

History of Ballinrobe

Among the many Postulants who entered was a young lady called Anne Waldron. Sr. Anne responded to an appeal from Mother Francis Warde in America. In 1860, accompanied by two other Sisters she left Ballinrobe for New Hampshire. The following year she led the foundation to Philadelphia where she lived for 55 years until her death in 1916.

While the Sisters desired to minister to the sick in the Workhouse Hospital, they had to minimise their services due to the unfriendliness of Colonel Knox. However, this changed later after a special visit by twelve Sisters, who brought food and gifts and amused the residents with music, singing, and games. During the next few years, donations flowed and this enable the Sisters to extend and refurbish the Chapel, and to install central heating in the main areas of the Convent and school.

Before the First World War, many of the prominent people in Ballinrobe sent their daughters to boarding schools. This changed during the war and Canon D'Alton approached the Sisters with a proposal to open a secondary school. In 1918, the "Sacred Heart School" was opened. A Commercial School was opened in 1919.

The centenary of the Congregation was celebrated in 1931 and there was a great upsurge in vocations. Sisters were sent to qualify for teaching in both Primary and Secondary Schools. The generosity of the Sisters was evident in their response to a pressing invitation for Sisters from the Diocese of Alabama. The community was very enthusiastic about it but the Archbishop did not agree. An invitation by the Bishops for Diocesan amalgamation was refused by Dioceses in 1918.

In 1971, a new Primary School was opened on a new site on Mercy land, on Convent Road, in Ballinrobe. Before this, the school had operated in a building attached to the convent. When the move was made to the new school, the staff was comprised solely of Mercy Sisters. However, this was to change gradually until the last Mercy Sister to teach in the school was Sr. Áine O'Connor. As Principal, she played a central role in the amalgamation of the school with that of the Christian Brothers. Subsequent to amalgamating with the Brothers' Primary School, the amalgamated school remained on the Mercy site. The property was transferred to the Diocese.



Retired Primary School teachers at a farewell ceremony: Srs. Áine O'Connor, Vincent Fitzpatrick, Maura Gallagher, Gerard Moran, Columba Warde, Gertrude Flanagan, Alphonsus Fitzpatrick, Xavier

Garavan, and Carmel Healy (all now deceased, except for Maura Gallagher)

Sacred Heart Secondary School amalgamated with the Brothers' School and the Vocational School, a new Community School was built, and opened in 1990.

Ballinrobe Convent closed in 2008. It was sold in 2014 and the proceeds went towards "The Voluntary Contribution to the State". Land was sold in 2018 and that also went towards the Voluntary Contribution.