

Mrs Rita O'Donnell with  
First Holy Communicants  
at Grange Church June  
1956.



Master Connolly with pupils at Grange School.

# GRANGE NATIONAL SCHOOL 1867–1967

By Miriam Gallagher

*Introduction (by Michael Quinlan)*

The National Schools Act 1831 allowed the setting up of Catholic Schools in Ireland. These buildings were generally built by voluntary labour and public subscription on land gifted by landlords. The government of Great Britain and Ireland would then pay teachers' salaries. A local contribution was also demanded. After Catholic Emancipation 1829 the building of churches took priority. Schools should have followed but Famine intervened, and it was not until the late 1840s and 1850s that the main thrust of national school building began.

A brief look at education in Ireland may be worthwhile. There is a long tradition of learning going back to pre-Christian times when Brehon Laws laid down that children in fosterage were to be taught. Monastic schools flourished in the Christian era. The sobriquet 'Island of Saints and Scholars' is richly deserved. Many monks and scholars travelled abroad to spread Christianity and learning. Centuries of invasion and oppression followed, and Elizabethan policies of undermining religion and language were continued by the Planters and Irish education moved underground and was unavailable to the vast majority of Catholics. Gearoid Iarla (Gerald Fitzgerald, 3rd Earl of Desmond 1338-1398) did attempt to found a university in Drogheda but was only briefly successful. The founding charter for Trinity College, Dublin dates from 1592. In the 17th century, James I set up some Royal Schools and Charles I founded King's Hospital School in Dublin. Catholic education was not catered for, and the passing of Penal Laws after the Williamite Wars forbade Catholic education for much of the 18th century.

Protestant religious societies set up schools, some known as Charter Schools and encouraged Catholics to attend. Towards the end of the century, a certain relaxation tolerated Catholic foundations as in Nano Nagle's Presentation Order 1776 and Edmund Ignatius Rice's Christian Brothers.



Other Orders followed, but the majority of schools were hedge schools, which were pay schools and restricted to those who could afford to pay. Children of wealthy families went abroad, and Irish Colleges educated young men for the priesthood. In 1824, it was estimated that there were 11,000 schools in Ireland, mostly hedge schools.

Twenty years after the passing of the National Schools Act, 4,500 schools had enrolments of 250,000 pupils and by 1900 there were 1,250,000 pupils attending 8,700 schools. An Act of 1878 linked the payment of teachers to the results of their pupils in an annual examination. This system was discontinued in 1922.

Less than 10% of children attended secondary school and only about 1% successfully completed the Senior Grade examinations (equivalent to Leaving Certificate) at the end of 19th and early 20th centuries. After 1921, there was little change in the control and management of education but the curriculum was changed in both primary and secondary sectors to emphasise Irish language, history and culture. In 1924, the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Examinations were introduced; 1926 the Schools Attendance Act and in 1930 the Vocational Education Act. Northern Ireland moved towards the English system of education, and the 11 Plus Examinations continued until 2002. Free second level education was introduced in 1967.

Here in the Republic, the first comprehensive school opened in 1966 and the then Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, made the historic announcement of free post-primary education. From September 1967, free transport was made available for those more than three miles from school. School Record Cards replaced the Primary Certificate. Boards of Management were set up in the 1970s and new curricula, multi-denominational schools and Gaelscoileanna, marked the final decades of the century. There has been change, major change. An indicator can lie in the fact that in the mid-1960s, less than 20% of students took the Leaving Certificate; this rose to over 80% in the mid-1990s.

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### *Grange School Building*

**T**he building, known affectionately by local people, as “The School” at Upper Grange, was built in 1867 as a national school, and though not operated as such since 1967, it can still be described as “an attractive, well-proportioned building, which despite a change of use, retains its original external appearance” according to the [National Inventory of Architectural Heritage \(NIAH\) Appraisal](#). The Appraisal goes on to state that “Features such as the sash windows and slate roof enhance the façade and help conserve the original aspect

of the building. The separate entrances clearly articulate the classrooms for girls and boys, which were a common feature of the educational system in Ireland in the nineteenth century. Prominently sited, this former school provides a pleasing roadside feature. The plaque reads: 'Grange National Schools Erected by SFW de Salis Esq 1867'. The school was erected by John Francis William, 6th Count de Salis-Soglio, who was a British diplomat and coin connoisseur and lived between London and Grange Hill". Grange Hill subsequently became known as Lough Gur House.

According to the NIAH description, the building is a "detached seven-bay single-storey former national school, built in 1867. Comprising gable-fronted end bays and gable-fronted breakfront to front (west) elevation, single-bay single-storey extensions and gable-fronted extension to rear (east) elevation. Now in use as a community hall. Pitched slate roof having render chimneystacks and cast-iron rainwater goods. Roughcast rendered walls with inscribed limestone plaque to breakfront. Tripartite openings to end bays having round-headed opening with flanking square-headed openings having one-over-one pane timber sliding sash windows and shared limestone sills. Square-headed openings with six-over-six pane timber sliding sash windows and limestone sills. Square-headed openings to breakfront having timber battened doors. A pair of square-profile concrete piers to the west with cast-iron post box, single-leaf cast-iron gate and stile. A pair of square-profile concrete piers to the south-west having single-leaf cast-iron gate".

The Parish Priest, who presided over Bruff Parish when Grange School was built, was Rev Andrew Ryan; however, he was not directly involved in the commissioning of the school, which was a gift from the de Salis family to the people of Grange. At that time, national education was non-denominational. The school remained in the ownership of the de Salis family until Limerick County Council acquired it.

It is noted from the Irish Architectural Archive that Limerick Architect, Patrick Joseph Sheahan, was assigned to a Grange School building project tender process in 1932-33. According to the archive, tender invitations issued in May 1933. However, a report carried by the *Limerick Leader* in February 1932 indicated that the closing date for receipt of tenders was 5th March 1932. In any event, the additions and alterations to Grange School were carried out.

A national school education was provided to the many children of Grange Parish over more than a century, providing a foundation for their lives ahead of them, and for many, to go on to further their



Original Grange School building of 1867.

education and training in a variety of callings, occupations, trades and professions. Over the years, many ex-scholars remained within the parish, working the land, employed within the parish or commuting to employment outside the parish, to provide for their families. Some went on to live elsewhere, at other locations in Ireland and overseas; and perhaps to make a mark in life, there.

Some died or suffered great pain or injury while fighting for the freedom of their country, Eire.

Irrespective of the life-paths taken by those who attended Grange School, mention of the school to an ex-scholar is likely to provoke a flood of memories, many of which will be of a nostalgic and benign nature while some others may be less pleasant.

Since the school closed as an educational institution in 1967, it has been utilised as a community resource for several and changing purposes or functions.



Last day at Grange School 1967. *Front row:* Gerard Barry, Michael Barry, Joe Hourigan, Gerard O'Connell, Kieran Ryan. *Second row:* Marie Hourigan, Nuala Hourigan, John Dooley, Pat O'Brien, Minie O'Brien, Liam Hourigan, Margaret Flavin. *Third row:* Anne Dooley, Mary Dooley, Pat Higgins, Nora Flavin, Ann Flavin, Patricia Casey, Marie Ryan. *Fourth row:* Mike Madden, Seamus Higgins, Jimmy Brosnan, Mary Bourke, Bernadette Reardon, Bridget O'Connell. *Back row:* Theresa Flavin, Tommy Doherty, Gerard Doherty, Brendan Madden, Bridie Brosnan, Helen O'Connell, Eileen Wrenn, Catherine Lombard, Tony Hourigan, Gerard Higgins, Gretta Higgins.

These include meetings of associations and groups, card-playing, set-dancing and boy scouts. The ICA have used the facility over the years. The Grange Cross Residents Association (GCRA Ltd) commenced using it, following its inception three years ago. The building fell into disrepair over the years, but noticeably, since the advent of the

GCRA and the consequential involvement of Limerick City & County Council, significant and clear improvements have happened, and will continue to be made to the building and the grounds upon which it rests. Therefore, it is hoped that this historic and attractive building will provide a community facility for all Grange people into the long-term future.

Much of what follows, regarding the history of the school, unless otherwise indicated, is taken from, or is an adaptation of, the article written by Patrick (Paddy) Clancy which appeared in *The Dawn*. Paddy was an uncle of Angela, Jack and Seoirse Clancy of Grange.

#### *Illustrious and Famous Persons*

A number of distinguished and famous persons learned their 'ABC', 'sums' and obtained a general grounding for life at Grange National School over the years. Patrick

Clancy has named many. These include patriot, Seoirse Clancy, Mayor of Limerick, who was murdered by Crown forces in 1921; Major JG O'Dwyer, who brought equestrian fame to Ireland when he was the principal rider on the Irish Army jumping team at many equestrian events around the world as well as in Ireland. In the field of politics, Patrick Clancy, who was a TD for Limerick in the 1920s and 1930s and Robert Ryan, TD for Limerick in the 1930s and 1940s, were schooled at Grange.

A number of Grange School scholars went on to clerical life including Dr Patrick O'Neill, Bishop of Limerick; Father John Casey and his brothers, Father Paddy and Father Joe; Fathers John, Francis and Pat Hogan of Holy Cross Post Office; Father Tim Greene; Father C Barry, Fr Patrick Valentine Higgins and Master Connolly's own son, Father Michael.

Ned (Egan) Clancy, brother of Mayor Clancy, who attended Grange School, was well known in hurling circles in the 'Tyler Mackey' era. He played with the Fedamore team and represented his county, Limerick. Egan immigrated to the USA, where he continued his hurling pursuits, and when he died at the untimely age of 44 years, he was the *Boston Irish News* Editor. Egan penned quite a few verses about his native County Limerick, particularly Grange and Lough Gur. Patrick Clancy recalled the opening and closing lines of such a poem about Grange School: "*I see the whitewashed gable now, beside the old boreen, the hawthorn hedge, the gravelled walk and the playground nice and green*" – opening lines; "*And then at last when summer came, the master would arrange, for six long weeks of sport and play around the hills of Grange*" – closing lines.

No doubt, this list of notable persons has grown since Patrick Clancy wrote his account. Fr John Donworth is just but one to come to mind.

#### *The Earlier School Years*

The first two teachers, principals both, appointed to Grange School were Mr Coffey and his wife, to teach boys and girls, respectively. These teachers taught at the school until they retired, Mr Coffey in 1892 and Mrs Coffey in 1895.

In 1892, Mr James Connolly was appointed to succeed Mr Coffey, and he taught at Grange until 1931. Mrs Coffey was replaced by Miss Nora Meade, who taught girls until 1929. Miss Meade was assisted by her sister, Miss Annie Meade, who, voluntarily without salary, provided her services. Annie Meade, though she spent some years in the teacher training college, was not a qualified teacher as she did not complete her training.

The Meade sisters were dedicated to the task of educating, and at times taught subjects that were outside the curriculum, such as music and drama. Seoirse Clancy, who went on to become Mayor of Limerick City, a lover of music, is reputed to have visited the girls' school, from time to time, in order to listen to the music being played there.

Following Irish Independence for the twenty-six counties, the new Irish

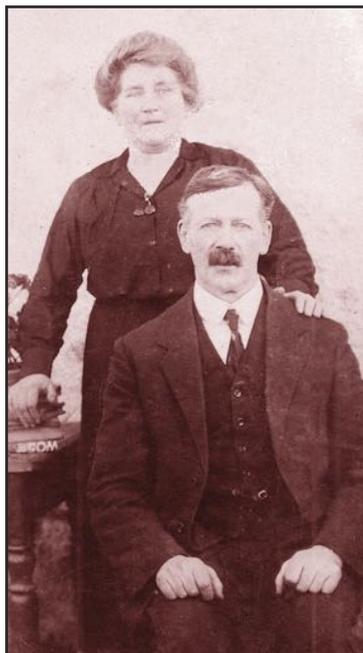
Government decided that the Irish language should be taught in national schools. When the Meade sisters underwent teacher training, the Irish language was not a school subject, and consequently they were not qualified to teach Irish. Miss Annie Meade discontinued her voluntary work, and Miss Alice Conway was appointed, becoming the first teacher of the Irish language at Grange School for girls.

Miss Nora Meade, who retired in 1929, was replaced by Mrs Rita O'Donnell, who taught with Miss Conway for a considerable number of years. Miss Conway married Jimmy Power of Fedamore and continued to teach at Grange until she left to take up a teaching position in West Limerick, where she taught until her death. Mrs O'Donnell taught in Grange until her retirement in 1965. Like her predecessor, Miss Nora Meade, she taught extra-curricular subjects – piano, poetry reading and drama.

Just as with Miss Nora Meade, Mr Connolly was not qualified to teach Irish when it was added to the subjects to be taught formally in national schools. Consequently, Miss Cahill was appointed to teach 'infants' and the subject of Irish. After two years, Miss Cahill vacated her teaching post and was replaced by Miss Smyth, who in turn, after three years, was replaced by Miss Moloney. Miss Moloney, an able teacher according to Patrick Clancy, subsequently left to take up a principal post in her native O'Brien's Bridge in County Clare. Miss Moloney was replaced by Mr O'Reilly, who, in turn, was replaced by Mr Jones. Mr Leahy also taught at Grange School. Apart from the post of 'Principal', teachers were titled "Assistant to the Principal".

#### *Master Connolly*

Patrick Clancy, in his history of Grange School, states that Mr James Connolly taught him and drawing from his own personal experiences, lauds the teaching acumen and teaching style of Mr Connolly, who introduced several extra-curricular subjects to the great benefit of the scholars. Patrick described him as not only a teacher but an institution; he had a store of knowledge which he delighted in imparting to others. Patrick stated, *inter alia*, *I think he was one of the best teachers ever to stand in front of a class, just like Miss Meade and Mrs O'Donnell. He also went way outside his brief and taught such subjects as science, extended geography and history. He even took Bible history at Sunday school. He also taught Euclid, trigonometry and drill. He even brought what he called his gardening class into his*



Margaret and James Connolly NT.

own magnificently kept garden to demonstrate to them, first hand, how to graft an apple tree and many other aspects of gardening. He even encouraged the boys with a flair to cultivate a plot at home, and he was always at hand to give them advice on what to do and how it was done.

Patrick attributed Mr Connolly's popularity as a teacher as the reason for scholars from many districts outside of Grange to have attended Grange School by choice. He mentioned several surnames including: Murnane, Hedderman, Hynes, Ryan, Brennan and McNamara, all from Lough Gur, parish of Knockainey; Ryan, Foley and Garvey of Ballingoola, all from the parish of Herbertstown; Ryan of Griffin's Cross in the parish of Fedamore; Keating of the Palatine Road, Bruff; Mulcahy from the Pike; Leahy and O'Brien from Ballingirlough; and O'Rourke, O'Farrell, Punch, Green and Russell from the Meanus area.

Many students during Patrick Clancy's years at Grange School were put forward for scholarships. Fr John Casey, a brilliant student, won a scholarship as did Bill Madden and Joe Carmody to the Albert College in Dublin. Master Connolly was proud of those boys and their achievements.

Referring to Master Connolly's rare sense of humour, Patrick remembered one pupil who left Grange School to attend another school, but returned to Grange after a short time. On the day of his return, the Master welcomed him with the rhyme – "*And like the hare whom hounds and horns pursue, he hastens to the place from whence he first flew*". The pupil then proceeded to occupy his old desk position, and there were no questions from the Master.

Master Connolly delighted in the hunt, and would listen attentively to an account from some boy who witnessed the chase in full. He would be pleased if the fox outwitted the hounds.

Patrick recalled situations where some pupils were late in the mornings, and one pupil was dispatched by the Master to see if the "stragglers" were coming before he closed the roll book, and upon arrival they would be greeted by the Master with the salutation "*The top of the morning to you Larry Muldoon*". If a pupil gave the Master a stupid answer to what he considered a simple question, he would respond as follows – "*I am debating as to whether I will give you a running 'dunt' or a kidney driver*". Invariably, a mere slap of his bamboo cane was the outcome.

If the Master wished to establish if a boy was paying attention to him, he would, 'out of the blue' ask the pupil to quote from any of a number of poems that included – *Casablanca*; Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, Scott's *The Lady of the Lake* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*.

Patrick wrote, recalling his own time at Grange School – "I can bring back memories of the very large classroom near the hall, the leather-topped table where the Master sat, and on the mantelpiece stood a lovely old Victorian clock, which

ticked the best part of our lives away, unknown to us. At each side of the clock, but higher up, was a huge map of the world.”

It is clear from Patrick Clancy’s recollections, and indeed, from word of mouth, handed down from Patrick’s contemporaries, who were also taught by Master Connolly, that students had an exceptionally high regard for this teacher, and for good reason. Clearly, the respect was mutual. It seems appropriate, therefore, to recall Goldsmith’s poem, at this juncture:

“*The Village Schoolmaster*” by Oliver Goldsmith

<i>Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way, With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay, There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule, The village master taught his little school; A man severe he was, and stern to view, I knew him well, and every truant knew; Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace The day's disasters in his morning face; Full well they laugh'd with counterfeited glee, At all his jokes, for many a joke had he: Full well the busy whisper, circling round, Convey'd the dismal tidings when he frown'd: Yet he was kind; or if severe in aught, The love he bore to learning was in fault.</i>	<i>The village all declar'd how much he knew; 'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too: Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage, And e'en the story ran that he could gauge. In arguing too, the parson own'd his skill, For e'en though vanquish'd he could argue still; While words of learned length and thund'ring sound Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd around; And still they gaz'd and still the wonder grew, That one small head could carry all he knew. But past is all his fame;- the very spot Where many a time he triumph'd is forgot.</i>
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*Mr Thomas Lynch*

When Master Connolly retired in 1931, he was succeeded by Mr Thomas Lynch, who was the principal teacher until his retirement in 1967, when Grange National School closed down, on foot of government policy on education. Master Lynch and his family occupied the teacher residence, located adjacent to the school, from the time the Connolly family vacated it until his retirement in 1967. The house is no longer in existence – the grounds upon which it stood form part of the old school property, now owned by Limerick City & County Council.

The *Limerick Leader* of 27th February 1932 carried the report, “*A Teacher Gael Gets Presentations on Promotion to County Limerick School* – We take the following from a recent issue of “*The Meath Chronicle*.” The following are extracts from the *Limerick Leader* report.

‘Mr Thomas Lynch, NT, Dunshaughlin, has been appointed Principal of Grange National School, near Bruff, Co Limerick. Mr Lynch has been in Meath for the last six or eight years and in that period proved himself a very capable teacher, winning high praise... clergy and parents, as well as endearing himself to

the pupils. An enthusiastic Gael, he was a member of the County Committee of the GAA, and also of the County body of the Gaelic League. He took a particular interest in hurling and identified himself in a whole-hearted way with the fortunes of the Meath County team. We regret Mr Lynch's departure, but we are sure he will not forget the many warm friends he made in Meath, and that he will pay the Royal County an occasional visit.

The *Limerick Leader* report went on to detail a number of presentations that were made to Mr Lynch, as had been reported by the *Drogheda Independent*.

As well as being dedicated to his teaching profession, Thomas Lynch was a very serious collector and recorder of folklore and contributed to the National Folklore Collection, held at UCD, Dublin. Such was the importance of his contribution that it was the subject of a whole chapter in a book published in 2012 by UCD in honour of the renowned folklorist and author, Dáithí Ó hÓgáin. The chapter was written by Bairbre Ní Fhloinn of the Folklore Department, UCD. An article to be found elsewhere in this book is dedicated to the said chapter by Ní Fhloinn, titled "A Map of Lough Gur".

*Mrs Rita O'Donnell, NT*

Mrs O'Donnell taught at Grange from the very late 1920s until her retirement in 1965. What follows are extracts from a report in the *Limerick Leader* in early 1930. The report from a "Correspondent" was headed "Concert and Play – Highly enjoyable Variety Entertainment".

"The first term's work at the Grange National Schools [*Girls' School and Boys' School at the time*] was ended happily for children, parents and teachers by a grand variety entertainment produced by the school children, and organised by Mrs O'Donnell, NT. The concert, play and tableau were certainly creditable to teacher and pupils, and it is hoped that Mrs O'Donnell will long be left over her pupils, for whom she has done so much already.

"As the curtain went up, both schools were on the stage and with heart and spirit sang beautifully a 'Welcome' chorus. The senior girls showed perfect training in their rendering of 'The Fairy Boy' and 'Ban Cnuic Eireann Oig'; while the senior boys stirred every heart with 'Let Erin Remember'.

"The singing items were wisely garnished with three excellent dance items. Miss Mairin Casey received long applause for her excellent dancing of an Irish jig, as also did Masters Clancy and Donovan with Misses Dooley and Connolly for the four-hand reel; while Miss Cissie Punch did special credit to the single reel.

"The concert items came to a close when Master Connie Flynn came outside the curtain and sang 'Sinbad the Sailor'. The full house encored and encored, and when he re-appeared to sing 'The Egg', the applause lasted some time.

"Mrs O'Donnell accompanied her pupils all through on the piano.

“Immediately Master Flynn had finished, the curtain went up and until its drop the audience were in one long roar of laughter at the excellent staging of ‘Oh, Lawsy Me’. The characters were well chosen. Miss Q Burke could scarcely be surpassed in her clever acting of ‘Dr Bunney’s charwoman’, and Dr Bunney himself (Master Jim Madden) did remarkably well. The people next door – ‘Mr and Mrs Digby Dix’ (Misses D Donworth and May Clancy) were excellent in their respective parts, and surely those present will never forget the clever acting of Master Connie Flynn as the ‘Unhandy Gardener’; while Master Joe Burke made an ideal policeman, doing his part splendidly.

“The play was followed by a tableau of the Nativity. This, too, was really beautiful. Miss Caitlin Burke as ‘Our Lady’, looked her part extremely well, and Miss L O’Brien garbed as ‘St Joseph’ was equally good. The shepherds, too, (Misses D Hayes and N Kirby) were very good, but the eight tiny angels



Girls of Grange School 1945. *Back row L to R:* Cassie Browne, Maggie Bourke, Violet Hogan, Delia Shanahan, Alice Hogan, Betty Stack, Josie Conway, Mary Hogan, Kitty Doyle, Noel Stack, Maeve O’Donoghue, Noelle Bourke. *Middle row (standing):* Peggy Ryan, Mary O’Donnell, Bina Lynch, Sadie Sheehan, Teresa Sheehan, Phil Madden, Phyllis Moloney, Sadie Kirby and Joan Dillon. *Front row (seated):* Mairead Hogan, Moira Doyle, Bernie O’Brien, Bridget Bourke, Anna Madden, Sheila O’Donovan, Josie Ryan, Marie Madden, Mary Madden, Josie Madden, Chrissie Doyle. *Kneeling in front:* Kathleen Stack, Mary Quinn, Peggy O’Donnell, Mary O’Dwyer, Mairéad Madden, B Conway, Betty Doyle, Nora Sheehan, Patsy Madden, Angela O’Dwyer, Nora Bourke.

looked perfect pictures with their silver wings. They were Misses B Harty, D Ryan, MA Casey, R Houlihan, N Dillon, B Burke, A Sheehan and M Flynn.

“The entertainment closed with the school song and with the deep gratitude of every parent heart. Mrs O’Donnell had, too, the pleasure of receiving the greatest appreciation from the overcrowded house.”

#### *The Final Years and Closure*

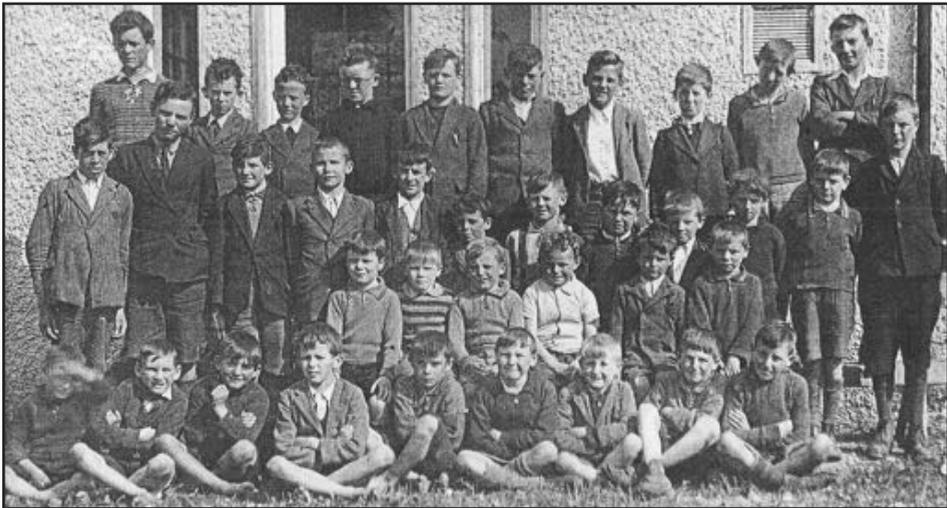
One of the last teachers to have taught at Grange School was Miss Sheila Dillon, a native of County Kerry. She took up her position in 1965, and when the school

was closed in 1967, she transferred to Bruff National School. Miss Dillon became Mrs James (Jimmy) Fitzgerald. Jimmy (deceased) was a local, well-known and well-liked farmer. Sheila still resides in Grange.

The following is a 'Question' asked in Dáil Éireann on 23rd February 1967, and the 'Answer' provided:

Mr T O'Donnell, TD, asked the Minister for Education – "Whether it is proposed to close Grange National School, County Limerick; and, if so, the reasons for this decision, and the proposed alternative arrangements for accommodating the pupils."

Mr O'Malley replied – "It is proposed that the two-teacher school at Grange be closed and that the children be conveyed on a transport service, which would be free to the children concerned, to the schools in Bruff, where there is adequate accommodation for them. This proposal has been made in the best educational interests of the pupils concerned."



Boys of Grange School 1945. *Back row L to R:* Francis Bourke, Kevin Lynch, John Power, Ted O'Brien, Gussie Bourke, Jimmy Madden, Christy Hogan, John O'Dwyer, Christy Kirby, Joe O'Shea. *Middle row:* Donal Madden, Tommy O'Brien, Martin O'Grady, Willie O'Brien, Donie O'Dwyer, Johnny Maher, Anthony Bourke, Willie Stack, Johnny Doyle, Pa Keating, Martin O'Sullivan, Denis Hynes. *Front row:* Tom O'Donoghue, Mike Power, Jimmy O'Donnell, Willie Hogan, Willie Bourke, Tony Hogan. *Seated cross-legged in front:* John Keating, Michael Quinn, Jimmy Keating, Michael Doyle, John Hogan, Dan O'Donnell, Mick O'Dwyer, Pat Hogan, Mike O'Donnell.

Grange National School shut its doors on 3rd July 1967 following a century of service. Many will remember the school and for a myriad of reasons. One man, in particular, Paul Ryan, formerly of Rahin, may have a unique reason to remember his 'last' day as it was also his 'first' day. That fateful day in 1967 was Paul's first day at school, and before that day was out, his school in Grange had shut its door to pupils.

The school registration records for many decades would have been destroyed some years ago, were it not for the vigilance of Seoirse Clancy Builders who retrieved the records from a rubbish skip. Indeed, Paul Ryan is recorded as the last pupil to



John Gallagher and Paul Ryan. Paul was the last pupil registered at Grange School in 1967.

be registered at Grange School. The registrations of some 900 former pupils are also recorded, and an article on those registrations will be found in this book. Another article again deals with the essays penned in their copybooks by a number of pupils in the years 1937/1938, which are safely preserved in the Folklore Department of University College Dublin. The Grange School pupils who participated in this project were mentored and guided by Thomas Lynch. These are treasures to be protected for the information and enjoyment of future generations. I suspect that more than a few of the living will be eager to peruse them.

#### *Nora and John Power*

Reference has already been made to the teacher, Miss Alice Conway, later Mrs Jimmy Power, who taught at Grange, being the first Irish teacher appointed to the school. Mr Power died at a young age in a road accident. Mrs Power's daughter, Nora, and her son, John, made contact with the book committee during the course of the book project. Nora lives in Dublin while John lives in Limerick. Nora subsequently wrote to the committee in which she lovingly recalled aspects of her childhood while living in Grange. It appears that Mrs Power and her family lived for a



Grange School in the 1930s. The children of Mrs Alice Power NT with their older cousin, Mary, on the left. Nora and Ned at the back with John at the front.

period (precise time not provided) in what subsequently became the home of George Shinnors, Veterinary Surgeon and his family. This property was an RIC Barracks at one time.

In her letter, Nora makes fond reference to the Corcass and its wildlife, geese visiting Lough Gur, the history and folklore of the Lough Gur area, and Grange Stone Circle and her discussions about it with Paddy Casey. In conclusion, Nora said, "I am glad and grateful to have spent so many childhood years steeped in the history of Grange and its neighbourhood". We are, indeed, glad to have heard from Nora and John.

#### *References and Notes:*

(1) <http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/niah>

(2) *Dáil Éireann - Volume 226 - 23rd February 1967 Ceisteanna—Questions. Oral Answers. - Closure of Schools*