



## *The Story of Maryfield College*

*began in Kilcullen! The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr John Charles McQuaid, visited Kilcullen, which was within the Dublin Archdiocese, and on seeing so many novices, enquired where they would go when professed. They would go to England, was the response, as the Sisters did not have another convent in the South of Ireland. He immediately invited the Sisters to come to the developing area of Drumcondra, in North Dublin*

*Srs Agnes and Stephanie came to Dublin and discovered a perfect site. They planted a miraculous medal in the field, hoping to purchase the land. They were successful, and so began the story of Maryfield! This was 75 years ago.*

***Sr Una Vaughan**, the first pupil on 12 September 1945, aged 12 at the time, has a very vivid memory of the time: Here is her delightful story!*

I have been invited to stir up, from an 80 year old memory, some happenings of the early days. The Congregation made its footfall in Dublin in 1945, and at the invitation of the then Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, opened a secondary school in a remote corner of Griffith Avenue, Carberry Road. This was still a countryside area, north of the city. Carberry Road began with only four houses when the Cork builders were unable to continue, but they left their mark with the named roads - Glandore and Carberry (aka Rosscarberry), well known Cork villages. Carberry Road was intended to be a main road continuing northwards, to link up the Collins Avenue. That never happened, much to the disappointment of the residents, who had just settled in. However, two of the houses were purchased by the Congregation and the two opposite houses opened businesses. A few CP Sisters took up residence in two semi-detached houses, where the first school, with pupils of various ages, was opened on 12th September 1945.

Thomas Vaughan and his family of five had moved from his farming home in St Margaret's, Co Dublin, to establish a general business opposite the Convent. Our lovely neighbour, Mrs Keaveney (aunt of Peter and Mark, of the current hairdressing empire in Dublin) also set up a small business. The Vaughan family was established before the CP Sisters took up residence across the road. My father was very attentive to the needs of the newcomers. Both my parents came from a farming background, where Sunday lunch was special. My mother used to take the cooked roast across the road to invite the CP cook of the day to slice off enough for each of the 3 or 4 sisters in the community at the time. She felt that maybe they were not getting enough nourishment in the lean days of the fifties!

The school opened officially on 12th September 1945. I signed up with my two sisters - a short journey to my new school. To make my own piece of history I ran across the road before breakfast to put my hand on the building so that I could always boast of being the very first pupil to arrive at the school



## *The Story of Maryfield College .....continued*

The first intake of pupils was mainly local, and included **Maria MacAuley** and **Nuala Kiernan** (RIP), while three nieces of Sister Malachy CP, **Maureen, Una and Kathleen O'Connor**, travelled from across the city by bus every day.



*First Day September 12th, 1945*

The numbers in each class were small at first but it made for a homely atmosphere. In the early days classes were held in the Convent house, awaiting completion of a few school rooms in the new building. Half of the main corridor was blocked off until the new wood block flooring was ready for heavy footfall.



The early Convent/School, Tigín Mhuire ( Little House of Mary)

The pioneers of the school project were two Sisters, **Sisters Agnes and Stephanie**, who are well remembered by the early pupils. They had come from the Convent boarding school in Kilcullen. The new school was welcomed as a much needed educational facility in the area.

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Boys were admitted up to 7 years of age, when they were prepared for First Holy Communion by Sister Livinus. Then they all gathered in the Assembly hall for a celebratory breakfast. This day marked their graduation from Junior school. John Kirwan, of the Kirwan undertakers, was among the first group of boys to graduate.

Other memories come to mind related to those early days. My father was very interested and attentive in whatever way he could help, walking the site every evening to gauge progress. One lovely summer evening, as the sun was setting, he saw the school lighting up and with Tom junior went to investigate, fearing there was a fire on the premises. They contacted the police, and they all went in to investigate. Young Tom was stopped by a police officer. *'And what are you, young man, doing here? I'm with my dad to find the fire!'* With a firm grip still on his shoulder the conscientious police officer led him along to find the dad! Peace was restored once dad verified his son's identity.

The new school building took over the large field at the back of the school, which had been a special place for us growing up. At times we witnessed the PP of Marino riding his white horse across the field, having come from the Christian brothers farm beside the school. He did not, like most in those days, own a car so he would have fitted into the environmentally friendly world we try to create today!

Every so often my father would prepare a picnic with special treats enclosed, and we were sent off to *"America"*, ie the top of the meadow, where we spread out the goodies and enjoyed them together. Lemonade, biscuits and sweets were limited treats for children in those post war days - but we thought it was a banquet, especially in *'our own field'*, miles away from the bustle of city. Are there any young children or teenagers today who would thank you for lemonade and biscuits! Eventually (unfortunately) our secluded *'escape to the country'* became a haven for the next generation - for cider parties!!



The family ran a grocery shop which had a considerable clientele as there was as yet none other in the area. My father had a great rapport with the school pupils, coming in as they did after classes, mostly for ice cream wafers. But, understandably, they were disappointed if young Tom was not on duty that day. The old ice-cream measures cut a two penny wafer, or if doubled, a four penny one. Tom, a very handsome and personable young man, was a magnet for the ice cream clients. And often enticed by female charm he pushed the ice cream marker beyond the limits!!

Some years later the Convent, including Novitiate and Chapel, were built, and neighbours were allowed to attend Mass there. The sight of Novices in white veils was a curious novelty. They all knew the Vaughans so they were distracted trying to make out which was their daughter. I had joined the white brigade in 1951, and about 30 others moved from the Kilcullen Novitiate to Dublin.

## *T*he Story of Maryfield College .....continued

When the Chapel was opened my father very quietly presented the first chalice to the Convent. Unfortunately, with no inscription, the whereabouts of that chalice is not known. No doubt, with the closure of the Convent many years later, it will have found a worthy home!

We were often reminded during our schooldays about our school motto, and encouraged to live by its meaning:

*'In Fide Stabilis' (Steadfast in Faith)*

Hopefully, we still do!!