school.[6]

Mount Sion Christian Brothers' School: The memories of Noel Kelly

I grew up close to Mount Sion Secondary School but I did not attend the primary school attached to it. Instead, I went to a much smaller primary school directly across the street from my home. That was variously

known as 'Manor Street CBS', 'the Manor School' and 'St John's, the Manor', but to us it was always simply 'the Manor'. The brothers who taught there lived in the monastery attached to the Mount Sion schools. In my time, the usual complement of teachers in the Manor consisted of two Christian Brothers and two lay teachers. When I progressed to Mount Sion Secondary School, it was a matter of going around the corner and walking just a little further, for about ten minutes. The psychological journey, however, was a bit different, a bit daunting, as Mount Sion both literally and metaphorically overshadowed the Manor School and my home. Because the brothers in the Manor were part of the community in Mount Sion, there was a sense that you were part of the fold, but you also had a sense that you were just a little removed from the centre and perhaps not quite as good. Therefore, in any competition at primary school level against the boys in Mount Sion Primary School, and particularly in hurling matches, we were always out to prove that the Manor boys were just as good as they were.

Nevertheless, from the early days in my last year in primary school, there was a certain amount of preparation undertaken and certain expectations were made clear for some who would be going on to Mount Sion Secondary School and also for others who wouldn't. Amongst the things that you knew would be coming in a few weeks' time was school on Saturdays. This coincided with the fact that there was school in the secondary school in Mount Sion on Saturdays. We were also promised that there would be a great emphasis on playing hurling in Mount Sion. And it was made clear that it would be a big school and also that we would have individual teachers for individual subjects.

Looking back, it is also clear that there was a family expectation that I would go on to secondary school and that it would be to Mount Sion. In fact, it was taken for granted. Somehow, myself and my soon-to-be secondary school peers at the Manor also knew that there were fellows in the class who were not going to be going on to the secondary school, although at the time we were not articulating any notion of whether this was for academic reasons, or social reasons, or whatever.

A striking memory of commencing secondary school was how many pupils there were; there were hundreds of them. I think there may even have been seven first-year classes. We were also aware that we were mixing with fellows who had come directly from Mount Sion Primary School and I remember a sense of trying to integrate with some of them. In fact, a small start had been made in this regard during the summer beforehand when about five or six of us went to Ballingeary in the West Cork Gaeltacht to attend a summer school to improve our competence

in Irish at the local Irish college. While there, we met up with some guys with whom we later mixed when in our first year at Mount Sion.

This is a good point to mention that the Manor was not an all-Irish-speaking primary school. Irish was, of course, taught as a regular school subject, and it was also used quite a bit by the teachers in regular classroom and schoolyard conversation, and also during the teaching of other subjects. When I went to Mount Sion, however, I found that there was a much greater emphasis on the language. I believe that for many years previously, the situation had been somewhat like that which I experienced at the Manor, with some brothers using the language much more than others. And likewise with the lay teachers. But, by the time I reached the school, in September 1965, the then principal had brought about a situation whereby a lot of subjects were taught totally through the medium of the Irish language. I also believe it was the language regularly used by the brothers themselves in the monastery. We were not necessarily expected to speak Irish when in the schoolyard, but certainly we had to use it when addressing any member of staff, whether brother or lay teacher. On Wednesday afternoons, we played hurling on the school pitches and there also the instructions were given in Irish by the brothers who were in charge of us.

Some fellow students were better at Irish than others. To some extent, I think, the ones who struggled less with it were those who had studied in the final year of primary school for the Urban Council Secondary School Scholarship examination and, in the case of fellows from the country, who had studied for the County Council Secondary School Scholarship examination. Only a small group had done this, of course. I remember being one of a group of three selected at the Manor to do the examination. We received extra tuition, sometimes during regular class time, but primarily in special classes conducted by a particular brother who tutored us every evening after school and also on Saturday mornings. It must have been very disappointing for him because none of us received a high enough grade in the examination to be awarded a scholarship. Part of his disappointment, I would say, would have been because he engendered in us a sense that we were as good as the fellows at Mount Sion Primary School, where there was a whole class dedicated to preparation for the examination.

Like all primary school students around the country, we also, of course, studied for the mandatory Primary School Certificate examination, which was not at all as difficult, but was not attached to the award of scholarships. I think that one's results in that examination dictated the particular stream to which one was allocated when enrolling

in the secondary school at Mount Sion. I also think that the fellows who had attended the Mount Sion Primary School were easily allocated, as the brothers had first-hand experience of their performance. I remember being put in one of the lower streams initially. However, that soon changed. The prize night for both Mount Sion and the Manor was held concurrently at Mount Sion shortly after I commenced there. I received my prize in front of parents, photographs were taken and my name was recorded to be reported in the local papers. The following morning, a brother came straight into class saying, 'Kelly out, bag and baggage', and I was lobbed straight into the top stream.

Starting secondary school brought me in touch with lads from other parts of the city. I ended up visiting their streets, places I had never actually been to before. Also, not all of the pupils were from the city. Guys came across the river from County Kilkenny, they came in from Tramore, they came from Portlaw and they came on the train from County Wexford. Some pupils arrived on public-transport buses, others got lifts in cars from neighbours working in Waterford and others yet again walked from various parts of the city. And the school also had a very big shed in which those who cycled parked their bicycles.

The ground floor of the school was an interesting design. It was a very long building in which classrooms could be created by using partitions. This permitted the creation of eight to ten classrooms. And then there was also the upstairs section. I also remember that it was possible for the brothers to go directly from the school to their monastery through a door connecting the two buildings.

On the matter of the school fees, I do not know if everybody paid the same, or if some paid nothing. I also have no memory of bringing a bill home, but I do remember bringing money to the brothers in an envelope given to me at home. This stopped after two or three years when free secondary school education was introduced.

I also remember the extent of secondary school dropout at Mount Sion. As I said, in my first year there were about 150 or more pupils and they were spread across about six different classes. The situation was probably the same in second year. However, by the time I got to third year, the Intermediate Certificate examination year, we were down to three or four classes. Some had gone off to start an apprenticeship at the local glass factory. Others commenced different trades. We must also not forget those who had left the Manor and had never commenced secondary school. While some of these immediately found employment, others went to the technical school. However, I have no memory

of anyone going to one of what were considered the more exclusive secondary schools in Waterford, or to a boarding school somewhere else.

We were also aware that there was a class divide when it came to secondary schooling. We knew, for example, that Waterpark College, on the other side of the city, consisted of a primary school and a secondary school also run by the Christian Brothers, but there was no connection between them and us, and the brothers who taught there had a separate monastery. It sounded like those who taught there constituted a different class of Christian Brother to those at Mount Sion, and of course they promoted what was seen as the middle-class game of rugby. There was no hurling or Gaelic football over there. We felt that the De La Salle Secondary School in the city catered for the same social class as ours. To us, the difference was that it had boarders as well as day students, and also the dominant school game was Gaelic football rather than hurling. At the same time, students from all of the schools did play soccer with local clubs and, in that way, we came into touch with each other.

Amongst ourselves, at Mount Sion, we had a sense that being from the city was superior to being from the country. We used to give the lads who came from the country to Mount Sion a bit of a ragging. However, it never went too far as they were well able to stand up for themselves. Also, within the school, the brothers very subtly let it be known that those in the higher streams were superior in some way and they were disdainful of those who went to technical schools. One brother used to cynically refer to them as 'card schools', playing on their official title in Irish of *Ceard Scoil* or 'trade school'. Some of that attitude was also in the homes. I also knew of some homes where work with the hands was highly regarded, where there was an admiration for handskills and craft, and of others where the idea of getting your hands dirty was frowned upon. This latter view prevailed at Mount Sion, where, for example, there was no teaching of woodwork and metalwork. This, however, seems not to have always been the case, as there was an old building on the site of the school and it was called 'the Tech'. It had science laboratories which we used and which had been built in the time of the British administration from grants provided by the old Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.

There was no such thing as subject choices in my early years in secondary school. I was required to study Irish, English, mathematics, history, geography, science, Latin and French. I have pleasant memories of being taught French. The brother who taught us had been sent away on a specialist teaching course and he taught us using an audio-visual approach, making use of tapes and a screen projector. There were

no textbooks whatsoever and we did no written work. And the amazing thing is that it is still with me. Whenever I go to France on holidays, I still have some of these phrases that go back to that time. It was quite innovative I would imagine in its day.

The other thing about the approach to the teaching of French is that it seemed to totally go against the authoritarian style within the school. I would describe this as a personalized system of authority in that the brother who was the principal had introduced it. He had brought a Gaelic nationalistic project with him. Now, looking back, he was a relatively young man in his early or mid-30s, although to us at the time he could have been any age. But there was a fear I suppose of him, for whatever reason, from the moment you went into the school. Now, whether it was respect or fear or both, I don't know. But his name was enough to quieten a classroom. Sometimes he would come into a classroom on some business and as soon as the door was opened you could feel this quietness. Also, you could meet him anywhere in the school. And he only spoke Irish to us and to the other teachers and brothers.

Now, having said what I have about the principal, he taught me Irish for much of fifth year and he was an outstanding teacher of the language. His own facility in the spoken language was excellent. He certainly was an old-style teacher, but the way in which he got us engaged with the prescribed novels and poems meant that my own knowledge and command of Irish expanded greatly.

The Gaelic nationalistic project, as I call it, that he emphasized in the school, had a number of other dimensions to it. We were all regularly reminded that the school had won the famed Dr Harty Cup, the most prized trophy amongst hurling-playing schools in Munster, back in 1937. Also, in fifth year, after doing the Intermediate Certificate examination, the school organized *céilí* dances for ourselves and sixth-year pupils. Again, all instructions at these *céilí* dances were given through Irish, as were all announcements and directions.

The older pupils prepared us for the *céilís* by taking us out onto the schoolyard after school on a few occasions and teaching us how to do all of the dances. We learned from other boys. Then, on a Friday night, every six weeks or so, we went to a hall in the nearby Mercy Convent or Presentation Convent and danced with the girls to the music of an accordion band. And it was seen not only as a Gaelic thing, but also, I suppose, as a kind of a positive atmosphere in which young Catholic boys and girls could come together, to meet each other. At the same time, there was no bringing of us together with girls at the Ursuline or

Sacred Heart of Mary Convent Schools. We were kept within our own social grouping.

I can also recall some resistance by some brothers to the Gaelic project. For example, when I was in the primary school in the Manor, the brother in charge was a soccer man. He played soccer in the yard with us. He'd kick a ball as good as anybody. He followed soccer. Also, he made no attempt to speak Irish. Then there was another brother when I was in secondary school who very sparingly used Irish, and sometimes his intonation indicated he was speaking it in a mocking kind of a way. I don't think I fully realized that at the time, but later on it was obvious to me what he was doing.

Individually, brothers and lay teachers slapped us a lot in our first and second years, but it eased off somewhat after that. We were slapped with a leather strap, and with canes, and also some guys used what looked like a length of architrave and it would come down across your fingers. You would be slapped for missing lessons as well as for misbehaviour. That was certainly so in first year. I can remember learning off by heart certain things in Latin and if you didn't know them you got a whack. So it was used for teaching purposes as well as for discipline purposes.

There were particular approaches to classroom management. Let's say that you had been given a poem or a list of things to learn off that needed to be examined. The whole class used to stand out and form a line or a semi-circle and each individual had to recite the material in succession. There might be up to six rounds of this and if you answered everything correctly then you could sit down. On occasions when our teacher was absent, we were brought into another classroom and we stood around the back for the duration of the class period. Sometimes for mathematics we stood at the front of the classroom, forming a semi-circle around the blackboard. I particularly remember that for geometry, with a beautiful chalk drawing on the board and a teacher demonstrating at close quarters, saying things like 'that and that is equal to that and that'. And I remember a voice in myself saying, 'God this is a lovely way to learn something.' There was a certain intimacy about it. On the other hand, I can also remember the downside of it, with a fellow being brought up to the board to do maths and the teacher handing him the chalk and saying: 'Right, well now you do the construction', or 'You finish solving the problem.' My recall of that in my own case is getting it wrong and receiving an unmerciful whack on the back of my head, especially from one guy who specialized in such behaviour. I remember seeing stars. Now I also have to say that not all of the brothers or all of

the lay teachers dealt out the rough stuff. I can remember some brothers who never used corporal punishment.

Religion, of course, was also taught in the school as a subject. Yet the brothers were certainly not pious. In first year we were given a booklet of prayers in Irish that we learned off by heart and every morning these prayers were recited before classes began and again at various times throughout the day. Then we had religious doctrine classes at midday. In May, there was the procession around the monastery gardens to celebrate the Feast Day of Our Lady and this celebration was continued every evening for a week in the monastery church when we met for prayers. Also, every Sunday morning, a number of us who were selected to join the Sodality of Mary Immaculate met at the school where we were given a little sermon by a brother, we recited the Rosary and proceedings finished with the singing of a hymn. I particularly remember singing, 'O Mother I Could Weep for Mirth.' Adult males also attended these gatherings.

In the school itself, there was no great intensity in the teaching of religion in my final years. When it came to the religious education class, we had a big textbook written by a Michael Novak. This was an American textbook which we bought and in the first term we used to read some chapters from it aloud in class. By November or December the brother who taught us would then come in to class and say, 'Read on yourselves', and that was it. Once or twice, a visitor came in to talk about something or other. He might have been a missionary priest, or someone else. The brother would just introduce him and leave, and sometimes we tried to make fun of the poor man left to talk to us. And yet, a number of guys in my class went on to become priests.

Throughout all of this there was our own involvement in our studies. I know that I wasn't studious at all in primary school. I hated it. Yet, when I went into first year, I knew there was an expectation that I would take things seriously. I remember getting quite organized with my books and getting used to the idea of having these different texts for different subjects and a timetable around which the day was to be organized. I remember responding to that in first year and doing well. However, I hit a pretty rough patch in third year when I should have been preparing for the Intermediate Certificate examination. Playing soccer was all I wanted to do. Also, I spent a lot of time in friends' houses, mucking around, when I should have been studying. Consequently, my examination results were not stellar.

Perhaps due to the response of my mother, I remember going into fifth year and thinking, 'This can be the start. Day one can be the start

of a whole new approach', and it was. A new course in maths had been introduced in which we were taught set theory and other new stuff, and I remember thinking: 'If I get in here at the start of the queue, I'm okay.' So I can remember my first day back in fifth year setting up a desk, a lamp and my books in my room at home. I remember saying: 'I'm going to study four or five hours every night. I'm going to do my homework in the evening time. I'm going to study, study. I'm going to go back over what I did today. I'm going to keep notes on what I studied.' And I can remember that at the end of fifth year I came first in my class. Then I went back to start it all over again because I was considered too young to move on to sixth year.

I had also got it into my head that I wanted to be a primary schoolteacher. The principal called me aside one day and said: 'You have chosen not to do French or Latin. That means, you know, that you can't go to university. You can't matriculate.' I'd never heard the word 'matriculate' in my life before. I said: 'I don't need to because I'm going to be a primary schoolteacher and those languages are not required for selection.' So, for the Leaving Certificate examination I studied Irish, English, mathematics, history, geography, economics and art. My foray into economics started off as business and accountancy in fifth year. That involved working a lot with balance sheets and it was boring stuff. Then, when I repeated fifth year, I took up economics instead. Now, at that time I'd started to watch a lot of television programmes about the EEC and that made economics seem more interesting.

Learning history is also worth recalling. In my first year in fifth year we had a teacher who spent all of his time getting us to translate into Irish a textbook written in English. He got this textbook out every day. It was called *Irish History 1700 to 1900*. He would call out the translation and we would write it down in between the printed lines on the page. The next year we had a new teacher and we studied the period 1400 to 1600 in both Irish and European history. I loved it, I have to say. But again the style of teaching was very didactic. It was a matter of 'this is the textbook. I will teach you from the textbook.' And then there was our notebook. We summarized what we had studied from the textbook into our notebooks. We had questions to address every weekend and we went through the textbook to find the answers. Nevertheless, by the time I got to sixth year, the teacher had moved on to saying: 'Well look, there are other books down in the public library. Get your hands on them and they will give you a bigger picture.' And I suppose that's when I started to learn history. I also remember wandering into the Waterford City

Library on my own volition and finding a history section amongst the shelves and being delighted to find that I could borrow books to read.

In the case of most subjects, anything that was dealt with in class, any related homework given, any associated study tips, and the conducting of regular short exams and longer ones at the end of each term, were all geared towards the State exams. We did well in Irish. It was taught very systematically and formally, and was all centred on the examination questions. Geography is another case in point. For one year we had a teacher who took a liberal approach, but then he was replaced by a grumpy guy, another lay teacher. The first day he arrived he stood in front of us, called us out one by one, and stood in front of each of us individually and said: 'My only job here is to get you honours in geography in the Leaving Certificate.' A book for the course was *Turner's Geology of Ireland*, an unexciting presentation of material. Again the teaching was systematic. We had an examination every Friday morning. Marks were given out of ten. Monday mornings witnessed post-mortems. 'What did you get out of ten?' 'I got eight. Sir.' That is the way it went on. And the results were good at the end of the year. He knew how to prepare us for the system. But there was the sense that the exams were all that mattered. There was no sense of doing geography for personal enrichment.

At the same time, things were changing a little. In fifth year it was still very much the old regime, the Gaelic project atmosphere. Because I was very young, it was decided that I would repeat fifth year and that was the year in which a new principal arrived. Very soon there was quite a noticeable change in the place. I can remember some teachers saying: 'If you want to do the exam in English, you can.' We used to have textbooks that were written in Irish at that time and now we also began to use some textbooks written in English. It's a long time ago, but I can remember that there seemed to be a lot more teachers speaking to us in English and we could almost notice that the tight regime was starting to relax a little. There was a sense, I'd say, both amongst the lay staff and senior students, that the 'commandant' was gone. There wasn't this kind of tightness, this oppression, if I can call it that, which used to be there. The whole Gaelic project seemed to be fizzling out. This, of course, was the late 1960s, a time of great change anyway. The previous principal used to stop guys at the gate, or pull them out of class, for having long hair. He used to send them home to get it cut. Once he was gone, hair started to get longer. Sideburns started to grow longer.

During all of this time the lay teachers themselves had a very low profile in the school. They had no staff room. I remember seeing them

during class breaks in a kind of a hallway having a smoke and hanging their coats on a rack, or a radiator. They didn't even have chairs to sit on. They were also outnumbered by the brothers. Mount Sion at the time still had quite a big community of brothers. They were all over the place, both in the primary school and the secondary school. At the same time, as I found out afterwards, a few new lay teachers started teaching in the school in my first year there. They taught across a range of subjects: history, commerce, Irish, English, science and maths. They also played their part in changing things.

I mentioned already that in my first year in fifth year we had a new geography teacher, a young guy, with liberal ideas. He looked like something from a Jane Austin novel, with long black hair, a gaunt appearance and a coat over his shoulders. He spoke about Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones. The response from us was, 'Crickey! Hey, what's this about?' Then, to top it all, he established what he called 'the geography room' over in the old 'Tech' part of school, away from the main building. In our first week or two with him, he brought in his own collection of books, including *Das Kapital*, *The Little Red Book*, *The Naked Ape* and *The Human Zoo*. All that kind of stuff. And he put them on the shelves.

He also had all these magazines about communism from the Soviet Union and from China, written in English. These were spread all over the tables and he came into class and used to say: 'I'm not going to lecture you or anything. I want this place to be a place of discussion, of learning, of re-learning and I have thrown open my library to you.' Sometimes he would elaborate, saying: 'I want you to read, I want you to expose yourself to all of the things that are going on out there.' He also held debates in class about the way society was organized, about Irish life, about authority. And we couldn't take this. Some thought this guy was an idiot. So much so that one day when he organized a field trip around the city so that we could look at the city walls and draw maps of the streets, we just cut loose and ran wild. The following year he did not return to the school and it was back to the old dry stuff in geography.

We had no school library and I remember Sean Crowe, who was my English teacher at senior level, saying that he had to fight tooth and nail to get a couple of shelves with a few novels on it because English wasn't really considered worth studying. Sean came to the school when I commenced first year, back in 1965, and he taught me in fifth and sixth year. I found him inspirational. I can remember that up to fifth year, English was boring for me. It involved learning off lots of lines of Shakespeare. I used to just hate it. I had no interest in it. Sean, however, gave us a great awareness of contemporary Irish literature and encouraged us to

read it and to make ourselves open to it. I can remember an incident related to one occasion when we had to write an essay for him. The following day he came into the classroom and said: 'I promised you that if ever I read something by anybody that I thought had some value, I would read it out in class. Now I've got one of these.' And he pulled out my essay and said: 'Sit up and listen to this.' He read out my essay, and while I died with embarrassment, I was also pleased as it was the first time that anybody had given me affirmation. This was reinforced when I read a complimentary note he had attached at the end of the essay.

Sean was the sort of guy who would bring a book by John McGahern into class and say: 'Have a read of that and see what you think.' He also invited Liam Murphy, a former Mount Sion boy who had become a published poet, to give a reading one night. He read Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan aloud to us and talked to us about poetry. Sean's view of English was that it was dynamic. It was something like soccer, it was something out there. And you could just grab it. And my response was to read voraciously. I started reading Joyce, Hemingway and Steinbeck. I also started reading poetry. I was dipping into *Hibernia* magazine to read contemporary Irish poetry. And the outcome of it all was that I did not do terribly well in the Leaving Certificate examination in English. I can remember looking at my results and getting this sinking feeling in my stomach. In my enthusiasm for the subject, I had not thought to work out the formula for getting good marks in the examination.

A new school was built and I entered the building in my sixth year. Perhaps the greatest indicator that change was in the air, however, was what happened in the school with regard to soccer. During my second year in fifth year there was a huge swing against hurling amongst the boys in the school. My memory of it is that a lot of very good hurlers didn't want to play in the inter-schools' hurling competitions. They had turned their back on the game and wanted to play soccer. In a way, this is not surprising, as the Waterford senior soccer team was in the ascendancy nationally and, in the summer of 1966, we got to see international soccer at its best as television had come to Ireland and we were able to view the World Cup. Soccer just took off like a forest fire amongst the youth in Waterford. The brothers, meanwhile, continued to promote a view of soccer as being English and of not being part of our cultural inheritance, but we took no notice of that.

A schoolboys' soccer league was played here in Waterford at Eastertime. We entered a Mount Sion team in the competition but we were not called Mount Sion to avoid annoying the authorities at the

school. It was run by boys themselves, helped by a group of adults. And we won it. We were named Manor Hill Celtic, which indicated proximity to Mount Sion without actually naming it. The next step was to enter for the official soccer competition for secondary schools around the nation. Not a lot of schools took part in it, but it was the beginnings of a kind of all-Ireland soccer competition. We managed, with the help of some local adults, to train, raise funds for a bus and travel to the matches. And we were very successful.

We reached the semi-final under the title Manor Hill Celtic. This, however, was not acceptable to the organizers of the competition. They required that we use the official title of the school. And the school was not prepared to allow the team to use its name. A number of boys then suggested that some sort of demonstration should be held. So, on one particular day when we were going back to school after lunch, a group of boys gathered across the road from the school, on Barrack Street, just in front of the military barracks, and other boys who were in school came out, and then other fellows who were coming back to school joined it. We found that we were on strike. There were no banners, but it was more or less a matter of 'all out'. Eventually, after making our point, we decided to return to class for the last class period of the day.

I can remember walking back into the classroom. We were in fifth year. We all sat down and we were wondering: 'What's going to happen? This is serious.' The principal just stood up in front of the class and said: 'Get your books out and study.' He remained there in front of us until four o'clock and then he said: 'You can all go home now.' The following day the story was reported in the *Irish Independent*. We wondered what the school authorities might do next. Would the teachers teach us? What would the kickback be? Nothing happened.

We were maturing a bit and we were starting to relate to teachers as people, not just as 'the guy up there'. The principal was a person for whom a lot of fellows had a lot of respect. He never used corporal punishment, he was an outstanding mathematics teacher and I always got on very well with him. I can remember him standing in front of the class some time later and, whether he gave us a long lecture or a short lecture, I don't know, but I remember him saying something like: 'After all we have done for Waterford, after all the Christian Brothers have done for Waterford, this is how you repay it, this is what you've done to us.' And that was it. No discussion.

Interestingly, I was back in Waterford in 1975, on my first teaching position, at the Central Technical Institute, and I entered a team in the local inter-schools' soccer competition. We were drawn against Mount

Sion in the first game. I went to the field with my team and the first person I saw was a Christian Brother in full Christian Brother's gear. There was a lay teacher with him. I remember speaking to them when going into the changing room afterwards. I said something like: 'Brother you don't know what this match has meant to me, having been one of the boys in the strike.' And he just said: 'Ah, that stuff, it's all gone.' He just waved it away, you know? I thought that was remarkable, how quickly life had moved on.

To finish off, I have sometimes reflected on the lack of what later became known as 'career guidance'. Somehow, we had developed a sense that we were brighter guys than those who went to Waterpark School or De La Salle School, and that we were definitely more Irish. As a result, we were going to go to run the civil service in Dublin. I can remember getting a great sense of that as I went through Mount Sion even though it wasn't formally spoken about. There was an unspoken idea that a lot of us would end up working in Dublin, that our future would be there, that we would be part of a civil service tradition of Christian Brother boys, Mount Sion boys, working at the highest level in government, not politically but administratively. Basically, we had an idea that we would, in some way, be running the country. University, of course, did not feature in this at all. I do remember once in our sixth-year classroom looking at the shelves and I came across this book from University College Cork called a 'Calendar', but nobody ever came in and sat down and said: 'Right lads, there are things outlined in here that you may do when you finish school.' What might be involved in studying law was a total mystery. Medicine had a kind of half a sense to it. But if there was going to be university attendance at all, it would probably be arts, or science, or commerce. And there was never any reference to former pupils who had studied anything at university. As I said already, I can remember then that my main interest was in becoming a primary schoolteacher. I knew that if I worked hard I would get it and that I would not have to worry about how I would support myself as everything would be paid for by the State.

Westland Row Christian Brothers' School: The memories of Willie Henry

I was born in Foxford in County Mayo in 1947 and I went to primary school there, to the local convent school run by the Irish Sisters of Charity. Then, in 1954, I moved with my family to Dublin. My father and mother had had a little shop and a farm in Mayo. They sold everything,

moved to Dublin, bought a bit of land and set up a horticultural business, replicating what my father and my grandfather had done in Mayo. I believe the principal reason they moved was for the sake of myself and my siblings, as there was no secondary school in Foxford, and when the time came, if we had stayed there, they would have had to send us to boarding school.

I went to Donnybrook National (primary) School in Dublin. The school was about a mile-and-a-half from where we lived. It was a regular primary school with all lay teachers. The principal was a fellow called Con Kennedy and the school was known affectionately as Con's Academy. This was seen as a very endearing title. Con was a lovely man and was very highly respected. Also, the language of instruction was English. We only learned Irish as a regular school subject.

I enrolled for secondary school in Westland Row CBS, close to the centre of Dublin City. I cycled the three-and-a-half miles in and out every day, although on wet days I used to get the bus. I also cycled home for lunch and back again, as we had an hour's lunch break. Now that was not difficult as it was the early 1960s when traffic was not a problem. Even milk was still being delivered by horse and cart at that stage. I remember that if you could get in behind one of the battery-charged laundry vans that travelled about 20 miles an hour, you could slipstream behind them. I always went with my older brother who was a year ahead of me in school. This also meant going to school on Saturdays up to one o'clock.

I have no memory of making a conscious decision to go to secondary school. My mother and father were always keen that myself, my brother and my sister would receive a secondary school education. I went to Westland Row CBS, although Synge Street CBS was just as close to my home. I think the attraction for my parents was that Westland Row CBS did not have as many pupils. Also, my brother had started there the previous year and they were happy with his progress. My sister went to the lay secondary school nearby, Sandymount High School, which, unusually for the time, was a co-educational school. The other boys' secondary schools near to us at home were Monkstown CBS and Oatlands College, also run by the Christian Brothers. Both, however, charged higher fees and Monkstown CBS was actually in that small elite group of CBSs that promoted rugby. We also perceived Oatlands to be a bit posh.

I found the name Westland Row CBS interesting as it meant for me that the school was not named after a saint. As far as we were concerned, it was named after the nearby railway station. As I said, the school did not have a large student population. While we had one class for fifth

year, and one for sixth year, there were two first-year classes, two second-year classes and two Intermediate Certificate classes. The classes were streamed into an A class and a B class in the first three years. I think the decision as to the one in which you were placed was based on your results in the Primary School Certificate examination. Also, the small number of fellows who had scholarships from Dublin Corporation were placed automatically in the A class. Most of those scholarship guys had already attended Westland Row Christian Brothers Primary School, as had about 80 per cent of all of those in first year. I found that all of these fellows were at a higher level than I was when I started secondary school. I had had a more relaxed primary education and had not had the brothers to push me along.

In my first three years I studied Irish, English, maths, geography, history, French and science. I then substituted Latin for French in my last two years as I knew that I needed to pass it in the Leaving Certificate examination in order to be able to go to university to study science. We were taught solely by brothers in first year and second year, but after that we had a few lay teachers as well. They were not in the majority, but we were very conscious of their presence. I also remember that they had a staff room, while the brothers used to go back to their monastery for their breaks and meals.

I remember that most of the lay teachers were very nice people. They didn't in any way abuse us. One was a bit rough but the rest of them were okay. Sometimes one or two of them did give you a clatter, but they were, in general, very easy on us. I had great respect then both for them and the brothers, and I still do now. However, the amount of stuff we wrote was incredible. Take history, for example. Our teacher was a lovely fellow. He used to come in to class with his notes which I would say he had held on to for over 20 years. His teaching consisted of reading them aloud to us and we transcribing as he dictated. He did this day after day. Occasionally he asked a few questions, but most of the time was spent writing down his words.

I also remember the lack of a sense of context in what we were taught in history in that there was no effort to try to relate the events pertaining to one century to those pertaining to another. The situation was somewhat similar with geography. When we studied geography in the first three years, the first thing we did was to get out a map, let's say of Spain, and we traced it. We then drew various features onto the map, but you were not required to work out what other countries Spain was joined up to and what countries were nearby. I would have to say that, as a result, I have a very poor knowledge of geography. To this day I'm

still struggling. And there is no point in asking me what oceans are here, there or anywhere. Oceans didn't come into it. The focus was only on the land.

The only subject that I could really get my head around was geometry. We had a teacher who explained to us early on that geometry is all based on 360 degrees and everything follows from that. I quickly came to understand that, and I got to love proving the theorems. There was a great challenge for me in that. I never learned a theorem off by heart because I'd read it and try to understand it, and once I understood it, I didn't have to learn it off by heart because I knew how it worked. Algebra was also fine; I could do that.

English to me, in hindsight, also very much meant learning by rote. For the Intermediate Certificate examination I had to study the *Merchant of Venice* and for the Leaving Certificate examination it was *Hamlet*. The unfortunate thing in both cases was that we started at page one in class and marked out lines that we were meant to remember because they were meant to mean something. However, there was no explanation at the very beginning of the year on what the underlying story was. We just ploughed our way through the play, but nobody said: 'Okay, guys, this is the story from A to Z. I'll tell you the story before we start the book and you'll see how it pans out then.' In fact, we did not even have an appreciation that these were plays. *The Merchant of Venice* and *Hamlet*, for us, were books to be read and they were written in strange English.

On the other hand, writing essays was not too bad. That was creative so I could do that. It wasn't a big problem. We also had précis exercises to do in preparation for the Leaving Certificate examination and I thought that was the easiest thing on earth; I found that very simple to do. But regurgitating poetry, I always found a problem with that. The issue for me was that I wanted to know what the poet was on about, but that was not explained to us. It was just a matter of 'learn the bloody thing off by heart and be able to recite it in class tomorrow.' And I was no good at memorizing. To this day, I cannot sing two verses of a song, never mind recite two verses of a poem. I struggled particularly badly with this when it came to poetry in Irish.

A lot of the subjects were taught through the medium of Irish until we went into fifth and sixth year. And Irish was also used a lot by the brothers in giving instructions around the school. One problem was that we learned terminology in Irish for geometry in the first three years, but when we went into fifth year we had to re-learn it in English. Regarding Irish itself as a school subject, I quite liked it. That may have had something to do with the fact I had a West of Ireland accent which

made pronunciation somewhat easy. I also have very fond memories of going to stay for a few weeks at an Irish college in Spiddal in the Galway Gaeltacht at the end of second year. That was brilliant. I was the only guy there from my school, I think, and I met up with other guys from Dublin. The first night in the house there were three of us and we said: 'Listen, are we going to speak Irish now all the time, or are we going to mess about?' Our decision was that we were going to speak Irish. It was a great decision because we spoke the language for the duration of our stay as best we could and after a fortnight it was amazing how much our spoken competence had improved.

The visit to the Irish college was organized by one particular brother who was absolutely obsessed with the language. It was very much a nationalist crusade for him. The unfortunate thing was that in his obsession he turned many pupils off the language because everything had to be in Irish. He got quite rough with some of the lads who just could not master much of the basics of the language. What he did not seem to realize was that if you grew up in Dublin, Irish was as foreign to you as if you had grown up in London. Whereas in my own case, I had picked up quite a lot of vocabulary from home purely because much of it was used in the English my parents used, as it was with most parents who grew up in the south and west of Ireland.

I don't want to give the impression that all of the brothers walloped us. Most of them did not. There were some very good brothers who never laid a hand on us. On the other hand, one guy stands out. He'd hammer you with a leather strap. Often too it was premeditated. I remember that he was left-handed. If he came into the classroom and took off his watch and left it on the desk, you knew you were in for a hammering. We had worked out that he took off his watch in case he'd damage it when using the strap. And the wallops you got were not just for misbehaving, but also for not having learned stuff. In fact, misbehaving didn't really come into it. Keeping control of the class wasn't a problem there. It was for not being able to recite the poem, not knowing your Latin vocabulary, or whatever. You got hammered with the strap. That's just the way it was. However, I also remember it lessened in intensity as we got older. In fifth and sixth year, fellows would sometimes stand up to the brother and not hold out their hand to get slapped when asked to. And the brother usually backed off.

I remember halfway through fifth year in school starting to ask myself: 'What am I good at? What do I like doing?' I was good working with my father in the glasshouse with the tomatoes, doing all that sort of stuff. I liked it even though it meant doing a lot of work. When

I was in secondary school, we used to cut lettuce on a Monday night. You couldn't do it earlier on in the day because there were no freezers or coolers. If you did, they would be all withered by the following morning. So, at seven o'clock at night, my brother and I used to cut 100 dozen lettuce with my father, put each into a little plastic bag and then place them in boxes to have them ready for the market the next morning. Now we could do that in two-and-half hours, myself, my brother and father, but it was hard work. My father would deliver them to the market in a large Opal car with a trailer the next morning at six o'clock. Experiences like that persuaded me that I should study horticulture.

So, for the Leaving Certificate examination I studied Irish, Latin, English, maths and science. We had a choice between commerce or science, and I did science because I was going to study it at university, Now when I say science, I mean chemistry. Brother Cullen taught us science and he was a lovely, gentle man and he took things nice and quietly. He was a very good teacher and we did a lot of experiments in the school science room. He demonstrated but we also got the opportunity to do a lot of practical work ourselves. I certainly liked chemistry. It was logical. I could understand it. We also did an awful lot of drawings of the experiments in a special science notebook, with grid paper on the left-hand side onto which we drew diagrams and lined pages on the right-hand side onto which we wrote accompanying notes. So, essentially we constructed our own science book. We had no accompanying textbook.

Hurling and Gaelic football were the school games. The official games period was Wednesday afternoon. We cycled across the city to play at Ringsend Park where we trained for the matches we played against other schools; there were inter-schools' competitions. We would pray that it wouldn't be raining on a Wednesday so that we would get to play football. And one or two brothers looked after us. Really all they did was turn up, pick two teams and let us at it, with one of them being the referee. I also remember that sometimes they used to pick maybe four or five teams made up of smaller numbers and run a league on those Wednesday afternoons.

We did not have a gymnasium in the school. However, there was a big room, and in our first three years there, a guy from the army used to visit. He did some kind of military drill with us and taught us how to do handstands and cartwheels. I also remember that in 1966, on the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising of 1916, we put on a pageant in the hall and we had a gymnastics display during the intermission.

Every Easter there was a soccer league in Dublin. That was frowned on by the Christian Brothers in the school. However, we used to organize a school team amongst ourselves to play in the competition every year. We did not use the school name and the brothers turned a blind eye to it. One year we approached a very nice brother and asked if we could borrow a set of football jerseys. 'Fine', he replied, 'I presume you will only want those numbered from 1 to 11.' He was a gentleman. He knew the situation and didn't try to stop it. Some of the other brothers, however, who looked after the school's Gaelic football teams, would not allow you to play on a school team if they knew you played soccer with a club in your out-of-school time.

Religion permeated the school. The Angelus was always said at midday. Christian doctrine was also taught each day and we did an examination in it at the end of every year. I remember we had this *Acts of the Apostles* book. It was about the size of the palm of your hand and all the Acts of the Apostles were in it. All of the exam was based on this book. I cannot remember what sort of questions were asked, but I do remember the brothers who oversaw it turned a blind eye to you if you had the book under your desk and had a look at it when writing the answers. Our take on that was that it was important to the brother that we got good marks so that the school was seen in a good light.

The experience was in no way pious. This was a time when the general view of religion was based on the premise: 'Beware of the wrath of God.' It was not a view of 'God is a lovely person' or 'she is lovely'. It was: 'Beware of the wrath of God.' I was an altar boy and I saw that at close quarters. It was Hell fire and brimstone from the priests, especially when there was a mission on in the parish church. We also had school retreats. In our last two years I think we went for two-day retreats to a farm setting. Silence was the main part of that. We didn't speak to each other except maybe at lunchtime. I think it was run by some religious order, but the main thing I remember about it is the silence, praying, meditating and reading holy books. I don't remember the lectures at all, so obviously they didn't have any huge impact on me.

Another religion-related experience I had was around 1962. Some very big Church event was being organized in Dublin and the Archbishop of Dublin, Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, established an organization called the Colleges Volunteer Corp. It was for boys around 15 years of age and older. Many of the schools in Dublin encouraged boys to join up. We acted as stewards for religious processions. We wore long black pants, a white shirt and a yellow sash, and we had yellow epaulettes on the shirts. I think that, once established, the organization continued

in existence up to about ten years ago. We used to meet in a place in Eccles Street. There was a 'Catholic Church Centre of Learning' there. Archbishop McQuaid used to come there and meet a group at a time. We also used to go to Lourdes every year and help to push the invalids around in their wheelchairs. My memory is that McQuaid was absolutely obsessed with going to Lourdes. He thought it was a brilliant place. I have visions of him taking out a map of Lourdes, spreading it on the ground, and then going down on his knees with all of us around and he showing us where the basilica was and where this, that and the other was.

I liked the experience myself. I went there with the group about four or five times. We raised the travel costs by running dances. And of course there was the excitement of going there by plane. Also, when we got there we had reasonable accommodation. As part of our preparation we were trained to move in formation in some barracks by two policemen, two members of the *Gárdaí*. We were trained to march, turn left, turn right, just like in the army. A small group did a lot of work, like in any organization, and my brother was one of them. You got to join after they came to the school to recruit. And the great thing was that when we joined, we got to mix with guys from lots of other schools. Also, there was a very wide social class mix there, even though we were not very conscious of that at the time. We also got to visit Born in Luxemburg, which is a Lourdes-type place. The result was that we got to travel and see parts of Europe, which was a rare opportunity at the time.

Oatlands Christian Brothers' College, Dublin: The memories of Ken Glasgow

I have very few memories of primary school. Nevertheless, I do remember my first day there. It was an old building in Mount Merrion, County Dublin, that subsequently became a kind of a community centre. I think the building was once the home of whoever owned all of the surrounding land. Being a dwelling house for a large landowner, the rooms were rather big. I also think they were very cold. When we were at school, a fire used to be lit in the fireplace at the front of each classroom. Also, it was not run by a religious order. It was Mount Merrion Primary School and had both boys and girls in attendance. The tradition was that the boys spent a few of their early years at this school and then transferred to the primary section of Oatlands Christian Brothers' College. I think it was called St Mary's.

Overall, I was happy in Mount Merrion Primary School. I commenced a year later than was the norm. My mother held me back for a year so that I could go to school with my brother and we could provide support for each other. I remember the head teacher who met us on that first day. I considered her to be a very old woman, but she probably wasn't. She was very nice. As for the actual teaching itself, I have very little memory. I think an awful lot of it was rote teaching, unlike now, when it seems to be a lot more fun and they play a lot.

When we went to the primary school of Oatlands College, we found that it was located in a building separate from the secondary school. So, moving to secondary school simply meant going into a different building at the other end of a playing field which the two schools used. We used to travel to school each day from Mount Merrion by bicycle. For much of the short journey you could cycle on the footpath. Lots of kids came by bicycle and there was a big bicycle shed at the school and it was always full.

In those days we did not wear a school uniform. While it was fee paying, I was not very conscious of that, although I am sure that my parents were. Also, I think many of us who left primary school went on to secondary school. You don't understand those things at that age, but I think the majority stayed on after completing the Intermediate Certificate examination to study for the Leaving Certificate examination. A number of those in my area also went to Blackrock College and a few Protestant neighbours went to Wesley College, or to the High School.

I think it would have been most unusual for a Catholic at that stage to go to a Protestant school. There was a clear line back then. I remember being told, maybe in my early days in secondary school, that Protestants couldn't make their way to heaven. I think it was an awful pity we had to listen to that because one of the recollections I have was that at primary school age we all played together, Protestant and Catholic, along our road. Once we went to secondary school, however, that all evaporated, partly I guess because we played different games in different places after school.

Religion was always there in the secondary school. We had the Christian Brothers' prayers in the morning. Now I don't think the emphasis on religion was particularly over the top, but it certainly was there. We were all brought to the church for regular Confession and we were encouraged to join a Sodality which met on Thursday evenings. Also, in the latter stages of secondary school, we were inundated with priests and brothers coming to the school encouraging us to join their particular religious orders. While still in secondary school, one boy in

my class went off to join the Christian Brothers and I remember even at that stage thinking that this was a big decision to make at such a young age. I think he was about 14 or 15 years of age. I cannot remember if he joined as a result of a talk we received from a particular Christian Brother who visited the school to seek recruits.

There were quite a few Christian Brothers teaching in the school in my time and some lay teachers. As teachers, the brothers were very much a mixed bunch; some of them were very good and others were so-and-so. The principal in my final year, I recall, was a quiet, reserved man, while the previous one had a very strong personality and while he was quite strict, we respected him because he was a very good teacher.

We sat in class, two to a bench. Some were old-fashioned benches with ink wells. I think there was never any more than about 30 pupils in a class. Also, in the examination years, there was a bit of movement around because some people were doing higher level, or honours' courses, and other were doing ordinary, or pass, courses in different subjects. I liked science. I was very much influenced by a lay teacher who was very good at teaching chemistry. He was very methodical in his preparation and in his teaching, and he made chemistry interesting. We also had a very good teacher of English, so I enjoyed learning English as a subject.

On the other hand, I hated Irish. The lay teacher who taught us was fanatical about the language. I don't know if it was just the effect of his personality, but I believe that the way he taught the language was dreadful. It was all about learning grammar. The only time I actually ever enjoyed Irish was in the run-up to the oral examination for the Leaving Certificate. We were actually encouraged for the first time ever to speak Irish to each other and to not necessarily worry about the quality of our grammar, which was not great. That was the only time I ever really began to develop some interest in the language. It was interesting struggling to put words together to make sentences. Also I learned Latin for a while. I remember many of us being puzzled while we were learning it because it wasn't really a spoken language.

Extra-curricular activities mainly meant playing Gaelic football and we were not allowed to play rugby or soccer in school. I think this was partly because the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) had given the school a grant to purchase the games' field and it took the attitude that 'We're paying for this, we're giving you a grant for this and it has to be a Gaelic football and hurling field only.' I think there had been some attempts to organize a rugby club, or the playing of rugby, but it faltered. I think it would have necessitated having to rent a field, or getting

a field somewhere else to play. I used to play Gaelic football in school even though I did not display any great prowess at it. I also remember we got no training. We just used to go out onto the field and kick the ball around, but no one ever explained rules or anything to us. There was also a little bit of athletics in the school. The school also put on a show every year and I participated in the *Mikado*. This activity, I think, was particularly geared towards the first-year students; they used to be the main people involved in a show, which was run at Christmastime in our small school hall.

There was corporal punishment in the school. The brothers had the leather strap, but only some of them used it. I actually think a lot of them didn't like using the strap. Others used it very sparingly. On the other hand, I do remember one who used it a bit and it used to sting all right. We got it if we talked in class, if we didn't seem to be appreciating what was being said, or if we were asked questions and didn't know the answers.

Regarding my decision to go to university, I think that came about as a result of family expectation. My father died when I was 17, in the summer between fifth year and sixth year. My mother was aware that one of her brothers who was quite close to her had got a county council scholarship based on the results of his Leaving Certificate which allowed him to study engineering at University College Dublin. And then there were two priests in the family who had received their equivalent of third-level education. So there was a very strong interest in education at home and my mother certainly felt that education was important, and encouraged us to study and do as well as we could. Now, even though she was widowed, I think a brother of hers who was a priest might have paid my university fees. As my father had been ill for a number of years before he died, we weren't in any way well off.

Regarding my specific decision to study science, I mentioned the influence of a schoolteacher already. Also, in my Leaving Certificate year I got a brochure from University College Dublin and was taken by the section in it on science and the various topics that could be studied. I had a special liking for chemistry, and I remember reading about biochemistry and developing a view that it would be a very interesting area to study. I also know I was not attracted to studying physics and I knew little about biology because it was not offered in the school, but certainly the bits I read about biochemistry fascinated me.

I also remember doing the Leaving Certificate examination. We did it in the school hall and I have a memory of the invigilator being absolutely clueless; there was some wholesale copying going on and bits of

paper were being passed from one fellow to another. It annoyed me so much that I actually reported it to the school principal, but it made no difference to the invigilator. I think he just moved one or two people around in the hall. I also know there was a certain amount of pressure on us as our school saw itself as being in competition with nearby Blackrock College. It did not affect me too much though. Certainly, I studied for the Leaving Certificate examination, but I was never interested in becoming first in the class. I wasn't in any way driven to be better than my peers. It wasn't until I went to university, where I had a lot of control over my own study and was able to pace it, as opposed to having to go in every day and regurgitate this, or write an essay on that, that I really came to enjoy studying for its own sake.

A particular thing I did not like about studying in school was that extra tuition was given to those who were preparing to do honours' papers in certain subjects, including the science subjects. Those who were not doing the honours' papers did not receive it. I always remember that. In fact the extra tuition was not provided by our regular teacher, but by a Christian Brother, who usually got the guys in question to arrive at school early every morning before classes began. Because I was not in an honours' chemistry class, I studied for the honours' paper in chemistry on my own. I managed because I got the extra notes from one of the science teachers. And I ended up getting honours in the subject, as well as in English and commerce. Those were the subjects I targeted. In order to get a place in University College Dublin, one had to have honours in a minimum of two subjects. So with the three I had I was accepted without a bother. I cannot put a figure on it, but I would say about one third of my Leaving Certificate class went on to university. One or two did science, some did engineering and someone did arts. Also someone did commerce, which was not very popular then.

Lismore Christian Brothers' School, County Waterford: The memories of Tony Dowd

I grew up as a member of the Church of Ireland, which is in a minority here in the town. I went to school to the CBS within walking distance of my home. Indeed I started my primary schooling at the local convent school run by the Presentation Sisters. I also spent a short period in a little private school run by Miss Eva Wright. I was with Miss Wright for about 12 months before I started at the Christian Brothers' primary school.

The decision that I would go to school locally was very much that of my parents. We had no local Church of Ireland school, and the minister, who was a personal friend of the family, recommended that I be sent to a Church boarding school. My dad, while very loyal to him and to the Church, was also very much committed to the local community. He ran a business locally and was also a Fíanna Fáil member of the county council. His attitude was that I was going to be brought up like most of my friends, the majority of whom were RC. He also let it be known that he believed I would receive a very good education by attending the CBS.

My father and my mother, I believe, considered that I should be at home with them and my brothers. The decision that I would stay at home and not go to boarding school had nothing to do with money. Not that we were wealthy; far from it. But they could have managed to send me away if they wanted to. Overall, their view was that the decision they had made was based on what was best for me at the time and by way of preparation for life. And I believe they were correct.

My parents had moved to Lismore, both of them having grown up in Dublin and having lived in different parts of the country after getting married. They were adamant that they were in Lismore to stay. There would be no going back to Dublin, or Cork, or anywhere else. We were all very happy in our house on Main Street. Now, of course, I was also very pally with a few other Church of Ireland boys as well as having my RC friends. We all played together. Three of us Protestants, as we were known – myself, Harry Allison, whose dad had a drapery shop across the street from our house, and Hugh Dawson, whose dad worked on the farm estate nearby in Glencairn – started primary school together at the Christian Brothers. We had Brother Blake in the early years and then we moved into Brother Murphy's classes. I say 'classes' because both of the brothers engaged in multi-grade teaching; Brother Blake taught second, third and fourth class, and Brother Murphy taught fifth and sixth class. Each of them taught in his own big old room. Perhaps now we would see these two rooms as not having been very inspiring places to be in, but really at the time we thought they were grand. And in the winter they were always fine as the big old-fashioned radiators were nicely heated from a boiler house just outside the building. I also have pleasant memories of very big windows which allowed us to be able to look out on the monastery garden at the back and on the main road which was to the side. They let in a lot of light.

I never remember going to school with the collywobbles. We enjoyed school. There was no problem. When it came to the time for religious

instruction, which commenced at midday, I just left the classroom and went home. It was a matter of waiting to get the look or the nod from the brother and then I knew I could pick up my school case and head home. It just meant I had an extra free half an hour. However, many of the lads were very jealous of it and would say, 'You lucky so-and-so', because they had to wait on for another half an hour. Also, I do remember I learned the 'Bells of the Angelus' and the different prayers. I remember all of them. Perhaps I picked them up from listening to them being recited by the others boys in the class. Some of them were also probably learned during singing time.

Now, of course I did receive religious instruction in the Church of Ireland faith. That took place at the Deanery. It was called Sunday School, but it was held on a Saturday. It took place in either the drawing room, or the sitting room, and we used to read and discuss our catechism. We were all of different ages, but we were organized into one group of about six boys and four or five girls. A very important part of it was preparation for Confirmation. You could not get confirmed until you were in your early teens and you could not receive Communion until you were confirmed. I remember I was confirmed by Bishop Harvey in the Lismore Church of Ireland Cathedral.

Returning to schooling at the Christian Brothers, I remember that when I commenced I was very much behind in Irish, but I picked up after a while. In basic geography and mathematics I was okay. We went to the hurling field on Wednesdays. I played a bit. I wasn't particularly good at the game, and ended up with a couple of slaps in the face, and a couple of slaps in the ankle and also a few on the knee. Also, I could only hit the ball on one side. So I wasn't a very proficient hurler. But I did enjoy the game and I developed a great respect for the skill involved; something I have to the present day.

Like many of the other lads, both RC and Church of Ireland, I had a go at cricket. The school did not promote the game, but we went along to the local cricket club. To be honest, I did not take to it at all, influenced partly, no doubt, by a couple of hard thumps of a ball. However, when I did get to play the odd game against a team from Cork, or somewhere else, the afternoon teas were superb. We used to get a great feed of sandwiches and loads of cakes. Socially it was all very pleasant being part of the group and having a nice day out. However, because of my lack of interest in the game itself, I did not bother with it after a little while.

Returning to the school scene, when it came to progressing to secondary school, I simply moved upstairs to the second storey of the same building. That is where the secondary school was located. Harry

Allison moved to Bishop Foy's Church of Ireland School in Waterford and I cannot remember what Hugh Dawson did. Perhaps his family left the district. So, I think I was the only Church of Ireland person in first year.

Regarding the teachers, a great favourite of us all was a lay teacher, Chris Kearns, from County Mayo. I remember well that when he first introduced himself he said: 'Good morning boys, my name is Chris Kearns, I'm teaching you English and I'm from Mayo.' And to a man we all said, good-naturedly, 'God help us', as was the common refrain at the time when someone said he was from Mayo. The brother superior was from Omagh in Northern Ireland. He definitely was a one-off, a brother who not only loved cricket, but played it locally. I certainly learned to admire the man greatly. He had varied interests and that was great stimulation for us. He loved cycling. He was into photography. And he made short films of places he visited which he showed on the back wall of one of the classrooms. I also considered him to be a great science teacher. He made learning very easy and most enjoyable. To add to the novelty, he had a fine North of Ireland accent and a mop of blond hair that was whipped back.

I also have fond memories of this man, Brother Doody, in relation to my religion. On one occasion, a Christian Brother visited the school to see if he could encourage some of the lads to join the order. He was very pleasant when he spoke to my class, which had about 15 or 16 in attendance. Each of us had his own seat. These seats had been designed for two, but each of us had one to ourselves. This man spoke to fellows individually. Eventually he came down and sat beside me and we chatted away for about 10 or 15 minutes. He asked me various questions and I think I answered them to his satisfaction. Towards the end of the conversation, I can remember quite clearly he said to me: 'Now, to one of the more important aspects of our religion, the Sacraments. Tell me how many Sacraments there are.' And I said: 'Two.' And he looked at me in astonishment. 'Two?' and I said: 'Yes, sir, Baptism and Supper of the Lord.' That's how I would have answered it: 'Baptism and Supper of the Lord.' I then frantically looked up at Brother Doodie and I could see his shoulders shaking with amusement. The brother interviewing me then turned to me and said: 'Oh, I'm very sorry, I hope you're not upset.' And I said: 'I won't give a thought to it.' And when he left, Brother Doodie said: 'Now, lads, that was a fine example to show you that there are just little differences between our separated brothers in the Church of Ireland and ourselves.' There was a humorous element to it which

we all enjoyed. I can remember all of the lads facing back towards me and they were all smiling: Cookie Donoghue, Pat Rafferty, Liam Murphy and the others. It was a good lesson for them and it was a good lesson for me.

Little things like this helped me in later years to come to realize just how close my religion was to Roman Catholicism and, of course, the RC lads, I believe, got some idea about how close the Church of Ireland, Anglicanism, was to their religion. As I said, Brother Doodie was definitely a one-off and in later years I came to realize that he was very much aware that he was facilitating such understanding.

He also took another interesting initiative which I have not forgotten. When I started in first year he began to call me 'namesake' because of the similarity in the pronunciation of our surnames. In fact, I believe they have the same derivation, his being closer than mine to the original Gaelic pronunciation. Well, after a week or two he noticed I was heading off at midday, Christian doctrine time. I was just grabbing my case when he said: 'Namesake, come here. Where are you going?' I said, 'Going home, sir.' 'Why?' he said, 'It's only 12 o'clock.' I said: 'Well, it is religious instruction now. It's the end of the class for me.' 'So', he said, 'Are you an atheist?' I said: 'No, sir, I'm a member of the Church of Ireland.' 'Oh, one of our separated brotherhood', he replied, as he often did later on. The following morning he called me aside and said: 'In future, at 12 o'clock come to my classroom. I want you to have your prayer book, your catechism and your bible with you. I'll be setting work for you to do. I had a chat with your minister and he has provided me with your syllabus of study.' And that is how it went, with him regularly asking me pertinent questions on what I was meant to be learning to see how I was progressing. I well remember telling my parents about this and my father was absolutely delighted. My mum was also very impressed.

In my entire life going to school, right from the time I started to the time I left, I never experienced any taunt about my religion. I think that Brother Doodie played some part in that, but it was also just the local way and it was reflected in life at school. When the boys had one of their school religious retreats I was excused, of course, but I still had to attend school. I think that might have been when I spent extra time with Brother Murphy from the primary school, learning something about one of his favourite hobbies, beekeeping. I well remember myself and another lad being shown how to take the honey out of the separator and put it into pound jars. We were rewarded for our effort with

a fine jar of beautiful honey. As a result, I retained a slight interest in bees and beekeeping. It was also probably on such occasions that he introduced us to the fine vegetable and flower garden he maintained. He loved his garden and his flowers, and he taught us a lot about insect life and birdlife.

5

Secondary School Education in Other Catholic Boys' Secondary Schools in Ireland, 1922–1962

Provision of Catholic secondary school education for boys in Ireland by religious orders of priests and brothers lagged far behind the provision made by the Irish Christian Brothers and the diocesan colleges. In 1930, the Patrician Brothers had six schools catering for 536 pupils, the Jesuits had five schools catering for 863 pupils and the Presentation Brothers had five schools catering for 372 pupils. At the other end of the spectrum, the Holy Ghost Fathers had two secondary schools, while the following orders each had one school: the African Missionary Fathers, the Redemptorists, the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans), the Order of Carmel (the Carmelites), the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Order of Franciscan Minor, the Order of Franciscan Capuchin and the Order of St Vincent De Paul.

Amongst the schools under consideration here were boarding schools run by religious orders catering for the wealthier Catholic class. These were very spacious institutions with a wide range of facilities and were often located in pleasant rural settings. One such school, the Benedictine Boys' School at Glenstal Abbey, County Limerick, was described as follows for the 1940s by a teacher who taught there at the time:

> Glenstal is in a beautiful setting in the quiet countryside of east Limerick.... Those of the lay staff who were not married lived in what to local people was always called 'the castle'. And the towers and turrets, crenelated walls and vaulted ceilings ministered to the feeling that we were indeed living in a medieval castle.[1]

St Vincent's Vincentian College at Castleknock in County Dublin, Clongowes Wood Jesuit School in County Kildare and Newbridge College, County Kildare, run by the Dominican Fathers, were along similar

lines. Regarding the latter, the original school was replaced by a new building in the mid-1920s. When this building was being erected, it was described as a school with ten large classrooms, three reception rooms, a large kitchen, offices, two well-ventilated dormitories with cubicles for 70 boys, a large study hall and professors' rooms on the second floor, and a sanitary annex with 14 shower baths.[2]

The schools of the type being described here remained numerically largely the same during the expansion which took place in secondary school education from the 1940s, with one of the few new schools being erected being Franciscan College, Gormanstown, County Meath.[3] As with the diocesan colleges and Irish CBSs, however, some improvements in buildings did take place. The Jesuit Belvedere College, for example, added additional accommodation and acquired new playing fields.[4] Not all, however, were in this mould. For example, a teacher who taught in 1937 at the Augustinian's Good Counsel College, New Ross, described how his teaching was mostly done in a basement cloakroom and that while there was a fireplace in that cloakroom, 'it served only to deepen the existing gloom' as 'the chimney seemed permanently cloaked'.[5]

Some of the schools of the type being considered here mirrored those of the Irish Christian Brothers and the diocesan colleges in the promotion of Gaelic games. Notable examples in this regard were the Franciscan College, Gormanstown and Ballyfin College run by the Patrician Brothers. Others, and particularly those catering for the middle and upper levels of the better-off in Irish society, mirrored the practice in Protestant schools of promoting rugby. Also, the situation was a little complex, with some of the less expensive Catholic schools like St Mary's Marist College in Dundalk, which catered for both boarders and day pupils,[6] the Jesuit boys' day school in Belvedere House in Dublin, the Jesuit's Crescent College day school in Limerick and Rockwell College for boarders in County Tipperary, run by the Holy Ghost Fathers, also being considered 'rugby schools'.

The remainder of this chapter details the accounts of the memories of secondary schooling of four individuals who attended Catholic boys' secondary schools other than diocesan colleges and schools run by the Irish Christian Brothers prior to 1967. The first account is from Brian Fleming, who attended Belvedere College, also known as St Francis Xavier's College. This school is located on Great Denmark Street in Dublin City. The original building was Belvedere House, which was built as an impressive dwelling house in 1774 by the Second Earl of Belvedere. It was later bought by the Jesuits who set up a boys' day school there in

1832. Along with promoting a Jesuit education, it also quickly became established as one of a number of Catholic rugby and cricket-playing schools in Dublin. Internationally, it is probably best known as the school that provides the backdrop for much of James Joyce's novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

The second account is from Gerry Jeffers. It relates to his attendance at De La Salle Brothers' College in Churchtown on the edge of Dublin City. Unlike many of the other De La Salle secondary schools in Ireland, this school promoted rugby rather than Gaelic football.

The third account is from Andrew Shortall, who attended the Patrician Brothers' secondary school in Ballyfin, County Laois. This order of brothers, more correctly titled the Brothers of Saint Patrick, was founded as a diocesan order by Dr Daniel Delaney, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, in 1808. They established a number of schools in Ireland and, later on, overseas, including in India and Australia. The school at Ballyfin was one of the best known of these, not least because it was located on the 600-acre Ballyfin Demesne and its associated 600-acre estate, which the Brothers purchased from Sir Ralph Coote in 1928.

The fourth account is from Brian Titley, who attended Coláiste Chríost Rí Secondary School in Cork City. At the time, this was one of three secondary schools in Ireland run by the Presentation Brothers. One of the features which distinguished it from the other two, namely, Presentation Brothers' College Cork and Presentation College, Bray, was that it promoted Gaelic games, and particularly Gaelic football, rather than rugby. The Presentation Brothers, as has already been noted, owe their origins to Edmund Rice, who is also recognized as the founder of the Irish Christian Brothers. By 1967, they had schools in the USA, England, Canada and the West Indies.

Belvedere College, Dublin: The memories of Brian Fleming

I went to Palmerstown National (primary) School in Dublin, which was the local primary school. I commenced in 1951. My father was a teacher in the school and it was quite an uncomfortable experience for both of us. There was no escaping being taught by him as it was a two-teacher school. One lady taught low infants, high infants, first class and second class, and my father taught the remaining classes. There was a seventh class, which had small numbers and was attended by those who had completed the Primary School Certificate examination. They were going to go into the workplace as soon as possible, but were deemed to be a year too young to do so, as the school leaving age was 14 and they

had not reached it by the time they had finished sixth class. So, both were engaged in what is now called multi-grade teaching, usually to about 70 students in 4/5 class groups. While I am sure this was challenging for teachers and made life difficult for those to whom learning did not come easy, it had advantages for the bright student listening in to what older children were being taught. Also, occasionally one was recruited to 'teach' younger pupils, in a sense, an early apprenticeship to the profession.

After completing sixth class myself, I went to secondary school in 1959, to Belvedere College. I was a good student in primary school, but I remember others who were better and they did not go on to secondary school. I can think of two in particular, one who became a postman and the other who went on to be a gardener. I cannot be sure why they did not go on to a secondary school. Lack of money to pay the fees might have been an issue, but there was a CBS not that far away where fees were nominal, or even waived in certain circumstances. It may also have been a matter of their parents requiring that they go out to work so that there would be additional necessary money coming into the home.

There was never any question at home but that I would be going on to secondary school. Both of my parents were teachers. My father, who was Irish, trained at St Patrick's Primary School Teacher Training College in Dublin. My mother was Scottish and she had trained as a primary schoolteacher in Scotland. Belvedere College, my secondary school, was, as it still is, a Jesuit all-boys' school, and it was fee-paying. It was a bit unusual as it had six, rather than the more usual five years, of secondary schooling. So I did six years there. We did the Intermediate Certificate examination after four years and the Leaving Certificate examination after another two.

I was very conscious when I moved to secondary school that I was one of only a small group who did so from my class. The rest went to a vocational school or got jobs. The situation brought about a certain amount of discomfort for me for a while. I made new friends at Belvedere and started to slowly lose some of my old friends from primary school. There was a little pull in two directions for a while, which was difficult. In saying this, I am not indicating that my new schoolmates were not collegial. While most of them were from better-off backgrounds than I was, there was no edge in that. It was all very pleasant. At the same time, I was aware that many of them had a different accent to mine. They sounded a little posh.

There was no such thing as parent–teacher meetings. At the end of each term we did an examination in every subject and a report was

sent home. The report indicated where we were ranked in our class. The classes themselves were very strictly streamed. There were four class groups in first year. You were allocated to one of them at the start of first year and you were still with that group at the end of sixth year. The allocation was made on the basis of one's results in an entrance examination. And those in the different streams differed in terms of some of the subjects they studied. Those in the higher streams did what were considered to be the more difficult subjects. Reflecting on it in later years, I came to the conclusion that this wasn't necessarily a good forecaster of future success; there were a lot of those cases where fellows you thought were beneath you academically in school became very successful in professional life.

The curriculum was very classical; I studied Latin and Greek. The Jesuits, however, also insisted that we do handcraft subjects. As a result, I became proficient at making carpets and making covers for standard lamps. That was all very interesting. I never worked out why they had that dimension to their curriculum.

All of the teachers were males and many of them were Jesuit priests. Indeed, we were very conscious from the outset that the Jesuits were the real force in the school and that the few lay teachers, all male, were, to some extent, second-class citizens. We also had Jesuit brothers around the place and they worked in the canteen and did other domestic and maintenance work. They were lower down the ladder in the hierarchy. Whereas the Jesuit priests had a very long period of academic and spiritual training, I don't think the brothers took as long to become fully-fledged members of the order.

After I left school, I went to university and then became a mathematics teacher. I think that can be attributed to the influence of a teacher I had. I think that kids, whether they rationalize it or not, like good teachers. Now, they might tell you that someone who was not very good was great fun and so on. However, they rarely like bad teachers. They have some sense of the fact that this man or woman is putting in an effort for you and that you should put an effort back in. In my case, I certainly met the best teacher I ever met in my life in Belvedere when I was in sixth year. I was doing a subject called applied mathematics. A lay teacher left the school and he was replaced by a retired Jesuit priest. He looked to me at the time as if he was about 90 years of age, but I'd say he was probably 70. He was living on the campus. He wasn't teaching anything else in the school, so he had plenty of free time to devote to us. The system he operated was based on us having two notebooks, one of which was a homework copybook and the other of which

was for classroom work. At the end of class he took the classroom copybook and each night he corrected the work we had done in it that day. He handed it back to us the next day. The first thing the next morning before classes began, we had to hand him the homework copybook in which we had done our assigned work for the previous evening. That was corrected and then given back to us at the beginning of his class with us. He was brilliant. It worked for me. I got a percentage mark in the high 90s in the honours' paper in applied mathematics in the Leaving Certificate examination. Many others in the class achieved similar results, which clearly reflected the value of his approach.

There was corporal punishment in the school, but it was carried out strictly in accordance with Jesuit regulations. The rule was that it could only be administered by the Prefect of Studies, as he was known. I witnessed two people in that role in my time. One of them, I am fairly certain, hated giving corporal punishment. I don't think the other one was worried about it one way or another, but I am not sure. That is just the impression I formed. It involved being slapped with a strap, and if you got a wallop of it, you felt it. I got it a few times. It was for misbehaviour rather than for any academic failure. As far as I know they were not supposed to punish a kid for academic difficulties, or lack of performance. I believe they stuck to that rule. Looking back, I think two factors sustained the corporal punishment regime in schools until it was abolished in 1982. It was practised in many homes, though happily not mine. And parents seemed to go along with it. Perhaps they just had an attitude of 'this is the way things are done', and they did not question it. Strangely, while it was a common feature in secondary schools, it was relatively rare in the vocational sector where I spent my career. So, I never taught in a school where it was part of the discipline code.

I went to and from the school every day on a public bus. There was one other guy who always accompanied me. I think in total there were about 700 of us in the school. The average class size was probably about 30. For a long time my memory suggested to me that the classrooms were huge, but when I went back there for a past-pupils' reunion a few years ago, I realized they were quite small. I think that 30 pupils would have been about the maximum that each room could have held.

When I first went to the school I was struck by all of the boxes located on each of the four or five floors in the building. Each box had a teacher's name on it. Very quickly we learned that we had to place our homework in these boxes first thing each morning. That meant that when the teacher had a free period from teaching he could pick up our assignments from his box, correct them and then give them back to us at class.

The Jesuits were very keen on giving us homework and I would say that I spent about two to three hours on it each evening.

There was a cafeteria in the school, to which we could go at lunchtime, and there was also a church. That was where many of our school religious retreats were conducted. I know we had to pay fees, but I have no idea how much they were. I would say that getting the money together wasn't easy for my parents. Because my mother had not gone to school in Ireland and had qualified as a teacher in Scotland, she could not speak the Irish language and therefore was unable to get teacher registration; demonstrated competency in Irish was necessary under the teacher registration regulations. As a result, she could never get a full-time position. Any work she got was substituting for other teachers who were not able to work for periods of time for various reasons.

Rugby was the big sport in the school. I was into soccer and on one occasion I was one of a group of lads who tried to start a soccer team. The priests didn't stop us, but neither did they give us any encouragement. Rugby and cricket were the games with status in the school. The rugby players in particular were looked up to and the school spent a fortune on promoting it. At the same time, unlike now when such schools advertise that they have a number of rugby coaches employed, it was the priests who did the coaching and they did it out of the goodness of their hearts. They were also big into singing and choirs. Every year we had a school production of a light opera. I couldn't sing so I didn't get involved.

We each had our own bench in class. The school authorities were very strict about making sure we wore the correct uniform. We wore a school blazer, school trousers and a school tie. The teachers all wore academic gowns. We referred to them by their surname. They also used our surname when referring to us. For example, I was always called Mr Fleming.

A big emphasis was placed on us being involved in charitable activities. We had a News Boys' Club which started long before my time. It was established, I think, to help young fellows who tried to make a living selling newspapers on the side of the street. That's where the name came from. We also had a priest, a Father Scully, and he set up the Catholic Housing Aid Society. I remember working on that, helping him. My mother helped out. The society was involved in building small houses, maisonettes, or small flats for older people. The Jesuits were quite keen that we understood that we had a duty to give something back to society for the opportunities we had been given. Regarding the formal teaching of religion, I am not sure if I can say it was well taught or not. But there were lots of religious practices, including class masses,

end-of year Mass and retreats. There were crosses on the walls at various places throughout the school, but otherwise it was not big on religious icons.

There was no great emphasis on career guidance. All I remember was that there was one occasion when we had a talk from two former pupils and it was stressed that we should join the Belvedere Past Boys' Association. The implication was that once we did that, we would get assistance from other members in getting a job later on. As a result, I would imagine that the majority of boys leaving the school each year joined. I didn't join myself. I didn't like people telling me what I had to do. I decided I shouldn't have to rely on somebody else to get me in a job because of connections. I believed I should be able to get a position on merit.

The Jesuits who taught me were, in the main, very good teachers. They all lived on the campus. They didn't have a family life to occupy their time and they lived on campus. So teaching was their whole life and they gave a lot of time to it. It was a good school. It gave me a comprehensive education by the standards of the time and I have fond memories of it.

De La Salle College, Churchtown, Dublin: The memories of Gerry Jeffers

I grew up in Churchtown, which was then on the edge of Dublin City. I started primary school with the Sisters of Charity in St Anne's in Milltown. It was co-educational and I stayed there until I had made my First Holy Communion. Then I transferred to the De La Salle Brothers' Preparatory School in Churchtown. The assumption generated by its name was that you were being prepared for attendance at a secondary school.

The secondary school had opened as a newly-built school in 1952 and I commenced there in 1959 when I was 12 years old. It was an all-boys' school. At that time, Churchtown was a new suburb, part of the city's post-war expansion southwards. My folks, for example, were the first occupiers of the house in which we lived.

My dad was very keen that I would attend secondary school. His trade was as a photo engraver and he later went on to manage the company for which he worked. He was very conscious that he had had to leave secondary school without gaining a Leaving Certificate. This was due to family circumstances. He made it clear that none of his six children were going to have the same experience.

The social stratification in the area was quite pronounced. Within the new suburb there were private purchase houses and there were local authority houses. Not many boys from the local authority houses attended the De La Salle Secondary School at that time.

I also remember that there was rigid streaming in secondary school. This meant that for most subjects we had an A class and a B class. I also have very powerful memories of being shocked when we came back after the Intermediate Certificate examination and found that certain students had not returned. They had been asked not to come back because they had done poorly in the examination or for some other reason. I've met some of them since and they still harbour resentment about that.

I think the De La Salle Order made a clear decision to promote the school as a middle-class establishment. Promoting rugby as the dominant sport indicated this strongly. The message it sent out was that those attending the school would be associating themselves with those who attended the middle- and upper-middle class schools that played the sport. Consequently, our rugby world was very organized.

I think sport played a big part in shaping my identity. Nearly every Wednesday and Saturday we played a match against another school. It was usually a Catholic school like St Mary's Rathmines, St Paul's Raheny or Terenure College, and occasionally a Protestant one such as the High School or St Andrew's. Most of the time we made our way by public transport, taking the number 14 bus into the city and negotiating our way from there. Part of the fascination was mixing with boys in schools that seemed different to ours. Some of them were obviously from families that were quite wealthy. Also, some of the schools were boarding schools with extensive grounds. Our school was a single building with two pitches in the middle of a housing estate. Playing these matches opened up another world for me, a world of people further up the socio-economic scale than we were. On the other hand, there was very little exposure to those attending schools that didn't play rugby, most obviously CBSs.

We had one particularly inspiring brother teaching us. I believe that he was very socially aware and he arranged for us to visit Belfast to play against a Protestant school in 1963. This was an unusual practice. He also had a link with a De La Salle College in Manchester. We visited there to play rugby and their team came across to play us. Looking back, while playing against other schools was interesting, I think what was really important was going to training and the bonding that went on with one's team mates, the friendships that were formed. This was all very positive. If you were tempted not to go to school on an afternoon,

a good reason to go was that there was going to be training at four o'clock.

I recall one De La Salle brother who, in my view, was quite conflicted. He was a Kerry man who taught us history, with a rather republican hue to it when I was in fifth and sixth year. On a Monday morning he would regularly ask: 'And who was in Croke Park yesterday?', to see who had been a spectator at a Gaelic football or hurling match. It was clear that there were brownie points to be gained from him if one said one had been to Croke Park. He might then ask: 'Well, who was in Lansdowne Road', to see who had been a spectator at a rugby match. And then he would follow up by asking: 'Was there anybody at Inchicore?' There was one guy who was a faithful follower of St Patrick's Athletic soccer club and he was kind of commended every time he said he had been to Inchicore. Then the majority of us would reveal that we had been in Glenmalure Park, Milltown, watching Shamrock Rovers soccer club play a match. I think that those who went to GAA matches found most favour with him, attending a rugby match or supporting St Patrick's Athletic soccer club was okay, but if you supported Shamrock Rover's soccer club, you were deemed to be mixing with what he called 'bowsies', the working-class crowd. After a while, it was a slightly amusing and predictable ritual.

There was a strong sense of competition between the schools that played rugby. I don't recall being particularly excited if we beat one of the teams from a Protestant school. The difficult schools to beat were some of the Catholic schools such as Blackrock College. They were the ones we wanted to beat and when we did so it gave us great satisfaction. We also had a school sports' day every year and that was very positively promoted. When I was in fifth year, a boy in sixth year, Tony O'Neill, was instrumental in getting a school team to play in an organized inter-schools' soccer tournament amongst rugby-playing schools. We were not allowed to play under the banner of the school, so we chose Berwick Rangers as our team name, as the De La Salle Brothers' residence was known as Berwick House.

In general throughout the school, Gaelic games were seen as being for a different type of person. I think some of us developed a similar attitude towards the Irish language. This related to our perception of the differences between people from urban backgrounds and those from rural backgrounds. What is interesting about this is that many of our teachers, both brothers and lay men, were from rural Ireland. In pupils' conversations there was a sense that those from the capital city were sophisticated, while those from the country came from less enlightened

backgrounds; they were 'culchies'. That kind of prejudice was prevalent in the school to some extent, though I don't think the brothers or the teachers set out to promote such views. Not only that, I can remember a very inspiring geography teacher from the West of Ireland challenging us, saying that because we lived in our particular suburb and environment, we had very little knowledge of rural Ireland and about the curse of emigration.

The brothers also promoted the idea that we belonged to an international De La Salle family. Many of them spoke about the other schools in which they had worked, such as those in Waterford, Dundalk, Wicklow, Ballyfermot, Ballyshannon, as well as schools in India and South Africa. I also remember that we formally celebrated, in the religious sense, St John Baptist De La Salle and the De La Salle Order on one particular day every year.

My recollection is that the curriculum we followed was pretty standard for the time. I did Irish, English, maths, geography, history, Latin, science, French and religious education all the way through from first year, while I also did physics in my Leaving Certificate years. We also did PE. Actually it was drill. I have a vague memory of using hula hoops and painted sticks and wearing long white trousers and white shirts in PE lessons. I presume the theory behind what we were doing was that we were learning discipline, but I found it all very boring. Playing sport informally around the school, on the other hand, was fun. We used to play soccer in the schoolyard, sometimes with a tennis ball. During morning break, I often had to decide if I would join the soccer game with the tennis ball, or go behind the bicycle shed for a cigarette.

Social interaction amongst the smokers was intense. It was about being accepted as part of the smoking group. Also, it was a way of socially mixing with people from other years, as was the informal soccer in the schoolyard. The brothers must have known that we smoked; it was such a large group. I think their attitude was one of: 'If I catch you I've no choice but to make trouble for you, so don't let me catch you.' There was also a ritual about the smoking itself. Cigarettes were in scarce supply and often you would have to share one. Or you would tap a cigarette and smoke a butt later on. In other words, an individual cigarette could be smoked in two, if not three, different stages.

I don't remember the school making any attempt to promote formal social gatherings between us and pupils in girls' schools. Informally, however, we had a lot of interaction. I had five sisters. As a relatively

new suburb, many neighbouring families had children of similar ages. Girls we knew used to come to the rugby games. By the time we got to sixth year, there were many girlfriends on the sidelines watching the games.

The annual school retreat was a major event. On at least one occasion we went on a retreat run by the Jesuits at Rathfarnham Castle. Even though it was close by, we stayed overnight. It was quite an intense experience. On the other hand, there was hardly any sex education at school that I can remember. I think this responsibility was seen as belonging to the parish, or to the family. What I do remember is that in the local parish church there were lots of pamphlets for sale that had been produced by the Catholic Truth Society. The most prominent author of these that comes to mind is Daniel Lord SJ. He wrote on topics like 'What to do on a date.' We used to buy these and read them. I also remember reading a regular column on such matters in *The Sunday Press* by Angela McNamara.

The strongest memory I have of the classroom is the amount of writing on the blackboard done by the teachers and the amount of transcribing of it by us. We copied almost everything that was written on the blackboard into our copybooks. In this regard, Brother Patrick, an inspirational teacher, introduced us to calligraphy and on how to use an Osmiroid pen to do distinctive script. I took a lot of pride in writing in this fashion in my copybooks. I produced neat handwriting and good diagrams in geography and science.

While transcribing seemed to dominate class time, I also remember that we spent a significant amount of time conducting experiments under the supervision of the science teacher we had at both Intermediate and Leaving Certificate levels. A new physics laboratory was added to the original building in the early 1960s. We had a lot of the classes in there and the activity work was really good. I believe that the approach was not one of 'we're going to do an experiment and we know the result in advance.' They were genuine experiments.

There were other memorable teachers too. I thought that Brother Francis, a De La Salle Brother who taught me Latin in first year and who was also the school principal, was outstanding. I was quite devastated when he didn't return in the second year. I think he died of cancer. The geography teacher I mentioned already, Gerry Fahy, also stands out as having been enthusiastic about his subject. Along with raising our consciousness about emigration from the West of Ireland, he related to us his experiences when working in the summertime as a student in the Tate and Lyle factory in Liverpool. This gave him a background to

talk about industrial England with great passion. So I remember feeling aroused by that passion and the opening up of the world to me through geography.

Mentioning Brother Patrick again, what also impressed me about him was his versatility. Not only was he a good teacher of French, he was also a good teacher of English, Latin and religion, and he required major engagement on our part. He was a serious communicator and it was a privilege to be in his class.

At the same time, corporal punishment was quite prevalent throughout the school. It was used to punish misbehaviour and for not doing schoolwork. The lay teachers were slightly more inclined to use it than the brothers. In the case of both groups, it was administered using a leather strap and, sometimes, a bamboo cane. I think it had quite a negative effect on many students. My memories of secondary schooling are reasonably positive, but when I go to class reunions, I notice that some of my classmates are keen to relive their memories and some of them are very negative with regard to the beatings they received. The practice acted, I believe, to promote learning through fear and also to generate and emphasize power inequalities. I also think I understood from very early on in secondary school that some teachers had made the choice not to use corporal punishment and I developed a lot of respect for them.

All of the teachers in secondary school were males. The brothers stood out from the lay men because of their distinctive religious dress. Interestingly, I think both groups frequented the same staffroom. We also had occasional visitors to the school. Almost every week when I was in fifth year we were visited by a representative of some religious order. Each representative was very engaging, providing attractive, interesting sessions, to encourage us to join his particular order. Most of them were from mission-oriented orders. We also had one or two of them encouraging us to consider training to be a priest for an American diocese. On the other hand, the De La Salle Brothers did not engage in this activity at all. They did, however, encourage us to do charity work. In the summer following the end of fifth year, I volunteered to do a week in Sunshine House, the Vincent de Paul holiday home in Balbriggan, in north County Dublin. About 120 inner-city kids, each about ten years of age, came for a week's holiday, and I played a part in looking after them. That helped me to realize that while I had gone through four years of secondary schooling and been exposed to the social categories that inhabited our school and some other schools, I knew very little about the social realities, and particularly the poverty, that was in the city in

which I was growing up. One did know about it at a superficial level and knew that particular suburbs and places were known to be 'rough'. But at Sunshine House I was given an opportunity to experience real children from poor backgrounds and listen to their stories about their lives. It was a very powerful eye-opening social-awareness experience for me as a 17-year-old.

I cannot remember studying seriously in after-school hours. I think the preparation for the public examinations was a relaxed enough affair. In primary school, I received very positive school reports in both fifth and sixth class, with good marks in every subject and a high ranking overall in my class. By about second year in secondary school, however, I was starting to slack off and received less positive school reports. As a result, my father sat me down as a 14-year-old and said: 'We've been thinking about these school reports and we think maybe a boarding school environment would be good for you. What do you think about going to Gormanston College?' I remember being shocked. In fact, I reacted so negatively they dropped the idea very quickly. On the other hand, the experience got me back on track in terms of paying more attention in school.

Along with the inspirational teachers that I have mentioned already, I also had other positive experiences that started to kindle a love of learning within me. One of these related to our science teacher, Mick Daly, giving us two months to do a project on a topic of our own choosing. I picked the question: 'Is there life on other planets?' As a result, I spent a lot of time in Rathmines public library and discovered lots of fantastic information on the topic. And it was not all just scientific knowledge. It also introduced me to philosophical and theological perspectives on the topic. Also, while there were no after-school study periods in the school, I remember an arrangement was established with Dublin City Libraries when I was in fifth year such that the school effectively became a branch library. Students acted as librarians and there was a fine collection of books on site. As a result, I ended up reading a lot. In particular, I read a lot of fiction. I benefited greatly, then and later, from this.

Ballyfin College, County Laois: The memories of Andrew Shortall

I was born in 1953 in Dublin. My mother decided to go to Dublin so that I could be born in a nursing home. But my home was in Kilrory, Stradbally, County Laois. My father had a farm of 116 statute acres. It is

good land and most of it was devoted to tillage. I am the eldest in the family. I have three other brothers and a sister.

I started primary school at the convent primary school run by the Presentation Sisters in Stradbally. I attended junior infants, senior infants and first class. I then transferred, as did all boys, to the local all-boys' primary school in Stradbally. It was a two-teacher school. Here I was taught by lay teachers. The teacher I had in second and third class was a female. She was Irish but her husband was of Polish descent. She had also taught my father as a young boy. Our home was about four miles from the school. Our mother used to drive us in and out every day. Sometimes she also brought the children of a few neighbours and sometimes they brought us. Occasionally, when the weather was fine, we used to walk or ride our bicycles.

My mother was a nurse. She was the local district nurse when she met my father. He had actually been one of her patients. That's how they met. When they got married, she was required, according to the State regulations of the time, to give up her job. After that, she only worked intermittently, deputising for nurses who were sick.

I finished primary school at the end of June 1966, and the following September I started secondary school as a boarder at Ballyfin College, which was run by the Patrician Brothers. The other options would have been to go to Portlaoise to the CBS or to the vocational school. We were also not too far from the CBS and the vocational school in Athy. They were all about ten miles from home. But it would have been a long way to cycle every day and there was no public transport that we could have used.

I had financial assistance in going to Ballyfin College as I sat for a county council scholarship, did well and was granted one. It was means tested; I think it paid about half the fees. The principal of the primary school gave myself and another lad additional tuition by way of preparation. I remember him as an interesting chap. He did not have much time for sport. I can distinctly remember bringing in a ball one day at lunchtime, and while he let us play with it, he told us he did not want it to happen anymore. In the classroom, however, he was always totally focused. For the scholarship examination, he set us appropriate additional work to do. He also gave us additional books to read and an extra maths book with difficult questions in it to answer. He used to correct our written work that we had to do. And he used to spend time giving us feedback. We also visited his house with our parents the weekend before the examination and he put us through a practice run of the examination.

The school itself was located five miles further from my home than any of the day schools I could have attended. That meant it was about 15 miles away. It was about halfway up the slopes of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. My parents were relaxed about sending me there as my father's sister's two lads had already been there and they found it to be fine. Out of a total teaching staff of about 20, there were about eight brothers and the rest were lay men. The order did not have any priests. It was founded by the bishop of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin in the 1800s. It had other schools in Ireland and in various parts of the world.

When I went into first year I was clearly the biggest lad in the class. At 13 years of age, I was six feet tall. I was also pretty strong as I was used to working around the farm. The school was located primarily in a big old mansion that was once central to the large estate of the Cootes and there was a big long driveway leading up to it. The actual domain consisted of 600 acres and was enclosed by a wall. There was an artificial lake at the front of the big house and the surrounding grounds were lovely. The Patrician Brothers had bought the whole lot. They farmed the land and fed us, the students, with the produce that was yielded. They grew their own vegetables and they killed the animals to provide us with meat, while bread and sugar were purchased locally. The fifth years picked the potatoes at the end of October every year. That gave you about ten days out of class. The parents didn't seem to mind. It had become a tradition. When the guy driving the tractor pulling the potato digger used to pass, we used to throw spuds at him and they would bounce off of the cabin.

My memory is that the food was not great. For breakfast we each got a bowl of cornflakes with hot milk. We had two slices of white bread and a bit of butter. That was it. The main meal was in the middle of the day. The main course was usually a couple of slices of roast beef, sometimes with gristle in it. You'd get a few spuds, maybe two or three, and some of them wouldn't be in great condition. I can often remember getting a spud that would be half rotten. If you were unlucky enough to get a bad spud, it was a bad day. You'd also get a bit of cabbage and a bit of turnip, or carrots and parsnips, mashed together. They were the staples. You would also get a dessert. It could be custard with a bit of rhubarb in it, or a bit of rice pudding. They used to have these small steel bowls for the desserts so that you couldn't break them. It was all dished out from a big aluminium dish given to the prefect at the top of the table. He was also given a big ladle in it and he'd dish it out. It kept us going until about 3.40 pm, when we were ravenous and received

a bun or a doughnut. Tea time was 7.00 pm, following two hours of study. We usually got a couple of sausages and two slices of bread with a piece of butter. Occasionally we got a fried egg or a bit of scrambled egg instead of the sausages. Often the prefect was helpful and managed to get extra bread for us.

The farm work was overseen by a lay brother, with one or two others to give him a hand. There was also a lay brother working in the kitchen and another one was a handyman around the place. None of them taught us but they were very much part of the religious community. There was also a couple of old retired teaching brothers around the place. A few of them were just living out their days, but the others still taught a few classes. I particularly remember one of them who taught me Latin in second and third year and he was the most cynical man I've ever come across in my life. He used to get us to stand in a semi-circle around the blackboard and he'd sit on the chair to one side of it. He used to get me to write anything he wanted written on the blackboard. 'Get up there big man and write this out for me', he'd say. He rarely got up out of the chair. On the rare occasion when he did stand up, he used to walk around with a ruler in his hand and he'd ask each student a question. If you gave the incorrect answer, he'd conk you on the top of the head with the ruler, while simultaneously saying: 'Oh you're for export.'

He certainly knew his Latin. He could also make it interesting, but often spoiled it with his cynicism. And he did not appear to know anybody's name. I was always referred to as 'big man'. He gave everybody a nickname, or he used an incorrect surname. One guy in my class was a Fogarty but he always called him Cody. There was another fellow called Ryan and he called him O'Reilly.

There were roughly about 60 pupils in each year and they were divided into an A and a B class. They were streamed according to ability, with the guys who had scholarships all automatically being placed in the A stream. We had a lot of scholarship lads. They came from all over the country; from Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Cork. There were several fellows from Kerry and some from Dublin. I won't say that every county in the country was represented, but a lot of them were. In our first three years we all studied Irish, English, maths, French, history, geography, Latin and science. No practical subjects were taught and there was also no drawing taught. Music also was not taught as a formal subject, but each year the first-year pupils put on a Gilbert-and-Sullivan production. This was all organized by a lay brother who did the maintenance work around the place. He used to bring in a drama teacher from outside to

prepare the cast for this. I was the only one not involved; I had been asked to leave the choir because my voice had broken.

I liked all of my school subjects. I think that was because I had a very good preparation in primary school. We had been taught some of our subjects in primary school through Irish, so I had no problem with Irish in secondary school. I found it a breeze. I was also well able to cope with the maths and I liked it. I didn't find the teaching of English to be very inspiring. It was all very much about dictating notes to us, which we wrote out in our copybooks. I had no grasp of the insights that poets were trying to communicate. Poetry meant nothing to me. I did develop a great love of reading of novels, but I am not sure if that was because of school or in spite of it.

Latin was probably my best subject. I absolutely loved it and I did extremely well in it in both the Intermediate and the Leaving Certificate examination. I don't believe that science was taught well. There was a good chemistry laboratory and a physics laboratory in the school. We occupied these rooms for a good lot of the science classes, but we rarely made use of the equipment. The subject was taught primarily as a theoretical one. I can only remember ever doing one or two experiments. Yet, I did chemistry and biology for my Leaving Certificate examination. Studying biology at that time was, I think, a bit unusual for boys. It was taught by a brother who had been teaching in a school in the USA and he introduced the subject when he returned. I also studied Leaving Certificate economics for two months, which I think might also have been a bit unusual for the time. The brother worked hard at trying to teach it to us. I think it was quite new in the Irish secondary school curriculum at the time and I found it very hard to grasp. I did not stick with it and changed to geography.

I cannot say I had any teachers who were truly inspirational, apart from the Latin teacher in my final years, who was a lay man. He went out of his way to provide a historical background to our studies. He was particularly good at bringing Roman history to life. Not only was he good at teaching us the actual mechanics of the language, he was also good at making the subject interesting and enjoyable. He didn't use any flashy teaching aids. Rather, the secret seems to have been that he liked the subject himself.

Overall we had about 300 boys in the school, nearly all of whom were boarders. Some local boys, mainly from around Mountrath, cycled to school. A few local Protestant boys also attended. They were farmers' sons and it was clear that they wanted to be farmers themselves. When it came to the time for our religion class every day, the brother who used

to teach us used to jovially say: 'Time for you lads to go before I convert you.' It was all said, and taken, in a good spirit.

There was one huge big room on the top floor in the main house and that is where the first-year pupils slept. Two rows of beds were lined up, one on each side of the room. Nobody was partitioned off in any way. You had a bed and you had maybe the distance of another bed between you and the next fellow. You had a locker into which you put your clothes and you had a couple of hangers on the wall behind your bed. A brother used to sleep in a room outside the door to make sure everyone was well behaved. The remainder of the students were located in a specially built dormitory block, a bit away from the big old house. Here there was more privacy as each person had his own little cubicle. Each year group was located on a different floor level and each had a brother in charge.

It was all well-organized. We got up in the morning about 6.45 am. There was a washroom attached to each dormitory with a big row of sinks running down the middle. It was freezing cold water coming down off the Slieve Bloom Mountains. We all then went to Mass in the school church. This was said by a priest from the parish in which the school was located. After Mass, we went to the refectory for breakfast. We finished breakfast at about 8.30 am and had half an hour free, when we used to go for a walk around the grounds or play a game of handball. There were a couple of recreation rooms and sometimes they'd be open, depending on the mood of the school principal. If anybody misbehaved, he'd lock them up for a few weeks. They contained a couple of billiard tables, snooker tables and table tennis tables.

Class commenced at 9.00 am and finished at 3.40 pm, with a morning break and a lunch break in between. As soon as classes ended, we headed for the playing fields to play hurling or football. The brothers took a great interest in preparing us for inter-school competitions, but these were the only games we had. Cross country and athletics was also promoted, although to a much lesser extent. Sometimes we played a little tennis on a rough court, but never in any competition. Soccer was never mentioned by the brothers, even though we did kick around a ball, soccer style, amongst ourselves in the schoolyard. Physical education (PE) was non-existent as a school subject.

We departed the playing fields around 4.45 pm to commence study at 5.00 pm. There was no school library so we were all dependent on our school textbooks. For the senior classes, study took place in a big study hall. The first and second years studied in their own classrooms, supervised by prefects. I was a prefect myself in fifth year and because

I had to supervise the juniors' studying, I found it a bit difficult to study. We also had a second study period, from 7.45 pm to 9.30 pm. We then went to wash our teeth and headed off to bed. It was usually lights out by 10.00 pm.

The old brother who was the maintenance man was a good pianist. If anybody showed an interest, he would give him tuition. This did not incur any additional fee. He just wanted to give fellows the opportunity. Only a few lads took him up on it, though. He also used to sometimes show us a film on a Sunday night in the study hall. It was a fairly regular thing. There was a stage at the front of the hall and at the back of the stage he had a proper screen that he could let down. He then used to set up a projector at the back of the hall. It became like a rudimentary cinema.

The only association we had with girls was through contact with a Brigidine Convent nearby in Mountrath. Once a year they were invited to our place for a school dance and they then invited us back to their school. And there was absolutely no sex education. The nearest we came to it was through a few lessons on human reproduction in the biology class.

We didn't go home at the weekends. As a result, I was very homesick in first year. It took me a good while to settle down. I was lonely but I never opened my mouth either in school or at home. Like everyone else, I never complained. We knew that our parents were making a fair bit of sacrifice on our behalf and we didn't want to let them down by complaining. So we eventually just got on with it and settled down.

Religion permeated the school day. We had Mass every morning and prayer at regular hours. We also had our religion classes. Yet, I have no memory of it being oppressive or overpowering. The brothers seemed to be fairly relaxed about it all. Also, there was hardly any mention that we might consider joining their order, even though there were guys coming around from other orders trying to encourage us to join them.

There was no formal career guidance. However, in our senior years, the brothers in charge of the dormitories would occasionally engage us in conversations about what we might do after our Leaving Certificate year. They would talk to one person about it one night and to another person on another night. It did, at least, get us thinking about our future.

Coláiste Chríost Rí, Cork: The memories of Brian Titley

The South Presentation Convent – a massive complex of odd-shaped buildings and high walls – occupies an extensive swathe of land between

Douglas, Evergreen and Nicholas Streets in a tough working-class area of Cork City. Nano Nagle, founder of the Presentation Sisters (or the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary) opened a convent and school on the site in the late 1770s and you can visit her grave in a shady part of the garden. By the 1950s, 'South Pres' housed a large body of sisters who operated a primary and secondary school for girls and a pre-school with a few primary classes for boys. The boys' school was named after St Finbarr, a popular local saint. Everyone called it 'the Conny'. It was here, at the age of five, that I had my first encounter with Catholic education in the old Irish mode – untouched by what was happening in early childhood classrooms elsewhere in the Western world.

The head nun was known in religion as Sister Stanislaus, but since the name was completely unfamiliar to us, and youngsters in Cork would not have been acquainted with Poland's patron saint and martyr, we called her Sister Santa Claus. My classroom teacher was the unforgettable Sister Benedict – a formidable woman of undetermined age who matched perfectly the stereotype of the nasty nun who ruled with a ruler. Her crude methods did impart some of the basics of literacy and numeracy and we were introduced to the Irish language, which I enjoyed. My most enduring memory of being in her class, however, was the catechism. There was a new question every day that had to be answered first thing in the morning and you never knew who would be called upon to respond. This random system kept everyone on edge and few would take the chance of turning up unprepared. I suspect that a modified version of the *Penny Catechism* was our text: Who made the world? Who is God? Why did God make us? Who was the first man? And so forth. Sister Benedict liked to spice up this barren fare with stories about Jesus, including a yarn from the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* about him fashioning birds out of clay that took to the air when he released them. Just as we left for home before Easter, she assured us that on the Sunday morning, if we were up early enough, we would be able to see the sun dancing for joy in the sky in celebration of the Resurrection. In fairness, she did advise us to protect our eyes by gazing heavenward through a piece of coloured glass. Many of us tried, but the celestial miracle eluded us. We might have had a better chance of catching the Easter bunny doing his rounds. My education was off to a great start.

South Presentation Convent no longer functions as it once did. Many of the buildings are shuttered and a few elderly nuns, now in secular dress, are still in residence. The schools are all gone and the classrooms in which young boys struggled with the 4Rs long ago are in the hands

of a lay community group that teaches English and work-related skills to immigrants.

My primary education (classes 1–6) took place in Scoil Chríost Rí (Christ the King School), a boys-only institution run by the Presentation Brothers. The school was popularly known as 'Turners', since it was located in the city neighbourhood of Turner's Cross. There were only two lay teachers employed there at the time. The brothers, who comprised most of the staff, had rather odd names that often matched their personalities: Anselm, Borgia, Columba, Dermott, Eunan, Jarlath, Munchin and Norbert. As a general rule, they were not that bad a bunch, and I suspect that they worked very hard and for little reward to instil the basics of an education in two languages and two orthographies.

One brother, however, was different; I doubt that any other country in Europe would have permitted him to be in the same room as children. His classes proceeded in a regular pattern of drill, repetition and a crack of the cane on the bare legs if you did not respond with the accuracy and alacrity that he demanded. The ridiculous-looking short pants we were obliged to wear made his tactics all the more terrifying. This was fifth class and it was here that we were introduced to Irish history and geography through the medium of the Irish language. History consisted of memorizing word-for-word stories from a textbook about Ireland in the bad old days of Norsemen and Normans. Geography meant learning by heart lists of the seven major towns in each county. We began with County Clare: Inis, Cill Rois, Cill Dalua, Cill Choai, Inis Díomáin, Cill Fhionnúrach, agus Lios Dún Bhearna. We got through most of the Munster counties that way. The lists of towns and rivers to be memorized were always seven in number and always in the same sequence. The memorization was achieved through repetitive chanting in unison.

This technique continued to be employed in sixth class and even in secondary school. There were the seven woollen-manufacturing towns of England: Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Barnsley and Wakefield; and the seven major rivers of Europe: the Rhine, the Rhone etc.; and let's not forget the Seven Deadly Sins, although they were not part of the geography curriculum. If you wanted to have a bit of fun – which was hazardous in the extreme – you could deliberately mix up the lists when called upon to rattle off one of them, as long as you were ready to switch to the right list before being pummelled. This primitive pedagogy served to fill up our minds with useless facts and precluded any possibility of meaningful understanding.

There was not much in the curriculum that might be described as either arts or culture. There was some choral singing, but it was

exclusively religious in nature and connected with such events as our Confirmation ceremony. A small group in the class, myself included, could not really sing, but we were obliged nonetheless to remain in the choir and to memorize the words of the prescribed hymns. 'The Crows', as we were labelled, were instructed to pretend that we were singing by opening and closing our mouths in sync with everyone else while not making a sound lest our cacophonies offended God.

In the later years of primary school, an interesting phenomenon appeared: the threat of Greenmount. About once a year, an inspector from the Department of Education turned up to check on our progress. His name was Mr Riordan, he wore a long green coat and he seemed to make the brothers nervous. Inspection meant entering classrooms and questioning us on the things we were expected to know. I suppose we could have engaged in sabotage by providing deliberately stupid answers for the man, but there was little danger of that. And just in case such an idea had occurred to us, we were warned by the brothers that Riordan had a van parked outside with which to transport troublemakers to Greenmount. There was much speculation about all this, including the capacity of Riordan's van, and although nobody knew what sort of a place Greenmount was, it did acquire a fearsome reputation. The threat, it turned out, was meaningless, since Greenmount was actually an orphanage/industrial school run by the Brothers in another city neighbourhood and you could only be sent there by the social welfare authorities or the juvenile courts. Over the years, I sometimes wondered if Riordan had even been aware of the threat hanging over us as he quizzed us on the seven major market towns of Clare and other knowledge of such vital importance.

Sixth class was the year of the Primary Certificate examination and I sat for it in June 1958. For most of the boys in my class, it was the end of their formal schooling. If you wanted a secondary school education you had to write an entrance examination at a school offering such a programme and there were very few of them around. Secondary schools were all fee-paying and all privately owned, for the most part by Church entities – dioceses or religious orders. They were under no obligation to accept you no matter how much wealth or intellectual prowess you had on your side. Secondary education was a privilege of the favoured few, something we were reminded of even before we got there and something that was constantly before us as we experienced it.

There was, however, an easy way into secondary school; by showing a serious interest in becoming a religious brother or priest, an education would be forthcoming in a junior seminary at little or no cost to

your parents. This message was conveyed to us consistently throughout sixth class, and in particular by visiting religious recruiters who regaled us with tales of heroism and adventure enjoyed by their members in carrying the message of salvation to ignorant heathens, savages, lepers and cannibals in exotic locales around the world. One of my classmates, John M., bought into it and he was spirited away to a boarding school somewhere in County Kilkenny. When he emerged two years later, he admitted that he had not listened to the radio or read a newspaper since the day he had entered. John had a lot of catching up to do. The Brothers had not given up on recruiting some of us to the religious ranks. The pressure would return towards the end of secondary school.

In some ways I was fortunate to be in the Primary Certificate class of 1958. The Presentation Brothers were about to expand their operations by building a new secondary school in the vicinity and we would be amongst the first to avail of the opportunity thereby provided. The new school, to be called Coláiste Chríost Rí, was going up on Capwell Road and would not be ready for occupation until January 1960. In the meantime, those of us who had passed the entrance exam and whose parents were willing to pay the fees began our secondary studies in an old industrial school building on Sawmill Street not far from the South Presentation Convent.

It is well to remember that the Brothers already had a secondary school in the city. The Presentation Brothers' College on the Western Road, or 'Pres' as it was known locally, was for the sons of the Catholic bourgeoisie, charged higher fees to maintain exclusivity, and had rugby as its official game since, for some mysterious reason, brutish scrambling in mud for an egg-shaped ball was considered a prestigious pastime. There was no question of such an institution admitting to its classrooms the working-class products of Scoil Chríost Rí.

Coláiste Chríost Rí was a bit of an enigma. On the one hand it offered a select group of proletarians an escape route from lives of pick-and-shovel drudgery; on the other, it was clear that our opportunities would be limited, for the most part, to low-end bureaucratic rather than professional careers. The one exception to this rule was careers in the Church and, as we shall see, much of the culture of the school was constructed with this objective in mind.

Coláiste Chríost Rí did fill a void. There were very few secondary schools for boys in the city at the time, and in particular on the south side. The new school not only took in those of us from Scoil Chríost Rí who had passed its exam (quite a small group, in fact), but also boys

from primary schools ranging all the way from Douglas Village to the inner city.

The teaching staff at Coláiste Chríost Rí was split about evenly between brothers and lay men at the inception, but as the years passed, the latter became more numerous. I can remember the names of six of the brothers: Bonaventure, Dennis, Fanahan, Felix, James and Mannix – strange enough, but not as strange as the names assigned to those in the primary school. And even if their ranks thinned out in time, there was never any doubt that they were the ones in charge and deserving of a special deference.

Brother Bonaventure was the head. We all called him 'Joe', based on the rumour that his name before entering religion had been Joe Murphy. Tall, shiningly bald, portly and with a flabby neck that jiggled wildly when he shook his head in disapproval, which was often enough, Big Joe dominated the school like a colossus in every sense of the word. And, as if to remind us that he was no ordinary Joe, he arrived at the school every morning riding in a limousine hired for the occasion from Sullivan's Funeral Services. Even though there was room on board for several passengers, the other brothers had to travel to work on foot or by bicycle from their monastery, which was actually at one end of the South Presentation Convent compound.

Joe was a religious zealot who believed his school should conform to monastic codes of discipline. Accordingly, we had to walk silently and in single file between classes as if we were friars in procession. Prayers punctuated the day and a statue, holy picture, or holy water font was never far from view. These elements of interior décor were designed to create a monastic atmosphere, but the ugly modernist buildings on Capwell Road were too much of a challenge to make it convincing. It never really felt medieval, in spite of the Brothers' best efforts.

Religion, or Christian doctrine, was Joe's teaching specialty and, even though it was not a subject on state examinations, we had a class on it every day, including Saturdays. In fairness, there was nothing slipshod or sentimental about the syllabus and it ranged over heresies (and why they were wrong), the Bible, devotions, indulgences and how to accumulate them, sacraments, the lives of saints, Papal encyclicals, the doctrines of Papal infallibility and the Immaculate Conception, the Syllabus of Errors (Joe was a big fan of Pio Nono), persecution of the Church by evil communists, the different categories of grace and sin, descriptions of Hell, smatterings of Church history, demon possession and everyday dangers to 'holy purity'. It was quite the program of studies,

when you think about it, but a solid foundation, along with the compulsory Latin (a completely stupid waste of time), for future clerics and there was a plan to recruit a few of us. There were often interesting and complicated discussions in class that I recall clearly. And whenever we encountered a contradiction or conundrum, Joe would fob them off a favourite line of his: 'It's a mystery of faith.' This was hardly satisfactory to inquiring minds, and there were a few amongst us.

Whatever his faults, and they were many, Joe was a good storyteller and had a way of engaging the imagination that was difficult to resist. I can still remember his vivid description of the death of Arius the heretic, a contemporary of the Emperor Constantine, who claimed that Christ was made of a similar substance to God, as distinct from the orthodox view that they were both of the same substance. This evil idea that subverted the Trinity called out for divine retribution and God did not disappoint. As Joe told it, one day Arius arrived at a square in Constantinople where he was about to address an adoring crowd of his supporters. Suddenly, he was cast to the ground, his stomach burst open and worms crawled out. Martin Luther, King Henry VIII and others who challenged the authority of the Church were also given negative portrayals. The horrible deaths they allegedly suffered were said to be sure signs of divine displeasure. The message was clear: mess with God and his Church and trouble will surely follow.

For every villain, there were several saintly heroes, some of whose portraits adorned the classroom or corridor walls. They tended to be people who had died young and the assumption probably was that we could more easily identify with saints of our own age. Strangely enough, two of the most popular figures here were actually female, although they were not the kinds that a guy might get all wound up about. Santa Maria Goretti, we were told, preferred death to sin, and we were advised to think about that when temptation came our way. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, on the other hand, preferred death to life and God rewarded her by taking her at an early age. This saint was also lauded for becoming a Carmelite at the tender age of 15 – a not very subtle hint that teenagers like us should be thinking about life in cowl or cassock. The most popular male in this pantheon was Saint Dominic Savio, an abnormally pious type who preferred praying to playing, and who died at the age of 14 while studying for the priesthood. In spite of Joe's best efforts, there was little about these people that we (I mean my friends and I) could admire, although we could acknowledge the heroism of Father Damien for his work amongst the lepers of Molokai.

The school flag was modelled on the Irish tricolour, but in shades of green, white and black. Joe assured us that the colours had been chosen for the following reasons: green for Ireland, black for the fallen patriots of 1916 and white for 'holy purity'. What exactly was this 'holy purity' that so obsessed Joe? In effect, he expected us to live as if we were monks under vows of chastity. He railed regularly against impure thoughts, impure desires, impure actions and anything that resembled an 'occasion of sin'. Masturbation, or what he called 'bodily pollution', was one of the great enemies of youth, he said, since the Devil was always inducing you to do it in order to secure your soul. In fact, 90 per cent of those suffering in Hell for all eternity were sent there for sins against 'holy purity', or so he claimed. The source of Joe's infernal statistics remains a mystery, although I suspect they came from the ever-fertile imagination of St Jerome. Or perhaps there is a sociology of damnation out there that I am unaware of? The message, nonetheless, was unmistakable; unless we disciplined ourselves to the standards of monkish celibacy as we negotiated the many pitfalls of adolescence, our immortal souls were imperilled.

One of Joe's favourite characters, whose story was trotted out from time to time to inspire us, was Matt Talbot. Matt was a Dublin dockworker whose heroic piety was only discovered after his death when they removed his clothes to find ropes and chains tied around his body as a form of discipline. He was probably a poor choice as a paragon of purity since his problem had been, as the Americans would put it, 'booze rather than babes'. I suspect that his love of pain may make him a candidate for sainthood one of these days, or he may already be there for all I know. Matt may well have been brought to the attention of the long-serving Pope John Paul II whose agenda included a massive expansion in the number of saints and a simplification of the process, perhaps ultimately with his own canonization in mind. A school named after St Matt of the Bloodied Ropes and Chains would probably have no trouble keeping boisterous youngsters in line. I wonder if Joe ever thought of that?

Another favourite in Joe's pantheon of saintly celibates was St Anthony, one of the early hermits who fled into the Egyptian desert in order to avoid the temptations of the world. The saint, in spite of the extreme physical austerities he endured in the middle of nowhere, was sorely tempted by Satan, who even appeared in the guise of a beautiful woman. Joe was trying to convey to us that women, or in our case teenage girls, were a problem requiring cautious vigilance.

In spite of Dominic Savio, Matt Talbot, Saint Anthony and Joe's best efforts to terrorize us about Hell, there were girls around, although not at Coláiste Chríost Rí, and some of us were interested in making their acquaintance. Girls generally attended convent schools, some of which were located near the centre of town. They were to be found after school in their distinctive uniforms on Patrick Street, the main thoroughfare, hanging around before catching buses homewards. Strolling up and down Patrick Street, popularly known as 'doing Pana', was a favourite way of encountering them. Once the Brothers discovered this custom of ours, they simply banned it without justification or explanation. It was an extraordinary intrusion into our private lives. But that didn't seem to matter to men who had appointed themselves as the religious police of youth. Brother Fanahan was Joe's principal enforcer, and he took to patrolling Pana after school hours in order to ensure that the prohibition on our *passiagata* was observed. No parents dared to object to such nonsense; they were all terrified of the men in black. If this evokes images in your mind of the Taliban, you are not far from the truth.

Keeping us away from girls was supposed to limit the incidence of solitary vice and to prevent it from evolving into participatory vice, a much more serious problem. 'Company-keeping', the old-fashioned term used to describe dating, or 'jagging' in Cork argot, was the ultimate 'occasion of sin', in the Brothers' eyes. Not only could it lead to sin, but it could derail the dormant religious vocations that some of us were presumed to have and were awaiting revelation. The good news is that it didn't work. The Brothers' attempt to control our social lives ultimately failed. We met girls in our own neighbourhoods and at the numerous dances and record hops held in tennis and rugby clubs across the city. It was possible to have a normal adolescence, but it took some effort.

Irish was the lingua franca of Coláiste Chríost Rí and it was used as the medium of instruction for subjects such as geography, history and mathematics. We were supposed to address the staff at all times in Irish, except when we had classes on science, Latin, English and religion, which were taught in English. The Brothers favoured Irish not just because it was our own historic language – a reasonable proposition – but also because it was allegedly free from the sort of filthy literature that plagued the English language and that was being kept from our shores by the vigilant Censorship Board.

The extensive use of Irish added a strong nationalist flavour to the school culture and this was reinforced further by the sports' program. In truth, there was no sports' program worthy of the name, or anything that might resemble PE. Walking or cycling to school was probably the

most exercise that the majority of students ever experienced. The Brothers had no interest in encouraging fitness or healthy participation in a variety of sports or activities. The problem was their single-minded focus on Gaelic football, rather than lack of resources. If you had no inclination or aptitude for this game, which was true for most of us including me, there was nothing for you at Coláiste Chríost Rí. In my own case, and having no shortage of aggressive energy to burn off, I solved the problem by joining a boxing club in the inner city that was named in honour of – and wouldn't you know it – Matt Talbot. I even bloodied a few ropes there from time to time.

Gaelic football fitted well in the nationalist-tinged muscular monasticism of Coláiste Chríost Rí. It was not played by girls or women, and they were not even interested in it as spectators. The strictly male nature of the sport probably endeared it to the Brothers, unlike tennis, for example, where males and females even played together on occasion. The idea at Coláiste Chríost Rí was to develop a winning school team rather than encourage a general love of Gaelic football. This meant that very few boys were actually playing while the remainder were reduced to supporting roles. And the ultimate objective was to have the best school team in the country by winning the Hogan Cup. It was not achieved in my day, but a competent team did emerge and made it into the Munster final when I was in the last two years of my secondary school education. The Brothers were ecstatic. As they rallied the entire student body around the team in anticipation of imminent glory, Brother Fanahan took it upon himself to compose a school song. The words were in Irish – of course – and were sung to the tune of John Phillip Sousa's *The Washington Post*. I can only remember one stanza and it went with the second movement:

Do bhúamar ar an Mhanistir Thúaidh

Ar Phort uí Shúilleabháin an Cé

Is ar Choláiste Bharra Naomha

Is ar gach foireann eile insan Mhumhain, ó ins an Mhumhain

(We beat the North Monastery School

And Sullivan's Quay School

And St Finbarr's School,

And every other team in Munster, oh in Munster).

Sousa's marches have a quirky, almost comical quality to them, and it is no coincidence that the Monty Python group later adopted his *Liberty Bell* as their theme song. And there was something of the comic opera about the sight and sound of adolescent boys singing Fanahan's words to cheer on their team. Perhaps it was a good thing that we lost in Munster and were spared putting on the spectacle elsewhere in the country if we had moved to further rounds of play.

Although the Brothers were quite aware that the vast majority of us would never join their ranks or go for the priesthood, the structure and culture of the school was designed to snag at least a few candidates. During Christian doctrine class, Big Joe never lost an opportunity to extoll the virtues of the religious life as the surest ticket to heaven and the propaganda in favour of this career choice intensified during the two final years leading up to the Leaving Certificate examination. There were detailed discussions of the nature of a religious vocation and how to recognize it. Joe assured us that God called in unexpected ways and that we should not be waiting to hear a voice, to be confronted by a pillar of fire, or to be knocked off a horse or a bicycle. In the end, it all came down to one simple premise: were you willing to do God's work in return for the hundredfold reward in the hereafter?

As these matters were being clarified for us, the recruiters for religious orders returned in earnest to make their pitches to captive audiences. We had no choice but to listen. These 'vocational talks' usually began with a stirring account of the evil state of a world under siege by the twin forces of 'pleasure-loving paganism' and 'godless atheism'. These forces were even penetrating Ireland's pristine shores through English newspapers and radio broadcasts, it was claimed. We were urged to put the Church's need for more soldiers of Christ at home and abroad before our personal ambitions. Foreign missions featured prominently in these appeals, and especially in Africa, where it was said that entire tribes had never learned to renounce nudity, polygamy, witchdoctory and the worship of the moon, the sun, or green-eyed yellow idols. Keep in mind that there was no such thing as career guidance at the school; careers in religion were given no competition as we tried to figure out our futures.

The recruitment drive was enhanced by an event in which we were required to participate in each of the two final years of school, the religious retreat. It took place at the Dominican Retreat Centre in Montenotte in the north-eastern part of town. Most of us looked forward to it since it was an opportunity to sleep away from home for two nights in the company of our friends and in private bedrooms, a rare luxury for people of our social class. Besides, the monastery had

extensive gardens and woodlands that were spectacular. The attractiveness of the place may have been part of a crafty ruse to entice us to join. We were given a sense that monks lived well, at least as far as their physical surroundings were concerned.

The retreat followed a tight schedule of meals, recreation, devotions, sacraments, 'spiritual counselling' (actually a probe into our private lives) and sermons, including the sex sermon. It was, in fact, an anti-sex sermon with the usual harangues against the Devil, the weakness of the flesh and how your own personal guardian angel was always hovering about ready to restrain your hand before it gave pleasure to you or to someone else. A 'profound silence' was supposed to prevail throughout the retreat and you could tell the holy types by their tight-lipped determination to stick with it to the end. Many of us gave up on the idea early on when we realized that supervision by the priests was a bit lax at times.

How many were recruited into the religious life? Were any of us ready to become eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven? Let us first consider some numbers. There were around 60 boys in the cohort that entered Coláiste Chríost Rí in 1958 and we were divided into two classes of approximately even size, based on results in the entrance examination. Some dropped out or were expelled along the way. By the time we reached the Leaving Certificate year, there were around 50 of us in all. As far as I can recall, everyone passed the Leaving exam in the summer of 1963, although the spread in the distribution of honours in individual subjects would have varied greatly. What did we all do?

At the time, the Leaving Certificate opened many doors and everyone found employment who sought it. Our class produced a newspaper reporter, an air traffic controller, a medical lab technician, two army officers (one with the British Army!) and clerks with Bord Fáilte, the Electricity Supply Board, and the various banks and insurance companies. At least seven of us, including me, went on to University College Cork. And there were two priests or 4 per cent of the total, no less. This was a considerable success rate from the Church's perspective.

Con O'D. was accepted into Maynooth to study for the diocesan priesthood. His decision came as no great surprise to anyone. An altar boy from an early age, and an avid member of the Legion of Mary throughout secondary school, he would not have known what to do with a girl if she had thrown herself at him. Tony Q., who joined the Dominicans, gave us more of a surprise. He had dated girls from time to time, but his ardour had always been tempered by a deep-rooted piety. I suspected that he had been roped in during the last of our retreats

because the Dominicans had not been amongst the recruiters who had visited us in school. Or perhaps he had become enchanted with Soeur Sourire, Belgium's Singing Nun, whose one-hit wonder, *Dominique*, a song about St Dominick, was climbing the charts at the time. When Tony told a group of us about his decision, I recall joking that he should remain vigilant lest the Albigensian Heresy make a comeback. He said he'd pray for me. I do not know if Con and Tony stayed the course until ordination. I never heard about them again.

Coláiste Chríost Rí provided a bare-bones academic education that was narrow in substance and purpose. But it was the only game in town for ambitious working-class boys at the time and most of us were keenly aware that if we stumbled along the way, it was off to pick-and-shovel land. There would be no second chances. The Brothers had us over a barrel, so to speak, and they knew it. There was no need to threaten us with Greenmount since they could simply kick us out the door at will. Nor was there any point in objecting to the long list of stupidities imposed on us. And parents, who were not welcome at the school, were far too intimidated to intervene on our behalf.

I was a few years into my studies in University College Cork when word came that Joe had moved away from Coláiste Chríost Rí to found another school on the same model in the expanding suburb of Bishopstown. The new school was to be called Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh. Joe was on a roll and I figured he would go for three in a row to round out the Trinity. Having named institutions after the Son and the Holy Ghost, God the Father was the obvious person to be honoured in the next expansion of the franchise. Coláiste an Athar Mhóir sa Spéir, perhaps?

Big Joe's empire-building was good and bad news. On the positive side, it looked as if there would be vacancies for secondary school-teachers if Brothers remained in short supply. And I was hoping for a career in that field. But the thought of working in an institution run by Joe or people of that ilk was too much for me to stomach. Besides, it was increasingly improbable that they would have hired the likes of me.

With few realistic options available, I left for Canada where teaching jobs were plentiful and were offered under dignified terms and conditions of employment. It was goodbye Joe, or so I thought. Some years later, just after Christmas 1972 to be exact, I was having dinner with my wife, Jane, in a Killarney restaurant. Quite unexpectedly, a large figure approached our table out of the shadows. It was Joe, and to my astonishment, he was dressed in civilian attire. When I attempted to introduce him to Jane as Brother Bonaventure, he quickly corrected me and said

his name was Joe Murphy. We had been right about his real name all along!

I was astounded to say the least. Could it really be, I asked myself, that Joe had forsaken holy purity for 'the fleshpots of Egypt'? Had he abandoned the youth of Cork to reckless experimentation with bodily pollution and other violations of the law of God? Seeing the puzzled look on my face, Joe explained that while he had indeed left the Presentation Brothers, he had done so in order to pursue a long-held dream; to study for the priesthood. His suit and tie were but temporary; soon he would be back in dog collar and soutane. I wished him well with his ambition. But I was greatly relieved that he was no longer in charge of an educational institution. There would be no Trinity or Rosary of Joe-like schools. Once he was gone, it was time to raise another glass in celebration; there was a glimmer of hope for Irish education.

6

Secondary School Education in Girls' Catholic Secondary Schools Run by the Sisters of Mercy and the Presentation Sisters in Ireland, 1922–1962

The official title of the Presentation Sisters' Order is the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As the last chapter has pointed out, it is the oldest of the female religious orders founded in Ireland, having been established in 1775. Thus, it emerged against the same background as that which prevailed at the time of the establishment of the Irish Christian Brothers, although unlike the latter, it was established as a diocesan order. It is also one of a number of other orders of women which has their origins in the same era, of which the most prominent two are the Irish Sisters of Charity, established in 1815, and the Sisters of Mercy, established in 1831.

The foundress of the Presentation Sisters was Nano Nagle. Her ancestors were members of 'the Cork sub-gentry, with landholdings in various parts of the country and commercial and professional interests in Cork city'.[1] She opened her first convent in Cork in 1775 and over the next two decades other convents were opened in Killarney, Waterford and Kilkenny. As with the Irish Christian Brothers, the order spread around the world, primarily, though not exclusively, establishing schools. While many of these were for the poor, the order also provided schools for girls from the financially better-off sectors of society, including in Ireland.

Some of the first schools established overseas were in England. Also, the first of a number of convents was established in India in 1841. Here, separate day and boarding schools were established for local girls and for Europeans, while orphanages were also provided. The first foundation took place in Australia with the establishment of a school in Tasmania.

The Presentation Order was established as a diocesan order, with formal approval being granted by Pope Pius VII in 1800. Great emphasis was placed on religious instruction and on the spiritual welfare of the girls in the schools. In Ireland, as with the other orders running secondary schools, the secular curriculum in the pre-Independence days was almost totally concerned with preparing girls for the examinations of the Board of Intermediate Education. The examination-focused emphasis was transferred to preparation for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations in the post-Independence era. A practice also evolved in the nineteenth century of helping poorer girls to make a living by teaching them how to crochet and make lace, and by providing them with work rooms to produce their goods.

The Sisters of Mercy Order, which eventually grew to be much larger than the Presentation Sisters' Order, was established quite a few decades later, in 1831. Its foundress was Catherine McAuley, who was raised by a Protestant guardian from whom she inherited a large sum of money in 1824. She used this money to establish her first religious house, a 'House of Mercy', in Dublin, for the provision of educational, religious and social services for poor women and children. From an early stage, the sisters were known locally as the 'walking nuns' because, unlike most female religious who, at this point, were living a cloistered life, they moved out beyond their convents to care for the sick. In 1877, the order established a dedicated teacher-training college for primary schoolteachers in Dublin. This was followed by the establishment of a sister college in Limerick in 1898. Like the Irish Christian Brothers and the Presentation Sisters, the Sisters of Mercy Order also spread not only around Ireland, but also around the world, and to such a degree that by the end of the twentieth century, it had become the second-largest Catholic women's order in the world.[2]

Both before and after Irish Independence, the Sisters of Mercy Order was by far the largest order of teaching sisters in Ireland. For example, in 1930, it ran 51 of the Catholic secondary schools in the State for girls. In these schools, 2,820 of the 9,525 girls in Irish secondary schools were taught. They were followed by the Loreto Sisters, who had 18 secondary schools catering for 1,845 girls, the Dominican Sisters, who had ten secondary schools catering for 1,259 girls, and the Presentation Sisters, who had 11 secondary schools catering for 611 girls. The remaining 2,990 girls were catered for by 15 different religious orders. Amongst the orders with only one school were the Sisters of Jesus and Mary, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny, the Sisters of Saint Paul, the La Sainte Union Sisters and the Benedictine Nuns.

As pointed out in the last chapter, the number of secondary schools in the State increased throughout the 1940s, the 1950s and the 1960s. As part of this development, the number of schools managed by religious sisters increased from 197 in 1955–1956 to 238 in 1961–1962. Most of this expansion was due to the initiative of the Sisters of Mercy. However, the expansion undertaken by the Presentation Sisters was also significant; it resulted in the order becoming the second-largest provider of secondary schools for girls by 1965. For example, in that year, while the Sisters of Mercy had 110 secondary schools, the Presentation Sisters had 40, the Loreto Sisters had 21, and the Dominican Sisters and the Holy Faith Sisters each had 11.

Like the schools of the Irish Christian Brothers, many of the Catholic girls' schools, including many of those of the Sisters of Mercy and the Presentation Sisters, had pupil populations of less than 150. Also, similar cramped conditions prevailed, particularly in the cities and larger towns. This restricted the number of full-time teachers that the sisters could employ on incremental salary. Also, in charging low fees, the sisters found it difficult to employ additional teachers out of their own resources.

The consensus throughout the decades leading up to the free education era was that in the majority of secondary schools, regardless of who the providers were, the heating, lighting and furniture were satisfactory.[3] The availability of adequate space, however, was not very satisfactory in many schools. In 1945–1946, for example, it was noted that while some schools got additional space through the acquisition of new premises, along with the adaptation and extension of existing buildings, most of the schools in the larger centres of population were filled to capacity, and rooms that were formerly used for handicraft, recreation and cultural activities were now given over to accommodating pupils for the teaching of the core subjects. In 1949–1950, it was reported that the situation had been alleviated somewhat with the building of a number of new schools and the extension of existing ones, but schools still existed where more than one class group occupied a single classroom.[4]

Many of the schools of the Sisters of Mercy, like those of the Irish Christian Brothers, conformed to this pattern. Some responded like the Sisters of Mercy in Cahir, County Tipperary, who, in 1932, built a small solid building as a nucleus for a secondary school and also used facilities nearby, including a science room in their primary school which had been built originally in pre-Independence days with grants from the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. The schools run by the Presentation Sisters also varied in terms of the quality of

buildings, accommodation and facilities. The nature of what was provided was also sometimes haphazard. For example, the secondary school at Presentation Convent Tuam consisted of three or four buildings which were formerly private houses, and the boarding students were accommodated in a former residence of the Catholic Bishop of Tuam.[5]

Presentation Convent, Cashel, County Tipperary: The memories of Mary O'Byrne

I was born in Cashel and I went to primary and secondary school there. Both schools were run by the Presentation Sisters. We had no lay teachers in the primary school, but in the secondary school, we had three of them, although one of those was only with us for a year. I remember her as she taught us maths. The nuns were dressed in black and had white wimples. My earliest memory of them is that they never seemed human. So much so that when I was coming up to the age at which I would be starting primary school, I absolutely refused to attend and it took a few weeks into the school year before my mother could persuade me to go. I was simply scared by the way they were dressed. Looking back, I realize that I have always been a person with a huge imagination and I was afraid of them because only a little bit of each nun's face was visible.

The convent where the nuns lived was a big grey building and my memory of it is that it was always wet and looked miserable. The part facing out onto the street had long windows and big doors. The nuns' living quarters, their chapel, the primary school and the secondary school were all located on the same site. There was also a small burial ground just for the nuns and it was located a little bit away from the convent.

The primary school and the secondary school were a short six-minute walk from my home. The primary school was built around the junior playground. To the right of it was the convent and to the left of it was the secondary school. To go from the primary school to the secondary school, you largely stayed in the same building, but moved to a different part of it just by going up a few steps and through a doorway. There was never any question at home but that I would be going on to the secondary school, even though my father was from a very working-class background. Both of my parents were very intelligent and I often recall how they never seemed to have even once considered encouraging us to leave school in order to take up jobs.

All of my sisters also went to secondary school. One of them studied nursing in England and one joined the British Army. I also studied nursing in the UK after my Leaving Certificate examination, and later

on I trained as a midwife and taught obstetrics to student midwives. I also did an Open University degree in England in general sciences as a mature student and later on again I started to study literature, photography and art for my own pleasure. I don't think I got the creative side of things from attendance at secondary school though.

I remember very well that a difference between primary school and secondary school was in the type of nuns with whom I had to deal. At least half of the nuns in the primary school were bullies. But the secondary school nuns, on the whole, were much better educated and were mostly dedicated to getting us to do our best in school. There was one nun I was particularly fond of who had a reputation as being a very hard woman to please, but we never had any problem getting along with each other. She taught English, mathematics and French.

For a uniform we had baggy blue gym slips with a sash. There was absolutely no spare money at home for any of this and it sometimes upsets me to think of the hardship that my parents had to put up with to provide for us. I remember that there was a drapery shop next to the school that used to sell the school clothes and I remember buying the blue blouses and the uniform there. I think we got some assistance from the school in that regard and also with buying the school books, but I am unsure as to how the procedure operated.

I studied Irish, English, history, geography, French, maths, Latin, Christian doctrine, accountancy and domestic science. The accountancy was so boring I could have slept through every class of it. Drawing and art were not on the syllabus for most of my secondary schooling. However, I always loved art and I used to buy a sketch pad and do a bit of sketching. In the final six months leading up to the Leaving Certificate examination, one of the nuns, knowing that quite a few of us were interested in art, got us together in a new block that was being fitted out for the teaching of science. She took us for classes on a Saturday morning. It was impossible to fit in a two-year course in that length of time. We had to try to cover the history of art and learn sufficient drawing techniques to try to pass in the examination. I did manage to pass, but it was not a very satisfying experience.

We were taught Irish by a very quietly spoken lay woman and I found it very boring. I did my best, but now that I have a real interest in the language, I am sorry it was not taught in a more inspiring manner. I did develop a great love for reading in English, but the inspiration came from home rather than from school. I used to devour all of the books in the local public library, which had a great selection and a very helpful librarian. My father, who was a natural storyteller, used to love reading

Zane Grey, but the main inspiration was my well-read mother, who also liked to help us learn the Irish language, though she was not a native speaker of it.

I don't consider school contributed to my love of books but it did introduce me to a wide range of authors. I loved Shakespeare, I loved poetry, I loved Gerard Manley Hopkins and I always managed to get really good marks in English. I also found out that I had a love of history, although much of what I learned I found out for myself; I was never content with just the school curriculum. My interest also came from my father who was very much into local history and into genealogy in the sense of being able to trace the local relations of many people when they came back from the USA or further afield. However, the actual teaching of history in school was boring. We just read aloud from a history textbook. I have no memory of doing the sorts of projects my own children used to do. We were expected to know different dates and place major characters in history in chronological order. I was also sorry for the teacher, a lay woman we had in our lower year classes. The class members used to bully her, asking her to explain such words as 'impregnable' when they were read out. She used to get terribly embarrassed. In my final two years leading up to the Leaving Certificate examination, we were taught history by a nun who was not really interested, didn't spend much time marking our work or giving us feedback and didn't give me the confidence to take the honours' paper.

I did geography also, and up to Intermediate Certificate level I again found the teaching very boring. The Leaving Certificate course, however, was interesting, especially as we had the opportunity to examine visuals, use photographs to interpret landscapes and write essays on our interpretations. I think that because I liked detective stories I saw myself as something like a detective working on landscapes.

At no stage did we study science in secondary school and when later I studied for a science degree, the only background I had was from the science I studied in my nursing and midwifery courses. It was only as I was coming up to leaving secondary school that a science block was built and the subject was becoming mandatory. I also remember being upset because one of the boarders actually managed to do a science subject in the Leaving Certificate examination as she had been given the opportunity to take classes at the local Christian Brothers' school. As day pupils, we did not even know that that might be possible. Science was a foreign country for the rest of us.

I did French for the Leaving Certificate. I was taught by one of the nuns and I believe she was a good teacher because to this day I can read

French without much difficulty. The same nun taught me mathematics and English. Because of her and the lay teacher I already mentioned who taught me the subject in my earlier years, I have never to this day had problems applying the subject in daily life. We also had to do domestic science. It was taught by a nun. It was hell for me because I really didn't want to do it, but I had to. We had to make clothes and do cooking. The school did have a modern kitchen, but I think I was rebelling against the expectation that you should get married and that you would need the subject to help you to look after a husband. I have a memory of making a mess of baking brown bread, sneaking it out of the class without being seen and then later on being a bit reckless. I thought the nun had left the classroom, so I took the bread back into the class, swinging it in a bag over my head and I was caught by her. And after all of that, I got honours in the subject in the Leaving Certificate despite some of the examination questions having an unexpected 'real' science slant to them. I think that that was because I was very good at writing essays and there was a major written component to the subject in the examination, and also because I never give up when undertaking a task.

We had a big playground in both primary and secondary school and we used to run like mad on it but we didn't have any sport at school. We did have drill and it was taken by a nun. You had to be very careful when taking part not to have your dress raised above your knee. In my final year at school, they were starting to have organized games. We did not have any career advice throughout my secondary school days, apart from visiting nuns who were home on holidays from the missions encouraging us to join their orders. I found out about nursing from a friend of mine who was going on to train as a nurse at St Vincent's Hospital in Dublin. It sounded like a feasible opportunity for me because it had the nurses' home attached, I would be paid enough money and I would be able to purchase my food.

From the beginning of our secondary school days those in the 'A' class always went back to school in the evening for two hours of supervised study. The supervision was nearly always done by a nun. We had time to go home, get something to eat and then go back. That indicates to me that the nuns were actually interested in us getting an education and being able to use it, even if they were unable to guide us much on careers. The usual expectation was that one would go on to study for nursing or teaching. I cannot remember anyone going on to be a nun, although we did have Presentation Sister postulants in our final year who were training to become nuns, had started their schooling in

another part of the country and needed to get their Leaving Certificate to be able to attend university or teacher-training college. I can remember one of them getting told off one day; it was a case of a nun telling off another nun in class for not producing the goods.

When I went to secondary school I was placed in the A class. The streaming started from the very beginning of first year and continued all of the way through. It was as if those in each stream occupied two different planets. Yet there was no animosity between us that I remember. I do remember, however, that some of the boarders, who came from different parts of the country, were real and utter torments. They liked to make fun of some of the day girls.

In the whole of my time at school we only had one sex-education lesson. It was given by a visiting lady doctor. But I was away from school that day. When I was about 16, I started to do a bit of acting with some of the boys through a local dramatic society/youth group, which I helped to start up. That led to my taking part in just one play in the town hall. When we had youth club dances, the boys took one wall and the girls the other. However, any meeting up individually with boys was frowned on by the nuns, and if they saw a girl meeting with a boy at lunchtime, they would march her in and parade her in front of everybody else returning to school after lunch. The person felt shamed. Nothing was said. It just reinforced the idea we got from a young age that because you were born you were a sinner and, basically, that you were doomed.

Now that is not the message I got at home. My father was very committed to upholding the rights of working-class people and he involved himself in local politics. We all loved him and called him Joe, his Christian name. He was never called daddy, or father, or anything else. He was Joe. The nuns didn't like that at all, seeing it as being disrespectful, but he was the love of all of our lives. My mother had been a nun for a short period. Religion was very important to her and so we had pictures of the Sacred Heart and the Shroud of Turin and holy water fonts around the house. We were surrounded by religion, but it never upset me until I hit the convent. One nun in particular picked on me and I dreaded going to school and learning about Hell from this person who made me miserable. I honed my mental arithmetic skills early on trying to figure out how many years I had to live before I went to Hell. Religion was taught in school, year after year, and in primary school, it was taught in such a way that made me feel that God did not love me. It took me many years later before I started to feel God's goodness.

North Presentation Convent, Cork City: The memories of Sally Desmond

I was born in Sunday's Well in Cork City. My father's family were builders. So he worked in the building business. I didn't have any brothers and sisters. The area was a mixed one in terms of religion. There were quite a number of Protestant families in Sunday's Well with whom we were friendly. It may explain why I have been friendly for all of my life with two particular ladies, one who is Presbyterian and the other who is Plymouth Brethren.

I went to the North Presentation Convent for both primary and secondary school. Both schools were for days girls only and both were located within the same building. Most of the teachers were nuns. In the primary school we had boys mixed in with girls for a few years, but they left after making their First Holy Communion and moved to the North Monastery School, run by the Christian Brothers, to Christians College, also run by the Christian Brothers, or to Presentation College, run by the Presentation Brothers. The primary school was in one area and when you went on to the secondary school you just walked across the playgrounds, through the ambulatory, down the gardens and there you were. However, you never again mixed with the primary schoolchildren unless you happened to have younger brothers or sisters.

A major thing when we went to secondary school was that we studied all of our subjects, apart from English and mathematics, through Irish. It did not bother me as I liked Irish and a lot of my extended family spoke the language. It was also attractive because it was impressed on us that we would receive an additional 10 per cent in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations if we wrote our papers in Irish. I remember studying Don Quixote through Irish, which involved double translation. The only subjects we didn't learn through Irish were English and maths.

I particularly liked history in secondary school. In that, I was influenced partly by the pride in knowing that some members of my family had fought in the War of Independence. We grew up on Irish republican history. Interestingly, I also loved English history. I attribute that to having had a very good teacher of the subject, a lay teacher. She loved the subject and it rubbed off on me. I also loved English literature and was very involved in drama, even though it was not taught in the school. My experience of drama was through 'the Loft', the very well-known Cork Shakespearian company. It had been established by Fr Seamus O'Flynn, our parish priest. We travelled everywhere with the

company. Through Fr O'Flynn and the Loft, an enormous number of people were instilled with a great love of the English language. The location itself was beautiful. There were dressing rooms, an auditorium and a small stage. Also, the members were from a wide range of schools and age groups, and there was also a large number of adult members. I believe we received as much education that way as we did in school. Also, the nuns did not seem too bothered that we had this pastime. Their general view, and that of our mothers, was that while we travelled to various parts of the country putting on productions, it was all right as we were with the priest.

I also received an out-of-school education by attending the Cork School of Music where I learned to play the piano. Elocution lessons, on the other hand, were provided within the school itself, but by a lady who attended for that purpose rather than by a regular member of staff. I feel that we were taught mathematics very well. What we didn't study, however, apart from physiology, were the science subjects, and I always regretted that. I believe that at the time, chemistry and physics were considered to be really subjects only for males. It was also a bit of a vicious circle because to have been taught, we would probably have had to have had a male teacher and there was not one male in the school, except for the gardener, and he was in his 80s. Over the years, the only other males we ever saw in the school were the bishop and one or two priests.

We had a large hall in the school. It was divided up by a series of partitions. These could be opened to reveal one large space. There was a stage and we did productions every year. Everybody was expected to take part in a school production after a certain age. Some played in a band. Others were part of a group who performed with hoops. Somebody else had a dancing group. The central piece was usually something like a Gilbert-and-Sullivan production. And, of course, the Gregorian Chant Choir performed. All of the preparation went on during a designated school period and then the big presentation took place over a few nights, with many of the parents in attendance.

We all studied religion and catechetics of course. We also went to Confession every Friday, and sometimes we had a school Mass and Benediction. This was all conducted in the nun's chapel in the school. Sometimes we would all march up to the cathedral which was only five minutes away. I have very fond memories of being in the school's Gregorian Chant Choir. That was really wonderful. It was run by Sr Immaculata and she had a passion for Gregorian chant which she passed on to us. We learned it during singing period in school and then sang it

at the Masses and at *feises*. To this day, I still buy Gregorian chant discs. It is amazing the effect that a good teacher has on you.

I had a couple of teachers who were as soft as butter. They were really lovely. Then there were others who were as hard as nails, and yet they were also very fair. We also knew the teachers who loved their subject. That was the case with our English teacher, a lay woman. One of the nuns who taught us English literature was the same. She succeeded in getting us to recognize the worth of poetry. Other teachers seemed to be quite mad. One of them, a nun, gave us a really skewed view of religion. She would ask us to pray for her intentions. Sometimes we would come in the next morning, the statues would all be down on the floor on their faces and she would say: 'Well, look at what happened during the night. That'll teach you all a lesson. I didn't get what I wanted.'

Some people say that teaching at the time was essentially geared towards the examinations. There is some truth to that. Certainly, doing the subjects through Irish was partly to help us gain additional marks. Also, the nuns and the lay teachers provided extra coaching for those subjects in which we were weak. This happened after school as well as on Saturday mornings and on Sundays after lunch. These were not just study periods; there was always someone there to help you with what you found difficult to understand. Also, we all studied domestic science in the first three years of secondary school. We were taught how to knit the heel of socks, how to make scones and how to make an Irish stew. These classes were conducted in kitchens in the school. In these, there were places called milk rooms where children who didn't have breakfast could get fed in the morning.

Most of the nuns guarded their feelings, as required by the order, yet a few of them didn't have nice attitudes. I would not say that they ridiculed any of us, but they sometimes picked on the kids they didn't like. And then there was always a pupil who was known as a particular nun's pet. That was the worst of all. It was better to be on the outer than to be considered a nun's pet. And all of them liked to try to instil humbleness in you. Yet, I remember that many of them were not that humble themselves. I say that because you always knew the sisters who didn't like certain other sisters. You always knew that there was a group who didn't think very highly of some of the others. We also gained a sense that because they had brought a dowry into the convent with them, all of the teaching sisters considered themselves superior to the lay sisters. Yet, overall, the nuns were very fair. At the end of each year, they would tell you exactly what they thought of you. They took an interest in us. They expected that, if we got married, we would go to the convent on

our wedding morning, and everybody did. While some of them were pious, others were not.

After the Intermediate Certificate examination some pupils just disappeared. My memory is that it was some kind of a natural process; you just didn't miss them. They disappeared out of your life. Through that process, classes of about 35 were reduced to about 15. Later on, we learned that some went on to get jobs in the civil service and in the banks. One thing that was very strong was that those of us who remained on in school were advised to consider going to university, and that, of course, is what I did myself, studying for a degree in commerce. In fact, we developed a view that while the Loreto girls were encouraged to try to make sure that they married well, the Presentation Sisters were primarily concerned that we should go and get a career for ourselves. That, of course, didn't mean we had no encouragement to become nuns. Sisters came around every year suggesting we might like to join them on the missions. They would just talk to us and give us out pamphlets and leaflets. At the same time, there was no huge emphasis on it in the school.

I remember well the school's religion retreats. The idea I formed of them was that the objective was to make you as pure as the driven snow. We learned that Maria Goretti was a wonderful person and we should always try to be like her. The retreat used to go on for a week. It was always conducted by a priest. We had sermons and recited the Rosary. We also had spiritual lectures and we were encouraged in fifth and sixth year to join the Guild of the Children of Mary Sodality at our local parish church. There were also long periods during the retreats when we were expected to be totally silent. These were meant to be times of silent prayer. Throughout it all, the main emphasis was on avoiding what were termed occasions of sin. Clearly the reference was to sex.

Now having said that, we were allowed to go to dances at a place called the Oratory, which was at nearby St Vincent's Convent, located between the North Monastery School and our school. These dances commenced on Sunday nights at 7.00 pm. The Daughters of Charity who lived in St Vincent's did the supervision. There was usually three of them on duty at the dances and each of us had to get a ticket from one of them in order to be allowed in. Our fathers accompanied us as far as the front door. Before the dance started, we always recited the Rosary. The rule for dancing was that we were to be six inches apart.

Camogie was actively promoted in the school. We had a very good school team. The training took place after regular school hours. It was taken so seriously that I remember being asked if I would mind not

playing on the school team as I was not very good. It was all organized by two lay teachers. We also had gymnastics on one day a week. Through sport, we were also conscious that the Christian Brothers had two kinds of schools. The boys at the North Monastery were introduced to the Christian Brothers' dominant republican attitude and it was reflected in the fact that they played hurling. On the other hand, the somewhat better-off families sent their boys to the Christian Brothers' College where they played rugby.

Mercy Convent, Loughrea, County Galway: The memories of Thelma Blackford

I grew up in Loughrea, County Galway, about 21 miles from Galway City. I only went to secondary school for three years, yet I still succeeded in going on to university at 18 years of age. A friend of mine had gone to Dublin to work as a model and do some au pair work during the summer period immediately after we had completed our Intermediate Certificate examination. When she returned, she encouraged me to leave school. Our plan was to avoid studying for the Leaving Certificate examination completely and, instead, to do independent study for the Matriculation examination of the NUI. While a Leaving Certificate with sufficient marks gave one direct entry to university at the time, so also did passing the very different Matriculation examination which was set by the university itself quite independent of the Irish Department of Education.

Our idea was quite radical for its time, but I became fired up by it and I persuaded my parents to let me follow through on it. We succeeded, passing in Irish, English, French, Latin and history. I then commenced study at the UCG in 1963. I remember it very well because it was the year that President Kennedy died. I spent two years there. Then I took a year off, travelling, working and studying in France and Spain, before returning to finish my degree. The main purpose was to improve my competence in spoken French and Spanish, but I also had quite a lot of fun hitch-hiking around. I also came to realize that there were different dialects of Spanish. On one occasion, I spent time with a family who spoke Andalusian Spanish rather than the classical language.

At the time, all of this was quite a long way geographically and culturally from where I grew up on a main street in Loughrea, where my father had a shop and a travel agency. My mother was also a local lady, from outside the town. She was a midwife, her sister was a midwife and her other sister was a primary schoolteacher. I think this had quite

an influence on me; three women working all their lives, which was very unique, because at the time I was in school, none of my friends' mothers worked. My mother was also known to everyone in the locality because of the enormous number of children she helped to deliver into the world. She also delivered all of my cousins and our aunt delivered us. I think that the knowledge of that experience and the amounts of time we spent together made us a very united, extended family.

I did my primary schooling at St Ita's, the primary school run by the Sisters of Mercy in Loughrea. It was easy to walk there from home. I have never reflected much on my primary schooling. We were surrounded by Catholicism, constantly engaging in religious practices, doing charitable and prayer work with the Legion of Mary, and even helping to clean the local cathedral. All of our teachers were nuns. In our class we had pupils who came from the orphanage attached to the convent and I remember going home to my mother and saying: 'Why aren't they dressed properly and why is their hair so short?'

It wasn't all pleasant for me either. I remember I used to leave class for one period and go for piano lessons to another nun. Sometimes I had to wait for her to arrive, and when she did turn up, she still spent the allocated amount of time at the lesson. The consequence was that I was sometimes late returning to my regular class. Because of that I was chastised, as if the delay had been my fault. It happened so often that one day I couldn't go back into the classroom and I became traumatized. Eventually my father intervened and sorted out the situation. But I still think about it because I found it hugely damaging.

I remember making my First Holy Communion. Afterwards, we all marched off to the convent school for our breakfast. The standard fare was a boiled egg and orange juice. The boys were in class with us up to that stage, but then they transferred to St Brendan's Primary School, which was run by the Christian Brothers.

In my own case, there was no question ever that I might be sent to school in another town. My transfer to secondary school simply involved walking across the schoolyard to another building. I think I was 13 years of age. In this part of the school, we had boarders along with day girls. I remember the move as having been exciting. In primary school we had teachers who could be very strict all day, but now we had different teachers for each class period and that provided us with variety. We now also had some lay teachers, two in fact. One of them taught us Latin and the other taught us English. They adopted a different approach to the usual class-management style of the nuns, which involved a lot of standing around the classroom and making us do a lot

of rote learning. In that regard, the lay teachers were a breath of fresh air and more inspirational.

Inspirational might be a bit of an overstatement regarding our Latin teacher, but she was always extremely well prepared. She taught us so well that later on I was well able to study the Latin syllabus for the Matriculation examination without having a tutor. Our English teacher gave us a great love of poetry. Also, she was diligent in her marking of our work. It was not the norm at the time for people to spend the amount of time she did marking our essays and giving us feedback. I believe all of this helped to raise our self-esteem. It was a practice that made us feel valued. Sr Austin was also an inspirational teacher of English in that she related what we were learning to various events and people during different periods of history.

There was also a young nun who was a very good teacher of history. She had a capacity to lighten it, even when it was the One-hundred Years' War, about which we were required to do an awful lot of rote learning. Somehow or other she was able to make it a bit more lively, and yet I can't explain why. Certainly it had nothing to do with the use of teaching aides of any sort. I don't even remember any use of maps. Also, there weren't any illustrative books, just a plain text. It was just that she had a capacity to transfer to us her enthusiasm for her subject. We also had some bad teaching. In the case of one or two, it was reflected in regularly being out of the classroom on some other business. This was a particular disadvantage to us when it came to our education in science.

The language of instruction in the school for all subjects other than English was Irish. Also, from the very beginning, we were streamed into an A stream and a B stream. I was in the A stream and that meant I could study languages. But I didn't get an opportunity to study home economics or art. I believe the separation was not good as it made some people in the B streams feel somewhat marginalized. And there was no chance of crossing over to the other stream once you found yourself in it at the start of first year. Or if there was, I had no awareness of it and never saw it happening. I also remember a lot of bright girls not going on beyond Intermediate Certificate level. Some went to work in shops and others attended classes offered by a local woman where they were prepared for secretarial work. I realized later that this was because people needed to get out into the world and earn a living. I was very lucky. My parents were certainly not well off, but also they were not poor. So I could have continued on at school if I had wanted to.

Sport was non-existent in the school. I have a vague memory of doing some kind of gymnastics. On the other hand, we did have school

religious retreats and they were significant. Interestingly, it was a time when girls brought along autograph books and we wrote nice things about each other in them; the nuns were not made aware of this, of course. I must say that I loved the retreats. They lasted for a few days. We used to have walks on our own when we engaged in silent prayer. I have no memory of the priests preaching fire and brimstone. I just seem to remember this lovely relationship with the girls and all of us caring about each other. However, there was no sex education either then, or in regular class time. I do remember a woman coming to teach us elocution and I think she mentioned that nylon could have a bad effect on our private parts. The emphasis on, and valuing of, chastity and celibacy was huge.

After the Intermediate Certificate year my friend and I decided we would leave school and study on our own. I don't know how we actually even convinced the school that we were leaving. I also don't know how we came to realize that studying privately for the Matriculation examination provided us with an alternative route to getting a qualification that could lead to university entrance. There was no opposition from my parents as they did not want me to be under pressure after having made up my mind. Earlier on, when I left primary school, I did my best to persuade them to allow me to enrol with a friend at the local technical school instead of at the secondary school. I fought all summer with my mother over that and she won out there. But this time there was no problem. I lived at home, acquired the set texts and regularly met my friend so that we could study together. And we succeeded in the examination at the end of one year.

Skibbereen Sisters of Mercy Secondary School: The memories of Anne Boyle

I grew up between Leap and Glandore in West Cork. I went to Glandore National (primary) School. Each day I walked for about two-to-three miles to school and home. It was a two-teacher school. The master, as we called the school principal, took third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh class. I remember him as having been a very good teacher. My judgement is, of course, a retrospective one. It has been influenced by recognizing that when I left primary school, I was very well equipped to go into secondary school.

I do not have very strong memories of religion being taught in school, although it certainly was. I did, however, become aware that there were Christian religions other than Catholicism as there were Protestant

children in the school. They attended the school because there was no Protestant school locally.

I remember well what was called the liturgical festival. Once a year, pupils from the various primary schools in the area went to Skibbereen, Rosscarbery or Clonakilty for a day. The venue at which we all met was the local convent school. I think we sang hymns, but I am not quite sure. However, what I am certain of is that we each got a bottle of lemonade and a small packet of biscuits. I also remember being sick on one occasion on which this festival was held and I was very disappointed as I missed my lemonade.

In class, in primary school, the master covered an awful lot of subject matter. We spent a lot of time learning Irish. He brought the language alive for us. He encouraged us to speak it in the schoolyard. As a consequence, we became fluent Irish speakers. I also have a vivid memory of doing mental arithmetic every Friday evening. I think the secondary school I attended also recognized how good the master was. One incident I can recall illustrates this. When I was in first year at Skibbereen Mercy Convent Secondary School, the Reverend Mother was teaching us mathematics. One day she was sitting with a girl behind me, helping her with algebra and I was looking around me, distracted, as I had completed my set work. Reverend Mother gave me a little nudge on the shoulder and said: 'It's alright for you, you've done this before.'

Looking back on it, I think that the master worked very hard and had established a very good system of teaching. As a result, a number of us received Cork County Council Scholarships to attend secondary school. I have no memory of being given any special tuition for the examination. The general system he applied to teaching all of us in the regular school time was sufficient. There were no special classes on Saturdays and no special streaming. It would not have been possible to stream in the senior years anyway as the student numbers overall were low; there were only three in my class. It was a very small school.

At the same time, I was very much aware at the time that it was important that I win a scholarship. Our family economic circumstances were such that without it I might not have been able to attend secondary school, although I think my parents would have managed somehow as they valued education very highly. My father had been a farmer, but by the time I was two, he had very poor health and had had to sell the farm. He wasn't able to work from then on. We also knew the value of a scholarship as my older brother, who is nine years older than me, had won one. He was able to take it up at a boarding school as the extra money required to supplement what was granted by the county council became

available when my grandfather died and left a little bit of money to our family.

In a way, it was unquestioned that I should go to secondary school and, therefore, it was not something to which I gave a lot of thought at the end of my primary school years. My mother was one driving force in this regard, being a great believer in the importance of obtaining a secondary school education. My father's family background was also influential. His uncle was a teacher and some of his cousins had gone to university. While he did not go to secondary school himself, he was a very well-educated man and very well read. He had stayed on for an extra year at primary school, during which time he was introduced to some post-primary school subjects, including geometry.

The Mercy Convent in Skibbereen was the obvious place for me to attend, being the closest secondary school to my home. It was about six-and-a-half miles from our house. I cycled to and from school every day as we didn't have a car at home. It was often raining but I have no memories of getting wet as my mother and father bought a raincoat for me that reached down to my ankles. I hated it because by now shorter clothes had become fashionable for girls. But it kept me dry while cycling. Some other girls in the locality cycled with me. We arose early and headed off to school. Immediately school was over, we headed back again and were usually home by 4.30 pm. It was a little bit challenging in the winter to get home before it got dark, but cars were no great problem as there were very few of them on the roads.

Attending secondary school led to new experiences. We now had school not only five days a week, but also on Saturday mornings. Also, I had never had contact with nuns and now they constituted the majority of my teachers. The Reverend Mother taught me maths, another nun taught me French and another yet again taught me geography. We had lay teachers for English, history and Irish. These were all women. There were no male teachers in the school.

We had a school uniform. It consisted of a shirt, a tie, a cardigan and a skirt. I remember that my mother and father bought them for me in Skibbereen and they had to wait until the scholarship money arrived in order to be able to pay for them. Some months later, they got a letter from the shop saying they had not paid for the uniform and there was bedlam searching the house for the receipt, which was eventually found and everything was fine.

I remember being a little scared on the first day because there were so many people around. We were all sitting in a classroom and I remember having to pick the subjects I would study. I had already received advice

from my brother on that. The A class did French and the B class did Spanish, and you had a choice between Latin and commerce. Because I was good at maths, commerce seemed an obvious choice. At the time, you needed to do Latin to go to university, but that didn't enter my head. Some subjects were specific to either the A or the B class, but I think we mixed and matched a bit for some of the other subjects.

My first three years were geared towards the Intermediate Certificate examination. I remember studying, after a fashion, for it. As the school was an all-girls' day school with no boarders, there was no organized study at school. In a sense, I never got a very good handle on studying and what I did do in that regard was at home. I was very much dependent on my textbooks. Basically I did my homework and didn't really study anything outside of that. But I was diligent in what I did and I did well in the examination. I found it easy enough.

All of the subjects interested me. They even excited me. We couldn't do honours' maths because it was not offered to us as an option. Also, if we wanted to do it, it would probably have been difficult as we were taught by women who most likely had not done it themselves. I loved commerce. I also loved Irish, geography and history as well. They came easy to me as we had learned much of the basics in primary school. And I particularly liked writing English essays. There was also some sport in the school at the time; we played basketball on Wednesday afternoons. That was done in a specially timetabled period. However, I had no great interest in it. I continued on with the same subjects for the Leaving Certificate examination. The Irish course was interesting as we had to study the history of the language, both as it changed as a language over the centuries and also in terms of its place in Irish society. Because of the variety of prescribed texts we had to study, we also became aware that there are dialects of Irish other than the Munster one with which we were familiar.

All of the nuns who taught us were nice. We had a lay teacher for English who was also very nice. I have a memory of my class travelling to Cork to see 'The Sound of Music'. She knew that I wasn't going and she came to me on my own and said: 'I'm driving and I can give you a lift.' I realized she knew I couldn't afford to pay to go on a bus with the others and that she was giving me a dignified way to deal with that. I really appreciated it but, not wanting to be singled out, I thanked her and decided to stay at home.

Corporal punishment was largely absent from the school. I remember the only time I witnessed it. One day the Reverend Mother slapped one of the girls because she left a ball in the yard, although there may

have been other reasons also. The action was so unusual that we were absolutely shocked.

There was no talk in the school about girls possibly joining the Mercy Sisters or any other religious order. In fact, the only time I experienced anything in that regard was when I was in primary school. Some missionary nuns came to give us a talk. When I went home, I announced that I wanted to be a nun. However, nobody paid any attention to me. In secondary school, because we had to head off home as soon as the official school day ended, we had no involvement in confraternities like the Children of Mary. For the same reason, there was really no involvement in extra-curricular activity of any kind. We did do singing in school, but there was no involvement in singing competitions, in debating, or in school concerts.

I have a very clear memory of Protestant girls being in my class. There were four of them in fact. This is not surprising, since West Cork has a small, but prominent Protestant population. In my view, the nuns made a point of being very nice to them. One of them was my best friend and we always used to sit and work together. In our cookery classes in first year, the nuns separated us and insisted she work with one of the other Protestant girls. I had a similar experience when I was in fifth year. I often wondered what the concern was. It may have had nothing to do with religion. Or perhaps she felt that I might be enticed away from my religion through the friendship. Or she may have felt a duty to make sure that there would be no reason to claim that the nuns were trying to have the Protestant girls overly influenced by their Catholic peers.

When it came to religion class, I think the Protestant girls either went to another room to study, or they sat at the back of the class and perhaps did some of their homework. It is also interesting that their parents sent them to a Catholic school. In one or two cases they were not well off, but some of the others in the school were the daughters of those with small businesses and they could have afforded to send them away to boarding school. Also, we were not aware of different Protestant denominations, even though the girls may not all have been members of the Church of Ireland. We just termed them all 'Protestants'. I am particularly grateful to have had their friendship, partly because while there was no great mixing between Catholics and Protestants, my mother's best friend had been a Protestant and when I was little she talked about her all the time. It was clear that they had been great friends.

I do not have any great memory of being taught religion, although we certainly had daily religious education classes. What I do remember, however, is that the Reverend Mother gave us a few sex-education

lessons in second year. After the first one, we were told to ask our mothers about where we came from. I remember I was 14 and I said to my mother: 'The nuns said you're to tell me where I came from.' My mother was absolutely mortified. She brought me to the parlour and she locked the door, and she told me that if you really, really loved somebody, you would get a baby. That terrified me. But then when we went back to school the following day we were instructed on the matter. It was very explicit and very informed. It was great. It was biological instruction, but there was some attention paid to the emotional side as well.

For my Leaving Certificate I did Irish, English, history, geography, French, commerce, maths and domestic science. I never studied science throughout my five years in the school, even though a science laboratory was built during that time. Some students were able to take it up for the final two years, but I didn't. If you did take up the option, I think it meant you had to go to the local Christian Brothers boys' school for some classes. Incidentally, that would have really been the only way to come in contact with boys through the school. Otherwise there was no mixing and no school dances to bring us together. It was always impressed on us that we were representing the school.

In my final year I found it hard to study. I really did not have an idea how to go about it. So I did my homework and some revision. At the same time, I was conscious of the importance of passing the Leaving Certificate examination. There was no career guidance as we now know it. I do not remember there being any informal kind either. What I did know is that I wanted to be a primary schoolteacher. I wanted to do well in the Leaving Certificate examination so that I would get the call to training, as it was put. My mother was ambitious for me in that regard. She also ensured that her sister-in-law would keep her eyes open so that when the civil service examinations were advertised in the newspapers I would be ready to apply to sit them.

I didn't get called to primary school teacher training. I disappointed my mother. I don't think I was too disappointed myself. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I was only 17 years of age. But I did get a job in the civil service and I went to live in Dublin. I knew that one needed Latin to go to university, but really that option hardly entered my head anyway. That was all for much later, when I became a mature student.

7

Secondary School Education in Girls' Catholic Secondary Schools Run by Other Orders of Nuns in Ireland, 1922–1962

While the largest order of teaching sisters in the State in 1930 was the Order of the Sisters of Mercy, the second and third largest were the Loreto Sisters and the Dominican Sisters, respectively, the former with 18 secondary schools catering for 1,845 girls and the latter with ten secondary schools catering for 1,259 girls. At this stage, the Presentation Sisters, as already pointed out, had 11 schools catering for 611 girls. The remaining 2,990 girls were catered for by 15 different religious orders. Amongst the orders with only one school were the Sisters of Jesus and Mary, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny, the Sisters of Saint Paul, the La Sainte Union Sisters and the Benedictine Nuns.

As with Catholic boys' secondary schools, a number of schools within this category were for girls from the wealthier Catholic families. The Benedictine girls' school at Kylemore Castle, Connemara, is an example of a comfortable boarding school in a splendid parkland setting of an old estate. Some of the less expensive schools were also in pleasant buildings and surroundings. A good example of such a school was that run by the Brigidine Sisters in Mountrath, County Laois.[1]

The remainder of this chapter details the accounts of the memories of secondary schooling of three individuals who commenced attendance at Catholic girls' secondary schools of the type under consideration prior to 1967. The first two accounts relate to attendance at Loreto schools. The Loreto Sisters' Order, whose official title is the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was established in England by Mary Ward in 1609. In the early nineteenth century, a distinct branch of the order was established in Ireland. As with the original English group, this branch founded schools and established a presence not only in Ireland, but also in a variety of countries overseas.

The first account is by Joan McNamara, who commenced her secondary school education at Mount Anville Loreto Secondary School in Dublin suburbia. After a few years, she moved from there to the Loreto secondary school in the heart of Dublin city, located on St Stephen's Green. The second account, by Una Cotter, relates to a different context, namely attendance as a boarder in provincial Ireland at the school of the Loreto Sisters in Fermoy, County Cork.

The third individual whose memories are outlined is Ro Aitken, who attended a secondary school run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary in Dublin. This order was one of a number of orders which were founded in Europe and which later gained a presence in Ireland, sometimes through the establishment of just one convent and an associated secondary school. The order was founded by an F. Jean Gailhac and Appolonie Pelissier-Cure in France in 1849. Its original purpose was to provide orphanages and shelter for women. In the latter half of the nineteenth century it started providing schools and also expanded beyond France.

The fourth individual whose memories are outlined is Winifred Bourke, who attended a secondary school run by the Dominican Sisters in Dublin. The Dominican Sisters, like the Dominican Priests and Dominican Nuns, were established in the eleventh century by a Spanish priest, Fr Dominic de Guzman, later Saint Dominic de Guzman. Officially, the four branches of the order are known as the Order of Preachers. While the nuns were established to lead a contemplative and cloistered life, the sisters were established to also provide service, including the provision of schools for girls. Dominican Sisters in Ireland owe their foundation to a convent opened in Galway in 1644. By the middle of the 1800s, their principal centre in the country was in Cabra, in Dublin, and from there they sent members to establish convents and schools in South Africa, the USA and Australia.

Loreto Convent, St Stephen's Green, Dublin: The memories of Joan McNamara

I went to two different primary schools. I started out at Milltown National (primary) School in Dublin. When the family moved house from Ranelagh, I enrolled in Mt Merrion National (primary) School. It was reasonably pleasant. I can remember committing one or two very small misdemeanours like ringing the doorbell on the principal's house for a dare and then being terrified that my parents would find out because in those days we were all terrified of our teachers. The boys were

with us until we made our First Holy Communion and then they moved off to an all-boys' primary school. I also remember going to school with my older sister. I ended up being asked to skip a class and, as a result, we were together in the same classroom.

All of the family members went to secondary school. We knew from an early age that we would be going and it was never questioned. It was just accepted that that is what would happen. There were fees, but the money seemed to be there to pay them. On the other hand, while we could be categorized as having been middle class, we were certainly not well off. An influencing factor was that both of my parents, who worked as civil servants, had themselves gone to secondary school. My father worked in the Department of Education, and my mother in local government but resigned, as was required, when she got married.

I commenced my secondary schooling at Mt Anville School run by the Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Heart. Originally it was a boarding school only, but by my time they had expanded to also take in day girls. I think I was quite a reasonably interested student and I worked hard. I did not get stellar results early on and I remember my father telling me not to worry, that I was doing my best. However, it was decided that I would have a change of school and so I enrolled after my Intermediate Certificate year at the Loreto Sisters' school on Stephen's Green. Mount Anville suited me better as it was near home and most of the pupils lived within a fairly small radius of the school. That was a very nice experience. I liked being able to walk home from school with friends and often spending an afternoon with them. All of that changed when I went to Stephen's Green and I found it quite traumatic. I did make new friends, but because I lived quite a distance away from the school, I could only socialize with them at weekends. Occasionally we cycled to and from school. More usually, however, my father drove us in to school on his way to work every morning and we returned home in the afternoons on the public bus.

While I was at Mount Anville we had more lay teachers than nuns, but it was the reverse at Loreto. Another difference was that while there was only one class at each grade level in Mt Anville, as it was a relatively small school, there was an A and a B class at each grade level in St Stephen's Green, as it was a larger school. When I went to Loreto I was told that I was going into the A class and so would not be able to study domestic science. I cannot remember how I felt about that, but I did appreciate getting the opportunity to study Italian.

Schooling in some ways was more formal at Mount Anville than at Loreto, although at both places there was certainly no question that a

teacher would come to school casually dressed. All of the lay teachers at Mount Anville wore gowns. We wore a skirt rather than a pinafore. We also wore a blouse and a jumper and three-quarter-length stockings that were pretty awful. At Loreto we had two uniforms. We wore a pinafore and a blouse and tie on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays we wore a navy dress with a white collar. I also have no memory of any attempt by the nuns at either school to try to recruit us to join the order.

My memory of the teaching in both schools is that it varied. We had some teachers and we felt sorry for them because they just could not hold the attention of the class and so the discipline sometimes went by the wayside. It was just because we were bored. Then we had other teachers who were very engaging and we all loved them. On that, we were very conscious of different levels of teaching competency amongst the staff. Also, there was no such thing as corporal punishment in either of the two schools. The standard punishment for misbehaviour was to be given lines to write out.

There was very little emphasis on sport at Mount Anville, possibly because it was a relatively new school and it was still seeking a focus. Any sport we did, we did outside of school. On the other hand, in Loreto there was a big emphasis on hockey, although I did not play hockey, not having commenced it at a young age. Other than that there was not a lot of extra-curricular activity.

Irish was no problem for me at school as my father spoke it regularly to us at home. Also, I heard it spoken regularly when travelling in the car with him as he often spoke it to other adults, and it was normal to hear phone calls at home being answered in the language. I liked maths, French and Italian. I also liked Latin. I liked how structured it was. It prompted me in later years to take a course in linguistics to study the derivation of languages.

Languages became my thing and I went on to study them at University College Dublin. I think there was always a certain expectation at home that I would go to the university. A number of girls who finished Loreto with me went to University College Dublin. I remember one of them who went there to study pharmacy and two of them became medical students. The majority, however, went on to secretarial colleges and straight into jobs in the bank or took up other secretarial roles.

There was no great emphasis on career guidance. In my early years at Mount Anville, I was interested in cooking and sewing and considered becoming a domestic science teacher. However, I was put off that idea when I went to Loreto. Instead they encouraged me to think about going

to university. That is what I did eventually, but not immediately after my Leaving Certificate year as I was too young. I got the opportunity instead to spend a year at school in France just along the French–Belgian border. I found that experience extremely difficult at first. I was only 16 years of age and I wrote a few letters home that were all blobs with my tears. But once I made friends it was grand, so I stayed. My spoken French was not good at all at the beginning, but as I had a very good foundation in the grammar, I improved very quickly just from listening to it being spoken all of the time.

Loreto Convent, Fermoy, County Cork: The memories of Una Cotter

I grew up in Tallow, which is very close to the County Cork border. In fact my mother was from Curraghlass, which is just over the border in County Cork. I attended the local primary school. There were two schools in the town, one for boys and one for girls. We had three female teachers in the girls' school. At the age of 11, my parents told me that I would be going to secondary school as a boarder at the Loreto Convent School in Fermoy. Both my mother and my grandmother had been boarders there themselves, so that was one influence on the decision. Along with that, my father was a strict disciplinarian and I think he thought the discipline of living away from home would be good for me. The principal influencing factor, however, was that my father was a pharmacist. He had a shop locally in which both he and my mother worked, and they were incredibly busy with that. While my mother was not a pharmacist, she could read prescriptions for my father. Also, in those days, the work never ended; pharmacists were expected to answer calls to their shop doors at any time of day or night.

The location of Fermoy was not a problem for me as I knew it was only about 12 miles away. However, I was very attached to home and I got a terrible shock when I realized I was going to be leaving to attend a boarding school there. I promised to do anything asked of me if I was allowed to stay at home. However, I got no hearing.

When I first went to Loreto Fermoy I was desperately lonely, desperately homesick. In my early years there we were only allowed home once a term. In later years we could visit our parents for a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon every three weeks. That was nice in one way. In another way, however, it wasn't. You were always on your guard in case you did anything out of order and the privilege of the home visit

would be taken away from you. We were kept in order in this way and by knowledge of the guilt you would feel if you let your parents down.

Nevertheless, I eventually got settled in. I had no other option. I got used to the school uniform and the importance attached to being 'Virgin-like' and 'Mary-like' any time we were out-and-about representing the school. I also got used to the idea that our school was considered to be the exclusive girls' school in town and a step above the local Presentation convent school which had day-girls only. Like my peers, I picked up from the Loreto nuns themselves and also from my school friends' mothers that sense that I was attending a superior institution.

Most of our teachers were nuns. We had very few lay teachers and there were no male teachers whatsoever. The only men we saw in the school were the priests who said Mass both for us and the nuns at some ungodly hour every morning. We were also aware of the presence of the lay sisters in the convent. They cooked all of the dinners and we sometimes helped them as we all had certain domestic duties to perform from time to time, like putting away the ware if somebody else was drying it. We used to chat to them and they were always pleasant.

There was a great stress in the school on teaching us etiquette. There was much talk about what was expected of a Loreto girl, about having table manners, about refinement and about sitting up properly. The importance of proper deportment was emphasized. I came under the spotlight in this regard occasionally, being a tomboy and inclined to slouch.

We all got on well with the day girls. We all sat beside each other in class. But we would never ask them to bring us anything from the shops in the town. We were only allowed treats once on a Wednesday and once on a Sunday, and we knew we would all be in trouble if that rule was broken. Also, we were never allowed to go home with the day girls.

The boarders came from a wide range of places. I remember County Cork girls coming from Clonakilty, Charleville, Kanturk, Mallow and Sherkin Island. We had girls from Kenmare in County Kerry. We also had girls from other counties. Most of them seemed to be the daughters of professional people. I am not too sure why they travelled so far, especially as there were schools of other orders near their homes. In some cases, their homes were also located nearer to other Loreto schools.

We usually rose at half-past six in the morning. Then we washed ourselves in a communal area. After that we went to Mass. The teaching sisters sat in one part of the chapel, the lay sisters sat in another part and we sat in another part yet again. Everybody used to go to

Holy Communion. At one stage in my schooling there I suffered from religious scruples, thinking I was not good enough to receive Communion. Perhaps all of the guilt that was promoted around the place got to me. On the other hand, perhaps it was all part of 'normal' growing up.

Occasionally, those in one of the dormitories would be allowed to have a sleep-in and those in another one would be allowed to have it on another morning. Breakfast was always at eight. After that, if the weather was fine, we used to take a walk around the garden and down to what we called 'the farm'. It was a big long walk. The grounds at the front of the school were nice and we had a tennis court where we could also play basketball.

The 'farm' was about half a mile in length. As we walked through it, we passed our hockey field. A workman and his family lived on the grounds. I am not sure if he produced some of the produce that we ate, or not.

We had lunch in the middle of the day. That was usually fairly modest fare. For teatime we might have a can of sardines between eight of us, but we always had plenty of bread. And we always had to eat everything put before us even if we didn't like it. Sometimes we got a cornflour desert and we used to wait until the nuns were gone out of sight. Then we would put it into an envelope and flush it all down the toilet. The reaction to the requirement that we had to eat everything presented to us is still with me to this day. I love food, but I still find milk puddings like rice and semolina off-putting.

When classes ended in the afternoon we used to have another short walk down by the farm, or a quick game of hockey, tennis, basketball or croquet. If it was raining, we went to the school hall where we could listen to music on a record player. For a while, I also took piano lessons. I didn't want to, but my parents were keen that I would give it a go. What was very important to me, however, was the school choir. I was one of 20 pupils who were picked for it and who sang the Gregorian chant. We would sing it publically on such occasions as a nun's golden jubilee, or if somebody important was visiting the school. I absolutely loved that.

After tea we went to study. We then went to have a wash and head off to bed. We were in bed by nine o'clock every night. All of the lights went out completely. For the first few years you couldn't turn on a light during the night if you wished to get up, but then, while it was all kept very quiet, we found out that a nun had lit a candle and got burnt. So, after that, it was possible to put on a light if you needed to find your way in the dark.

For most of my years in the school a nun used to sleep in the dormitory with us in order to oversee our behaviour. In our Leaving Certificate year, however, we had our own few rooms, each accommodating six students, and we oversaw ourselves. This arrangement at that stage of our life was seen as being an improvement. We saw ourselves now as being a bit posh.

We had a head girl and a deputy head girl in the school. They were also responsible for our behaviour. As part of that, they oversaw a practice whereby we received different coloured ribbons; there were five ribbons, each being awarded for achieving a particular level of good behaviour. Eventually, when you received the colour for the highest level of achievement, you were allowed to become a Child of Mary, which was a big thing. While somebody or other was watching us to make sure we kept in line, the system also taught us to monitor ourselves. Associated with this was the fear that you might not be allowed to become a Child of Mary. That would have been terrible. This was one way in which we were kept in line.

You also stayed in line out of respect for your parents. You studied because you knew that that was what your parents expected of you. In my case there was also a positive dimension to this as my father would give me ten bob if I did well in an examination. Equally, you would hear all about it if you didn't do well. Waiting for the school report to arrive at home was always an anxious time.

There was no corporal punishment whatsoever administered in the school. If you were deemed in need of punishment it was through withdrawing your privileges, including being able to eat sweets on a Wednesday and a Sunday. You brought your sweets in with you at the beginning of term and you divided them so that they could last for as long as possible. Most of us also got a little pocket money which we could spend in a little shop run by the nuns. If it was your mother's birthday you could buy a holy picture and a packet of little notelets and envelopes so that you could write a letter and send it and the holy picture home.

As boarders we also learned to take on certain responsibilities. We each had to make our own bed and look after our own space around it. We had to make sure that the wash basins were kept clean. I credit the nuns with teaching me to be a responsible person. Also, some of it was fun, especially when it was my duty to ring the bell in the morning. I used to love that, marching up and down and waking everybody up. Also, I have to say that you were never made to feel you were there to do manual work.

We also had extra-curricular activities. I have already mentioned the recreational side of sport in the school. Also, hockey was played competitively. I was never wonderful at it, but I played it and I enjoyed it. But I was not good enough to me a member of the school team even though I did try very hard. All of the other games were only played in-house, and for fun rather than competitively. We also had PE. For that a lady came to us from Cork once a week and amongst the things she did with us was a certain amount of ballet and other performing arts' activities which we performed on parents' day. I think we must sometimes have looked like a pack of thundering bulls running around when we were meant to be graceful.

Regarding the particular subjects we learned, I loved French and I liked Irish. On the other hand, I hated science but my father insisted I do it up to Intermediate Certificate level as that was his own background. After that, however, he allowed me to drop it and I took up domestic science instead. I also did Latin for my Leaving Certificate examination, which I liked and in which I did well. I also liked geography very much, but for some reason I did not like history. Even to the present day, while I like to know about the present and the future, I am not particularly interested in the past.

The nuns were the dominant influence in the school. At the same time, I do not remember being offered any kind of career guidance. I think that that was left to the parents. In my case my mother took the initiative. While I was doing my Leaving Certificate examination, my father died. That was very upsetting. My mother had already booked me into a college in Eccles Street in Dublin to do a commercial course; she was familiar with that scene as she had been in the civil service in Dublin. Now, however, so that I could be nearer home, she changed the enrolment so that I could start the same course in a similar college in Skerries in Cork.

Interestingly, there was no pressure to consider going to university. In contrast to the day-to-day discipline of the school, everything was taken rather casually with regard to what the future might hold. Except, of course, to say that one always heard about the importance of gaining a permanent and pensionable job.

There was very little fraternizing with the boys in the nearby schools. Once a year we had a dance with the boys from St Colman's College and that was about it. It was considered to be the most exclusive boys' school in town, and it was separated from our school by a high wall. In our Leaving Certificate year about four of us got to know some of the boys there. One of them started writing letters to us. The nuns got word of it.

It became a major event and we were interrogated. It was all because of a harmless letter and we were in an awful state, although on reflection I guess they were probably afraid for their lives in case anybody was sneaking out and meeting fellas after dark. I remember that my father, strict and all as he was, was absolutely livid over the whole thing. He and some of the other parents objected strenuously and within a day or two it all fizzled out.

There was very little sex education of any sort, although I do remember a nun who spoke to us on a number of occasions about what she termed 'the conjugal act'. We thought it was amusing and we christened her 'the Conjugal Act'. That's all I remember about that, apart from the fact that whatever she talked about was always in the form of a religious message. The dominant message was that God has put us into the world to procreate so that we can come to know and love him. We also got that message from the visiting priests during the school retreats. On one occasion, a particular priest reprimanded us for wearing the sashes on our school uniform skirts too low on our bodies; he seemed to think that we were being sexually provocative.

I have very fond memories of some of the nuns. In general, there were the strict ones and the not-so-strict ones. However, all of them were very fair in their dealings with us. One of them I remember as seeming to be more human than the others. She was lovely. She would chat to you in the classroom and you knew that, once you got her permission, you could also speak to her afterwards. Also, they all encouraged us to read. We had a very good school library and used it regularly. It was a favourite place to go on a wet Sunday afternoon when we were unable to go out on a three-mile walk. I remember the selection of books as having been very good and the library itself being a comfortable place within which you would be inclined to sit down and read. As a result I developed a great love of reading. Having said that, from the time I left school I maintained that I would never send any of my own children to boarding school, notwithstanding the extent to which it taught me to be independent.

The Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary: The memories of Ro Aitken

I commenced schooling in a very small fee-paying school in Dublin. It was run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary. We had only one lay teacher. I started in kindergarten. I remember the uniform we wore very well. We had a kind of a dove grey smock with a big blue artist's

bow on it. For later years we had two uniforms, one for the summer and one for the winter. In the summertime we wore a straw hat, white gloves, blue and white gingham and a blazer.

I remember all of the teachers in great detail. The nuns varied. Some of them were very nice and some of them were a bit intimidating. I think some of them should have been doing something else as they did not seem to like children. And this was a time when parents didn't go up to the school; it wasn't part of the culture at all. The nuns were in total control and it was the luck of the draw as to whether you got a nice one or a stern one in class.

We had a five-and-a-half-day week in school. I remember Saturday morning very well. It was devoted to craft classes. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed making little chairs and slippers. Also, there was a huge emphasis in our school on hockey. I was not terribly interested, but we all took up hockey when we were about 11 years of age and we played it all through our school years in after-school hours. We didn't have anything like a chess club or a library class for those not interested in sport. Drama, however, was important and we usually put on an operetta every year. We were all involved in that.

I went on to secondary school in the same place. The same nuns ran it. Both schools were on the one campus. Like all secondary schools at the time, it was fee-paying. I always knew I would be going on to secondary school. It was never a matter for debate at home. In fact, from an early age I also knew that there was an expectation that I would go on to university. This all came from my parents. My father had been to university himself and my mother was also well educated.

When I went into secondary school I found we had quite a few lay teachers. We came to terms with the practice of having a separate teacher for each subject. There was no formal pastoral care programme. There were no form teachers. There was no career guidance. In a sense, it was a matter of sink or swim. If you happened to have a nice teacher, you benefitted. If you didn't, you just sank. My memory is that nobody would notice if you were top of the class in September and bottom of the class by next June. The whole emphasis was on imparting academic content and teaching the prescribed syllabus for the State examinations. I have no recall of an emphasis on monitoring pupils to see if they were thriving and flourishing. There was nobody formally overlooking the welfare of the children. And the only activities offered for enjoyment were hockey and drama.

I did like some of my secondary school subjects. I loved English all the way through secondary school and I liked art. And I liked history.

My decisions regarding what subjects to study when I went into fifth year were based really on the teachers I liked and those I did not like. We had to study Latin in those days if we wanted to go on to university. Because we only had one class per year group at this stage, we had a situation where a handful of us doing Latin were being taught in the one room alongside those who were doing another Leaving Certificate subject, probably commerce, which was considered to be a good grounding for them if they later went on to attend a secretarial college. The subjects I loved were the subjects where the teachers were encouraging and supported us, and where they showed an interest in us as individuals.

I was in the school a few years when free secondary school education was introduced in Ireland. I remember that us senior girls were told that students from more diverse backgrounds would be attending from now on. At one stage we were told that four girls had entered first year from the local primary school, as opposed to coming from the feeder private school we had attended. We were asked to make them welcome and to assist them in settling in. We did our bit and we found that they were all actually far nicer than we were. Finally, I recall that by the time I was in sixth year I was certain that I wanted to go to university to study English, which is what I did. However, I made the decision without receiving any formal advice from the school. This is not to criticize any individuals, as the teachers themselves were very nice.

Muckross Park College, Dublin: The memories of Winifred Bourke

I commenced my primary schooling in junior infants at Muckross Park College in Dublin in 1955, and ended my secondary schooling there in 1967, after sitting for the Leaving Certificate examination. I should have enrolled in primary school in September 1954, but when my mother brought me along to the school, the principal said: 'Oh, keep her at home until she's five.' As I was going to be five years of age in February 1955, my mother brought me along in January, so I enrolled at the beginning of the second term.

Going on to secondary schooling after leaving primary school was very much the norm where I grew up in Donnybrook, a middle-class Dublin suburb. Some of the girls went on to Muckross Park School, like I did, while others went to Sacred Heart, Leeson Street, Loreto, Stephen's Green, or the Sisters of Mercy secondary school in Haddington Road. At Muckross Park the primary and secondary school were run by the Dominican Sisters. In later years I became aware that I had had a special

brand of education, having been taught by a group of sisters who were enlightened and who saw women as having a role to play in the world, in society and in life. They absolutely encouraged us to adopt such a viewpoint.

I was taught by sisters and lay teachers all through primary school. As we progressed from year to year, a different teacher took us for class. In secondary school, on the other hand, it was different teachers for different subjects, again some of them were sisters. Some sisters were incredibly effective, just as there were some lay people who were very good teachers. On the other hand, there were some, as with some lay teachers, who were pretty ineffective.

The original building that housed the junior and senior schools was knocked down last year, but I remember it vividly. In my mind I can still walk in the pupils' door, walk up the stairs, go into the hall and look down at the parquet floor. It was a lovely big hall and we had assembly there every morning when we were addressed by the principal and deputy principal, known then as the Mistress of Studies and Mistress of Discipline. At that stage, the junior school was located on the ground floor and the senior school was located on the two floors above.

Regarding my secondary schooling, I remember that, in terms of age, we had a mixture of sisters. Some of them in the junior school were young but, by and large, I would think that most of them were over 30, which at the time seemed ancient. For much of my school years they wore the wimple and the veil that came right over the forehead. Then, at the time of the Second Vatican Council, their mode of dress became more relaxed. They continued to wear a veil, but it was more of a headband style. As a result, we managed to see some of the hair. In fact, I remember that we became greatly amused by one sister who began dying her hair and plucking her eyebrows. We also, of course, wore distinguishing dress in the form of our school uniforms.

The good teachers are memorable. Their breadth and depth of knowledge was impressive. The best of them all was Sister Patrick who taught me geography right through school. She lived and breathed education. She was concerned not just with teaching us her subject very well, but also with our development as young women. She was just a fantastic teacher all round. From first year right through, she had us doing projects. As a result, it is not surprising that my cohort participated in the social and scientific part of the national Young Scientist competition shortly after it was established. Our projects were centred on the local community, which we learned to analyse in terms of its geographical, historical, social and economic dimensions.

We also had Sister Bertranda, who was an excellent teacher of English. While we were required by the syllabus of the Intermediate Certificate examination to study one Shakespearean play and by the regulations of the Leaving Certificate examination to study another one, that didn't stop her from introducing us to other ones in the other years. So, in first year we studied *Julius Caesar*, in second year we studied *As You Like It* and in fifth year we studied *King Lear*. This was all part of making sure that we obtained a broad education that went beyond what was required by the State's prescribed curricula.

I recall that we also had superb teachers for Irish and French. I don't think the actual science programme we studied for the Leaving Certificate examination was great though. It was a subject in which physics and chemistry were combined, as opposed to the separate physics or chemistry subjects which also existed. Most of our teachers were not very strict, but if you were interested, they provided you with the opportunity to learn. If you weren't particularly interested you weren't forced. This reflected the strong emphasis placed in the school on students adopting personal responsibility for their actions. At the same time, I do remember one teacher from my primary school days who used corporal punishment a lot. If you were one of her pets, you got a tap on the hand with a ruler, and if you were one of her pet hates, she brought down the ruler with a ferocity that was unwarranted. I also have a memory of one particular girl in secondary school who I knew well at the time being verbally bullied by one of the sisters. Overall, however, these incidents as far as I am aware were exceptional.

The Second Vatican Council had a huge impact not only on the sisters, but also on us as pupils. We became hugely aware that the sisters considered it to be the most exciting thing to happen both in the life of the Catholic Church in general and in their own lives. Up to that point, Dominican Sisters never went outside the gates of their convent grounds; they were an enclosed order. Now they were able to throw open the doors, so to speak, and move freely around their wider environment. This was all discussed with us in school as indicators that we were living in a time of great change for Catholics not only in Ireland, but internationally. We learned from the sisters that they were gaining a great sense they were participating in the Church as women and were starting to make an impression, even if only a small one, on one of the final great bastions of male domination in our society.

In 1963, I was 13 years of age and the Council was in full operation. A consequence for us was that we were encouraged to engage in a lot of open discussion in the classroom. These debates were overseen by the

sisters and also, as we got older, by one of the lay teachers. We focused on current affairs and politics, including in relation to recent history. The sisters joined in with us, expressing their opinions freely, especially on the changes taking place within the Church. Their attitude, I would say, was one of 'we have at last been given the chance to flourish and we are going to embrace it.' During this time, we also had visits from members of different female religious orders about their particular missions but there was absolutely no pressure whatsoever on us to join. Rather, the view was one that a girl should follow her own star and take her place in the world doing whatever she wanted to do.

One of the things that was quite innovative at the time was that we had sex-education classes with a female doctor who came into the school specifically for that purpose. I think it took place when we were about 15 years of age. The instruction related more towards relationships as boyfriend and girlfriend than it did to marriage. Indeed, the sisters themselves impressed very much on us that there is more to life than getting a man. Their central message was that we all had gifts and talents and that pursuing those talents was what we should be about. If marriage was part of that, then that was fine, but not essential. I also have to say that that was a reinforcement of the message I got at home from my parents.

Like all secondary schools at the time, ours, of course, was a fee-paying school. It had once had a boarding house attached but that had closed down before my time there. I was also lucky in that I could walk there in 20 minutes. I have no doubt but that the expectation of us was that we would not only go to secondary school, but would, from there, progress on to university. This came from both my parents. My father had grown up in rural Ireland and had had a taste of post-primary education as he stayed on at primary school beyond the standard age of leaving so that he could train as a school monitor, which was one route at the time to becoming a primary schoolteacher. My mother's influence and that of her family background was also there. After leaving school she attended a commercial college and her three brothers went to university. Two of them graduated as engineers. The third one graduated with an arts degree and became a schoolteacher. My mother had hoped that the eldest brother would then be able to pay for her to obtain a university education as the family were not very well off. It was not to be, however, as he got married very young and had to concentrate on rearing his family.

The principal extra-curricular activity was sport. I played hockey two days a week after school and we played matches at weekends. That

meant that we got to travel to other schools. On Saturdays we had school until 1.00 pm. Then we had a quick lunch, and if we were going to play a match in the Dublin area, we headed for the Ballast Office at the top of Westmorland Street and took a bus. We also went on longer journeys to play schools in Wicklow and Belfast. My memory of it all is that we had a great time. I also recall that in my first two years in secondary school you could also play netball and camogie, but the school then took the decision to replace them with basketball.

During fifth year, we were invited to participate in a Vincent de Paul outreach programme to the elderly. In pairs, we paid weekly visits to elderly ladies living in poor housing near the city centre. For the following two years my friend Alice and I visited two ladies who lived on different floors in Iveagh Buildings on Meath Street. Their flats consisted of a couple of rooms with a shared toilet and sink on each floor. The ladies introduced us to their lives. We heard about looting in Dublin during Easter 1916 and the poverty of the '30s and '40s. Their stories made a profound impression on us.

Overall, the girls in our class had a great sense of community. It was terrific. It was a very happy place and I have no memory of any bullying taking place amongst the girls. At the same time, I remember we had streaming, with those in the B classes deemed not to be as academically able as those in the A classes. Consequently, they became somewhat isolated from the rest of us and friendships between those in the two groups were not really encouraged.

The school had a sort of formal link with Blackrock College in that once a year the boarders there came to Muckross Park for a dance. For that we were supervised by the sisters but it certainly didn't feel oppressive at the time. Also, while it was exciting, my age group were, by now, going to dances in the local area at weekends. This included going to dances at such rugby clubs as Bective, Wesley and what was known as Baby Belvedere; you didn't go to the 'adult' dances at the Belvedere Club until you were about 18.

I was also provided with opportunities from home to extend my education. During a number of summers I attended an Irish College in the Gaeltacht. Also, when I was in fourth year, and was only 15 years old, I went to France on a student-exchange programme. Nevertheless, by the time I was in sixth year my aspiration was to get out of the school as quickly as possible, stop all the book stuff and start working. So, after finishing my Leaving Certificate examination I started a commercial course and spent two mornings at it, with hours of homework each night. I could not bear it and decided to take up the offer of a place on

a social science degree programme at University College Dublin, at that stage still located in Earslfort Terrace. That was a great decision. I had three other girls from Muckross Park in my degree course. That was a help, but I still felt somewhat overwhelmed by people who were taller than me, fellows who were louder than me and people who were really, really bright. The experience was almost like a physical shock, so much so that it took me a full year to adjust to university life. I also recall that of the other girls in my Leaving Certificate class, one studied medicine, a few did an arts degree and one or two others studied physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Overall, then, my time at secondary school was a particularly happy and nurturing time. I was encouraged to be the person I wanted to be. In retrospect, perhaps a little bit more discipline might have benefitted me but I still appreciate the room that I was given to be my own person. The Dominican motto of 'Veritas' permeated the whole ethos of the school. Everything that the sisters hoped we would be was encapsulated in Veritas – Truth.

8

Secondary School Education in Protestant Secondary Schools in Ireland, 1922–1962

Protestant secondary schooling in the Anglican tradition in Ireland dates back to the immediate post-Reformation era. Some of the early establishments were very much concerned not just with providing a religious and secular education for Protestant children, but also with converting Catholic children to the Protestant faith. Associated with this was their role in promoting English culture, including the English language. Indeed, the charter schools admitted only Catholics, under the condition that they be educated as Protestants. By contrast, all Catholic schooling and not just secondary schooling, was, like Presbyterian schooling, prohibited under the Penal Laws.

By the time of Irish Independence, the Protestant population in the new State had dwindled to a small minority. Furthermore, it continued to dwindle over the next four decades. Indeed, by 1967, the year of the introduction of free education, Protestants in the Republic of Ireland constituted less than 5 per cent of the national population. Members of this minority, numbering about 120,000 persons, were divided amongst the Church of Ireland (3.7 per cent), the Presbyterian Church (0.7 per cent), the Methodist Church (0.2 per cent) and other denominations. Only in Dublin (where Protestants represented 9 per cent of the population) were numbers rising, reflecting the general trend amongst the population of Ireland as a whole of moving to the capital city. Across Munster and Connacht there was only a light scattering of Protestants, with some greater concentrations in Cork City and in its hinterland, in County Donegal and in counties along the southern border with Northern Ireland.

By 1939–1940, there were only 45 Protestant secondary schools in the State, catering for 1,972 boys and 1,691 girls. Nearly half of these schools were located in the Dublin area. Most of the other schools, which were

dotted around the country, were located in areas central to the locations of the various concentrations of the Protestant population, as noted above. Also, in view of the fact that the percentage of the population of the State which was Protestant was very small, it is not surprising that most of the Protestant schools, like Catholic schools, catered for very small numbers of pupils; of the 45 Protestant schools, 36 contained less than 100 pupils each, and of that 36, 19 contained less than 50 pupils each. Also, 18 of the schools were co-educational. This situation prevailed as much out of a desire to facilitate the survival of Protestant schools as out of a philosophical commitment to co-education.

Protestant schools operated under all of the same rules and regulations regarding financing, payment of teachers' salaries, curriculum and inspection that applied to Catholic schools, and their pupils sat for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations. At the same time, it was not unusual for pupils to also be entered for the General Certificate of Education examination of the United Kingdom. Also, Church of Ireland secondary schoolchildren were entered for the General Synod 'religious education examination', with pupils being examined at different levels according to a prescribed syllabus. The results of this examination were published every year in the *Irish Times*.

Unlike many Catholic schools, Protestant schools did not promote Gaelic games. Rather, they promoted the English public and grammar school games of rugby, cricket and hockey for boys, and hockey and netball for girls. They emphasized what they considered to be the socializing influence of these games and the use of them to promote leadership, loyalty, cooperation, self-discipline, initiative, tenacity and sportsmanship. Playing these games also brought them into contact with students from some of the better-off Catholic schools.

In 1967, the year of the introduction of free education, there were 42 Protestant schools in the State. Of these, 22 were in the Dublin area. There was also a group of schools clustered along the boundary with Northern Ireland, catering for the substantial Protestant minorities in Counties Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal. The remainder were scattered unevenly across the Republic and included two Religious Society of Friends-run co-educational boarding schools.

The Protestant schools also varied greatly in terms both of size and of the facilities provided. In the year 1965, enrolments ranged from 30 pupils in a provincial mixed boarding school, to nearly 400 in a Dublin boys' school. Also, 20 of the schools contained less than 100 pupils and about the same number operated in converted dwelling houses. Fees also varied considerably.

Some of the Protestant schools were on a par with the expensive Catholic boarding schools and were in equally splendid settings. For example, the situation at the Religious Society of Friends' Newtown School in Waterford City in 1940 was described as follows:

> The school has a setting of ample space. On entering the gates and passing up the drive, the park stretches out on either side; to the left beyond the cricket pitch, the high posts of the rugby field can be seen, and beyond that again is the hockey pitch. The school's milking herd are grazing or lie peacefully in the shadow of the trees .... The impression of spaciousness grows as the school, which is on a gentle incline, is approached.[1]

The buildings in the school contained not only classrooms and dormitories, but also pupils' common rooms, a gymnasium, a sanatorium and playing fields.

Alexandra College girls' school[2] and Kilkenny College[3] for boys had similar facilities, as had St Columba's College, Rathfarnham, County Dublin, a Church of Ireland foundation whose early purpose was to educate the sons of the Irish gentry to take their place as the natural leaders of the Irish people.[4] Like the other schools in their category, both Catholic and Protestant, they were able to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities as pupils paid relatively high fees.

Not all Protestant schools were in surroundings as pleasant as those noted above. St Andrew's College, which was established by the Presbyterian congregation on St Stephen's Green in Dublin in 1894, considered closing altogether in the 1930s and, under serious financial strain, moved out to Clyde Road in Dublin in 1937.[5] At this stage, it had about 100 pupils. Wilson's Hospital School in Multyfarnham, County Westmeath, had only about 75 pupils, but was in a reasonably well-off financial situation partly due to the fact that it had a 180-acre farm attached.[6]

Most of the small Protestant schools which were scattered around the country were 'rather small, drab institutions which lacked the ruling class assumptions of the English public schools'.[7] In relation to this, Dr Adele Crowther has described as follows St Margaret's Hall in Dublin, which she attended in the 1930s and which had a student population of 24 girls:

> The school had two gardens, at the corner of Mespil and Burlington Roads ... the gardens made tolerable our performance of Shakespeare,

> and between classes teachers and girls jogged fast round their gravel paths, skidding through the corners of sharp-angled box hedges .... Some trouble with a lease moved St Margaret's Hall for a year to an empty diocesan boys' boarding school. Brown varnished, with clattering iron treads on the stairs, it had an unventilated chilliness, and we were fed cocoa and doughnuts twice a day to keep us warm. The boarders lived in a flat and lunched in a basement restaurant in Kildare Street ... we played soccer in a concrete yard of the school.

By the early 1960s the authorities of such schools realized that, in the long-term interest of preserving Protestant education, they should engage in some rationalization of resources. In certain places, further co-educational schools developed from amalgamations of small schools and some of these relocated to new sites.

In May 1966, the Secondary Education Committee was established, consisting of representatives of the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church and the Religious Society of Friends, to develop a common approach for the reform of Protestant education in the State and to engage in negotiations with the Minister of Education in seeking to realize its objectives. The most radical development was the opening of the first Protestant comprehensive school (one of a series of comprehensive schools established through State initiative) in Raphoe in County Donegal in 1971. This initiative, with major State assistance and with Protestant representation dominating within the management structure, signalled the likelihood that Protestant education in the State would be secure for the foreseeable future.

The remainder of this chapter details the accounts of the memories of secondary schooling of four individuals who attended Protestant secondary schools in Ireland prior to 1967. The first of these, Susan Parkes, attended Alexandra College in Dublin. The second account is by Victor Talbot, who attended three Protestant secondary schools, namely, the High School in Dublin, Wilson's Hospital School in County Westmeath and Wesley College in Dublin. The third account is by Gwyn Roe, who attended Dundalk Grammar School. The fourth account is by Brian Dungan, who attended the High School.

Alexandra College, Dublin: The memories of Susan Parkes

I was born in Dublin and grew up in a large Protestant family. My father was an Englishman who had come to work in Ireland as a young man and stayed. My mother's people on her mother's side were from Dublin

but her father had come from Yorkshire as a young man to work in the wool business. So, we had a good mixture of what I would call the Anglo and the Anglo-Irish background.

I didn't go to a regular primary school. I attended a private primary school located in a large house in Palmerston Park in Dublin. It was fee-paying and based its curriculum on the ideas of Froebel. However, it wasn't until I later studied Froebel's theories on kindergarten education that I realized how Froebelian the school actually was. It was called Miss Sweeney's, having been established by a woman of that name. She came from Cork and was an early graduate of the Royal University. She was very interested in nature study and biology and we did a lot of that. We also played various team games and learned to recite lengthy verses of poetry. I have always said that it is one of the reasons I was never shy about speaking in public.

It was a lovely school and I was very happy. We began learning French there. We didn't learn much modern Irish history but we had a very good history teacher and we read the Greek legends. We read the Irish legends also and we did a lot of creative writing. We were given many opportunities to write imaginative stories, which, of course, is all very Froebelian. The kindergarten was located at the top of the house and then, as you got older, you moved down the house. One went from 'kindergarten' to 'kindergarten transition' and then to 'lower preparatory', 'middle preparatory' and 'upper preparatory'. You felt really very grand by the time you got to 'upper preparatory'.

We didn't study any Irish, which was quite common amongst the Protestant community in such schools. This created some difficulty for me later on when I went to Alexandra College, which we all knew as Alex. When I started there I found that most of my companions had done five years of Irish in primary school. We only did it in our last year, on the instigation of parents. For many years there had been a tradition in the Protestant community in Dublin of sending children to boarding school in England, or to boarding schools in Ireland which traditionally did not teach Irish. But that was starting to change with the realization that it was necessary to know Irish if one was going to go on to most of the other secondary schools in Ireland.

Like most of the other pupils, I cycled to and from school on my bicycle. Sometimes a designated mother would cycle with us, picking up children as we went along. Both boys and girls attended the school, but some of the boys used to leave after a few years and go to primary school sections in the High School or St Andrew's. As for the teachers, the majority of them had been trained at Alex, which had a special

Froebel teacher-training department attached to it in those days. I cannot imagine that the salary was very handsome because they could only be paid what the school could afford to pay, but I remember them as having been a very able group of young women. And later on I realized how lucky I had been to have been part of what was a unique community of people.

As I said, I then went on to secondary school at Alex. This was somewhat unusual in my family as my sister and my two brothers all went to boarding school; in the case of my sister, it was to a school in England, and in the case of my younger brother, it was to St Columba's College in Dublin. I let it be known that I wanted to stay at home and go on my bike to Alex every day.

I started at Alex in 1948 and was there until 1954. In those days the school was divided into two parts. Alex School was in Earlsfort Terrace and was in a separate building from Alex College. The College was, as it had been at the time of its establishment in 1866, regarded as a ladies' college. Alex School next door was established later on in the 1880s by Miss Isabella Mulvany as a feeder school for the College.

Alex School was located in a solid red-brick building. It was a fine spacious Victorian structure. It had a big staircase inside and long corridors. The classrooms were also fine and large, and you couldn't see out of the windows as they were quite high up. Outside we had an asphalt playground at the back. We used to play skipping and netball there at break time.

The schooling itself was very different to what I had experienced in primary school. It was a very good straightforward institution in the grammar school tradition, but there was not a great deal of creative work conducted there. We all wore brown; brown coats, brown hats, brown tunics and brown jumpers. And we had to bring house shoes with us each day. We took off our walking shoes when we arrived in the morning and put on our indoor shoes. Our walking shoes were then placed in our lockers, where we kept our gym shoes and additional clothing.

Alongside the school was a boarding house, founded in the 1840s for the daughters of Church of Ireland clergymen. The girls who stayed there used Alex as their school. A lot of them were in my class and I remember that they worked very hard at their schoolwork. We also had day girls like myself and then we had a boarding house for 'regular' boarders, known as 'Res', as in 'the Residence'. Quite a number of the 'Res' girls came from the North of Ireland. Alex had, for a long time, attracted quite a lot of Northern girls. Nowadays one tends to forget

that the traditional North–South Protestant links continued even well into the 1950s.

We had a gym in the school which doubled up as an assembly hall. For PE we regularly had student teachers from the Ling PE College. They wore green and we always thought they looked gorgeous. We also had a very good games mistress who was fairly formidable. She had trained in England and was always immaculately dressed in navy shorts and wore a whistle around her neck.

We sat for the Intermediate Certificate examination after four years. From the beginning we were streamed into three classes. We were known as the 'upper', 'middle' and 'lower' and we tended to mix only with those in our own stream. The authorities did not seem to worry too much about how one felt about it. We each had our own classroom and our own teachers, although we were 'set across' for maths and Irish. My Irish was so poor I had to go down to C stream for Irish class even though I was in the A class for everything else. When I was in my first term in C-stream Irish, I discovered that nobody did any work at all down there. We had a rather nice elderly teacher, but she didn't worry about it too much either. She used to teach us songs. So I did my homework in class. In the next term I was moved up to the B stream where we had a much better teacher for Irish and I did learn quite a lot from her. Then, by the time we got to the next year, I was put into the A stream. But I never really caught up with the others in the language and having a rather sarcastic and sharp teacher did not help much. On the other hand, we did have some very good teachers. My favourite teacher was the history teacher who was a lovely person and taught us Intermediate Certificate history and was excellent. I got a great grounding from her in how to take notes, how to lay out our books, how to work at a subject and how to look for the causes and the outcomes in historical events. In fact, I kept my history notebooks. She was great. But Irish was always a problem for me, I'm afraid.

Most days we had lunch in school. We could go to either what we called 'the hot lunch kitchen' and pay for it, or we could bring our own lunch and have it in what was called the 'cold lunch kitchen'. My mother said: 'You're going to have the hot lunch every day, dear', and so I did. I remember it wasn't exactly appetizing.

We had games twice a week – on Tuesdays and Fridays. For that we had to go out to Milltown, which is where the school is now. They had playing fields there. On games' days we stopped school at 1.00 pm and we were given an hour and a half to get home, or we could stay in the school for lunch if we wanted to. I used to go home, get my hockey

things and then go to Milltown. The boarding girls got the train. The hockey was great. We had very good teams and I loved playing. We also played netball in school and we played tennis in the summer. The tennis was never as good as the hockey because we never had as long at it; tennis season was very short and the tennis courts were really pretty awful. It was just a matter of marking and laying out the hockey field.

I enjoyed the structured day at school. We did a wide range of subjects with certain options. When you started at the school you had to choose whether you would do domestic science, experimental science, or art. My father said: 'Well, there's no question my dear. You do science. This is the scientific age. The other subjects you can pick up later.' So I never did any art and I was always very sorry about that afterwards. Also, I'm not a good cook because I didn't do any domestic science. In those days domestic science was considered appropriate only for those in the C class. Some of the Bs did science with us, but overall we were a small group. On the other hand quite a large group did art.

I loved the science. We had very good labs at Alex. They were built, I think, in about 1912. We did a lot of experiments. We used to have a double period for those on Fridays and we used to write them up in our science notebooks. We were encouraged to use the equipment and it was really very interesting. I am very glad I had the opportunity to study science up to Leaving Certificate level. It gave me some insight into the way scientists work and the way the periodic table works. But I also knew I didn't want to be a scientist, even though my father would have much appreciated it, I think, if I did.

After doing the Intermediate Certificate examination I moved to Alexandra College which was next door to Alexandra School. There was a little green door at the end of the school corridor which led out into a garden. It was a beautiful garden divided into sections by walls with entrances in them. Ms Henrietta White, a former principal of Alex College, who had been a great gardener, had laid it out. It was such a contrast to the asphalt playground in the School.

Those running the School believed in doing everything the same way as boys did it, so that we could later compete with them on equal terms. Even our uniform was quite masculine. On the other hand, Henrietta White's ghost haunted the College. It was a ladies' college. Femininity was cultivated. We no longer wore uniforms. There were always flowers everywhere and we were encouraged to garden. And we were all called Miss, as in Miss Parkes, Miss Brown and Miss Thomas. At the beginning we were all mesmerized by this. I found it quite difficult to transfer from the supportive routine of the School into the more third-level approach

at the College. Later on, however, I realized that the approach adopted meant that it was much easier for us to adapt to life at university, in Trinity, than it was for girls who had gone to other schools. We were well prepared in making our own study notes, making our own way and doing things for ourselves. We had learned how to take responsibility for ourselves.

The staff members were fairly remote in some ways. This all contributed to us eventually developing an independent approach to our work. They were very charming and very clever women, but they expected you to be really able to do everything for yourself. We now moved from class to class. I didn't particularly like the history teacher who wasn't as inspiring as the one I'd had at the School and I began to wonder whether I really was any good at history. On the other hand, we had a very good teacher for English. And our teacher for Irish was wonderful. Initially, she didn't know why I was so weak at the language, in contrast to a lot of the girls in my class who were studying for the honours' course. When I explained my situation to her she said: 'We're going to get your Irish better.' I did my best but continued to struggle, and as we approached the middle of the year, she said: 'You know, Susan, we can't have this because you're going to have to get your Leaving Certificate. You have to have Irish if you're going to get your Leaving Certificate and your marks show that you're going to get a good Leaving Certificate, but not unless you pass in Irish.' So she gave me quite a lot of extra tuition and I passed. I am still enormously grateful to her. She took the trouble in a big school like that to give me support when I needed it.

I decided at Alex that I wanted to be a teacher, but I have no memory of any advice coming from anywhere on that, or in relation to any other profession. We certainly didn't have a career guidance teacher. In the Leaving Certificate year there was some advice given to us to keep our options open in terms of the subjects we studied. I studied the honours' courses for physics and chemistry, which is partly explainable, I think, by my father hoping I was going to be a scientist. He certainly encouraged me to study both subjects. Also, I was influenced for a while by a notion that I might become a physiotherapist as it was becoming a new and interesting career for girls.

I also did Latin and French. I was good at Latin and it stood to me because I went on to study history in Trinity at a time when we had to study Latin charters. I didn't do art or geography. In fact, I remember going home in a bit of a state one day and saying to my father: 'I can't do history and geography, they clash on the timetable.' He encouraged

me to do the one I liked best, and so I chose history. I credit this decision to the influence of the very good teacher I had in primary school. I also realized from talking to peers that if I graduated with a degree in history I could consider the possibility of being a librarian. That was actually rather attractive to me. I told my father and I remember him saying: 'Library work can be rather dull. You never meet anybody. Teaching would be better than that.' It was only after I graduated that I was certain I wanted to be a teacher. I had done quite a bit of work as a 'brown owl' in the Girl Guides, looking after junior girls, and I found that I really enjoyed the children.

Not everybody in my class at Alex went on to university. The majority, in fact, went on to study nursing, or to do a secretarial course. The College actually had its own secretarial department and its students went on to work in a bank or business, or for an insurance company. There was also a housecraft department offering a course in home economics, which included the study of catering and food science. Attached to it was a flat and two girls would live in it for a week, at the end of which they would entertain the staff, serving them lunch and dinner. That was all very advanced in some ways. At the same time, the bright girls were privileged. Academically they were kept apart from the girls in the lower stream who studied for the British Ordinary Level examinations. I believe that not having a Leaving Certificate disadvantaged many of them later on when applying for jobs, as the Ordinary Level standard was not as high as Leaving Certificate; it was somewhere between the Intermediate Certificate and the Leaving Certificate level. The good thing, however, is that we all remained friends, and many of us are still very much in touch with each other.

The High School, Wilson's Hospital and Wesley College: The memories of Victor Talbot

My parents were Protestants and members of the Church of Ireland. My mother, who was from Aughrim, County Galway, was born in 1908, and my father, who was from Athlone, County Westmeath, was born in 1912, the year the Titanic went south. In their lives they lived in counties Galway, Westmeath, Wicklow and Dublin. I was the only one in my family who was born in Dublin, hence I consider myself a Dubliner, and maybe apart from the rest.

My father had a diverse life. He inherited the family farm, which consisted of very poor land near Aughrim (Spruce Hill). He wasn't interested in farming nor was he very good at it. He did not have the temperament

to deal with wilful animals. Later, this would extend to children. His main interest in the 1930s was tinkering around with electrical equipment, including simple radios, crystal sets and waterwheel-powered generators, which he built for himself and a few locals. He sourced parts from the British Army, which were obsolete after World War I. However, one day he got a letter from the Customs and Excise Department in Dublin requesting him to attend the opening of a parcel from Britain. He never replied, never heard from them again and had to source parts elsewhere.

In those days rural Ireland did not have gas, never mind electricity. He used to install simple 240-volt lighting systems in people's houses around Aughrim and later in Dunlavin, County Wicklow. The power was generated from waterwheels on dammed streams and stored in batteries. Interestingly, if the system was not turned off at night, it would overcharge the batteries and stuff them up. That frequently caused rows. I don't know if what he was doing was legal or dangerous. I suspect in those days he was ahead of his time as turf fires, candles and tilly lamps were state-of-the-art technology for heating and lighting in rural Ireland. Accordingly, government regulations covering such activities would have been a comical concept to bureaucrats in Dublin. Eventually, as a failed farmer and an aspiring sparky, he moved to Dublin where he trained to become an electrician. He gained his qualification from the Atlantic College on the corner of Leeson Park and Chelmsford Road (Ranelagh), whose main purpose was to train men in electronics and electrical communication for the Merchant Navy. When qualified, he set himself up as an electrical contractor.

I was born in Dublin on 6 December 1947. I recall being told that the winter of 1947 was very severe. My entrance to the world did little to warm it up. Reading between the lines, I was a mistake, but as all good Irish women did, they did their duty and grinned and bared it. I had two older brothers and an older sister. We were brought up in Ranelagh. Apart from one other household on our street, Chelmsford Avenue, we were surrounded by RC families. Most of them were very cordial to us. While rather poor, we were dignified, quiet and minded our own business. As an aside, it is always smart for minorities to be polite and to keep one's powder dry. We were respected for that. At the same time, I think the situation had a major effect on me as I became socially isolated: I was instructed not to play with the kids on the street, so I had few friends. Many of the kids were street smart and later drew the attention of the *Gardaí* (Police). Not just was there a religious divide between my parents and neighbours, there was also the rural-Dublin divide. To make things

even worse, my parents, and my mother in particular, quite wrongly saw ourselves as being rural middle class. The reality was we had a little inherited wealth but lived a very working-class life. Yes, I covertly mixed with the local kids. My mother lived in fear that I might get caught by my old man. She would get a mouthful from him and I would get a hiding.

Like most minorities worldwide, Southern Irish Protestants developed a siege mentality. We witness this phenomenon in the diverse world of Islam today. History shows that autocratic leadership, be it religious or political, thrives on poverty and ignorance, and my part of Ranelagh was no exception. Thankfully things have changed. It is now a haven for godless yuppies.

The population of Protestants in Southern Ireland fell a lot after World War I. Many died fighting for the Empire and others settled in Britain after Irish Independence in 1922. Those who remained got caught up in the RC-political control-freak net, which was largely designed to keep the ordinary Irish RC person in a religious and social straightjacket. In turn, the Protestant siege mentality became more acute as the RC hierarchy tightened the noose. Many Protestants believed in an RC Church conspiracy to rid Ireland of non-believers, as they could not be real Irish. While there were grounds for this conspiratorial notion, it would be more true to quote the Australian Public Service which says, 'why look for a conspiracy when incompetence is the obvious answer.' The RC Church, which struggled with the notion of civil liberties, in the name of God, demanded of their followers that RCs marrying infidels had a divine duty to convert them to the RC faith so as to save their souls from Hell and damnation. Further, all children from mixed marriages had to be brought up in the RC Church so they would be saved from the fate of the infidel. The practical effect of these RC rulings was that the numbers of Protestants in Southern Ireland declined further. However, as they say, every dog has its day; Irish people are more educated and financially well off, and the population of believers and infidels live in harmony. The Islamic world could benefit from studying the psychology behind the religious history of Ireland. It was divisive and destructive, all in the name of the God Almighty.

Another example of the abuse of power by the RC Church in daily life was the blanket ban on RC students attending Trinity College Dublin (Dublin University), the only University in Ireland at the time with an international reputation and which offered secular education. The university was considered by the RC Church as the last bastion of the Protestant British Empire in Southern Ireland. The ban was imposed by

the then Dublin Archbishop McQuaid, who had politicians eating out of his hands. The ban denied Irish RCs the opportunity of receiving a broad holistic university education, free from the clerics and their fifth column. Later, when the archbishop went to meet his maker, the ban was lifted.

I went to a Church of Ireland primary school on Northbrook Road, near Ranelagh Road. It was in Leeson Park Parish. The parish community members catered for everything. They baptized you and ran the Cubs, Boy Scouts, Rovers, Brownies, Girl Guides, the Girls' Friendly Society and Sunday School, amongst other things, for the youth of the parish. They had table tennis, indoor bowls, badminton, theatre, a home for old men, a blind ladies' home and an orphanage, along with other activities and facilities. Somebody always knew somebody who would give you a job. The experience was one of cradle to the grave. Whether it was benevolence or control, who knows. I suspect it was part of the siege mentality. Overall, the community was tight-knit, with social stratification ranging from old money snobbery to working-class survival. There were two churches. The one on Leeson Park attracted the well-heeled as it was near the rectory. The smaller one, a corrugate iron structure on Ranelagh Road, attracted the plebs. There was no new money in the parish as the community was in decline. A very stark example of social stratification was given to me by an old church warden, Mr Bailey. He pointed out a gallery within an arch of the Leeson Park Church. He told me that the women of the night were allowed to attend church there behind the curtain. One wonders if the purpose of the curtain was to separate the great unwashed from the self-righteous and well-heeled, or simply to avoid potential embarrassment between customers and service providers. Anyway, to use a general saying of Charles Haughey, former Irish Prime Minister, it was an Irish solution to an Irish problem.

There are a number of interesting aspects of Leeson Park School worth recalling. It was the school for the parish orphanage, which provided a constant supply of children. Many were not orphans. Rather, they were the progeny of poor or troubled families from around Southern Ireland. One night the school was set on fire by vandals and two classrooms were destroyed. The outcome was that the school was eventually relocated to Ranelagh Road beside the corrugated iron church, where it still exists as a non-denominational school. As an aside, a few attempts were made to burn down Leeson Park Church also, but God knows whose side the Protestants are on. This was around the time when the Jewish synagogue in Terenure was also attacked, an act, I assume, undertaken because the

Jews crucified our Lord Jesus Christ. Thankfully, tribalism in Ireland is on the wane, and pluralism and tolerance now stand tall.

I did pretty poorly in Leeson Park Primary School. There was a strong emphasis on Irish and lots of posters on the walls were written in Irish, but most of us did not understand them. There was no great parental support for learning Irish or any other subject, yet there was significant parental expectation to do well at school in all subjects. Parents did not see schooling as their prime responsibility in those days. You were expected to be self-motivated. If you did not perform, it was the stick. Learning, including of Irish, was a negative exercise for most. I remember my father once saying to me when the census came around: 'Can you speak Irish, Victor? We need somebody in the family to say yes.' There wasn't actually an anti-Irish-language feeling in Protestant homes, but there wasn't a sympathy about promoting it amongst working-class Protestants either. It was just accepted that we had to do it. Interestingly, I became aware that my young RC neighbour's children were able speak Irish. Sadly, their achievement stayed in the classroom. I was amused at the irony of that. For all the government's good intentions, the promotion of Irish in Ireland was a failure. It was taught with the stick and not the carrot.

One good aspect of the Leeson Park National (primary) School was that a government van came every day to give the kids milk and food. We each got a half-pint of milk and a sandwich. The sandwiches were cheese (Monday), bully beef (Tuesday and Thursday) and a jam without margarine on Friday. On Wednesday we got a big raisin bun. What a treat.

Reflecting in later years on some of what I have said already, I came to recognize the potential of Irish to give the people a national identity. That was never emphasized when I was growing up; it would have been too visionary and positive. Nationalism was a 'get in the face of the British exercise'; the old enemy mentality, rather than an independent enunciation of Irish virtues. Unfortunately, Irish was dragged down by divisive politicians, by the GAA and by the RC Church. This trinity undermined the real value of Irish. It was part of our European heritage in that, unlike many European languages, which are Latin-based, it is one of the few remaining spoken languages from the Celtic family of European languages. This negativity extended to government regulations which stated that if you failed Irish in the State examination, you failed your whole State examination. Any proper educationalist will tell you that some children have a gift for maths and science, and others for languages. They would also concede, these days, that girls are

generally better with words and languages than boys. Hence boys with a strong talent for the sciences and maths often failed their State examinations and were consigned to the dustbin of emigration. Ironically, this probably impacted more on working-class RC children than the better-resourced Protestant children, who learned Irish as an intellectual pursuit.

In none of my schooling was Irish used as the language of instruction for other subjects. In fact Irish itself was taught through English. Gaelic football and hurling also played no part in my growing up. I was very much aware of the existence of the games, however, since many of our neighbours were country people. My next-door neighbours, Mr and Mrs Mooney, were like parents to me. Mr Mooney was from County Leitrim. Not only did he used to follow the GAA, he used to referee matches in Croke Park. Of the four kids in my family, I was probably the only one who spent much time with my neighbours. This may have been because of loneliness. The result was, however, that I became more interested in Irish culture than the rest of my family, and developed republican sympathies, which I carry to this day.

I left Leeson Park National Primary School in 1957 and went to the junior school part of the High School, located at Harcourt Street in Dublin, until 1961. Later, the latter was moved to Danum, Rathgar. I had to walk to and from school along Ranelagh Road each day. It was about a three-mile round trip. It was very lonely walking by myself. We didn't have much money. Sometimes my parents gave me the bus fare, but I would still walk and use the money to buy a cream bun for myself at school; I was a sugar junkie and that was a luxury.

The school charged fees. My parents had to pay five pounds a term for me. I remember that clearly. I had friends on our street who went to Synge Street CBS and they had to pay minor amounts of money. They used to complain about this and I used to tell them: 'Well, we pay five quid, which is actually a week's wages for my father.' The RC Church educated RC children for very little and I don't think they appreciated this. Mind you, there is no such thing as a free lunch. As I have already noted above, it was benevolence or control. Make your own choice.

I began to realize that I was good at science and maths and bad at languages. One year I topped the class in art and maths, which surprised everybody. But it never again happened. Also, I did poorly at Irish. I then went into the first year of secondary school at the High School. I recall how many Northern Irish teachers we had. Presumably they got employment because they flew the Protestant colours. Some of them were not shy about giving verbal abuse and using some violence.

I was an academic loser if there ever was one. I wound up getting myself into one of the most despairing situations of my life. If you didn't turn up with your homework completed satisfactorily, you had to deal with the year teacher. By this time I had form and sympathy was in short supply. The year teacher discussed me with the rest of the teachers and I was put on what was called 'report'. That meant I was given a document on which after every class I had to have the comment 'satisfactory' written on it by the class teacher. I was required to have 'satisfactory' in every class for a week. That was harrowing because I could never get off report. It also meant that I got picked on by teachers and everybody knows that teachers need a whipping boy.

To the day I left that school, I never got off report. What despair for a young kid in the name of education! What made it worse was that my old man thought it was the school's role to educate me because he paid fees. I could not bring many friends home to my house because of my working-class background, I was not able to play with the kids on the street because they were RCs and inspiration at home was non-existent.

My father told the headmaster, Dr Reynolds, a classics scholar, that he had his permission to use corporal punishment on me as much as he wanted so as to get me to perform. The good Dr had no interest in that modus operandi. A few of the teachers, however, and particularly my French teacher, clobbered me. I deserved it, but it was still despairing having no real school or home support. Rather, there was plenty of coercion and ill feeling. I think that eventually the headmaster advised my parents to take me out of his school, probably as a lost cause. Around that time, my old man threatened to send me to the Christian Brothers at Synge Street. They were renowned for straightening out young boys.

The difference between the kids at High School and the Chelmsford Avenue School was like chalk and cheese. I had learned a lot of interesting stuff on Chelmsford Avenue, things that nice Protestant boys would find distasteful. Later, some of the blokes on the Avenue graduated to all sorts of theft, including stealing expensive cars. Two of them cut down the rugby goal posts at Lansdowne Road in 1970, before South Africa played Ireland, as a protest against apartheid. They were avid GAA supporters and were probably just looking for an opportunity to stick it up the English game. Their mother hated the kids on the street playing cricket up against the lamppost. She used to shout at them and throw water over them. Another hung himself in Mountjoy Gaol and another yet again used to take women's underwear from clothes' lines; I think the practice was called snow dropping. Then there was the one who became a peeping Tom and got chased by the *Gardaí*. Another died of

liver failure having spent years on the streets of Dublin as a derelict. And then there was a bloke who, I am told, became involved in pimping in London.

It was on this street I was introduced to masturbation by one bloke. Another bloke who went to a local priest's school (upmarket compared with a CBS) tried to sexually assault me. I am sure that the Lord God Almighty, in all his wisdom and compassion, will deal with these matters in Purgatory. I was told that, as a Protestant, I would not even get to the starting line in that direction. It was Hell and damnation for me. Another friend, a bit older than me, on an adjacent street, ended up getting murdered by his wife. I think she is still doing time, if she is not already with her maker. You can kind of get the idea why my parents did not want me hanging around with the local kids.

At this time, I used to go to Herbert Park, Ballsbridge, to get away from the Avenue. There used to be a model steam-train club there with outdoor tracks. Children used to get rides on it on Saturdays. There I met my first paedophile. He used to sit in the shed where they stored the engines. He would sit boys up on his knee and give them sweets. He told me he was the captain of seven ships as he put his hand up my pants. I mentioned this to my old man one day that there was an old bloke at the trains who was the captain of seven ships and gave me sweets. I did not mention the rest in case it might be seen to be all my fault. My old man smelt a rat but never followed it up, maybe because he worked on a Saturday and was too busy.

In despair, my parents, on the recommendation of an uncle, moved me to Wilson's Hospital School in County Westmeath, as a boarder. The fees were £70 a year in 1961. I don't think they went up a great deal between then and 1966 when I left. It was by far the cheapest Protestant boarding school in Ireland. There were no day pupils. It was like a prison without cells. There was no significant contact with the outside world. All students, who were mainly from rural backgrounds, were members of the Church of Ireland and came from all over Ireland. It was a heavily endowed school for poor Protestant boys and it had a very ordinary name amongst its peers. I travelled there by train from Westland Row Railway Station. The train left me off at Multyfarnham and I walked the rest of the way.

I remember my first night at the school, which was three-quarters of the way through the 1961 school year. I was the focus of attention of the other 85 kids. Everybody was wondering who this new geezer was. The pecking order amongst them had already been established and no punk from Dublin was going to change that. So I got the rural treatment

being an outsider, a Dublin jackeen. There were lots of questions to see if I was a smart ass. I did not acquit myself very well and hence got the same treatment for the rest of the term. Making friends was very difficult because the kids were very cheeky. Also, I came to realize that rural people came to suffer extremely from a profound sense of inferiority when it came to dealing with city people.

In winter, the raw limestone buildings with no furnishings were cold, dark and depressing. The headmaster, called 'the warden', a clergyman near retirement with no educational qualifications, rarely switched on the old iron radiators. Presumably this was to save money and, of course, the view also was that young boys needed to be hardened up. We washed in cold water, except once a week when we had a warm bath. We bathed in pairs and the water was changed after every ten boys had washed in it. We looked forward to extremely cold nights when the water would freeze in the pipes as we then did not have to wash. Not surprisingly, after every term, when I went home, my sister used to pick out all the black heads out of my skin, which built up during the term.

The attrition rate amongst pupils was huge. A typical first-year intake was about 30 pupils and six years later only two-to-six pupils remained. The school was over 200 years old in 1961 and it had a 200-acre farm attached to it. There were six dormitories, but only four of them were used; the other two were derelict.

A lot of the buildings were falling into disrepair, including the outbuildings. The walls were solid and damp and whitewashed on the outside. They were pink-washed on the inside, and were between 0.5- and 1-m thick. The place was Spartan. The architectural style was along the lines of the mental asylums in Ballinasloe and Portlaoise and the penal gaols through the European colonies. Several ran away. I recall a young kid called York, who was from Moat, doing a bunk twice. The warden laid into him. Of course it was all in the name of education.

During my period there, the school celebrated 200 years from foundation. Because of this, somebody must have given instructions for the facade to be improved. The mortar was falling from the old limestone buildings. Rather than mend it, a contractor arrived from Dublin with four or five workmen and sprayed the outside of the main building in battleship grey, a most appropriate colour for such a dour place. The British Navy would have been proud of the job.

After some time in the school, I became aware that in the past, trophies were awarded for sport. Maybe Wilson's Hospital had had glory days eons ago. It never happened in my time. We were never allowed

outside a boundary wall immediately attached to the main buildings. The place was more secure than a low-security prison. If you were caught beyond the boundary, you got beaten, either by sadistic prefects, by teachers, or by the warden himself. Hence, our free space was some classrooms, the locker room and two courtyards, one of which had a handball alley. The old alley was made up of an old garden wall on the left, a very rough front wall and the wall of a building with boarded up windows on the right. You would not know which way the ball would bounce when it hit any of the walls.

The warden, a country bloke, had this Dublin-country hang-up and did not warm to kids from Dublin. He seemed to accept me because I projected myself as a modest battler. There were several pupils from the Leeson Park Orphanage. One in particular was told by the warden to see him in his office at break time. It was at the top of stone stairs, called the 39 steps. The poor fellow was a mess afterwards. So much for the message of Jesus and Protestantism. I realized later that Wilson's Hospital School had a poor reputation amongst some in the Protestant community, yet the Board of Governors, who used to visit the place, seemed to be satisfied with it. Maybe they thought that poor people deserved no better. Ironically, some of the prefects that handed it out became old boys of the school and players in the governance of the Church. I am glad I live in Australia.

There was one good aspect to life in the school and that was the warden's daughter, Shelia Mayne. She was the matron and was somewhere between 25 and 30 years old. She was a graduate of Alexandra College Dublin and a nurse, probably after training at the Adelaide Hospital in Dublin, where many Protestant nurses were trained. She was one of the few people in the school that I ever thought had any sense of compassion or a feeling of warmth for the kids. I must admit I would not have minded having a cuddle from her. Some of the boys nicknamed her 'hairy', although I never worked out the reason why. Actually, I found her rather attractive, with her brown hair, big brown eyes and slightly rotund figure and her motherly, pleasant and caring personality. She must have inherited her traits from her mother.

Working with a very tight budget, Shelia used to produce very good meals. I often wish I had had the opportunity to thank her for all the good work she did for us. She was like an oasis in the desert. The unpasteurized milk for our meals came from the school farm and all of the bread came by van from Mullingar. It might be illegal these days to use unpasteurized milk, but I am still alive. The van brought cakes, and kids who had money used to buy them even though they were not supposed

to. Others would simply nick them. We also did our bit in providing the food by doing a little work on the school farm. On one day a year the warden would ask us if we wanted to pick potatoes. Most of us wanted to get out of the place so off we went. The other motivator was that we were afraid of the consequences of saying no. The warden had a memory as long as the ash plants with which he would hit us.

At that time, the warden was between 60 and 65 years of age and about five foot eleven inches in height. He taught maths. He never used a book. Rather, it was instruction from his head, the blackboard and fear. We were so scared that it was to our peril if we did not pay attention. He rarely smiled, had a big copper nose, a big hard red face, wavy grey hair and a bit of a limp. For us, it was also significant that he had two suits. Both were black and he always wore a cleric's collar. He wore the older suit when he was around the school and the better one when he was going somewhere. Thus we always knew if he was going to be absent for a period of time. This absence was a relief to us.

To give an indication of the tension that was there amongst the boys when the warden was teaching, we used to yawn before and during the lesson, a sign of anxiety. If he caught you, you were in trouble. I remember I was ordered up to the blackboard on one occasion to solve a problem about triangles and circles. I was given the chalk. I worked out the solution to the problem, but I was so scared, I said: 'Sir, you need to circumcise a circle around the triangle', instead of saying, 'You need to circumscribe a circle around the triangle.' He looked down at me over his big red nose and, with a straight face, quite abruptly said: 'Son, you don't circumcise circles, sit down.' I think he was relieved that somebody knew the essence of the solution. Had I been wrong, I might have got a straight leg kick up the backside.

We had six teachers and a few of them, as with the warden, did not have teaching qualifications. Also, some had not attended university either. One of the non-qualified teachers was our Irish and history teacher in year one. He was Berty (Robert) Clarke, otherwise known as Nobby. He was a very narrow-minded Protestant from Buncranna, County Donegal. The overall message we got from him, and from the rest of our teachers, was: 'We are proud to be Irish. We fought battles against the English. We were on the Irish side.' I guess that should not be surprising since, after all, Irish republicanism is very much an Irish Protestant invention. People often forget that. And yet, I had no idea at the time that there were a million Protestants in Northern Ireland and the majority of them had little in common with Protestants in the South of Ireland. It was not until I heard of 'the Troubles' much later when

I listened to Bernadette Devlin that I became aware of the injustices in Northern Ireland.

Near the end of my schooling I came to realize that I'd love to see Ireland united into a plural society based on tolerance and ethics, and to hell with religion. To my lifelong disappointment, I have come to realize that many people benefit from division and tribalism, including Saxon neighbours in Northern Ireland. As they say, Britain once ruled the waves, now she waves the rules.

Another Irish-language teacher, an RC called John O'Hara, was a nice enough bloke even though he did not like me. He was not very committed to teaching us Irish. This was a pity, because he had a lot to offer. He often let us know he was very proud to have played Gaelic football for University College Dublin in the Sigerson Cup. He was not too much into corporal punishment. He used to say that if we thought this school was tough, try the one run by the priests in Mullingar. Mind you, infrequently, he would give you a clip around the ear. At home in Mullingar, he watched an American brainless TV series called 'the Fugitive'. After each episode, he would spend most of the Irish class talking about it. We encouraged him. I never really worked out what his goal was at our school. Interestingly, when we used to go walking in long lines along the road, crocodile style, you used to have to ask him in Irish if you wanted to do something. So in that way he did extend the Irish in the school a little bit.

There were two reasons why the particular subjects taught at the school were chosen. One group of subjects were those required by the Irish Department of Education. Those in the other group were dictated by the availability of teachers. Latin was in this second group. It was always easy to find Latin teachers because of the dominance of the RC Church in Ireland.

We had four years of secondary school leading up to the State's Intermediate Certificate examination. In first year we were taught science by Mr Duggan, who was an RC and generally a nice bloke, yet he could send you to the warden for re-education. He went on to be a priest. For the next two years we were taught by a Protestant clergyman called Canon Gift from a parish somewhere around Kilbeggin or Tyrrellspass. He also used to send kids to the warden for re-education.

In year four, we had another science teacher, Mr Bingham, a botanist from Northern Ireland. The old laboratory was out of the ark. It contained all of the old classical furnishings with brass equipment. Mr Bingham used to like bringing boys out to look at the plants and flowers. He was a bit eccentric and used to occasionally have a drop of port

wine in his room. We used to knock it off. He was a nice man, harmless but memorable.

I remember being taught English by Nobby. The first book we read with him was *A Christmas Carol* by Dickens. The following year we were taught English by an RC bloke called Declan Timony ('Deck'). He was a great supporter of the GAA. He used to play rugby with us. He had his Gaelic football way of going up for the ball and I had my rugby way of doing it. I recall one day I smacked him on the face when we both went up for the ball together. I knocked out a few of his fillings. It was only later I realized what happened when he drew it to my attention. What bothered Deck most was that I might have done it intentionally, as he never liked the kids putting one over him.

I also remember that Deck had a habit of using the 'f' word in class. It was easy to wind him up in order to get him to use it more. He used to drive a little Austin A30 and he had a girlfriend called Mary. In those days, sex to unmarried RCs was not meant to be on until after marriage. Then it was on for young and old. He used to write letters to Mary and post them at the school gate. We used to wind him when we saw him dropping them in the post box. He would lose it and gave us a hiding with lots of 'fs' being used for good measure, along with words relating to our parentage.

Strangely enough, I think the RC teachers identified more with our despair than did the Protestant teachers. When Deck came to the school, he saw that the kids had nothing much to do outside of class time. He persuaded the old warden to purchase basketball equipment and nets, which he set up in the big locker room. Another RC teacher, Frank Canavan, used to teach Latin and Latin history. He wore a Caesar haircut and had a patch of white hair at 23 years of age. He also wore winkle pickers (pointy toe shoes), which were frowned upon by the warden. He had a record player and used to play records to us when the warden was not around; one that stands out is 'Big Bad John'. He saw that we had hardly any learning resources so he went into the county library in Mullingar and got permission for the school to borrow 200 to 300 books. This was good because the existing stock of books, like the laboratory, were museum pieces. As an indication of Frank's broad-mindedness, he used to attend school chapel with us when he was on duty. Later he became headmaster at a Catholic school in Galway.

Speaking about books, Nobby sometimes used to leave his in the classroom. I used to take them, parcel them up and send them to a friend in Dublin. He used to sell them to a book buyer in Dawson Street and we would split the proceeds. Postage was quite expensive so I ran a

small racket. I used to collect postage stamps from the boys when they got mail, remove the stamps from the envelopes and pair up identical stamps with post marks on opposite ends to each other. Using a magnifying glass and a razor blade, I then overlapped them and stuck the two unfranked pieces to an envelope. I was never short of newly stamped envelopes and the post office in Multyfarnham never copped on. However, all good things come to an end. Because postage was free to me, I had pen pals around the world. One was called Carolyn Cohen from Wisconsin, USA. Her friend was a stamp collector and she wrote to me asking why Irish stamps came off envelopes in bits and pieces. I never replied.

Overall, we had more RC than Protestant teachers. This has to be seen in light of how hard it was to recruit teachers for the school. A local unemployed person had been in the Jesuits in South Africa studying for a PhD. I think he either failed or had issues and came back to Ireland to live on the family farm near the school. These days we would describe him as a very introverted, distant and self-consumed person. Yet he stood out as he wore the bright coloured safari clothes he had in South Africa. He used to mutter to himself most of the time, which drew amusement from the kids. He taught English and Latin. He had no teaching qualifications and was offered five pounds per week and full board. He was pleased to take up the job as there was no alternative around his home.

Life outside of the classroom was supervised largely by prefects. The warden left most of the overseeing of the students to them. A lot of them were violent and there was a lot of coercion and blackmail. If they saw anything untoward like running in the building, they would address it in one of three ways: by giving you a hard clout around the face, reporting you to a teacher or, worst of all, sending you to the warden. You could have a lot of time to worry about going to the warden because he was only available to administer corporal punishment after church on a weekday morning, or at 11.00 am break any weekday. Waiting through the weekend was the worst. Also, giving an explanation for your behaviour to a prefect, a teacher or the warden was of no avail. It was considered to be giving cheek and the punishment could be increased.

We slept in four different dormitories. The one to which you were allocated depended on what class you were in. The number of beds in each ranged from about 10 to 30. Each boy had his own locker. There were no curtains on the windows and no coverings on the wooden floors. I can't remember having heating in the dormitories, although there may have been a few radiators. We were not separated from each other in any way

so there was no privacy. Talking in bed at night was not allowed. The prefects would hit you with wooden coat hangers if they caught you having a chat. I will never forget it. I would love to have engaged with some of them later when I played adult rugby.

Each of us was given three blankets. If you wanted more you had to bring a rug from home. Every week you changed the bottom sheet on your bed. That sheet got washed and the top sheet became the bottom sheet for the following week. Then you got a laundered sheet to go on top. Underpants, shirts, vests and socks also got washed on 'laundry day'. To that end, you brought the clothes down to the basement to a gaol-like room where there was a strong smell of stored potatoes that I can still remember. The socks, underpants, sheets and pillow cases were separated there and it all went to Cavan for laundering. All personal items had the owner's name on them. If the name was not clear or fell off, you got another clout around the ear from the prefects.

There was no fraternizing whatsoever with girls, as there were none around the school, apart from a few young domestics. Also, your parents could only come and visit you once a month. If you missed that, which was often the case because of distance, you could go home on one of the infrequent long weekends. Otherwise you could be at the school for up to three months and never see any family, although that was rare. Initially, the journey home was easy because the Multyfarnham Railway Station was located alongside the school grounds. After my first two years, however, the station was closed and we had to catch a public bus, which took an eternity to reach Dublin.

The first thing we did after breakfast every morning was to go into the chapel for a morning service of 15-minutes duration. It was not clear what that was meant to do for us when we lived in fear. Maybe it was another control ploy to keep us all together. In the evening, at 8.30 pm, we had night prayers, again for 15 minutes, and this time in the first-form schoolroom. We all crowded into it. I couldn't say we got very motivated by it at all, but it was a break from the homework. Occasionally, the warden would hold a public display of corporal punishment immediately after prayers. After prayers, you could go to the toilet. One senior boy used to use the opportunity to take advantage of kids.

On Sunday morning after our school church service, we walked to the local parish church. It was about 1.5 miles away. The building was cold and damp, even worse than the school. The clergyman, whose name was Tobias, and nicknamed Toby, had a limp. He was a nice enough fellow. I think he may have been from Dublin. He was the clergyman for three parishes, as the number of Protestants in rural Ireland was dropping off

rapidly. For some reason or other, the warden did not like him. I suspect that was an inadvertent compliment to Toby.

When we came back to the school from Sunday service, we always had a cold meal, winter or summer. That helped the domestic staff as they could prepare it on Saturday. It usually meant cold jelly for desert, even in the middle of winter. Then, in the evenings, we had seven o'clock service. I liked that because I liked the evening hymns. But again, I remember the whole experience as having been emotionally cold; pure Protestant duty and obligation. And of course there were no crucifixes on the walls to distract you. That would have been blasphemous. Nor were there candles, holy pictures or water either. The basic Protestant theology underlying this situation was, 'Thou shalt not make thyself a graven image.' You had to teach yourself to never try and depict what Christ looked like. It was all rules with little compassion.

We also studied for the Church of Ireland religious instruction examination. It was on scripture and it was taught by Nobby, who had a good North of Ireland accent. The students used to get a huge number of Church prizes in the examinations because Nobby was totally dedicated, while the kids also cheated. We learned much of the stuff by rote. It never dawned on the prefects, teachers and the warden that Jesus never used a stick, a coat hanger, blackmail and coercion, and he did not beat the 12 apostles. If all of the other teachers had been as committed as Nobby, we would all have Nobel Prizes by now. With the advantage of hindsight, and now knowing more about the 12 tribes of Israel, Middle Eastern and Roman Empire culture, the spread of Christianity via the European Empire builders, misogyny, virginity, evolution, psychology and man's neurotic need to dominate, I have come to the conclusion that the scriptures were written by males to serve the purposes of males, and to give them authority, while claiming that their actions were the Creator's will. Also, there was no sex education whatsoever during religious education or at any other time.

The only unstructured time available to us during the week was between 8 pm and 9 pm on a Sunday after evening chapel. All sorts of things happened then, including one senior boy harassing the form-one kids for 'relief'. The latter was sinister because it involved blackmail, bullying and a huge age difference. The relationship was pure exploitation. I lived in fear of this guy. Later he tried to interfere with me in a dorm at the beginning of a long weekend when most of the students had gone home. He was raging that he could not succeed. We also heard that he used to pressure the female domestic staff for 'favours'. I think he had some success in that area. He was later expelled from the school after

being caught out of the dorm at night at a dance in Mullingar. Interestingly, some of these senior turkeys were so misguided that they went on to study divinity, although most of them could not cut the mustard.

Regarding sport, the warden appeared to dislike competition for some reason. Maybe he was afraid of injuries and calls for financial compensation. Nevertheless, we did play rugby between ourselves most afternoons for much of the school year. Because the school population was small, juniors often played with seniors. So the younger fellows had to become smart quite quickly. The pitch was a cow paddock so you had to be careful where you got tackled. It was located next to an old cricket pitch and pavilion, a remnant of better times. Occasionally in the winter, if it was raining badly, we would remain in the school buildings. However, if the rain was intermittent, the teacher might walk about 70 of us to Multyfarnham in crocodile formation, taking in a three-mile round trip.

Every year we used to play a few rugby matches against other schools: Sligo Grammar, King's Hospital and Mountjoy, all 'good Protestant schools'. We found the visits to Sligo Grammar very enjoyable as it was a fairly progressive place, was co-educational and the kids were very interesting. The standard of their rugby team, being poor, was about the same as ours. When we played Mountjoy and King's Hospital, we played against 'second' teams. I think we played the matches just before and shortly after Christmas. They were the only contact we had with other schools throughout the year. Nevertheless, we had some interesting experiences. One year when we went up to Sligo Grammar, many of the kids got drunk on the train. It became a huge issue at the school. On another occasion, some kids missed the train back from Sligo and had to stay there overnight. While we also played cricket at school, we never played against other schools. The crease was cut and rolled every May and all cow shit removed.

At the end of 1963, the warden retired. At this time, boys were being caught at dances in Mullingar and then expelled. However, to be fair to the warden, he did let them sit their State examinations at the school. In 1964, a new, much younger warden took over. He had gone through Oxford University. He was a highly qualified clergyman and his wife had a doctorate, so they covered most bases in a poor school.

In 1966 I had to leave the school. The trouble started for me after I had done well in the Intermediate Certificate examination in 1965. I studied hard that year. I was also selected to play rugby for the Connacht schools. The rumour went around the school that one day I would play for Ireland. It originated during a schoolboy rugby programme, which the Wanderers' Football Club in Dublin ran for teenagers in

the Christmas holidays. I knew it was rubbish, as I simply was not big enough for the position in which I played. On the strength of the rumour, however, the new warden made me a school prefect. I needed that like a hole in the head. The warden said to me: 'You have to be a prefect, because the boys look up to you.' I told him I was not interested. After that, our relationship deteriorated. Also, I was confronted every day with trying to discipline boys. I felt totally outside of my comfort zone. I did not believe in coercion and corporal punishment, so the kids knew they had me over a barrel.

One day during a maths period, I was sitting alongside another guy, Edgar O'Neill, who used to listen to the radio most of the time in class. That day he had a box of pencils in which he had a dart. He said to me: 'Hey, Talbot, throw the dart up at the blackboard.' There were only about six kids in the class, which consisted of forms five and six combined. When I told him to get lost, he said, 'You're funky.' In Wilson's Hospital School, nobody ever took that lying down. So I threw the dart up at the board and carried on with my work.

The teacher wasn't alongside the board, he wasn't threatened and he actually did not see the dart hitting the target. However, later on when he saw it he went to the warden. The class members were then spoken to by the warden, who made a great point of saying how much he would respect people if they owned up. Only Edgar and I knew what happened. If I did not own up, only we would ever know. Just to test the warden, I owned up after a few days, but did not 'dob in' Edgar. The warden then said to me: 'I'm going to stop you playing interprovincial rugby.' I felt devastated given what had already been said to everybody about the importance of being honest. By now I had played against Leinster and Munster. I got really depressed and could not study. I told him I was going to leave the place. 'Where would you go', he said. 'I might go off to the RAF', I replied. He then decided to write to my parents. When they subsequently spoke to me they said: 'Well, basically he's given you an option. He's saying you knuckle down, do it his way or leave.' It was all bluff and blackmail, but I came from Chelmsford Avenue and I did not lie down. I was also aware that the school was not able to offer me the subjects I needed to get into Trinity College Dublin and that it would therefore be to my advantage to get out of the place and go to a more progressive school. In response, the warden assured my parents that he could teach me all of the subjects that I needed to go to Trinity, but that was nonsense. My parents were concerned. They did not know who to believe, but they could see the logic of my argument. That dart saved my education and I left the school: 'Thank you, Edgar.'

In 1966, I was enrolled at Wesley College, which was then on St Stephen's Green in Dublin. I chose Wesley because there were girls there. I got back to playing rugby competitively. I played provincial rugby again. I also did a little bit of competitive running. The teachers seemed to like me because I was a 'trier'; sometimes people feel less threatened by triers than by smart dudes.

Wesley is a Methodist foundation, but it catered for all denominations, including Anglicans, Presbyterians, Jews and others. About 50 per cent of the students were boarders. I lived at home and cycled to school every day. The standard was higher than at Wilson's Hospital and I struggled a bit in Wesley to catch up. Yet, in the end, I was probably one of only ten pupils who went to university from about 80. The teaching of Irish was good, which was just as well, as my standard in the language was poor; I got 41 per cent in the Intermediate Certificate examination and 40 per cent in the Leaving Certificate examination. The latter met the language requirement for admittance to Trinity. It frightens me now to think that one mark less could have meant I would have lived a very different life. That was the case for so many young Irish RCs who subsequently succeeded around the world. Ironically, it was the government which failed the people in its coercion to make people speak Irish.

Mr Ryan, one of my teachers at Wesley who was from the Protestant tradition, insisted that we should all be familiar with the names of those executed by the British Empire after the Easter Rising of 1916. I fully supported that. He later became Headmaster of Sandford Park School and later again at the Boys' Masonic School in Clonskeagh. He clearly affiliated himself with the republican tradition. I also remember that one of our teachers who taught Irish, an RC, paid undue attention to some of the girls. These days he would be given the push. One day he called me a scut because my hair was too long. Actually it bothered him that I was friendly with the girls he befriended.

There was no sex education at the school. In fact there had never been any sex education anywhere in my school-going years. However, religion was taught at Wesley and it was nice to have girls in class; I have always been partial to girls. My first decent sexual experience was with a lovely girl at the school. She was more mature than me and eventually ditched me. Nevertheless, she was a lovely soul.

The boarding girls resided in Burlington House, on Winton Road off Appian Way, where the Fitzwilliam Tennis Club now stands. Younger male boarders boarded in Upper Leeson Street where the Burlington Hotel is now situated. The older boys boarded at Luford in Dundrum. All students, both boarders and day students, started off the day with

a church service in the main school. It was taken by the headmaster, a Methodist clergyman, Mr Myles, who was reasonably broad-minded. He didn't hammer away Methodism. He also used to teach us religion, get us to recite long verses from the Bible and then require us to memorize them at home. That was difficult for me as I was never good at memorizing stuff.

After we completed the Leaving Certificate examination, we had to stay on at school for a week. During the examination period I had grown a beard. When I came back to the school, the deputy principal, known as 'the enforcer', told me that I had had no permission to grow it and that I should shave it off. By now I was 19½years of age and took no notice of such a puerile order. Overall, however, I have to say that my 18 months at Wesley College was one of the happiest periods in my life. Notwithstanding I would never want to repeat again the majority of my schooldays. They were the worst days of my life.

Dundalk Grammar School: The memories of Gwen Roe

I went to primary school to St Nicholas' Church of Ireland School in Dundalk. It was a two-teacher school and the teachers were members of the Church of Ireland. They engaged in multi-grade teaching. The 'master', or school principal, taught those in the higher grades in one room and the little ones were always taught by a female teacher. I believe we got a very good primary school education. I had a sort of love–hate relationship with the master as I liked to challenge him. At one level he didn't like that, but at the same time, he didn't seem to mind that I was the questioning type.

The school had a small room into which the girls went on certain afternoons to learn to knit and to sew. Sometimes the teacher made sure that older girls helped the little ones. It was all very pleasant. Nevertheless, there was corporal punishment and I often got slapped with a bamboo cane for talking. That was one of the things on which I challenged the master, especially when pupils were punished for not being able to do their schoolwork. I felt that that was unjust.

All of the pupils in the school were members of the Church of Ireland. The Presbyterian Church had a school of its own in the town, so the Presbyterians went there. Having said that, my friend who lived almost next door to our school and who was Presbyterian went to school with me, but that was an exception. The religious education was conducted by the teachers and we had to do an examination called 'the higher voluntary examination'. This was an examination on the Old Testament

and the New Testament. It was set by the Church authorities. There were prizes for those who excelled in it. On one occasion, a newly arrived clergyman started to visit the school unannounced and bring us down to the local church for extra tuition. I have a sense that the master was not too pleased about this moving-in on his religious instruction role.

I moved on to Dundalk Grammar School for my secondary school education. I entered first year with about 24 others. Quite a number of them had come from Northern Ireland as boarders. Most of them had failed the 11-plus examination and this was now the only way they could obtain a grammar school-type education. They had the difficulty of learning Irish from scratch and they were not helped by the fact that our Irish-language teachers were not great teachers. Usually they were much better at their other subjects, which might be science. I think that when the headmaster was employing teachers of other subjects, he tried to make sure that they were graduates of UCG, because at that time all degree work there was conducted through Irish. In that way, he hoped to also be getting teachers of Irish. So, when they arrived at the school they often found they had to teach Irish to some classes as well as teach their main subject specialism. The problem was that while they might have been very fluent in the language, they were not necessarily good language teachers. It was a terrible shame because people like myself who were very good at Irish lost out. I loved learning the language in primary school. There we were totally involved in speaking and in writing essays in Irish. And I loved using the old Gaelic script. It was beautiful.

Science, on the other hand, was very well taught in our secondary school. In the early years we did botany, chemistry and physics. And we had a lovely lab which was regularly used. I remember using the gas burners and the other apparatus, and enjoying using them. We wrote up all of our experiments in our special science notebooks. We didn't have science textbooks. Really what we did was create our own from notes dictated by the teacher.

I would have loved to have continued studying science subjects after completing the Intermediate Certificate, but the school did not offer them. The only option was to go to one of the local Catholic schools for special tuition and my parents would have been very much against that. We were an extremely Protestant family and there was a huge divide between the Catholic and Protestant communities. When I was attending the primary school, which was fairly near our own home, the kids going to the convent school would be shouting: 'Proddy, Proddy, quack, quack, quack, go to the Devil and don't come back.'

I broke ranks somewhat when I was 16. I like playing tennis and there was a tennis club in the rectory. I went there for a good while, but to progress, you had to go down to what was known as the Ramparts Tennis Club. My parents were very much against that. The fear, I guess, was that because you would be mixing with Catholics, you might end up marrying one of them. However, I made it clear that my motivation was just to play tennis at a higher level, and I went ahead and joined the club. The attitude, of course, also has to be seen in the light of how close Dundalk is to the border with Northern Ireland and to the town of Newry where the ratio of Protestants to Catholics, at 60:40, was much closer than in Dundalk. There was a fear of a growing Catholicism numerically nearby and a related threat to the strength of Protestantism. At the same time, we were very conscious that we were Irish. We were committed to Ireland and most definitely not pro-British.

The school was fee-paying. It was also co-educational. It started out as an all-boys' school. That's why we had no facilities geared towards the education of women in areas like home economics. Like the boys, we did Latin, drawing and science. The provision of additional facilities for other subjects would have been very difficult as the total pupil population at that time was only about 60. The school building was actually a large house. The headmaster lived in it. He entered it through the front door. He had a sitting room and a study on the ground floor, where the classrooms were and, I presume, he had bedrooms upstairs. His wife was a very kindly woman. She was wonderful to the boarders, both boys and girls, who also lived upstairs. They had separate dormitories and their own bathroom. The boys were just regarded as an awful nuisance. Because we had grown up with them, they were like brothers to us. There was no such thing as having boyfriends while at school.

The good teachers, as far as I was concerned, were those who set work and then examined it the next day. If it was written work, it was corrected and given back to you with helpful comments written on it. Good teachers also made you go back and re-do what you had already done incorrectly. The formal teaching of religion was done by the regular classroom subject teachers. It was taught from nine through to half-nine every morning. We had quite a lot of Presbyterian pupils and they distinguished between themselves in terms of whether they were First Presbyterians or Second Presbyterians. I never really knew what that meant. During the religious instruction period, they received their instruction from a Presbyterian teacher in the school who taught geography and maths. We somehow became aware that they had received a fantastic grounding in the catechism at home in their own church

areas; they had learned it off by heart. We were taught religion by Miss Rayburn, who also taught English and French. She was a very good teacher. We did an examination each year that was set by the Church of Ireland Synod. We had to know huge chunks of the Old Testament and the New Testament and material from a book known as 'the grey cover' that dealt with lots of Church teaching.

I wore a school uniform which my mother made for me. Ireland was very poor at that time. The money was terribly tight and my mother was a good seamstress; she made all of our clothes. The uniform was a navy blue gym slip with a blue and a white blouse. We also wore a blazer. Again, my mother made mine. The boys were supposed to wear grey pants and I think a grey shirt and a school tie. The school tie was important but the kids coming in from the country often had it hidden under the mountains of clothes they wore just to try to stay warm.

Some of those who started in first year were termed 'the train people'. They came to school daily from as far away as County Monaghan and from lots of little towns between there and Dundalk. A good number of them were Presbyterians. After a while they pulled out and remained at home working on their farms. Others cycled from closer by. After cycling six miles in the wintertime, many of them arrived with their hands swollen from the cold. The boys often had chilblains on their ears because they all had very short hairstyles at that time.

I did music as an additional subject for two years. It cost something like 15 shillings a term. I didn't particularly like it. It was my mother's idea. She had in mind that I might become a primary schoolteacher and that it would be helpful for that. There was also a notion that I might end up playing the organ in a church somewhere. We did play sport, but it was not a huge thing. We had one tennis court which was badly kept. It was a grass court. The boys used to cut it with an old push mower and we used to mark it with an old lime lining machine. It was often cut up but it was nice. We also had a hockey field. It had a slope on it and the grass was kept down by two horses grazing on it. Often we had to remove the horse poop before we started playing. We rarely played any inter-schools' competitions, apart from playing against nearby Drogheda Grammar School. Because the boys did not play rugby, there was no mixing with the more elite Catholic schools, unlike the situation with larger Protestant schools.

We all had some involvement in the maintenance of the school. The building was heated from enclosed stoves that burned coke. This was the waste product of a gas works in the town. It was very hard to light, so pupils who arrived at school early in the morning were instructed that

that would be one of their jobs. Some were good at the job and some were not. But when they got it going properly, it was really very hot. That was just as well as it was the only heating we had in the school, apart from that from a few stoves in some of the classrooms. We also had to dust and clean the classrooms. Also, it was a big offence if you left a bit of a sandwich or the butt of an apple hanging around. You learned very early on that you had to clean up after yourself.

As I progressed through the school, many of the students dropped out. Quite a few students got jobs after successfully completing the Intermediate Certificate examination. Some of those who were good at maths received some additional tuition and then went on to study accountancy while being apprenticed to an accountancy firm. The headmaster also was very good at helping people to get jobs. He knew everybody in the town. He had lots of contacts. He would come into the classroom, point at somebody and say: 'I want to talk to you sonny.' He would then speak to the individual in question, indicating that he should do an examination to work in a bank, or take up a position he had heard about that was available in an office.

I, like my brother, had a scholarship and our fees were five pounds per term. The six of us in my class did the Intermediate Certificate examination and then five stayed on in the school to study for the Trinity College Dublin Matriculation examination. We were not assigned any teachers as the school only offered formal tuition up to Intermediate Certificate level. This was probably because the small numbers attending the school made any other possibility financially unviable. Anyone who wanted to progress to Leaving Certificate level had to enrol as a boarder in a Dublin school.

The school did not get any financial assistance from the State for me during the additional year in which I stayed on. Accordingly, I helped out with the teaching of the first-year students and sat with the boarders in the evenings, supervising their study periods. I was successful in the Matriculation examination. As a result, I then went on and studied for my degree at Trinity, graduating after the normal enrolment period of four years. My degree subjects were English, French, geography and psychology. I had been keen on being a primary schoolteacher but I did not do well enough in Irish to get a place at Coláiste Móibhí, the Church of Ireland preparatory college, which would have led on to admittance to the Church of Ireland Teacher Training College.

Much of the work I did in preparing for the Matriculation examination was on my own, but I received some help from the teachers. Miss Raeburn was most helpful. Another teacher helped me with maths and

geography. My mother also encouraged me greatly at this time. She was very keen on education. My father was not quite as keen. I suspect he thought attendance at university would not be very wise since I would end up getting married and being a housewife. I became aware of the fact that I could do the Trinity College Matriculation examination because of people in the school who had studied for it themselves. These were young men of about 20 years of age. Each had the title of 'junior assistant master'. They were enrolled in the theological college at Trinity College. They did some first-year teaching and took the boarders for games and walks, and to services of their respective churches. They were enrolled in Trinity as external students and travelled there three times a year to take their examinations in theology.

The High School, Dublin: The memories of Brian Dungan

I was born in Wexford, but I only spent the first year and a half of my life there. We then moved to Dublin for four years. After that we moved again, this time to a rural place in County Wicklow. We spent six years there before we returned to Dublin once again. The reason for the moving was that my father was a Church of Ireland clergyman and he worked in various parishes.

During all of my primary school years I attended Church of Ireland primary schools. The logistics of attending the High School for secondary school education were easy as my home was located only about a mile from it. At the time I commenced, I believe there were about 300 in attendance. It was a single-sex school. There was also a primary school attached and I attended it before transferring to the senior, or secondary, school.

The High School in my view was very much a Protestant school in a broad sense, rather than strictly being a Church of Ireland school. I say that because we also had Presbyterians in attendance, along with a small number of Methodists. We also had some Jewish pupils. I was quite conscious of them because they didn't come in with us for prayers in the morning. After a while I also got to realize that they had distinctive Jewish names.

When I attended the High School it was located in Harcourt Street, pretty much in the centre of Dublin. Later on, the school was moved out to Zion in Rathgar. That was where the school's sports' grounds were when I was in attendance. We had a basic school uniform. It consisted of a jacket, a hat, grey trousers and a shirt and a tie. We were regularly inspected to make sure we wore it, and if we didn't, we were punished.

Corporal punishment was officially administered by the headmaster. You could receive six of the best if you consistently broke a particular rule. I never received it and I also have to say that corporal punishment was not the norm. Some of the teachers might occasionally give you a clip across the ear. In general, however, they didn't beat people up. The most common form of punishment was detention, which you got for misbehaving. It usually meant that you had to stay back in school after 3.00 pm for an hour. You could also be required to stay behind for doing poor homework. This was called 'imposition'. The distinction was brought out in your annual report, which documented the number of times you received detention and the number of times you received an imposition.

I do not remember the religious ethos of the school as having been overpowering. But, of course, we did have religious instruction, including scripture classes for the first three years. Also, at the beginning of each school day, there was always a Bible reading and prayers. This was six days a week as we went to school for a half day on Saturday mornings. I do not remember saying any prayers during the day, but we did study for the Synod examination in religious knowledge.

I remember studying Irish, English and maths in the early years of secondary school. I managed okay at Irish, but did not do as well in it as I had done in primary school in County Wicklow. That was a one-teacher school with about six to 12 pupils. We had the advantage of being taught not only by the teacher but also, when we were young, by the older pupils.

Irish as a school subject was not high on my list of priorities in secondary school. I think I learned by rote a lot of what was necessary. I know that for my Leaving Certificate examination I learned off three or four different essays in the hope that we would be asked to write one of them in the examination. Also, since I realized that my memory was not great and I couldn't remember all of the poems on the course, I zeroed in on a few of them in the hope that they would be the one's on which we would be examined.

The Irish language was certainly encouraged in the school but like in many other schools, I don't think the majority of pupils saw it as important. That is not to say that we had an anti-Irish outlook. Certainly as a result of the history we learned, we left school thinking we were republicans. We picked up a view that over the course of history, the English had been bad in their relations with the Irish, who were good.

Maths was one of my better subjects. It was divided into geometry, algebra and arithmetic, with trigonometry coming later, in our senior

years. In the junior years we also did English, Irish, geography, history, Latin and science. Up to Intermediate Certificate level we studied a general science programme. I then studied physics and chemistry for the Leaving Certificate examination. Biology was not taught formally as a subject, but I remember that some of the younger trainee teachers who used to come to the school taught a little of it as they had studied it at university.

I knew that I needed to study science to realize my plan regarding what I was going to do when I left school, but I wasn't overly good at it. We studied it both as a theoretical and a practical subject. I do not know what other schools were like, but I believe we had good laboratories. Also, we had some teaching from university lecturers at Trinity College. Similarly, in maths, our teacher taught the subject to engineering students in Trinity. If you wanted to do honours' maths in the school, you had to work hard. If you didn't want to put in the effort, you were sent to the pass maths class straight away. It wasn't a matter of: 'I don't like you, you're out.' It was kind of: 'You're not willing to put in the work so there is no point in being here.' If you did the work, the teacher would persevere with you forever to make sure you got good results. The teacher in question was a full-time lecturer at Trinity and he only taught the honours' maths group in sixth class. This was not an experimental thing as he had been doing it for quite a number of years. I think he must have done it because he enjoyed it. The school, presumably, also enjoyed having him, especially since his students got really good examination results.

I also studied French. I passed it in the Leaving Certificate examination, but I was not very interested in it. Like Irish, it wasn't taught as a spoken language. After I left school I went to Belgium for one summer and worked on a couple of farms where they only spoke French. When I came back to Ireland I began to think that if I had had that experience before I had done the Leaving Certificate examination I would have got a much better result.

We had hardly any sex education in school. Indeed, all I remember on that is one or two people external to the school being brought in to give us a very occasional lecture. We did, however, spend some time in the junior years studying a number of cultural subjects. While there was no teaching of woodwork and metalwork, I remember doing some basketwork. In fact, I remember making a few Christmas presents, including trays, for people. We also did music. Every year we performed a Gilbert-and-Sullivan piece. I also remember that we once performed a play in Irish and President de Valera's wife came along as a guest.

I don't think I had a huge academic aptitude in school, but I was motivated enough to work hard and grind out good results in my examinations. From an early age I had developed a great interest in farming. My family did not have land, nor did they have the money to buy it. As a result, I knew that the only way I could get close to farming was by studying agriculture in university. I actually got farming in my blood from about the age of six or seven. When my father was a rector in a rural part of County Wicklow I used to go down to the neighbours' farms and I fell in love with the lifestyle. I couldn't be hauled away from it. And it just stayed with me. My parents recognized my great interest and encouraged me to pursue it.

So that is what motivated me in my studies throughout my secondary schooling. I knew that I would need honours in at least two subjects in the Leaving Certificate examination to be offered a place to study agricultural science at Trinity. To make sure I still liked the practical side of things, I also spent a summer at an agricultural college in Gurteen in County Tipperary while still at secondary school. There I found I was still on the correct path career-wise. I also spent a year there after leaving school and before starting my studies at Trinity.

While there was no career guidance teacher in the school, we did receive formal guidance and I remember doing sets of aptitude tests. I also know that in my senior school years it was known that I wanted to be involved in agriculture in some form or other, and that because of that I was given time off school to attend a number of local farming championship events. Also I know I never had a thought that I might not end up in agriculture. The attitude at home and in school was that in order for me to achieve my ambition, I would have to obtain a degree in agricultural science.

The school also promoted sport. The principal sports were rugby and cricket. A boxing tournament was held every year, and some also played badminton. We had PE with a sergeant major every week. It was actually drill and it took place in what we called the school gymnasium, but we had no special equipment. Basically it was a large assembly hall. Some of the exercises we did were similar to those I recently learned in Pilates classes.

Rugby was compulsory. You had to play, whether you were good, bad or average; I don't think there was the same compulsion with regard to cricket. We used to play in the Leinster Cup. That meant playing rugby not only against other Protestant schools, but also against such RC schools as Blackrock and Belvedere. At the same time, I don't think the competitive element was over-emphasized in the school. This may have

been because in my time, the headmaster was not really of the sporty type. The competitive games were played on Wednesday afternoons and on Saturdays. That was the Leinster way. For training, I had to cycle three miles to Zion.

Playing inter-schools' rugby also revealed to me that there was a certain notion of social stratification amongst those who attended Protestant schools. I once remember we played St Columba's and they were making fun of us, calling us 'The school around the corner.' This was a play on the radio program hosted by Paddy Crosby which regularly featured primary school pupils talking with broad Dublin accents. Clearly, the St Columba's boys considered themselves socially superior to us. We, however, certainly did not see any differences between them, ourselves and those who attended the two Protestant schools close to us, namely, St Andrews and Wesley College.

I know I also took part in athletics and cross country in school. I had an aptitude for running and enjoyed it. I trained on my own. For the boxing tournament every year a ring was brought into the big hall in the school. We also had the bell at the side of the ring. It was an in-house tournament and taking part was completely voluntary. It was overseen by the guy who took us for PE, but I don't think there was a lot of training. I only took part on one occasion, but I remember the experience as having been exhausting. We had an international referee from a local boxing club and everyone was encouraged to come along. Usually the hall was packed for the event.

There were one or two guys who were talented at soccer and I think they might have quietly taken time out of school to play the game. Gaelic football and hurling were not on our radar at all, especially since we didn't have television at the time. However, I do remember an uncle of mine coming over from England when I was 16 or 17, and we going off to see an All-Ireland final in Croke Park. It really would have been seen as breaking the Sabbath if it was known that we did it, so when we came back, we didn't say a word about it at home. Also, I probably had a little more familiarity with Gaelic games than did my peers because when I lived in the country, in County Wicklow, I mixed with the local farm workers, who were RCs, and I remember some of them talking about going up to Croke Park for the games. In that way I became conscious of the All-Ireland championships in Gaelic games at an early age.

There were no formal connections with girls' schools. Of the Protestant girls' schools, Alexandra College was less than a quarter of a mile away from the High School and the Diocesan School was only around

the corner from there. When I was in the senior classes it was quite a novelty when one girl came up from Alex to do science with us. She was the only one who did so at that stage. We had no formal social events between the boys' and the girls' schools. The mixing took place at the parish level, including at parish dances. Some boys used to cheer on the girls' teams when they were playing hockey. Usually they knew the members of the teams through family connections.

We had little or no contact with RC girls. That is not surprising since the situation was that RCs wanted to marry RCs and Protestants wanted to marry Protestants. And Protestants were very conscious that the RC Church required that children of a mixed marriage be brought up as RCs and that a marrying couple had to sign a declaration to that effect. The fear that Protestants had was that they would be bred out of existence. Now, having said that, my father, in his capacity as a Church of Ireland rector, was quite ecumenical in Dublin. He used to meet up with members of RC communities quite a lot. Ecumenism is something about which he was very enthusiastic. Also he was the first Church of Ireland chaplain to have been appointed at University College Dublin, which was located in his parish.

Because there were no boarders in the school, we had no formal study periods. We went home each afternoon at three o'clock. I also don't think we were disadvantaged as we were taught very well during our regular school periods. Also, we did not have a school library. Again, this was not a drawback as we bought all of our textbooks and used the public libraries when necessary.

I never considered that I would attend any university other than Trinity. It was seen essentially as being a university for Protestants and we had a family tradition of attendance. My father, an aunt and some of my uncles had gone there. I enrolled in an agricultural science degree. The first two years consisted of general science. Then, because of an arrangement between the universities, I spent the second two years at University College Dublin. That was when we did the applied side of the degree.

9

Secondary School Education in Various Other Secondary Schools in Ireland, 1922–1962

The first account of memories of secondary schooling outlined in this chapter is that of Edward Lynch, who attended St Patrick's Classical School in Navan, County Meath. This was a school run by diocesan priests which was not a diocesan college. The background to St Patrick's Classical School is outlined in Edward Lynch's memories of schooling below. However, before presenting them, it is necessary at this point to outline the background to the other three categories of schools. This background relates to the second account, by Don Herron, who attended a Catholic juniorate run by the Irish Christian Brothers, to John Coolahan's account of his memories of attending a Catholic lay secondary school run by Miss Jane Agnes McKenna at Tarbert, County Kerry, and to Michael O'Shea's memories of attending a preparatory college, which are then related.

Catholic juniorates

Juniorates were special secondary schools run by individual religious orders which enrolled those who declared an interest in entering religious life with them. In some ways they were not very different from ordinary Catholic boarding schools, although usually the teachers were specially selected both for what was seen as their excellent teaching abilities and for their own fervent commitment to the religious way of life and to the religious order to which they belonged.

Some students who decided to enter a juniorate did so as young as 14 years of age. Depending on prior education, others entered an appropriate grade at a later stage and usually remained until they completed their secondary schooling. While parents were sometimes asked to make a contribution to the cost of their children's education in these boarding

schools, most of the costs involved were met by the religious orders who ran them.

Juniorates had a somewhat greater emphasis on discipline and on saturating all aspects of life with a religious ethos than was the case in ordinary Catholic schools. The daily pattern of life during the school week was highly organized, with most time being spent on classes, study and prayer, while some time was also spent on recreation, usually sport. Weekends were also highly organized, with timetabled study periods, games' periods, long walks and time for doing various chores, including washing clothes and polishing shoes. As was the case during the weekdays, an emphasis on prayer was maintained, with large proportions of time being taken up with Mass in the morning, the Rosary in the afternoon and religious ceremonies, including Benediction, in the chapel at night.

In the juniorate, students got some introduction to the history and traditions of the religious orders with which they were associated. Also, while those in juniorates run by teaching orders did not engage in teaching practice, their minds were regularly oriented towards the notion of teaching as a vocation and as 'a calling from God'. In some juniorates, students were immediately introduced to the 'great silence' required of the fully-fledged members of the religious orders; from the end of each evening meal until immediately after breakfast next morning, all maintained complete silence. To break it, other than in circumstances of absolute necessity, was a very grave fault.

Students in juniorates were regularly reminded that at the end of their secondary schooling they would have to decide whether or not to proceed to the first official stage in religious life. They were told to pray for divine enlightenment to help them make their decision, while at the same time it was emphasized that it was a grave sin not to heed 'the divine voice' which told them if they had a 'religious vocation'. Also, while they were regularly informed that they did not have to make a commitment until the end of the juniorate years, the culture was such that it was not very easy to leave as there was much talk about those who had 'pulled out'; it was not considered a good thing to do.

The great majority of students in juniorates in Ireland during the time in question were in those run by the Irish Christian Brothers, while a smaller number attended those of other orders of religious brothers, including those of the De La Salle Brothers and the Marist Brothers. Only two juniorates seem to have existed for female religious orders, the preference being to recruit members once they had finished their secondary school education. One of the two female juniorates was in Newmarket,

County Cork, and was run by the Australian Sisters of St Joseph, who recruited girls so that they would eventually go to Australia as members of the order. The other was a special school called 'the House of Mission', in Callan, County Kilkenny. Its function, along with providing a regular secondary school education, was to encourage girls to consider joining a missionary order of female religious when they finished their schooling.

Lay-owned schools in Ireland

Along with church schools run by priests, brothers and female religious, as well as by Protestant denominations, Ireland, for all of the period under consideration, also had a group of lay-owned secondary schools, most of which were Catholic in terms of their general ethos. Accordingly, in this account they are generally referred to as Catholic lay secondary schools, although not all of their founders might have explicitly classified them as such. The motivation to establish these schools was largely lack of job opportunities in the Church-run schools. While only six Catholic lay secondary schools existed at Independence, they grew steadily between then and the early 1960s: in 1939–1940 there were 17 such schools; by 1955–1956, they had reached 48; and by 1961–1962, they had reached 57. These schools were to be found in various parts of the country, but there was a major cluster centred on rural County Limerick. The average number of pupils in one of these schools in 1936–1937 was 46. They were funded by student fees, plus a State-provided capitation grant of ten pounds per senior pupil and seven pounds per junior pupil. The State also paid the teachers' salaries, but, as with both Catholic and Protestant Church-run schools, no finance was made available for buying premises, for building works, or for maintenance. Accordingly, while those who established the schools were able to provide themselves with a living from the enterprise, they were not engaged in a profit-making enterprise. They provided secondary school education in small towns and villages largely (though not exclusively) where no such provision was made by religious orders.

Catholic lay schools, regardless of location, could not be established without the permission of the Department of Education. There were many instances where an attempt to open a school failed because it did not meet the requirements of the department regarding suitable premises and minimum student numbers. Also, a number of schools which did meet the requirements initially and opened for a year or

more, eventually had to close down as they did not pass the inspections carried out by the Department of Education's inspectors.

There was also the Catholic Church to contend with. While there were no official Department of Education regulations requiring clerical agreement, 'the approval of the bishop of the diocese immediately became the *sine qua non* factor which, if speedily granted, greatly facilitated the opening of lay schools.'[1] There were instances of Catholic lay schools gaining approval from the local bishop, especially in districts with an acute shortage of secondary schools. Equally, there were cases of founders of schools who, while successful in their ventures, met with very strong opposition from bishops of the dioceses in which they were located, as well as cases of those who were unable to establish their planned schools due to a bishop's open hostility.

By the early 1950s, the number of pupils in the lay-owned Catholic schools in Ireland constituted approximately 5 per cent of the total number attending secondary schools. The owners of between 40 and 50 of the schools decided to come together in the Federation of Lay Catholic Secondary Schools (FLCSS), having found that, being neither Protestant nor Catholic clergy, there was no existing schools' association to which they could seek membership.[2] Between 1958 and 1962, the FCLSS made representation to the Department of Education on the need for oral tests in all language examinations, the need for special allowances for school principals and the need for the establishment of posts of special responsibility and heads of department. It also sought the aid of the other managerial associations in the formation of a joint managerial body to press for better capitation grants for schools and for building grants for the erection of new schools and extensions to existing schools, but in this it was unsuccessful.

The introduction of 'free education' in 1967 heralded the rapid demise of the Catholic lay secondary schools. The Department of Education considered that a minimum enrolment of 150 was what was required for a secondary school to be viable. Accordingly, most of the Catholic lay secondary schools were too small to benefit from State funding for expansion and their owners did not have the money to finance the expansion themselves. Many were forced to close and today only a very small number exist.

The preparatory colleges

In 1925, the Department of Education announced that it intended to establish special new secondary schools called preparatory colleges as

a measure to supply well-educated Irish speakers for the primary school teacher-training colleges. It planned for half of the intake to the training colleges – about 150 students per year – to include graduates from the preparatory colleges, the other half being filled by open competition. The scheme under which the colleges were established stated that they would enable the State to recruit pupils with a very good proficiency in the Irish language, including pupils from the Gaeltacht, and give them a secondary school education with Irish as the language of instruction.[3] They would then go on to train as primary schoolteachers. In this way, it was hoped to raise the standard of spoken and written Irish in the primary schools. It was envisaged that the teaching staff of the colleges would be persons of high qualifications who would be competent to teach the secondary school programme up to Leaving Certificate standard, be fluent speakers of Irish and be able to give instruction through the medium of Irish in the subjects on the curriculum.

A major critic of the proposed scheme was T. J. O'Connell of the Labour Party. He argued that 13 years of age was too young to be making a decision that would bind one to a teaching career. Nevertheless, the scheme was implemented. Six preparatory colleges (two of them located in Dublin) were established under Catholic Church management. Three of these were for Catholic boys and three for Catholic girls. A co-educational college for Protestant students was also established. Students in the colleges all studied religion, following syllabi set by the Catholic or Protestant Church authorities.

In June 1930, the first group of students in the colleges sat the Leaving Certificate examination. They did a four-year course in Irish, English, mathematics, history, geography and science. Ernest Blythe, a strong advocate of the project, and Minister of Finance at the time of the establishment of the colleges, justified this narrow curriculum. In a speech in the *Dáil* in 1932, he stated that since the work of giving a full secondary school course through Irish was an experimental matter, it 'was necessary to have a minimum curriculum in the beginning because of the difficulties involved'.[4] At the same time, a strong emphasis was placed on orientating the pupils towards their future careers as teachers and a strong sense of vocation was inculcated in the students throughout their stay in the colleges. Every student had to practise teaching in the second term of the third year of the course in the junior classes of the colleges or in selected primary schools.

Not only was there a strong emphasis on the Irish language in the colleges, it was also expected that they would be permeated by a Gaelic ethos. This was made clear by Professor O'Sullivan, the Minister for

Education, when opening Coláiste Chaoímhín in Dublin, a college entrusted to the Christian Brothers. He stated that the students 'would live in an Irish atmosphere' and that 'everything outside would be as Irish as everything inside the classroom'.[5]

Not all, however, were happy with the existence of the colleges and they attracted special attention in 1944, when General Mulcahy, a Fine Gael *Dáil* member who had supported their foundation in 1926, found fault with the discriminatory nature of recruitment. On this he was supported by other members of the *Dáil*. Eventually, in 1961, the six Catholic colleges closed. Colaiste Móibhí, the Protestant college, was permitted to stay open until 1968 in order to continue to assist the Church of Ireland primary schoolteachers' college in being able to recruit students with a proficiency in Irish of a standard required for teacher preparation.

St Patrick's Classical School, Navan, County Meath: The memories of Edward Lynch

My home was four miles outside the town of Navan in County Meath. We were next door to a novitiate for the Maynooth Mission to China. I grew up there on a 240-acre farm. The local primary school was in Johnstown, only two miles away. I commenced school there in 1953. I was six years of age at that stage. My mother insisted that that was an early enough age for my siblings and I to start school. Her view was that she could do more for us at home in our early years. In saying that, I am saying that she was a huge believer in the importance of education, not the opposite.

The experience of primary school was fine, apart from two years which were pretty much a waste of time. We had a teacher from the Dingle Peninsula and he used to spend most of his time talking about his village and sheep farming, but paid very little attention to teaching us the school syllabus. When I finished primary school I went on to secondary school at St Patrick's Classical School in Navan.

St Patrick's was run by diocesan priests from the Diocese of Meath. The diocese is very long, stretching from Bettystown, where there is a five-mile coastline, all the way to the River Shannon. In other words, it stretches halfway across Ireland, while not being very wide. Originally the bishop resided in Navan and the diocesan college was there. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, he moved his place of residence to Mullingar after a dispute over Parnell with the local district council. The diocesan college was also relocated. That meant that the

school in Navan was closed down. However, it was reopened in 1932 as an all-boys' fee-paying school and was run by a group of diocesan priests, though not as a diocesan college. During my time, the school was usually staffed by about five priests. I believe the practice was to replace them every ten years or so with a new group.

In my first year at secondary school I realized I was somewhat behind as a result of the relaxed approach that had been taken in my primary school. In fact my mother had realized this and had removed me a year early so that I could attend a preparatory class, called 'prep', along with four others, at St Patrick's. Two of the fellows had come with me from my school and two came from another school. I was particularly behind in Irish and the situation was not helped by the aggressive and negative attitude of the lay teacher who taught us the language.

This was an all-boys' school and it only enrolled day pupils. What I remember about that first year is that we were seated in a big old oval-shaped room along with the first years, who numbered about 16, but we were taught as separate classes. We remained in our room for nearly all of our classes, while the teachers rotated. Then each year we moved to a different room. It was a fairly small school so there was only one class for each year group. At the time there were also other schools in the town: a Loreto Sisters' primary and secondary school, a De La Salle Brothers' primary school and a Sisters of Mercy primary and secondary school. Most of the boys in St Patrick's came from the Brothers' school. Overall, I think they were more hardened than those of us who had attended little country primary schools.

The St Patrick's school building was unusual. It had been purpose-built as a school in the late 1800s. It had an oval shape. There were storerooms underneath and a boiler room full of sawdust, which was used to heat the place. To get down there you had to take rickety wooden stairs. In retrospect, I can see that the set-up was a fire hazard.

My mother's influence continued all through school. She insisted that I stay back at the end of third year and repeat my Intermediate Certificate examination, even though I had passed it the first time. My mother's view was that I was just not mature enough to profit from progressing. So, I did the Intermediate Certificate examination a second time, this time after being technically enrolled in fourth year, but sitting in with the new group of third-year students. Throughout the country most students who stayed on in secondary school progressed after completing third year and the Intermediate Certificate examination to fifth year, so I must be one of the very few in the history of the State who was ever in fourth year. Now the experience, of course, was a pleasant

one as the syllabus was largely the same as that which I had studied the previous year, except that one or two of the prescribed texts in Irish and English had changed.

I think my mother's decision was a wise one because when I went into fifth year I approached everything with confidence. I do not think I would have gone to university and gone on to be a vet with 43 years' experience if I had not gained the confidence I achieved at that stage. It was really important, I believe. It allowed me to consolidate my learning and put down a firm foundation for future work.

Throughout my secondary school years also we were kept focused by the regular in-house examinations: the Halloween exam, the Christmas exam, the Easter exam and the summer exam. After each exam, a report was sent home and one was given a comment of 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory', indicating how one was doing overall. These were the only possibilities. One could never be deemed to be 'excellent'. I always got 'satisfactory'. Then, after completing my Leaving Certificate examination, I received a scholarship to attend university.

I remember the subjects I did for my Leaving Certificate examination. Mathematics was divided into a number of parts, including arithmetic, algebra and geometry. I also studied English, Irish, geography, history and Latin. Studying Latin seemed to make sense in a school entitled St Patrick's Classical School. We didn't study Greek, but the classical language and classical Geek culture were regularly referred to, especially during Latin classes, and Greek books were to be found at various places around the school.

We found the priest who taught us Latin to be a very interesting man who instilled an absolute love of the language in us that I still have to this day. When he was teaching us something, he would make comparisons with the Greek cultural tradition. He would talk about Greek mythology and he introduced us to the *Iliad*. Because of the way he taught us Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico,* we got to know Caesar as if he was in the Irish Army. This priest had a way of bringing the classical texts to life. And, of course, I found my command of Latin to be very useful in university when learning anatomy.

The priest who taught us history was also very interesting, very nice and very gentle. I also loved geography. I still do. I believe it was taught well in my school. Again, the teachers gave us a love of the subject. And all of the priests gave us a sense that they were very educated. We respected that. They rarely hit you, and if they did, it was always for what they deemed to be gross misconduct or insubordination. And that was so rare that I can only remember it happening three times in

the seven years I was in the school. On the other hand, we did receive corporal punishment from a lay teacher for not knowing our work in Irish. If you couldn't answer a question you automatically stretched out your hand and you got six belts of a leather strap. This was part of his pedagogy. It wasn't that you got belted because you were a naughty boy. This was for not knowing Irish. It led to me developing an intense dislike for the language. It took me 20 years after leaving school before I took a healthy interest in it. And yet I got on better with this lay teacher than did most of the others. I think it was because we both had a great interest in horses. Mine came from home; my father had bred the winner of the 2000 Guineas one year. The fact that I was bigger than the teacher when I was in sixth class may also have been a factor, of course.

We did PE in school on a Tuesday afternoon. All of the pupils took part from 1.45 pm until 3.30 pm. An ex-Irish Army guy came down on the bus from Dublin. He had us doing drill, marching round and doing gymnastics on the floor, on parallel bars and on a vaulting horse. We also had a trampoline which we used indoors in the big room that was normally a classroom for first years. I can still see myself twirling backwards and forwards. I also remember that we had singing on a Wednesday evening. A lady used to visit the school to teach us. However, unlike other schools I knew of, we did not have a debating society, although our parents used to bring us to Navan to see shows put on by travelling theatre companies.

We had no official contact whatsoever with any of the girls' schools in the area. Any dances we attended were in the town and they had no association with the school. In similar vein, there was no such thing as sex education. Anything you learned about that was in the schoolyard from other fellows, or from observing the animals on the farm. Some of the priests would have had difficulty anyway if it had been part of the curriculum. I remember one poor man who used to turn crimson if a woman only walked into a room. Even to read out the word 'kiss' in a school text was difficult for him.

I consider myself very lucky that I studied chemistry and physics all through secondary school. We never had any science textbooks. Everything was dictated to us and we wrote it down in special notebooks. We had a science laboratory in the school and on Tuesday and Friday nights we returned to do practical work instead of attending the normal study periods. It was easy for the teacher to accommodate the 15 or 20 people involved. Our interest in science was also enhanced when a television was brought into the science room as we got to view

special science classes which were broadcasted when Telefís Scoile was established.

Religion, or Christian doctrine, as it was called, was also taught. We did a special examination in the subject every May. It was set by the diocese. It had nothing to do with the Department of Education. A priest also visited to give us an oral examination. He was known as the diocesan inspector. But nobody worried much about him or the inspection. Also, while we had some priests visiting us to tell us about the priesthood, there was never any pressure from our teachers to become a priest or a brother.

During any spare time while at school, we used to walk round and round the school building. You had to be careful if you were up to devilment or going to have any fisticuffs as the priests were constantly on patrol. I also recall that the toilet facilities were primitive. And facilities were negligible for sport, which usually meant Gaelic football; I never saw a hurling game until I moved much further south in Ireland during my working years. The school was too small to be able to field teams in inter-schools' Gaelic football championships, but fellows played with local clubs. We did have a handball alley but it was hard to get a chance to be able to play as it could only accommodate four at a time. The school did, however, organize some handball competitions amongst the pupils themselves.

We had school on Saturday mornings. The rest of the week school finished around 3.35 pm. There was supervised study from 5.00 pm until 7.45 pm. It was organized in 30-minute blocks, with each block being dedicated to a separate school subject. Attendance was mandatory for people close by, but my mother insisted that I also attend. So she ferried me and my siblings in and out from home in the car. She was a huge influence on my education. She had attended the local Loreto school herself. She was also very active in the local community and she regularly spoke to the school principal about our progress. My father worked very hard and was happy to leave all of this to her, while giving her moral support in the task.

The Christian Brothers' Junior Novitiate, Dublin: The memories of Don Herron

My early schooling was in a primary school run by the Loreto Sisters in Dublin. It was actually a private school located alongside a local primary school. My parents drove me from my home in Walkinstown as there was no local primary school there at the time; it was a new suburb.

Sometimes I shared a drive with another family and my family reciprocated. Occasionally I travelled home by bus and that was safe as there were no roads to cross.

I spent three years there and then I transferred to Synge Street CBS in the centre of Dublin. I still recall the grilling I received when I went to the school office before I was accepted. In those days you needed to do an interview before you were accepted into Synge Street. I started there in second class. Initially I was allocated to a B stream because Irish had not been emphasized greatly at my previous school and it was expected that the top boys at Synge Street would be fluent Irish speakers. However, I made good progress, and by the time I was in sixth class, I was in the top class, the scholarship class.

We had to go into school a quarter of an hour earlier than the other kids and we went home a quarter of an hour later. This was all to provide us with extra tuition for the scholarship examination. Success would mean that our fees would be paid to attend secondary school. It was a gruelling year up to Easter, when we sat the examination. Once the scholarship examination was over, however, we still had three months left in school. It was just another world. Some of the Christian Brothers teaching in the secondary school used to come into class from time to time and teach us some of the first-year secondary school programme. I remember being introduced to what was then known as 'the new mathematics', which was just beginning to be taught. We were given a sense that while we were still in primary school, we were now secondary school boys. This, of course, was an all-boys' school and it was highly competitive, with a small number of fellows fighting it out year after year to get the top places not only in the school but in the scholarship examination.

At the time I moved into the secondary school run by the Christian Brothers in Synge Street we were living above our business premises in Dolphin's Barn. The overall regime in the school was a lot more relaxed than in the primary school. I travelled to Synge Street by bus every morning, and took the bus home for midday dinner and the chance to listen to an episode of 'the Kennedys of Castleross'. I had done well in my examination and received my scholarship. We were located in what had previously been a primary school, as a fabulous new up-to-date primary school had just been built. The classrooms were divided by partitions which could all be opened up to reveal a large hall. All of the teachers had nicknames. It was a novel experience to have somebody coming in to teach maths and then somebody else coming in to teach French, and then geography and so on. I can also recall exactly

where I sat in the classroom, yet I can't remember the person alongside whom I sat.

When I was growing up I knew from the attitude of my parents that I would be going on to secondary school. My mother was from outside Enniskillen, in Northern Ireland, and she had gone to secondary school there. My father was from County Donegal and had always made it clear that while he would have liked to have attended secondary school, family circumstances dictated that he had to go out into the world after primary school and make a living.

I only did first year at Synge Street because I then went to the Christian Brothers' junior novitiate. I had shown an interest in going there when in primary school. What the postulator, whose duty it was to inform us about the life of the Christian Brothers, had to say, appealed to me. However, I was far too young at that stage to do anything about it. I remember that when the time did come to make the move, my parents and myself were engaged with the Brothers in meetings, interviews and filling out forms. There was also some checking out of my character with our parish priest.

The juniorate was located in Carriglea Park, which is now the location of Dún Laoighre Institute of Technology. Originally, it had been an industrial school, or what was sometimes called an orphanage, and remained so up to the 1950s. In that decade, the number of young boys who joined the order reached an explosive level. The result was that the Irish section of the order became too big to administer as one unit. The solution was to split it into two provinces, one north of a line from Dublin to Galway, and one south of the line. Each province now had to have one of everything; its own junior novitiate, its own novitiate and so on. That is how Carriglea came to be the junior novitiate for the southern province.

The junior novitiate was essentially a secondary school with a certain amount of religious activity, including daily Mass and prayers. My class consisted of about 24 boys from the southern part of Ireland and we were all scholarship boys. We went straight into the Intermediate Certificate class and did the examination after one year of study. The remaining 60 in my group were split into two other classes and they spent two years studying the Intermediate Certificate programme. My class then went on to study for the Leaving Certificate examination in one year, while the larger group proceeded to the Intermediate Certificate year.

When those in my group started, most, like myself, were 13 or 14 years of age. We also had chaps joining us at various stages later on as we

progressed. Quite a number also dropped out along the way. They found that the discipline required was not for them, or they became homesick, or they just felt unsettled with the way of life and the Brothers indicated to them that it would not suit them.

It was a total package that first year. We were away from home for the full duration, as boarders. We went home only for the summer holidays, for Christmas and for Easter. I really enjoyed it. I have no recollection of feeling any sense of disappointment. Games were compulsory and I was not really into games. But, while there was no way out of it, the situation did not leave me with any bad memories.

What did happen, as I have indicated already, is that when I went to the juniorate, I was put straight into the Intermediate Certificate class. That meant that I never spent time in second year in secondary school. We were hot-housed into doing the Intermediate Certificate course in that one year and it was hell for leather. We had good teachers. Notes were all well documented. And I think we all got honours in five to seven subjects. That was what was expected of us, having been streamed on the basis of being a scholarship class. And the reward for doing well was that I had to do the Leaving Certificate examination the following year. The main emphasis was on getting honours in Irish, which was essential for entry to the Brothers' teacher-training college; one or two in my group who did not get it were, at a later stage, sent by the Brothers to University College Dublin to study for a BA.

It was an extraordinary process of acceleration through secondary school. I can only assume that the Brothers wanted to move my class along at a pace related to our capacity. In my case, that meant that the first novitiate year (which involved no academic classes) was spent at St Helen's Booterstown (which is now the Radisson Hotel opposite University College Dublin), the second year was a pre-teacher-training year in Old Connaught House, Bray and the third year was the first year of teacher-training college at St Mary's Teacher Training College, Marino. Following this route meant that I ended up teaching in a school at 19 years of age. The majority moved through at a standard secondary school pace; it was just our few scholarship lads who moved at a faster pace.

I have a pleasant memory of the Christian Brother who taught us botany for the Leaving Certificate examination. He really took things nice and slowly. We never felt rushed. Yet, at the same time, the program was covered. Also, all of our education was conducted through the medium of Irish, apart from English language and literature. This was because of the commitment of the Brothers to play their part in the

effort of trying to revive the Irish language through the schools. And the effect has stayed with me all down through the years. I can still walk through the Botanic Gardens in Dublin and name all of the plants and leaves in Irish. So much so that I often have to shake my head to try to think of their English-term equivalents. We also spoke Irish at mealtimes and in lots of other interactions.

The teaching model was very much a sold knowledge-transmission one. There wasn't much discussion. We had formal study periods every day, including on Saturdays and Sundays. One thing I did find horrendous was the amount of rote learning we had to do. And I was not very good at doing that. It was the only thing that made me uncomfortable, not being able to recite passages of the poetry of Milton and Dryden, and sections of the prescribed Latin texts. Others could do it without a bother. Now, of course, there was no physical punishment whatsoever, or ridicule. I just used to feel a sense of embarrassment and shame at not being able to recite when requested.

We also learned from the discipline of the way of life, including the approach to teaching and study, that there was no need for any extra tuition and for huge amounts of homework. It was a matter of constant steady work. All the subjects were well taught. We had good teachers of English. We also had good science teachers even though I would describe it as having been 'book science'; while they had a lab in the juniorate, we did not do any experiments in it. Also, while we didn't do art for the State examinations, we got a very good introduction to the subject in a summer course add-on in our second year in the novitiate. All of our teachers were Christian Brothers. They were selected specially for the job, partly because they were excellent teachers and partly because they were honourable men. They were also exceptionally well prepared for class.

Overall, my memory of the junior novitiate is a very positive one. I know we did our schooling in a rush, yet there was never a sense of great pressure. I also realized from early on that I would be happy being a teacher. In fact I think that that was the principal thing that attracted me to the way of life. Also, I do not think making such a career decision at 13 years of age was as strange then as it would be deemed to be nowadays. I didn't see anything strange or unusual about it. I know that people have written about it subsequently, pointing out that it was a very young age at which to be making a career choice and that the Brothers were taking advantage of people. But I never felt that at all. In fact, there was a level of freedom to choose at all stages, including choosing to leave. It wasn't until after one passed the Leaving Certificate

examination and moved on to the novitiate that the induction into the Brothers' way of life took off in earnest.

I did move on to the novitiate. By now there were only 13 fellows left from my original scholarship-class group of 24. In the second novitiate year, in Bray, as I have mentioned already, we did a little bit of teacher training along with spiritual preparation. We were also introduced to higher level maths and we studied some philosophy. I then went to the Brothers' teacher-training college in Marino, which I entered at the age of 18, and after one year, I was teaching in a school. The teacher-training programme was one of two-years' duration, but a Department of Education regulation permitted nuns and brothers to break it into two sections so that they could spend a year or more in schools in the interim. It meant that the orders could send young men and young women out to primary schools to work for several years to fill gaps, and to be tested to see if they could do the job. So I actually did two years of teacher training but in two separate stints.

My recollections of Marino are that it was rigorous and that we had very competent people teaching us the various subjects. The art teacher was really first class and I think all of us used to look forward to the activity with a high level of pleasure. The maths was taught exceptionally well. The fellow who taught us English was someone for whom we had great respect. He was ever so calm. The one lay teacher we had in the place was a part-time staff member who came to teach us about the PE curriculum that had been developed for the new primary school curriculum to be introduced in all schools throughout Ireland.

About 100 brothers were in first year in Marino, training to be primary schoolteachers. Most of these were Irish Christian Brothers, but there was also a small number from some other orders. There was also a group of second-year students and they had already spent some time teaching in schools. They lived separate from the first years. Everything was very well organized, resulting in us doing things well. The teaching practice we did, which was monitored very closely, was somewhat along the lines of that which operated in Victorian times. We were seen every day. Our notes were read every night. And if a brother on the Marino teaching-practice supervising staff wasn't happy with the notes, we had to write them out again on the morning before we went to school.

I decided to leave the Brothers when I was 21 years of age. I recall that when I joined my parents appeared to be quite stoic about it all. They never expressed an opinion about my choice. Yet when I left and returned home they showed great joy at having me back.

The Secondary Lay School, Tarbert, County Kerry: The memories of John Coolahan

I started primary school in Tarbert, North Kerry, in 1945. A memory I have of it is of harsh physical conditions. It was just after the 'Emergency period' during the Second World War. The school had been built in 1869 and the fabric hadn't changed. It was an interesting physical building when it was built in the middle of the nineteenth century, but by the middle of the twentieth century, it still operated with outdoor toilets at the back of the schoolyard. The yard itself was often very wet and not very hospitable.

We actually had a boys' school and a girls' school on the one site. They were altogether separate institutions, though side by side. Thus, the boys and girls were separate from early infants, right through. Those in early infants and first class were taught in a small room which had a gallery and a fireplace. There was a larger room which had been partitioned to give two rooms. The basic furnishings were very minimal and dated.

The only heating system we had was from fires. The parents brought turf to the school. The setting of the fires was often a problem because the turf wasn't always very dry. There was a carpenter's shop across the road and I remember going across and gathering the shavings from the floor. They used to make coffins and other wooden articles there and the shavings used to be left on the floor. We used to use them to get the fire underway.

The rooms had high ceilings and big windows. The lower part of the walls was painted bottle green so that you could not see the dirt and the tops of the walls were a yellow ash colour. A number of maps and charts hung on the walls. I remember that one teacher who arrived when I was in third class produced a lot of charts, maps and diagrams of historical battles. He was very good at that and the room became more attractive as a result. He also brought a new energy to the school. He taught us music and songs and established a school band. I enjoyed all of that very much.

I have bad memories of the amount of corporal punishment that was used in the school. The classes I associate most with the harshness are Christian doctrine or catechism classes, which took place for 30 minutes each day, starting at midday. We had to learn the answers to catechism questions. This involved articulating large words, definitions and concepts. Small children had to learn the answers by rote learning, and if they did not answer correctly, they were beaten. The pressure was particularly great when it came to preparation for First Communion

and Confirmation. The situation was not helped by the fact that the local parish priest used to come by and question the pupils. That probably put additional pressure on the teachers. In a sense, the atmosphere was almost the exact opposite of what one would wish it to be if one was seeking to cultivate love and a sense of interest in religion and relationships.

At the same time, I enjoyed primary school. I enjoyed the singing classes and the music aspects of it. I enjoyed mental arithmetic very much. We became very good at mental arithmetic. We started off the day with it. Some would stand around doing it and some would sit as there were not enough benches to accommodate all of the students. After a while, those standing would sit, and vice versa. That sort of procedure continued throughout the day as we moved through the different subjects.

We were very fortunate to have the teacher I mentioned who came when I was in third class. He was very energetic, he had a lot of new ideas and he seemed to me to be very organized. I remember that the way he approached history, geography and Irish was very structured. I remember that I enjoyed him and I enjoyed answering his questions. I also think he got a kick out of teaching us. He would laugh and direct us in our work and we would act with him. I also enjoyed that. He sharpened things up greatly.

I think that when I started school it was a school that was a bit stuck, but by the time I finished, it was a very different place. One piece of evidence on that was that when I was in sixth class, the school won the Carlile and Blake Award, which was a very prestigious award within the primary school system. I remember it involved a schools' inspector conducting an examination over a number of days. I also remember the inspector himself because he was very pleasant; we had grown to expect inspectors to be harsh and domineering.

The prescribed primary school curriculum was still a bit narrow at the time. It was the old curriculum introduced in 1922 and it hadn't changed much. The emphasis was principally on English, Irish and arithmetic. In the senior classes, history, geography and singing were also taught, but there was no teaching of science, drawing, physical education, or nature study. The official curricular and pedagogical approaches were very rigid and I think that the inspiring teacher I have mentioned already found them quite restrictive.

There really was no decision to make regarding going on to secondary school, even though only a minority did so at the time. My father had been bright in primary school. So had my mother and she had stayed

on to do seventh class. Secondary schooling at the time was not an option for them as they would have had to go away to boarding school, which would have been too expensive. But with the establishment of a secondary school in the area later on, they took the view that myself and my seven siblings would attend it.

There was also a family connection with the secondary school I attended; it was located in a house which my father owned. He had gone to the USA after the Irish Civil War. He came back around 1932 and bought this very large house just a little bit outside the village of Tarbert and rented it to a lady who wanted to establish a secondary school.

I moved on to secondary school after I finished sixth class. Some stayed on for an extra year, or two. Also, some were kept back in sixth year and repeated it. The great majority in my class did not go on to secondary school. Most of them emigrated to England when they were 15 or 16 years of age. Those of us who did not accompany them did not have far to go to our secondary school as it was located on the edge of the village. It was one of a number of lay-owned and lay-run schools located around the country, and particularly in North Kerry and West Limerick. They existed because education was valued in the area. It was seen as worthwhile. Teachers were respected and people had a view that you needed to get schooling if you were going to progress in life.

I could have attended a similar school close by in Glin, County Limerick. It was very much geared towards gaining good public examination results and was well known for having developed strategies to that end. The preference was that I would attend the local school in Tarbert, which was renowned for its promotion of a liberal education. I just took to it like a duck to water. I didn't see any problems with it. After moving from primary school, one of the things that struck me was that there was no corporal punishment. For a while I was asking myself when the beatings were going to start. I found it very strange that you could go through secondary school without being slapped, given the prevalence of the corporal punishment in primary school.

The lady who established the school was Miss Jane Agnes McKenna. She was from nearby in West Limerick. Like herself, her teaching staff were lay people. The school was also somewhat unusual in that it was co-educational and interdenominational. Miss McKenna was a Catholic and she had a good relationship with the local parish priest. She also had a good relationship with the local Protestant clergyman. They had an understanding that Protestant children would attend, but that they would not attend the religious education classes. Apart from that there

was nothing unusual about their presence in the school. There was no question of trying to indoctrinate them into the Catholic faith.

We had a mixture of Protestant religions in the village, including Methodists and members of the Church of Ireland. Everyone lived in harmony. There was never any conflict. The children of all of the denominations went to the school in a very natural routine sense. Religion was never an issue. We knew that people had different belief systems and we had our denominational commitments, but it was never an issue that caused awkwardness. I think that that is another tribute to the school.

Overall, then, there was a very nice atmosphere in the school and Miss McKenna herself was a very gifted teacher. She was also very committed to her work. She was a tremendous teacher of French and English. Her French was superb which, I suppose, is not surprising since she had been a student at the Sorbonne. Through her we became very familiar with the great French poet, Baudelaire, and the French dramatists, Racine and Corneille. At the time we assumed that this was normal, but I found afterwards it wasn't.

Miss McKenna also had a great love of Shakespeare and such English poets as Wordsworth, Shelley and Milton, and she really brought their works to life. For her, Hamlet and Macbeth were very real characters and she passed on that sense to us. Also, she had a library in the school and I used to use it a lot. It was particularly well stocked with the classics in English literature. It also had a good selection of books in the Irish language. Miss McKenna was interested in the Irish language even though she did not teach it.

There was a pleasant intimacy about the school, created partly by the fact that the pupil population was only around 100 students. The classes were sometimes very low in the higher grades. I think that when I was preparing for my Leaving Certificate examination, there was only myself and about two others in class for some subjects. We did not mind that at all. It created a sort of family feeling in the school. We all knew each other and we all played football together in fields alongside the school. Also, we used to go home for our lunchtime. In that way we were very closely linked with the village. I also remember that the girls had a school uniform. It was a navy blue pleated skirt and a dark wine cardigan. We didn't have a boys' uniform, but we were expected to be smart in our dress.

The other teachers were very good and very efficient, but they were not as distinguished as Miss McKenna. She was a great leader and was the heart and soul of the school. The range of subjects in which she was

accomplished was also quite interesting. She was proficient in Latin, Irish, English and French and she made sure that they were all taken seriously in the school. She also had a great command of history, geography, commerce and business studies. What she didn't have was any science background and we were not taught science in school.

We all did singing in the school even though it was not a subject for the public examinations. We had choirs and engaged in debating. This all created a great ambience. The atmosphere was very humane, with no corporal punishment. Pupils came not just from Tarbert, but also from surrounding villages. Some of them were able to get to school in the mornings on a public bus. Because it used to return late in the evening and the pupils had to wait around for it, Miss McKenna set up study sessions, during which they used to do their homework. She kept the fire going and kept the light on in the classroom in which they used to study. I don't think it was electric lighting. Rather, it was provided by lamps.

Those of us who lived in the village nearby didn't stay on for the study periods. We did our homework at home. Also, doing it was regarded as a very normal practice. We had to write essays at the weekends in English, Irish and French. I enjoyed doing them very much. And we got great feedback on what we produced. I remember getting a kick out of that. Miss McKenna took time to read what you wrote, and if you put things well, she gave positive comments. That gave one a great sense of affirmation.

Extra-curricular activities were few, yet there were some. We played Gaelic football during a designated sports' period and for a while we had a lady teacher who was an international hockey player so she introduced us to the game. We took the occasional trip to Limerick to see the great actor, Anew McMaster, perform Shakespearean plays. He was a member of a very well-known touring group of actors. Normally we saw him perform in the city's theatre.

I am not sure of the extent to which the school played a part in my decision to train to be a primary schoolteacher. What I do remember is that my family wanted me to become a teacher. A number of family members worked in the civil service and one of those graduated with a BA through studying for a 'night degree' in University College Dublin. When I passed my Leaving Certificate examination in 1959 with good results, I had a huge variety of job offers. In all, I was offered six jobs. One of them was in the ESB, another was in the Agricultural Credit Corporation and there was the possibility of joining the civil service. However, I was not too keen on any of those. I wanted to teach. It

is possible I was inspired by the exceptional teacher I had in primary school and also by some of my secondary school teachers.

My family were very supportive of my decision when I got the 'call to training', as it was then called. As far as I was concerned, it wasn't really a difficult decision. I just forgot about the other possibilities. I am sometimes asked why I did not apply for a university scholarship. But I'd never heard of university scholarships and nobody alerted me to their existence. If I had known, and if I had got one, I would probably have gone to university at that point rather than later on. In the 1950s, of course, university wasn't as much in the consciousness of people as it is now. It was an institution that was far removed from many people's aspirations. Teacher training was different. It was closer to what people knew. One knew primary schoolteachers and what they were. There was also a certain status associated with 'getting the call to training'. Also, it was not an expensive route to take because it was heavily subsidized by the State. When I commenced at St Patrick's Training College, however, I found all the regulation and regimentation there quite off-putting, but I eventually came to enjoy it.

Scoil Ulmhúcháin, Baile Mhúirne, County Cork: The memories of Michael O'Shea

I was born three miles outside the town of Macroom in County Cork. At that time, my locality was classified as a Breac-Ghaeltacht, or a partially Irish-speaking district, but my father and mother were native speakers of English. The Lán-Ghaelatcht areas, or intensely Irish-speaking districts, centred on Kilnamartra, Ballyvourney, Ballingeary and Coolea, were a number of miles farther west. My dad, Jeremiah O'Shea, was a collector of rates and my mother, whose maiden name was Johanna Lucey and who came from Cnoc Satharn, was the only girl in a family of four children, and was the principal teacher in the local primary school. She had trained to be a teacher under the British administration at Carysfort Teacher Training College in Dublin, run by the Sisters of Mercy. Her tutor for mathematics there was Eamon de Valera.

The local primary school I attended was at Dún Dá Radharc and had been built in 1837. I was taught in primary school by my mother until I was 12 years of age. I then went to the secondary school in Macroom, which was run by the De La Salle Brothers. At the end of my first year, I sat for the examination for admission to a Coláiste Ulmhúcháin, or preparatory college, and was unsuccessful. I sat it again the following year and this time I was successful. Most fellows actually sat for the

examination at the end of their primary school education. I was one of a few who were exceptions in that we were admitted to the college having already had some secondary school education. We were eligible for admittance as we met the requirement of being under 15 years of age at the time we sat for the examination.

The first secondary school I attended, the De La Salle College in Macroom, was small. There were about 20 students in each year group. They came mainly from the town, with a few also cycling in from the surrounding countryside. We also were taught by a very small teaching staff, comprised of two brothers and two lay teachers. I was very lucky to have been taught by Brother Bernadine, who was a very enlightened teacher. He was from Sligo and was a member of the De La Salle Order. He was an excellent teacher of English and somewhat inspiring. He had an outstanding grasp of the fundamentals of written English and also imparted a love of English literature to us.

I became aware of the possibility of attending a preparatory college through my brother who was two years older than I was and who had already won a place in one of them. There was also the information provided by the De La Salle Brothers in Macroom; the order ran Coláiste Íosagáin, the preparatory college a few miles away in the Gaeltacht village of Ballyvourney, or Baile Bhúirne as it is known in Irish. I was attracted to gaining a place there because it meant I would have a guaranteed place later on in a teacher-training college once I completed my secondary schooling. There was also the attraction that it provided a boarding school education at little or no cost; essentially, free education was provided in the preparatory colleges long before it became available to the great majority.

The entrance examination was in a variety of subjects and, apart from the test in English, it was all conducted through Irish. With most of the students being from the Gaeltacht, one's ability in spoken and written Irish had to be very good in order to compete with them and pass. I was lucky as I had received a very good grounding in the language at primary school. I also benefited greatly from the teaching of the language provided during my two years at De La Salle College, Macroom.

On successfully completing the examination, I enrolled in Coláiste Íosagáin. The college provided a four-year course, with the first two years leading to the Intermediate Certificate examination and the next two leading to the Leaving Certificate examination. I had to start in first year. This meant that as a result of my two years at school in Macroom and four years at Coláiste Íosagáin from September 1945 to

June 1949, I ended secondary schooling with six years of secondary school education in total.

The education was what would now be termed one of total language immersion. All of our teachers were native Irish speakers. About half of them were De La Salle Brothers and the other half were lay men; we had no female teachers. Irish was not only the language of schooling, but also the language we used 24 hours a day, including at recreation time, the only exception being during English class time. With fellows from all over the country, we were exposed to all of the dialects of the language. We became accustomed to some speaking in Connemara Irish, some in Donegal Irish, some in Déise Irish and so on, as well as in our own West Cork dialect. Speaking in Irish became so normal for us and our proficiency was so good that it was unknown for fellows to speak amongst themselves in English. This situation prevailed out of a general interest on everyone's part, rather than as a result of any language policing, which did not exist anyway.

We mixed a little with the local Irish-speaking community. A practice developed of having some of them who were *seanchaí*, or storytellers, coming to speak to us in the school. Other *seanchaí* from various Irish-speaking parts of the country who were given to wandering were also welcomed at the college when they visited the area. They were encouraged to recite their stories for us, sing their songs and pass on their lore.

Our life was lived almost totally within the college. During the week we were not allowed to leave the college grounds. We could, however, go for walks in the local area on Saturdays and Sundays, visit the local shops and climb the local hills. I had a bicycle and used to take the opportunity to cycle home to see my family. It involved a trip of about ten miles each way. It was very beneficial to me in 1945, with the Second World War still raging, as food for sale was rationed throughout the country and, as a result, was also rationed in the college. While at home, I could pick up some home-made bread or a pound of home-produced butter, which really was very nice to be able to get at the time.

The college building was purpose-built. For that particular era, the accommodation was pretty luxurious. Every student had his own cubicle, each separated from the next by wooden partitions. It meant that everyone had a great deal of privacy. The college also had a separate study room where we engaged in supervised study in the evenings and we were able to do additional reading in a well-stocked library. We had hot and cold water, there was electricity and we had oil-fired central heating. In fact it was far superior to what I experienced when, after

leaving the college, I went to St Patrick's Teacher Training College in Dublin.

Our textbooks were provided for us. We did not have a great deal of them, partly because only one or two in each subject had been translated from English to Irish. We studied Irish, English, mathematics, geography and history for the four years. We also studied science for both the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations. We were taught by a qualified science teacher and had access to good laboratories. For the first two years we also did woodwork. For anyone who wished to avail of it, tuition was available in music. This allowed me to obtain piano lessons.

While we had students from all over the country, most of them were from County Kerry, so it is no wonder that Gaelic football was the dominant game in the school. A number of fellows brought their hurleys and pucked around a ball amongst themselves, but there was never a sufficient number of them to form a team and enter inter-schools' competitions. After all, enrolment was very small even by the standards of the day, with no more than a total of 80 pupils in the school. Soccer and rugby were never even mentioned. However, we did play a lot of handball amongst ourselves during recreation periods and for that we had access to four very good handball alleys on the school grounds.

As well as having a very strong Gaelic atmosphere, the school also had a strong Catholic ethos. We started every day with attendance at Mass at 7.00 am. The priest came from the local village and we took it in turns to be altar boys. We also said the Rosary and attended Benediction on Sunday evenings. Like other Catholic schools, we had an annual school religious retreat, usually in October. My strongest memory of that is that it ran for three days, much of which was spent in silence and spiritual meditation. The strict moral code prevalent at the time was also strongly observed, including in relation to the mixing of the sexes. For example, I remember that while I was there, a group of students had some association with the girls who were working in the place, and when this became known, they were expelled. While they may not have been up to anything untoward, they had broken a strict rule and were sent home.

I have to say I enjoyed being a student at Coláiste Íosagáin. There was absolutely no corporal punishment. I was also lucky in that I was not too far from home, but it must have been tough at times on the fellows from places as far away as Donegal. They used to arrive at the college on the first day of September, and only got back home again at Christmastime, at Eastertime and for the summer break. Generally speaking, the food was good and wholesome. We had a resident matron who was a qualified

nurse and she supervised the provision of the food. There wasn't a farm attached to the school, but fresh vegetables and potatoes were purchased locally. There were no lay brothers at the school, so the maintenance was done by some locals who were employed by the college. One of their major tasks was to keep the heating system in tune all of the time. Overall, I would say that it was an expensive place to run.

10

History, Memories and Life Stories of Secondary School Education in Ireland, 1922–1962: An Overview

By way of opening to this concluding chapter, a number of qualifying points regarding what has been offered in the book so far need to be restated. First, most of the accounts by individuals on their secondary schooling relate to the years immediately prior to the introduction of the free-education scheme; while throwing up great challenges in terms of obtaining participant participation and quality of responses, it would be interesting to produce a similar body of accounts in relation to a large number of those who went to secondary school in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. It is also recognized that others might favour the use of a different category of secondary schools to that used to frame the accounts in this book, and might also wish to pay attention to a range of additional schools, including the one Jewish school in the country during the period, the 'secondary tops' and the secondary schools established in the Gaeltacht, as well as a small number of schools that were completely private in the sense that they received no financial assistance whatsoever from the State.

It is also important to restate that the accounts that have been offered cannot be seen as being in any way 'representative' of the experiences of secondary schooling in Ireland both for the period and for the particular categories of schools to which they relate. As was made clear in Chapter 1, those interviewed constituted a convenience, or purposive, sample. Thus, the intention in making the accounts available is not to claim that they are in any way typical. Rather, the expectation is that they will act to stimulate others to reflect on their experiences and to consider the extent to which these were similar or different to those of our participants. The result, it is hoped, will be a sharpening of readers' memories and the provision of encouragement to contribute to debate on them.

Finally, it needs to be restated that, rather than being oral history, where the aim is to gain information about the past, the research which eventuated in the solicited accounts presented in this book are 'topical life stories', where the focus is on participants' memories of secondary schooling. And yet it would be remiss to leave considerations at that since the accounts have the potential to provide insights to add to the corpus of historical work already undertaken on the history of Irish secondary school education which is based on both written and oral sources and which has been summarized in Chapter 2. Accordingly, we analysed the accounts in terms of commonalities and differences to see what could be distilled from them that would be of value for generating further, and more extensive, expositions that would add to that corpus of work. What emerged from the analysis in this regard are two major themes, one of which corresponds to Abrams' notion of 'memory as a subject of study' and the other which corresponds to her notion of 'memory as a source of study'.[1]

Memory as a subject of study

What we are referring to in focusing on memory as a subject of study are issues highlighted in our participants' accounts which, while also of interest to the educational historian, are more about reflections on schooling in the light of subsequent experiences than they are about memory of how it was experienced at the time. Two sets of issues have been identified in this regard. The first set relates to how our participants constructed their memories of secondary schooling, while the second set relates to what they saw as the identities that schooling sought to promote.

How our participants constructed their memories of secondary schooling

In addressing this theme, it is useful to recall Macmillan's point that 'we mistakenly think that memories are like carvings in stone; once done, they do not change.'[2] Nothing, he argues, could be further from the truth; 'memory is not only selective; it is malleable.' Some of our participants came to realize this for themselves. For example, one of them had a memory of his classrooms as being quite large and was somewhat taken aback when, on visiting his school many years later, he discovered they were actually quite small. This kind of testimony serves well to remind one of the importance of not too hastily concluding that just because one's memory about a situation is quite clear, it represents

accurately the way things were at the time. In a similar vein, our participants' accounts serve to remind us that while, as researchers, our central concern may be individuals' experiences of secondary schooling, these experiences were not necessarily central in their own memories of their teenage years, or even earlier years for that matter. For example, one participant seemed to suggest that she attached more importance to certain enjoyments surrounding attendance at an annual liturgical festival in her primary school days than she did to the daily rhythms of schooling.

Our participants' testimony serves also to illustrate two of Abrams' contentions regarding the construction of memory. The first of these is that 'remembering is typically conducted using a memory frame, which we might describe as a locus or field which makes remembering possible.'[3] What stands out is the extent to which the memories of secondary schooling of a number of our participants were recalled by comparing and contrasting them with their experience of primary schooling. For some, their primary school experience was recollected as being a very negative, and sometimes depressing and distressing one, while their secondary school experience was recalled as being the opposite. For others, the reverse was the case. For others yet again, the experience at both levels was either positive or negative, while there are also those who claimed to have had both positive and negative experiences in both primary and secondary school. What stands out overall is that the major influence in nearly all situations seems to have been the approach taken by the teacher in the classroom.

The second of Abrams' contentions regarding the construction of memory that is illustrated by our participants' testimony is that we can have flashbulb memories, or memories of particular vivid events. These memories, she holds, retain 'detailed images of an especially traumatic or emotional event'.[4] In the case of our participants, they ranged from being shocked at being told one was going to boarding school, to the loneliness experienced in such settings, and from the recollection of a school strike, to one's responses to what struck one clearly at the time as actions of great injustice not only towards oneself and fellow pupils, but also towards teachers.

In some cases, how our participants constructed their memories of secondary schooling also reveals issues that, while striking for them at the time they expressed them, could, most likely, only have become clear to them a considerable number of years after having left school. Pedagogy featured strongly in this regard; some recalled inspiring teachers and what they considered to be their inspiring pedagogy, while others recalled uninspiring teachers and their poor pedagogy. While it

is likely that the memory of the inspirational and un-inspirational (not to mention cruel) teachers represented how one saw the individuals in question during one's schooldays, the rationalization as to why some pedagogical approaches were good and others were poor seems only to have taken place after many more years of life experiences. Overall, the common denominator in influencing the nature of this rationalization seems to have been the extent to which what was taught, and the way it was taught, proved to be meaningful later on, and not just practically, but also emotionally.

What the participants came to see as the identities that their secondary schooling sought to construct

The second set of issues on memory as a subject of study that arose out of the analysis of our participants' accounts are those related to what they came to see as the identities that their schooling sought to construct. On this, three principal, though somewhat inter-related, identities have been identified. These are religious identity, sexual identity and social identity.

Regarding religious identity, it is a little surprising given the overwhelming influence of the churches on secondary schooling in the country that its promotion does not reveal itself to be an over-riding memory. This suggests the possibility that the development of one's identity in this respect was so much part of what went on in the home and in society more broadly that its presence in the schools was very much taken for granted and deemed so 'normal' as not to stimulate cogitation, except on the part of a small number. What is also a little surprising regarding the particular case of the Catholic schools, given some of the popular views indicating otherwise, is that our participants recalled that there was no great overt emphasis on recruitment for the religious life, and that even when it formally took place through visits from priests, brothers and nuns specially appointed to suggest that one might join their ranks, there was no great psychological pressure applied on students by these personnel or by the schools' authorities. Our participants' reference to the visits of these specially appointed personnel in the schools also stimulates a number of as yet unanswered questions, including the following: did certain schools only allow recruiting personnel from particular religious orders into their schools? Did those orders like the Christian Brothers which catered largely for the less well-off send their recruiting personnel to the schools catering for the better-off? Did religious orders like the Jesuits and the Vincentians who

ran schools for the better-off engage in any formal recruitment practices to seek members for their own ranks, and, if so, what form did it take?

One dimension of religious identity which appears strongly in the testimony of some of our participants is the relationship between it and the promotion of national identity. While some expressed a view that their religious background promoted a sense of 'Irishness' amongst them, certain differences in this regard also revealed themselves. On this, the indications are that Christian Brothers' secondary schools promoted a notion that while their students' Catholicism made them very Irish, the fact that they infused their schools with the Irish language and promoted Gaelic games made them both *uber*-Irish and *uber*-Catholic. At the same time, those who attended Catholic schools that promoted rugby, cricket and hockey, and only taught Irish as a regular school subject, gave no indication that they had been inducted into a frame of mind that had them thinking they were somehow less Irish than anyone else in the country. The same notion emerges from considering the testimony of those who attended Protestant schools; indeed they are quite explicit in their accounts that they were taught and learned Irish republican history as being as much part of their history as it was of the Catholic population, and that they were most definitely not pro-British in sentiment. However, it is necessary once again to state that much more research needs to be undertaken on these matters before one can consider the extent to which they are conclusions that might usefully inform the historical record. Equally, the extent to which one's religious identity, especially in the case of the Catholic schools, developed one's sense of belonging to an international Church family is also worthy of further exploration.

Our participants also came to see that their secondary schooling sought to somewhat unconsciously construct their sexual identity, even though their accounts suggest that, to a certain extent, this was not deemed to be the province of the school at all, particularly when it came to sex education, which was almost non-existent. Also, our participants' testimony suggests that whatever sex education there was in Catholic schools was more likely to have taken place in girls' schools than in boys' schools. Furthermore, the suggestion is that it sometimes involved meaningless lectures and was undertaken with a great deal of embarrassment by priests, brothers and nuns.

Notwithstanding what has been said above, our participants, on the whole, were clear that a central message one received at home and in the general community was reinforced through the school, namely, that one should be very guarded in one's associations with the opposite sex

and that sexual relations before marriage were to be avoided at all costs. Particularly striking in this regard is the testimony indicating that particular nuns would shame a girl in the presence of her peers if they received a report that she had been talking to a boy outside of school during a lunchtime break. The testimony is also revealing on the fact that some schools never organized formal gatherings, such as dances, between the pupils of their schools and those from nearby schools catering for the opposite sex and that those schools that did do so usually organized them only once a year. Also, the advice given on what was appropriate behaviour at such gatherings seemed to some of the participants to have bordered on the hilarious and the naive. Generally, it seems, this was given only to girls, with the emphasis being on chastity and celibacy, on being Virgin-like and Mary-like. Finally, allowing for the exceptional practices of certain female religious orders, girls also learned what were deemed to be appropriate female practices to do with home-keeping, refinement, social etiquette and deportment, the implication being that while they might work for a number of years, their true vocation (if, in the case of Catholic girls, they did not enter religious life) was to be eventually realized when they became mothers and stayed at home to look after their husbands and children.

The third set of memories of the identities that schooling sought to construct relate to social identity. On this, the accounts of our participants suggest that those who attended schools for the better-off had their position in society confirmed for them through the elaborated code of language they used, through the games they played (primarily rugby and cricket for boys, and hockey for girls) and the schools against which they played in sporting competitions, and, even in some cases, through being told by their teachers that they belonged to a superior class. Equally, those participants who attended schools for the less well-off learned that while some were destined to remain within their social class, others could move up the social ladder.

To conclude, it seems fair to hypothesize that secondary schools saw their principal duty as being to prepare students as well as they possibly could for the State examinations and that it was up to the students themselves and to their parents to decide what was to happen after that. Accordingly, formal career guidance in the sense in which we know it today seems to have been non-existent. Instead, what took place was haphazard, if well meaning, Furthermore, advice given appears to have been related to one's social position and thus, again, to the shaping of one's social identity. For those who went to schools for the less well-off and had good examination results, there was no great issue involved

anyway; they had a wide variety of public service and white-collar jobs available to them, as well as the possibility of training to be primary schoolteachers, or nurses in the case of girls. At the other end of the spectrum were those who always knew from an early age that once they achieved the entrance requirements, they would be able to go to university if they wished and that there would be no financial impediments to taking that road. In the middle were those who, with various examination results, gained salaried positions as a result of the initiatives of concerned school principals and teachers, and those who found out by chance, or through the encouragement of individual teachers or their parents, that attendance at university was a possibility. The common message picked up, however, regardless of the career pathway one took, was that the best possible outcome would be to gain a permanent pensionable job in order to, at the very least, maintain one in one's social class and, preferably, result in social mobility.

Memory as a source of study

Two sets of issues have been identified in the accounts that can be classified as relating to memory as a source of study. The first set consists of issues that are deserving of investigation to allow us to elaborate on the existing body of knowledge about secondary schooling in Ireland during the period to which the participants' accounts relate, while the second set consists of issues that are worthy of investigation to reveal new insights. Each of these sets of issues will now be considered in turn.

Issues worthy of pursuit to extend our current historical knowledge about schooling in Ireland

In highlighting issues identified within our participants' accounts that are worthy of presentation to stimulate discussion on how to extend our current historical knowledge base about secondary school education in Ireland through the use of both oral and non-oral sources, we are not contradicting what has been said already; there is no claim that they represent what was typical at the time. However, further investigation might indicate that typical, in fact, is what they were, or that the situation generally was quite the opposite, or, indeed, that there was variation from school to school. Only larger projects could indicate more clearly what the situation was; projects that would generate testimonies in which, to paraphrase Cunningham and Gardner,[5] we might hear over and over again fundamentally common rhythms of the experience of schooling, of expectation and of orientation.

Amongst a set of issues identifiable in the accounts presented in the previous chapters are those indicating that we should not too readily assume that certain matters that are currently commonplace were also commonplace in the not-so-distant past. One of these issues is that of parent–teacher meetings. While such meetings are now part of the regular rhythms of second-level schooling, the accounts presented here suggest that they may have not been so in the pre-1967 era, when parents were often expected to stay as far away from schools as possible. The accounts also go some way towards substantiating the written records drawn upon in Chapter 2 which indicate that the bicycle was the most common mode of transport taken to school by those attending day schools and not within walking distance, that the physical conditions of many schools were very basic, that corporal punishment was used by some teachers under certain circumstances and that extracurricular activities were very few, usually being restricted to a small number of games (if not just one) and the occasional drama or light opera production.

At the same time, the accounts also indicate that there was some diversity within the pattern. This prompts one to wonder about how widespread was the teaching of Gregorian chant, which gave such pleasure to those participants who mentioned it; if cycling daily to school had its attractions as well as its hardships; whether more than one boys' school promoted boxing; and, given the extent to which it is a regularly highlighted, even if also contested, area in second-level schooling today, if all students, like the majority of our participants, had no problem making the transition from primary to secondary school. The accounts also prompt us to question some stereotypes, particularly with regard to the inflicting of corporal punishment. Clearly, its use was not restricted to Catholic boys' schools, or, within them, to CBSs. Furthermore, while one is struck by depictions of leather-wielding Christian Brothers, one is also struck by the accounts that draw attention to those who never lifted a hand to a student in the classroom. To conclude on this, the whole area of classroom-control practices, including the nature and extent of the use of corporal punishment, and by whom it was used, is very much under-researched and is deserving of attention by other scholars.

Some accounts in the written record, as already presented in Chapter 2, point to another under-researched area, namely, the centrality of the State's Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations in defining for students, parents and teachers the perceived purpose of secondary schooling. Our participants' accounts indicate that further insights may be available on this. In particular, they reveal a

general pattern which, if it could be demonstrated for a much larger number of respondents, indicates that good teachers were primarily defined by students at that time in terms of how well they prepared them for the State examinations. This preparation involved providing students with notes that addressed potential examination questions, setting homework clearly focused on these questions and providing regular written and oral feedback on the homework. Again, this is an area that merits further investigation by drawing on both the official documentary record and the spoken word, 'the written and the divergent, the shared and the distinctive',[6] to facilitate engagement in synergic analysis.

Issues worthy of study to offer new insights into our current knowledge of the history of secondary schooling in Ireland

The second set of themes on memory as a source of study relates to issues that are worthy of pursuit in larger projects using both oral and non-oral sources in order to add new insights into our current knowledge on the history of secondary schooling in Ireland during the period to which the participants' accounts relate. On this, one is reminded of Thompson's[7] point that though the recollection of memory is specific to each individual life, within such recollection there is always much that speaks with a truly representative voice. We take this as corresponding to Abrams' view that oral testimony can reveal issues on which we currently have only silences, yet are worthy of historical investigation on the grounds that they may reveal the experience of many. The sorts of issues she has in mind are those that are 'impervious to the documentary record and thus largely unrepresented in historical accounts'.[8]

A number of issues present themselves in the latter regard from the analysis of the accounts in the previous chapters. For one thing, it reveals that we do not have a knowledge base on the experiences of those who attended more than one secondary school and the effects, if any, of their transition from one secondary school to another. Related to this is the need to highlight that while five years seems to have been the standard maximum duration of tuition provided by secondary schools, some schools provided an additional year, while others provided less. What effects these different patterns may have had on students' experiences of schooling merits attention. So also does the pillarized[9] nature of the relationship between Catholic and Protestant schools and the effect that the experiences which pupils from each of these sectors had with regard to their perceptions of each other on

the odd occasions on which they rubbed shoulders, particularly on the games' field.

We also know very little about student decision-making in relation to their secondary schooling. In particular, we know very little about why they decided to attend a secondary school in the first instance, although our participants' accounts at least yield the hypothesis that it was almost totally a parental decision, rather than a student one, and that financial considerations were paramount in deliberations. Similarly, the testimony in the accounts leads to the hypothesis that the decision-making regarding which particular school to attend was also almost totally a parental one. Engagement in decision-making regarding one's career direction at the end of secondary schooling, on the other hand, appears to have varied from often involving the student alone if he or she belonged to the less well-off social classes (whose members seemed to only consider lower middle-class occupations as being within their grasp), to that of parents and teachers also being involved if one was from the middle- and upper-income levels of society; for the latter, it seems, a sense was created that securing a place at university in order to study for the professions at all levels was possible. Again, however, this proposition has to remain at the status of a hypothesis in the absence of the detailed research projects on the area that need to be carried out.

We also know hardly anything about bullying in school by peers, what forms it took, how it was perceived by school authorities and what actions, if any, were taken to deal with it. Neither do we know anything of significance about pupil resistance in school to teachers, to the subjects taught and to regulations governing participation in games, including different types of games. Equally, we have hardly any studies on the attitudes of students, teachers and parents to the practice of streaming in the schools. Also invisible are studies on the function of school uniforms and on the message that the wearing of such distinguishing apparel was meant to send to the public.

To reiterate a point made somewhat differently already, the sorts of issues mentioned above need to be addressed using the data of both oral history and documentary history. Furthermore, this needs to take place in a manner that, as Gardner puts it, recognizes and shows understanding of the nature of the production of these complementary historical approaches and, correspondingly, 'the limits of their analytical potential'.[10] By looking at both the spoken as well as the written, he concludes, we may gain new insights, engaging 'the past through written documents which are contemporary, but dead' and coming at the

past 'through spoken voices which live in the present but, in memory, both assert and evoke the past'.[11]

* * *

The decision to write this book was stimulated by the fact that the 50th anniversary of what was arguably the most significant development in Irish education in the twentieth century, namely, the introduction of 'free' second-level education in 1967, was approaching rapidly. It was a development that quickly led to mass participation in second-level schooling throughout the nation. Writing in the early 1980s, the historian, Joseph Lee, professed admiration for this and related achievements over the next two decades, especially since any significant Church–State conflict was avoided. On the latter he stated:

> At the level of high politics, potential Church/State conflict has been mediated with remarkable skill. The potentially explosive education issue was largely resolved in the 1960s, following an extraordinary surge of activity by the previously moribund Department of Education. If the strong feelings raised on both sides had not yet fully subsided, the observer must remain impressed with the relative smoothness of so striking a change in educational power structures.[12]

Cogitating associated developments raises a variety of interesting questions, including those relating to the extent to which what took place led to equality of educational opportunity (and to the fact that a small number of secondary schools in the country continued to be fee-paying), those relating to the nature of the political struggles that took place in relation to post-primary education and those relating to the adoption of a largely common curriculum across the traditional secondary and vocational schools, and the newly established comprehensive schools, community schools and community colleges.

It is gratifying to note the extent to which scholars have addressed these and similar sets of research questions in relation to developments in Irish education for the period since 1967. At the same time, the lack of research on various aspects of the process of education in Ireland for the decades prior to 1967 is striking. In particular, there is a serious lack of expositions on the experience of education at all levels by former students. This book, which has focused on memories of those who attended secondary schools in the country, is offered as one attempt to address the deficit. In doing so, it is recognized that there is a great need for similar books on the larger numbers who attended primary schools

and on the smaller numbers who attended vocational schools, universities, teacher-training colleges and a range of other small institutions. Hopefully, as was expressed in Chapter 1, others will now be stimulated to engage in projects in relation to each of these aspects of the education sector, possibly using as a model the project upon which this book is based.

Notes

1 Introduction to Secondary School Education in Ireland: History, Memories and Life Stories, 1922–1962

1. For a comprehensive account of political developments associated with this scheme, see J. Walsh (2009). *The Politics of Expansion: The Transformation of Educational Policy in the Republic of Ireland, 1957–1972*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 182–194.
2. See T. O'Donoghue (1999). *The Catholic Church and the Secondary School Curriculum in Ireland, 1922–1962*. New York: Peter Lang, p. 23.
3. One of the best overviews on this situation is still A. Green (1990). *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA*. London: Macmillan.
4. A variety of these are mentioned throughout Chapter 2.
5. Investment in Education Survey Team (1965). *Investment in Education – Report of the Survey Team*. Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 51.
6. See, for example, J. Coolahan (1981). *Irish Education: History and Structure*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration; E. Doyle (2000). *Leading the Way: Managing Voluntary Secondary Schools*. Dublin: Secretariat of Secondary Schools; S. Farren (1995). *The Politics of Irish Education, 1920–1965*. Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast; D. Mulcahy and D. O'Sullivan (1989). *Irish Educational Policy: Process and Structure*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration; S. Ó Búachalla (1988). *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press; D. O'Sullivan (Ed.) (2005). *Cultural Politics and Irish Education since the 1950s*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration; E. Randles (1975). *Post-primary Education in Ireland, 1957–1970*. Dublin: Veritas Publications.
7. The Irish Churches were involved in education, not only in Ireland, but overseas. This involved providing schools for the children of those in Irish diasporic communities throughout the English-speaking world as well as children in mission lands. On this, see D. Murphy (2000). *A History of Irish Emigrant and Missionary Education*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.
8. Regarding university education for women, for example, see J. Harford (2008). *The Opening of University Education to Women in Ireland*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.
9. See M. O'Connor (2010). *The Development of Infant Education in Ireland, 1838–1948: Epochs and Eras*. Oxford: Peter Lang; T. Walsh (2012). *Primary Education in Ireland, 1897–1990*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
10. See, for example, V. Jones (2006). *A Gaelic Experiment: The Preparatory System, 1926–1961, and Coláiste Móibhí*. Dublin: The Woodfield Press.
11. For a history of the schools' inspectors, see J. Coolahan and P. F. O'Donovan (2009). *A History of Ireland's School Inspectorate, 1831–2008*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

12. Two exceptions in this regard are B. MacMahon (1992). *The Master*. Dublin: The Poolbeg Press, and T. J. McElligott (1986). *This Teaching Life – A Memoir of Schooldays in Ireland*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press. For an account of lay teachers in Catholic schools, see P. Duffy (1967). *The Lay Teacher*. Dublin: Fallons. For a history of the teachers' unions, see J. Coolahan (1984). *The ASTI and Post-primary Education in Ireland, 1909–1984*. Dublin: The Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland; J. Logan (1999). *Teachers' Union: The Teachers' Union of Ireland and Its Forerunners in Irish Education, 1899–1994*. Dublin: A. and A. Farmar; T. J. O'Connell (1968). *100 Years of Progress: The Story of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 1868–1968*. Dublin: The INTO.
13. See, for example, A. Taylor (2010). *To School through the Fields*. Dublin: Brandon Books.
14. For an overview on the evidence, see B. Arnold (2009). *The Irish Gulag: How the State Betrayed Its Innocent Children*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan; M. Raftery (1999). *Suffer the Little Children: The Inside of Ireland's Industrial Schools*. Dublin: New Island Books.
15. See, for example, P. Doyle (1989). *The God Squad*. London: Corgi Books.
16. See, for example, M. Coleman (2007). The abuse of children in Irish Charter Schools in the early nineteenth century, in A. Potts and T. O'Donoghue (Eds.) *Schools as Dangerous Places*. New York: Cambria Press, pp. 55–86.
17. For extracts in this regard, see A. N. Jeffares and A. Kamm (Eds.) (1987). *Irish Childhoods: An Anthology*. London: Collins. An exception is P. O'Callaghan and P. Lawlor (2012). *Making a Difference: Stories of Inspirational Teachers*. Dublin: The Super Generation.
18. V. Minichiello, R. Arone, B. Timewell and L. Alexander (1991). *In-depth Interviewing: Researching People*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, p. 166.
19. T. O'Donoghue and R. Brooker (1993). 'Education through the artist's eye: A critical interpretation of the recollections and viewpoints of selected Queensland artists', *Australian Art Education*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 18–25.
20. S. Rolls, H. Plauborg and M. Baver (Eds.) (2009). *Teachers' Career Trajectories and Work Lives*. The Netherlands: Springer.
21. D. Lortie (1975). *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
22. P. Sikes, L. Measor and P. Woods (1985). *Teachers' Careers: Crises and Continuities*. London: Falmer.
23. A. M. Huberman (1993). *The Lives of Teachers*. New York: Cassell.
24. R. Fessler and J. C. Christensen (1992). *The Teacher Career Cycle: Understanding and Guiding the Professional Development of Teachers*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
25. See T. O'Donoghue and R. Brooker (1993). 'Education through the artist's eye: A critical interpretation of the recollections and viewpoints of selected Queensland artists', p. 19.
26. P. Abbs (1974). *Autobiography in Education*. London: Heinemann.
27. V. Goertzel and M. G. Goertzel (1962). *Cradles of Eminence*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co.; *Three Hundred Eminent Personalities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
28. B. Bloom (1985). *Developing Talent in Young People*. New York: Ballantine Books.

29. See, for example, W. Hughes and R. Dawson (1995). 'Memories of school: Adult dyslexics recall their school days', *Support for Learning*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 181–184.
30. See, for example, J. A. Patterson, K. A. Mickelson, M. L. Hester and J. Wyrick (2011). 'Remembering teachers in a segregated school', *Urban Education*, Vol. 46, pp. 267–291.
31. See, for example, T. H. Claire (2011). *An Investigation of the Perspectives of Ex-pupils of a Special School with Moderate Learning Difficulties on Their Schooling*. Unpublished EdD Thesis, University of Birmingham.
32. P. Gardner and P. Cunningham (1997). 'Oral history and teachers' professional practice', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1997, pp. 331–342.
33. R. L. Leight and A. D. Rinehart (1999). *Country School Memories: An Oral History of One-room Schooling*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
34. M. Punch (1977). *Progressive Retreat: A Sociological Study of Dartington Hall School*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
35. G. W. Allport (1942). *The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Research*. New York: Social Science Research Council.
36. N. K. Denzin (1989). *The Research Act*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
37. See I. F. Goodson (Ed.) (1992). *Studying Teachers' Lives*. London: Routledge, p. 6.
38. L. Abrams (2014). 'Memory as both source and subject of study: The transformations of oral history', in S. Berger and B. Niven (Eds.) *Writing the History of Memory*. London: Bloomsbury, p. 97.
39. Ibid., p. 98.
40. G. W. Allport (1942). *The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Research*, p. 78.

2 The Broad Background to Secondary School Education in Ireland, 1922–1962

1. For an overview of these see J. Coolahan (1981). *Irish Education: History and Structure*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.
2. Ibid., p. 8.
3. See S. Dunn (1988). 'Education, religion and cultural change in the Republic of Ireland', in W. Tulasiewicz and C. Brock (Eds.) *Christianity and Educational Provision in International Perspective*. London: Routledge, pp. 89–116.
4. Ibid.
5. This is dealt with in detail in T. O'Donoghue (2006). *Bilingual Education in Pre-independent Irish-Speaking Ireland, 1800–1922*. Ceredigion, Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, pp. 24–31.
6. See M. Wall (1976). *The Penal Laws, 1691–1760*. Dundalk: Dundalgan Press.
7. The classic work on this is A. McManus (2004). *The Irish Hedge School and Its Books, 1695–1831*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.
8. For the establishment of Protestant schools within the context of the developments of Protestantism in Ireland see D. Bowen (1978). *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland, 1800–1870: A Study of Protestant Catholic Relations between the Union and Disestablishment*. Dublin: Gill and MacMillan.

9. See, for example, K. Milne (1997). *The Charter Schools of Ireland 1730–1830*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.
10. See T. O'Donoghue and J. Harford (2011). 'Church–State relations in Irish education', *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 316–317.
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12. See D. Kerr (1982). *Peel, Priests and Politics*. Oxford: Clarendon.
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Index