

## History

The history of our school is very much linked with the history of the locality and particularly with that of the Inchicore Railway. The establishment of the school was a direct response to the needs of the area at the time. It was built on the site of what was the Cow and Calf Inn. Let's journey back a little in time!

The year is 1729. An Act of Parliament in this year established Ireland's first turnpike or toll road. It went from James' Street through Kilmainham and Inchicore, past the Cow and Calf Inn to Kilcullen, County Kildare. The Kilcullen Road Company - a Turnpike Trust - maintained this road. In turn the Trust charged toll fees at various gates along this road. Sample fees for 1787 were as follows:

A coach with 4 horses was charged 1 shilling (5 pence) per horse

A horse and cart was charged 1 old penny

A horse only was charged 1 old penny

Droves of domestic animals were charged various amounts per score (20)

In fact the Cow and Calf Inn was situated at a very important road junction. A second Turnpike road, operated by The Mullingar Road Company between 1786 and 1854, went along Inchicore Road, also passing by the Cow and Calf Inn, through lower Ballyfermot and Palmerstown.

In the early 1800's Inchicore was an area of fields and pastures. The Cow and Calf Inn was on land owned by Lord Cloncurry. Nearby was the Cow and Calf farm, which stretched along Grattan Crescent and lower Tyrconnell Road. An Act of Parliament to establish a railway was passed in 1844. Thus began the Great Southern and Western Railway Company, later C.I.E. at Inchicore. The newly formed Railroad Company acquired a seventy-three acre site locally. Here the Railroad began, but due to the Great Famine it was not completed until October 1849.

The expansion of the railway works created a need for houses in the area. The Railroad Company built houses for their workers, beginning with North and South Terrace and Inchicore Square. Later other terraces were built. A school was also a necessity and with the construction of the Inchicore National Schools or Model Schools came the demise of the Cow and Calf Inn, as it was on this very site, on land belonging to the Railroad Company, and with their financial assistance, that the school was built in 1853.

While the National School System was established in 1831, and schools were open to pupils of all denominations, many Catholics viewed the schools at the time as another attempt to proselytise, and continued, when they could afford it, to use "Hedge Schools" to educate their children.

Initially when the schools opened in October 1854, there were three separate schools here, an infant school, a girl's school and a boy's school. The schools were

always referred to as the “Model School”. The building was a model or example of the then current vision of what should constitute a school, hence the name. It was built to a definite plan, had a very precise furniture layout. Pupils’ desks were fixed to the floor to ensure that the pupils always sat in the same regimented way. All aspects of daily life in school were highly regimented, the pupils marched about and the lesson in hand had to be clearly on display. Where heating was provided, it was from the fireplaces in each classroom, the fuel often provided by the pupils. The Irish language was not taught, and any Irish history had to be suspect. Parents had to certify in a special “Religious Instruction Certificates” book the kind of religious instruction they wanted for their child, where the pupil’s religion differed from that of the teacher. The Inspector also was obliged to sign this certificate. The daily routine was strictly timetabled, with frequent inspections. In some Model Schools students were coached and instructed as future teachers.

Here, in the Model School, up to the 1920’s, apprentices from the local Railroad Company attended evening school.

In 1934 part of the boy’s playground was acquired by Dublin Corporation to widen Grattan Crescent. Some of the horse chestnut trees were then lost and the boy’s play area reduced. The lower wall with its railings was built at this time.

Through the course of its long and illustrious history, the school had some famous people on its staff and in turn produced many noteworthy pupils. The noted dramatist T.C. Murray was headmaster in the boy’s school until his retirement in 1932. Another headmaster was the acclaimed singer, Elias (“Bunty”) Maguire, who won the gold medal for tenor the year after John Mc McCormack, and whose son Hugh Maguire was the acclaimed violinist. Mr. George Brown, headmaster until 1976, organised a night school for the young people of the area and trained the once-famous Inchicore Hibernian’s GAA football team. The Irish poet Caoimhín Ó Conghaile was also on the staff of the boy’s school.

Perhaps the most famous pupil, from Phoenix Street, was the poet Thomas Kinsella, born in 1928, who received his Primary Education at “The Model” from 1932 until 1940. Mr. Kinsella is especially noted for his translation of the Irish epic, the “Táin”, or “Cattle Raid of Cooley”, the oldest Epic Tale in Western Europe.

The children of Maurice Walsh of “Quiet Man” fame also attended the Model. Many pupils over the years brought honours to the schools through their efforts at the various “feiseanna”. Much later, Pat David Nolan, who plays “Barry” in the current T.V. soap “Fair City”, attended until fourth class. Recently the schoolyard was used in the filming of “Angela’s Ashes”

Over the years, the school belonged to various parishes: St. Jude’s, James’ Street, St. Michael’s Inchicore and from September 1972, to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate Inchicore.

Initially the ethos would have been that of the British Establishment and Church of England, despite the official effort to maintain otherwise. It was to counteract the

effects of the Model School, that the Oblate Fathers, at the invitation of the Catholic Hierarchy, opened the House of Retreat in Inchicore in 1861. In 1916, at the height of the Easter Rising, the Inspector wrote that work was progressing well, “despite local disturbance”. With the foundation of the State, the ethos of the school became Catholic. The Minister for Education was the school’s manager and the Office of Public Works was responsible for the maintenance of the building. An asbestos-covered diesel burner eventually provided central heating. The Infant School was absorbed into the other two schools in 1970. In 1972 an effort at modernisation was made, through the efforts of Father Joseph Horan O.M.I., whose mother once taught in the school. New toilets were built back to back for boys and girls, in what was once the infant schoolyard. At this time suspended ceilings were installed.

In the early hours of December first 1991, as a result of an intrusion, a fire caused serious damage to part of the building. In the course of refurbishment, the timber wainscoting on the walls was removed. Concrete flooring replaced the worn wooden floors and the asbestos-covered diesel burner was replaced with a modern gas burner.

In September 2001 the boys and girls schools amalgamated. What were once three schools is now one single school - Inchicore National School, still called “The Model”!

We are one of the oldest schools in continuous use in Ireland, with a long and glorious tradition. We strive to educate the pupils entrusted to our care, in keeping with the great tradition of our noble predecessors.

Sources of information:

Inchicore Kilmainham and District by Seosamh Ó Broin

Mr George Brown (RIP) former headmaster

The Internet

J. Ahern

Last Headmaster Inchicore Boys “Model” National School