

Colaisde Muinteoireachta Na Mumhan

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Thanks to Breda Lucey

COLAISDE MUINTEOIREACHTA NA MUMHAN

Munster College of Irish

1904 - 1914

Around the beginning of the present century there was considerable controversy among educationalists on the Continent regarding the teaching of languages. The traditional method was based on Latin grammar and classical texts. But, Latin was "a dead language"; its forms and literature fixed. The living languages were changing and developing. The idea arose that these should be taught, not on the old grammatical method, with out-of-date texts, but as spoken languages and with texts of modern literature. The idea grew. Two systems of "Direct Method" became known - the Berlitz and Gouin systems. The science of Phonology, or phonetics, was studied and developed to ensure accurate pronunciation and intonation. In England, there were "Summer Schools", in which French, German and other languages were taught on the new methods. Berlitz schools were established in London.

Some members of the Gaelic League in London were attracted by the new methods of language teaching. The thought occurred that these methods could be applied to the teaching of Irish. Someone suggested the formation of a "Summer School" in a Gaeltacht district, where students of the language could meet native Irish speakers, and where classes could be held and taught on the "Direct Method" applicable to a living language. The London Gaelic League, whose Secretary at the time was Liam P. O Riain, offered to contribute financially to the setting up of such a "Summer School".

At the Comhdhail held in connection with Feis Na Mumhan - the fourth Feis - in the Assembly Rooms, Cork, August 26th, 1903, the matter was brought forward. It was considered and discussed; enthusiastically supported by Sean O Caoimh (Shan O Cuiv of later years, father of the present Attorney-General). Several Gaeltacht areas were suggested, among them Guagan Barra and Beal-Atha-n-ghaorthaigh. Tadg O Scanail, though himself a native of Bailemhuirn parish, strongly urged the claim of Ballingeary. He, with Diarmuid O Tuathaigh, was teaching in the Boy's School in the village at the time. A small organising Committee was appointed to make arrangements for the opening of a School, or College, in the summer of 1904.

The Committee considered the suitability of the places that had been suggested. Ant Athair Risteard O Dalaigh, D.D., D.Ph. had been teaching a class, of his own organising, in Guagan Barra. Accommodation there, however, was regarded as inadequate for any considerable number of students, as well as being remote from groups of Irish-speaking families. So, Beal-Atha-n-ghaorthaigh was finally decided on.

On New Year's Day, 1904, I had a note from Father Augustine, O.S.F.C., (Ar dheis De go raibh a anam), asking me to call on him. He was President of the Cork branch of the Gaelic League at the time of which I was Co-Secretary with George Shorten, one of the Shorten family of Ballingeary, and author of a little song "An Capaillin Ban". In the Capuchin Friary, Father Matthew Quay, Cork, Father Augustine and myself spent several hours discussing matters connected with the Gaelic League and the language movement. He explained his ideas regarding Colaisde na Mumhan. It was to be more than a "Summer School" for teaching the language. It was to be a school for training teachers of Irish in the best methods of language teaching. It was to be more than a localised class for casual students on holidays. It was to be Colaisde Muinteoireachta na Mumhan: - The Munster Training College of Irish. He said the organising Committee needed a Secretary and appealed to me to undertake the work, waving aside my protestations of having too many other matters to attend to. Who could refuse Ant Athair Auguistin? His earnestness, his enthusiasm, his determination were irresistible. I had to accept, even if only provisionally, and thus began a connection with Colaisde na Mumhan and Ballingeary that lasted for thirty two years.

The first formal meeting of the Committee was held on April, 4th, 1904, in "Grianan na nGaedheal" Patrick Street, Cork. Padraig O Seaghdha presided. The others present were - Father Augustine, Father Sean O Conaill, Michael Murphy, Tadhg O Scanail and myself. Members of the Committee unable to attend on that day were - Rev. Patrick Hurley, Rev. Donnchadh O Driscoll and Sean O Caoimh.

Padraig O Seaghdha Oide Sgoile, Glengariff, was known as "Gruagach an Tobair, or "The Gruagach". He had written some racy stories and sketches on country life, under his pen-name, in an easy, idiomatic style. He was, in fact, a master of idioms and had a deep knowledge of Irish literature. A pleasing and attractive character was "the Gruagach".

Ant Athair Sean O Conaill was curate at Caolcoil in the parish of Bantry; a native speaker of Irish and steady worker for its advancement: quiet and unassuming.

Michael Murphy, Solicitor, who acted as Treasurer of the Committee, was a member of the Cork branch of the Gaelic League. He was keenly interested in Irish place-names.

Father Hurley was Parish Priest of Ibhlaoghair, the parish in which Ballingeary is situated. It is also known as Inchigeela parish. Father O Driscoll was curate in the same parish and afterwards became Parish Priest of Inniskeane.

Father Hurley had been a member of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, and had contributed notes on the history of the Diocese of Cork to the first numbers of the Society's Journal. It was also due to him that the "Life" of Saint Finbarr was published in the

same Journal (1893). He was responsible for the erection of the Oratory on the island in Guagan Barra Lake. A hospitable man, he was ever ready to entertain noted visitors to the locality. This was not appreciated by some of his parishoners when the visitors were high in the councils of the Dublin Castle Government! One such visitor was Sir Horace Plunkett, who passed through Ballingeary while the Colaisde was in operation.

Sean O Caoimh I had known since 1899, as a member of the Cork Gaelic League and as the moving spirit in the founding of the Cork Young Ireland Society. At that time he was on the reporting staff of the "Cork Examiner".

"Ni chothuighean na briarthra na braithre". The inevitable problem of money arose. Funds had to be obtained. It is amusing and interesting to record that the amount of money the Treasurer had in hand on that day was £8. 15s! The value of money has changed, but even then, one hundred and thirty five shillings was not a princely sum on which to run a College; even a "Summer College". It was decided to appeal to priests, national school teachers and well-known sympathisers of the language movement. The response to the appeal was not a startling one. But, amongst the unsolicited subscriptions was one from a then unknown sympathiser, Roger Casement. He wrote me from Ballycastle, Co Antrim, commending the project, which he had read of in some of the "Irish Ireland" papers. He was then at home on leave from the British Consular Service. A grant was forthcoming from the Coiste Gnotha of the Gaelic League, the mover in that regard being Rev. Father Murphy, of Enniscorthy, who had expressed interest in the project of the College, and desired to get trained teachers of Irish in Loch Garman. London Gaelic League also contributed.

The classes of students visualised as attending at the courses were - "Bona fide Gaelic League teachers; teachers in primary and secondary schools, and individuals who desired to become teachers". There had been some native speakers from Gaeltacht districts who had gone forth as teachers of the language but had had no training in teaching methods. A condition was laid down that candidates for admittance to the Colaisde should have a fair literary and conversational knowledge of Irish and, in the case of Gaelic League teachers, a fair general education.

At the next meeting, which was held in Ballingeary, Father Augustine submitted a draft curriculum, to which he had given much thought and on which he had consulted others: Professors and teachers. He was Rector of Rochestown Capuchin College at the time. It was as follows: - Linguistic - (a) Phonetics; (b) Grammar and Prose Composition; (c) Poetry; (d) Reading; (e) Recitation and Story-telling. Methods of Teaching - (a) Lectures on Methods; (b) Demonstration of the Method; (c) Practice on the Method. History of (Irish) literature; Irish History in general; Vocal music. Provision was also made for Lectures on miscellaneous subjects, for Irish dancing, for games and amusements. Such was the basis

of the courses. It was quite an ambitious programme at the time. The needs of teachers preparing for the National Education Board's certificates and of students in Senior grades in Intermediate schools were also to be provided for. The courses were to be in operation for the months of July and August.

Diarmuid O Foghludha was appointed Head Master (Ard Ollamh); and Rev. Dr. O Daly, Lecturer in Phonetics. Osborn Bergin was to be asked to lecture on the history of Irish literature and Liam. F. O'Riain on general Irish history. Tadhg O Seanaill was to give a series of lessons for National Teachers on the teaching of school subjects through the medium of Irish: the bi-lingual school programme of the time. There was a Bi-lingual Certificate to be obtained under the rules of the National Board of Education.

Diarmuid O Foghludha had a pen-name, by which he was well-known - "Feargus Fínnbheil". He had written articles and subsequently published a booklet "An MacLeighinn", on methods of teaching Irish. If I recollect aright, he was a County Limerick man. At this period he was a Customs Official, stationed in Belfast. Previously, I think, he had been in London and was a member of the Gaelic League there.

Dr. O Daly, known to the older, Irish-speaking people of Ballingeary as "Father Daly" and to students of the College as "An Dochtuir", I had met in 1902. One night, in October of that year, we had a reading of our Manuscript Journal at the Cork Celtic Literary Society. I had invited some members of Cork Gaelic League to be present. Seoirse Shorten came, bringing with him an intellectual looking young priest, having smooth, pleasing features, who appeared to be rather shy and diffident. It was "An Dochtuir". I asked him to speak in Irish. He spoke shortly. To my ear, though I was no judge, his "blas" and pronunciation were faultless. They were of the same quality as of native speakers I had listened to. I learned afterwards that, some six months previously, he had come to London; was born in Australia; had never known anything of the Irish language, though his people hailed from near Cumanfhiaidh, till he met some members of the Gaelic League in London. He had studied in Rome and had some acquaintance with a dozen languages. His method of learning them was through phonetics. He had mastered the art and science of phonology.

Osborn Bergin, "An tainhirgineach", did not lecture in the College on the year of its opening, but was a lecturer in other years following and was a frequent visitor to Ballingeary. His knowledge of Old Irish was very deep. Unlike other eminent scholars of the older forms, he maintained that a knowledge of modern Irish was necessary to understand the older language. Though he could be critical, he had a strong, quiet sense of humour. I remember one very wet day in the dining-room at

Sean ni Luasaigh's, "Tig na mBan", his being seated on the floor, in a corner, softly playing a violin and humming an air to himself. When he disengaged himself, I handed him a book that some young lady student had left on the table, and asked him to translate it into Irish. It was "The Viper of Milan": He enjoyed the joke. Bergin gave us the two very popular songs, "Maidin i mBearsa" and "Sìol Ho!". There seemed something prophetic in the line of the latter - "Scaipidh an sìol o mhaidin go h-oidhche, Agus tiocfhaidh an toradh in Éirinn, la".

The classes were held in the Parochial Hall, near "the chapel", given willingly for the purpose by Father Hurley. Other classes for domestic economy subjects, had been held there previously, under the auspices of the Co. Cork Technical Instruction Committee. From that Committee Father Hurley received a rental, which he handed over to the College Fund. Subsequently, the Hall was enlarged and the name, Colaisde Muinteoiríochta na Mumhan, fashioned over the doorway. On warm, sunny days, classes were held in the open, in the "Chapel Yard", fe scath na gearran; the forms in "the Chapel" being utilised to provide seating accommodation.

The courses began on the fourth of July (1904). It was a simple opening.

The first two names on the College register of students were An tAthair Augustin and An tAthair Gearoid Ua Nuallain, An tAthair Gearoid had come from Belfast, knowing little or no "Munster Irish". How his studies developed is well-known. He had a long connection with Colaisde na Mumhan and his interest in it never wavered. He became its Ard Ollamh. He has told his own story in "Beatha Dhuine a Thoil".

Amongst other names that appear on the records for that opening year were Bibhlin ni Chroinin, Maire ni Mhathghamhna, Sean O Cuill, Diarmuid O Laoghaire, Aine Ni Baghallaigh, Seamus O h-Ochaidh (Fear Mor), Tadhg O Seaghdha (Tadhg Saor), Michael O Foghludha, Concubhar O Muirneachain, Concubhar O h-Argain. These achieved distinction as successful teachers of the language and in other ways.

Inspired by the example of Colaisde na Mumhan, "An Fear Mor" got Colaisde na Rinne established, which has had a long and successful career. Thousands of the children of Kilkenny must know and revere the work of Bibhlin Ni Chroinin, where she has spent a lifetime, teaching them. Of her, more can be related. Sean O Cuill for a time taught in Co. Wexford; returned to Cork City, where, in 1914, he was on the Executive Committee of the Irish Volunteers. He was also a member of the Committee of the Colaisde for many years. He obtained his degree of M.A. and was the author of "Cead Fios an Barraigh", which showed him as an original writer and thinker. Diarmuid O

Laoghaire taught in Rathcaola, Co. Limerick, and for several years was Assistant Professor of Method in Colaisde na Mumhan. He was a poet and a writer, a storyteller and a wit. His letters to me, giving his "observations" on the progress of students in the College were always a delight, because of his command of Irish idioms, and his sharp diagnosis of individuals. He came from Lioscarrigan, the homeland of An tathair Peadar, to whom he was related. He was very proud of a letter he received from An tathair Peadar. It was to the effect that: next to himself, Diarmuid was the best writer of Muscraí Irish then living! Conchubhar O Muimhneachain, a native of Ballingearry, taught for many years in St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny. He collected and had published the poems of an ancestor: Seamus Mor O Muimhneachain. He successfully translated many Anglo-Irish stories. I remember him telling me he found the translation of James Murphy's stories: "The Forge of Clohogue" or some other: most difficult, though they dealt with country scenes and country people. Conchubhar was a delightful character. "Tadg Saor" got his leas-ainm from having performed the principal part in a little Irish play of that name in St. Mary's Hall, Cork, on St. Patrick's Day, 1902: the first Irish play ever presented in Cork. Aine Ni Raghallaigh, of Macroom, was a sweet singer of Irish songs of pure traditional style. In 1905, she was appointed as Teacher of Singing in the College. In later years, Marcella Hurley, National Teacher at Coomhola, became teacher of the Singing Class and was a worthy successor to Aine Ni Raghallaigh. One could not but be moved to the depths at her singing of "Sean O Duibhir a' Gleanna". Later still, Maire Ni Chuill, sister to Sean O Cuill, was the teacher, a native speaker and traditional singer, she made Maire Bhuidhe's "Cath Ceimánfaidh" particularly her own; expressing the pathos and the fierce sentiments of that song in an inimitable style. Maire Ni Bhathghabhna was Mary MacMahon of Cork City. She was a Master of Arts and Professor in St. Mary's Training College, Belfast. In later years, she taught latin through the medium of Irish in Colaisde na Mumhan. Called to a religious vocation, on the counsel of Father Augustine, she entered the Poor Clares and died as Mother-Abbess of the community in Cork City.

The number of students enrolled in the Colaisde on this first year of its career was sixty two, which was considered at the time very satisfactory and gave promise for the future. There were two sessions: at the end of each session, examinations were held and certificates awarded. It was laid down as a principle that certificates were not to be awarded merely as a result of the examination, but also as a result of the professors' observations and the progress made by the student during the course.

Many of the students in 1904 and succeeding years were "muinteoirí taisdil" - travelling teachers of Irish. A number were from Ibhlaoghaire itself and from Bailemhuirne, who had gone forth to

various parts of the country. They taught Gaelic League classes and, in some cases, as "Extern Teachers" of Irish in National Schools. The conditions were not easy or comfortable for them at the time. They did heroic work for the spread of the language and the advancement of the movement.

At the end of the August session, a number of the students met and expressed approval of the courses in the following terms: "Go bhuilimid lan tsasta leis an gcuma'n a bhuil obair na Colaisde ag dul ar aghaidh agus go n-iarrimid ar an gComhaltas leanamhaint air i gcomhair na hathbhliadna". The College was still in the experimental stage. There was doubt of its continuance. This resolution was an encouragement to the Committee to continue. The Committee itself was only provisional.

Feis na Mumhan was held in Killarney that year (1904). A report was made to the Comhdhail. The Committee were re-appointed and urged to continue their work. It still seemed to be a tentative effort.

It was difficult to convince the people of Ballingeary that the College would be permanent; difficult, therefore, to get them to enlarge and improve their houses for the accommodation of students. Their attitude was understandable, no one could say whether the College would progress or not. There were rumours also that classes may be held elsewhere, in other Irish-speaking districts of Munster.

The first that moved was Bean Ní Lusaigh of the residence that came to be called "Tig na mban". Her husband, Michael O Luasaigh, was a skilled craftsman. He had a fine knowledge of Irish, sharp and witty sayings; but was a very silent man in the presence of strangers. Mrs. Lucey herself was a generous and hospitable woman and spared no effort to make her guests comfortable. There was a learned discussion in her diningroom, for here the priest-students who came to the College dined: Jesuits, Vincentians, Professors in Diocesan Colleges and others. I remember one such discussion on "Cad is firinne ann? What is Truth?".

In time, others, and some at a sacrifice, improved and extended their residences. There were "Tig an bhfear", "Tig na sagart", "Tig na mbuachaillí", "Tig an droichid", "The Chalk Line" (Teach Laighean!); and, later, "Ard na Laoi". Two miles to the north, "The Lodge", most pleasantly situated, and west, on the road to Ceimánfhiaigh and Guagan, "Tuirindubh", the townland name which became identified with the ever-open, welcoming house of Muintir Tuama. The latter was a "College", and a village in itself during the summer season. The smell of the good turf fire on the open hearth, the home-made bread, the heather-honey, the fresh lettuce, are, I am sure, still remembered by many a visitor to "Tuirindubh".

The kindness, the courtesy and the care for students and visitors displayed by the people of Ballingeary were in the very best traditions of Irish hospitality. The older people soon came to understand the difficulties of students of the language and, with patience and gentleness, afforded them help in their studies. The older Irish speakers had many pithy sayings, many an adage, many a fable, many a rann with hidden meaning, from which a student could learn some of the most beautiful expressions and turns of the language.

Out of many, I hear recall a few personal reminiscences. On several occasions, on sunny afternoons, cycling from Macroom, I would find Ben Shorten, of Curraithe, seated on a grassy bank at the roadside, about half a mile from the village. "De bheathasa a Liam" was the first salutation. Then "Conas a thainis? An fada a ghgana tu?" The questions and answers led naturally to a general conversation easy and pleasant.

There was Bean Uí Choitir, who, when I entered her house, would say "Na suidhfa a Liam?" - a courteous invitation: not "suidh síos", which may be said to a naughty child. It taught me a lesson in the subtleties of language.

There was Bean Uí Mhongain, mother of Most Rev. Dr. Tadhg Manning of Los Angeles: always pleasant, always helpful, careful, bustling. Her enterprise got "Ard na Laoi" erected. Gura fada buan i.

There was "Kit"; Bean Uí Shiothain, of "Tig a'droichid", whose humour was infectious and whose eyes sparkled one day when a student referred to "bainne na ngadhar" instead of "bainne na ngabhar"! Her worthy son, Sean, has inherited her quality of quiet humour and his bean a' tighe, Nora, possesses the same amiable disposition. From Sean I learned a "rann" about the poet who advised a confrere, the day after a drinking bout, to partake of the tail of "Cu Phinn"! ("Bran-dighe!").

Sean O Tuama, of Tuirín, was one of nature's gentlemen. I could never imagine him uttering a harsh word. He was the soul of kindness; his Irish speech smooth and pleasant. Bean Ní Thuama, quick, active, hardworking, was hospitality personified. The family were all Irish speakers from childhood. There were stories here of "Cath Ceimanghiaigh": a conflict of the Tithe War in the Pass, of which Maire Bhuidhe sang. A story, too, of a "spirit funeral" that crossed the hills from Achros to Guagan. In Tuirindubh I saw, for the first time, "creachoilí giuise", pine wood torches. The wood was from trees that had been found deep in the bogs, under many layers of turf.

The first time I called to "the Lodge", on a quest for accommodation for students, Bean Ní Chroinín, bean a' tighe was apologetic, as

the house was not in the order she would have it. To me, it seemed admirable, as there was good accommodation, a large room that could serve as a dormitory, and the situation ideal. Showing me over the house, which was only part of the residence, she said: "Nil aon chrob air; nil aon chrob air". The place had been a shooting lodge and there was a farmhouse attached. Fear a'tighe, Seamus O Croinin, was a splendid type of man, easy spoken, quiet, polite. The whole family, indeed, had the same easy, gentle manners.

Many persons of note were to spend a time at "the Lodge" afterwards, including Terence Mac Swiney, Professor Domhnal O Corcora and Sean O Coindealbhain. The "Hidden Ireland" of O Corcora was, I imagine, largely inspired by the traditions of Ballingeary and his development as author, dramatist, artist, influenced by those surroundings. Sean O Coindealbhain, as member and President of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society has done notable work in historical research. One memory of Traolach Mac Suibhne I may here record: a ramble over the hills from "the Lodge" to Tuirindubh. My wife accompanied us. We went across the hills by Ceim-cora-bhuaille, passed near the cromleach, over soft, turfy land, through furze and briars, through bracken and heather, over crags and rocks. It was a quiet calm evening; an evening for meditation and contemplation. For a time we were wrapped in silent admiration of the beauty of the hills, and the purple glow over the mountains. Friendship seemed deepened in such surroundings. Traolach and myself had been friends and associates since boyhood. The stress and the strain, the glory and the tragedy of events to come were hidden in the womb of the future. The memory of that quiet evening in the hills may have come to mind when I knelt by his deathbed in Brixton Prison.

Not far from the Lodge was the cottage of Siobhan Bean Ui Cheilleachain ("Siobhan a'tSagairt"), a famous bean-sheanachaidhe, having an amazing store of songs, poems, stories, proverbs, rhyming riddles. She used illustrate some obscure sayings and difficult passages by actions. On one occasion, I recollect, she illustrated thus the line, "go ceafrach, buacach, beannach" by holding aloft a poker in her hand, and assuming a martial attitude. She was also skilled in home crafts, and took pride in her variegated-patterned knitted quilts. Once I made arrangements for a Dublin University graduate to stay in her cottage. His bed was of the tester variety, with curtains drawn around it. For his comfort, Siobhan had laid in it two feather ticks, two or three heavy blankets, and one of her intricately-worked heavy quilts. I learned from him afterwards that he put one of the ticks on the floor, a blanket over him and slept soundly thus.

Risteard O Maolcatha used to stay in Siobhan's cottage and recorded, I believe, many of her pithy sayings, rhymes and stories. Perhaps some day, when he casts off the burden of political life, he will give for publication his impressions of his days in Beal-Atha 'n ghaorthaigh.

Ballingeary has prospered since the Colaisde was established there, and is now a different village to what it was in 1904 - half a century ago. There are enterprising and capable persons there to advance it further, such as Seamus O Se, Headmaster of its Vocational School; to keep alive the old traditions, "the blas" and the fluency of language of the seandaoine.

Here is a description of the locality and of recreations connected with the College courses, written by Diarmuid O Laoghaire, some years after the foundation: -

"Ta sraid-bhaile beag darab ainm di Beal-atha-an ghaorthaigh, in Ibh-Laoghaire, in iarthar Chondae Chorcaighe, agus is ann ata Colaisde Muinteoireachta na Mumhan - an freumh-cholaisde des na Colaisdibh Gaedhealacha.

Einne a Bhion tuirseach, tnaithe, treis oibre cruaidhe na bliadhna, no craidhte ciapaidhte o choraibh cruadha an tsaoghail, is feidir leis tamall samh, soghach, siothchanta a chaitheamh i nduthaigh Bheal-atha-an ghaorthaigh. Ni moide go bhfuil aon ait eile in Eirinn chomh hoireamhnach chun a dheanta. Abair gur iascaireacht an caitheamh aimsire ba rogha leis - nach ceann de aibhuibh na h-Eireann a bhion eise go fluirseach ionta, an Laoi? Agus gabhann an Laoi trid an nGaorthaigh? Ma 's binn leis "Lamhach gunaidhe trean" - beireadh se a ghuinn leis agus teidheadh se ag sealgaireacht ar na cnocaibh no ins na portachaibh. Ma's aoibhinn leis fuaim an chamain a chlos is feidir leis an fhuaime do bhaint as ma thugann se caman leis go dti Colaisde na Mumhan. Ta baid ann i gcoir badoireachta shios ar Loch Allua agus thuas ar foch Fhinnbharra san Ghuagan. Ta cumanna uaigneacha ann agus gleamta dubha dorchu, cnuic arda agus sleibhte fiadhaine, binne garbha carrigreacha mora maola agus plasoga breaghtha boga. 'Seadh, agus bionn aer ur na sliabh ag seideadh chomh bog san go gcuirfeadh si croidhe an duine ghruama ag leimrigh istigh ina chleibh le hathas agus le haoibhmeas. Agus ma's rinneoir no ceolaidhe e, gheobhaidh se caoi ar a chosaibh a chrothadh agus ar a cheol a spreagadh, mar bionn rinnee 'gus ceol i gColaisde na Mumhan gach aon trathmona. Agus ma's file e, ni breag a luadh go gcomhnuigheam Deban na neigeas fein ag beal dorais an Cholaisde!

Ta buntaiste eile sa sceal, buntaiste thar gach rud eile do Ghaedhilgeoir. Ta an Ghaedhilg a labhairt ann. Labrann na seandaoine ann i chomh breagh, chomh binn, chomh ceart, chomh blasta, comh liomhtha, chomh deis-bhealach agus labhair Fiomm Mac Cumhail no Oisin na Feinne riamh i! 'Si an teanga ceadna a labhairtear ann agus do labhair agus do scriobh Eoghan Ruadh O Suilleabhain agus a urmhor fili na Mumhan tri chead bliadhna o shin. 'Si an teanga ceadna a labhaireann agus a scriobhann an tAthair Peadar O Laoghaire agus a urmhor ughdair agus de scriobhneoiribh in Eirinn fe lathair".

This may seem highly coloured, but anyone who remembers those early days of the "sowing of the seed", and the early ripening of the harvest: the idealism, the enthusiasm, the self-sacrifices, the friendships made and the joyousness of the times in Ballingearry, will admit a basis of truth to the vivid description of the surroundings that influenced the minds of many who came to Colaisde na Mumhan.

Diarmuid also wrote: "Tagann cairdeas agus maintardhas as an geomhuadar do dhaoibh". B'fior dó, an úair úd.

At the end of 1904, the College Committee, on the advice of Father Augustine, decided to ask the Archbishop and Bishops of Munster to become Patrons of the College. All of them accepted and, in addition, contributed financially. At the time they were: - His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. Fennelly, Archbishop of Cashel; Most Rev. Dr. O'Callaghan, Bishop of Cork; Most Rev. Dr. Browne, Bishop of Cloyne; Most Rev. Dr. Kelly, Bishop of Ross; Most Rev. Dr. Mangan, Bishop of Kerry; Most Rev. Dr. O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick; Most Rev. Dr. Sheehan, Bishop of Waterford; and the one who still remains to rule his See - Most Rev. Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe.

Dr. O'Daly's leave of absence from his duties in the diocese of Goulburn, New South Wales, was to expire in 1906. I was directed to write to the Bishop of the diocese, asking for an extension of leave for "An Dochtuir". The Bishop was Most Rev. John Gallagher, D.D. In due course, the reply was forthcoming. His Lordship acceded to the request of the Committee. Dr. O'Daly was then appointed Ard Ollamh for July and August sessions that year. The request was renewed the following year and again acceded to. In 1911, "An Dochtuir" went to Australia and remained there some time. He did not expect to return to Ireland. In fact, however, he did return and the rest of his days were spent in Cork.

At the end of 1905, he was appointed Professor of Irish in Drumcondra Training College, Dublin. When Colaisde Laighean was established, early 1908, he lectured there on phonetics. He also lectured in St. Mary's Training College, Belfast.

The Professor of Method in the Colaisde in 1905 were Sean O Cathain and Pádraig Mac Suibne. The former, like "Feargas Finnbeil", was a Customs and Excise Official, also stationed in Belfast. His "Ceachta Cainnte Gramadaighe" showed the carefulness and capability of a trained mind, and a thorough mastery of a new method of teaching Grammar. He brought illustrated charts, then a novelty, for his Direct Method teaching in the Colaisde. He was again in the College in 1906 and in subsequent years. As he could attend only in July during his annual holiday, and he was needed in August (1905-1906), John P. Boland and Tom O'Donnell, members of Parliament for Kerry were communicated with. Their influence with the British Customs Authorities was successful in securing extended

Sean was a delightful and pleasing character. I recollect, at the end of one of the sessions, after an "all-night" scoruiocht to mark the closing, his leading us out on a "turas" to the Pass of Ceim-an-Fhiaidh, a four or five miles walk. It was a glorious summer morning and we saw the sun rise over the hills to the east of the Lakes of Inchigeela. There were "tri gartha ar chnoc" at the height of the Pass.

Padraig Mac Suibhne was an indefatigable worker in the Gaelic League, at Fermoy, for many years. He was engaged in every activity connected with the language movement. For some years he contributed regularly, notes in Irish to the "Cork Examiner". Under our own Government, he became Inspector of National Schools. No doubt, he is still remembered by many who shared his friendship, and appreciated his shrewd sayings. In 1906 he delivered a series of lectures on Irish literature in the Colaisde.

Rev. Dr. Henebry, original, versatile, learned in Sanskrit and other languages, authority on Irish music and singing, who afterwards became Professor in University College, Cork, gave a series of lectures; nominally on Grammar; actually, on a variety of subjects, including traditional singing and violin playing. Though unsmiling, his eyes used twinkle when he rendered the Sanskrit "O maqui O" into modern Irish. It was "A mhic o!". He was an excellent lecturer before a large audience. "Gaedheal mise agus ni eol gur nair' dom e" was one of his favourite sayings; said defiantly to mark his scorn for "seoinini".

Others who lectured in the Colaisde during its early years were - An tathair Padraig O Duinnin, compiler of "Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Bearla", the first edition of which appeared in 1904; translator into Irish and English of St. Patrick's "Confession"; editor of anthologies of Irish poetry and writer of little Irish plays that became popular. Sean O Ceallaigh, "Sgeilg", whose immense work in many directions, over the years, is of a phenomenal nature. He also became a member of the Committee of the Colaisde. Ant Athair Cathaoir O Braonain of St. Brendan's Seminary, Killarney, subsequently, also a member of the Committee.

The number of students in the Colaisde in 1906 was double that of 1904. Year by year the numbers increased until, in 1910, a peak year, two hundred and sixty students were enrolled. Among those of 1906 were some whose names are written in the history of Ireland's struggle for independence.

Tomas Mac Donnchadha came to the Colaisde from St. Colman's College, Fermoy, where he was a Professor. This was Thomas Mac Donagh, leader of Irish Volunteers, signatory to the Declaration of Independence; executed after the Rising of Easter Week, 1916.

Tomas Mac Curtain, who had been teaching Irish for a time at Croom, Co Limerick; In Cork city, an active worker in the language movement. When the Cork Corps, Irish Volunteers, was launched, he threw himself heart and soul into their organisation; became Commandant and Brigade Officer. After the Sinn Fein victory in elections, he was elected Lord Mayor of Cork. On the early morning of March 20th, 1920, he was murdered by the British "Crown forces" - a squad of "Black-and-Tans" police. He had made an appointment with me to meet him that day. We were to visit some city schools, Ar dheis De go raibh a anam.

Ant Athair Ailbhe, O.S.F.C. This was Father Albert, who, with Father Augustine and other priests of the Capuchin Order, was to display heroic action in ministering to wounded Volunteers in the Rising in Dublin, 1916.

On the roll also is Brian O h-Uigin, writer of patriotic and religious verses, gentle poet; member of first Dail Eireann. He came to the Colaisde from Ceanannus na Midhe. Also, no doubt, stimulated by what he had observed, he was the moving spirit in founding Colaisde Ui Chomhraighe, at Carrigaholt, Co. Clare.

Here came Padraig Ua Seochradha - "An Seabhach" - from Daingean Uí Chuise, whose writings and whose work for the language are well-known; whose voice is still heard in Seanad Eireann in its advocacy.

Cormac O Cadhla, at the time in Kinsale, is also to be numbered among the Colaisde students. He developed into a very graceful writer of Irish; "Slighe an Eolais" being used in the College classes in later years to great advantage of students. Anyone who read "Le Roi des Montagnes" must appreciate its Irish rendering in "Ri na genoc". It was a very happy choice for translation.

Another on the list is Tomas de Bhal, Sagart, Luimneach - Father Wall, whom "that brute Maxwell", as Bishop O Dwyer called him, would have silenced and removed. The General did not anticipate a sword-thrust from the intrepid Bishop, which silenced him.

In 1907, among the students was Michael O Cuill, whose long connection with Beal-Atha-n ghaorthaigh, as Irish organiser of classes under County Cork Vocational Committee, only ended recently. On the Tuesday of Easter Week, 1916, Michael, as an Irish Volunteer, left Cork, and, with difficulty, got as far as Inchicore. He was promptly arrested by the British Military, lodged in a cell in Richmond Barracks, and told he was to be shot in the morning! The alternative was that he should join the British Army - a worse fate in his eyes. He was deported with the general body of prisoners after Easter Week. Gura fada buan e.

Very early, the Colaisde became known outside of Ireland. From New Zealand A Father Golden sent a subscription towards its upkeep. Another came from Dr. O'Riordan, Rector of the Irish College in Rome. I had a letter from a boyhood friend, Diarmuid Lynch of the Philo-Celtic Society, New York, extolling the project. Rev. Father O Gorman, Vincentian, who had attended the courses, wrote from the Irish College, Paris, expressing his admiration of the work done, and hoping great advantage to the teaching of the language would accrue from it. A Rev. Mr. Dunn from the Vicarage, Bath, sent some Irish Texts Society's volumes to form the nucleus of a College library. Later, (in 1911) a Dr. Patrick O Connell of Cork, who had been a patient in the House of St. John of God, Stillorgan, donated all his library to the College: a varied collection.

Another Vincentian who attended the College in 1906 was Ant Athair Padraig O Caoilte. He was one of the Professors in Castleknock, and also taught in the Irish College in Paris. In later years, when he was attached to St. Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork, we became very close friends. He many times recalled his days in Ballingeary. He had a wonderfully clear, tuneful singing voice. He often mentioned that he had not appreciated the beauty of "open" pronunciation of Latin till he had heard Dr. O Daly lecture on Phonetics. Irish vowel sounds adapted to latin suited the music of the Mass much better than the "closed" sounds, which, he said, were prevalent in England.

The Committee of the Colaisde was still provisional. It was supposed to be elected annually at Meetings of the Comhdhail held in connection with Feis na Mumhan. Actually, the original members of the Committee continued to act as a permanent body. In 1910, the Comhdhail decided to confirm it as such. All the responsibility was thus put on the Committee.

At the request of the Coiste Gnotha of the Gaelic League, Rev. Father O Laoide of Croom, Co. Limerick, and Eamon O'Neill, of Kinsale, were co-opted on the Committee in 1905. Dr. Bertram Windle, President Queen's College, Cork, Ant Athair Cathaoir O Braonain, Saint Brendan's Seminary, Killarney, and Sean O Conail, Cork, were also co-opted that year.

In subsequent years, others were added to the Committee, some temporarily, as nominees of the Coiste Gnotha, or as representatives of the students in the College; others permanently, nominated by the Coisde Ceanntair of the Gaelic League in Cork.

Those members were: - "Scellg"; Risteard O Foghludhe ("Tiachra Eilgeach"); Sean O Cuill; Edward Mansfield, one-time President of the National Teachers' Organisation; Rev. Eamon Fitzgerald, C.C. Inchigeela; Ant Athair Seamus O Floinn, Sagart Faoiste of Passage

West, Co Cork; who, in 1910, was Chairman of Comhdhail na Mumhan. He was a frequent visitor to Ballingeary. His interest in and profound knowledge of traditional music is well-known. Rev. Lambert MacKenna, S.J.; Seosamh O Laochda, teacher in the North Monastery Christian Brothers' Schools, Cork; Risteard O Caoimh, National Teacher, Ballyhooly, Co Cork; Seamus O h-Aodha, M.A.; Tadhg O Tuama; Seamus O Muinnheachain; Maire Ni Chuill; Domhnal O Corcora, whose interest in the Colaisde and in Ballingeary has already been referred to. Seoirse Mac Flannchadha, (George Clancy) of Limerick, who had been a student in the College, also became a member of the Committee. This was the Mayor of Limerick, who was shot dead by the British Forces in March, 1921. His wife, Maire Ni Chillin, had also been a student in the Colaisde.

It was more or less accepted that the Parish Priest of Ibh-laoghaire would be Chairman of the Committee and President of the College. In June, 1908, Father Hurley died. His successor was Ant Athair Conchubhar O Laoghaire, who, in March, 1913, was succeeded by his brother, Ant Athair Seamus O Laoghaire, who afterwards became Parish Priest of Dunmanway and a Canon of Cork diocese. Ant Athair Seamus was very active and deeply interested in the language movement and in the advancement of the Colaisde. Frequently his letters to me were typed and in Irish.

In January, 1906, I had a letter from Seoirse O Muanain, Dublin. He wished to obtain particulars regarding the courses in Ballingeary. He said it was contemplated establishing an Irish College in Dublin. We furnished him with all the information he required and Colaisde Laighean began its career.

The same year the Committee formulated a scheme of "Free Scholarships", to encourage young men attending Gaelic League Classes to attend the College for training as Irish teachers. The recommendation as to suitability of candidates was left in the hands of Pionan Mac Colum, then Ard Fimithre na Mumhan under the Coiste Gnotha. The scheme, however, proved too costly for the finances of the Committee and had to be abandoned.

A much agitated question at this time was the payment of fees for Irish in the National Schools. The scheme that had been in operation was withdrawn. A new one was being drawn up, under the authority of Mr. Bryce, the Chief Secretary. This included a proposed grant to the Gaelic Colleges. The "extern teachers", however, the muinteoiri taidil, would be deprived of remuneration. In common with the general demand, the Colaisde Committee passed a resolution calling for the restoration of the fees that had been withdrawn. This was sent to the Lord Lieutenant (Lord Aberdeen), to the Chief Secretary, to Mr. John Redmond, to the members of Parliament in Co Cork, to the Cork Corporation, Cork Co. Council and the National Board of Education.

In the ultimate, what happened in connection with the Gaelic Colleges was that the National Board agreed to pay a sum of £5 for each National Teacher attending a College, who obtained a College Certificate. "Ard Teastas" - and who taught Irish satisfactorily in a school for twelve months afterwards. Much additional work for a Colaisde Secretary! In 1907, Colaisde na Mumhan Committee agreed to the Board's scheme, but would not accept a condition that a Board Inspector be present at examinations in the Colaisde, maintaining that Certificates were not granted merely as a result of examinations. The Board accepted the Committee's condition. The National Teacher students of the Colaisde looked for extra holidays as a "reward" for attending the courses. The Committee endorsed the demand and the Board acceded to the requests.

Relations with the Department of Agricultural and Technical Instruction were much easier than with the National Board of Education. There was much less "red-tape". Under the D.A.T.I., there was a scheme for teaching of languages in Technical and Commercial Schools. In 1913, the Colaisde Committee applied to have the classes in our College, recognised as language classes under the Department's scheme. This was acceded to. Fees were paid for all teacher-students on attendance at the classes. The grants thus obtained formed the main revenue of the Colaisde for several years.

Evidently there were Gaedhilgeoiri in the offices of the Department. On one occasion a form was returned to me with a pencilled note to change the name of Maire Ní Chinnéide, who had been teaching Latin through Irish in the Colaisde. She had become Mrs Fitzgerald! Maire was a teacher in the Dominican College, Eccles Street, Dublin, and an enthusiastic worker in the language movement. Through her influence many of the girl pupils of Eccles Street came to Ballingeary. One could hear some of the seniors discussing the relative merits of Keats and Shelley as poets!

A considerable number of those who came to the Colaisde in 1906 were learners of the language, non-teachers and not seeking training in teaching methods. A problem arose regarding them. The Colaisde was a training College not a school in which to learn Irish. On the other hand, the number of native Irish speakers who desired training as teachers seemed to be decreasing; the number of "muinteoiri taidéil" who could be employed throughout the country seemed limited. At the end of the year, the Colaisde Committee decided to establish a Scoil Samraídh - "Summer School" - in connection with the College to meet the requirements of learners. There was a suggestion that it be located in Inchigeela instead of Ballingeary, as an influx of non-speakers of Irish into Ballingeary might lead to a greater use of English in the village. The suggestion was not adopted. A real and very interesting conflict - if it may be called such - ensued. Would Irish or English predominate during the courses.

On balance, it is difficult to say on which side the advantage was. More English may have been spoken because of the advent of learners; on the other hand, these advanced in the knowledge of Irish and in the capability of speaking it.

The School was set up in 1907; Mibhlín Ní Chroíinín being appointed as Teacher in charge. A native speaker, whose home was in Ceimcora-bhuaille in the hills north of the village; who had already been teaching in Kilkenny; and who had been trained in the Colaíste, she displayed energy, activity and capability. Young as she was, she wielded her "slat" over Professors from Secondary Schools and Colleges, over staid students from many parts of the country as well as over young people who had come to learn the language. Her "slat" became a legend.

In addition, she organised turasanna and picnics, tramps over the hills, excursions to Gleann Garbh and Cill Airne, and other places of scenic beauty in the district. The people of the village and surroundings were put under "geas" to supply the needs for picnic parties. There was many a pleasant outing and many a pleasant "turas" with Mibhlín Ní Chroíinín as leader. Many a pleasant boating excursion down the lakes of Inchigeela also: to a rock which, funnily enough, was called "Gibraltar". Beannacht De leis an sean-aimsir!

In 1908, the Coiste Gnotha of the Gaelic League made a request that the Gaelic Colleges be affiliated to the new Universities then about being established. Our Colaíste Committee took no action regarding this, but endorsed the demand that Irish should be an obligatory subject in the Universities up to the point of specialisation.

A request was also made to the National Board of Education to pay fees for Irish as an "ordinary subject" in National Schools. It had hitherto been an "extra" and "optional" subject.

Seán Ó Seaghdha of Doire 'n Chairn, Adrigole, who was deeply interested in plants and herbs and in discovering the Irish names for them, came to the Colaíste as Lecturer on Bi-lingual teaching in 1909, and a second teacher being required in the Scoil Samhraidh, Michael Ó Foghludha, known as "Michael na gcleas", was appointed.

In 1910, came Piaras Beaslai, to give a course on Litiríocht na Gaedhilge. His lectures were of the deepest interest, showing wide research and capable judgment. Ant Athair Lambert MacKenna, a competent judge, spoke highly in his praise at meetings of the Colaíste Committee. For many years afterwards Piaras was a visitor to Ballinagarry and after 1916, was enthusiastically welcomed because of the part he had taken in the Insurrection, and the stirring verses he had written in connection with it.

Dr. O Daly, being absent in Australia, for the courses in 1912, Ant Athair Seamus O Ceallachain was appointed Ard-Ollamh and Dean of Residence. Ant Athair Seamus had come to Ballingeary the previous year, as Curate; the first to be appointed solely to minister in that part of the parish of Ibhlaoghaire. He was born in Lauravoultig, a few miles from Newcestown, Co Cork, and attended school at Castletown Kinneigh. He studied for the priesthood in Farranferris Diocesan College, and from there went to Maynooth. He was not a native speaker of Irish, but had studied in school and college, and acquired the "blas" and fluency of a native speaker. It was because of his knowledge of Irish he was sent to Ballingeary. His interest in the language and its advancement was intense. His tragic fate, murdered by "Black-and-Tan" police in my home in Cork, Whit Sunday morning, 1921, is part of the general story of the terrorist regime of the fighting years. He was an ardent priest and never flinched in his duty.

From students of the Colaisde and from residents of Ballingeary a request was made to the Committee to have an organisation in some form established in the district to help in the preservation of the language there: the local branch of the Gaelic League being inoperative. On condition that the Coiste Gnotha of the Gaelic League contribute half towards his salary, the Committee decided to appoint a Muinteor Taisdil to undertake the organising, with a local Committee assisting. Accordingly, early in 1913, Tadhg O Senghdha ("Tadhg Saor") was appointed as organiser and teacher. Requests also came from other districts, Dunmanway and Bailleahuirne. The project in Ballingeary did not continue for any lengthy period. The Committee's finances were not flourishing: the funds of the Coiste Gnotha were diminishing - in fact it made a demand on the College Committee to refund grants that had been given in the early years for the upkeep of the College. The history of the Gaelic League itself shows advancement and retrogression; periods of high enthusiasm and periods of lethargy. 'Se sgeal na h-Eireann fein e, is docha, ag dul ar aghaidh agus ag dul ar chul.

As I have intimated, the number of students coming to Ballingeary was increasing each year. In 1908, over two hundred and twenty students enrolled. The question of accommodation for classes became pressing. In the month of August it was possible to obtain the National Schools and classes were held in them. They were not available for July session.

At a Meeting, in Killarney, 1908, a deputation from Ballingeary appeared before the Committee and urged the erection of a new College building, for which they had already collected some funds. The members of the deputation were Peadar O Croinin, Domhnal O Criodain and Risteard Breathnach. At the end of the August session in the same year, a request was also made by the students to the same effect. The Committee regarded the matter as a serious undertaking. To erect a substantial stone building, which may be used as a residential College

was out of the question, both because of the cost and because such a College would defeat a primary object of the whole enterprise, contact of students with Irish-speaking families. The Committee, therefore, decided to erect a temporary structure and raise a fund for a permanent one. A grant could have been obtained for a Village Hall from the Department of Technical Instruction. The President, Ant Athair Seamus O Laoghaire, did not favour acceptance of a Government grant. In 1909, an appeal for funds was issued. Dr. O Daly collected individually in Cork and Kerry Counties and in parts of Cork City from house to house. Nearly £500 was thus secured. The question of a site for the building arose - A "Land Question". The land in Ballingeary district had been sold by the landlord to the Land Commissioners, but had not been vested. As was the way in connection with land purchase, there was delay.

Finally, an acre was secured on the land of Conchubhar O Liathain, at Dromanaillig: and ideal situation, with a view of the river, the lakes and the hills. Subsequently, the site was purchased, outright, from the Land Commissioners. Trustees were appointed: - An Athair Seamus O Laoghaire, S.P., Uachtarán an Cholaisde, Sean O Conaill, Sculptor, Cork, and Michael Murphy, Solicitor, Cork: Mr. Murphy not being willing to act as Trustee, Shan O Cuiv was appointed in his stead. The building was erected by John Kearney, Inchigeela. An inscribed foundation stone was donated by Sean O Conaill. The formal opening ceremony took place on 4th July, 1914: Ant Athair readar delivering an oration on the occasion, in his usual fluent, eloquent, humorous manner.

Ta dachad blian imthighthe o cuireadh an bhuan-chloch. Ta tigh an Cholaisde ud ann fos. Ca bhfuil na milte a dhein freasdal ar na ranganna ann? Cuid acu imthighthe ar shighe na firinne: solus na bhflaitheas d'a nanamainaibh. Beannacht ortha so ata beo fos agus go gcuiridh Dia ar a leas iad!

Slán le Beal-atha-'n-ghasporthaigh
Is le seana-Cholaisde na Mumhan:
Cuimhnighmis ar na laetheanta geala ann
Is dearmhadimis na laetheanta dubha.

Cuireadh craobh de'n Cholaisde ar bun i gCathair Chorcaighe sa bhliain 1913. Sgeal eile iseadh e sin.