

## **The History of Education in Downstrands**

The Commissioners for National Education (National Education Board) were established in 1831 under the direction of then Chief Secretary, Edward Smith-Stanley. Many hedge schools were already in existence in Ireland, as well as schools funded by various societies. Communities from 1831 built schools or converted existing buildings before applying to the Board for funding. Most were successful in their formal applications, many of which have survived in the National Archive in Bishop's Street, Dublin. Around 2,500 schools were built throughout the nine northern counties from 1832 to 1870. Ardara Male applied to connect in 1834 but it wasn't until 1837 that Keonaghan became the first National Board School listed in the Salary Books from the southwest Donegal area. It seems that the schools had to be locally established before the Board would countenance connecting them. The local superintendent who ruled on the applications in the early years was Mr. William Savage. The Board's grants covered salaries, the erection of new schools, provision of free stock, musical equipment, maps, clocks, desks and other essentials. The focus was on reading, writing and arithmetic, with Gaelic culture excluded. The buildings were mostly one-roomed affairs, with benches, a single fireplace and a thatched roof. Furthermore, inspectors could now be appointed and model schools were set up for the training of primary teachers. By March 31, 1844 over 18,000 pupils were on the rolls of Donegal schools.

### **Brief history of education in our area:**

A school was established in Maas in the late 1700's by prominent Methodist preacher, Mathew Stewart. A Catholic private school was also established by the three Gallagher families at the back of Ardclougher Hill in the 1800's. (source: Lochlann McGill, 'In Conal's Footsteps', 1992). It was never a national school and lies on the old road from Castlegoland to Maas near Seal Bay/Lochán Buí.

Hedge schools existed in Narin in 1826 open to both Catholics and Protestants.

1. The Old Church, Narin (beside the beach, no remains in 2008). Teacher 1826: John Moore, Protestant; £17 a year; no schoolhouse; 42 pupils, 34 Catholic; parish school; Col. Robertson's Committee; Scriptures read.
2. Beagh; built by locals in early 1800's who were later fined £1 for cutting thatch at 'Muirbheach' (at the nearby beach) without permission; it remains in good condition and is continually thatched. Teacher 1826: Hugh Gallagher, Catholic, 1s8d to 2s1d a quarter; a 'wretched barn'; 25 pupils, 19 Catholic; not connected with any society; Scriptures read. The old thatched schoolhouse in Beagh still stands close to the newer schoolhouse opened in 1894 and closing in 1969. The latter is now a private residence, while the barn is maintained in good condition.
3. Burdeck (Loughfad): Teacher: Thomas Boyle; The room is described as "wretched" and 42 children are enrolled.

Narin hedge school was established in the ruins of the Old Church beside the beach in Narin. It started as a Church of Ireland school for boys only. In 1826, however, 34 of the 42 pupils were Catholic. It was funded by the Robertson Fund, money left in a will by a wealthy man called Col. Robertson who died around 1795. He wanted poor children in the diocese of Raphoe to get an education. A new school was built in 1828. By the mid 1800's, both boys and girls were attending.

### **Downstrands National Schools 1840-1876**

*Beagh (alt. Beigha, Beyha) 4389*

Beagh started off as a hedge school built around 1784 by the local people. On 31/12/1856, its master, Patrick McGlinn was removed from his post after a conviction for being a member of the Ribbonmen, an illegal agrarian society.[\[4\]](#)

Teachers:

Charles McCoale 1845; James Fury 1846; Andrew Furey (left for Glenties) 1846-52; Patrick McGlinn (came from Letterbrick N.S.) 1853-57; Bernard McNelis 1857; John Brogan (from Drumboghill, left for Brackey) 1857-60; Daniel Sweeney (from Brackey) 1860-

Monitors:

Catherine Sweeney 1874- Managers:

Rev. Daniel O'Donnell 1845; Rev. Edward Glackin 1846-47; Rev. J.D. McGarvey 1847-66; Rev. Charles O'Donnell 1867-

*Clooney Female 4583*

Connection 1845. Contact address: Ardara.

The school was sponsored by the London Ladies' Hibernian Society and its roll number was 4583. Thomas Conolly owned the school-house. The school was managed by the Church of Ireland at first and later was under the joint manager-ship of the local Catholic and Protestant clergymen. The school started with around 20 pupils daily and by 1877, there were 30 pupils coming to school every day. It was replaced by Clogher N.S. in 1889. We do not have any roll-books for Clooney. It was later extended and used as a post office. The first named teacher was Jane Moore in the 1830's. The Society donated £8 to the school, with more money added if the pupils did well in exams. Only girls attended at first. The school was managed by the Church of Ireland initially and later was under the joint manager-ship of the local Catholic and Protestant clergymen. Isabella McHugh was 24 years old when the school was connected and had been taught the rudiments of teaching at Cloghan Female. Saturday was set aside for religious instruction.

Teachers:

Isabella McHugh 1845-51; Anne McHugh 1851; Ellen McHugh 1851-57 (left for Donegal Workhouse school); Bridget McHugh 1857-66; Mary McHugh 1859-60 & 1866- Monitors:

Anne McGeoghegan 1866 Managers:

Rev. Knox Barrett & Rev. E. Glackin 1845-47; Rev. Knox Barrett & Rev. J.D. McGarvey 1847-64; Rev. M.R. Clarke & Rev. J.D. McGarvey 1865-66; Rev. M.R. Clarke & Rev. Ch. O'Donnell 1867-1872; Rev. McKinney & Rev. Ch. O'Donnell 1873-74; Rev. Joseph Crawford & Rev. Ch. O'Donnell 1875-

*Drumboghill (alt. Drumboeighill)2877 Connection*

1844. Contact address: Ardara.

A hedge school was listed in 'Mullaveay' in 1835 with Michael Gallagher the Master. The land was owned by the Marquis of Conyngham. Less money was spent by the Board on Drumboghill N.S. than nearly any other school in the county in 1874. Little remains of Drumboghill school today.

Teachers:

James Munday 1844-46 to unknown date; Patrick McLoughlin c.1849-52; Francis Moloney 1852; John Brogan 1852-57 (was at Lergonsearagh until 1848); Bernard McNelis 1857-58; Thomas Manelis 1858-63 (came from Cashel, Carrick); Patrick Manelis 1863-67 (left for Cronaghbois); Mary Manelis 1867- Monitors:

None

Managers:

Rev. Daniel O'Donnell 1844-45; Rev. Edward Glackin 1846-47; Rev. J.D. McGarvey 1847-66; Rev. Charles O'Donnell 1867-

Kilclooney 2659 & 8078 from 1861 (alt. Loughfad, Kilcloney & Killilooney) Connection 1840. Contact address: Ardara; An Anthony Doherty (aged 40, 'considered the best in this parish') was named as teacher on the original application form. 'Killilooney N.S.' opened in mid-1840 with 64 boys and 28 girls on the roll. The landowner was the Marquis of Conyngham. The school opened with a Sligo man, Mr. McCoale, the teacher. A new school costing £207 was opened on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 1861 with a new roll number, 8078. Its lease was for 31 years or three lives, namely Queen Victoria, Prince of Wales and Prince Albert. It expired on the death of King Edward in 1912. A grant for a work-mistress was sanctioned from 1863 to 1867.

Teachers:

William McCole 1840- Monitors:

Hugh Kennedy 1856-57; Francis Kennedy 1858-59; John McCoale 1860-64; Anne Manelis (workmistress) 1863-67; Catherine McCoale 1867-72; Brigid McCoale 1872-76;

Managers:

Rev. Daniel O'Donnell 1840-45; Rev. Edward Glackin 1846-47; Rev. J.D. McGarvey 1847-66; Rev. C. O'Donnell 1867-

*Maws 3248*

Connection 1841. Contact address: Glenties; In 1820, Mr. E. Maxwell applied for help to build a school in Maws but was turned down. The first mention of a school there (other than the Methodist school) was in 1841. Its roll number was 3248. The school joined up with the Board of Education in late 1841. It had 44 pupils in 1842, 58 in 1843 and 44 in 1844. A single teacher provided the education and he/she was paid £8 a year in 1844. Maws school was mysteriously closed by the Manager in late 1844 and we don't know why. The field on the Maas side of the Hanlon house with the road-signs for Glenties and Dungloe was always called the School House Park but this may be related to the nearby Methodist school-house. The two may indeed be the same school.

Teachers:

James Millar, 1841-44 Monitors:

None Managers:

Rev. Knox Barrett, 1841-1844

**Schools from 1876 to the present**

*Clogher N.S.*

Clogher N.S. was built to replace Clooney N.S. and it opened in 1889 with a roll number of 13296. It was designed in 1888 as a 75 pupil school, for 40 boys and 35 girls. We still have the names of all the pupils who attended from the entrance books, but not those of all the teachers. Pupils were housed in John Peter McHugh's shed in 1967 when the school was being repaired. The school amalgamated with Dallán Forgaill in 1987 when St. Conal's N.S. was opened.

*Kilclooney N.S.*

Kilclooney ("Killilooney") N.S. as can be seen from the above opened in mid-1840 with 64 boys and 28 girls on the roll. The first roll number was 2659. The school was a thatched one at the site of the old post office. In 1861 another building for 60 pupils opened costing £226, with the locals contributing £75. Its new number was 8078. This was called the 'Black School' on account of its dark walls. Another new building was built

in 1933 and it was re-named as Dallan Forgaill. The roll number was changed again to 16963. We still have most of the roll-books. In the mid-eighties, there were too many pupils and some were taught in Anthony Hanlon's house. The school amalgamated with Beagh N.S. in 1969 and closed along with Clogher N.S. in 1987 when St. Conal's N.S. was built.

#### *Drumboghill N.S.*

A hedge school was listed in Mullaveay in 1835 with Michael Gallagher the Master. The land was owned by the Marquis of Conyngham. The teacher had 23 pupils, 17 boys and 6 girls. Of them, 17 came to school most days. They studied reading, writing and arithmetic. Drumboghill N.S. started in the 1840's. Its roll number was **2877** and its patron was Rev. J.D. McGarvey and the teacher was P. McLoughlin. By the 1870's, over 30 children were coming to school every day. The school was closed in July 1890 and the pupils went to the new school at Kiltorish. All that's left of the school is a doorway in a roadside wall near Kiltorish Hall. We do not have any roll-books for this school.

#### *Narin N.S.*

The school was a hedge school in the ruins of the Old Church beside the beach in Narin. It started as a Church of Ireland school for boys only. In 1826, however, 34 of the 42 pupils were Catholic. It was funded by the Robertson Fund, money left in a will by a man called Col. Robertson who died around 1795. He wanted poor children in the diocese of Raphoe to get an education. A new school was built in 1828. By the mid 1800's, both boys and girls were attending. Its first roll number was 11929 and its later one was 13053. The Rev. E. Sweeney allowed it to become a National School in 1879. It was one of only four Robertson Schools that an inspector was happy with out of the 26 in all of Co. Donegal in 1856! It ended its days as a National School in 1941 and its pupils transferred to Lettermacaward and Clogher. The roll-books from 1880 to 1900 can be viewed at: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com>

#### *Beagh N.S.*

Beagh started off as a hedge school built in 1784 or 1815 (depending on the source) by the local people. They were later fined £1 for cutting thatch on the Muirbheach without permission. Hugh Gallagher was a Catholic and worked in a 'wretched barn'. He had 25 pupils, 19 of whom were Catholic. The land was owned by the Marquis of Conyngham. It became a National School in 1845 with 90 pupils and one teacher who earned £8 a year. Its Manager was Rev. J.D. McGarvey and the roll number was 4389. In 1889, Rev. B. Kelly, P.P. asked for and received a grant for a new school costing £259 2s 8d. Its roll number was 14001. Beagh amalgamated with Dallan Forgaill in 1969. Both barn and school still stand today. They are owned by the Gallagher and Sweeney families.

With the demise of the fishing industry in Rosbeg, emigration and depopulation increased, with knock-on effects on education in the area. In 1969, Beagh N.S. (a oneteacher school) was amalgamated with Scoil Naisiúnta Dhallán Forgaill (Kilclooney). In 1973, Kitoorish N.S. Rosbeg (also a one-teacher school) was amalgamated with Clogher N.S.

#### **History:**

The decision to build a new school amalgamating Clogher and Dallan Forghaill was taken in 1967 and a site was bought on the Summy Road in 1977 by Fr. Colton, C.C.

The local community had to fund-raise to help build the school and finally, in October

1985, work was begun by the late Frank Conaghan of Glenties. Pauric McLoughlin of Sligo was the architect. The foundations were laid in the spring of 1986 and the building was finished by Easter 1987. Fund-raising continued for several years to help pay the necessary local contribution. Its final cost was £368,279 which was an over-run on the initial estimate of £330,000. The local community had to fund 10% of this sum, with this contribution completed in October 1995.

The new school was blessed by Fr. John Doherty on September 1st, 1987. There were 136 pupils and five teachers that year. Kathleen O'Donnell was the first principal, succeeded over the years by Mary O'Brien, Briege Naughton and Tom Plunkett.

A shelter costing £10,223 was built in 1995 using FÁS workers and work on converting the two fields in front of the school to football pitches began the same year. The current school uniform was introduced in 1989 to general approval, with the crest following in 2007.

The school has enjoyed much extra-curricular success over the years. It reached the Pioneer All-Ireland Quiz finals of 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2019, finishing in the top five on four occasions. The pinnacle of the school's quiz success came in 2002 when it reached three All-Ireland finals sponsored by Cadbury, the Credit Union and the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association respectively.

In 2003, the school sponsored Katlin Radics, a Special Olympian from Hungary and she performed gymnastics for the children in the hall.

The President, Mary McAleese landed by helicopter on the school grounds on her way to opening the Dolmen Centre in April 2004. She wrote an inscription in the Visitors' Book.

The school has won county titles in Gaelic football in 2003 (seven-a-side girls) and 2006 (Roinn 3 boys) and the girls won Ribena soccer titles in 2004 and 2005. The lads won the Ribena soccer county title in 2006.

### **General:**

The school is situated in a Rural DEIS area, adjacent to the villages of Narin and Portnoo. It was opened on September 1st, 1987. The catchment area of the school extends from Rosbeg (West) to Loughfad (East), and from Clooney (North) to the Owenea River and beyond in the South. The school is served by a bus from Rosbeg, Narin and Portnoo and a larger bus which serves the areas of Clooney, Castlegoland, Loughfad, Kilclooney, Kilclooneymore, Sandfield, Beagh, Tullycleave and Carn. The majority of pupils travel to school by bus.

On August 31, 2022, there were 65 pupils on roll, taught by three classroom teachers, two special education teachers and two special needs assistants. Also employed by the school are a part-time secretary, two cleaners and a gardener. The Manager and Chairperson of the Board of Management is Fr. Philip Daly, C.C.

In addition to the regular curriculum, the school gets involved in other activities to stimulate the children. Recorder lessons in the school were a regular part of the curriculum from 1994 to 2018. Evan McGarrigle currently teaches tin whistle to the students on a weekly basis. A time capsule was buried by Mags Coughlan's senior class in 1998, to be opened in 2048. The children participated in the Comenius European

Project from 1997 to 1999 and the school bought its first computer in 1997. Céilí dancing instruction from Pat Finnerty ran for a decade from 2000, while artistes who have performed for the children include the Strabane Brass Band, the University of Ulster Choir, Parky the Magician, and the West Midlands Theatre. Sports coaches have also enhanced the children's school experience in aerobics, rugby, golf, basketball hurling, RINKA and Gaelic football. The school has taken part in the Discover Primary Science and Maths initiative since 2013 and was awarded its first Green Flag in 2015, its second in 2017 and its third in 2019. Thirty Google Chromebooks have also been acquired by the school, along with 26 iPads.

Upgrades to the facility in the past twenty years include the re-development of existing football pitches and associated yard improvements in 2007/8, insulation of attics and walls in 2011, replacement of all wooden windows with PVC double-glazing in 2019, refurbishment of the kitchen in 2020, an exterior repainting in 2021, and drainage works, complete new heating system, and the purchase of a storage container in 2022.

### **Staff:**

Mrs. Kathleen O'Donnell was appointed Principal of the new school in 1987, while Mrs. Nuala Harkin served as Vice-Principal. The school was never officially opened, though it was blessed by its first Manager, Fr. John Doherty. Its principals since are as follows: Mrs. Kathleen O'Donnell (Sept. 1987 to Dec. 1994), Mrs. Mary O'Brien (Jan. 1995 to Oct. 1995), Mrs. Geraldine Cannon (Acting Principal Oct. 1995 to Mar. 1996), Mrs. Briege Naughton (Apr. 1996 to Aug. 2007) and Mr. Tom Plunkett (Sept. 2007 to the present).

The members of staff of the new school were as follows:

From Dallán Forgaill	Mrs. Kathleen O'Donnell (Principal) Mrs. Geraldine Cannon (substituted for by Ms. Aoife Hayden) Ms. Ailis Boyle
From Clogher	Mrs. Nuala Harkin (Principal) Mrs. Briege Naughton

The current staff consists of:

<i>Mary McLoone</i>	Deputy Principal, Infant Classes & 1 <sup>st</sup> Class
<i>Mags Lough</i>	Special Post of Responsibility & Special Education Teacher
<i>Gina O'Donnell</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> classes
<i>Tom Plunkett</i>	Principal, 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Classes
<i>Kathy Walsh</i>	Special Education Teacher
<i>Martina McGinley</i>	Special Needs Assistant
<i>Linda McGill</i>	Special Needs Assistant
<i>Maria Boyle</i>	School Secretary
<i>Catrina McFeeters</i>	School Cleaner
<i>Sunee McCole</i>	Relief School Cleaner

The current Board of Management consists of:

<i>Fr. Philip Daly C.C. (Chairperson)</i>	Bishop's Nominee
<i>Mary McCarthy (Treasurer)</i>	Bishop's Nominee
<i>Tom Plunkett (Secretary)</i>	Principal
<i>Bernie Gallagher</i>	Parent Nominee
<i>Vinny McConnell</i>	Parent Nominee

*Mags Lough*  
*Stella Ryan*  
*Jim Boyle*

Teacher Nominee  
Community Nominee  
Community Nominee