

## **Education**

### **Secondary Education**

When the north wing of the convent had been completed, a Boarding school for girls was started which attracted many pupils from the surrounding area. By 1880, this school had been altered to a day school, called St Mary's Intermediate School. Increasing numbers warranted the building of a larger school, which was completed in 1938 and officially opened in 1939, as St. Mary's Secondary School. A top floor was added in 1954. A further extension – St Anne's, was added in 1972. Numbers continued to increase. A major extension was added which was officially opened on November 6th 1987. Sr. M. Ann McGoohan was one of the first Principals followed by Srs. M. Philomena McGuire, Benedict Browne and Genevieve Foley. Sr. M. Attracta Tighe was the last Sister Principal from 1981 – 2004.

A recent Press release in November 2020 announced the building of a new Secondary School on convent land north of the existing St. Mary's! It bears the exciting news that *"it will be a new model to meet the demands of new modes of learning."* Presently, the school has in excess of 500 students. Mrs Patsy Sweeney was Principal in St. Mary's from 2004 – 2016. Mr Robert O'Reilly is the present Principal and Margaret Burke is Deputy Principal.

### **Other Sisters who ministered in the Secondary School**

Sisters Mary Gallagher, Marie Celine Halloran, Breege Duggan, Consilio Dobbyn, Kathleen Mullarkey, Stephanie Barrett Anne Kirwan, Maura Flynn, Breeda Leonard, Martina Barrett, Annuntiata Browne, Rita Conway, Catherine Kennedy, Regina Ruane, Ann Mc Donnell, Aquinas McNulty, Norrie Mac Hale, Maureen Kelly, Martin Sheridan and Nancy Clarke.

Sr. M. Malachy Ryan taught a Commercial class and she was assisted in that by Sr. M. Ignatius Slevin. It was very popular class with many young women in the surrounding area who found employment in business. Some years later, when Malachy Ryan retired, Bonaventure Byrne assisted Ignatius. Rev. Mother Antonio Leavy had a spacious two room classroom built for their use and comfort.

### **Primary Education**

Fundraising was done and money was borrowed so that another school – a primary school, was opened for girls and boys on the Convent land in 1885. However, probably due to increasing

numbers, the Sisters returned to the old school in Teeling Street in 1907 with the infant boys and remained there until the present infant schools for girls and boys were built in 1939. A much-needed extension was added to the Girls' school – Scoil Chroí Íosa, in 1959. Sr. M. Lourdes Boland was Principal then.

Many years later, due to dwindling numbers in Ballina Primary schools, the three Principals – Sheila O'Grady, Scoil Íosagáin Junior Boys' School; Liam Higgins, Scoil Pádraig, Senior Boys; and Sr. Nancy Clarke, Scoil Chroí Íosa, Girls' School; together with their respective Boards of Management, met in the Manor Hotel Ballina, in May 2006, to explore the benefits/possibilities of amalgamation. A number of meetings took place thereafter. A meeting in the Downhill House Hotel on June 25th 2007, was organised by Ms Tona Redmond and Mr. Jason Kearney, Department of Education and Skills (Des) Tullamore, Bishop John Fleming (Killala Diocese and Patron) and the Sisters of Mercy, represented by Srs. Mary Walsh and Carmel Molloy (Trustees of the two Mercy Schools.) Present also were the Chairpersons of the BOM, Mr Paul Brennan Chairperson of the two Mercy Schools, and Fr. Martin Henry CC Ballina, Chairperson BOM Scoil Pádraig. The three Principals were also present – Mrs. Sheila O'Grady, Mr Liam Higgins and Sr. Nancy Clarke. A decision was made by DES, Bishop Fleming and the Mercy Trustees to amalgamate Scoil Chroí Íosa and Scoil Íosagáin from September 1st. 2007. Scoil Pádraig was given until May 15th 2008 to join the amalgamation if they wished. Scoil Pádraig decided not to join and to remain an Independent school. Sheila O'Grady was appointed Principal of the new school, Scoil Íosa and Sr. Nancy Clarke was appointed Deputy Principal. The new school system was in place for September 1st 2008, thereby becoming a main-stream (Infants to 6th Standard) Co-Ed school. In 2011 Sr. Nancy retired and Marie Loftus was appointed Deputy Principal. Marie Loftus retired in 2014 and Ms. Monica Duffy was appointed Deputy Principal. Sheila O'Grady retired in 2015. The new Principal appointed was Mr. Michael Tunney and Ms. Monica Duffy continued as Deputy Principal.

### **Other Sisters who taught in the Primary Schools**

Srs. M. Joseph Garrick, Patrick Hennigan, Columba Cotter, Margaret Mary Finnerty, Paul Brett, Mercy Naughton, Stanislaus Lavelle, Baptist Higgins, Dolores Gallagher, Muredach Finnerty, Annuntiata Browne, Augustine Kelly, Kevin McNamara, Vincent Torpey, Cecilia Kelly, Bernard Eyre, Gertrude Noonan, Sacred Heart Gallagher, Stephanie Barrett, Regina Ruane, Marie Celine Halloran, Ann

McDonnell, Rita Conway, Bonaventure Byrne, Maureen Kelly, Norrie MacHale, Maura Flynn, Freda Kenny, Margaret Burke, Helen Barrett, Angela Ruddy, Bernadette Hoban.

Srs. M. Angela Murphy, James Murphy, Lourdes Boland Perpetua Hynes, Seraphina Hynes, Francis Coultrey, Helen Greene, Dympna Linnane, Loreto Burns, Mary Gallagher, Breege Duggan, Finbarr Martin, Assumpta Heneghan, Consilio Dobbyn, Kathleen Mullarkey, Aidan Kivlehan, Attracta Tighe, Don Bosco Kennedy, Martina Sheridan, Evangelist Hegarty, Celestine O'Loughlen, Camillus O'Loughlen, Aquinas McNulty, Mary Nallon, Ursula Doherty and Kathleen Walsh.

Sisters in the Girls' school who were Principals were – Joseph Garrick, Columba Cotter, James Murphy, Lourdes Boland, Phyllis Surlis, Mary Lou Haverty, Nollaig O'Horo, and Nancy Clarke.

### **The Junior Boys' School**

Boys enrolled in Convent Junior School, were from Junior Infants up to and including Second class. The first teaching Principal was Sr. M. Immaculata Christie, in 1939. Sr. M. Teresa was the next Principal.

In 1987, Sr. Nancy Clarke, ably assisted by Bishop Finnegan, appropriately named the Junior Boys' School – Scoil Íosagáin.

### **Other Sisters who taught there were:**

Srs. M. Teresa Wright, Gabriel Murphy, Camillus O'Loughlen, Agnes Giblin, Aquinas McNulty, Kathleen Mullarkey, Ursula Doherty, Carmel Ruane, Mary Nallon, Aidan Kivlehan, Anne Hegarty, Mary Lou Haverty, Kathleen Walsh, Nollaig O'Horo, Nancy Clarke, Martina Barrett.

### **Principals in the Junior Boys' School**

Srs. M. Teresa Wright, Aquinas McNulty, Kathleen Mullarkey. Nollaig O'Horo, Nancy Clarke, Mary Nallon.

The Junior Boys' school became an Infants Boys' School in 1970 approximately, when Sr. M. Aquinas Principal, allowed the 2nd class go to Scoil Pádraig, the Senior Boys' School.

### **St. Muredach's College**

In 1923 Bishop Naughton requested Reverend Mother Attracta to send two Sisters to take charge of house-keeping in the College, the Post Primary school for boys. Sr. M. Muredach Finnerty went as housekeeper and Sr. M. Carmel Barry as nurse. Sisters continued there until 1988 with Srs. Rita Duggan and Gerard Carroll being the last to minister in that capacity. The spirit and professional help of the Sisters there, were appreciated by priests and students alike.

### **Other Sisters who ministered in St. Muredach's College**

Srs. M. Paschal Kelly and Veronica Carroll