

**DOMINICAN COLLEGE
MUCKROSS PARK**

A Century of Memories



1900-2000

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A Century of Memories **1900-2000**

Introduction

Welcome to this souvenir booklet, *A Century of Memories: Muckross Park 1900-2000*.

The emphasis in this booklet is on the day-to-day school life over one hundred years. Throughout that century, many major changes were taking place in the background, as the school expanded from a handful of students in 1900 to the present complement of 686 girls.

The introduction of free secondary education in 1966 accelerated this expansion, and in 1974 an extra stream was introduced, to cope with the numbers of students applying for places. In 1989, a Board of Management was established. Also in that year, Transition Year began to be developed, encouraging interests other than

the purely academic. In 1997, the Junior School was closed down. Now the school stands on the threshold of a further development, a new building which should be completed by 2003, and will accommodate 600 students.

The biggest change over the century has been the gradual diminution of the role of the Dominican sisters; only one now teaches in the school, and Muckross has its first lay Principal. The Dominican ethos is buried deep in the school, both past and present, and the odds are, as Muckross enters its second centenary, that the values of truth, honesty and a certain self-deprecation, coupled with a sense of humour and objectivity, will continue to prevail.



The Editor

...Muckross has lived through exciting times in our nation's history (perhaps the most exciting 68 years of the 800 since the Normans arrived), and the changes outside its walls have wrought change and development within.

Change is evidence of life, yet one thing has not changed and it is the principle on which Muckross is built: that Dominicans should 'with glad hearts praise, bless and teach'. This could be valid even for the much-vaunted twenty-first century.

Sister Bertranda OP, 1968



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Message from the Region Prioress

For Christians, the Millennium celebration is linked with the biblical practice of Jubilee and Sabbath.

*You shall let the land lie fallow;
that is, you shall practice
Sabbath;
You shall forgive debts, letting
forgiveness in;
You shall free captives and
proclaim liberty;
You shall find out what belongs
to whom and give it back;
You shall hold a great feast,
learning to sing the canticle of
'Jubilate'.*

[Proclaim Jubilee: Maria Harris]

The biblical celebration is a clarion call to stop. Stop and recall the years that are past. Remember whom you are, from whence you came and from what you need to free yourself. For the Jewish people, the year of Jubilee was a time to recall God's goodness to them. It was a time when they checked their relationship to God, to people and the earth. They set right what was out of order and celebrated their equilibrium and freedom.

As Christians, we are invited this

year to stop. Stop and recall the Christian Story. Where is Jesus Christ in my life? Through the Spirit of Jesus am I in a right relationship with God, people and the earth? What is holding me captive from celebrating life? Is there a song of thanksgiving in my heart?

It is with great joy that we as Dominican Sisters celebrate this year 2000. We recall the last hundred years of our story in Muckross Park. In the year 1900, St Mary's University College was transferred to Muckross Park. This provided for the right of more women to access third level education as attendance at the Royal University was denied to women. A first and second level school was also established.

I think it is true to say that over the decades the education provided at Muckross Park has held the vision and values of those pioneering Dominican women - values emanating from the vision of the human person. We accept that the person is created by God and so is precious. Each individual is unique, with distinctive gifts, and needs an atmosphere of

freedom, beauty and encouragement in order to develop them. The development of the whole person is important and so the strong tradition of drama, art, music and sport began and is still in evidence today. St Dominic wished his followers to study assiduously, to ask questions with the mind and heart which in truth will lead to social transformation.

In this year of Jubilee, as we celebrate a tradition of one hundred years of Dominican life and education in Muckross Park, we give thanks for the sisters, lay teachers, parents and students. We pray that the gift of St Dominic to the Church of his day may flourish in Ireland today. That those whose rights are denied today as in 1900 may have people to name the injustice and act upon it. That questions may be asked and answers sought to ensure that right relationships be restored between God, people and the earth. May we give praise and thanks to God. ✠

Sister Helen Mary Harmey, OP
Region Prioress



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Message from the Principal



Mrs. Anne McDermott, Deputy Principal and
Ms Patricia Fitzsimons, Principal

This is a special, privileged, year for everyone. It celebrates a new calendar millennium, it is Jubilee Year for the Church and we, at Muckross Park, mark one hundred years of Dominican education on the campus and begin our journey into the next hundred years.

On September 9, exactly one hundred years ago, the small group of Dominican sisters from Sion Hill who had, some months earlier, started a new foundation in Donnybrook, now opened their school for junior and senior girls. On that very day, Saturday 9 September 2000, one hundred years later, we in the school invite all the friends of Muckross to rejoice in and celebrate this event with us. We invite those associated with the school to pause and hold that moment that links us with the past, to give thanks for all that has gone before, to rejoice in the present and to dream the future.

Dominican education has always prided itself on being at the frontiers. It was this spirit of challenge and adventure that inspired Mother Patrick Sheil in Eccles Street to provide university education for women in 1885, when none of the universities would admit female students. At a time when society generally believed that a woman need not be educated

beyond the acquisition of limited accomplishments, all of which, it must be said, were worthwhile, Eccles Street, and later Muckross Park, prepared young women to take degrees in the Royal University. These sisters were women ahead of their time. They 'rejoiced in the present and dared dream the future'. Because of them the role and influence of women in families, in the work place and in society at large changed irrevocably. Our school in Muckross belongs to this tradition and if we are to remain true to our roots we must find ways in the twenty-first century to embody that transforming spirit of adventure and challenge.

Dominican education, I believe, is about developing in the individual a love for knowledge and learning, a desire to search for truth in its many facets. It seeks to unfold to the individual her unique inner beauty, her strengths and limitations, so that each may come to know, accept and appreciate her own strengths and weaknesses and may learn to respect and appreciate qualities and differences in others. From that centre of truth grounded in reality, individuals may be transformed to live gospel values, values such as forgiveness, compassion and understanding, values often

undervalued by an acquisitive society.

Dominican education is born out of the time-honoured Dominican tradition of a love for study and learning. If our school in Muckross continues in this tradition and never succumbs to the temptation to reduce education to a points-chasing exercise, then we have a right to claim our heritage. We must continue to cultivate in our students a love for disciplined study and learning; to awaken their imagination through poetry, music and the arts; to engage them in rigorous debate and encourage them towards passionate and compassionate critical analysis.

We, as educators in a Dominican school, have a duty to recover and reshape for our generation the vision of our founders. We must in their memory and spirit continue to open young hearts and minds to the myriad possibilities of true learning and transformation. We then will have a right to belong to that band of pioneering Dominican women of the last century. We too may call ourselves Dominican educators. ✦

Patricia Fitzsimons
Principal

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The Dominican Sisters in Ireland

The first documented account of the Dominican Sisters in Ireland is of the foundation of the Convent of Jesus and Mary in Galway in 1644, under the jurisdiction of the Provincial of the Dominican Order. The first of the Irish sisters, Mary Lynch, received the habit in 1644, followed by Julian Nolan in 1645. Within eight years, the ravages of Cromwell, and of plague and famine, forced the sisters to abandon the religious life, or to take exile. Fourteen sisters, including the two mentioned above, went to Spain, and thirty-four years later these two women returned to refound the convent in Galway.

Numbers grew until after the defeat of James II in 1690, when all religious communities were dispersed. Julian Nolan, a tower of strength to the sisters in these troubled times, died three years later. After many years dispersed among friends and relatives, the sisters came together again in Dublin, in a small house in Fisher's Lane on the north side of the city. In the early days they disguised themselves as dressmakers. Among those who came to Dublin were Catherine and Mary Plunkett, relatives of the martyred Archbishop of Armagh, St Oliver Plunkett. These two later went on to Belgium.

The sisters moved to a vacant former convent in Channel Row, and lived the Dominican way of life as far as they could. They saw a need for the education of Catholic girls, and ran a boarding-school for wealthy Catholics which helped to finance their work of educating poorer Catholics. By 1808, however, the number of sisters had dwindled to three, and they were unable to maintain their convent and school.

The Prioress, Sister Eliza Byrne, leased a new property at Vernon Avenue, Clontarf, where she hoped to establish another school. A few postulants joined the small community, but numbers were still small, and financial difficulties forced them to look for more suitable premises. In 1819 they moved to Cabra, and the following year St Catherine's Poor (or Free) School opened its doors for the education of the poor. Once again they took in some boarders to help the finances. The work of evangelisation through education had begun.

More Dominican convents and schools were founded in Dublin: Sion Hill in 1836, Dun Laoghaire in 1847, Eccles Street in 1870, Muckross Park in 1900. Outside Dublin, there were convents in Drogheda, Wicklow, Belfast and later at Port Stewart. As well as

being involved in education, the Dominicans took special needs under their care, and in 1846, at the request of the Vincentian Father McNamara, the sisters in Cabra established a school for deaf girls in their grounds. Over the years they have achieved tremendous results. In 1963, Sion Hill opened Benincasa, a school for children with special needs.

In 1929, St Catherine's College of Education for Home Economics was established at Sion Hill. The modern degree in Home Economics includes a teaching qualification. In 1943, the Froebel course for primary teachers was started, and in 1976 the Froebel College of Education offered three-year degree courses for primary teaching in collaboration with TCD.

The Dominican Sisters in Dun Laoghaire recently celebrated 150 years of educating the children of the area; the primary school still survives, but the secondary school closed in 1990. Bloomfield Shopping Centre now occupies the site of the buildings, including the old house, Echo Lodge. In 1919, a small chapel had been built in the grounds to commemorate the people of Dun Laoghaire who had been killed during the First World War, and Sister

Concepta Lynch, OP painted the entire interior in Celtic designs. This little gem, her life's work, has been preserved, and will shortly be open to the public.

Unfortunately, as with other religious communities, the number of Dominican Sisters has declined. No new postulants are waiting to take the place of older sisters. However, the ethos of the Dominicans has been carried through, and there is a great demand for places in Muckross Park today. As the articles in our little booklet show, many past pupils fondly recall their days in Muckross, and carry with them the traditions of the Dominicans and the school. ✨

Moira Laffan



Sr Norah O'Connor, 1981-97 last Dominican Principal and Ms. Dromey, Vice-Principal 1988-97

The Story of Muckross Park

Moira Laffan and Sr Méabh Uí Cbleirigh

Muckross Park was originally a Victorian private residence, belonging to the Cranny family. This family was related to the Plunketts, an old Anglo-Norman family.

Patrick Cranny came to Dublin from County Kerry around the middle of the 19th century, to set up a leather and shoemaking business at 74 South Great George's Street. His cousin, Patrick Plunkett, also came to Dublin, from Killeen Castle, County Meath, and in 1847 married Elizabeth Noble, whose family had a leather store at 1 Aungier Street. From 1850 onwards, with the coming of the Industrial Age, shoes were mass-produced by machine instead of by hand, and the leather industry declined. Dublin meanwhile was growing rapidly, and the two cousins decided to go into partnership as builders.

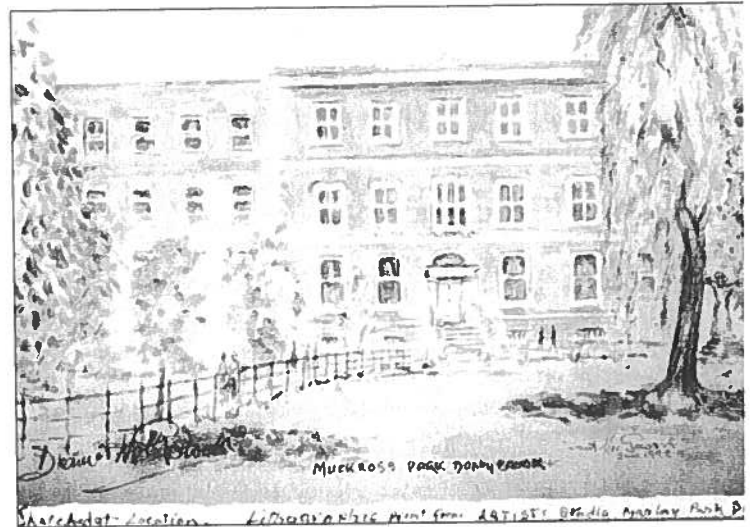
They built on part of the Pembroke Estate, which comprised a large section of the growing affluent suburbs of south Dublin, such as Wellington Road, Elgin Road and Marlborough Road. It was difficult still for Catholics to buy land in certain areas, but they were helped by some of the Protestant Plunkett cousins. In 1865, Patrick Cranny built a detached house in its own grounds as his own residence, on Marlborough Road, the same year in which the foundations of the Sacred Heart Church,

Donnybrook, were laid.

Muckross Park was a big, square house of good proportions, with large glasshouses running down one side (according to a memoir by Geraldine Plunkett-Dillon). The comfortable reception rooms had high-quality ceiling mouldings, and the house was surrounded with land, enough to keep riding horses, a carriage and carriage horses. Patrick Cranny and his wife had seventeen children, only four of whom survived.

While the church was being built, Mass was celebrated every Sunday in one of the large stuccoed rooms on the first floor of Muckross Park for the small local Catholic congregation. The altar stone, containing five relics, came from an old church in Donnybrook Cemetery, situated beside the present Garda Station. This altar went in turn to all the Plunkett houses, and was finally presented to the Franciscan Sisters in Mount Oliver, Ballymascanlon, County Louth.

Although the Plunkett and Cranny partners sold some of their houses, they kept a great many and lived on the rents. There was a demand at the time for good houses to rent rather than to buy, as many English-born civil servants and company directors lived for short periods in Ireland. The Plunkett-Cranny business flourished.



Lithograph print of Muckross Park by Dermot McGowan, 1992

George Noble Plunkett was the son of Patrick Plunkett and Elizabeth Noble. As a rich young man, he travelled abroad a good deal, and while in Rome he befriended Mary Potter, an Englishwoman. He assisted her financially to found a religious nursing order, the Little Company of Mary or the Blue Sisters, and invited them to come to Ireland. As a result of his work, Pope Leo XIII made him a Papal Count in 1884. Also in that year, he married his second cousin, Josephine Cranny, daughter of his father's business partner Pat Cranny; he had made up his mind to marry her after her sixteenth birthday party, in Muckross Park in 1874. The papal title had finally convinced Josephine's mother ▶



Patrick Cranny.

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Mrs Maria Cranny.

▼ that he was suitable for her daughter, even though he followed the debased profession of journalism.

The wedding took place in the brand-new church at Donnybrook, and the reception was held at Muckross Park, Josephine's home. After their marriage, Count and Countess Plunkett lived at 26 Upper Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin, and they had seven children. One of these was Joseph Mary Plunkett, poet and patriot, who was one of the signatories of the Proclamation in 1916, and was executed after the Easter Rising with the other leaders.

Count Plunkett himself entered politics in 1895. He was elected as a Sinn Fein Member of Parliament in 1917, and later served as Minister for Foreign Affairs in the First Dail Eireann, and Minister for Fine Arts in the Second Dail. The Crannys lived at Muckross Park until 1900, when Mrs Maria Cranny sold it to the Dominican Sisters. From 1879, the Royal University of Ireland had admitted women to examinations for degrees, but offered no lectures for them, and the Archbishop of Dublin asked the Dominican and Loreto Sisters to fill this need. The Dominicans set up St Mary's University College in 1886, offering tuition for women students first at Eccles Street and later at 28 Merrion Square. When Muckross Park came up

for sale, it was decided to leave the bustle of the city for this quieter, greener location. On July 11, 1900, the Sisters moved to Donnybrook from Eccles Street and Sion Hill.

Many of the Dominican Sisters were highly qualified, well able to lecture at third level, and an academy for girls began, at Junior, Secondary and University levels.

The school opened for its first pupils on September 9, 1900. The *Freeman's Journal* reported, on August 4, 1900:

***St Mary's University College
Important Development
The good Dominican Sisters...have just purchased for the purposes of a permanent home for St Mary's College, the beautiful and spacious park known as Muckross Park, Donnybrook, with its fine residence. The place seemed designed for a College of the kind, offering plenty of freedom for growth, and affording even at present a most attractive place for quiet study and healthful recreation...One announcement that will especially gratify the Catholic parents of South Dublin is that the College will have associated with it an Intermediate and a Preparatory School.***

A year later, on September 2, 1901, the *Freeman's Journal*, in an editorial entitled 'The Intermediate Boards Roll of Honour', stated:

The names of the Convent schools that have at length carried the flag to the front deserve to be especially noted

St Louis, Monaghan; Dominican Convent, Eccles Street; Loreto College, St Stephen's Green; St Mary's University College, Donnybrook; Loreto Convent, Wexford; and the Convent of Mercy, Macroom.

Again, reporting on prizes received, Muckross was included: 'Gold medal in Modern Languages going to the Dominican Convent, St Mary's, Donnybrook.'

In 1901, as Sister Méabh relates, the Secondary School was amongst the six leading schools of the year: 'Twenty candidates were presented for public examinations and they won 8 exhibitions, one gold medal, 6 composition prizes, and many honours. These included a first place in Mathematics and French and third place in Irish.' Editorial comment indicated that the Catholic schools, by taking the lead for a second ►

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▶ successive year, 'have given the lie to Professor Mahaffy's remark that "paupers don't need universities".' (J.P. Mahaffy was the Provost of Trinity College, Dublin.)

The university connection ended when, in 1909, the newly-established National University of Ireland permitted women to attend lectures. However, a new university link was made in 1929, when a House of Residence for student nuns was built. As numbers of student nuns dropped, lay students were allowed to board, and a new hostel was built for university students in 1963. Today, there is a keen demand for places in the hostel for first-year students.

Increasing numbers in the Junior and Secondary schools stretched the capacity of the original residence. Since 1903 the boarders had been residing in Glenwood, a rented house beside the Mount Eden Road entrance, but in 1907 a dormitory was built at the back of the main building. A new Secondary School wing was added in 1925, in time for the Silver Jubilee of the convent. This was celebrated by a production of Lawrence Housman's *Bethlehem*, beautifully performed despite the lack of modern staging and lighting. A convent wing was added in 1928.

In 1935, a wing comprising science rooms, hostel rooms and

a Junior School was built, and a much-needed college theatre. In 1945 a chapel was erected, designed by a past pupil, Miss Eleanor Butler, Architect. In 1949, ten acres were acquired for playing-fields, tennis courts and an all-purpose pitch. A fourth storey was added to the entire building during the 1950s and 1960s and, as numbers continued to increase, pre-fabs were built on the grounds. The expense of running a private Junior School was considered unnecessary, and this part of the school was phased out over four years, finally closing in 1997.

Today the school awaits a new building to replace both the pre-fabs and the classrooms in the old house. What will happen to the Cranny/Plunkett house then? Whatever the future holds, we are confident the spirit of Muckross Park will live on, and that girls will leave school proud to remember and acknowledge Muckross as their Alma Mater.

The connection with the original Cranny and Plunkett families continued down through the years. Count Plunkett and Josephine Cranny had seven children. Geraldine, who married Thomas Dillon, Blanaid, who married Eoin O Brolcháin and Seoirse, who married Mary McCarthy, all had descendants who were pupils of Muckross. The connection is maintained

right up to the present time, when Niamh Plunkett is to sit her Leaving Cert in 2000, keeping continuity for a century. Plunketts and relations of Plunketts continued to live on Marlborough Road in Cranny/Plunkett houses, but gradually the houses were sold; only a few still remain in family ownership today. Whatever happens to the old house, at least a future is guaranteed for Muckross Park College when a new school is built. ✧



Wedding of George Noble Plunkett to Josephine Cranny, 1885 (group taken on steps of Muckross Park).



A Century of Memories

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Muckross Park, 1900-2000

Méabh Ni Chleirigh, OP



Sister M. Albertus OP, 1902.

The Jubilee Year of 2000 sees our convent celebrating its first centenary. An insignificant event by comparison with the Millennium in honour of the birth of Christ, one might say. Nevertheless we take pride, as people do, in looking at our roots.

On July 11, 1900, the Community moved to its new Convent of the Immaculate Conception, Donnybrook. Shortly after this, the following notice appeared in a daily newspaper:

St Mary's University College and High School Marlborough Road, Dublin. Conducted by the

Dominican Nuns Under the patronage of His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin. Classes will be resumed on Monday, September 9th. In addition to University Courses pupils are prepared for examinations in the Intermediate Board. Elementary classes provided in the school for young children, girls and boys. The College is surrounded by spacious grounds. As only a limited number of boarders can be accommodated early application is requested.

So in the early days of the new institute there were three levels of education. From the notes of Miss Eleanor Butler, one of the earliest university students, we learn something about the way of life and the professorial staff of the University.

Due to lack of space, even in this large residence, it was necessary to rent a house for the University students. This house was on the new Mount Eden Road, and was named Ard Eoin. All lectures and academic functions were of course held in the main building. According to newspaper reports of the time, the standard was extremely

high: 'an enterprise brimful of promise', wrote the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* on August 4, 1900.

From Eleanor Butler's notes, we learn that Mount Eden Road was then 'little more than a cart rut, off Morehampton Road and ending in fields'. The new house 'smelt strongly of new timber and mortar. The workmen would not be finished for a week.' On the first night of residence, 'candles were divided round. Latin dictionaries, books of Trigonometry, of Logic were opened' before they finally retired to 'little white curtained beds' in rooms with whitewashed walls. Years later, when she was studying at St Hilda's, Oxford, 'a mansion for people who had the world's wealth at their command', she remembered that first night at Ard Eoin, 'the gallant attempt of a few brave women, in a bleeding nation, to find a means of improving her womanhood by enlarging their activities and mental outlook.'

The staff included such eminent persons as Professor Mary Hayden, Professor Agnes O'Farrelly, Professor Patrick Semple, Professor Arthur Clery, Professor P.J. Merriman and Professor Mary Ryan, who was later to become President of University College, Cork.

The lively Literary Academy of ▶



Muckross Park, 1900.

Muckross Park, 1900-2000

Méabh Ní Chleirigh, OP



Senior School, 1918.



▶ the university students organised debates on some of the burning topics of the day. Professor Agnes O'Farrelly's paper, 'The Reign of Humbug', was later published by Conradh na Gaeilge, while Miss O'Kennedy read a paper entitled 'An Craobh Rua'. Dubhglas de h-Ide, later to become President of Ireland, chaired this meeting, and one of the speakers was Pádraig Mac Piarais (Patrick Pearse). These were days when

a small number of Irish women and men were determined not to let their own language and culture die.

At that time it was difficult to travel from the north side of the city to Donnybrook, and therefore enrolment for university studies diminished. Because of this, in 1903 the Sion Hill Council decided that some of the classes, as well as three of the staff Sisters, should be

transferred back to Eccles Street, numbers 23 and 24, the latter recently purchased by the community.

The 1920s saw in the community some sterling and colourful characters, among whom are remembered Mother Gonzales Stone, expert in Old English; Mother Albertus Hochburger, a Bavarian who delighted in reminding us of her Celtic origins; Sister Brendan Luja, a



Luxembourger who perfected the French of her chosen pupils; and Mother Joseph Kreighton. There were also Mother Osanna Curtin, terrifying Maths teacher but out-of-class angel; Mother Martina Cuffe, beloved mistress of the Junior boarders; Sister Alphonsus Kettle, daughter of Parnell's right-hand man, Andrew; Sister John Moloney, brilliant philosopher and graduate of Hull University; and Mother Benvenuta Connolly, former member of Cumann na mBan and brimming with love for Ireland. Another great Gaelic enthusiast of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s was Máire Ní Ainle who, during all the days of her teaching life, never flagged in her efforts to keep our native language alive.

With a giant at their shoulders of the stature of our Founder, St Dominic, it should be possible, even in these materialistic times, for those actively involved in developing the present and future hopes of Muckross Park to preserve, promote and pass on the inseparable elements of prayer and the apostolate which, alongside the academic and the cultural, have flourished in it for a century. ✨



Junior School, 1914.

Some names have been written on the 1914/18 photos, as follows:

Junior School: Barbara Byrne (later Mrs. Lightfoot), S. Cathley (?), R. Courtney, M. Donovan, Gallaher, K. Gore-Grimes, M. Gore-Grimes, B. Hagan, K. Keogh, K. Lowndes, Imelda O'Brien, E. Sheilds, K. Sheilds, Tuohy

Senior School: M. Binchy, Moyra Bowers, N. Buckley, A. Carleton, R. Condon, T. Condon, B. Delaney, P. Delaney, Donovan, M. Gallagher, Jos. Gore-Grimes, Frances Holmes, M. Kelly, R. Kenny, Liebrecht, A. Lowndes, May Lynch, M. McGloughlin, M. McNally, E. McNeill, M. McNeill, M. Maguire, L. Maher, N. Moran, Dolly Nolan, O'Donovan, P. O'Gorman, R. O'Gorman, F. O'Malley, M. O'Toole, M. Phelan, M. Bloom Pollock, Rogan/Roger (2), N. Ryan, M. Shields, K. Spears, N. Spears, Tully, Tuohy, B. Tuohy.



Play, "An Tobar Naofa", 1916.



A Century of Memories 1920s

Muckross Park, 1920s

Two past pupils have provided memoirs of Muckross Park in the 1920s, Sister Méabh Ni Chleirigh and Una Fitzsimons.



Sister M. Benvenuta Connolly, OP.

Sister Méabh started as a Junior boarder: 'I remember my father taking me up the avenue for the first time, and my awe at the impressive house with the cosy conservatory on the right and the statue of the Sacred Heart opposite.. I remember particularly the kind and motherly Mother Martina Cuffe who was in charge of us.

'We were taken to unpack in a dormitory, which was over the present horticulture room. The person commissioned to keep us in order was the legendary and elderly Alice Power. She ruled us with an iron hand, but we still played tricks on her until she complained to Mother Martina how impossible we were to control. My outstanding memories of class were of elocution with Miss Bourke, Gaeilge in the horticulture room, PE (then called drill) in the present Laundry - barbells, dumbbells and marching!

'On Mother Martina's feast-day, November 3rd, the juniors always had a free day, and in 1925 Alice took eleven of us on a picnic to Dun Laoghaire. When we reached the end of the pier we were just in time to see a diver go down under the water. Nothing would make us budge until he came back to land, three hours later; it was dusk by then. We went into Woolworth's, and one girl (who shall be nameless) broke a little

bottle of perfume, but ran off and left poor Alice to deal with the damage.

'Muckross celebrated its Silver Jubilee that year with a lovely performance of Laurence Housman's *Bethlehem*. The new school building was still in progress, but sufficiently advanced to allow us to use the three rooms 16,17 and 18. No. 18 had a temporary stage, and the other two made do for the auditorium. We junior boarders were put huddled underneath the stage to keep us out of the way; we got an occasional peep at the performance.

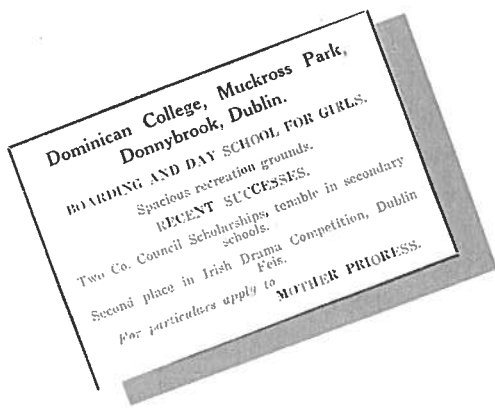
'When the building was finished, in 1926, the boarders were transferred to a large new dormitory, now rooms 21, 22 and 23. This experiment did not last, and the area was divided into three classrooms, plus a narrow one which we named the Sausage Room. This was not quite as quaint and primitive as the room we were in in Sixth Year, a space we called the "dug-out" situated behind the present Vice-Principal's office. You may consider the present school old and dilapidated, but it is a palace compared with the older parts of the one we loved so much.

'The larger part of the staff room made two classrooms, and the smaller part was what we termed "Alice's kitchen", where she exercised her authority for

many a year. She saw Prioresses come and Prioresses go, and on one occasion was heard to mutter, "I'm sick and tired of training in these Prioresses". Alice played a very important role, because at that time the sisters could not go out even to post letters or visit the sick in hospital; she was indispensable. She died in Muckross Park in September 1984, at the age of 100. May she enjoy the eternal rest she so well deserved.

'In 1926, when we were in First Year, Sister Benvenuta arrived, small of stature, young, fresh and exuding life and joy. We had her every morning at 9am in Room 9, then called St Vincent's. She had a large bronze pocket watch on the table as she taught, and I remember once Pat Dunne came five minutes late for class: "You are late, Patricia." "It's only nine by Big Ben." "Well, it's five minutes past nine by Little Ben!"

'Mother Ben excelled in surprises - never a dull moment in her classes. She taught Gaeilge, Religion and English, and at any possible opening she'd have us dramatise a poem or produce a simple classroom play, such as "An Tobar Naofa". That was my very first dramatic effort. It was 74 years ago, and to this day I still remember my first



Advertisement for school, 1926.



Class, 1925.

line: "Go reidh, go reidh, mise an Ri, deanfaidh muid leí pe rud is maith liomsa!"

On our own initiative we produced several classroom plays - *David Copperfield*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Blessed Imelda*, *A Minute's Wait*. The latter got us into trouble, because Mother Osanna considered the Dublin lingo very vulgar, e.g. "Tahe your sates plase, sates plase" and "Will ye take the baby out o' the pram an' let the lady see the fish..."

'The only lay teacher we had was Máire Ní Ainle, who had a single-minded devotion to all things Irish, and began every class she taught with the prayer: "A Naomh Brid, cuidigh linn chun an Ghaelige a fhogluim agus chun í a labhairt chomh binn milis agus do labhairt tú féin í". Otherwise, we were taught by nuns, and we loved them all: Sister John, fascinating with English; Mother Albertus, a wizard at French albeit a Bavarian herself; Mother Osanna, a legendarily terrifying Maths teacher but a gentle archangel outside class; Sister Ita, our Latin teacher, constantly promising to teach us how to make yeast buns, for which pleasure we would gladly have sacrificed a Latin class. And there was dear old Mother Gonzales, a founder member of Muckross Park and Professor of English to the university students in 1900-03, who

initiated us into the mysteries of St John's Gospel.

'Mother Ben became Principal in 1928, and retained the position for sixteen years. Immediately after that, she was appointed Principal of the Junior School. In her mid-fifties, she volunteered to go on the missions to South Africa, and never returned to her beloved Ireland.'

Una Fitzsimons arrived in Muckross in 1921, aged six. 'There were some tough teachers, in particular Miss McCarthy, an Irish teacher. Fortunately, she and Mother Albertus both knew my mother, who had been one of the first boarders in 1902, and were not as strict with me as they might have been. We did have cards marked for discipline and checked each month, but back then awards were given for good behaviour. Any Muckross girl today will tell you that goodness is its own virtue.

'Tennis was played in front of the main building, but was not taken very seriously. Hockey was played to the side, where the prefabs are now, but was optional. I studied French, Latin, Irish, English, Maths, History and Geography (the latter two done as a unit for the Inter Cert). For the Leaving Cert I dropped Geography, and Domestic Economy. No-one did science; the labs came later. There were

twenty girls in my Inter Cert class, but only three of us did Leaving Cert, myself, Joan Dowling and Patricia Walker, a boarder from Galway.

'The uniform was the same colour as it is now, but it was a pinafore or gymslip with a shirt underneath, and an optional tie. Mother Albertus would threaten to sew newspaper to the hem of any skirt which went above regulation length. There were few lay teachers, and no males. The nuns always wore a full habit, and the convent was closed. When the hockey team won the Senior Cup, all the students came to the school gates to welcome the team, but the nuns could only come as far as the bend in the drive.

'Sister Cecilia taught music, and the choir took part in the Feis every year, but never won. The standard in drama was not that good, either. We once did a play based on one of Dickens' novels, but no boys were involved, and the girls playing men were not allowed to wear trousers. To remedy the problem, the "men" wore wellington boots!'

Another glimpse of life in the 1920s comes from the diaries of Maire ('Céit') de Bhaldrathe, then aged fourteen:

"18 March 1927. There is an awful row at school. We will all get our caps and blazers and ribbons off on account of the boys last night...Third Year is a disgrace to the school. Always in rows, so says Mother Albertus. M. Albertus says, "We were fools of girls, the others fools of boys. It is no harm to talk to boys, it is the harm we take out of it. Goodness knows how we should end. It is a crime to take sweets from boys. Boys are stronger than girls and can knock them down physically and metaphorically" (I'd like to see any of them knock me down.) 19 March 1927. We will probably be expelled...It's a ghastly row. 20 March 1927. Got out of row all right with cautions, lectures, sermons, etc."

And finally, a slightly acerbic note from Conor Cruise O'Brien, who came to prepare for his First Holy Communion in 1924: 'My brief stay at Muckross was not a happy one...At the schools I had attended before, questions were encouraged, and nobody was ever beaten. At Muckross Park, in those days, questions were sharply discouraged, and corporal punishment was routine...The beatings were not very severe - I remember receiving sharp cracks across the knuckles with a ruler - but if you had never been beaten before, it was an unpleasant experience.'



Muckross Park, 1930s

Memories of Muckross in the 1930s are provided by Sr Méabh Ní Chleirigh, Sr Bernadette Marie Pakenham, Mairead Connaughton and Carmel Finn.

Bernadette had a miserable start, but rapidly settled in and was ultimately very happy in the school: 'My schooldays in Muckross Park began in floods of tears which didn't dry up for weeks. I was six years old, and had spent too long alone at home with my mother, since my last sister had started school five years before me. To add to my loneliness I was desperately shy, I hated to be singled out for attention, and I was partly French, so I was different from the others. I didn't know I was using French words, but when I said them the

other children laughed, so I wouldn't speak to them or to the teacher for months.

'It was September 1936 when I started school. The "Baby Room", as the kindergarten classroom was called, was under the care of Sister Bernadette, a trained Montessori teacher. We used coloured beads on wires for counting, and when they were withdrawn I used my fingers instead. I continued to do so until after I left school, and never managed to learn addition or tables. However, I know that before the end of my

first year I was doing multiplication by two figures, which seems contradictory.

'My second year was passed in the "Brown Room", which had folding doors, enabling the boys, who sat in the front rows, to be closed off from the girls at certain times. We did needlework; I don't know what the boys did, maybe woodwork. Saintry Sister Stephanie prepared us for our First Confession and First Holy Communion, but of these I have only the vaguest memories; I do, however, remember the prayers she

taught us for Before and After Holy Communion, and occasionally still use them. I remember Miss O'Sullivan endlessly walking up and down the room while we repeated after her the Confiteor and the Apostles' Creed - in Irish! She had a small suitcase which she would place on her desk, and out of it she would take a tin soldier, a comb, a mechanical mouse and other such small items which she used as the basis for Irish conversation.

'We were mostly taught by lay teachers, with the sisters taking a half-hour each day for Catechism. Through the years I came under the influence of Mother Albertus, Mother Martina, Mother Cecilia and Sister Cataldus, and very fine women they were. Once a year the Diocesan Examiner came - and we got to keep on our outdoor shoes for the occasion. We would file into one classroom from which the furniture had been removed, and stood in a semi-circle with our hands joined and our knees knocking, waiting for our turn to be questioned. I can't recall anyone failing to answer correctly.

'The Chapel was where the parlours now are, and there we made our First Holy Communion with our parents squeezed into the back seats. But fundraising for a new chapel had begun. Sister Bonaventure had a large trolley from which she sold sweets, wheeling it into



Inaugural meeting of reorganised Past Pupils' Union, 17th November 1935.

DOMINICAN COLLEGE
MUCKCROSS PARK



A Century of Memories
1930s

the cloakroom while we were having our lunch there. My father used to give me six [old] pennies on a Sunday, and I was meant to buy a one-penny bar of chocolate every day to supplement my lunch and help the building fund. I did this until I discovered a shop on my way to school which sold the same bars, unwrapped, for a ha'penny [half a penny]. They tasted the same to me; probably they were rejects from the factory sold cheaply. I saved three pence each week.

'One of the nuns used to hand out lines as a punishment. Anyone caught talking in class, for example, had to write out 20, 50 or 100 times "I must not talk in class" before the next day. My class wasn't too bad, but the class next door was always in trouble and couldn't cope at all with the lines they were amassing. My friends and I decided we'd help them, and in our spare time at home we began writing pages of lines. These we brought to school and offered to the girls next door - at a price! I don't remember what they paid us, probably one penny for 100 lines. I was making a tidy little sum until my father, looking up something in my atlas, came upon sheets of these lines. An enquiry followed, and my little business came to an end.'

During the 1930s, the position of hockey began to be challenged, as remembered by Sister Méabh: 'By our later days

a small patriotic group had come to birth. Approving of the GAA's ban on "English" games, we introduced Camógaiocht, but having to start from scratch we needed help. This the boarders received from the convent chaplain, Fr Lonergan SM. He was a brilliant hurler. Out he came to the pitch every morning to give us practice.' Mairead Connaughton and Carmel Finn also remember this time: 'Picture Maeve Cleary with a book of rules in her hand, directing the camogie beginners, to the amusement of her ex-hockey friends. Indeed, we also have a vivid picture of Mairead sitting on her camán throughout practice sessions as a stand against playing team games.'

Other strong influences on the patriotic group were Máire Ní Ainle, and Mother Ben's 'na taenna Gaeilge'. Once a month, says Sister Méabh, a day-girl would invite the Gaelgoiri to tea in her home, and then the boarders would invite the day-girls back to a special Gaelic tea in school. 'Naturally our stumbling conversation was through the medium, accompanied by much fun and laughter.' There were also 'ár dturasanna go dtí an Ghaeltacht'.

The 1930s had begun with the wonderful experience of a pilgrimage to Lourdes, organised by Dominican schools. Again Sister Méabh remembers: 'We all wore our uniforms, so it was



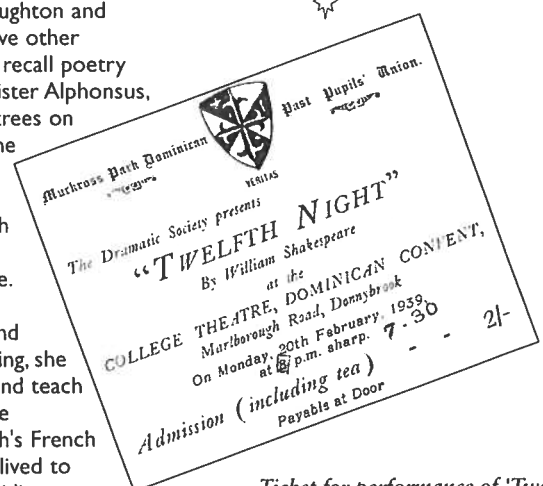
Dominican Schools' Pilgrimage to Lourdes, Easter 1930.

easy to pick out the various schools. I still remember girls from Dun Laoghaire, Eccles Street and the North, along with our own small group and many others.'

Mairead Connaughton and Carmel Finn have other memories: 'We recall poetry sessions with Sister Alphonsus, out under the trees on fine days, and the feisty Sister Brendan, who wanted to teach us French as a spoken language. Owing to our intransigence and political wrangling, she had to give in and teach by the book she abhorred, Heath's French Grammar. We lived to regret our stupidity.

'We used the Sausage Room

during Fifth Year. During a visit by an inspector, heavy girders fell on the roof overhead. The nervous inspector bolted, followed by the Latin teacher, while we collapsed with laughter.'



Ticket for performance of 'Twelfth Night', 1939.



Science in Muckross

Science Staff, assisted by Sister Francis OP

In the 1930s Sr Alaquoque started teaching science in Muckross by introducing nature studies, as important a subject today as it was then. When Sr Alaquoque was transferred to Eccles Street a few years later she took the subject with her, and science in Muckross moved into the dark ages for a time, until Sr Francis was transferred from Eccles Street in 1952.

From Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan, she completed an honours degree in organic chemistry in 1935, a Masters in the chemical constituents of *Lechinora gangliodes* (lichen to you and me) in 1936 and shortly afterwards a H.Dip., all from UCD. As she had been educated by the St. Louis sisters in Carrickmacross Sr Francis did her teaching practice with the same sisters in Rathmines. The extraordinary thing is that she would have preferred Arts but wasn't allowed, because she hadn't studied Latin for Matriculation. She started Science with the hope that she could soon transfer to Arts, but once started she was hooked and the rest is history.

During her studies she stayed in Dominican Hall, Stephen's Green where her love of the religious life brought her into the Dominican Order. She then

taught in Eccles Street until she was transferred to Muckross Park. Initially she taught maths but in 1957 Botany was added to the curriculum, the first science subject taught to Leaving Cert. level. There were three pupils in the first class.

Trying to answer a demand for Physics from students who wanted to study medicine, Sr. Francis found that she needed a considerable quantity of equipment. The prioress, Mother Hilary, a very far-seeing lady, encouraged her to buy all necessary equipment, with the help of grants from the Department of Education. For its time, Muckross was well equipped for teaching science. Some of the old pieces like the Wimshurst machine, microscopes, mercury lamp, homemade light boxes, Fortin barometer and spectrometer are still in use. The first skeleton used as a teaching aid was passed on from Sr Alaquoque. In those days skeletons were the real thing, as there was no plastic. It was said to be the skeleton of a young Austrian girl and is probably still in a cupboard in the Junior school.

In 1979 Sr Francis retired from full-time teaching but continued on a part-time basis for a good few years.

The Labs

The Science Room (currently Lab 14) was originally a store-room for costumes. There were three old-fashioned long benches in the room, and when it was needed as a classroom for the Junior School the bottoms of the legs were cut off to a suitable height for the children. About ten years later, when the room was converted for science classes, those pieces were dug out and stuck back on again. A fume cupboard was installed by Sr Francis in the lab and vented out to the yard. There were five sinks and gas points on fixed benches around the walls as well as a teachers' bench with sink and gas. As the old long benches were free-standing, they couldn't have any gas, electricity or plumbing attached. The roll-up blackboard in room 14 must have been unique; these were only found in universities at the time.

November 1982 saw the opening of the 'new lab'. Room 15, a large senior school classroom, was converted to a laboratory suitable for the practical work necessary in all the sciences. The cost of this was met by the school, the Dominican Order and fundraising by the staff, as the dimensions of the room were not adequate for it to qualify for a Department of Education

grant. Dani Mitchell headed the fundraising activities, and ran in the Dublin City Marathon in 1981, splitting her sponsorship between 'The Hospice' and the 'new lab'.

After the opening of the 'new lab', with the increasing numbers doing science, the 'old lab' was given a badly needed facelift. At last the long benches were fixed to the floor and fitted with sinks, gas points and electric sockets. However, it never lost its 'old' character and you never knew what interesting items you could find in at the back of a cupboard, such as a petrified Ammonite fossil, Fahrenheit thermometers, bottles of benzene, mercury and other unidentified chemicals (the latter were carefully transported into Trinity where they kindly disposed of them for us). Many past pupils on return visits have commented on how the lab looks just like it did in the 1960s! A group from the World Bank recently visited the school and were fascinated by the 'quaint labs'. A considerable number of excellent scientists came out of those same labs.

The grants given by the Department of Education for labs and equipment over the years have fallen far short of the required spending to teach the sciences as practical subjects,

A Century of Memories



but the shortfall was always met by the Dominicans. There were long discussions among the Science staff, at the end of each year, concerning the most essential piece of equipment we needed to order for the next year, and what "must have" items could be sacrificed. Each teacher put the case for her subject and the aim was to try and get enough equipment and materials to ensure that all the students could perform the experiment, not just watch the teacher demonstrating. This meant that the single piece of expensive equipment was often put on the long finger.

The Prep room came into existence sometime in the early 1980s. This was originally three small rooms, but two doors were sealed and partitions removed. There is a French window opening onto the back of the convent, but it wasn't possible to open it for years. Later an outside chemical store was built, with access from the Prep room, to house dangerous chemicals.

Physics

Physics was taught by Sr Francis in the late 1950s/early 1960s, but only as the students requested. In 1981 it was officially added to the curriculum in Muckross, with six students in that first class.

Currently there is an average each year of eighteen students taking physics. Its introduction meant that there were more career options open to the students, especially in 'male-dominated' areas like engineering. It is now the norm every year for one or more students to pursue this as a career.

Chemistry

This was taught for the first time by Sr Francis, carried on by Anita Mulloy in 1972 and, over the years, by Dani Mitchell, Caroline Ryan, Dorothy Stephenson and Deirdre Harney. The numbers doing chemistry have oscillated between one and two classes in each year, working out at an average of twenty-five per year, which interestingly does not reflect the national decline in numbers taking chemistry.

Biology

This is still the most popular of the sciences at Leaving Cert level, even though it can be the most difficult to do well in. It is rare to have a student who does not find some part of the course fascinating and the girl that has a love of plants is a real pleasure to teach. 'Human reproduction' is always a lively class but it has to be made clear to the students that this class is not to be confused with sex



Horticulture class, 1987, pictured with Sr Barnabus OP, Sr Teresita OP (Convent Prioress) and Ms Anne Marie Mee.

education. An exercise in comparing reproduction in a plant and an animal usually sorts that out.

The highlight of the course is the annual field trip to a woodland or seashore. We have visited over the years Belfield woods, Baltinglass, Glendalough and Seapoint.

The Students

Over the years science has grown in popularity, with between four and five classes in each year of the junior cycle, and always three biology classes, one or two chemistry classes and one physics class in the senior cycle. In Transition Year our aim has always been to try to 'bridge the gap' between Junior and Senior science. With core science and modules in electronics, chemical analysis, biotechnology and horticulture, we try to provide something for

everyone.

With so many classes, each requiring at least one double class in a lab every week, and only two labs, over the years the School Timetable has been constrained by lab use. Quite often experiments were brought to the classroom in boxes or on trolleys and the class next door would be surprised at some of the odd noises coming through the wall. So it is not surprising that we are looking forward to working in four new purpose-built labs in the new school, each with its own Prep room.

We had many incidents over the years in practical classes, thank God none of them serious, but the best entertainment was with animals. The variety of animal life in the pupils' homes is amazing; the usual white mice, gerbils, rabbits and cats were sometimes brought in to 'assist' in experiments, but when one

Science in Muckross

Science Staff, assisted by Sister Francis



Sr Francis and Sr Barnabus pictured with students at the Young Scientists' Exhibition

student brought in a boa constrictor as an example of a reptile for classification it certainly brought the class to life!

There was always someone who couldn't bear the sight of blood, and teachers had to be quick off the mark to catch the falling figure. Those who wept at the sight of the teacher chloroforming earthworms or insects were usually told to watch where they put their feet in future.

Young Scientists Exhibition
Muckross has a long tradition in the Young Scientists, from the first exhibition in 1965 right down to the present year, 2000, and we are very proud of the many participants, category winners, runners-up and highly commended over the years.

The most notable achievement was that of Catherine Conlon who won Young Scientist of the Year in 1981, with a project entitled "Spiders, webs and spiders' thread" (she had also won the group award the previous year with her brother). She went on to represent Ireland in the European Contest for young Scientists and Inventors in Brussels, and was awarded with the top prize and title 'European Young Scientist of the Year'. Her sister Delia

followed her and won two category prizes, and on her third year was awarded overall runner-up Young Scientist, for a project on ants.

Horticulture

The introduction of Transition Year in 1989 saw the inception of horticulture as a subject. It was taught by Anne Marie Mee in its inaugural year and has been carried on to the present by Adrienne Relihan, Caroline Ryan and Dorothy Stephenson. The course covers a diverse range of topics from the nature of soil to growing your own plants from seed, from flower arranging to making compost, and from hanging baskets to forcing hyacinths for Christmas. The horticulture class also looks after the borders in front of the Transition Year classrooms. They look their best in spring, when the hard work put in on frosty mornings in winter comes to fruition. It's a pity the weeds grow faster than our precious plants in our absence in summer (any offers to keep it tidy?), but such is nature's way, and we soon get the better of them again in September.

Over the years some classes have left a permanent mark in Muckross by planting trees. The beautiful cherry in front of the TY rooms was planted by Ms. Relihan's class of 1991. The

class of '94 invited Patsy Kinsella to plant a lovely Japanese maple in front of the hostel to commemorate her retirement, and the class of '96 did the same on the occasion of Sister Norah's retirement. The white cherry she planted is doing well at the front of the small woodland opposite the hall door. In the year 2000, we hope that in the autumn Sr Barnabus will plant a tree for the Centenary of the school.

We look forward to moving to our new school, when horticulture will have its own greenhouse and polytunnel, and we plan to establish a wildlife garden which will provide a rich educational resource as well as a refuge for wildlife. The occasional stressed student or staff member is welcome to avail of this quiet corner. Already on order for this garden is a small plaque which reads 'Walk softly and listen. Mother Nature at work'.



The Teachers

Sr Aloquoque
1930s
Nature studies
Sr Francis
1957 - 1979
Botany, Junior Science, Physics, Biology
Ms. Anita Mulloy
1972 - 1984
Junior Science, Chemistry
Ms. Dani Mitchell
1978 - 1990
Junior Science, Biology, Chemistry
Ms. Anne Marie Mee
1981 - present
Junior Science, Biology, Physics
Ms. Dorothy Stephenson
1984 - present
Junior Science, Biology, Chemistry
Ms. Deirdre Harney
1987 - present
Junior Science, Biology, Chemistry
Ms. Adrienne Relihan
1988 - 1993
Junior Science, Biology
Ms. Caroline Ryan
1993 - present
Junior Science, Biology, Chemistry
Ms. Helen Hill
1990 - present
Junior Science



A Century of Memories

1940s

Muckross Park, 1940s

Memories of Muckross in the 1940s come from Alma McIntyre, Hilda Murphy, Sr Bernadette Marie Pakenham and Pat Warren.

Pat Warren was a sportswoman at heart: 'One of the best parts of Secondary School for me was the joy of hockey. I used to chase the ball everywhere, looking for glory for myself at everyone else's expense, but I was introduced to the joys of team play by Deirdre Ennis, who came once a week to coach us. Hockey taught me a lot, and the Cup matches were pure magic.

'The curriculum was geared to educate us, rather than prepare us for the world of commerce. A big influence on me was the advent of two young, clever and enthusiastic teachers, Sister Vincenzo [now Sister Méabh] and Sister Hilary. Sister Hilary brought a new dimension to English teaching; we were not treated as children to be instructed, but as young adults with minds of our own. However half-baked our ideas, she listened respectfully and pointed us in the right direction. The first essay I wrote for her got a poorish mark; that gave me a jolt, and I realised this lady expected a lot.

'Sex instruction was not on the agenda. An elderly German nun was asked to speak to the older girls about Life, and I remember her words exactly: "Stay away from the boys!" I remember one hardy girl asked what



Camogie team, 1940.

"circumcision" meant, and the answer was (after some embarrassed shuffling), "a circular cut at the top of the leg".'

Bernadette Pakenham also remembers the new teachers: 'In Fifth Class, most of us were old enough for the Senior School, so we were called "Bun Rang B", while the real Senior School First Year was called "Bun Rang

A". Some of our lessons were given by Senior School teachers, among them Sister Hilary and Sister Vincenzo, both newly arrived in Muckross. Sister Vincenzo provided comic relief by stamping her foot in temper on the platform when we didn't come in quickly enough after the bell rang for class. At the same time, we admired the way she'd sweep into class on cold winter mornings looking

majestic, wrapped up in her black cappa.

'Sister Vincenzo inspired me with a love for all things Irish, and once in the Senior School I began to play Camogie, putting myself into the minority, as three-quarters of the pupils played hockey. The camogie-ites barely mustered two teams at the best of times, so we never had "subs", and you daren't miss ►



A Century of Memories

Muckross Park, 1940s

Memories of Muckross in the 1940s come from Alma McIntyre, Hilda Murphy, Bernadette Marie Pakenham and Pat Warren.

► a match no matter how sick you were. The hockey-players had a wonderful coach in Miss Ennis, whereas the coaches engaged for us showed up irregularly, and often gave up completely after a few weeks. There would follow weeks or months with no coach at all, and the nuns in charge just didn't seem to care. We felt the nuns favoured the hockey-ites, whom we called traitors for playing an English game, while we were the "wild Irish".

'We were banned from playing in the Inter-Schools Camogie League while the hockey players were allowed to continue competing in their Cup matches. We felt this was unfair discrimination, and vented our rage by staying behind during their time for practice and sewing up the sleeves of their coats, tying all their shoes together by the laces, or letting the air out of their bicycle tyres. The very field we played on was referred to as the "hockey pitch" (where the pre-fabs are now). We used it on Mondays and Thursdays while they had Tuesdays and Fridays; Wednesday was a free-for-all when anyone could battle for a place on the field. Sometimes two games were played simultaneously, and

at other times both camps joined forces and played one against the other.

'In Bun Rang B, we had the doubtful privilege of joining the Seniors for their annual retreat of three days' silence. During the school hours we read pious books or did needlework in our classrooms, or we could walk in the grounds or pray in the chapel. For the talks, by a Dominican priest, we were allotted places at the back of the chapel; here we found various fairly innocent ways of amusing ourselves, as most of the talks went away over our heads. When we were a few years older, we began to look forward to the retreat; it was a break in the school routine, and you got a chance to think about your life and what you would do in the future.

'Anytime we were sent out of class for misbehaving, we would gravitate to the unused Science Room, where Sister Anna took in all miscreants. She had retired from teaching, and though we respected her, and though we regarded her as having no authority over us. Somehow we knew she wouldn't repeat what we told her, so we trusted her

with our problems, whether they concerned school or not. TB was rampant at the time, and a sister of one of the girls in my class was hospitalised with it. We were all scared we'd contract it too, but Sister Anna put our fears to rest. She listened in a non-judgemental way to our difficulties with teachers, gave us sensible advice and even took our side if she thought we merited it.

'Because of wartime restrictions, schooldays in the 1940s tended to be rather dull. But the war ended when I was in Third Year, and we woke up suddenly. We were no longer children, but teenagers, and our horizons widened accordingly. Now that the Blackout was over, the cinemas, theatre and opera were available to us in the evenings, and at weekends we were up and about on our bikes. Boys too became an interest, for some of my classmates. There wasn't much time or inclination for study; we were beset by a kind of restlessness which I think caused quite a bit of concern in the school. No wonder Alice Power, the old retainer, complained of us and Sister Hilary took to her bed. We didn't see her again for

weeks; she would send us down work to do on *Henry IV*, but when the day of reckoning came, the only part of the play we were proficient in was the "noises off-stage", as one wit put it.

'A number of lay teachers passed through Muckross about that time. I remember an elderly gentleman whom we delighted in addressing as "Sir", and whom we tricked into believing that we didn't get homework on a feast-day; his daughter, who was also on the staff, put him right on that point. There was a Latin teacher who confounded us, when we couldn't untangle the relationships among the gods, by saying their morality was different from ours. If the gods didn't obey the laws, where did that leave us? There was an English lady who never adopted the custom of saying a prayer at the beginning of class, and when one girl automatically made the sign of the cross, concluded that the girl hadn't done her homework and was praying she wouldn't be asked! And there was the Maths teacher whom we admired more for her stylish clothes than her ability to teach us the theorems of Euclid.



Fifth Year 1944-1945

'But the nuns were the backbone of the school. They were wonderfully kind, and they took an interest in each pupil. They instilled values in us, especially a love of truth, and awakened in us an awareness of the need to help those less well off than ourselves, materially or spiritually. A number of my classmates left after the Inter Cert, and still more at the end of Fifth Year, so we were reduced to only seven girls in Sixth Year. We had more freedom and were given more responsibility. Religion and English classes were the highlight of the day when, with Sister Hilary, we discussed current topics and tried to solve world problems as she prepared us for life after school.

'On our last day in school, we were asked whether we regretted anything we had done or not done over the years, and I remember saying, "Yes, I never missed a day in twelve years". I meant it as a joke, because I never wanted to miss a day; I think that is the best testimony I can give.'

Alma McIntyre started in 1947. 'It was a whole new experience, coming from a small lay school,

and Sister Benvenuta became my idol. She ruled us with a gentle rod of iron, and my father became a great hit with her - having a car probably had a lot to do with it, in those days. It wasn't long before little notes were being sent home asking if he would kindly drive Sister so-and-so to Sion Hill, Dun Laoghaire or Eccles Street, knowing he wouldn't say no. In return he was showered with prayer leaflets, holy pictures and medals, and even a beautiful leather cover for his Missal made by a pretty young nun, Sister Barnabas - the cause of great leg-pulling from my mother.

'My saddest memory was of "Benny" leaving us for the missions, and we lined the avenue singing "Go Ye Afar", with tears pouring down our cheeks; I still get a lump in my throat when I hear that hymn sung.'

Hilda Murphy remembers the Forties as a very subdued time, 'very much a world in monochrome. It was an older people's world; there were very few activities, outlets or even clothes for young people, because we hadn't yet been invented. We were, therefore,

supremely lucky to attend a school where this discouraging attitude did not prevail. The school was very much for us, and we were seen in an enlightened way as not just apprentice adults, but as ourselves.

'Junior School was a place and a time of Nativity Plays - playing "The Farmer Wants a Wife", spelling tests and sum sines, of lining the avenue and singing "Go Ye Afar" as the first post-war batches of Africa-bound nuns drove slowly away. We wore hair-ribbons and read school stories.

'If reading was relaxing, writing was not. One wrote with a "penny pen" (though I think it cost slightly more), a piece of wood with a detachable nib. When the nib broke, a new one was slotted in. Fountain pens were for later; we wore them hooked into the square necklines of our gym tunics. Biro pens came in about 1949 or so. Meanwhile we laboured with our ink pens, blotting the ink with a rectangular piece of blotting-paper kept neatly tucked into the inside fold of the cover of the copybook.

'Covering the copies was a big thing. Coloured paper, gift wrap, crepe paper, wallpaper - wallpaper was the ultimate in oneupmanship. One could tell whose house had recently been decorated, and possibly by whom, through the wallpaper on the copies. But of what we wrote in the copies, or learned from the books sold to us from the shop in the big press beside the Junior Cloakroom, I remember nothing.

'The half-centenary of the school was celebrated in 1950 with a pageant based on the forces of nature as prayer: "Bless the Lord, ye sun and stars". God's voice spoke through the tempest: "I am with you; have no fear". Alas, I remember very little of it apart from the superb sound and lighting effects, possibly because it took place behind me - I was one of four heralds, in a tunic of black and white squares, standing on those tiered steps in front of the stage. A dreadful eyesore, those steps, spoiling the elegant Hall; I meant to set fire to them before I left, but it slipped my mind.'





A Century of Memories

The Irish Junior Red Cross

Cora Gaffney, OP

While in Junior School at St Louis National School, Rathmines, I was an active member of the Junior Red Cross. I remember preparing albums to exchange with members in other countries; I wrote about local beauty spots and illustrated the articles with postcards. Visiting the sick in hospital was also important; I remember bringing toys to children suffering TB in Ballyroan in 1948. We would visit Cappagh Hospital at

Christmas, and help with the Christmas party.

The Head Office of the Society was at 25 Westland Row, and if help was needed I would go there after school or on Saturday mornings. Mary B Murphy was General Secretary, and her special task was to promote the Junior Red Cross in schools. On hearing that I was going to go to Muckross Park, Miss Murphy informed me that there was no Junior Red

Cross link there, and that she wanted me to establish one.

This was a tall order for a pupil settling into a new school, making friends and trying to come to terms with Trigonometry - if my teacher had set it to music, I might have made some sense of it. However, once Miss Murphy and I had enlisted the generous co-operation of Sister Barnabas, a Junior Red Cross link was formed in 1950. What activities did we engage in? Obviously, fundraising for whatever need was most urgent at that time. We visited Goldenbridge Orphanage with presents for the children and provided a party and entertainment. We studied First Aid and were provided with certificates on completion of the course. One year we took a course in Home Nursing.

At the Horse Show in the RDS in August 1951 we took turns at the Irish Red Cross Society stand, and helped to prepare the display; our photo appeared in the Irish Press. Soon after, I attended a Junior Red Cross conference in Barnett Hill, Surrey, with Rosemary Hill from the Ursuline Convent in Blackrock, Co. Cork. This was the first time Ireland had sent



Irish Junior Red Cross Rally, Iveagh Gardens, 1952 (Cora Gaffney at right, applying bandage).



A Century of Memories

delegates to an international Red Cross rally. What an experience it was, meeting young people from all over the world. We did not have a uniform, but most other delegates wore a Red Cross uniform during the day and changed into national costume for the evening entertainment.

At a Junior Red Cross rally in Iveagh Gardens, Dublin, in September 1952, Muckross Sixth Years led the parade into the grounds. I carried the flag. It was quite a heavy pole, so I'm sure I got some help for part of the route. On the platform, we gave a First Aid demonstration. The next international rally, in Sweden, was attended by Denise O'Brien; by that time I had entered the Dominican Novitiate in Kerdiffstown, Co. Kildare. The Junior Red Cross in Muckross continued to go from strength to strength.

School Echoes, 1963



Junior Red Cross presentation in aid of famine relief, 1966.

Presentation of a cheque to Our Lady's Hospital, Crumlin, December 1999. With Anne Mitchell and Naoise O'Brien are Mr Bob Hacshaw from Crumlin Hospital and Dr Garret Fitzgerald.





An Ghaeilge i bPáirc Mhucrois Céad bliain ag fás

Duine ar bith a bhfuil tuiscint aige no aici ar stair na tíre seo tuigfidh siad an dlúthbhaint idir an Ghaeilge agus tús na haoise seo. Agus, dar ndóigh, níl gá cur slos a dhéanamh ar an mbaint atá ag sin go léir le Coláiste Pháirc Mhucrois: is ag fíor-thús na haoise seo a bunaíodh an Choláiste. Coláiste thrí leibhéal a bhí ann - bunscóil phrí obháideach, meánscoil mar an gcéanna agus ionad staidéir do mhná a raibh cúrsaí ollscoile ar siúl acu ach nár ceadaí odh dóibh freastal ar an ollscoil. Bhí athbheochaint an chultúir ag tosú agus suim sa Ghaeilge agus sa chultúr Gaelach ag fás arís.

Ní haon ionadh mar sin gur bhuail beirt de na fathaigh is mó i ngluaiseacht na Gaeilge isteach chuig díospóireacht de chuid Chonradh na Gaeilge san acadamh meán-aicmeach seo a bhí ag fógairt sprid na haoise nua ina dhóigh fé in. Ag an gcruinniú sin bhí Dubhglas de hÍde san chathaoir agus i measc na gcainteoirí bhí Pádraic Mac Piarais. 'Tús maith; leath na hoibre', mar a deir an seanfhocal. Is fiú machnamh a dhéanamh freisin ar an Staraí cáiliúil Mary Hayden a bhí ag múineadh Staire do na mná óga sin; agus sin déanta againn is féidir linn blas Gaelach na Coláiste a shamhlú agus an fhé in-mhuinín sin a bhí faoi bhláth a mhothú, tar éis an chéid go léir

atá imithe. Tharla an cruinniú sin idir 1900 agus 1903.

Ach chun seanfhocal eile a tharraingt orainn féin in 'Ní hiad na fir mhóra a bhaineann an fóimhar.'

An grá agus an dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge a bhí i gcónaí agus atá anois sa Choláiste seo fós, ní ar eachtraí móra na staire a bhraitheann sé ach ar dhíograis na ndaoine a chaith blianta fada ó lá go lá ag saothrú ó dhubh go dubh ar son na Gaeilge. Tá cuid acu inár measc go fóill, cuid eile acu imithe le fada ar Shlí na Fírinne agus muidne, a gcomharbaí, fós ag treabhadh linn.

Ag caint le hiar-scoláirí agus le hiar-mhúinteoirí a raibh páirt acu sa ghluaiseacht fhada seo tá rud amháin le tabhairt faoi deara; bhí fealsúnacht chinnte i gcónaí taobh thiar de mhúineadh na Gaeilge i bPáirc Mhucrois. Bhí tuiscint ón tús sa choláiste agus ba thuiscint réabhlóideach í an am sin: go mbraitheann teanga ar chomhthéasc atá pré-abhailte i gcultúr agus a bhaineann le pobal beo a cheanglaíonn daoine le chéile. De thimpiste nó diaon ghnó bíshin an fhealsúnacht a spreag agus a threoraigh an Ghaeilge sa scoil le linn na haoise seo.

Ón tús bhí cur chuige leathan a chuir béim ar an gcomhthéacs. Bhí béim faoi leith ar úsáid

laethúil na teanga i ngnáth-imeachtaí na scoile. Cumarsáid a bhí ann ón tús; cumarsáid nach raibh an tsaorgacht ceangailte léi; ach cumarsáid a bhí beo agus fiúntach. Cé go mbí odh an beagán ní os coitianta ná a mhalairt cuireadh meas i gcónaí ar an mbeagán, Cuireadh tús le camógaíocht scoil. Cruthaíodh ceangail leis na Gaeltachtaí; an Rinn ar dtús agus ní os déanaí Gaeltachtaí eile ar fud na hÉireann. Fiú sna fichidí bhí na ceangail seo mar chuid de chóras agus de thraidisiún na scoile. Mar gheall ar na ceangail sin bhí clanna áirithe a chothaigh agus a neartaigh an traidisiún; ina measc Clann de Bhaldráithe a rinne a gcuid féin ar son na Gaeilge san aois seo. Diaidh ar ndiaidh bhí iar-scoláirí ag teacht ar ais mar mhúinteoirí agus blas an traidisiúin leo. Ina measc is fiú An tSr. Méabh Ní Chléirigh a lua. Bhí sí bPáirc Mhucrois mar dhalta go dtí 1932 agus dífhill sí mar mhúinteoir sna daicheadaí. I measc na n-iarrachtaí fiúntacha ar son na Gaeilge bhunaigh sí Cumann Gaelach chun an Ghaeilge a phréamhú go nádúrtha i measc na ndaltaí. Ar na himeachtaí a bhí odh ar siúl go seachtainiúil bhí odh drámaí, cluichí, ceol agus damhsa. Is cuimhin léi féin in cailín darbh ainm Christine on tSeiceaslobhaic a tháinig mar dhídeánaí i rith an dara Cogadh Domhanda agus a fuair an chéad áit ina rang i nGaeilge.

agus maireann an traidisiún fós. Bhí tacaíocht i gcónaí ón mBainistíocht agus ón Oifig. Fiú na laethanta seo, i bhfealsúnacht na scoile cuirtear béim ar thraidisiún Gaelach na hÉireann mar bhunchloch na scoile agus mar chuid lárnach de Chultúr na hEorpa. Tá na céadta daltaí fós ag tarraingt ar na Gaeltachtaí gach bliain, iar-scoláirí ag múineadh na Gaeilge i mbunscóileanna agus i meánscoileanna. Bialann Ghaelach ar Shráid Chill Dara faoi bhainistíocht iar-scoláire. Iar-chéimí de chuid na scoile mar bhean ghnó oillte go hiomlán tré mheán na Gaeilge i D.C.U. I saol gnóthach acadúil na scoile sa lá atá inniu ann cuirtear béim mhór ar thorthaí agus is soiléir go bhfuil toradh na hoibre go léir le feiceáil ar na torthaí a ghnóthaí tear sa scoil seo i láthair na huairé.

Is minic a chloistear an gearán nach n-úsáideann daltaí an tsár-Ghaeilge atá acu; nach mbeannaíonn siad dá chéile sa teanga agus fiú nach bhfreagaíonn siad beannacht as Gaeilge - sin gearán an lae inniu.

Ach is dúshlán é don chéad chéad eile, - dúinne agus dár gcomharbaí, an teanga a athbhunú i bpobal beo agus i gcultúr a cheanglaíonn sinn le chéile mar chuid de thraidisiún. Ní beag an obair atá déanta ag Páirc Mhucrois san obair sin.

Dónal Ó Maoldomhnaigh





A Century of Memories

1950s

Muckcross Park, 1950s

Hilda Murphy provided memories of this decade, along with the collective reminiscences of Claire Dowling, Enda O'Leary, Sheila Forde, Beatrice Doran, Margot Doyle, Madeleine O'Sullivan, and Lorna Madigan.

This group begins: 'Some of our earliest memories are of entering the back gate on Mount Eden Road, always puzzled that the pillars said "Sion Hill" on the inside, and of walking up the drive by the vegetable garden, trying to balance while walking on the edging stones. It was always a relief to arrive at the one lovely flat stone where we could have a rest!

'We loved the Babies' class, under the guidance of Sister Victorine. Our class formed the first-ever Transition class, between Babies and First Form. We didn't have a separate classroom, just a row of desks at the back of the Babies' class. Beth McAllister was the teacher in charge of Third Form, and we loved her reading aloud to us as we sat with our sewing and embroidery, especially *The Wind in the Willows*.

'First Communion was a great occasion; apart from the solemnity of the moment, we remember the smells of incense and beeswax in the chapel, and the novelty of having breakfast

(cornflakes and cooked ham) with our parents in the Refectory. Confirmation too was awe-inspiring; there we were in our almost identical camel coats, processing from the school to Donnybrook Church, terrified that Archbishop McQuaid might question us and we might fail. Memories of the annual Corpus Christi procession are with us still - the nuns lined the avenue, unable to join fully in this big event. The avenue and Morehampton Road were lined with loudspeakers for the sacred music as we wended our way, led by Father Condon, stopping all the traffic en route.

'A trip to Wills' cigarette factory in Fifth Form is remembered by some of us with pleasure - we had to write essays about the experience. We also remember Mother Albertus teaching us "*Stille Nacht*" for Christmas. Before we left the Junior School, Mother Aimon gave us a peptalk, standing on a little box in the cloakroom while we stood there in our royal blue uniforms and white blouses, with the smell of shoes and leather in the background. She told us never to forget two words, "please" and "thank you", and to remember that we were now almost adults. ►



Alice Power (right) with Rosie Doherty (mother of snooker champion Ken Doherty).



Awaiting the arrival of the Dominican Master General, Michael Browne OP, 1958



Muckcross Park, 1950s



Confirmation group, 1957.



Paula Slattery (far right), Muckcross Park 1948-61, appointed Ireland's ambassador to the Argentine from 10 January 2000.

► 'Our first impressions of Senior School were of Sister Vincenzo. In Irish class, she taught us the poem 'Sraideanna Baile Atha Cliath', and some of us remember it to this day. We entered the Feis, and came first reciting this poem. Sodality classes gave Sister Méabh the opportunity to talk about the more serious side of life, and it was she who encouraged us to go to Irish college. Most of us went to Gortahork, Co. Donegal, where Síle Uí Duigán kept us all under her thumb. We discovered boys for the first

time, and reunions were held regularly in Dublin afterwards, at ceilis in Barry's Hotel and the Mansion House.

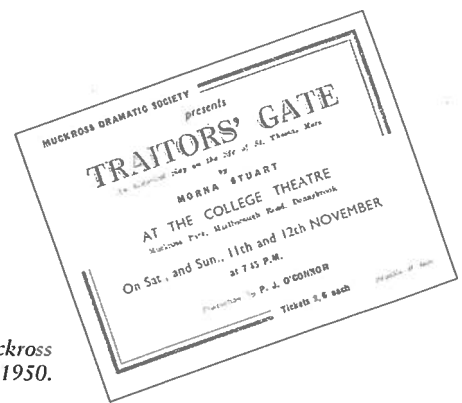
'The Junior Red Cross, under the direction of Sister Barnabas, was involved with St Mary's School for the Deaf in Cabra; girls from Muckcross "adopted" a student from St Mary's, and visited Cabra to meet their young friends. A fund-raising fancy-dress was an annual event, with the proceeds going to the Junior Red Cross.

'We can recall playing hockey in the front field with the ground hard with frost, the nuns walking round the hockey field in groups, and the effort involved in bringing sandwiches to entertain visiting teams after matches. We all have happy memories of the Concert Hall stage, and the annual Choir exam with Sister Cecilia, as she instructed us in the importance of deportment. We can still smell the wax polish, and the heavy brown velvet curtains with their own particular odour! Sister Cecilia introduced us to Gilbert and Sullivan, with performances of *Iolanthe* and *The Pirates of Penzance*.

'Maths and Latin were difficult, but Patsy Kinsella and Sister Louis Dominic made them interesting for us. We will

always be grateful to Sister Patrick for teaching us Irish poems by singing them - it was a great help to the memory, but made one unpopular during exams! Our introduction to art appreciation came from Ann O'Connell, who also taught some of us French; Celia Dowling taught French to the other half of the class. Muckcross also provided many finishing touches, such as elocution lessons, dancing lessons, and even a session on deportment and grooming.

'Discipline was always unobtrusive, but firm; the "Ribbon" system saw to that. Some of us lost our green ribbons for talking in the cloakroom. We lived in fear of a teacher putting a black mark against our name on the back of the classroom door, endangering our chances of a ribbon. Our one ambition was to become a Child of Mary and wear a blue ribbon. We were reprimanded by Mother Hilary for running in the corridor and not behaving like young ladies. One of us remembers being Organiser in Chief of Ranks, standing at the top of the stairs watching everyone filing down to the cloakroom, *in an orderly fashion*. Being a Prefect was of great importance, with a burden of responsibility. For us, the Fifties were a good time, and we are deeply grateful.'



Programme and ticket for 'Traitors' Gate', celebrating Muckross Golden Jubilee, 1950.

Hilda Murphy's memories in the Fifties are of the Senior School, 'a place where one did not wear hair-ribbons and did not admit to reading school stories. I remember those years not by the date but by the Shakespearean play we studied. *Julius Caesar*, the Baltinglass post office controversy. *The Merchant of Venice*, Kathleen Ferrier at the Royal, the Abbey Theatre fire, the Korean war.

'In November or December 1951, there took place that great milestone in theatrical history, *Cinderella*, or *Caitlín na Cluide*, with Wendy Spinner as *Cinderella*: 'Maidir liomsa, ni ligtir chuig aon siomsa mé'; and Catherine Fant as the Fairy Godmother: 'Lurabóg, larabóg'. Siobhan Dowling and Fionnuala McAree were the Ugly Sisters, and Maire O'Rourke and Geraldine Hughes were excellent as the prince and the courtier, Iorgnette and all. Much siomsa was had by all.

'Schoolwork was becoming more interesting, and so was the outside world as the old staid and sedate ways disappeared. The in word was "contemporary", and we were forever urging our parents to get rid of perfectly comfortable sofas and chairs and replace them with angular things with strangely positioned legs. And

we wore those dreadful felt skirts.

'By 1955, we were beginning to realise who ran all this - who, in a totally unassuming way, with no fuss, little backup, no fanfares, simply gave so much. We remember well Sister Anna's paintings, Sister Barnabas' needlework, Sister Stephanie and Sister Bernadette, Mother Albertus Hochburger ('I am not German; I am Bavarian'), Sister Alphonsus and Mother Clare, as well as Mrs O'Farrell Macalister, Miss Hanley, Miss Hopkins, Sister Anne O'Connell, Miss Kinsella (always deemed "just one of ourselves"), Sister Louis Dominic and Sister Innocentia, both so young, Sister Patricia Cronin and Sister Cecilia Veale (musician, electrician, linguist - you name it), Sister Brendan, Mother Martina, Mother Augustine O'Sullivan, Sister Vincenzo and, very specially, Sister Hilary.

Endings are difficult to write; even that promising lad from Warwickshire avoided them, substituting a reference to the future. I will emulate him; we look forward to the next hundred years of Muckross. Floreat.' ✨

Hilda Murphy



Corpus Christi celebration (in front of Hall Balcony), 1959.



First Communion of Eithne de Valera, current staff member, at Muckross Park with her parents, Professor and Mrs Ruaidhri de Valera and her grandparents, An Taoiseach Eamon de Valera, and Bean de Valera, 1956.



A Century of Memories

Sport in Muckcross

Hockey in the 1950s

Valerie Barry

Third Class, under the tuition of Miss McAllister's patient and crystal-clear method of coaching, was when my love of hockey began. Two years later, the big day arrived and we played our first match against Mount Sackville. Under the care of two 'big girls', we travelled on two buses and walked from Islandbridge Gate to Knockmaroon Gate, in the Phoenix Park. It was a brilliant day, snow was falling and settling on the trees and the park was beautiful. We were treated to a wonderful afternoon tea and played games and activities with the boarders, but the match itself was 'snowed off'.

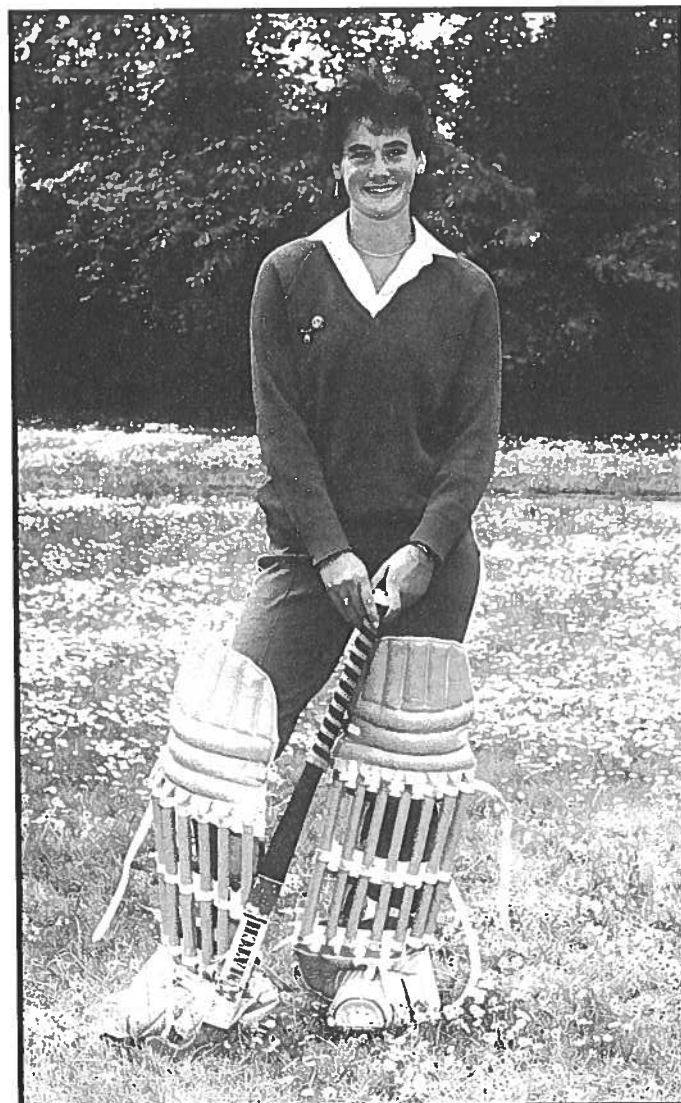
In First Year, we were encouraged out by the Sixth Years to the hockey-pitch, the small grass area overlooked from the Concert Hall. During my six years in Senior School we had no PE teacher, which surprised us as Sion Hill was in full swing training PE teachers. Little Miss Deirdre Ennis came after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays; at one stage the numbers dropped to ten, but Auntie Dee Dee, as she was affectionately known, said if it dropped to one she would still come to keep the game alive.

Hockey lost its sparkle for some time, but one day an enthusiastic, vibrant nun talked to me, emphasising her points

and interest in re-establishing the game by thumping one fist into the palm of the other hand, eyes blazing! Barney had launched herself, and me, into full flight.

She was a woman before her time - no other school had such foresight. The two grass pitches still in use today were developed, and the Hen Run was converted into changing rooms. There was a grand opening; the camogie and hockey players lined up, with Sister Barnabas, Sister Patrick and the architect Binky Drumm. Paula Slattery, representing camogie, spoke in Irish, and I represented hockey and added my appreciation for the new facility. The hens were banished forever from their hitherto comfortable home in the botany fields at the back of the school.

We were not allowed to play in the Leinster School Competition or against Protestant schools. To this day I am unsure of the reason; was it unlady-like, did the looming figure of Archbishop John Charles McQuaid ban women from competitive sports, or was it the gap between the black stockings and the shortened gymslip? Despite this, four of us did represent Leinster School teams in my era, Lorraine O'Reilly, Margaret Nagle, my younger sister Marguerite and myself. Lorraine, Marguerite and



Sandra Gorman, Muckcross past pupil represented Ireland as hockey goalkeeper.



A Century of Memories

I were later selected for the Irish team.

My school life was lived from match to practice to match. We still had school on Saturdays, and the rule was that if you were absent from school you must be too sick to play your match. There were a couple of occasions when Lourdes itself would have been proud of the miracle! The blank pages of my textbooks had lists of teams instead of notes, and Mary Healy was a most efficient secretary. Our friend Catriona Doran suffered us, but continued to play camogie, in which I also took part.

Tennis was even smaller in numbers than hockey. We played on the beautiful lawn in front of the Convent hall door, with the spirit of Joseph Mary Plunkett looking down on us from where he was born, and the spirit of Barney keeping an eye on us from behind the curtained windows of the parlour. She was ensuring our safety while we were being coached by the only male teacher to enter the school gates at that time, John Horn, the leading coach in the country. Again, these tennis classes were most progressive.

I am still teaching hockey six hours a week, at Mount Sackville. My late father, Lughaidh, used to say, 'You won't be able to run around a hockey-pitch at 40', but I was, and still am at just a little beyond that magical age!



Muckross wins Leinster Schools Hockey Cup, 1997.



Muckross loses Leinster Schools Hockey Cup, 1998.



A Century of Memories

Sport in Muckross

Orienteering

Erika Keane

We started orienteering in 1978, and were actively encouraged by the PE staff, especially Deirdre Blair; we also remember with appreciation the huge input of Mr and Mrs Jos. Lynam. Orienteering combines cross-country running and map-reading, as you run, to find checkpoints along the way, and a group of us became close friends through our love of this challenging sport.

I remember our first trip away, to Sheffield, in 1978, and we travelled with the Irish Army to Scotland in 1979. In 1980 we represented Ireland at the French 3 Day event and the Swiss 5 Day event.

Orla Cooke was the Irish Orienteering Champion in 1984 and 1986, and was the first Irish competitor to qualify for the World Championships on her own merit. Tara Horan won in France, and represented Ireland at several international and world events. Ann Masterson is noted for her length of time on the leader board in Finland (Scandinavia is the home of orienteering). Catherine Lyons, representing Ireland, visited Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Eastern Bloc during the 1980s, and organised an event in Lithuania. Michele Coleman is actively involved in orienteering in New Zealand.

We all remember the Muckross Park Orienteers Relay Teams and individual events in the early years; we were the envy of other clubs at the Irish Junior Championships for years. We thank again all who introduced us to the sport, and we all hope that the same opportunities are being offered to the present pupils.



Basketball League winners, 1995



Sonia O'Sullivan pictured with Muckross athlete Maria Lynch during school visit.



A Century of Memories

1960s

Muckross Park, 1960s

The Swinging Sixties are remembered by Fidelma Freney, Neasa Ní Ghráda, Honor O Brolcháin and Emer O'Sullivan.

Fidelma Freney came to Muckross in 1967, after doing the Inter Cert in a restrictive boarding-school. 'My lasting impressions are of a school where freedom and self-expression flourished, the only restriction being responsibility to oneself and to others, combined with an obligation to society in general. Personal development was encouraged, and received as much recognition as academic achievement.

'In many ways, Muckross Park was ahead of its time, with not only the academic curriculum but also sports and public

speaking. Novel at the time were "poise and personality" courses, and the nuns organised discos and debates with the nearest boys' schools. Supervision seemed non-existent to me, and the influence of the teachers was invisible. Students were never rebuked for subject decisions; I for one was glad to be rid of Maths, not to mention History, Geography and Art. I did try to compensate by taking up a new subject, but after a few weeks with Sister Francis, botany also joined the list of rejects.

'In Fifth Year I decided to give up music, to concentrate on the rest of my studies. This left me with a free two-class period once a week, but instead of being directed to the Library for



Library, 1965.

compulsory study, I was free to use it as I saw fit. I thrived in this atmosphere; study was no longer a chore, and I began to develop a genuine interest in some of my subjects. The Dominican emphasis on a broadly-based, liberal education greatly contributed to their students' well-being and happiness.

Honor O Brolcháin is descended from the Cranny and Plunkett families, who are so intertwined with the history of Muckross. She lived quite close to the school, in a house built by her great-great-grandfather; as she says, 'I was always inordinately proud of these facts, and inflicted them on my

poor classmates until I got some sense!' The choice of school was simple: 'My mother said that when the family moved into Marlborough Road in 1948, she used to hear the Muckross girls talking at the tops of their voices and laughing up and down the road, and she decided that it was definitely the school for us.

'Most of my own memories are of endless talk - arguments, debates, discussions, constant needling by the nuns and lay teachers to make us think. It was the nuns who made us seriously consider a real career - our strategy, up till then, was to train as secretaries in the hope of meeting the man of our



Open-air-performance of 'Hiawatha', 1963.



Lay staff, 1961.

dreams in some glamorous job, so we could marry, have children and stay home for the rest of our lives!

'In Muckross, I was given many moments that made deep impressions, such as when Miss McAllister read us a chapter on the Great Famine by Cecil Woodham Smith. I was only ten, and shocked to a standstill; most of us had never heard of the Famine. I had many more such moments in Fifth Year, when each teacher made use of

what was then an "interim" year to expand our fields - *Romeo and Juliet*, European history, French poetry, lifeskills with real wisdom from Mother Hilary.

'We were guinea-pigs in a careers guidance scheme, with interviews and IQ tests, which was set up by Mother Jordana; we had driving lessons in the school grounds, some of the very first sex education talks in Ireland, the introduction of volleyball (because it was a European game), and were

drawn into a scheme of regular interaction with handicapped children. There was a new library for Fifth and Sixth Years in a big sunny classroom; the range of books was huge, and there was a sense of personal adventure about the place.

'Women such as Sister Patrick sent us out with a wider vision of the world; one of the many extraordinary things she did was to pass around books which were banned at the time, but which she knew were good literature. Time proved her right. Sister Barnabas, who passionately wanted us to get the best and kept it all moving forward; the philosophical and wise Mother Hilary; the intellectual Sister Benvenuta; the enthusiastic Sister Vincenzo - they were all part of this energy.'

Emer O'Sullivan was at Muckross just two years ahead of Honor. She says, 'In retrospect, our class was incredibly well-behaved. Whether this was due to the coincidental harmony of ideas of learning and fun I do not know. Huge kudos ensued from creating the best-looking stall at the annual Sale of Work, but the vulgar counting of profits was heavily frowned on. Oneupmanship was despised utterly, and competition was

deemed to be an entirely private affair from High Babies upwards. The Leaving Cert results were collected from the school during the holidays, and given to parents without any hype whatsoever.

'However, such achievements as singing in the opera or playing team games had to be public events. Any applause due was given in the form of a general recognition of something called "team spirit". This was to prevent you from ever complaining about cold dark wet Saturdays spent waiting for the bus to take you to play a match in Santa Sabina, where after ninety minutes of vigorous struggle against mud and wind the refreshments would consist of two Marietta biscuits and a cup of tea you could have walked to Galway on, followed by another long wait at the bus-stop. There were no hot showers, needless to state, so now you were wet and cold and smelling of mud, and so numb that you couldn't remember if you had won or lost, in answer to a kindly question from someone on the bus.

'Another preoccupation of the time was character-building, guaranteed to be built up by a series of deprivations, mental rather than physical, such as sporting defeats or not getting ►

A Century of Memories
1960s



Sandra Plunkett supports vote of thanks to Miss Ennis, hockey coach, 1961.

Hall then, though the noise from the audience was a good experience for future life. Sporting glory was not shared by parents apart from the odd dad roaring enthusiastically from the sidelines, much to the utter mortification of his daughter - such a girl clearly did not have any brothers. We would say a prayer later in the Chapel that God might see fit to accommodate such a father in the future, and save us all any further embarrassment.

'The annual Gilbert and Sullivan performance was de rigueur in Irish schools. I don't know why we never questioned any possibility of change in composer; I think now that we thought it was on the curriculum. All performances were strictly unisex; cross-dressing and its disastrous effect on the human psyche had not been revealed to us at the time. A great advantage of the ubiquity of the operas was the opportunity to attend whatever opera you were doing in another school. Amazingly enough, we were sent to two different performances, one in Blackrock College and, to reinforce the special Dominican flavour, one all the way to Newbridge College. And before you begin to imagine what fate might befall 21 maidens from Muckross in the wilds of County ►

► the part of a "Little Maid" in *The Mikado*. You were always safe in the knowledge that whatever pain you might be feeling was actually moulding you into a sort of Joan of Arc, who would experience exhilaration when encountering hardship later in life.

I often wince when I remember the uniform. No consideration was given to any evolution of the female form between the ages of four and eighteen. The highly unflattering box-pleated

royal blue garment, donned for the first day of Low Babies, was replicated in emerald green on entering Senior School. The box-pleats grew wider and more unpleated with age, so by the time you reached the age of sixteen, your uniform hung down the back of your calves and barely reached your knees in front. One bore a distinct resemblance to those carved figures on the bows of old wooden ships. If these garments were designed to protect us from too rapid a sexual

awakening, they certainly worked a treat.

'Another feature of the time was the total absence of any parental presence at school. The parent-teacher meeting would have been considered total superfluous by students and parents alike. They certainly attended the annual Opera, usually all two performances, accompanied by all other members of the family no matter how young. Space was not a problem in the Concert



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1960s

► Kildare, amongst 400 Dominican schoolboys, bear in mind that uniform was compulsory.'

Neasa Ni Ghráda's earliest memories were of her first day in Muckross in 1958. She remembers Sister Polycarp, Sister Brendan, Miss Tierney and Miss O'Donoghue. After a year in Ring, she entered the Senior School.

'Emphasis was on tidy uniforms, berets, black outdoor shoes, and indoor shoes (I think these were brown). The tip of the knee was as far up as the skirt was allowed to go, but once outside the gates skirts suddenly shrank, with the aid of the belt! The obligatory gaberdine coat was completely impractical; if it got wet on the way into school, it was still damp and clammy at the end of the day. Punctuality

was another matter, something my family was infamously bad on, even though we lived only five minutes away. Indeed, one of my elder sisters was put in charge of the bell for assembly, and consequently the entire school was late.

'Sister Bertranda, who taught History, was the first nun to talk to us about what it was like for her to enter the convent, and how she had her last cigarette on the doorstep - it somehow made them all seem much more human. I suppose the great difference now is that there is only one nun teaching in Muckross now. I always swore I would never say that my school days were the best days of my life, but I do think that Muckross gave me an openness to ideas and other people's ways of doing things.'



Maeve Brennan, national winner of Bord Iascaigh Mhara Fish Cookery Competition, 1963-64.

There were the many crazes which swept the school. First of these was 'Two Balls'. If you threw your ball just high enough to go over the wall, there was a chance for the Roof-Hoppers Anonymous to go on a roof crawl by way of Fatima window. Next came the yo-yo, and water pistols. Due to the latter the authorities took on the look of Wild West sheriffs on their rounds - pockets bulging with these lethal weapons. We seem to remember one of the animal lovers trying to educate her white mice. They had to remain illiterate, however, as their presence under the desk had a disturbing effect on her neighbours. Later came the days of the illegal green, silver and gold (quite patriotic, really) nail varnish.

All of which brings us up to 1963, when following a thunderstorm Muckross became the Venice of the South City, and many hitherto covered ankles were to be seen. However, things didn't quite reach the Ark stage and next day, to the disappointment of the students, everything was normal again.

School Echoes, 1965



A Century of Memories

1960s

Thunderbird

After a five-minute briefing on the basic rules of driving, the instructor surrenders the car to you. You have checked the mirror and in a business-like manner you turn the key clockwise. A little acceleration to keep the engine running. You haven't moved yet! Ah! A car appears in the rear-view mirror. It's 500 yards away but you will wait! You are not going to be one of those reckless drivers, are you? Well, two minutes later you deem it safe enough to venture forth. Off with the clutch. Convulsively both you and the

instructor dive forward into the windscreen. The car lurches backwards and with a final note of sufferance the engine dies. Maroon-faced, you turn to your partner and ask sheepishly, 'Well, what went wrong?' The secret of the clutch is refreshed in your memory...

'Next turn to the left.'

'Now let's see, indicator up for left, down for right. No, it's the other way round. No it isn't, click, clack, click.'

The calm voice interrupts your feverish tweaking of the indicator.

'It doesn't matter, you've just

passed the corner.'

'What! Oh dear, I forgot about the steering wheel!'

'Well, do better next time...'

Second lesson takes place in the busy streets of Dublin's fair city. Having got over O'Connell Bridge with no major difficulty, you sail jauntily past the GPO. What an historic moment. Past Nelson's Pillar when SCREECH!!! The instructor's dual control brakes are slammed on. Utterly amazed, you gaze around. His face is sober. On either footpath your gaze is met with some sour, some smirking, some shocked looks.

'Traffic lights', a brief word from your partner.

'What?' Your eyes follow his and there, amazingly enough, a red light glares threateningly down on you. Tricked and angry, you go on the defensive.

'They were never there before!'

'Well, they are there now...'

'Eager Beaver', School Echoes, 1965



Driving lessons for Sixth Year pupils, 1965-66.



A Century of Memories

Muckross Park, 1970s

Sinead Williams and Deirdre O'Connell have contributed memories of Muckross in the Seventies.

Sinead started in Muckross in 1967, aged four. It was an idyllic place to attend school with vast grounds, a huge weeping willow to play hide'n'seek under, a horse called Dolly to feed and visit on breaks, and a friendly groundsman with a lovable black labrador, Rolo.

'Through the Junior School my favourite teachers were Sister Alexis, Miss McCarthy, Sister Marie de Lourdes and Miss McAllister. Sister Marie de Lourdes, the music teacher for the school, took what was called a "Special Choir" to Salzburg in 1973. I couldn't sing a note, but my big dream was to learn German, and I wanted so much to go to Austria. She gave me an unprecedented three chances to audition for the choir, but I was hopeless.

'In 1975 I moved to the Senior School. It was something of a culture shock to be "streamed", separated from the classmates of so many years and adjusting to many different teachers. However, a wealth of subjects was offered, and in First Year we got to do a bit of everything before choosing what we

wanted to do from Second Year on. I was introduced to cookery, science and French, but I was never much of a cook and the teacher, Mrs White, despaired of me. I remember a Gas Company milk rolls competition where my rolls were elephantine in size, because I put both baking powder and self-raising flour in the mixture.

'My most abiding memory of Senior School was the 1978 school exchange to Paris, led by Sister Barnabas. I stayed with a wonderful family who treated me in style, and tried hard to steer me in the direction of their slightly older son to encourage me to stay. I really didn't want to return to Dublin, so when Aer Lingus announced that the plane was over-booked and six people would have to be delayed a day or so, I was the first to put my hand up. Sister Barnabas was most grateful to me for leading the offers, and we got to stay in the Paris Hilton with generous food vouchers. That was the highlight of the trip!'

Deirdre O'Connell, now a teacher in Muckross (Ms Rankin), remembers the classrooms: 'Pupils began in the prefabs, moving yearly inwards and upwards through the

building and the litany of saints after whom the classrooms were named, to culminate in Sixth Year on the top corridor, where the next move was an invitation through the mirrored door into the convent. I know of no pupil who was tempted by this subtle suggestion!'

She also remembers the wide variety of H.Dip students: 'Our history teacher was an American with wild red hair...His laid-back style in teaching belied a vicious streak in reports, and my friend still harbours a grudge for the comment which suggested that she had "sat back on her laurels". Our PE teacher that year was an imposing young woman who brooked no absence from the hockey field and tracked us down relentlessly if we failed to appear. With such an obvious appreciation of the mortification of the flesh, it was not surprising that she also taught us religion. Her greeting on entering the classroom was "Open all the windows", and as we froze in the arctic blasts of January, the fires of Hell seemed a distinctly inviting prospect. These were the days when we envied Dolly the horse who grazed contentedly, snug in her winter coat, in what had

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- ▶ formerly been the nuns' vegetable garden.

'Fourth Year saw us banished temporarily from the main building, and the prefabs proved less of a trial to us than to our English teacher that year. He was a delicate creature, forever closing windows and rubbing his hands Lady Macbeth-fashion in an attempt to maintain circulation in the chilly outreaches of the prefabs. We affectionately nicknamed him "Sexy Sox", in recognition of his colourful collection of foot-warmers.

'In Fifth Year, Miss Kinsella introduced herself as our English teacher. My first essay was returned with a comment that took little account of the tender sensibility of one who had successfully negotiated the Inter Cert. The composition was thrust at me unceremoniously with the barked dismissal that it was "one-sided, cliched - and too short!" This no-nonsense style defined its author. She laid great store by the motto that if things weren't fair, 'neither was life'.

'Miss Kinsella would no doubt have approved of the advice given by our principal as we left Muckross. In response to an anxious inquiry by a Sixth Year concerned at the threat of

diminishing job prospects as the economic decline of the late 70s began to bite, Sister Domenico briskly replied, "There are no jobs, dear. You've got to make them."

'Now, each year, I see my own Sixth Year concert reflected in the anarchic celebrations of yet another graduating class. This uniquely Muckross custom best exemplifies the sense of continuity which characterizes many of the school's activities. Some customs, like the Blind Boys' Party, the Christmas sales of work and the annual Fancy Dress for staff and pupils have lapsed, but the appreciation of a tradition continues in the productions staged with Gonzaga, the charitable work of the Vincent de Paul and the annual trip of volunteers to help with the invalids in Lourdes.

'When I meet with my fellow past pupils, our shared recollections make it clear that Muckross is a place from which "we cannot be turned out". It has given us an education that accurately reflects Aristotle's view on learning, that it should be 'an ornament in prosperity, a refuge in adversity, an provision in old age.' ✨



Sr M. Barnabas OP pictured at school sports 2000.



Travel Overseas

The French Connection

Maire Kealy, OP

In 1973 Sister Barnabas, encouraged by the Principal, Sister Domenico Miley, organised a trip to France for Third Year students. The inspiration had come from a conversation with two members of Les Filles de l'Education Chretienne institute, who were staying in the Hostel, and wanted to arrange exchange visits between Irish schools and their own school, Ecole Charles Peguy in Paris. In time, the venue changed to a school in Bobigny, in the suburbs of north-east Paris.

This marked the beginning of almost twenty years of French exchange visits, which became an important part of the expansion of Muckross's language development programme. In the later years, until the exchanges ended in 1990, the visits were organised for Transition Year rather than Third Year, because the Junior Certificate was now taken in Third Year.

Over the years, more than six hundred pupils from each school benefited from the linguistic, social and cultural interaction. As every teacher knows, preparation is vital to make any school outing worthwhile, and the logistics of co-ordinating the

travel, passports, accommodation, finance, insurance and medical requirements of 35 Irish and 35 French teenagers was no small task. With characteristic thoroughness, Sister Barnabas left nothing to chance. With the willing co-operation of the teaching staff, the girls were prepared carefully for the visits, and classes were devoted to a study of art, and to places of historical interest which they would visit.

Parental involvement was crucially important to the success of each year's exchange, and the parents helped in every way they could. Each family participating was given briefing notes; among many useful snippets of information, 'please advise your French student not to carry too much money around with her' was typical of the down-to-earth and practical approach of Sister Barnabas.

The French students would arrive for three weeks in the second term, including Easter Week, and the Muckross girls would go to Paris immediately the school closed for the summer holidays, because French schools stay open until the end of July. This caused the minimum disruption of normal

classes for both schools. In each school, staff members would give French or English lessons to the visitors each morning, and a daily schedule was prepared so that the girls would gain as much value as possible from their stay. A sample programme for a week in Dublin would include visits to Leinster House, Newgrange and Tara, Dublin Castle and the Royal Hospital, Kilkenny Castle, RTE and Hughes Bros ice-cream factory, while in France the girls would visit Notre Dame, the Louvre, Versailles and Chartres Cathedral, not to mention the ever-popular tour of Paris by Night.

The appreciation of the exchange students is evidenced by the lifelong friendships some of them made, the fluency in spoken French which many acquired, and the companionship and fun which they experienced together. This success was achieved by the combined efforts of Principals, teaching staff, secretarial staff and parents, but above all by Sister Barnabas, who was the heart of it all.



Notre Dame, Paris, 1967.



Staff on school trip, Morocco 1996 (Sister Norah, OP, Principal, in centre).



Sking, Andorra, 1996



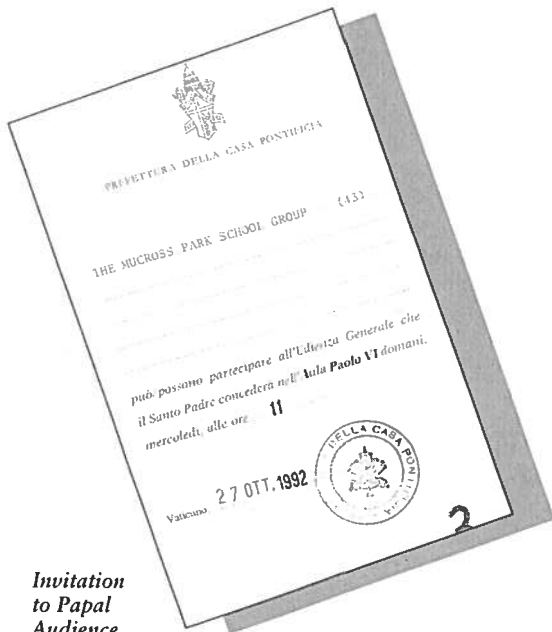
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Sister Norah and Staff in Venice, 1995



Students and staff on the Isle of Capri, 1993 including the late Ms Fionnuala O'Driscoll R.I.P.



Invitation to Papal Audience 1992.



Students and staff at Heidelberg Castle, 1991.



A Century of Memories 1980s

Muckcross Park, 1980s

Una Ni Dhubhghaill

The eighties - The glittering, shoulder-padded, 'greed is good' years. To the west, Gordon Gekko was busy making his millions on Wall Street. To the east, Margaret Thatcher was busy making her mark on Downing Street. On a fine September morning, I stood white-socked, white-faced, and terrified in the hall which separated Grianáin 3 and 4 (grianán - that was a new one on me), unbuckling the belt of my gaberdine (more new words) with fingers that shook slightly. Most of the beginning is a blur now - not because so much time has passed, but because it was a blur then too. There was a bewildering array of new teachers and subjects and rules and rooms and name-tags and faces. I don't think my eyes returned to their normal size until after Hallowe'en. And of course there was Sister Méabh, who made sense of all the confusion, told us what we needed to know and where we needed to go, and often indeed took us there herself, imploring us by the way to keep the classroom tidy and reminding us of the connection between cleanliness and godliness.

As we made our way up through the school, we passed from Sister Méabh's sphere of influence into that of Sister Barnabas, whose considerable talents were daily put to the

test in keeping the Third Years (not yet an exam year in those days) somewhere in the vicinity of the straight and narrow. In our case she achieved this by channelling our energies into producing a concert. There was always music - choir and special choir, concerts, masses, carol services, musicals (*Calamity Jane* and *The King and I*), always under the baton of Mrs. Maguire, and always a welcome break from the classroom. The upper reaches of the school were the realm of Sister Norah and Miss Kinsella. Life on the top corridor was a serious business: decisions had to be made about one's 'life' - that

mysterious thing which lay on the far side of the Leaving Cert. But in the meantime, and taken every bit as seriously, there were debates and plays (some of which were all the more interesting for involving the participation of the opposite sex), magazines to be produced, literary competitions to be entered, and opinions to be formed over a packet of Hobnobs in Herbert Park at lunchtime. I was in the Leaving Certificate class of 1988. That year, the sixth year concert had the added significance of coinciding with the retirement of Miss Kinsella, the Vice-Principal, after at least forty

years' connection with Muckcross as both pupil and teacher. One might think that we, as Sixth Years, might have felt our grand exit overshadowed by Miss Kinsella's departure. Instead it made us feel all the more special - as if she had chosen this particular year to leave, and her choice was somehow a reflection on us. Well, it wouldn't be worth staying once we were gone, would it? Six years is not a long time. But the six years between twelve and eighteen; between first year and sixth year; between the Grianáin and the top corridor: those six years spanned a lifetime. I bet they still do.



Staff, 1986. pictured with Sr Nora O'Connor OP, Principal and Ms Patsy Kinsella Vice Principal.



A Century of Memories

Showtime

Lucy Mitchell

Anyone who went to Muckross Park between 1981 and 1987 should remember all the songs from *Calamity Jane* and *The King and I*, the musicals we staged during those years.

For *Calamity Jane*, I was in Third Year and had to run on stage during the opening chords like a distressed damsel in a silent film mouthing 'Help! Help!', followed by two cowboys carrying a huge banner announcing '*Calamity Jane!*' It was a tiny part, but I felt quite important. My best friend, Gillian Reidy, played Calamity Jane, and made us proud that a Third Year could carry the title role so well.

For the male roles, Gonzaga Fifth Years were invited to audition. They turned up one October Monday after school; they wore suede Chelsea boots, suede jackets and some had 'sun-in' in their hair. I waited months for one called Cormac to acknowledge me and I think he said 'hiya' some time around the last night, but that could be wishful thinking. Through Gillian, four of us got invitations to the parties hosted by the Muckross Fifth Years, and I wore red ankle boots, matching legwarmers, black trousers with buckles down the side of each leg and a bat-wing sleeved top - real supermodel material.



Treasa Davison and cast of '*The King and I*', 1985.

Gillian had to kiss 'Wild Bill' on stage, and I was amazed that she was unfazed by this and actually did it!

Treasa Davison from RTE directed both musicals, and certainly gave them a professional touch. However, she was my aunt and very bossy, and I had many embarrassing moments when she shouted at the cast or crew and told them in no uncertain terms (sometimes unrepeatable) what she thought of them. The Gonzaga boys didn't escape either; playing a rugby match was no excuse for missing a

rehearsal and she could reduce a six-footer to tears.

When the shows were on nobody, but nobody, was allowed 'front-of-house'. No visiting Mum and Dad, or the boyfriend. Once we saw an unfortunate member of the chorus getting caught chatting to her pals on the balcony; in comparison, Oliver got off lightly when he asked for more. As my mother was a science teacher in Muckross, I remember feeling that I was unlucky enough with one family member in school, but to have two was really unfortunate. But by the end of



A Century of Memories

1980s

Showtime

Lucy Mitchell

► the year Treasa was popular again and the musicals were a resounding success.

In my Fifth Year, with Treasa in charge again, I was assistant director with Catherine O'Flaherty for *The King and I*. From October to Christmas we spent weekday evenings prompting the lead characters, and from Christmas to February we were in the Concert Hall most weekends. We spent the time sorting out costumes with Mrs O'Driscoll, singing with Mrs Maguire, dancing with Mrs Prendergast and watching Treasa do all three, while at the same time she bellowed at anyone not making themselves useful. Mrs Maguire was the quiet inspiration behind the scenes; she never got flustered if something went wrong, but you knew you were in trouble when she got very pale and quiet. All of us, whether principals or chorus members, were note and word perfect in every song. And Sister Barnabas was the guiding light holding the entire production together; anyone with a problem from raffle tickets to stage lighting, 'Ask Barney, she'll know'.

Catherine and I ran around the school being busy and important and missing as many classes as possible. We gathered props for the King's palace and Anna's house, and costumes for the many wives who spent most of the time on their knees. We had the sounds of fireworks on tape to be played when the

British dignitaries visited Siam, so of course we would play it at most inopportune moments. We loved looking after the little Junior School girls who played the King's youngest children and Anna's pupils.

Once again the Gonzaga Fifth Years descended, and once again we all got in a tizzy. This time they were in Doc Martens, crombie overcoats and wore a lot of gel in their hair. They drank in Lyster's in Ranelagh and Bartley Dunne's in town. That season we were wearing ankle-length pencil skirts, laced-up point-toed black boots and silk shirts in luminous colours, worn over the skirts and held in place with wide belts. My hair was scrunched and frizzed within an inch of its life, held back with a scarf. The look echoed Madonna in her 'Get into the groove' video (I knew the dance routine too).

Before long a few girls were 'going with' Gonzaga boys and all break and lunch times were spent sitting on the radiators at the back of the classroom, gossiping about who had broken it off with whom and why, and who they fancied now. There were parties galore; the musical became the excuse for everything. We spent Art class designing programmes, costumes were made in Home Economics and songs were learnt during Music.

The King and I was staged in spring and was a great success.



'Fiddler on the Roof', 1999.

Not long after, teachers began mentioning the Leaving Cert and we came back to earth. The

good times were definitely over. I still know all the songs, though.



THE GONZAGA OPERA

One cold November afternoon, a group of Muckross Fifth Years trooped enthusiastically up the Gonzaga College avenue, full of hope and aspiring dreams of stardom. Twenty or so green 'cows' were herded into the music room and waited in nervous anticipation. Suddenly the door opened and the infamous Mr Gerry Murphy made his entrance. Silence fell on all present - tall man...middle-aged...glasses...dusty teachers' cape...open-toed sandals...and an awe-inspiring beard.

Christmas came and went, and intense nightly rehearsals were held over the next three weeks. Severe ear-aches, chronic fatigues and good times were had by all.

One week to go, during which we encountered Mr Bevin (English teacher extraordinaire), Mrs Gerry Murphy (the proud wife), the First Year chorus (we are still suffering the effects) and last but definitely not least, the Fifth Year chorus and stage crew. They came in very handy when props needed shifting. Right from the beginning they all got off, to a great start.

Two dress rehearsals and a few tantrums (by Guess Who) later, performance night loomed, and everything came together at last. From the main cast to the stage crew, everyone had a part to play and played it to the full, especially the dancers, who, on opening night, gave a very sober performance. Many thanks to Mr Murphy and Mr Potts and all of Gonzaga for putting up with us.

Hilary Buttle, Susan McElwee, Yearbook 1994-95



A Century of Memories

The Belfast Exchange

The Co-operation North scheme is an exchange programme established between Transition Year, Muckross, and Victoria College, Belfast. The Victoria girls came down before Christmas, and the return trip took place over St Patrick's weekend.

The second leg of the Belfast trip is definitely the easiest. No need to worry about someone else having a good time; let someone else worry about you.

Our train left Connolly Station at 3 pm on St Patrick's Day. None of us wore green, white and orange, opting instead for duller, more subtle attire.

Coming into Belfast was a strain on the nerves: everything raced through my mind. What sort of family were they? Would I be fed? Would they have Union Jack bedspreads and shrines to the Queen? Would I understand their wee accents? Grasped tightly in my hand was a tiny scrap of paper: the number of Dukes Hotel, Ms Dromey's safe haven for the weekend - to be used in dire situations.

Ten minutes later I was on my own, no supporting classmates, lost in a huge car with my exchange student and her father. Time for small talk. Her father kindly pointed out various

landmarks on the way to the house. I answered pleasantly: wow, great, right, oh lovely!

I arrived at the house and sat down at the dinner table. Time for more chit-chat. They were a Catholic family - the father was a past pupil of Blackrock College. Did I know many people living in Sutton? I sat, smiled, remembered my manners, and did my school proud. I watched them falling over themselves trying to make me feel at home. Would I have more dinner? Did I want to go out? What would I like to see in Belfast? I just kept smiling.

The next day at school was an experience not to be missed - it was like Grange Hill meeting Mallory Towers. We saw it all: the technology building, swimming pool, Astroturf tennis courts, the canteen, the portrait of the principal in the hall. But as the Victoria girls said, Muckross is more 'homely', more personal. Of course! Victoria College lacks that shabby but cosy feeling that is Muckross. Later that day it was time for tea with the Lord Mayor at City Hall. None of us dropped our china cups, thank God!

Saturday was spent in Belfast city, where we charged like deprived, poverty-stricken

children into Boot's and Topshop, and stood and stared in awe at all the wonderful things. But time flew, and the next day we were on the train home, exhausted. Despite our whining, Ms Dromey refused to give us the next morning off.

During the whole of my stay I saw one soldier, the only indication of trouble in the city. I had expected a war zone. Without that soldier and his large black gun, it would have been simply a shopping spree to the city. We went north. We co-operated. I'd say the Co-operation North scheme went pretty well this year.

Jill Holohan, Yearbook 1993-94



Seamus Heaney visiting Muckross, 1994



The late Senator Gordon Wilson visiting Muckross, 1994



A Century of Memories

The Teacher's Voice

My Time in Muckross, by Dani Mitchell

When I was asked to write a note about being a science teacher in Muckross, I thought I would look up my school diaries as I had kept all of them. Three hours later I was still trying to figure out the story behind the following:

'Don't forget the hardboiled egg for 5th year biology.'

'Planaria and amoeba didn't arrive.'

'See fox group at lunchtime.'

'Bring in thyroxine for tadpoles.'

'Bring hearts and Daphnia on Thursday.'

'See Patsy re waterworks.'

Eventually I figured them out; I am sure that all students of biology and chemistry will know exactly what they mean!

My life in Muckross started in September 1978, coming from another Dominican College, Taylor's Hill in Galway. It was a huge change as I am a Galwegian and spent most of my life there. We lived a small distance from Taylor's Hill and to me the journey from Blackrock to Donnybrook was huge.

Although Sr. Francis 'retired' she was still very involved in teaching, so the science department consisted of Anita Mulloy, Sr Francis, a H-Dip

student and myself.

We had just one laboratory (room 14) and it was quite difficult making sure that each class got at least one practical session a week. Later, when we had the "new" laboratory in room 15 we had many more science classes and each year in June Sr. Nora would give us the timetable to organise full use of the labs before she got to work on the other classes. This made a huge difference to the Science department as our labs got maximum use.

The support from Sr Nora in financing the science labs was wonderful. Anything to help the teaching was always available, we had our own account and could repair, replace and keep fairly well up-to-date with our apparatus. One successful venture was having mixed ability science classes, which I think worked very well. The classes were decided alphabetically. Now I understand the whole school is mixed.

As time went on, the demand for science subjects was increased. Anne Marie Mee had the Physics Dept. up and running, and Dorothy Stephenson had replaced Anita Mulloy in Chemistry and

Biology. Anita was a great loss, but she had left her mark by introducing a wonderful method of team teaching which she had used in Canada. It was a 'take off' point for Science in Muckross; it made such good sense to work as a team, as the time taken to prepare experiments and set exams was greatly reduced. Each teacher had to follow a certain programme for the term and once experiments were set up, each class could use them in rotation. One teacher set the exam for all at the end of the term and everyone shared the work. Of course things went a bit astray at times but we always held onto the team structure and I understand it is still working well.

My memories of the Young Scientist competition go back to the early 1970s. The projects I remember most clearly were not necessarily winners but were great fun. I remember Sheena Leeson in tears because her project on "Eye-witness testimony" wasn't giving her the result she wanted. She wanted to show that certain types of people, such as policemen and doctors, made good witnesses, but her carefully recorded information, using proper

scientific methods, failed to show any concrete result. She didn't want to put in her entry, but after much persuasion she did, and came first in her section. Her *method* was flawless and that's what counts.

Ecology was always an important topic for the Leaving Cert Biology course, and it was a good example of team teaching. The only problem was getting the day for our outing from Sr. Norah - our chosen time was usually May, not a good time for the powers upstairs. Plans were made, equipment prepared, techniques taught and off we went. Sometimes we went to the seashore at Seapoint but our most popular outing was to the woodland in Belfield, where there was always the off-chance of seeing a good-looking male student. One year we ventured to Marlay Park, but the arrival of a 'flasher' put us off that one! Line transects, quadrats, pooters etc was the language of the day and after returning and putting all our results on paper we had a wonderful (but not always accurate) display on the lower corridor. Once I saw a pH value over 50!

The arrival of the H.Dip. student each September was greeted



Pupils from Muckross pictured with President Mary McAleese during a visit to Aráis an Uachtarain with Victoria College, Belfast

with pleasure and a little trepidation. Would he/she clean up after a practical class? would they fit in with our plans? It was like having a new cook in the kitchen and by golly did they have to fit in. They were all great, always ready to learn and join in whatever was going on, not just in science. Tall Ruth Feeney from Carlow could turn her hand to anything, even writing songs for Patsy Kinsella's retirement. Pat Whymys, a winner in the *Irish Times* debating competition, was not the best at preparing his experiments, so when his supervisor arrived it was "all hands on deck". But my favourite was Fiona Gilmartin. I know a teacher should never have favourites but she was always full of laughter. On a cold wet morning when our hands were wet and cold from making up solutions or washing apparatus, Fiona would have us in stitches describing one of her escapades. Sometimes she was worse than the pupils when she got a fit of giggles in class.

Love of trees was always an essential topic in the Science

Dept. There wasn't a single oak tree in the grounds until 1987. John O'Driscoll, a forester, husband of our much loved Fionnuala and father of Roisin, selected a young vigorous oak from the Wicklow mountains to be the first. Sr. Francis performed the blessing. It is situated in lovely open space on the south side of the convent, in front of the pavilion; it has grown well but the main trunk has divided in two, which is quite unusual. It will always remind me of Fionnuala and John, God rest them. I understand another oak has been planted near the lovely blue cedar just inside the front gate. The fig tree has disappeared.

And what about the coffee trees? These are two very famous trees from Africa whose seeds were sent to a Belgian nun in Muckross in the nineteenth century. You can see them growing against the side wall of the convent near the pavilion. But are they the real thing? Recently I came across a description of the loquat tree, *Eriobotrya japonica*, native of the

Far East, and the author could be describing the Muckross coffee trees. I have two in my garden grown from the bean / fruit of the Muckross trees but they haven't borne fruit yet, so I cannot confirm my 'diagnosis'. The small white flowers, produced in spring, should smell of bitter almonds. Would somebody please dispel my doubts?

The weeping ash in the centre of the front field is old and I think its days are numbered; it was never a favourite of mine. It had no welcome for spring as it didn't produce a leaf until early June when summer holidays had begun and most of the students were gone.

I took a career break from Muckross in June 1990 with every intention of returning the following year, but another 'life' took over. I found it very hard to look back, but once I started, the good memories flooded back. One of the last entries in my school diaries read 'set up the potometer on Monday.' Thank God I never have to set up a potometer again. ✨



A Century of Memories

The Teacher's Voice

Thro' the Arches of the Years by Patsy Kinsella (1953-1988)

When I was teaching in Muckross, a great part of life was spent trying to get out of school. A bus strike, a protest march of any kind, a flake or two of snow, would see the troops at the principal's office suggesting that it would be wise to close the school there and then before trouble started. Yet it was always 3.30 before we made it through those doors.

Muckross was a very caring society, and the strongest support group was the 'friends of the sick'. The sick never, but never, went alone - always they were accompanied by a friend or two who held on to the sick, supported the sick, spoke for the sick: 'Should she go home? Have a walk in the fresh air? Have a cup of tea?' Some were even more helpful: 'Will I get her a disprin? Ring her mother? Walk her to the bus-stop?' (The sick themselves rarely spoke.) Suggestions that the friends of the sick might benefit from a spell in the classroom were greeted with dismay at such a lack of understanding; suggestions that the sick might do likewise were greeted more with sorrow than with anger.

This care extended beyond the school. One day a lady fell at the front gate, and four Muckross

girls instantly helped her up, mopping her down, offering to get her disprin or to ring for an ambulance. Her phone call to the principal was ecstatic in her praise of the pupils, but in fact the principal had to be restrained from enquiring why the girls had been at the school gate at 2 pm - principals are like that.

In seeking time off school, the staff often got in on the act. When the daughter of a staff member became engaged to the son of the Minister for Education, it was suggested that as we were now related to the Department of Education, we deserved a half-day. In 1985 the harvest failed due to excessive rain, and rumour spread that we were getting one or two weeks off to help with the harvest. The principal, whose roots lay deep in Kerry, said Kerry farmers would be delighted to get help from Muckross girls, only they'd have to wear their uniforms. I don't remember the end of that one! Fire-drill was a great diversion - the school could be emptied in one minute and filled again in twenty minutes.

In relation to the opposite sex, there was the annual seminar on 'Men and Women - how they relate' with the boys of Cistercian College, Roscrea; the

annual sale of work in Sandford Park boys' school; the annual opera with the boys of Gonzaga College. We were progressive!

We had sorrows - principals Sister Domenico and Sister Patrick, and prioress Sister Miriam, died during those years, three wonderful women who touched all our lives in a special way.

With the eighties came chat shows and discussion groups, but not all of the staff approved. 'You don't know your tables', said the maths teacher, 'what's 7x8?' 'Would it be 56,' said the fifth year. 'See what I mean,' said the maths teacher, 'she wants to discuss it!' I always considered myself an expert on Hamlet, until my pontificating was interrupted by a bewildered fifth year: 'What's his real name? I mean, is it, like, John Hamlet or, well, Hamlet Smyth?' - surely the most sane question ever asked!

Muckross was a great place to work in, but it did age me - how else to explain that when a certain nun and I were enjoying a cup of coffee one day, a friend of said nun approached, embraced her, and turning to me said, 'And you must be her mother!' To my eternal glory, let it be said that I am still talking to that nun. ✨



Muckross in the 1990s

Tanya Walsh, Head Girl 2000-2001

The passing of one hundred years has seen thousands of young women leave Muckross Park with the Dominican ethos planted firmly in their hearts, and this time next year, I believe I will do likewise. Students of this school never forget the crest and the ever-important Latin word inscribed underneath, 'Veritas', 'Truth'.

Entering Muckross on 28 August, 1995, I learned of this ethos on my very first day in secondary school, sitting in the school hall with 119 other girls, listening attentively to Sister Norah. Her voice rang out crystal clear: 'Veritas is the Latin word...' and was strangely comforting. For incoming first years now, the voice will be that of Ms Fitzsimons welcoming them to Muckross, and no doubt, among her first words

will be 'Veritas'.

First Year passed at a nice even pace. My main concern was the confusing timetable, and to this day I can't figure it out (all those boxes!). Fortunately a fellow-pupil always tells me where I'm meant to be. I recall finding my feet instantly, and loving the constant chat and banter between classes. My class, O'Riada, had Ms Dromey as our first Form Tutor; she genuinely cared for us and helped us to settle in. Within three months, Muckross was our second home.

Second Year was a move away from being looked after. We were fully-fledged Second Years, ready to slow down and approach work with an easy, relaxed attitude - no stress, man! Regardless of our wishes to stay in Second Year forever,

Third Year approached (even sooner than expected) and with it came the dreaded 'J word'...J...J...Junior Certificate...ah! It was mentioned at every available opportunity, and we could not escape reality. Our first public examination was inevitable, and the pain is still fresh in my mind. Mocks, revision, timetables, pass, this revision book, notes, 'Where are your exam papers?'. It must be said that I don't believe that I would have made it through Third Year sane (some people say I didn't) without the help of my friends. We got through it together, and I'm relying on our friendship to support me as Sixth Year dawns.

Transition Year was a breath of fresh air, eagerly awaited. I got to talk and talk and talk and, oh yeah...discuss...and, eh...organise...and plan...and talk some more! The pressure of exams was lifted and our social lives improved dramatically (or according to some, drastically). Transition Year certainly enhanced our social skills! I believe we have carried these skills through to Fifth Year, where our class is considerably more united than some other years.

In Fifth Year, we moved back into the main building and once again had to come to terms with lockers crammed full of books,



Senator Joe Doyle, Lord Mayor of Dublin, with Sister Brenda Mary, OP, Prioress of Muckross Park convent during a school visit in 1999.

folders and notes. Memories of Third Year were evoked in September of '99 as complaints were made of heavy schoolbags and piles of homework. Only this time it wasn't the Junior Certificate, it was the L...L...Leaving Certificate. There. I said it. Well, wrote it. It's a beginning, none the less, of accepting what looms ahead. It seems that each year is slipping by faster and faster.

My final words are on Sixth Year. Imagine...five years gone and one to go. If the 'veritas' be known, I am looking forward to being a Sixth Year more than dreading it. We have nothing to fear only fear itself. Honestly though, it's called the Leaving Cert for a reason - after you sit it, you get to leave secondary school.



Board of Management, 1992-94.

DOMINICAN COLLEGE
MUCKROSS PARK



A Century of Memories
1990s

I'm sure many tears will be shed as we progress forward to 2001, but through the tears, there will be smiles and thoughts of the future. Times change, faces change, and pupils move on. One hundred years have passed, and Muckross Park remains intact. The Dominican ethos will live on in the new school when it is built. Remember, Sixth Years, the people, not the points, and I know you will carry with you always (as every Muckross pupil has done) warm thoughts of life here, and 'veritas'.

Other memories of this decade are provided by Seána Kelly:

Dwarfed by a long green skirt, I entered Muckross for the first time in 1990. I soon realised the pride and esteem that accompanied attendance there, as staff members would ask us did we know how privileged we were to be sporting our green uniform.

Our first year was spent in a grianán that was finding it difficult to stay standing. I was sure it was going to collapse during class, preferably during double science on a Friday afternoon. One freezing day, the radiators had broken, but Sister Louis Dominic produced a



Presentation of books to library by Gay Rodgers, President of PPU, 1999 (second left, with Patricia Fitzsimons (Principal), Sr. Barnabas OP and Moira Laffan (Librarian).

hammer from under her habit and proceeded to bang the heater into action again. From that day forth we were never surprised by what would appear

from beneath the white habit.

The two people who inspired me most with their love of life and integrity are Sister

Barnabas and Mr Maloney, or 'Dan the Man'. Of course, I was petrified of the two of them in first year. Dan would march into the class, armed with red-



Staff, (past and present) at retirement celebration for Ms Eileen O'Sullivan and Ms Aileen Mc Carthy, 1998.



A Century of Memories

Muckross in the 1990s

Tanya Walsh, Head Girl 2000-2001

marked copybooks, to question did we have any ounce of wit inside our heads. He would then draw lines on the blackboard to explain 'An Chopail Is', lines that became more and more familiar. Dan's class was never just an Irish class; it was a life class in which I learned about philosophy, morals, integrity and values.

Third year brought us into close contact with a legend in Muckross - the person who personifies all that is good and right in the school and who fights for justice in every case, Sister Barnabas. She taught us the meaning of Veritas, and in her own way looked out for us all. My highlight of this time had to be our trip to Lourdes in 1995 - six of us headed off for an experience never to be repeated. Barney would wait for us to return from 'socialising' at 1.30 am every night, and we would kill ourselves running home for fear of annoying her. We spent treasured days with her, and I am still amazed at how she sends me thinking with the simplest of statements.

I met my best friends here, teachers and pupils, and I am always delighted to tell people how much I loved my time in Muckross. If I ever have a daughter, she might follow the

Muckross path, and if her times there are half as good as mine she will smile every time she thinks of it. ✨



Ticket for fund-raising action, 1994, which raised £22,000 for the Sports Department.



Debs' Ball, Sixth Year of 1995.



A Century of Memories

Young Entrepreneurs Scheme - Muckross says YES!

Eileen Kelly/Bernie Delaney, Business Department

In 1993, Muckross joined the growing band of schools offering the Young Entrepreneurs Scheme. The aims of the programme are to provide students with first-hand experience of setting up their own business, to encourage initiative, creativity and entrepreneurial skills, and to create a culture where students might consider setting up their own business in a changing environment.

In May, the students are briefed on the scheme, and encouraged to use their summer holidays to develop business ideas. Junior participants are introduced to YES in early September. Regular briefing sessions are held where advice and support are given, and sometimes a shoulder to cry on! By late November companies are well established, and a Market Day is held in the school. Families, friends and the local community flock to savour the atmosphere, and secure those early Christmas presents.

The next stage is the written report, and the girls are given guidelines on how to present it. Three or four copies are produced, then passed on to external judges who adjudicate using the following criteria: initiative, research, quality, performance and presentation.

Our judges come from the business community, the arts and the educational sector, and give freely of their time and expertise.

In January a prize-giving night is held, to which the families of participants are invited. The panel of judges interviews each company; this is very intense, but enjoyable. The qualifiers for the Dublin City finals are selected, but every entrepreneur is acknowledged as a winner, and each girl is presented with a certificate and a small gift.

It is important to remember that the YES programme is more than an enterprise competition. It is about participating, setting up and running your own business, and gaining first-hand experience of the real world of work and business.

In addition to the high levels of participation within the school, our entrepreneurs have achieved a very high standard at all levels of the competition. In 1993-4, Muckross had a National Winner in the Junior section with a specially designed World Cup logo ('Famous Seamus'), and in the Senior Section in 1994-5 with a z-card design (an identification badge) adapted to meet the needs of second and third level students.



Jenny Murphy (5th year) Sr Norah O'Connor and Susan Farrell. Jenny Murphy went on to win the Senior section of the National Final.

Muckross has had many other qualifiers and runners-up, and in 1998 a special award was presented during the Dublin City Finals in memory of the hard work and dedication of Margaret Farrell, a member of the Dublin committee. This award is for the project displaying the most endeavour and industry each year, and in 1998 was presented to Ciara Spain of Muckross for her 'Bag and Tag' company.

To reach the standard of the National finals, let alone to win at that level, is a great achievement in itself, but it is equally important to foster risk-taking and the entrepreneurial spirit. Some companies were not outright winners, but continue to trade successfully; these include Anne Farrell's 'A helping hand'. Anne now exports her teaching aid to Britain. Aimee Deaton's 'Suaitheantas', designed to encourage the use of the 'cupla focail', has attracted the attention of Bord na Gaeilge.

In 1999-2000, Tanya Walsh's 'Elephanta Productions' qualified for the National finals, while Laura Gormley's company came second in the Regional finals.



Debating in Muckross

Caitriona Ni Dhubhghail

By the time Sister Rita announced to me in Sixth Year, 1992, that I was to follow in my sister Una's footsteps and be Auditor of the school Debating Society, I was already looking back on a stimulating debating career. Ours was the kind of household in which, over dinner, you fought dearly for the word and had to earn your right to it through merciless punning. With both parents professionally involved with words, one as a teacher of languages and the other as a writer, I suppose my interest in forms of expression and rhetoric was inevitable.

But this didn't mean I was a natural, and my six years in Senior School saw me progress from a nervous wreck in the after-school First Year debates, to a finalist in the Leinster Schools Debates in 1993, quaking, but speaking in front of a full Theatre L in UCD and a panel of judges. The best thing you can do for someone who loves debating - or, indeed, any activity that involves performing - yet who suffers from performance nerves, is to provide them with platform after platform, opportunity after opportunity. And this Muckross certainly did.

Opportunities, styles and topics were myriad, from the after-school debates among classmates to the inter-class debates organised by the English Department (the aim of which, no doubt, was to develop the clarity of thought so essential to a decent essay), from the so-called 'friendlies' with boys' schools (far from friendly, if you took some of the speeches at face value, but invaluable as encounters with that unfamiliar

species, the opposite sex) to serious competitive debating. The big advantage of friendlies is that the motion for debate is irrelevant, by and large; at one Muckross/Gonzaga debate it was discovered five minutes before the start that both teams were opposing the motion. The Gonzaga team duly switched sides, as the motion had no bearing whatsoever on their speeches anyway.

You could take the whole business seriously as an educational experience, or you could see it as a mere hobby. Either way, the opinions, arguments and statistics carefully compiled for the fray were soon forgotten; if you learned anything from debating, what you learned was brass neck. Exposure to the terrifying three minutes prior to the magic words 'I rest my case' channelled the brain into productive adrenaline, a handy hormone in all sorts of situations. Keep talking when you don't know what you're saying; sound like you know what you're talking about when you don't - few professions would reject the value of such skills.

The tradition of debating in Muckross is part of a wider tradition of preparing young people to meet head-on the challenges of adult life. This is why it's a shame that, in my time at Muckross at any rate, debating was something of a minority taste. The job of volunteering for participation in various local and national annual competitions always seemed to fall to the same outspoken few (you could always tell - they were the ones who never let anyone else get a word in

edgeways in classes which allowed for that sort of behaviour, notably Irish, English and Religion). In my time, we competed in the Concern Debating Competition, aided and abetted by the Religion Department, and in the Gael Linn Irish debates; other competitions included the Mental Health Public Speaking and the Rotary Public Speaking debates, not to mention impressive successes en francais in the Alliance Francaise competition.

For those who were to continue on, like myself, to be avid debaters at third level, the best preparation was definitely the L&H Leinster Schools Debating Competition. Organised by third-level students, for most of whom school was a fairly recent memory, it seemed to provide ingress to a scarily adult world full of unpredictability. The thought of allowing someone to interrupt your carefully prepared flow of thought with a 'Point of Information' to which you had to devise a shattering

witty and spontaneous reply! It still happens the odd time that I wake up, bolt upright, with a devastating riposte on my lips to a point of information proffered to me over eight years ago. I am told this will pass - when I can afford my own speech-writers.

Even a cursory glance at job ads, where the skills most sought after are confidence, communication, interpersonal skills and problem-solving, confirms the suspicion that debating can furnish you with invaluable experience which will come to your aid at all sorts of unexpected moments, be it talking your way out of a parking ticket, going the extra mile in a job interview, defending your doctoral thesis or convincing a cynical electorate to vote for you. My hope is that the debating will continue to be valued in Muckross Park as it was when I was there, and that Muckross girls will always be provided with plenty of opportunities to gain experience in this indispensable art! ✨

The debating team of the Dominican College, Muckross Park, won the Hibernian Cup in the final of the competition sponsored by the Dublin Institute of Catholic Sociology, at the Dominican Hall, Eccles Street, last night.

They spoke against the motion, 'That education for girls should be more concerned with keeping a home, rather than training for a career'. The motion was supported by a team from St Louis High School, Rathmines.

The chairman was Mr Maxwell Sweeney.

The teams were: MUCKROSS PARK - Misses Deirdre Garrett, Breda Farrelly, Gemma Doyle and Darina Boden. ST LOUIS HIGH SCHOOL - Misses Mary Finan, Emer Forde, Helen O'Meehan and Katherine Walsh.

School Echoes, 1964



A Century of Memories

In Memoriam

Significant dates and celebrations are paradoxical. We see the larger picture and tend to forget those whose hands marked and moulded the whole. Yet, somehow, the memories come back and we remember and see again the vitality, vision, energy and dedication of those who served and shaped the Muckross whose centenary we are celebrating.

When I came to Muckross over a quarter of a century ago the influence of Sr. Domenico was still apparent - her focus and thoroughness. She lived as a force long after her death. I remember also the quiet and total dedication of Sr. Mairead Dalton - no detail was overlooked, no pupil forgotten. No care was too small. Sr. Mairead saw all her pupils as entirely significant.

Sr. Miriam Caffrey's joy and laughter still bring a smile to my face. Her concern for the pupils facing difficulties of any kind was inspirational. It was a concern rooted in deep Christian belief. Her warmth embraced all who knew her.

I remember Sr. Ita's quiet efficiency; she was a thorough teacher whose quiet perfection was a challenge and set an example for all who worked with her. Her bravery and peaceful acceptance of her final illness moved all who knew her.

Who could ever forget the flamboyance and larger than life

characteristics of Sr. Patrick? Spontaneous, versatile, demanding and supportive, she ploughed her own furrow with scant respect for petty bureaucracies and filled the school and community with a sense of joy and celebration. She seized her day with vigour and fun, and was a great and gifted educationalist.

The memory of Fionnuala O'Driscoll - a past pupil, mother of a pupil and daughter of a Muckross teacher - is associated with Muckross for a great part of its first century. Gifted with patience and creativity, she astonished with the quality of the work coaxed with artistry from awkward hands. No pupil was ever diminished in her class, but all were treated with an infinite care born of Fionnuala's long life of caring for others.

Anne Maguire filled the school with music and song. Lunchtimes, breaks and evenings echoed with musicals and Masses. Choirs and orchestras materialised for all occasions. It appeared so effortless that we sometimes failed to appreciate the effort required. The perfection of the performance always soared above Anne's quiet unruffled patience.

On this special occasion in the school's history we remember them with gratitude.

DM

SISTER BERTRANDA FLYNN, OP, 1913-2000

Sister Bertranda was an insightful and enthusiastic History and English teacher who instilled in her pupils a love of literature and the intricacies of the language. Her entry into the classroom was heralded by mounds of books; she always carried great piles of paperwork and she liked to have her reference books handy.

She encouraged an openness and enjoyment in our reading, a gift she gave us for life. There were no 'bad' books, there were no stony silences of disapproval if we turned up with offerings from the likes of Edna O'Brien. She introduced us to J D Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, not long off the banned list; this was quite a daring move for a nun, even a Dominican, in the heady sixties, and we felt so grown up.

Sister Bertranda was a teacher whose opinion we valued. The little notes and threats she wrote on our copybooks were important and I have kept my English essay copies to this day. She was honest too; she agreed that Hamlet was a wimp, Ophelia was an airhead and the entire family was severely dysfunctional.

We kept in touch over the years. She took a great interest in her past pupils, and she remembered the important events in their lives. I will remember her as a woman who

was a true teacher, who believed in herself and who handed on the best of her knowledge, experience and confidence to her own girls.

VC



Caitlin Gearóid, 1914-1999.

CAITLIN GHEAROID, NÉE DE BHALDRAITHE, 1914-1999

Bhí Caitlin ar scoil í bPáirc Mhucrois in éineacht lena drifíúrach agus dearbhracha le linn na fichidí. Bhain sí Ard Teistimearacht amach le honóracha sa bhliain 1932. Is beag nar shrois sí an Millennium acht shleamhnaigh sí go ciúin chun Dé tamall an-gearr roimhe. Mathair í le Máirín, Nuala, Deirdre, Meabh agus Eoin. Seanmhathair í le Nora agus Eadaoin Shortall, agus Una agus Niamh Farrell.





Past Pupils Union

Gay Rodgers President Muckross PPU

Muckross may be having its 100th birthday this year, but almost as noteworthy is the fact that the Muckross Past Pupils Union is celebrating its 88th year - it is the oldest girls past pupils union in the country. Formed in 1912, the Union began a mere 12 years after the school was founded - it seems there was a Union almost as soon as there was a past pupil!

The principal aim of the Union has been to encourage and help past pupils to remain in contact with the school and with each other. We do this mainly through our yearly news letter - the Muckross Mail - which was started in the early 1970s and the Annual Reunion function (held in April of each year).

Our other major activity is fund raising for the Union's Benevolent Fund which is used to help (on a totally confidential basis) past pupils who might be experiencing financial difficulties. Our main fund raiser is the Bridge Drive which we hold in September, augmented by raffles and other financial extortions at the Annual Reunion. Over the past years the Fund has also been able to make a small donation to the Cheshire Homes and in more recent years to donate books to the school library.

There has always been a strong bond between the school and the Union. The Annual Re-Union and the Bridge Drive are still held in the school and a PPU Mass is celebrated in the School chapel on the first Sunday of most months.


Muckross has always been more than just a school. There is a Muckross "spirit" which is very evident whenever past pupils meet - be it at the Annual Reunion or in more informal groups. The school's past pupils form a large cross section of Irish women who have fulfilled many and varied roles throughout the years.

Considering the age of the school and the vast number of pupils who have passed through it, the Union has only just under 400 members although membership has been increasing in the last couple of years. At present, the age profile of the Union is probably not as balanced as it could be.

As with most similar organisations, the Union owes its continued existence to the very dedicated and hardworking Committees who have overseen its activities throughout its history. The main aim of the current committee is to continue to increase the number of members particularly from

the more recent graduates - new blood is always needed to bring fresh ideas. You are a past pupil as soon as you leave the school - you don't have to wait for grey hairs before you join.

As President of the Union, I believe it has great potential for networking as the "old boys" do so well. Many past pupils run their own businesses and we can and should support our own.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the school on a memorable 100 years. 

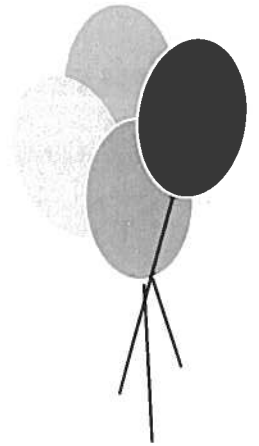
Gay Rodgers
President
Muckross PPU

Principals of Muckross Park

1920-1922	Sister John Moloney
1922-1928	Sister Osanna Curtin
1928-1944	Sister Benvenuta Connolly
1944-1948	Sister Meabh [Vincenzo] Ni Chleirigh
1948-1957	Sister Cecilia Veale
1957-1963	Sister Louis Dominic Nolan
1963-1969	Sister Patrick Cronin
1969-1975	Sister Domenico Miley
1975-1977	Sister Angela Campion
1977-1981	Sister Manus O'Byrne
1981-1989	Sister Norah O'Connor
1989-1991	Ms Ruth Dromey (Acting)
1991-1997	Sister Norah O'Connor
1997 to present	Ms Patricia Fitzsimons

CONGRATULATIONS

TO DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK
ON CELEBRATING THEIR CENTENARY
YEAR AND TO ALL PAST AND PRESENT
STUDENTS AND STAFF FOR THEIR EFFORTS
WHICH HAVE MADE THIS OCCASION
SUCH A SUCCESS.



AIB BANK ARE DELIGHTED
TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS
CENTENARY CELEBRATION, THROUGH OUR
LONG STANDING RELATIONSHIP WITH
DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK.



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DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK

A Century of Memories



The Next Hundred Years

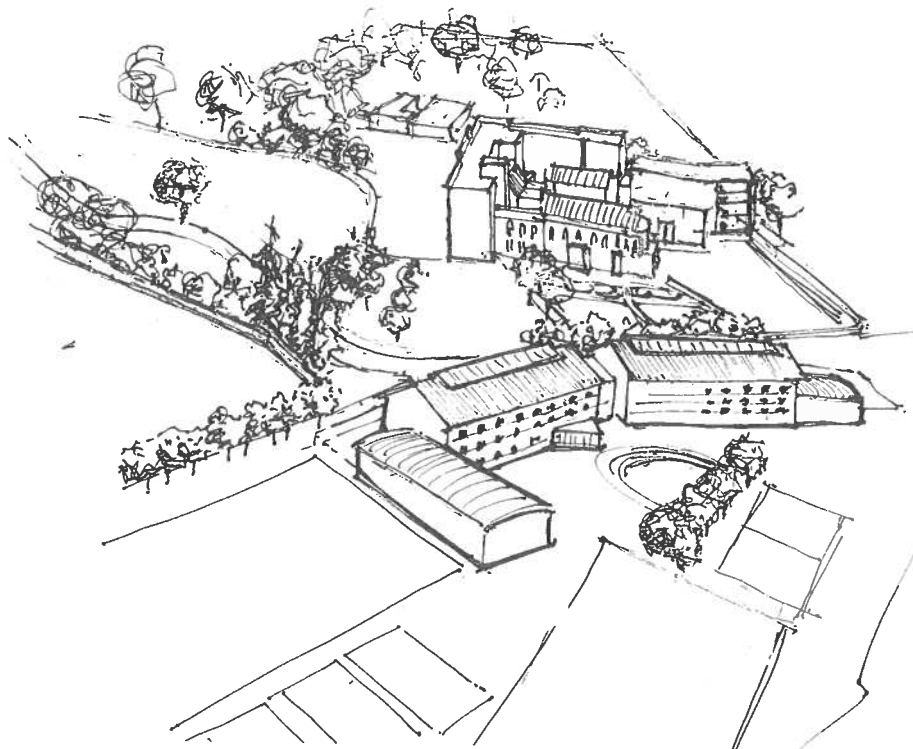
Patricia Fitzsimons Principal

For a number of years, the school has been negotiating with the Department of Education for the building of an extension which would replace the prefabricated structures.

However, in March 1999 the Department decided to grant-aid the construction of a whole new school for Muckross Park College. The site of the new building has been generously donated by the Trustees, the Dominican Sisters. It will be situated on the ten-acre field to the west of the existing buildings, just beyond the convent walled garden.

During the summer of 1999 interviews for the design team for the new building took place. The successful candidates are as follows: McHugh O Cofaigh, Architects; Rogerson Redden, Quantity Surveyors; Nicholas O'Dwyer & Partners, Structural Engineers; Building Design Partnership, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers. Now, in the summer of 2000, we are ready to present draft outline plans to the Department of Education for approval. The building process is a slow one; however, the Department has suggested that the building will be ready for occupation sometime in 2002. Surely another celebration looms.

This is an exciting time for the school, for the students and more particularly for the staff. Those of you who know Muckross are aware that the



Artists impression of the new school

conditions in which we work are far from ideal. The prospect of working in a school that will have state-of-the-art classrooms; an abundance of specialist rooms designed for teaching and learning; a sufficient number of science labs to accommodate all science classes; a guidance suite; office spaces; and a PE/Concert Hall that will allow for a variety of physical education classes and also be a space for young people to experience and experiment with music, theatre and drama - all this has given us the

opportunity to imagine, to dream Muckross into the twenty-first century.

As we plan the future we become aware that a school is much more than its building. Central to any school are the people who give it its spirit and its life; the people who have gone before and who will walk its corridors in the future. It is important, as we prepare to move from the familiar if somewhat dilapidated building, that we lose nothing of the spirit

that is Muckross, the spirit that the old Victorian walls have encompassed for over a century. Our new building must somehow embody and express the heart of a school which is a centre of learning, a place where people are at ease with one another as they unfold and discover the experience that is life.

Patricia Fitzsimons
Principal



A Century of Memories

History of Muckross Park

Following on from the production of this booklet, and the large amount of material that was accumulated for it, it is now hoped to produce a complete history of Muckross Park in book form, to celebrate the opening of the new buildings in about three years' time.

If you, or your friends, or members of your family, have any material relevant to the history of the school, or any reminiscences that you would like to share, we would be very grateful. Photographs and other memorabilia will be carefully looked after and returned promptly. We would like to make this as complete a history as possible, dealing with such aspects of Muckross life as sports, debating and charitable work in more detail than we could in this booklet.

Please send your contribution to Helen Litton, 45 Eglinton Road, Donnybrook, Dublin 4 (email helenlitton@clubi.ie). We look forward to hearing from you.

Acknowledgements

As we celebrate a hundred years of Dominican education in Muckross Park College, we hope that this publication will bring back memories to the many people who have gained from its stimulating, enriching and caring education.

We are grateful to all the writers who so unstintingly contributed articles reflecting the history of the college during the last one hundred years. We also acknowledge the assistance of those who provided photographs and historical memorabilia.

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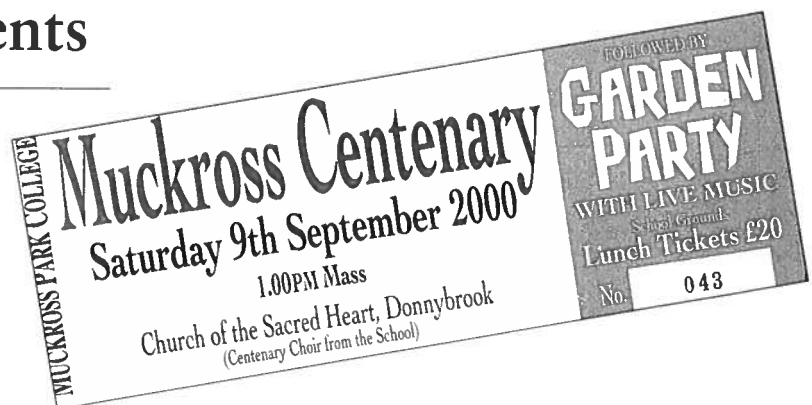
and material.

A very special thank you is due to two people in particular without whom this production would have been very difficult - Ms Moira Laffan, our school librarian, and Ms Helen Litton, a past pupil and presently an editor, who provided overall guidance as to source material and proofreading.

Finally a special word of commendation is due to the school staff, Dominican community, the school pupils, past pupils and all who have contributed in any way to this publication. Go raibh rath De ar bhur gcuid oibre agus ar obair an Cholaiste i gcoitinne.



Jim Breslin
Staff member - Co-ordinator



Centenary garden party ticket, 2000.