

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

CROSSROADS PS KILREA

A COMPILATION OF MEMOIRS AND
PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THROUGH THE
DECADES

1921-2021

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Friday 14th October 2022

What a privilege to be the principal of this great rural school which is steeped in so much history and held in such high regard by the people of the local area. Having been appointed to the role of Principal at Crossroads Primary School in September 2017, I could quickly sense the unique ethos of community, togetherness, and pride throughout the school community. The school is blessed with a community with great loyalty and who care deeply about it and who are prepared to get involved and contribute towards making it a hub of learning and enjoyment for pupils to grow and develop.

The provision of high-quality experiences for the pupils of our school is a team effort. We all do our best to remember the three key words in our school mission statement; Nurture and Inspire the children and they will Flourish.

As a school we have always been blessed to have staff who truly care for our pupils as though they were family. I wish to thank them all for their hard work and commitment to all aspects of school life as we have seen major developments and improvements over the past few years. The rich history of the school over the past 100 years reminds us that as a school community, we are the caretakers. For the short time that we're lucky enough to be involved, we do our best to make positive contributions for the children in our care. If there's one thing we've learned, it's that the experiences and development of pupils are influenced most by the attention, diligence, and enthusiasm of those caring for them. For many years the staff and pupils of Crossroads PS have been forced to shift from one mobile classroom to another. Never once was there a complaint from a pupil about their classrooms which often had patches of damp and leaky roofs. Such is their resilience and acceptance; their focus was always on the enjoyment of friendships and learning; Just as it should be.

Fortunately, after many years of waiting and after combined effort of the leadership, Staff, Board of Governors and parents and wider school community, the pupils of 2022-23 are finally able to enjoy brand new classrooms. All our pupils under one roof, with first class facilities that will hopefully serve this school community for many, many years to come.

Tonight, is a time for thanksgiving. We are thankful for everyone who has been involved in Crossroads PS throughout its history. There are far too many to mention. Luckily all those who have been involved over the years did not give their time and effort for acknowledgement, they have done so for the benefit of the pupils. 'It takes a village to raise a child.' Never a truer word spoken. Like every school ours relies on the support and collaboration between our parents, grandparents, staff, governors, Pearses GAC, our neighbouring schools St Columba's and St Conor's our parish and local businesses. They all make important contributions to school life. We also remember all those members of our school community who have passed away and who would have loved to have witnessed this occasion, most recently Brian Calvert, Marcella McWilliams and Father Cargan.

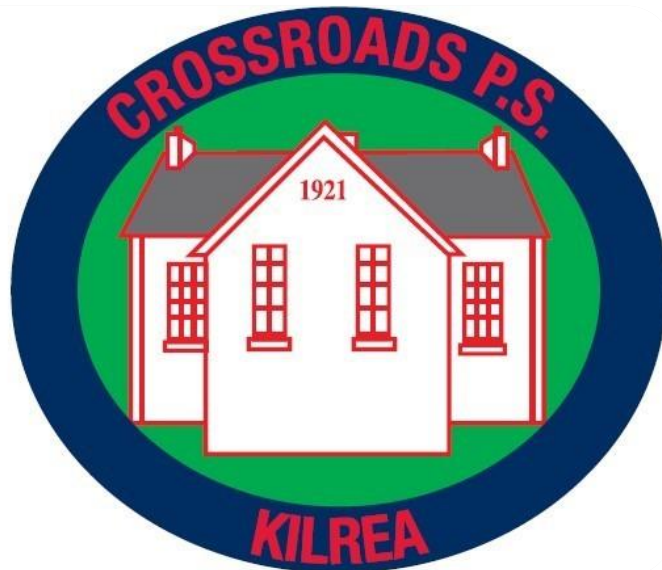
Thank you to all who have been involved and enhanced our mass this evening. You have all played an important role in representing the wider school community. Thank you to Father Harkin and to Father Crowley for their great contributions to this special occasion.

Earlier today we had the pleasure of a visit from Mrs Mary Convery, who I'm reliably informed is the oldest member of our school family at 95 years. Mrs Convery taught in Crossroads and held the role of principal for many years. At 91 years of a difference in age, we were delighted that she was able to join with our two youngest pupils, Orlaith Mooney and Harry Birch, in cutting the ribbon to officially open the renovation of the existing building and the extension of five beautiful new classrooms.

We hope that you will join us in coming back to school for some refreshments and a walk around the school. There will be no guided tours, please feel free to walk around and see all the classrooms and the work that has been done. Perhaps take a seat in one of the classes and catch up with old friends. We have also prepared some displays of photographs from across the decades which I'm sure will bring back memories for a lot of people. As you walk through the front doors, you will see the painting which Father Cargan had purchased for the school to mark this very occasion, prior to his passing. Now a treasured gift which holds great sentiment.

I hope that you all enjoy seeing the physical improvements to the school this evening. On behalf of Crossroads Primary School, Kilrea, thank you all for your contributions to our school. I hope that you will continue to show the great support, loyalty and generosity so that the school can prosper and serve the community for the next 100 years.

Eugene Mullan (2017-present)



A Compilation of Memoires and Photographs from Across the Decades...

***These memoires have been written by past pupils,
staff and members of the wider school
community. Some contributions are already many
years old and those who have written them have
passed away. We will ensure that these memoires
are preserved to be read and enjoyed by future
generations.***

School and Chapel

BY JIM MC COTTER

In the Summer of 1942, Drumagarner celebrated its centenary. Papal bunting, stretched from pillar to post, hung motionless in the morning sun, far above the drive that led from the gates at the road to the chapel door. The men who had put it there, even those who had only held the ladder were proud of what they had done on Friday night. At five past eleven on Sunday morning, about the Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Dr. Farren's car pulled in at the chapel gates and stopped to let the Bishop out. Then it drove slowly up to where Fr. McCrea, the curates and twelve altar boys were standing waiting. A young black-haired priest stepped out with a case in one hand and vestments over his other forearm. He swept in past the waiting clergy and up the middle aisle of the chapel. The congregation, who had been in their places since half past ten, were sitting up, whispering among themselves and in need of a little diversion. The young priest provided that. He went to the altar, vested quickly in surplice and stole, marked passages in the missal, adjusted the stand to just the right place, assembled the crozier and leaned it against the wall beside a high-backed chair that made its appearance for the bishop coming. He left as quickly as he had come. The congregation was amazed at the suddenness and efficiency of the take-over. "Not even one of our own poor priests anywhere to be seen!"

"What was going on outside?" "What was keepin' them?" The Bishop was making his way slowly towards the chapel door, smiling and talking to those who formed the guard of honour, two lines of them, the parishioners on one side and the American soldiers from their camp in the Convent grounds at Kilrea at the other. The soldiers were not all Irish-American, they weren't even all white, not many of them knew to bow and kiss the Bishop's ring but when they shook his hand they were confident and self-assured, unlike those on the other side, apprehensive and scared of not being able to think of anything to say should the Bishop speak to them. There were other differences too. The soldiers were clean and smart, dressed in their shirts and ties, light khaki uniform and shiny brown shoes. "Ah, God, shure many's a good girl's head they put astray, them wae their tanned faces and blonde hair."

During the ceremonies that followed, the Bishop was colourful in what he wore and in what he said. But it was the young priest in the white surplice that commanded most attention. He it was who knew when to stand, when to sit or kneel and when to swop the skull cap for the mitre. "How did he remember all yon performance he went through?" was the question people asked each other when they compared their memories of the centenary, long after it was finished and done.

The singing that morning was something else that lived in the memories of those who attended. "That was the best part of the whole thing", some people said. Even the Bishop was impressed. At the end of his address he said, "I must pay tribute to the members of the choir whose fine voices and whose choice of music added so much to the occasion. Their conductor, Master Kelly, deserves a special mention for the quality of his work. You, the people of Drumagarner and Craigavole, are fortunate to have the services of one so talented and dedicated." Little did he know how the Master had put them over their pieces again and again, beginning away back in the dark winter evenings before any other preparations were even thought about. The Master was like that: he didn't leave things to the last minute.

The Master had a rich deep voice and took great delight in training the choir. It was easy, they were all good singers and adults, too, who could be relied on not to laugh or giggle or misbehave when he was concentrating or had his back turned. School was different. Some of the pupils at the Crossroads were talented, some were barely middlin' and there were others who hadn't a note. Tone-deaf they were and often humiliated by their mates who referred to them as "the crows". "Not everybody can sing, but everybody can try," was what the master used to say. Still, the music lesson with the whole class was difficult enough and the strain often showed.

We didn't have music all that often but it was easy to tell when it was imminent. We would all be set down to silent reading and the Master would take advantage of the peace that followed to make the preparations. This involved unfurling the Modulator, a long strip of white linen about the size of a bath towel with the scale printed on it in large, black letters and pinning it to the top timber of the blackboard frame. He would take the tuning-fork from its place on the top of the mantle-clock and the song book from among those on his table.

We always stood up in our places for music. The Master said; "You cannot sing properly sitting down." We began with our breath-control exercises, in through the nose now, big, that's it, hold for a count of six, one, two, three...., and out again through the mouth; in quickly, hold it, out quickly; in, half out and hold out fully. Relax. Then he struck his tuning fork on the table and followed with the instruction; "Take that doh." With his inspirational lead we took it, we took it again and again until he was satisfied we had got it. And then we started our scales practice, Doh, re, me, fah, ...doh and back down again. Up and down, down and up we went, mainly following the Master's lead. Up and down again but two at a time. Doh, me, soh, doh, doh soh, me, doh. Difficulty increased. The Master pointed to notes at random, doh, soh, fah, me, re, la, te, te, lah, soh. As long as the Master provided the lead, this exercise was manageable. But sometimes he stopped suddenly, leaving us to follow the pointer on our own. We went on a distance under our old momentum. Volume reduced, uncertainty set in. The Master kept on pointing till even the most talented fizzled out. A long silence followed. "If you had been as bad as that on the Modulator and an inspector in the room, I'd have been sacked. No wonder I can't sleep in my bed at night, tearing my hair out, worrying about you and what, under God, will happen to you in the years to come." It was always embarrassing, at times excruciating. Thank God for Tommy McKendry. Tommy nearly always sat at the back and was full of harmless mischief. At times like this he could be relied on to relieve the tension with one of his many home-made nonsense rhymes, just loud enough for those near him to hear. High doh, low doh, fal-dee-deedle-di-doh! and if that was not enough to make us laugh he added dum-diddly-um-dum, dum-dum. But we dare not laugh. The Master was in a mood, it was clear. Even the slightest trace of merriment at a time of such crisis would have been punished severely. Tommy was taking a risk, Tommy always played it close to the brink. But then, teachers are too serious, they worry about small things. Not many of us ever mastered the tonic-solfa but we all went on to live fairly full lives.

The music lesson always ended with a couple of songs from our repertoire. "Down by the sally gardens" was a favourite, a tale of young love that bloomed but never blossomed.

Down by the sally gardens,
My love and I did meet,
...she bade me take life easy
As the grass grows on the weirs.
But I was young and foolish,
And now am full of tears.

Pity!

Come to think of it, there was a romantic thing about the Master. "I can still mind him teaching us a song and its still on the go after all them years....

When we were sweet,
When we were sweee..t sixteen

and he only heard it once, with headphones on an auld battery wireless he bought for a pound."

Whatever about romance, the lesson always ended with some nonsense piece like "Hard boiled eggs", a litany of culinary delights we never knew, delights of shape and size, colour, texture and taste, of a kind that would send Lloyd Grossman off to deliberate, cogitate and digest.

Hard boiled eggs,
With buttered rolls and ginger beer,
Strawberries, pickles
Walnuts, marzipan and nougat.
Some chocolate, toffee,
And large ripe pears.

LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY

Gone are the days when three or four of us set out on foot from Crosskeys and the townland of Gortade to start the daily trek to Moran's Crossroads. Through Lisgorgan and Killymuck and up the Pirley Hill to Killygullib, at every lane and every trodden path across the fields, we collected others. By the time we reached the Creamery Lane we were a crowd that took possession of the road, and the crack was good. Turnerstown and the school in sight, another day about to start, unfinished bits of conversation, stories not yet fully told and songs unsung were put away for coming home that evening. The comings and the goings: what happened in between was only mildly interesting.

Gone is the stretch of concrete road that ran from Mc Eldowney's bridge, past Moneysallin moss to Billy Dempsey's corner. That was the way the boys from Drumagarnier, Gortmacrane and Lisnagrot came daily, dawdling along and not a homework done and not a care, and on to the round rocks and wee George Wallace's from where the gable windows of the school were clear for everyone to see and the master, too, out at the school gates blowing his whistle till his face was blue. The reality of another day dawned first. Pace quickened. In the hollow at Neville's bridge exercise books changed hands and arrangements made to cog a homework during RE time and plans were drawn up with promises and guarantees to pass the borrowed book from hand to hand and under desks, in time to reach its rightful owner long before the start of lesson two arithmetic.

Gone is the LMSR, the London, Midland and Scottish railway. Gone, too, is the morning train, as much as forty wagons long that pulled out of Kilrea station at half past nine, so reliable that clocks were set by it. The mighty engine puffed and panted on past banks of turf in Moneysallin moss and fields of cows and creamery cans on wooden stands, by bare embankments and through cuttings deep, one hoarse hoot for every bend and two for every level crossing. Kilrea to Tamlaght Halt and Upperlands and Maghera and on to - and on to God knows where, some said to Cookstown junction. We always stopped and climbed the ditch to watch the train go by. The rhythmic clunk of wagon wheels on joins in metal rails, the clink of buffers, the gleaming domes and copper pipes, the frenzied hiss of steam escaping under pressure wafted wild, black smoke rising, swept backward by the speed, bent sideways by the wind across the fields to meet us.

Dammit there's the train at Tamlaght Halt and us not yet at Rainey's Manse. Late for school, late for school again, a note despatched that evening from the master to our parents. "If you had went to bed last night

and got up when you were called, it wouldn't have happened. If God spares me, you'll be on the road in time the morra". "Nobody walks to school anymore: they all get dropped off at a gate now".

Gone the understanding smile of auld Joe Bradley who never told the master that he caught us stealing "Turmits" from his field to scobe on the way home from school.

Gone is Harry Williamson's bicycle shop that stood at the low end of Toner's Pointy Hill. It wasn't much, a wooden hut divided in two, a workshop and a kitchen with a wee black stove, a frying pan and teapot, a mug and plate. But Harry was always there trying his patience against a running screw or rusted nut, jollied along by big Johnny Moran from his reserved seat at the top of the bench, a bench piled high and each day higher with spanners and tools, oily rags, bright gleaming parts just out of their boxes, unwrapped and grimy sprockets and broken chains no longer fit for use. It was fascinating. I wanted to leave school and be a "bicycle man", serve my time and be a proper "bicycle man". "Don't be a bicycle man. In a year or two everybody 'll have a car. There'll be no bicycles and then where 'll yeh be". Harry said.

Shattered dreams: good advice is often hard to take.

Gone is Robert Quinn's shop from the face of Glasshill. But still remains the memory of rows of big glass jars with lids and knobs that occupied the wooden shelf behind the counter, labelled, Fox's glacier mints, sugared almonds, brandy balls, barley sugar twists, liquorice sticks and liquorice pipes alight. We stood low, looked up at the big brass pan of Robert's scales tip and tilt in our direction. "Shure an extra sweet or two is neither here nor there", was what he said. For a penny you got a paper poke of hard clove-rock as good as any that would have cost you tuppence many another place.

Gone is our school garden, a triangular piece of land between the roadside hedge and Turner's stoney ditch, stretching from the high ground at the school to swampy meadow by the riverside where buttercups and water-lillies grew in spring. It wasn't much compared to fields but then the master said: "Agriculture is about size, horticulture is about style". Tuesday evening was horticulture evening and it was good.

GONE LONG GONE. TIME HAS WHITTLED IT ALL AWAY.

The Junior Room

for Annie McGill

Annie's classroom was the only one in that small school
without pupils planted in rows slicing
the crumbly air straight as Christ's crucified stare.

Junior room *sans* roof *sans* floor was a lake
of islands slowly flowing from some geography of grace
in pale blues and milky opalescent silks.

Lanterned by liquid moon and serous stars
floating under the firmament of fish she fed with strange fruit
gathered down deep on the gravel's unmade bed.

Sediment stirred by flitting bats and the molten patterning
of their crystal chatter spreading as she held
between her thumb and finger tip a seed of water.

Swollen with three syllables sounded out
on a girl's new exercise book - pig-e-on. Turning to two
rising from the ancient prow of an out-rigger canoe.

The Master's Goal BY JIM MC COTTER

It was a Friday morning in late June. Already, the bigger boys had been kept at home to help win the hay and foot the turf. Attendance had fallen badly, school was winding down. Very soon the older folks would say, as they always said: "Another year over, God almighty where is the time going to?" But to us, in the classroom, July was not an end, July was the beginning of summer. We looked forward to long sunny days, unscheduled days, days of activity and freedom. Freedom! Two months freedom! September seemed so far away, we thought September would never come.

The heat in the classroom was stifling that Friday morning. There was no sun and no wind, the master described it as "stuffy". By ten o'clock he took off his Donegal tweed sports jacket and arranged it on the chairback behind him. After a while he opened the classroom door and wedged it with the oval, galvanised mop bucket that was kept under a bench in the porch and was hardly ever seen except when someone was sick all over the floor. Then he took the pole from between the two science cupboards and opened both sashes of the tall Georgian window at the back. When you stood at the master's table to have your work corrected, you prayed and looked out that window at a big ash tree, higher than the whitethorn hedge that separated us from the bare hills of Turnerstown.

Twenty past twelve, only twenty past twelve! "I think that'll do for the morning. Time for some exercise and a breath of fresh air. Tidy up your desks, put your books away and stand in your places." Why! Why was he letting us out ten minutes early? It was not like him. There was a murmur of speculation. "Quiet now, no need for all the talking. Quiet, I said. The row nearest the partition will go first today. Now, move out in an orderly fashion.nextnext. The row nearest the fireplace grew impatient, inched forward, jostled those in front and had to be put back till their turn came.

Outside, we lost no time eating our bread and drinking our milk. And then began the serious business of entertaining ourselves till playtime was finished. We had no games equipment, we made our own entertainment and a varied programme it was. When we got tired of one thing somebody always came up with a bright idea and we moved on to something else. Autumn was the conker season and a time of vicious competition, then there was the annual yo-yo craze and a time for swapping stories and exchanging comics. Spring was a time for hide-and-seek. We used leave the school grounds, cross the road into Wallace's meadow, through the wire fence at the low place and on to Etherson's lane, in as far as the metal bridge, along the railway embankment to the hedge between the meadow and Turner's Pointy Hill, back across the swamp where rush bushes and tall willows grew, where once there had been a lint-dam - a great place to hide. As often as not, we got our socks soaked and our boots muddy, and were sent "out of line" to wipe them and have them inspected before being allowed back into the classroom.

But June was always football month. That Friday we hurried in order to get the game started. Somebody suggested the same teams as yesterday and that was agreed. Jerseys were taken off and put in four piles at a distance apart that was measured and checked - the goalposts. Centre, kick-off and the match was on.

But the match that day was not contested as fiercely as usual. Ten minutes into the second half and still no score. The girls, our fans, who had jostled for places on the sod ditch beside the playground were losing interest. It was easy to tell for they had already started to talk among themselves, to giggle and push each other down. There was no cheering, no standing up and no applause. There was some ridicule.

Suddenly it happened, The full back at the top end of the pitch passed the ball back to his own goalie. The goalie was under no pressure and could have been expected to act with some foresight. But, instead, he ran out and blarged. It was a long high ball that just missed the corner of the classroom. Murphy's Law. Just at that very moment, the master came round the corner. Hearts stopped! What would happen if it hit him on the chest and left a big round muddy mark on his white shirt? What would happen if it got him on the face and knocked his glasses off or broke them in his eyes? It was all too horrible to think about. Brave men turned their backs and slunk away from disaster. But those who had enough courage to glance back over their shoulders saw something they couldn't have expected. The master kept his cool, flexed his elbows by his chest, brought his clenched fists together under his chin, headed the ball low against the school wall and trapped it nicely on the rebound. With the ball in perfect control, he glanced down the pitch, in the direction of the goals at the roadside, where the puddle of green water that lay all winter had been turned into glar by the summer sun. For a moment he forgot himself, for a moment he was as young and irresponsible as the rest of us. He forgot about his good grey flannel trousers and his polished black shoes. He started on a run towards the lower goal. It all happened so quickly nobody knew what to do. The half-back made a token tackle but it was no use. The master was on a roll, unstoppable.

Now it was all up to the full-back and he had two courses of action open to him. He could stand his ground, let him shoot and take the flak from his mates on the road home that evening. Or he could tackle and risk the wrath of the master from then until he became of age to leave school. Compromise! It was a time for compromise. With a stern face and a look of determination he made a run on a course well calculated to just let the master through. Everybody was impressed, everybody except the goalie. He panicked. "Come back, come back some of yeh, gather in, take him, don't be feared." We all looked, the goalie had forgotten himself completely. But he was the last line of defence and, it must be said, he got his act together quickly. He stretched out his arms to shoulder level, put his feet well apart, flexed and thrust from the knees and kept his eye on the ball. The master sold him a very crafty dummy that sent him diving into the clabber on the right and finished with a flick round the left hand "post". The girls leaped up and shouted, the spectators were coming on to the pitch "Yeas! Yeas! What a goal!"

The master knew his place. He had peaked and it was time for him to retire. He walked off up the pitch, big with pride. At the top end somebody said: "Lovely, well shot, sir!" The defeated goalie, who had just retrieved the ball from the roadside hedge, muttered to his own full-back: "Wee lick, silly, stupid wee lick. I'll get him goin' home this evening." There was anger and menace in his voice.

Fortunately the master didn't hear what was said. He walked on up the pitch to the top end and took the wee green gate that led into the school garden. He wiped his feet on the edge of the lawn, pulled a handful of grass and cleaned the toes of his shoes. Then he lit his mid-day cigarette and stood inhaling and quietly watching two white butterflies that flitted between the lupin and the tall delphiniums that sprang up in the narrow herbaceous border between the grass path and the open, blackstone lining of the sod ditch that had been built specially to keep the ball out of the flowers.

We were allowed extra time that day: the master didn't blow his whistle or call for line-up until twenty to two. Back in the classroom, he was strangely reluctant to resume work. Instead, he told us about the way he used to play lunchtime football in the school-yard when he was our age. He told us about the Coyles, the Dorrities and the Healys that played with him. He told us, too, about his native Derry and how he used arrange his weekend visits with Mrs. Kelly and the children to coincide with a Derry City match at home in the Brandywell. "Nothing as good as a soccer match for relieving the tension of a hard week in school," he used say. And he talked, too, of the club supporters and the soccer mania that swept through the city like an epidemic when the team was doing well in the cup.

It didn't strike me as odd then, but later, I wondered why the Derry people were so loyal to a game that had such strong British associations. But that didn't last long. In the mid 80's Derry City was accepted by the F.A.I., to compete in The League of Ireland, they defeated Cork 1 - 0 in the final and brought the cup north for the first time. For a moment, no more than that, the Bogsiders and the Watersiders were united in support of their heroes.

Everybody travelled South for the final. In the week before the match, family cars were serviced and filled to the brim with petrol for fear their owners would be let down, coaches were all hired and booked and special trains were put on. Long before the event, it was clear that for one weekend the city would become a ghost town. In anticipation, the aerosol artists got to work and overwrote the political graffiti on Derry's walls with their own humour. "Las' wan out, pull over the gates behine yeh. No forgittin', we're warnin' yeh!"

MY SCHOOL DAYS BY JOE DOHERTY

In the month of April 1929 I was taken to school as a small boy of five years. I was the youngest of four so I had plenty of company. As we trudged along the two and a half miles other scholars joined us. I can remember being teased about the awful place school was. As we rounded the last bend and came within sight of the school I was feeling really scared.

That was the worst of it over, as I was ushered into the school room and seated on the wee chair, the Mistress welcomed me with the other starters. Placed in front of us on the wall was the verse:

***Let's always try to be polite
in everything we do,
Remember always to say please
and not forget thank you.***

As time passed I progressed through first and second class and into the Master's room. He took all pupils after second class. About this time a food scheme was started. A large bone was obtained from the flesher's cart and boiled in a large pot on the (Modern Mistress) stove. This soup was doled out at playtime into a collection of half-pint tins made by the local tinsmith. Milk was added to make the soup go further. It maybe wasn't high class soup but it warmed us on a winter's day.

Transport to school was poor at that time with only occasional lifts in horse drawn vehicles, and an odd ride in a motor car.

In the spring of 1934 a rail strike was called which meant that the mail had to be carried by road. The mail van travelled down our road at half past nine in the morning and up again at four in the evening. The driver opened the door and allowed us to sit among the mail. This strike lasted for one month and we were sorry to hear it had ended.

Towards the end of my school days a school garden started in a small field north-east of the playground. Going back after holidays we were surprised to see a garden shed erected, full of new garden tools - barrows, spades, graips, trowels, dibblers and lines. The garden was prepared by experienced labourers under the supervision of Mr May. Plots and paths were created and the boys were allowed to care for each plot. Seeds and plants were sown. Some fruit trees and a cold frame were added at the bottom of the garden. The rampart between the playground and the garden was constantly being eroded by children playing, so during holidays a labourer repaired this and opened a new entrance to the garden.

I was the Master's message boy. He was the proud owner of a rally bicycle with 3 gears. Once he promised us that he had dispersed with corporal punishment. However, some time later after the promise, he found he needed to inflict punishment to a particular pupil and as I was the errand boy I was instructed to take the rally bicycle and ride into Johnny LYttle's in Kilrea and purchase 4 canes there. I was given fourpence for this purchase. Canes were one penny each. I was well warned not to tamper with the gears. However, I could'nt resist experimenting with the gears. I pushed the lever in the effort to get top gear and got stuck between gears.

My most vivid memory of growing up at Crossroads, and indeed of my childhood in general occurred when I was eight years old, and in Primary four. It was a really hot summer's day, and by the time lunch came, everyone was outside playing, except for Louise and I. I don't really know why we weren't outside that day, but instead we ended up sneaking into Mrs Mc Flynn's mobile. I remember we were in a really giddy mood, so we started doing the usual forbidden classroom antics, drawing on the blackboard, swapping around people's books and bags, messing around with the classpaints. Soon we got bored and decided to have a nosy in Mrs Mc Flynn's store. I guess you can't condemn our curiosity, it was very seldom that we got the opportunity to see what lurked inside that little room. So half heartedly we entered, no sooner had we done so when there was a loud SNAP, which scared the hell out of us, I looked down to see that I had stood on Mrs Mc Flynn's mouse trap. Two seconds later and we were out of there. Panting with the sudden adrenalin rush, we stood in the playground in fits of laughter.

What happened next is a kind of a blur, from what I can remember somebody came up to us and said they knew what we were up to, and that they were off to tell the teacher. Sudden panic must have come over Louise and I, we thought we were in big trouble, of course we'd been in trouble before, a lot of times before, but for some reason we really thought we were for it. We had to escape and that's when we saw it; the hole in the school hedge. We discussed our plan of action, and without any hesitation, two minutes later we were climbing out through that hole and onto the road.

We headed for the town, I had this obscured idea that Louise and I could go to my house, and my Mum would be all understanding, she'd give us biscuits and let us watch T.V. for the rest of the afternoon, Lord knows where this preminiscion came from. We were a little down the road when second thoughts started creeping in, it was getting really warm, the sun was belting down on us but it was too late to turn back now, besides I think we both saw it as a kind of adventure.

When we got to Drumagarner Chapel we decided to say a little prayer that we were'nt dead when we got home. We were the only two there, sitting up on the balcony saying our prayers in the big, empty, silent church. It felt quite creepy and really weird being the only two there. Nevertheless, we proceeded to have a small tour of the altar, and a few rings of the altar boys bells. Then we headed off on our travels again.

We got pretty far, in fact we managed to walk to the Marian Hall, without being stopped by a car or being questioned once, soon my Mum would be opened armed and understanding to our plight. Suddenly we heard a car pull up beside us; a door opened and a familiar voice hollered, "You two, get in the car now!!" Reluctantly, we turned to see Nancy the school cook staring out of her car window. We didn't hesitate, Louise jumped in the front and I in the back. Nancy turned the car and headed back to school. I remember her making us say the rosary on the way back, and Louise and I could'nt stop laughing. You know the kind of laughter that comes on you when someone tells you a tragic story, or something really bad happens, and you know there's nothing funny about it, you don't want to laugh, but you just can't keep it in.

Of course at the time we knew we were in serious trouble. We pulled up outside the brown gates, no sooner had we done so, than we were tugged out of the car and marched into the staffroom. I nearly died when my Mum turned up, her face wriggling with anger and embarrassment. For what seemed like an eternity we were interrogated in that staffroom.

"Where were you going?"

"Who's idea was it?"

"Do you know how much trouble you caused us?"

I'd never saw the teachers so cross, Louise was crying, I was just dreading getting home.

By the time we were allowed to go home, the playground was filled with all the other pupils. They all stared at us, as we walked to the gates, some taunted, others looked on with pity. I felt like a criminal going to the chair. The silence in the car on the way home was unbearable, calm before the storm. As soon as we entered the kitchen my Mum went to the cupboard and got out a ladle. My backside and that ladle became close buddies that day. I was sent to bed, with no dinner and an aching rear end.

Of course I promised never to do anything like that again, but then promises are hard to keep!!!

BY ANN BRIZZELL

BETTY'S SCHOOL DAYS

BY BETTY KEALEY

I remember one day coming home from school with a crowd of my friends. The boys grabbed my brand new leather school bag and threw it in the river near the school. The bag went floating down the river and I could not get it back. So I had to go home and tell my Mum what had happened. She sent one of my brothers back up to get the bag and he found it. The books were ruined. I was scared going to school the next day without my books because I thought Mrs Convery might be cross with me.

FRANCIS MC WILLIAMS 1965 - 1972

I started school in September of 1965. We had to walk to school every day and it was about three and a half miles each way. We had a track across the fields. As an infant I went into Mrs Tohill's classroom. We got milk each day at 10.00 and dinner at 12.00. The cook at the time was Mrs Rose Mc Kenna. My happiest memory of school days is of being taken to the front of the class and congratulated for being the most knowledgeable pupil at Religious Education. As a prize I got bringing in the coke and turf for the pot-bellied stove for a whole year! The best years of school were spent with Miss Mc Gill in P.3/P.4. She was a saint and I always enjoyed her class and lessons with her. School in those days was much harder than school is now. We got no special holidays except for holy days and school holidays. There was nothing special like a visit from the Derry football team and Sam Maguire. We only had the 3 classrooms then.

BRIDGET MC ELDOWNY (1926 - 1935)

"I was in the Master's side and I was sent into Miss O' Connor's room for she had a black Modern Mistress with an oven. It was sewing and cookery week. She taught us the basic stitches, hemming, backstitching and knitting, plain and purl. There were cookery utensils in the school and she brought the ingredients with her. We were taught how to make soda bread, scrambled egg, poached egg and cornflour. If it was soda bread she would have taken it home and the other things we ate in school.

We made a sewing bag with a drawstring to keep items in. She demonstrated how to make leather handbags. She punched the holes with an awl and used a needle and thong to stitch the edges together".

"In 1932 Master Kelly went to the Eucharistic congress in Pheonix Park. I mind he told us about the massive crowds that attended. The Papal Nuncio was there and all the Bishops. He brought back the E.C. Newspaper and sold them for 4 pence each to us".

"In winter we wore heavy boots, the stronger the better, they lasted longer. In summer it was the bare feet for most of people. We were bothered with stone bruises but you had to go on".

"We had a leather strap - eg. a harness for a horse to keep the few books we had together - a catechism, a story book (poetry etc. in it) a reading book, a table book and a bible history. For the drawing he would have hung his overcoat on a peg on the blackboard and we had to draw it".

Teachers would have cut sticks out of hedge and beat pupils if they didn't behave, or they didn't know their sums and spellings.

Jim Oliver (1935-1949)

There used to be four Parochial Houses on Bridge Street in Kilrea. One, where the SDLP office is now, two for the curates and one for Master Kelly. He cycled from the town every day out to Crossroads. There were only two teachers. Master Kelly had the older children up to age 16. Miss Connor taught the younger children from about age 4-10. A partition separated the two classrooms and there was a fire in each one. The two chimneys are still there now. We had to bring turf on a Monday. I remember bringing two turf with string around them. There was no electricity.

Children walked from Lisnagrot to Crossroads. School started at nine o'clock and Master Kelly would be out on the road down at the range wall with a whistle telling them to hurry up! Master Kelly had a vegetable garden where the current school kitchen is. There was rhubarb, potatoes, scallions, lettuce and flowers. Children were sent out to weed it. The sloped ground made an unofficial lake in heavy rain, and it wasn't unusual to find someone had been pushed in during playtime!

I didn't enjoy going to school. On my very first day. I stayed until lunch, then escaped, ran across the road and up the lane to my mother! During the war I can remember soldiers outside the school and being very afraid looking out at them.

Fr Chapman and Fr Rooney visited the school to do the religious exams. Dr Farrell was the Bishop for Confirmation. We had to say the rosary every morning at school.

Gerald Etherson Sr (1941)

I remember having to bring turf to school every week for the fire to heat the classroom. No turf, no heat. I remember the Monday penny where we had to bring in a penny every Monday to pay for stamps, stationary etc.

We had to walk to school unless you were lucky enough to have a bicycle, which meant we carried the turf to school. Also, there were no toilets, we all used a bucket. There were only two teachers Master Kelly and Miss Connor.

Vincent McAteer 1945 – 1954

There was no electricity or heating in school it was coal fires. There were no flush toilets, had to go outside to outside toilet. There were no dinners, each pupil had to bring their lunch. During my time at school small bottles of milk was introduced. The teachers were Miss O'Connor and Mr Kelly. The rosary was said daily. There was no school uniform. There were two days per week in the afternoon, needlework and cookery classes. The boys were sent out to do gardening. Mr Kelly had a garden and the boys looked after it.

Margaret Darragh (nee Oliver) 1940-1954

I remember starting school and having to walk three and a half miles to get there. We never had a car when we were at school. Miss O'Connor was my teacher when I started. She taught class 1, 2, 3 and 4! Then you went in to Master Kelly and he taught until you left at fourteen. We were there from 9:15am until 3:00pm. At lunchtime we played racing, skipping, chestnuts and marbles. The priest called regularly to school and every year we had a religious exam. The school had only two classrooms separated by a partition. Miss O'Connor's room had a black range and in the winter time she would heat the bottle of milk as they were frosted sometimes. They had no central heating and no canteen, you brought your own lunch. There was no such thing as school trips. It was a very basic school. All I remember was maths, English and reading. I also learned how to knit and sew. All I remember about it was sixty years ago.

Maureen Mc Killen (1946)

My father John McGill was a pupil at the school at the chapel (The National School?) but moved to Crossroads when it opened in 1921, aged 9. He left school to work on the family farm aged 12, when his father died. I began Crossroads in 1949 (aged 5) and left the Christmas I turned 15. There were only 2 teachers in the school when I was at Crossroads, Master Kelly and Miss O'Connor. Miss O'Connor taught the infants. We did religion every morning and Religious examinations were a very big deal with lots of preparation! We also did reading, writing and composition. Pupils were often slapped for giving the wrong answers. The school had a garden and every class got a turn to work in it. Because we lived close to the school, my brother Sean tended the garden over the summer. The school was heated by open fires for which we had to bring in turf. If Master Kelly saw my father bringing home a load of turf, he would ask us to bring some into school the next day. I brought a lunch to school each day and all children got a free bottle of milk. At lunch time we played games like tig, skipping and ring a rosies. **Mary Doherty (McGill) 1949-1959**

Mr Kelly the Principal took the 11 Plus pupils every Saturday morning for 2 hours to tutor them. I had to walk over one mile every day to school and walk home again. The pupils had to take in two turf each, every week, for the fire. We had to take in 1p every Monday for the black babies in Africa. We didn't have school dinners. We had to bring a lunch and we got ¼ bottle milk at 11 o'clock and 1 o'clock. I have fond memories of working in the garden, at the side of the school. We would weed the vegetables and eat some of the strawberries. My father drew the first load of stones, to build Crossroads school, by horse and cart. All the way from the Round Rocks quarry.

James McAleese (1949)

I remember Mrs McGrath cycled from Rasharkin every day.

There was no uniform as such. My mother made us short trousers on her sewing machine with pedals (there was no electricity). It was normal to have patches on the elbows of your shirt and the collar wore through!

Every Monday you had to bring the 'Monday pennies for the black babies.'

In the early 60s it was my job to 'bury or burn' the rubbish. There was no bin lorry. Old books and scrap paper would be put in a pile outside. If they got wet, I would have to dig a hole in the garden to bury them. If they were dry, I was given matches to burn them.

School closed for a week in October to allow everyone to go pratai digging on their farms.

Priests would've taken the Religion classes. In my time I remember Fr McLaughlin, Fr Howton, Fr McSorley, Fr Kane, Fr Mullan and Fr Devine.

I remember PJ Kelly locked my brother Patsy in the coal house and the commotion in the senior class when Master Kelly realised, and he jumped up on the window sill to shout in at Patsy to see if he was ok.

With only two teachers for the whole school, it was hard to keep up with the work and the teachers didn't have time to help anyone that was struggling. There was two to a seat in the classroom and I shared with Sean McLaughlin.

Harry Etherson 1953

I remember about twenty of us from Lisnagrot area walked the 3.5 mile to get to school. We walked over fields and moss, up the railway and out at Etherson's lane. We carried turf wrapped in newspaper and tied with string for the fire.

Brigid O'Neill (nee McKillen) 1950s

When I was at Crossroads, we only had three teachers; Mrs Convery, Miss McGill and Miss McEldowney. There were only three classrooms. The teachers had to put coal on the fire as there was no oil heating. We never got away on school trips and we had a mobile dentist who would come to the school every so often and if you needed dental work done he would do it in the dental van and then you would have to go back to class and finish your school work.

The nurse would come too and give injections when needed and check eyesight etc.

Kevin McAleese 1963

I remember 'the tunnel' under the window in Mrs Convery's class. We would pick the football teams for break and lunch by creeping on our bellies up the tunnel to pass notes back and forth. You were at the mercy of Mrs Convery's metre ruler stick if you were caught! Sometimes the lunch time football ended in a row. I remember one day the row continued on the walk home. I threw Kevin Darragh and Martin McWilliams over the hedge at the end of the Drumard Road! Sorry lads! I remember the grey dentist van getting towed into the yard. Word would quickly spread that it was there, and you sat quaking until your name was called to go. I can still remember the smell of it! I remember a boy Sweeney getting told off by Mrs Convery, so he climbed up on the window, used his two hands to slide open the sash window and he jumped out and walked home! I delivered the milk and drank any leftovers.

Angela McKay (nee Darragh)

I Remember when I was in p6 my teacher used to give us sums to do each morning while she got herself organised. She would call out £4.17.6 (old money) multiplied by 89, 72, 63 and so on, about 10 sums to keep us busy. At the end she asked us to call out the answers.

One day she lifted my friend Maire McCotter's book and accused her of copying as she had no working out done for each sum, only the answers written! She wasn't impressed when we told her that she gave us the same sums everyday so we knew the same answers! I still know that £4.17.6 x 89 is £433.17.6

One day my friend Maire McCotter stuck her finger in a hole in the bottom of her desk we didn't want to tell the teacher Mrs Convery in case she got into trouble, so I went out to the toilet to get some soap. We put some soap on it, but it didn't work because the finger was swollen up. Eventually we had to admit what she had done and the teacher wasn't too pleased! She sent an older pupil up the road to her house to get a saw and then he had to cut the wooden desk to release her finger. It was a very frightening experience as she was scared he was going to cut her finger off! She should have been more scared of the punishment she would get later!!

Siobhan Quigg (McAleese)

One of my earliest memories of Crossroads was the day I bit Avril McShane! We were in the infant room, seated beside the partition which was far away from the heat of the stove. Presumably, it was in an attempt to keep warm that we were puffing on our hands. "Give me your wee hand" I said kindly, and poor Avril agreed. When she gave me her hand I just couldn't stop myself from sinking my teeth in her!! Her squeals would have been heard at Moran's Crossroads.

Our teacher, Mrs Tohill, dragged me, kicking and screaming, to the senior room to face the wrath of the principal. I won't mention her name as I'm needing a fill of oil at the minute, but she was a force to be reckoned with. I got six slaps with the metre rule (an innocent sounding name for a lethal weapon!). The principal declared that I was a cannibal and made me stand with my face to the wall for the rest of the morning. A short time after this incident, the McShane family moved to England. To this day, I hope it was not because of my cannibalistic tendencies! Walking home from school was an adventure and there were landmarks all along the way. First were the bridges, the small bridge on the right and the big bridge on the left which had steps going down to the river. Next was Armstrong's, the big, mysterious, white house hidden behind high hedges. We never saw the

occupants but often dared each other to run up the lane and around the corner to the front of the house. Anyone brave enough to do so returned at great speed pursued by some very angry geese. Having passed Bloomfield's cottages, you had to tread carefully past the end of the Lower

Town lane and Eddie Wallace's cottage. Quinten McGill, the Alsatian, lived on the Lower Town lane and was nearly as scary as Eddie Wallace. But not quite! The bend in the road known as the round rocks held The Whins and Nancy's Plums. The plum trees were all that remained of the home of Nancy Doherty. We would eat copious amounts often with dire consequences! The Whins provided a short cut to Larkin's Road and were the scene of several battles. These battles usually ended with someone in a headlock while their assailant roared "Say submit" (pronounced sum-mit). The recommended reply was a hasty "I submit" before your head was ripped off. Between Billy Dempsey's Road and Oliver's, the road was concrete rather than tar which was a source of wonder and excitement (remember this was before the days of Xboxes and the like). Then came the Gaelic pitch known in those days as Rushy Park because of its proximity to the moss. There was another wee river to explore at the end of the Swatragh Road, it was a great place to paddle and catch sticklebacks. The final leg of our journey involved a long chat at the end of the Gortmacrane Road before heading home. It's sad to note that there's no chance of locating most of the above places on your Sat Nav in 2022, but, thankfully, former pupils of Crossroads hold them fondly in their memories.

The fact that I have stronger memories of outside than inside school maybe says a lot about my work ethic! I just loved break and dinner time and all our playground games. Several of these involved a race to the finish line - One, Two, Three, Red Lights, Giant Steps and What Time is it Mr Fox. Or we might borrow the big skipping ropes and sing along as we skipped

" Cinderella, dressed in yella'
Went upstairs to see her fella'
How many kisses did she get?"

Some of us were lucky if we got a couple of kisses before tripping over the rope! We played corners in the kitchen canopy and hopscotch in the playground if we could steal some chalk to mark out the grid. On a really good day, the boys would let us play football, usually we just got to be the goalposts!! Our star player was a younger girl, Rosa Diamond whose hero was Johnny Giles of Leeds United.

Walking to and from school brought many adventures, the most notable of these involved Eddie Wallace also known as 'Snib'. Eddie was probably a very nice man but he put the fear of God in us. One fateful day, as we dandered past, we spotted Eddie proudly putting new concrete balls on top of his pillars. One boy who shall remain nameless - your secret's safe with me Rum - ran back and knocked one off before it had time to set. We thought it was bad enough that day when Eddie came charging down the road after us, roaring his head off. But the next day he had a GUN. Yes siree, there he was, old Snib, leaning over his ball-less pillar brandishing a shotgun!! The pupils of Crossroads scattered in all directions, most of us back in the direction of school. We had to take an alternate route home, up Etherson's lane and down the old railway to the safety of the Moneysallin Road. When I told my mother why I was late that day, she gave me a clip around the ear for annoying the neighbours. Life was very different back in the Sixties!

Maire O'Hagan (nee McCotter) 1961 – 1969

I remember my school day at crossroads started early. I was the first to be collected by taxi, driven by Francis Cassidy, there was no school bus. When I arrived at school, Lizzy M^cGill had the stoves lit in each classroom, that was the only form of heating. In winter the crates of milk were put beside the stove to warm the milk.

There were 3 classrooms, infants with Mrs Mullan, Juniors with Miss M^cGill and seniors with Mrs Convery and a staffroom and toilets. The dinner ladies were Mrs M^cKenna and Mrs Irwin. The subjects taught were maths, English, reading, spellings, tables and geography, sometimes we listened to stories or music on the radio. There were no calculators, computers or iPads. There were no school uniforms and no school trips. I now have grandchildren at the school, and I am so glad to see the new building taking it into the future.

Carmel Quigg nee Burke (1965 -1972)

I remember we used to play rounders and football. We liked saying prayers. I liked using sharp things that cut paper. It sounded like the starship enterprise doors closing. I liked sitting beside the fire when it was cold. I liked skating over ice on the football pitch when it was frozen over in winter. Mrs M^cKenna was a great cook; I loved her jam and coconut sponge. We were allowed to walk to school. The police stopped us one day and told us we were on the wrong side of the road. There were only 3 rooms.

Jerome M^cGill 1969-1976

I remember the custard was so nice. I loved the nature table, one time I bought a branch in off the monkey puzzle tree. We loved sitting beside the stove when it got red hot. One day I was sick and Mrs M^cGill let me go home early. One day there was a tin of sweets brought into school and they threw them into the air and we got to catch them

Jackie M^cGill 1970 – 1977

I remember there was only the big fires (stoves) we all stood around in the morning to keep warm. In primary 7, it was my job to leave class 5 minutes early at break time and lunchtime to make the tea for the teachers, and then ring the bell by hand to let all the classes out. Mrs Convery was the best principal.

Sharon Larkin nee McAteer 1974

Having stories read by Mrs A McGill, possibly p3. Being enchanted by her ability to make the book come alive. The open fire in the classroom possibly p6 and p7, were the milk bottles came in sometimes frozen and sat beside the fire to defrost. By the time we got to drink them they would have a layer of cream on them (I didn't really like this). The dentist calling in a van at the side of the road for check-ups and sometimes treatment! I enjoyed playing rounders in the yard and using the pole to run around outside Mrs McKenna's kitchen. My final months were spent with great excitement and anticipation moving equipment into our new mobile. The smell of the old books in the store is a smell I will never forget! Miss McQuillan gave me a prayer in P1 which I still have to this day :)

Joanne Kearns (Darragh) (1973-1980)

I remember Mrs Mc Cusker the taxi driver, red Cortina with black vinyl top. There were 5 children in the back seat and 3 in the front. She let me change gears as she drove. I remember the hole in the hedge that we used to jump through. I remember Mrs Mc Flynn breaking a ruler over Martin Mc Erleans hand. I remember having to do all the sums Mrs Convery left on the blackboard from the night before in the morning while we waited on her coming in.

Cormac Mc Ateer (1975-1982)

I remember Miss Annie Mc Gill giving out sweets when we got our spellings correct. I had to go out to the coal shed to bring in coal to put on the fire that was in the classroom. I recall Miss Mc Gill asking me to take the blackboard duster outside and back it off the wall to clean it. I remember going on a school trip and putting 10p in the slot machine, it got stuck so I hit the machine to move it and the alarm went off!!

I took a golf ball to school one day and I was bouncing it off the wall, it went through the window and landed in Mrs Convery's custard. I got in trouble for breaking the glass and was called a missile thrower!

Martin Oliver (1980-1987)

I remember my time at Crossroads being great, the principal was Miss Mc Gill. My favourite teacher was Miss Mc Gill. I remember us gathering around the stove to keep warm in winter.

Myself and Sean Madden would have delivered the milk to the classrooms every Friday.

Myself, Sean Madden, Mickey O' Boyle, Eoin O' Kane, Martin Madden, Dermot Law and Gerald Dempsey always brought in conkers and played to see who was King of conkers. We also had a hut in the corner of the playing field. We had great fun playing games. Sports day was great. Everyone got involved and I won most of the throwing competitions.

At dinner time we would help the dinner ladies serve out the food to the younger children. The other teachers I remember are Mrs Mc Quillan, Mrs Mc Flynn and Mrs Mc Allister.

Nicholas Mc Kee (1980-1987)

I remember my first classroom in Crossroads after I was appointed in 1975. It was one half of what is now the hall. I taught p1 and p2 and Annie McGill taught p3 and p4 on the other part with a wooden partition in between. Many's the natter Annie and I had across that connecting door.

There were no radiators or running water in the classrooms but each classroom was heated by a potbellied stove with a surrounding protective guard. The caretaker lit the stoves in the morning and it was teacher's job to keep them going through the day. Many times, I forgot to do this and we all had to suffer the cold for the rest of the day. When lit they radiated great heat, so much so that I managed to melt several small plastic chairs if I placed them too near the screen!!

I also remember the p4/p5 children doing a history project and dressing up in 1940/50 clothes and going down to the 'old school' at the Giant's Causeway. They came back disappointed saying it was just like Crossroads! Gave a whole new name to 'living history'.

I remember in 1976 we were so excited when we took possession of our first new mobile classroom (little did we know it would be the first of many down through the years). This followed the appointment of Mrs McFlynn (formerly Dillon)

Staff and children stood out to see it being winched into position. Fr McNally PP at the time, arrived in the middle of this and was later heard to relate the story of 'the flutter in the dovecote).!!

I remember doing a farm project with the p1 and p2s. We all travelled down to John and Claire O'Kane's farm for a visit. What a day we had seeing the animals and all piling into John's trailer for a spin around the farm. Meanwhile Claire and Mary had organised lunch for all and finished off with ice cream before we left. No visits to open farms later lived up to that day. A great memory.

I remember the children only had a small area of tarmac for playing.

However, we had lots of greenspaces around the school.

The children ran, jumped and played on the grass. They made dens in the hedges, hid in bushes and climbed trees. Some even brought items from home to furnish the dens. Structured play before its time!!

And then one day along came a very officious man with a clipboard and said, no more dens, no more playing in the trees and bushes. Health and Safety had arrived in Crossroads!!

Moira McQuillan (Teacher appointed 1975)

I remember going on a school trip to water world Portrush and my sister Patricia who was in the car leaving me to school that morning. Annie McGill asked my mum would Patricia go with us on the bus as a helping hand and to supervise the children, and she agreed. I never was fond of water and always liked my feet firmly on the bottom of the pool, my friends all were going on the big slide so I was talked in to going on the slide. As I got to the bottom and hit the water I could not swim and almost drowned only for the life guard lifting me out and to this day my sister can remember it as she saw the pool attendant saving my life.

Jerome McGoldrick 1982- June 1989

I used to be allowed to go home for my lunch everyday. Mrs McAllister would help me across the road. I would be home in time for 'The Breadman' and an episode of Home and Away and neighbours. It was a fight everyday between James Donaghy, Eamon McCloskey and James Dempsey as to who would be allowed to come home with me! I remember my dog Sheila was a frequent visitor in the playground. She loved all the attention she got. I remember being in Annie McGills P7 class. When I was acting the gipe she always sent me down to Ms McQuillan's P1 classroom for my punishment. Mrs McQuillan always opened the door saying 'Paul Etherson, why is it always you?' Young Bronagh McAleese was in the P1 class and funny enough I think I remember her saying 'I'm going to marry that boy some day!' LOL

Paul Etherson 1984

I remember always getting the school bus to the school and Johnny driving it. I remember making my Holy Communion and my veil kept falling off me. I loved Fridays because we always got chips for dinner. I loved the jam sponge and custard pudding. I had to repeat primary 6 twice because of the way my birthday fell. I had Annie Mc Gill and I loved her as a teacher. I remember one time eating a rice krispie cake. The rice krispie stuck in my tooth and I was crying with the pain. Mrs McQuillan looked after me.

I remember going to Maghera school to the swimming pool. Annie Mc Gill always said to mammy that my big brother Nicholas Mc Aleese was always protective over me. I remember the teachers Miss Mc Quillan, Mrs Mc Flynn and Mrs Mc Allister.

Emma Watton (1984-1991)

I remember I got a lift to school every morning with the caretaker, Patsy McWilliams and I would have helped her clean the fires out and bring the coal in. I also set mouse traps and collected the dead mice from the traps I had set the previous day. Maybe that's all I was good for!

James Dempsey 1984 -1991

I started crossroads when I was 4 years old. There were 4 girls and 4 boys in my class, my P1 teacher was Miss McQuillan. The P1s and P2s were in the same classroom, it was the hall divided in two with p3s on the other side. There were four teachers, Miss McQuillan, Mrs McAllister, Mrs McFlynn and Miss McGill. I remember at break and lunch time a pupil walked around the school ringing the bell at the start and the end of break. Dinner and lunch was served in the classroom and the tables were set and cleared by the pupils. Also the P7s served the younger pupils their dinner, once you had finished eating you could go out and play. There was only one mobile and all the other 3 classrooms were in the school. There was a small bottle of milk each day for the pupils, these sat in crates at the front of the school and on a warm day they would be very warm....yuck! There were other times on really cold days the top of the bottles were frozen. I remember there being stoves for heating in the classrooms and the senior boys brought the coal around the classrooms in the mornings. The school uniform was white shirt, navy and yellow ties and grey pinafore. The year I finished the school changed to the current navy and green uniform. I made my communion in P3 as this was the age that Holy Communion was made. Sports was football for the boys and the girls played uni-hoc. Mr Cranny came to Crossroads in 1991 when I was in Primary 7, when Annie McGill retired. I have wonderful memories of my time at Crossroads. I am very grateful for the foundation I received in my education here and I am privileged that myself and my children are past and current pupils.

Gemma McGilligan (McKay) (1985-1992)

I remember jumping through the 'hole in the hedge' at break and lunch times! Ellie Etherson was our playground adult, the nicest lady. I used to love walking around at playtime holding her hand. Mr. Cranny taking me to a public speaking competition in Belfast, I think I was in P6/P7. I came home with an award!! (it was Road Safety) Mrs. McFlynn was probably my favourite teacher lol! I remember Rory's first day of P1 ... he ran into Barry Burke and got a lovely black eye!! Annie Bradley was our school cook, another lovely lady, always so kind and smiling.

Rowena Cassidy 1986 – 1993

Once upon a time.....

Of course you would expect a story about children to begin like this, but not today.

I graduated in 1980 and moved to teach P5 in Mullaghbawn, then to Cloughogue in 1982 to teach P6/7 followed by an appointment to the post of Principal in Ballyhackett in 1983 teaching P4,5,6 & 7 all at the same time (a bit of plate spinning required!). When I had time I looked out my office window viewing Mussenden Temple and on a clear day to Jura in Scotland.

Then came the summer of 1991 and my appointment to Crossroads, this lasted until August 2017, the main post of my career over a quarter of a century. It's amazing to be able to look back with many memories over a career spent largely in rural primary schools and particularly in Kilrea.

I'm sorry, if you expected an expose' illuminated with humorous tales, but not today. I have many stories about staff, governors, parents and pupils in the main humorous, but not always so!

I always came home with a story that made me smile, after all there is no oint in not enjoying your work.

Working with children every day of your life is a privilege and most rewarding.

As Principal people trusted me and so today, on this special occasion, all your secrets are safe with me so no expose' but honestly its best. Everyone knows those moments of humour and they were many as Crossroads is a happy family unit at the heart of the local community.

Today is a very special day for School, parish and Community. Along with many others I played a role in today's happy event, the product of belief, hard work and persistence. There have been so many of us who have played a role in this one hundred year journey. Especially we must remember those who are no longer with us, but are so much part of today, without a past we have no future.

Turning the key to the new Crossroads has been a one hundred year dream, for over 26 years, mine. As I retired the last thing I did was to sign along with our great supporter Fr. Cargan (R.I.P.) to release payment for the build.

The next phase was undertaken by Mr Eugene Mullan, staff, governors and parents and what a tumultuous time; meeting upon meeting, upheaval, swinging crane as part of your daily routine not to mention COVID which hurt our community like so many others.

It has all been worth it because the dream is now reality, the future of Crossroads is now secured. It still will rely on being supported by all our local community, as in the past. I look forward to seeing the school grow and further develop its facilities which are there to enhance our children's lives.

I'm proud to have been able to be part of the story of Crossroads.

Mr Paul Cranny

I remember I don't remember what class I was in but I remember making tiles for a tree. We had to make our own tiles from clay and make a nice design on them. They were then displayed on a wooden sculpture of the tree where the carpark now is. It stayed there for years and I always thought it was great taking part in making something so special.

Geraldine McCotter (1993)

Some of the best days involved sword fights in the playground with lengths of cow parsley freshly pulled out by the root. If the fight or duel got a bit too serious the root end of the cow parsley would have been rattled off your backside! John Lowery was a fierce adversary lol. In the bad weather when the sod was soft we would have made mud slides. Endless amounts of fun. Ann McAleese was never too impressed when I got home though clabbered in muck. Mrs McGill came out of retirement to teach us on Fridays. Every Friday she brought us in bars of chocolate. A fine woman. Great memories.

Barry McAleese

Mrs Dougan in P2 always rewarded good behaviour with flumps! Every sports day Gusty and Veronica McCotter would bring the shop in the back of their estate car-wham bars, black jacks, iron bru, highland toffees, postman pats.....Doing the verucca check at Mrs Beaties swimming class praying you wouldn't be made to put on that special sock. In Mrs McFlynn's class we did a project on Flax and Linen and got a day trip to Clarkes factory in Upperlands.

Bronagh Etherson (McAleese) (1992-1999)

I remember Mrs M^CAllister in p4, I fell asleep on a bean bag in the reading corner. Every Friday Mrs M^CAllister brought out her tin of sweets (tea bag tin full of dolly mixtures) and everyone got one.

Johnny the bus driver – he used to stop down the road, take out his false teeth and do a dance then get back into the driving seat!

The bell- someone got to run around the school with a wee brown bell at break and lunch time.

Taking turns to do the milk round (in the glass bottles in the green crates)

Eimear Dooley (1994- 2000)

I remember getting on the school bus every morning to a big smile from Johnny the bus driver. He kept us entertained the whole way to school singing at the top of his lungs! I remember my P1-P3 Ms. M^cQuillan welcoming us every morning with a big smile. I was able to present Ms. M^cQuillan with flowers at our Christmas play (while still dressed as a Shepard... beard and all!!) I had a range of roles in our Christmas play but my favourite was playing the lost sheep in our p2 Christmas play and having to scream at the top of my voice "baa baa baa, I've lost my mama ma ma". My favourite memory of Crossroads is playing Red Rover boys against girls at break and lunch, especially when the girls won!

Niamh M^cAteer 2000

I remember when Gail burnt the toast she made our class and set the fire alarm off. Every teacher I had made primary school the best memories I have. Me, Anna O'Neill, Louis and Anthony won the track and field race as a team. Being a friendship buddy. A typical day at school came with prizes or gaining points for our house colour or table (purple was the best). Mr Mullan becoming my new Principal and Primary 7 teacher. A sad memory was Mr Cranny leaving but we wished him all the best. We had the best classroom assistants. Our classroom assistant was Jane Carey but when we were leaving P7 she was leaving to become a teacher and went to England.

Katie Hamilton 2013-2018

When I was at crossroads, I had a blast. The staff was brilliant with us, spoiling us with treats and days out. I think my favourite memory was my residential there was only the 14 of us and we went to the jungle and had a blast, then when we came back, we seen this massive bouncy castle which we stayed out for hours, I remember having a championship match against Steelstown and it was the first time we beat Steelstown which was class. I think my favourite day of the week was a Thursday as we had pe and I was always helping out cause we would have English up until break then we'd have maths, then pe and finally history, religion or art and design. I remember when I was in p5 that my brother Ryan (who was the captain) lead the team to a football final and they won, so he was offered to come to my school and show the trophy and I had never ever been a prouder sister that I didn't stop ranting about it for weeks. I think by now everyone will understand what I loved about Crossroads.

Grainne Oliver (2014-2021)

I remember when we went to Woodhall in P7 and I hit an arrow into someone's backyard. I remember when I played in the castle cup in P5. I remember our leavers trip to the jungle in P7. I remember winning the credit union quiz in P6.

Eoin Walsh (2014-2021)

The Senior classes of Crossroads travelled weekly to Maghera High School to participate in the swimming lessons on offer there. As our outing overlapped break-time it was customary for the pupils to bring their own snack with them and eat it on the journey.

One day I was accompanying my P5 class to the swimming class when Aine Bradley, seated directly opposite me on the bus, opened her lunch box, removed two red, round objects from within and offered one of them to me. 'Would you like a Babybell, Miss?' she asked.

Babybells were a relatively new commodity on the market then and I hadn't ever seen nor eaten one. I gratefully accepted but as I sampled the unfamiliar offering I thought it a very unsavoury bite for a child to want to eat or anyone else for that matter. Maybe it was an acquired taste. Meanwhile Aine eyed me with intrigue. 'Do you like it, Miss?' she asked. I nodded an approval. 'You're supposed to peel the red covering off first, Miss!' she added. Rather than spit out the contents of my mouth or admit my lack of knowledge of Babybells I swallowed the offending substance and said, 'Yes, but I actually prefer them with their skin on!' Aine seemed surprised with my response. Later, when Aine was engaged in conversation with the classmate beside her I got the opportunity to gingerly worm the remainder of the Babybell into my pocket. Upon closer inspection and out of Aine's radar I realised that what I had actually eaten was the token cheese, wax and all!

Crossroads Primary School was a great place to work in and I have a wealth of happy memories of my 39 years teaching there.

As a young, novice teacher in 1977 I was busy teaching English when the classroom door opened and in stepped Mrs Convery, the Principal, with a very tall, elegant lady whom she proceeded to introduce as Mrs Henderson, the needle-work inspector. Mrs Convery conveyed that the inspector was keen to view the pupils' handiwork. At the time P5 pupils had been engaged in a project on 'Children Around the World' where we had studied the lifestyles of children in other lands and it was my intention that we would all make stuffed models and dress them in national costumes. The

children had been given fabric cut-outs which were to be hand sewn with running stitch, turned inside out, stuffed and various fabrics and embellishments then added to create their models.

I reluctantly instructed the children to take out their samples, for I was well aware that they were in no fit state for inspection. Most were still at the stage of sewing the cut-outs with the running stitches and none had reached the stage of adding costumes to their models. Out came naked dolls with puckered edges, some with bulges of cotton wool protruding from their bodies, some with stuffing escaping from their seams and some had crumbs of biscuits and crisps and boiled sweets attached, the results of secret nibbling under desks. All in all, they were a tardy lot and Mrs Henderson seemed to take a dim view of our efforts. Her facial expression told it all. She requested the help of three strong boys to help her carry some boxes from her car.

With the boxes safely deposited on the teachers' table, she proceeded to delve into them and bring out our exhibit after exhibit of wonderful handiwork. There were felted lions with luscious manes, fabric giraffes with long slender necks (not a bulge in sight), ladybirds embellished with spots, stripy snakes complete with red-forked tongues and many more wonderful creations.

As each exhibit was displayed my pupils 'oohed and aaahed' in admiration of the work. I tried glaring down the classroom in an effort to curb their enthusiasm but all to no avail. It was obvious they were well impressed with this work from the pupils of other schools and I felt that I had fallen short in delivering the skills required to produce work of the standard on display here. The last exhibit was a clown with a leering smile that seemed to add insult to our experience. Even he could see that our needlecraft wasn't up to scratch!

Upon instruction the boys carried her boxes of creativity back to the car and when she bade farewell I breathed a sigh of relief. She did say that she would call again to assess the progress we had made in 'needlecraft' but she never did!

Mrs Mc Flynn (1976 – 2015)

Without giving away my age, I have been in Crossroads for nearly half of my life. 27 Years with Four Children going through the school and all being well a few of my own grandchildren will too. I hope to be here to see them and their classmates come through as well.

We've fed children's children throughout the years; and we think that when we start seeing grandchildren of children who we provided dinners to, we might hang up the apron. Unfortunately, we have still the same kitchen, it is small but we got a new dishwasher in 2021 and it makes our day a little easier. We provide tasty break and all our food is fresh from our kitchen - we are waiting on our Michelin Star.

Geraldine and I are like Batman and Robin, working together for 26 years and now the wonderful Patricia who has joined us, we have a great laugh and enjoy working together for such amazing children and staff, and we look forward to many more happy years in our wonderful, long overdue new build school.

Margaret McGilligan, Geraldine McCloy and Patricia Draine

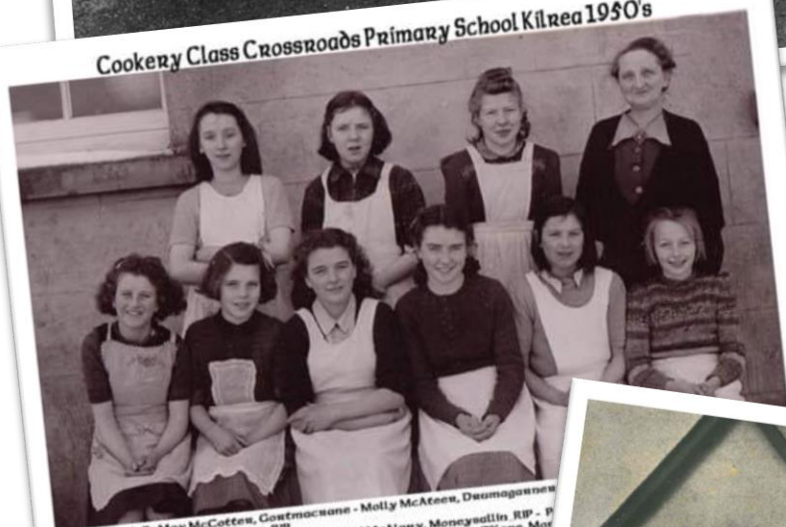


Pupils of Crossroads Primary school, Kilrea, pictured around 1960, with teachers Mrs Heenan and Mrs Tohill.





Cookery Class Crossroads Primary School Kilrea 1950's



Back Row, L-R: May McCotter, Gormacane - Molly McAtee, Dromagone
 Teachers: Miss O'Connor, Kilrea R.P.
 Front Row, L-R: Alice Lodge, Killygillyb - Mary J. McAlony, Monysallin R.P. -
 Mary Conway, Killygillyb - Ethel Gilmore, Dromagone - Mary O'Kane, Monysallin













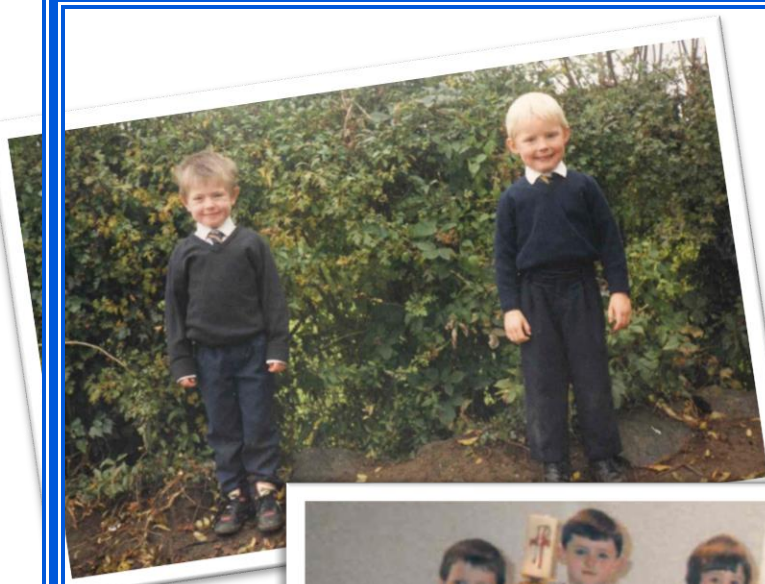




































Primary One - 2021 ~ 2022



Primary Two - 2021 ~ 2022



Primary Five - 2021 ~ 2022



Primary Six - 2021 ~ 2022



Primary Seven - 2021 ~ 2022



Primary 1 and 2

2022-2023

