

FANORE NATIONAL SCHOOL

John McNamara, petitioned the Government for funds to erect a National School at Fanore most of which land he owned, in the following terms. The McNamara's were noted as beneficent local landowners.

Fanore National School ~ Application for Funds

.Fanore Beg No 5268 18/12/1847

Application for building a schoolhouse. Parish of Killonahan. John McNamara Esq.

The lands of Fanore Beg being his estate in fee. Required for 50 male and 50 female children. 2 rooms required. Signed by John McNamara, Mober, Labinch. Proposed site on right hand side of road from Ballyvaughan and Roadford in field adjoining Margaret Moran's. Nearest Post Town is Lisdoonvarna. No National School within 3 miles. John McNamara was brother to Major McNamara MP. Inspector Savage's Report 7/3/1848.¹

However, this first application was unsuccessful. It has been reported that Denis Carrucan attended what must have been a *Hedge School*² which met in cowsheds and the like.

It was not until 1887 that a Schoolhouse ~ Dwelling was opened. This continued in use until 1963 when the present school was built. The school provided a basic primary education until a school leaving age of 14 years.

Agnes Kerin provides an important description of the school in the early years of the twentieth century³

Our school was one huge classroom, divided in two, not by a curtain or anything but a wide space. There were two teachers, the master and the lady who taught the younger children until they were about ten years

¹ Handwritten note by Jill Blee from Clare Archives 5268 Clare 2D 28,8

² Report from Anna Carrucan

³ *Agnes Kerin Memoir*

old then they moved up to the master. The classroom was comfortable in summer but in winter it was very cold. There was a big fireplace at one end of the room and each child had to bring a cart load of turf to keep the fire going in winter. When it was your turn to bring the turf, you got the day off school and your name was marked off the attendance list. On bitter cold days, when you couldn't hold your pencil, you were allowed up to the fire to get warm then back to your seat. The schoolmaster was fond of a drink and, when my father was alive, they would go together to the only public house in the village. Perhaps because of that he trusted me and he would give me money, to stop at the public house and get him a glass of whiskey and a bottle of beer on my way to school. I would hide it for him up on a little shelf in the turf house. Sometimes I was late for roll call but he always marked me, "present", as he knew where I was. I would have liked to stay on at school and learn more but we had no choice but to leave school and find work. In those days there was no night school. My mother made us read at night and helped us with our lessons.

Those seeking a secondary education were forced to leave home to a boarding school, as described by Anna Carrucan.

September 1962 saw my departure to an all-Irish boarding school at Spanish Point, Co. Clare. The loneliness at boarding school, although only 27 miles from home was the same as if it was hundreds or thousands of miles away. No regular visits home except at the end of term Christmas, Easter and Summer. My parents did not have much time to visit due to the pressure of child rearing and farm work, but when they did it was like a party. The food parcel was so appreciated, along with the extra pocket money for the school tuck shop. 1962- 68 was spent at this school with my two sisters Breda and Noela joining me for part of that time.

Anna notes that when Department of Education introduced free transport for the secondary school students in 1966, Breda and Noela left Spanish Point and travelled by bus each day to the local secondary school in Lisdoonvarna 9 miles

away.

However to follow into tertiary education it was necessary to travel to a major centre.⁴

The Fanore National School (St Patrick's) still carries on its important task of education in the 21st century. See the following link for a brief overview of the school:

http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/cominfo/edu_tran/education/national_schools/fanore_ns.htm

Given its unique location, environmental awareness is very important. You can read more about this at

http://www.burrenconnect.ie/community/fanore_dunes_school_conservation_project.html

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