

Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae Dhún na nGall 1905-2005

Súil Siar • Ceiliúradh • Múnlú na Todhchaí

County Donegal Vocational Education Committee 1905-2005

Reflecting • Celebrating • Shaping the Future



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November 2005

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEO	Adult Education Officer
AETC	Adult Education and Training Centre
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CERT	Council for Education, Recruitment and Training
CIE	Córas Iompair Éireann
EEC	European Economic Community
ESF	European Social/Structural Fund
EU	European Union
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
LYIT	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NSEF	North South Education Forum
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
NWHB	North Western Health Board
OEC	Outdoor Education Centre
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAYE	Pay As You Earn
PPP	Public Private Partnership (Páirtíocht Poiblí Priobháidead)
RTC	Regional Technical College
TCK	Tourism College Killybegs
TD	Teachta Dála (Dáil Deputy)
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
WELB	Western Education and Library Board

PREFACE

We are deeply honoured to introduce this publication on behalf of Co Donegal VEC in order to celebrate its achievement in the provision of educational services for individuals and communities throughout County Donegal from the beginning of the twentieth century.

The theme for our 100th anniversary celebrations and this publication is summarised as follows; reflecting, that is reflecting on the achievements of the past; celebrating, which is celebrating the current provisions and arrangements and shaping the future provision to meet the challenges and avail of the opportunities which lie ahead.

This publication marks the significant milestones in the achievements of Co Donegal VEC.

From 1905-1930 Technical Schools were established in Letterkenny and Ballyshannon with outreach centres throughout the county; between 1930-1965, there was gradual investment and expansion in schools located throughout the county to respond to community needs in areas such as Bunrana, Carndonagh, Donegal Town, Gortahork, Gweedore and Loughanure.

1965 saw the publication of the OECD Investment in Education report and the key policy decisions on free transport and free education resulting in major expansion in enrolment in second level schools. In terms of Donegal the publication of the “Steering Committee on Technical Education” Report led to the establishment of the Regional Technical College in Letterkenny under the aegis of the Committee, the rationalisation of second-level facilities resulting in a Comprehensive School in Glenties and four Community Schools throughout the County. The Committee purchased the District Hospital in Killybegs which formed the core of the current Tourism College and also acquired the eighty-seven acre Johnston/ Lough Veagh

Estate at Gartan on which the Outdoor Education Centre is currently located. The 1990s represented a period of intensive development by the Committee of its Adult and Community Education Services and facilities centred on six dedicated Adult Education Centres in Ballyshannon, Bunrana, Donegal Town, Gortahork, Letterkenny and Milford.

The Committee’s flexibility in responding to community needs and aspirations continued throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century with the establishment of Magh Éne College, Bundoran from 1992, in response to a community request, with its separate identity from 2000, followed by the establishment of Coláiste Phobail Oileán Thoráí in 1999 conjointly with the Ionad Pobail or Community Centre on the island, Coláiste Ailigh in Letterkenny in 2000 to provide second-level education through Irish and the establishment of Moville Community College in 2001 to cater for students in North-East Inishowen.

The Committee, with its professional, dedicated and committed staff, network of fourteen second-level schools and colleges, six dedicated adult education centres, the Tourism College Killybegs, Gartan Outdoor Education Centre, together with its Local Music Education Service Partnership (LMESP), in partnership with other agencies, and the development of its youth work functions and services under the Youth Work Act 2001, is poised to face the challenges and avail of the opportunities which the future holds.

The Committee, in cooperation and in partnership with community, voluntary and other statutory agencies based on its history of flexibility and responsiveness, is poised to achieve its vision of excellence in a quality learner-centred education service play the lead role in making life-long learning a reality for individuals and communities in Co Donegal.

We convey sincere thanks to Bank of Ireland for their generous sponsorship of our 100th anniversary celebrations, including this

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Clr Terence Slowey

Cathaoirleach/Chairperson

Seán Ó Longáin

Priomhoifigeach/Chief Executive Officer

04 November 2005

INTRODUCTION

A clear understanding and appreciation of the history of County Donegal Vocational Education Committee (VEC) is not possible without a knowledge of the development of vocational education in this country along with an understanding of the social makeup of the county during the late nineteenth century and also in more recent times.

Donegal is the most northerly county on the island of Ireland and the fourth largest in the county, covering some 486,091 hectares (or 1,193,621 acres¹) in total or 6.9% of the total land area of the Republic. It contains the largest Gaeltacht area in the country which covers one third of the land area of the county and has the longest coastline, some 1,134 km or 17.1% of the national coastline. The county has a population of 137,383 persons² with 23.4% of the population aged 0-14 years and 12.6% of the population aged 65 and over. Donegal's unique geographical location was determined by political factors in the early part of the twentieth century which succeeded in severing much of the county from its natural hinterland with Donegal becoming part of the Irish Free State in 1922. As a solution of sorts for remedying social, economic and political grievances it led to considerable suffering and isolation on the part of the county which is still visible today.³ It would seem that the unique geographical shape of the county (its sheer size, distance from the seat of government and being connected to the rest of the Republic by only ten kilometres of land) has been a strong influence in terms of shaping the provision of education and training services.

Vocational education (or technical as it was known as in its early days) in Ireland was first initiated in the 1700s and 1800s mainly for the

teaching of art. In Dublin in 1867 the Royal College of Science was established 'to supply, as far as practicable, a complete course of instruction in Science applicable to the industrial arts especially that which may be classed broadly under the heads of:- (1) mining, (2) agricultural, (3) engineering, (4) manufactures.'⁴ Around the same time in England a Department of Practical Art was set up in 1852 'to promote general elementary instruction in art and to give assistance to schools in which art was taught. Later, it was taken over by the Privy Council Committee on Education (the forerunner of the British Ministry of Education) and shortly afterwards became the Department of Science and Art.'⁵ Part of the remit of this body was the distribution of 'the annual Parliamentary Vote for instruction in science and art and through it a proportion of the moneys voted reached Ireland. The schools and institutions aided in this country include National Schools and evening classes, in addition to art and science courses in Secondary Schools and Technical Institutions...and to the Training Colleges.'⁶

The Technical Instruction Act was passed in 1889 to meet a growing demand throughout the country for technical education. However, the funding provided was 'insufficient for all practical purposes, so that the Corporations of the cities were the only bodies which could undertake to carry out the provisions of the Technical Instruction Act to any reasonable extent.'⁷ In other words, it really had no effect at all in a rural county like Donegal.

¹ Beattie, Seán. Donegal. (*Ireland in Old Photographs*). Sutton Publishing, Gloucestershire, 2004, p.5

² Census of Population 2002

³ The 2002 Census of Population found that the county had an unemployment rate of 15.6%, double the national average. It also has some of the highest rates of early school leaving in the country and in 2005 was found to have the highest poverty rate in the country (see Combat Poverty Agency. *Mapping Poverty: National, Regional and County Patterns*. Institute of Public Administration, Dublin, 2005)

⁴ *Vocational Education in Ireland*. Records Unit of the Department of Education and Science (Source unknown). p.1

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Vocational Education in Ireland*. Op. cit. p.2

Irish society in the 1800s and the earlier half of the 1900s was very much an agrarian one, thus ensuring that the history of education in Co Donegal was intricately linked with that of agriculture, as indeed it was for most of the rest of the country at that time. Beattie tells us that 'throughout the nineteenth century the administrative affairs of Donegal were in the hands of the gentlemen of the Grand Jury [mainly comprising wealthy landowners]...they were an unelected body. The day-to-day business of running the county was in the hands of the Board of Guardians.'⁸ 'By the end of the nineteenth century the British government was hoping to find a solution to the Irish question by introducing Home Rule and land reform. Donegal was in the forefront of the land campaign. A series of Land Acts succeeded in bringing agrarian agitation to an end, and one of them in particular (in 1891) had a dramatic effect on the infrastructure of the county. It set up a body called the Congested Districts Board, which covered most of Donegal, and aimed to improve conditions through education, training, new industry, communications and marketing.'⁹ The early work of the VEC's predecessors, the County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee (formerly the County Donegal Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee) were very much shaped by the remit of the Congested Districts Board. Moreover, 'education and vocational training were seen as vital to help small communities survive. (A crochet class was started in the small village of Carrowmena in Inishowen, while in Ardara lace-making classes were organised for young women).'¹⁰

In 1895, the 'Recess Committee', an unofficial Committee of Irish men, on the invitation of Mr Horace Plunkett, 'met to inquire into Ireland's agricultural and industrial resources and to study, in regard to the development

of these resources, the methods adopted in other countries for the promotion of agriculture and industry through the agency of the State and the co-operation of the inhabitants.'¹¹ It issued its report about a year later, which suggested that the agricultural and industrial interests of the country might best be promoted by 'the diffusion of expert information, and by practical education, and for this purpose recommended that an entirely new Department be set up to direct the work of agricultural and technical development and education.'¹² As a result the Agricultural and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899 was passed and came into full operation on the 01 April 1900. Under this Act, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction was set up in Dublin and the Parliamentary Vote, previously administered from London by the Department of Science and Art was transferred to this new Department along with the provision of an annual endowment of £55,000 for the purposes of technical instruction.

In Co Donegal the Grand Jury held its last meeting in Lifford in 1899 as 'in that year it was abolished and replaced by the County Council, whose members were elected by residents of the county'¹³ under the Local Government (Ireland) Act which was passed in 1898. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction set about organising schemes in manual instruction, rural industries and domestic science in rural areas.

'To administer these schemes, statutory Committees (Technical Committees or combined Technical and Agricultural Committees) consisting of members of the Councils and of other persons selected, were set up'¹⁴ (by the County Council in the case of Donegal, creating the County Donegal Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee). A plan of work, which

⁸ Beattie, Seán. Op. cit. p.9

⁹ Ibid., p.14

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.14-15

¹¹ *Vocational Education in Ireland*. Op. cit. p.2

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Beattie, Seán. Op. cit. p.9

¹⁴ *Vocational Education in Ireland*. Op. cit. p.3

was created from submissions from local technical committees in the various towns and villages, had to be submitted by the County Committee to the Department for approval each year before it could be implemented. The County Donegal Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee split in two in 1905 into the Committee of Agriculture and the Joint Technical Instruction Committee (with the latter becoming the forerunner to the VEC today).

In 1924, under the Ministers and Secretaries Act, technical education was passed over to the Department of Education which set up a commission in 1926 to 'enquire into and advise upon the system of Technical Education in Saorstát Éireann in relation to the requirements of Trade and Industry'.¹⁵ The result was the enactment of the 1930 Vocational Education Act, with the Joint Technical Instruction Committee transformed into the Vocational Education Committee to provide continuation and technical education.¹⁶ 'The Committees were to be representative of educational, cultural, commercial and industrial interests in the area, but the local authorities themselves were limited to not more than eight seats. Finance was to be provided partly from local rates, partly from government subventions which were intended to be on a pro rata basis but often outpaced the local contribution. Fees were payable by the students participating, but they were deliberately fixed at a very low level and accounted probably for not more than ten per cent of income.'¹⁷

While it is obvious that from earliest times the development of vocational education and training in Co Donegal was shaped by legislative developments at a national level, in the earlier

part of the twentieth century, the political landscape was also an influencing factor. However, the overriding influence has always been that of meeting the needs of local communities throughout the county.

While the main method of instruction in the early days was that of itinerant instructors who travelled around the county providing classes, the first permanent/technical schools in the county opened in Ballyshannon and Letterkenny in 1914. The enactment of the Vocational Education Act in 1930 saw the school in Ballyshannon also become the first headquarters for County Donegal Vocational Education Committee until 1949 when the headquarters moved to Letterkenny. The Committee set up further schools around the county which totalled nine until 1978 and then grew to the fourteen that function today. Alongside the growth in the second-level schools within the remit of the Committee, an 87 acre estate for outdoor education at Gartan and the Tourism College in Killybegs were added in 1969 and Adult Education Services, which for many years, while being considered the Cinderella of education, had provided classes for adults in the form of night classes and basic literacy classes, expanded considerably with the advent of the White Paper in Adult Education in 2000 and substantially increased funding, all growing to amount to almost 45% of the VEC's work today.

A look through the minutes of the meetings of the Committee shows that in many ways educational life in the county at the turn of the twentieth century was very different to that at the turn of the nineteenth century in terms of for example, the use of what were known as itinerant teachers. In other ways however, it was largely similar with some practices having

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Continuation education was defined as education 'to continue and supplement education provided in elementary schools and include general and practical training in preparation for employment in trades, manufactures, agriculture, commerce, and other industrial pursuits, and also general and practical training for improvement of young persons in the early stages of such employment.'

Technical education was defined as education 'pertaining to trades, manufactures, commerce, and other industrial pursuits (including the occupations of girls and women connected with the household) and in subjects bearing thereon or relating thereto and includes education in science and art (including in the county boroughs of Dublin and Cork, music) and also includes physical training.'

¹⁷ Lyons, F.S.L. *Ireland Since the Famine*. Fontana Press, London, 1973, p.650

changed only slightly since 1905. What follows is a glimpse over the history of education and training provision in County Donegal as provided by County Donegal Vocational Education Committee over the last one hundred years.¹⁸

¹⁸ Five distinct periods can be identified in the history of Co Donegal VEC and this is how the book is presented as it was the easiest way to cover such a long and detailed history – 1900-1905 covers the initial activities of the Donegal County Agriculture and Technical Instruction Committee which was under the remit of the County Council at the time; 1905-1930 covers the period from when the Department split the committee into two separate committees (with the Joint Technical Instruction Committee covering technical/vocational training) in 1905 until the introduction of the 1930 Vocational Education Act; 1931-1966 covers the history of the VEC up until free education was introduced; 1966-1999 covers the VEC's history up until the end of the twentieth century and 2000-2005 covers the most recent history of the organisation during the twenty-first century. In terms of putting this history together, the primary documents used were the minutes of the Committee meetings (the Joint Technical Instruction Committee and the Vocational Education Committee) held since 1905 (and of the Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee from 1900-1905) as this was the most complete and accurate information available for the last one hundred years. This was supplemented by information provided by present and past employees of the various schools and centres (from school/centre records, newspaper cuttings, photographs etc.). Unfortunately time did not allow for extensive use to be made of interviews or newspapers although some articles were used from the Donegal Democrat and the Donegal People's Press.

1. 1900-1905

INTRODUCTION

Education and training was first put on a statutory footing in the county with the establishment of the Donegal County Council Agriculture and Technical Instruction Committee, set up under the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899. This committee held its first meeting in the Courthouse, Lifford on the 27th November 1900. The minutes tell us that those attending that first meeting included;

William J. Hanna Esq. (Presiding)
Edward McFadden Esq. M.P.
Hugh A Law Esq.
Rt. Revd. Mgr. McGlinn
Hugh McDevitt, Esq.
Captain Thomas B. Stoney
Teague Magee Esq.
Michael Cassidy, Esq.
William Gallagher, Esq.
Peter Ward Esq.
The Revd Fr. Stephens
Wm. J.A. Wray Esq.
Abraham Manning Esq.
Francis Callaghan Esq.
The Revd John Sweeney P.P.
George Moore Esq.¹⁹

Captain Stoney was appointed permanent Vice-Chairman (and acted as convener) and the Most Reverend Dr Patrick O'Donnell, the bishop of Raphoe (who would later become the Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh and who was an active member of the Congested District Board since 1892²⁰) was appointed permanent Chairman (and was reappointed to this position every year until 1923). All appointments to this Committee continued to be made by the County Council for some years afterwards.

1.1 DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL AGRICULTURE & TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The work of this Committee was essentially divided amongst two committees – the Agricultural Committee and the Technical Instruction Committee.²¹ However, in 1907 it was resolved;

*'That this Committee respectfully represents to the County Council the desirability of reverting to the former arrangement by which all the members of the Agricultural Committee were also members of the Technical Instruction Committee as it is a misfortune that the Technical Instruction Committee should be deprived of the assistance of gentlemen from different parts of the County who came to Lifford to attend meetings of the Agricultural Committee and who by the present arrangement cannot participate in the meeting of the Technical Instruction Committee.'*²²

This was accepted by the County Council who had 'recommended to the Department the change in the constitution of the Technical Committee suggested by this Committee at their last meeting.'²³

i. Committee Business

As it turned out however, the Chairperson, Dr O'Donnell was unable to attend the first meeting and submitted a letter of apology which also outlined some of his ideas for the rollout of the work of the committee;²⁴

¹⁹ County Donegal Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 27 November 1900, p.1

²⁰ Bolger, Pat 'The Congested Districts Board and the Co-Ops in Donegal' in Nolan, William, Ronayne, Liam and Dunlevy, Mairead (Eds.) *Donegal History and Society*. Geography Publications, Dublin, 1995, p.656

²¹ County Donegal Committee of Agriculture. Minutes of the meeting of 21 November 1905, p.2

²² County Donegal Committee of Agriculture. Minutes of the meeting of 12 November 1907, p.6

²³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 09 December 1907, p.5

²⁴ County Donegal Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 27 November 1900, pp.2-4

Dear Mr McFadden

I regret it isn't possible for me to be present on Tuesday at the first meeting of the Committee that the County Council nominated for the purposes of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899. It is not by any means easy for the Committee, most efficient though it is in composition, to make a good start; and I am not aware that the Department has issued any advice as to the times of the practical programme which a body like yours might wisely undertake.

The County Council or the Finance Committee can best decide whether the 1d [one penny] in the £ you propose to raise should be levied under the Technical Instruction Acts 1889-1891, or under the Act of 1899. For the first year it would seem preferable to take the older Acts; but as you might not care to change so soon it might be better to levy under an Act which leaves the Department free to back you up with a larger sum than the Local charges amount to. The rate under the 1899 Act must, I believe, be a County-at-large charge, and as the Department cannot spend its funds in the congested Districts, the best plan might be to invite the Congested Districts Board to formulate a scheme, subject to the approval of the committee, for the expenditure of the rate raised in the Congested districts, and of the additional sum which the Congested Districts Board might decide to assign for the projects covered by the scheme.

Once the rate is secured the question immediately arises as to what the Committee should undertake in the non-congested districts. In my opinion the great point is to avoid costly experiments that come to nothing and dishearten instead of encourage the people. It seems to me that as it is good policy to help the workers to help themselves, it ought to be part of that policy to encourage people to give themselves the practical education they require. In the poorer localities a judicious system of prizes to every occupier who did a certain amount of good drainage on his own land, or built outhouses up to a prescribed standard, or provided a neat cottage dairy; and above all whose general cultivation and treatment of the soil over the whole farm reached a high level for his circumstances, would

be the best man to encourage intelligent farming all the year round. In the richer districts the prizes should be competitive, but of very considerable value, for the best cultivation of seeds and crops or best rearing of livestock. If the Department can sanction a programme of this sort it might be taken for granted that they would provide expert advice for giving it effect.

As regards other rural industries, we should see our own way very clearly as to what the outcome is likely to be before undertaking a definite scheme. In any case it might be well to await the suggestions of the Department.

In regard to technical schools or classes in the towns, I think night classes alone are feasible. We should probably be educating young people to leave the districts; still I should say it would be a very considerable boon for the youth in our urban districts to have facilities for learning such subjects as drawing, typewriting and shorthand, carpentry, woodwork, and practical electricity.

But doubtless the Committee will limit its undertakings to what can be accomplished with the money that will be available, and devote its energies to projects that give fair promise of educating the people to earn a livelihood. With this object in view it might be as well to wait a while before promoting any definite scheme, even when the rate is levied.

*I am, dear Mr McFadden
Sincerely Yours
Patrick O'Donnell*

*Letterkenny
26 November 1900*

The minutes then tell us that

'a representative of the Department of Agriculture – Mr Carroll – then addressed the Committee at considerable length and made some suggestions as to the times on which the Committee might work, after which it was moved by Mr McFadden, seconded by Captain Stoney and unanimously resolved:-

That we recommend the County Council to levy a rate of one penny in the pound on the rateable

monies in the County for the purpose of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and that said rate be raised under the provisions of the Technical Instruction Acts of 1889 & 1891 and be applied for any of the purposes of Agriculture and other rural industries not included in the said Act.

That the Secretary be requested to communicate with the various Rural District Councils in the County and the Urban District Council of Letterkenny and Ballyshannon Town Commissioners requesting them to appoint in their Districts a Technical Instruction Committee and that said Committee prepare as soon as practicable a scheme for its District according to the provisions of the Agriculture and Technical Instructions Act 1899 for submission to this Committee and that a copy of Dr O'Donnell's letter be attached.'

And so began the pioneering work of the Donegal County Council Agriculture and Technical Instruction Committee which would split into two separate committees a few years later with the Joint Technical Instruction Committee eventually being transformed into the County Donegal VEC in November 1930. Initially the Committee's work was only geographically concerned with the non-congested district areas. The Congested areas were added in 1904.²⁵

This Committee's second meeting was held on 14 January 1901 and discussed the cultivation of flax (which resulted in a specialist sub-committee being set up for the sole purpose of dealing with flax only), on foot of representation made to them. Schemes of agriculture and technical instruction were then received from the various districts which included;

- Derry No. 2 District Council
- Stranorlar District Council
- Ballyshannon District Council
- Milford District Council
- Letterkenny Rural and Urban Councils

- Glenties District Council
- Inishowen District Council
- Strabane No. 2 District Council
- Donegal Rural District Council
- Dunfanaghy District Council

But all were asked to reframe their schemes to give consideration to flax cultivation and some were asked to 'see under what headings and how far they might effect a saving by co-operation with other Committees.'²⁶ (In particular Ballyshannon Rural District Council and Ballyshannon Town Commissioners submitted two separate schemes and were asked to form a committee consisting of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of both and the clergymen of all denominations in the Union to formulate one scheme.²⁷) Most were also asked to 'frame separate schemes for the Congested and the non-Congested portions of the Union.'²⁸ Without a doubt the issue of savings is one which is still alive and well in the work of today's Scheme, one hundred years later! The business of the Committee was also concerned with funding applications for prizes for various shows, the payment of premiums for animals that were exhibited at various shows, farm inspections etc. It would seem that the funds raised in 1901 were such that the levy set for 1902 was reduced from one penny on the pound to half a penny on the pound.²⁹

The principle of local determination of needs underpinned the development of education in the county from the beginning when, at the Committee's second meeting, in discussing correspondence from the Department of Agriculture requiring them to reconsider the scheme they had submitted for consideration in the Live Stock Improvement Scheme, it was stated by the Chairman that 'County Donegal was particularly circumstanced and the different parts of the County had different requirements. That the Districts concerned had not a uniform history and naturally the people living in these Districts were best acquainted with their local

²⁵ County Donegal Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 19 February 1904. p.5

²⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 14 January 1901, p.2

²⁷ Ibid., p.4

²⁸ Ibid., p.5

²⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 06 November 1901, p.2

needs. The Committee had great respect for the Departments' views but he also knew that the Department had great respect for local opinion.³⁰

ii. Committee Secretary

By and large, the business of the Committee was carried out by the Secretary (Mr Eugene O Doherty) who dealt with correspondence and actions decided upon. The Department wrote to the Committee in 1901 about the appointment and duties of the Secretary '*stating that all such appointments were to be reconsidered and date from the 1st January 1901.*'³¹ Furthermore '*the letter defined the duties of the Secretary and stated that the Department would be prepared to contribute 50% of the approved salary and expenses of this post. Letters were also submitted from the Department stating that the Acting Secretary has given every satisfaction during the past year by the manner in which he had performed his duties and that in case of his re-appointment the Department would be prepared, having regard to the salary of which he was already in receipt of from the Council to sanction a salary not exceeding £80 per annum...it was then resolved, on the motion of Mr W.K. Hanna, seconded by Mr Wm. Doherty to re-appoint Mr Eugene O Doherty Secretary.*'³²

The terms of the Secretary's appointment were considered by the Committee again in 1905 when '*in view of the appointment of separate Committees for Agriculture and Technical Instruction*' the Department '*had deemed it necessary to review the terms of Mr O Doherty's Appointment as Secretary. That he would henceforth hold two separate and distinct appointments. One as Secretary to the Committee of Agriculture and one as Secretary to the Joint Technical Instruction Committee and that it would therefore be necessary for this Committee*

[Committee of Agriculture] to formally appoint Mr O Doherty as their Secretary from 1st October 1905...and that unless the Committee desired to do so themselves they did not propose to review annually the question of Mr O Doherty's appointment as Secretary so long as they continued to be satisfied with the manner in which his work is done.'³³

The Secretary's duties also included attending shows on behalf of the Committee and because of this it was necessary by 1908 to fix the office hours '*to be observed by the Secretary when not absent on official duties.*'³⁴ The hours suggested by a special sub-committee set up to look at the matter were 10.00am until 6.00pm with an hour for dinner every day except on Saturday's when the hours were 10.00am until 1.00pm. However, the main Committee considered this too long and instead it was agreed that the hours would be 10.00am until 4.00pm with an hour for dinner every day except on Saturday's when the hours were 10.00am until 1.00pm.³⁵

1.2 ITINERANT INSTRUCTORS

Itinerant Instructors were first discussed by the Committee in June 1901 when they proposed to pay '*the Itinerant Instructor for the three districts of Letterkenny, Londonderry and Strabane No 2, £250 per annum which sum will include travelling expenses.*'³⁶ Some months later in October 1901

'the Committee proceeded to consider the matter of the appointment of an Itinerant Instructor for the non-Congested Areas of the County and the Secretary having read a letter from the Department relative to the applications received and Mr Gordon of the Department having outlined the Departments scheme of Itinerant

³⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 February 1901, pp.1-2

³¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 09 December 1901, p.6

³² Ibid., p.6

³³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 November 1905, p.2. (Up until this point, the Secretary had been approved each year so this did away with the need to review his appointment on an annual basis).

³⁴ County Donegal Committee of Agriculture. Minutes of the meeting of 10 November 1908, p.1

³⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 12 February 1909, p.2

³⁶ County Donegal Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 21 June 1901, pp.3-4

*instruction, it was proposed... 'That an Instructor for the non-Congested districts of Donegal be appointed provided a suitable man can be got.'*³⁷

Furthermore in December 1901, when the Committee discussed the Technical Scheme submitted by the Department for the County;

*'The Committee approved generally of the principle of the Scheme but more particularly of that portion of it proposing the appointment of an Itinerant Instructress in Domestic Economy as they believed that such an instructress, if a thoroughly competent person can be got, would be of great benefit and regretted that provision was not made for the appointment of at least two instructresses as one will only be able to cover a small portion of the County. They thought, however, that they might be met at present by giving those districts not touched by her compensating benefits.'*³⁸

Doubtless they formed the core of the schemes produced by the various district councils but this cannot be completely verified as it was not possible to access copies of these records. The areas of domestic economy (home economics) and manual instruction (wood and metal work) were the two main subjects required.

The meeting of 09 December furthermore stated in relation to the Technical Scheme submitted by the Department for the County;

'With regard to the proposals as to Capitation grants contained in the Scheme the Committee were of the opinion that the County, particularly the rural parts of it, is scarcely in a position at present to be benefited to any extent thereby, and that this portion should be modified by providing for the appointment of an Itinerant Instructor in Manual Instruction with a travelling equipment. They thought that such an instructor

*who could be brought in touch with the more backward Districts would much more materially benefit the County and would lead up to and encourage the formation of such classes as are meant to be got at by the Scheme. Before taking any definite action, however, with regard to the Scheme, the Secretary was informed to ascertain the views of the various Local Bodies with regard thereto and to submit same to the Co-Ordinating Committee who were authorised to take final action in the matter.'*³⁹

The Committee approved this at the meeting of 30 December 1901 when they resolved *'That we approve of the appointment of an Itinerant Instructress in Domestic Economy and of an Itinerant Instructor in Manual Instruction for the whole County and in addition, where applicable of Capitation and Equipment Grants to qualified schools.'*⁴⁰

(i) Domestic Economy Instruction

The Department approved their modification and at their meeting of 20 January 1902 *'the Secretary was accordingly instructed to advertise for a Domestic Economy Instructress at a salary of £80 per annum with actual expenses of locomotion and it was agreed to ask the Department to assist the Committee in defining the duties of the Manual Instructor and to state at what salary they would be likely to procure a competent man.'*⁴¹ The Domestic Economy instructress, a *'Miss Sara M. Ward of 13 Richmond Terrace, Lisburn Road, Belfast, who held first class diplomas in Cookery and Dressmaking from the National School of Cookery, London'*⁴² was finally appointed at the meeting of 10 February 1902, with her holidays fixed at a maximum of one month in the year.

Local committees were to be set up in each District to deal with the classes. In arranging the

³⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 11 October 1901, p.1

³⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 09 December 1901, p.4

³⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the General Committee meeting of 09 December 1901, pp.4-5

⁴⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 30 December 1901, p.1

⁴¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 January 1901, pp.1-2

Domestic Economy classes *'it was arranged to let each Rural District have from Centres, the Instructress to spend a month in each Rural District and the Districts to be taken in the following order:*

Londonderry No. 2	-	April
Strabane No. 2	-	May
Stranorlar	-	June
Donegal	-	July
Glenties	-	September
Dunfanaghy	-	October
Milford	-	November
Letterkenny	-	December
Inishowen	-	January

It was also arranged to have only Artizan classes conducted, the fee to be that suggested in the Departments 'Memo': 2/6 for the full course of 12 lessons for all such courses 3/6 for a single lesson 3 d.⁴³

The Committee were later informed by a letter from the Revd. M. Sheerin P.P. Fahan *'that the local committee was of the opinion that the fees fixed for these classes were likely to prevent the daughters of labourers and small farmers in the Districts from obtaining the benefits of the classes; and he also informed the Committee that he had formed this opinion to be general and that the Rev. HM Menamin P.P. Buncrana had asked him to make a similar representation to the Committee. The Committee were agreed that the fees should be reduced from 2/6 and 3/6 to 1/- and 1/6.'*⁴⁴ These fees were set at 1/6 for thirty lessons and 2/- for forty lessons in September 1902.⁴⁵

As more classes developed and the amount of teaching required increased, Ms Ward requested an assistant for her dressmaking class. However, the Committee felt it would be more advisable to appoint another Instructress. *'In connection with this matter, Ms Ward wrote stating that if required to work six days in the week, as suggested by the Department, the Committee might accept her resignation.'*⁴⁶ The minutes inform us that *'no action was taken with regard to the matter.'*⁴⁷ It would therefore seem that teaching union issues were alive and well in the early part of the twentieth century! As it turned out, the Committee were unable to obtain a second qualified dressmaking and cookery instructress (after advertising and writing to all the training colleges *'in the Kingdom'*⁴⁸) and so requested the Department to allow them to appoint a qualified dressmaking instructress only. Ms Ward then provided cookery instruction only and the new instructress (Ms McDonald⁴⁹) provided dressmaking instruction.

(ii) Manual Instruction

It was not easy for the Committee to fill the manual instructor's position as it was difficult to find properly qualified applicants, despite advertising the post twice. Eventually they were advised by the Department that they *'had a number of young men in training some of whom would probably be available for appointments in September 1902 and suggesting that...the Committee should defer taking further action until such time as the services of these in training would be available.'*⁵⁰ The Committee duly

⁴³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 10 February 1902, pp.1-2

⁴⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 3 March 1902, pp.3-4

⁴⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 April 1902, p.2

⁴⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 22 September 1902, p.5

⁴⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 July 1902, p.2

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 13 October 1902, p.2

⁵⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 10 November 1902, p.3

⁵¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 09 June 1902, pp.2-3

agreed to this. However, when this eventually happened the applicants were not qualified in smithwork which was felt to be very important for the county. After checking the nature of the training given to the applicants with the Department, it was confirmed that *‘the course of instruction for Manual Instructors had only comprised woodwork.’*⁵¹

Instructors in those days had to attend for examination in Dublin with the Department before their appointments could be considered. The method of appointment for Instructors was that they applied for the post advertised and their qualifications were checked with the Department. If they were suitability qualified, the Committee members then cast their vote as to whether they should be appointed or not. This then went back to the Department for approval.

Mr James O Neill, who was to become the first Chief Executive Officer of County Donegal Vocational Education Committee in 1930, was appointed as a manual instructor to the South of the County in 1904. In 1905 he was moved to cover the Northern division of the county.⁵²

In terms of accountability, by 1904, ‘it was resolved to instruct the teachers of permanent centres to send in monthly reports as to attendances, progress etc.’⁵³ This practice was to carry on for many years to come.

(iii) Ineligibility of Residents of the County for Employment

It is noticeable from the minutes that those appointed to the various instructors post came from all over ‘the kingdom’. In 1904 the Department issued a ruling which stated that *‘they had found it necessary to make a rule that*

*in the case of new appointments under the 1903-4 Agricultural Scheme no person would be eligible to take up duty in the County in which he or she was resident.’*⁵⁴ This essentially meant that Donegal people were excluded from all appointments in the County, something that the Committee strongly disagreed with and refused *‘to make any appointments under said Scheme [1903-04 Agricultural Scheme] until the [above] rule be absolutely withdrawn.’*⁵⁵ A disagreement thus erupted between the Donegal Committee and the Department over this matter that was to last for almost three years. The following amendment was proposed at the June meeting;

*‘That we strongly protest against a rule forbidding the residents of County Donegal from being employed by this Committee in the District where only their merits and character are known and where they are best able to exert their energies. We decline to approve a rule that assumes that the residents of this County are not fully competent when selected by this Committee to carry out any of the duties this Committee assigns to them.’*⁵⁶

The Department replied in a letter of 04 July 1904 to state that *‘the rule that a resident in a County is not eligible for employment as Instructor therein in connection with Agricultural Schemes has been in operation for the past two years and the Department do not consider it advisable at present to modify it.’*⁵⁷ The Committee considered this at their next meeting on 08 August, the minutes of which tell us the following;

‘The Committee had under consideration the Department’s letter of 4th July 1904. no. 17476 declining to modify the rule prohibiting the employment as instructors under the Agricultural Schemes persons resident in the County and the

⁵¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 13 October 1902, p.3. It is not clear from the minutes who was eventually appointed to this post.

⁵² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 March 1905, p.3

⁵³ Ibid. Minutes of the General Committee meeting of 10 October 1904, p.5. The word ‘periment’ appears as it did in the minutes and is obviously a spelling mistake.

⁵⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 27 June 1904, p.7

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.8

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 11 July 1904, p.4

following resolution was, on the motion of the Revd. Hugh McMenamín seconded by Mr Joseph McArthur, adopted, viz:-

Resolved:- "That the County Donegal Committee of Agriculture and Technical Instruction regard the rule of the Department of Agriculture prohibiting the employment of persons resident in the County as Instructors under the Agricultural Scheme very unfair to the residents of County Donegal and we respectively submit the following as sufficient reasons for modifying the rule:-

- (1) The Donegal County Committee in selecting properly trained Instructors would have a better character, disposition and suitability of the Candidate from their own County than those from any other County.
- (2) More than half the Unions of this County would require Inspectors who could speak Irish and Donegal can supply more Irish speakers than half the province of Ulster.
- (3) Donegal is bounded three fourths by sea and about one fourth by land, therefore from its isolated geographical position its chances of getting employment for its Instructors outside the County is only one fourth of what it would be if it were bounded by land instead of being bounded as it is largely by water.
- (4) As the amount of money each year at the disposal of the Committee depends on the amount of rate collected for the purpose in the County the salaries in the gift of the Committee are rightly regarded as the bread of the Children of the County and are maintain it is unjust to take the bread out of their mouths when they are properly qualified to earn it. Needless to say that the Committee do not suggest the appointment of any Instructor not properly qualified.
- (5) Hopes have been held out that the Department of Agriculture would improve the County, stop emigration and make people happy by providing facilities for earning money. Why make residents of the County ineligible for positions in the County by this new and extraordinary rule?
- (6) The Department of Technical Instruction under Sir Horace Plunkett, who is Chairman of the Technical Branch as well as of the Agricultural Branch has no such rule for Inspectors in lace making, sprigging, crochet work etc. and the

Committee have several such Instructors residents of the County, who are giving every satisfaction. The Commissioners of National Education sanction the appointments of residents in the County as teachers and Manual Instructors in national schools.

The Local Government Board does not make Medical Officers of Dispensaries, Workhouses and Asylums ineligible because they are residents of the County. Clerks of Petty Sessions, Clerks of the Peace of Asylums and Poor Law Unions are under no such ban.

The Post Office authorities do not insist on this rule in regard to Postmasters and Lettercarriers. The Congested Districts Board appoint residents of the county as Inspectors in connection with work done under Parish Committees etc.

It does not occur to us at present that such a rule applies to any class except to the R.I. Constabulary. A member of that force cannot serve in his native County but there is a great difference between the duties of this Police and those of Instructors in Agriculture. The Constabulary have to maintain law and order, they prosecute at Petty Sessions the violators of the law; they have disagreeable of not odious duties at evictions etc. Not so with lectures on poultry keeping, bee-keeping and buttermaking – their duties are agreeable and the people are pleased to attend the lectures.

(7) We also complain that no notification of this rule was given to this Committee by the Department until after they made the appointment a couple of months ago although the Department state that it has been in existence for two years.

(8) We further desire to point out that while it is stated that this rule has been in force for two years the Department only a few months ago sanctioned the appointment of an Instructor under the Agricultural Scheme who was a resident of the County and they also, last year, sanctioned the appointment of an Instructress under said Scheme who, while not exactly a resident of the County, resided in a Parish and District which extended into the County and who discharged her duties in the part thus extending with as much acceptance and success as in any other part of the County.

Many reasons and precedents are against the continuance of this rule and we respectfully

*suggest its withdrawal or modification. It is also resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Department, the Chief Secretary for Ireland and each member of Parliament for the Country.*⁵⁸

The Department again refused to modify the rule and at the November meeting the Committee resolved to send the resolution to the Department again.

County Committees which wrote to them on the matter showed that counties Cork, Carlow, Dublin, Londonderry, Leitrim, Limerick, Sligo, Wexford and Wicklow supported their actions while Counties Down, Tyrone, Tipperary North, Tipperary South and Waterford took no action. County Kilkenny supported the Department and County Galway stated that all their Instructors were residents of the County. The Department had again written and regretted that *'they had nothing to add to their previous letters on the subject.'*⁵⁹ County Monaghan supported the action of the Committee and Counties Kildare and Antrim took no action.⁶⁰ A motion was proposed that the resolution be withdrawn with an amendment that it do not. As this was a 'direct negative' a vote was taken with 6 for and 13 against leaving the motion *'accordingly declared lost'*.⁶¹ County Kerry also refused to accept the Department's rule.⁶² However, the minutes of 10 April 1905 tell us that the Department had finally decided that the Secretary of the Department was *'coming down to confer with the Committee with regard to this rule.'*⁶³ However, this doesn't appear to have happened.

The minutes of the meeting of 20 March 1906 tell us that the Milford Council passed a resolution *'declining to appoint local committees in connection with the working of the Schemes*

*of the Committee until the matter in dispute between the County Committee and the Department re the appointment of natives of the County as Instructors under the Agricultural Schemes, could be settled...and it was resolved on the motion of Monsignor McGlynn, seconded by Mr Gallagher 'That our Secretary be directed to send to the Chief Secretary of Ireland, as President of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, a clear short statement of the issues between the Department and the Co. Donegal Committee of Agriculture regarding the exclusion of Instructors in Agricultural subjects from appointments in their own County, and also a copy of the proceedings of the meetings of the Committee in reference thereto with view to get him to influence the Department to modify, if not to rescind the obnoxious rule; and that a copy of this statement be sent to the Commission of Enquiry to be held into the working of the Department, to the Leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party and to each member for Co Donegal.'*⁶⁴

The matter appears to have finally been resolved in 1907 (almost three years after the dispute first began), when *'a notice of motion by the Revd. Jas. O Kane regarding the rescinding of the resolution on the books of the Committee refusing to appoint Agricultural Instructors and the putting of the Schemes adopted by the Committee for 1906-7 into operation subject to certain conditions, which had been adjourned from previous meeting was on the agenda for consideration.'*⁶⁵

We are told however, that before dealing with it, *'the Secretary read a letter which he had received from the Department stating that they understood from the Most Revd. Dr O Donnell that the Committee were prepared to attach as a condition of appointment a regulation to the effect*

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 09 January 1905, p.1

⁶⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 13 February 1905, p.3

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 10 April 1905, p.2

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 March 1906, pp.4-5

⁶⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 05 March 1907, p.3

*that the person selected would not act in a Parliamentary division of the County in which his or her house is located, and that they were willing to sanction an arrangement of this nature.*⁶⁶

This compromise seems to have been the key. Father O Kane then moved and Father Cannon seconded and it was unanimously resolved *'That all resolutions on the books of the Committee declining to appoint Instructors under Agricultural Schemes be rescinded and that the Committee proceed to put the Schemes into operation accepting the condition of the Department that no Instructor shall act in the Parliamentary division of the County in which his or her home is located.'*⁶⁷

1.3 FINANCES

(i) General

Finance was always an issue and unsurprisingly constituted a large part of the Committee's business. Money was raised to finance the various schemes and activities and was set each year from 1900. For the year 1908-9 for example, fees were levied at one penny on the pound.⁶⁸ The minutes of 09 January 1905 tell us that *'the Secretary mentioned that, at a previous meeting he had been instructed to send a sufficient number of copies of the Agricultural Scheme for 1904-5 to each Clergyman in the County to distribute among the members of his Congregation and pointed out that he would require to get about 20,000 copies of the Scheme printed to comply with this direction. The Committee accordingly decided to only send one copy to each Clergyman.'*⁶⁹

Each year a scheme was approved and set aside for the implementation of the Committee's activities. It was normally considered in conjunc-

tion with a Department Inspector. Table 1 illustrates the Agricultural and Livestock scheme for the year 1903, and would appear to be the first such financial scheme put in place by the Committee. Table 2 illustrates the Agricultural and Livestock Scheme for 1904-5, the first year of our centenary celebrations.

⁶⁶ County Donegal Committee of Agriculture. Minutes of the meeting of 05 March 1907, p.4

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Minutes of the meeting of 04 February 1908, p.3

⁶⁹ County Donegal Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 09 January 1905, p.6

TABLE 1 – AGRICULTURAL & TECHNICAL SCHEME FOR 1903⁷⁰

<u>Schemes</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>	<u>Approved Fund</u>	<u>Grant</u>
Expenses & other items			
Salary of J. J. 200			
Expenses 100			
Experiments 20	£20	£200 0 0	£20 0 0
Practical Scheme			
Salary of J. J. 100			
Expenses 100			
Egg stations 20			
Banders 20			
Hardware 20	£200	£105 11 0	£100 0 0
III. Horticultural scheme 150		£97 10 0	£50 0 0
IV. Cottage Gardens 200			
Royal scheme 100		£25 0 0	£20 0 0
V. Flower Show scheme 100		£20 0 0	£20 0 0
VI. Show scheme & other items			
Farm produce, Nuttyans			
Artisan's 100		£100 0 0	£100 0 0
VII. Live Stock scheme 100		£20 0 0	£20 0 0
VIII. Administrative expenses 100		£70 0 0	£20 0 0
IX. Printing & Stationery			
(Station stamps 10)			
Special letter 100			
Secretary expenses 100		£20 0 0	£20 0 0
	£207 10 0	£107 10 0	£200 0 0
Repaid by Agricultural 100 0 0			
from County 100 0 0			
	£207 10 0		

⁷⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 10 November 1902, pp.9-10

TABLE 2 – AGRICULTURAL & TECHNICAL SCHEME FOR 1904-5⁷¹

<u>Schemes.</u>	
1. Live stock	
139 nominations to mares.	£375
34 premiums to bulls	510
10 premiums to boars	50
Expenses	£50
Total	865
Amount payable from Rates, £327:4:0.	
By Department £538:16:0.	
2. Agricultural Instruction:	
Salary of Instructor.	£200
Expenses of Instructor.	100
Experiments	50
Total	350.
Payable from Rates £200 By Department. £150	
3. Poultry.	
Salary of Instructor for 12 months at £2 per week.	£100
Expenses of Instructor.	150
30 eggs stations	100
16 Turkey premiums	32
Contributions towards cost of	
11 houses	32
Contributions towards cost of birds	
11 stations	66
Total	
Payable by Rates £168 By Department £282	
4. Butter-making	
Salary of two Instructors for 26 weeks at £2 per week.	£104
Expenses of same.	00

⁷¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 12 September 1904, pp.3-5. The Scheme was considered in conjunction with Mr Gordon from the Department of Agriculture.

9. Administrative expenses. £220:-
 10. Portion of Secretary's salary chargeable to Agriculture Expenses £116.
 £25.
 Total £556.
 Payable by rates, £152:0:0. By Department, £321:12:0
 11. Subsidies to shows. £300.
 Payable by Rates, £150:0:0 By Department, £150.
 12. Grant for Fertilisers and Feeding stuffs Act. £20.
 Payable by rates, £8. By Department, £12.
 The following regulations were made in connection with the Live Stock Scheme, viz:-
Horses Valuation of farmers eligible to compete in the Non-Congested districts of the County not to exceed £150, two-thirds of the nominations to be reserved as far as possible for farmers under £20 valuation. The valuation of farmers in the Congested districts not to exceed £12. Breeds of stallions to be selected for more thoroughbred and Agricultural.
 The following centres were fixed for shows of mares, viz:- Ballyshannon, Long, Dunbarry, Raphoe, Ballybofey, Glenties, Dungloe, Glenties, Ballybofey, Ballybofey, Ballybofey and Carradonagh.
Cattle Breeds of bulls eligible for premiums, Shorthorn and Aberdeen Angus and Galloway in Congested Districts.
 The same rules that were in force last year as to valuation, of owners of cows, &c. were adopted for the 1905 Scheme.
Sheep No limit as to valuation of owners of &c. was fixed.

(ii) Locomotion Expenses

In the early days of the Committee, travelling expenses for itinerant instructors were known as locomotion allowances and were sought at a rate of £50 from the Department for the 1902-1903 Technical Scheme. However, the Department reduced the amount to £30 each which the Committee felt to be wholly inadequate 'having regard to the size of the County'⁷² and duly sought to have this increased to £40. The Department declined to grant this which

left the Committee with having to refuse adoption of the Scheme until the increase was made.⁷³ As it turned out the Department bowed to this pressure as they eventually approved the 1902-1903 Technical Scheme, which was confirmed in a letter read out at the meeting of 13 October 1902.

When it came to Committee business, travelling rates are not made explicitly clear. However, the minutes of 21 July 1902 reveal that 'A letter from the Lord Mayor of Cork and other members of the

⁷² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 August 1902, p.3.

⁷³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 22 September 1902, p.4

Cork Technical Instruction Committee relative to a Congress of the Technical Committees to be held in the Municipal Building, Cork on the 7th August and requesting the Committee to send two delegates having been read, the Secretary was authorised to send the names of any two members whom he might ascertain would be visiting Cork about that date.’⁷⁴

The Committee also tried to procure reduced railway fares for officers carrying out business on behalf of the Committee. However, they were informed at the meeting of 12 November 1907 that ‘*the Committee of the County Donegal Joint Railways Committee could not see their way to grant reduced fares to the Committees Officers*’⁷⁵ so the Committee pursued the matter further through the County Council to try and procure reduced fares for their own Council staff and staff appointed by them to the Agriculture and Technical Affairs Committee. The matter was finally resolved, unsatisfactorily, when the Department wrote to the Committee to inform them that they had received a communication stating that ‘*the Managers of the Irish Railways at a meeting held there [at the Irish Railway Clearing House, London] had decided not to grant special cheap travelling facilities to County Committees in regard to the Railway fares charged to the Itinerant Instructors employed by them, but that certain companies has reserved to themselves liberty of action.*’⁷⁶

(iii) Employers Liability

The first considerations of insurance for the Committee arose in 1907 due to the introduction of the Workmen’s Compensation Act 1906. The Committee accepted a quotation from the Royal Insurance Company for ‘*a policy covering the Committees Liability at a ratio of 7/6 per cent*

on the wages paid.’⁷⁷ The following year, the quotation of the General Accident, Fire and Life Assurance Corporation Ltd at the rate of 5/ per cent in the wages paid was accepted.⁷⁸

(iv) Local Government Audit

Where one has money, there are auditors and they have been a feature of Committee life since the early 1900s. The minutes of 07 October 1907 tell us that the Committee had been paying a fee for this service for a number of years when it was realised that the fee was being ‘*extracted illegally*’ from them;

‘The Secretary having brought under the notice of the Committee that it had been recently decided by the King’s Bench that the Local Government Board had no power to charge a County Committee fees for auditing their accounts where the County Council paid a fee of £100 a year for Audit purposes, and that, consequently the Board had illegally exacted fees from the Committee for past five years, it was moved by Mr McArthur seconded by the Revd. J.C. Cannon and resolved ‘That this Committee hereby call upon the Local Government Board for Ireland to refund to them the sum of £42, being the amount of fees illegally exacted by the board for Audit purposes from the Committee under their Sealed Order.’⁷⁹

The Local Government Board however, wrote to the Committee ‘*stating that they were unable to comply with the Committees request.*’⁸⁰

The Committee protested against this and instructed the Secretary ‘*to bring the matter under the notice of the Chief Secretary of Ireland and request him to direct the Board to make this refund.*’⁸¹ Eventually the matter was let go when the County Council decided to take no action on it.⁸²

⁷⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 July 1902, p.4

⁷⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 12 November 1904, p.5

⁷⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 01 October 1908, p.4

⁷⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 12 November 1907, p.4

⁷⁸ County Donegal Committee of Agriculture. Minutes of the meeting of 10 November 1908, p.6

⁷⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 07 October 1907, p.3

⁸⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 09 December 1907, p.2

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 01 October 1908, p.4

1.4 STUDY VISITS

The notion of learning from others, including those in other countries is not a modern phenomenon. As far back as 1904, the Donegal Committee was getting involved in study visits as reflected in the minutes;

'A communication dated the 2nd inst and referring to a previous communication of 13th April 1904 from the Department relative to the appointment of a representative to accompany a deputation of Irish Farmers which the Department are sending to visit the Continent during the coming summer was read. The Department request the Committee to furnish the name and address of the farmer selected to represent this County on the deputation, with a statement of his qualifications in connection with the flax industry and any suggestions the Committee desire to make regarding the time at which the visit should take place.

It was proposed by Mr Magee and seconded by Father Stephens that Mr Patrick Kelly of Ballyarrell, Killygordon be appointed to represent this County in the forthcoming deputation to the Continent - it having been stated that Mr Kelly has been all his life intimately connected with the flax industry. It was suggested that about the middle of July would be a suitable time for the deputation to visit the Continent.⁸³

1.5 SCHOOLS

The first suggestions for setting up schools in the county came towards the end of 1902 when the Committee adopted a resolution from the North West of Ireland Agricultural Society requesting same. This resolution stated;

'That we the members of the North-West of Ireland Agricultural Society, beg to point out to the Vice-President of the Department of Agriculture in Ireland the serious disadvantages under which the youth of the North-West district are placed in the matter of obtaining scientific

training in Agriculture or any of the allied branches owing to the fact that there are no schools nearer than those at Dublin and Cork. More especially does this state of affairs affect girls who have now to travel to Cork if they wish to undergo a course of training. We consider that the North-West of Ireland has strong claims to have a properly equipped school for the practical training of both sexes established in a convenient centre, and we believe that if established, it would be much availed of. The Northern farmers have shown in the past that they are both practical and progressive. They still desire to keep abreast of the times, and to have their sons and daughters better educated in all the different branches of Agriculture, but with the vast majority of the expense of sending them under the present system puts a practical and scientific training out of the question. Besides, we believe that the establishment of such a school would be a great stimulus to the farmers themselves - would act as an object lesson them and create a healthy interest in their everyday work. We are convinced that such a scheme is worthy of the attention of the Department and we request their favourable consideration of the suggestion.⁸⁴

This request was finally granted twelve years later in 1914 when schools opened in Ballyshannon and Letterkenny.

CONCLUSION

By 1904 the work of the Committee had increased to the extent that the Secretary *'applied to the Committee to be granted an allowance for clerical assistance on the grounds of the large amount of extra work thrown upon him by the inclusion of the congested areas of the County.⁸⁵* In essence the business of the Committee was that of the County Donegal Committee of Agriculture and Technical Instruction from 1900 until 1905 when in that year the Department wrote to the County Council announcing the separation of the two Committees into the Committee for Agriculture and the (Joint) Committee for Technical Instruction;

⁸³ County Donegal Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 13 May 1904, p.3

⁸⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 13 October 1902, pp.3-4

⁸⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 11 April 1904, p.2

Department of Agriculture and
Technical Instruction for Ireland,
Urban Districts Office, Dublin.

17th April 1905.

Donegal

I have to acquaint you, for the information of the County Council of Donegal, that the Department transmitted this the present Committee of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, appointed under Section 14 (1) of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899, being Committee appointed by the County Council and to be held in Urban Districts, and that the Council of Urban Districts are not legally entitled to delegate to a Committee of a County Council their rights and responsibilities in regard to Technical Instruction, even though members of the Urban District Councils act as and a Committee either in members of the County Council or as an opted authority.

In the opinion of the Department it would, in many instances, be desirable in the interests of Technical Instruction to formulate separate schemes for the County and for the Urban Districts, and in order to provide for the economical and efficient administration of the Technical Instruction funds for the areas controlled by the present Committee for County Donegal, the Department would suggest the appointment, under Section 14 (2) of the Act, of a Joint Committee to administer Schemes of Technical Instruction in non-agricultural subjects, with a local account distinct from that for the County Agricultural Schemes. This Committee, which should be designated the "Joint Technical Instruction Committee for County Donegal", would consist of representatives of the County Council and of the Urban District Councils, the number of representatives of each contributing authority being proportional to the total funds which would be available for an independent scheme under each authority. The "total funds available" is here understood to mean the joint fund formed by the local contribution from rates, and the contribution from the Department's endowment.

The representatives would in each case include Councillors, but might also include persons who, not being Councillors, have special knowledge of educational questions. These latter persons would be called ad hoc members, and would in all cases be appointed by the contributing Councils. The majority of the total representatives should be Councillors.

The Department are advised that a Joint Committee, constituted as expected above, would be a Statutory Committee within the meaning of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act of 1899, but that, owing to its joint character, its tenure of office would determine on each occasion with that of any of the local authorities who are represented upon it. The Joint Committee must, accordingly, be re-appointed after the dissolution of the Urban District Council in January of ~~the~~ year, and after the re-election of the County Council in June of every third year.

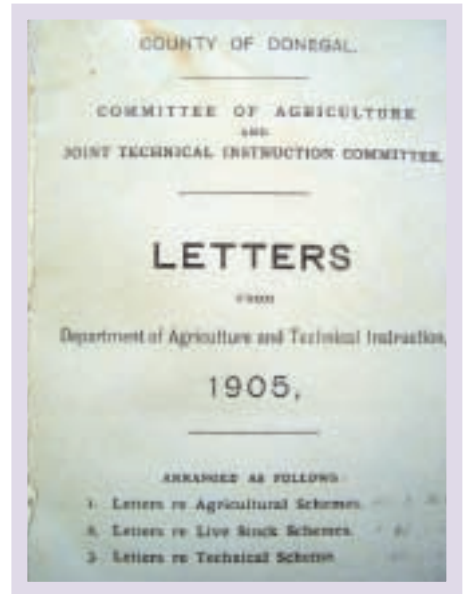
The Secretary

County Council of Donegal

It is not clear whether the Joint Technical Instruction Committee was totally separated from the County Council at this stage. Correspondence from the Department in relation to the appointment of a solicitor for the Vocational Education Committee in 1936 illustrates the issue;

'In the opinion of the Department the Solicitor to the County Council has no legal claim to be regarded as the Committee's Solicitor by virtue of his employment by the Council. The old County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee was not a Committee of the County Council, and neither is the County Donegal Vocational Education Committee which is a separate body corporate with perpetual succession and Official Seal. It is suggested that you refer Mr McMullan to Sections 7 and 26(2) of the Vocational Education Act, 1930. Captain Scott said – "The Department was wrong, that the old County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee was a committee of the County Council – there is no doubt whatever as to this – vide old Standing Orders of the County Council (1929) No. 108, page 63, which Standing Orders were approved by the Minister. Mr McMullan is an officer of the Council, vide Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, Section 109 which defines 'Office' and 'Officer'. As such officer he was engaged in duties relating to functions, powers and duties transferred to the Council to the Vocational Education Committee by the Vocational Education Act, 1930 and by Section 99 (1) of that Act he became the Legal Officer of the Committee'".⁸⁶

Nevertheless, the work of the Committee in those first five years really was that of agricultural and technical matters, mainly concerning flax production, payment of prizes for various agricultural show, payment of animal premiums and technical instruction classes in a variety of subjects such as cookery, dressmaking, sprigging and crochet lace, laundry work, manual instruction (smith work), agriculture, poultry, beekeeping, butter-making, horticulture etc. With the separation of the two committees, the business of the Committee was to become wholly concerned with education and training through the medium of technical instruction.



⁸⁶ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 15 September 1936, p.3

⁸⁷ County Donegal Committee of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1905. Copyright of Donegal County Archives Service.

2. 1905-1930

INTRODUCTION

The work of the Committee continued unabated from 1905. During this period their biggest achievements were the establishment of a number of Technical Schools around the county which began to shape the work of the Committee as we know it today. Differences in how the Committee ran its business in comparison to today are quite stark during this period, although it is also clear that some methods and regulations have not changed since then.

2.1 FINANCES

Finances have always been an ongoing concern for the Committee and this particular period was no exception. A number of interesting points are worth highlighting.

In 1906 a circular from the Department requested the Committee to *'issue an instruction prohibiting teachers and other officers in their employment to accept presentations or gifts in recognition of their public services.'*⁸⁸ However, a year later it was pointed out by the Secretary that *'it had been brought under his notice that the rule made by the Committee prohibiting their teachers from accepting presents was not being observed by some of the teachers and he was instructed to again remind the teachers of the rule and to request their strict compliance therewith.'*⁸⁹

In 1910, the average rent paid for a room to hold classes was four shillings a week, to include fire and light.⁹⁰

In 1912 it was resolved to appoint *'a finance committee consisting of all the members of the Committee to examine the accounts before each meeting and that the Committee be summoned to meet a short time before the general meeting'*⁹¹

Financing the scheme of course, was not always easy, as this resolution made by the Cork County Borough Technical Instruction Committee and adopted by the Donegal Committee at their meeting of December 1918 highlights;

*'That we record our profound dissatisfaction with the administration of the Technical Instruction Act in this County and that we condemn the inadequacy of the financial endowments, whereby Technical education in Ireland, in common with education in general, is starved and stunted despite the fact that Ireland contributes 20 million pounds annually in taxation to the British Treasury in excess of the sums collected for Irish Government and administration in general.'*⁹²

Attendance Grants were paid to each of the local Committees for instructors based on their attending and teaching classes. However, this got into difficulty in 1918 because of the mass closure of classes towards the end of that year due to an influenza epidemic that swept the country. The Committee passed a resolution referring to this at the meeting of 10 December 1918 which read;

'That inasmuch as the attendance grants which will be earned by the Technical Instruction Committees throughout Ireland this year will be very reduced on account of Technical Schools and classes having to be closed owing to the

⁸⁸ County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 03 July 1906, p.3

⁸⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 04 June 1907, p.2

⁹⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 11 February 1910, p.2

⁹¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 March 1912, p.2

⁹² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 10 December 1918, p.3

Influenza Epidemic and in as much as it will be impossible for most Committees to continue in 1919-20 their existing schemes of instruction unless the losses sustained in this way by the Committees are made good to them, we call upon the Department to at once take such steps as will secure that the same course as is adopted by the Commissioners of National Education will be followed, viz: that each Committee will receive at least an equal amount of grants as to what it received under the 1917-1918 Scheme.’⁹³

World War I also had an effect on the business of the Committee as they took the decision to pay war bonuses to a number of instructors ‘of 2/- a week from 1st November 1916, for the duration of the war, and for six months after peace is declared’⁹⁴ to cover the higher cost of living being experienced.

Costs had to be considered at all times. For example, in regard to the lighting of the Letterkenny Technical School, the Committee were informed at the meeting of 25 November 1919 that the cost of gas was to be increased, so it was directed that the matter be brought before the local committee for consideration and ‘to give direction as to the advisability of continuing the present lighting by gas or of adopting some alternative means of lighting.’ As it transpired however, the Committee were to continue with the use of gas ‘as the Committee considered that owing to the initial cost of buying oil lamps, little saving would be effective for the present session and further that an electric lighting Scheme would probably be in existence next session.’⁹⁶ As it turned out, it was to be another number of years before electricity would come to Letterkenny or most of the County.

By the time the Committee was to change from the Technical Instruction Committee to the Vocational Education Committee in 1930, the finances for the Technical Instruction Scheme had increased somewhat as follows;

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 07 November 1916, p.2

⁹⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 07 November 1919, p.1

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.1

TABLE 3 – TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION SCHEME FOR 1930/31 ⁹⁷

Technical Instruction Scheme 1930/31

In the motion of the Chairman seconded by the Deputy, the scheme and pro-
 operation was continued on the same lines of session 1929/30, the estimated income and
 expenditure being as follows:-

<u>Estimated Income</u>		
I. Local Contributions:-		
Grant from Govt		
(A) Aid from L. Council (S. & L. C.)	£ 34	4
(B) - - - - - Donegal & Letterkenny L.D. Councils	£ 73	107
II. Grants from the Department:-		
(A) Normal Grant	466	
(B) Special Grant in respect of class-rooms & offices	25	
(C) Grants under programme of schools - 1930/31	210	2691
Students Fees and sale of products of classes		25
	<u>Total</u>	<u>£ 3483</u>
<u>Estimated Expenditure:-</u>		
Salaries of Staff (22)		2735
Travelling and maintenance of teacher (Technical Schools)		60
Travelling expenses of Placement Teacher		30
Rents, Insurance, Fuel, Light and Bleaching (Schools)		320
Repairs to premises		70
Consultants wages (7000)		166
Prizes		70
Class Material		110
Annual classes (Rent, removal of equipment etc.)		170
Equipment (new and renewals)		60
Administrative Expenses:		
Salary of Clerk	22	
Printing Stationery and Stationery	20	
Residual Expenses	27	
	<u>Total</u>	<u>£ 3976</u>

The anticipated deficit of £493 will be met from a credit balance on hand.

⁹⁷ Tirconaill Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 15 April 1930, p.5

2.2 INSTRUCTORS

Instruction was provided in various subjects such as lace, domestic science, Irish, metal workshop, technical instruction and engineering (whereby an engineering instructor in 1930 was paid a 'salary of £150 per annum plus appropriate cost of living bonus'⁹⁸). One of the many objectives of the technical instructors was to provide enough training to ensure that an industry could get up and running in a particular area as can be seen from the minutes of 17 July 1911 which stated that 'with reference to Drumbollogue and Rashedog Sprigging classes, the Committee decided not to continue the teacher there as she had been already five or six years in that district and they were of opinion that the industry should be by now sufficiently established.'⁹⁹ This also happened if it looked like an industry was not going to become established as these minutes continued to tell us that 'the Committee also had under consideration the question of continuing the Stranorlar and Dooish lace classes as the teacher had been conducting these classes for a period of about six years and the Department had written stating that their Inspector had reported that they were not likely, for various reasons, to develop into productive industries and desiring the Committee to take into consideration the advisability of discontinuing these classes at the close of the present session.'¹⁰⁰

In 1908 the Department introduced the rule 'prohibiting the canvassing of members by candidates for appointment,'¹⁰¹ one which still stands today.

One of the starkest contrasts to the work of today's Committee is revealed in the minutes of this period, in terms of the level of detail of some of the work the Committee dealt with

when, for example, we are told 'Mr O'Neill, [who was to become the first Chief Executive Officer] Manual Instructor wrote applying for permission to order a new vice for one of his benches to replace one which had got broken and he was authorised to do so.'¹⁰² Another example of this detail can be seen from the following entry in the Committee minutes of 21 October 1930:

Application by Mrs Margaret Barnett, Domestic Science Teacher, Carndonagh School: Mrs Barnett applied for the following articles of equipment:

*4 scrubbing brushes
4 egg beaters
6 basins
1 tablecloth
6 tea cloths
6 netted cloths
1 preserving pan*

Mrs Barnett also applied to have the kitchen floor covered with linoleum.

On the motion of Mr. Faulkner, seconded by Mr. Kerr, it was unanimously agreed to supply the articles of the equipment and the necessary linoleum.

This level of detail of the Committee's work continued very much up until the mid-1970s. In today's terms this appears to be rather pedantic and illustrates how much work practices have developed over the last thirty years.

The problems associated with providing itinerant instruction in a county as large as Donegal were highlighted in the minutes of 30 June 1914 when 'the Secretary mentioned that the sewing machines were receiving considerable damage when being forwarded by rail and the Committee decided...to get travelling cases made for them.'¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 30 September 1930, p.2

⁹⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 July 1911, p.4

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 July 1911, pp.4-5

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 08 June 1908, p.3

¹⁰² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 January 1912, p.2

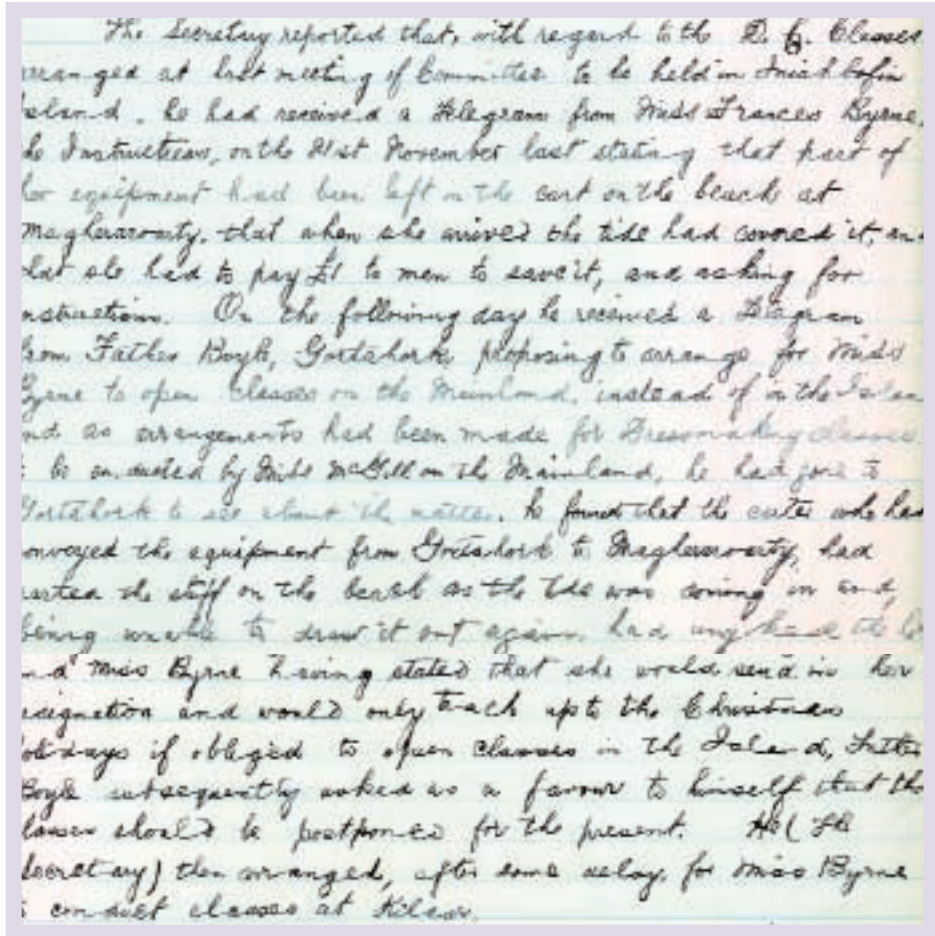
¹⁰³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 October 1930, p.3

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 30 June 1914, p.5

2.3 INSTRUCTION ON THE ISLANDS

If life as an itinerant instructor on the mainland presented its problems, they were worse for those who took their instruction to the islands.

An extract from the minutes of 17 December 1912 give us an insight into the difficulties experienced in providing instruction in the county in general and the islands in particular;



The Secretary reported that, with regard to the B. G. Classes arranged at last meeting of Committee to be held in Inish Beg Island, he had received a Telegram from Miss Frances Byrne, the Instructor, on the 21st November last stating that part of her equipment had been left on the cart on the beach at Magheracrossy, that when she arrived the tide had covered it, and that she had to pay £1 to men to save it, and asking for instructions. On the following day he received a Telegram from Father Boyle, Gortahork, proposing to arrange for Miss Byrne to open Classes on the Mainland, instead of in the Islands, and as arrangements had been made for Dressmaking classes to be conducted by Miss McMill on the Mainland, he had gone to Gortahork to see about the matter. He found that the cutter who had conveyed the equipment from Gortahork to Magheracrossy, had cast the stuff on the beach as the tide was coming in and, being unable to draw it out again, had very nearly lost it and Miss Byrne having stated that she would send in her resignation and would only teach up to the Christmas holidays if obliged to open classes in the Islands, Father Boyle subsequently asked as a favour to himself that the classes should be postponed for the present. He (the Secretary) then arranged, after some delay, for Miss Byrne to conduct classes at Kileeshane.

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⁹⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 December 1912, p.2

All of this of course meant that various financial claims were sent into the Committee for a range of costs including *'an account received from the man (Barney Ferrey) who carted the equipment and left it on the beach, for 12/- for carting it and 2/- for carting a new piece of stove pipes from Falcarragh station to Gortahork; and account from Miss Byrne for £1 paid to the men for saving the equipment; a claim from Miss Byrne for a maintenance allowance of 6/8 a night from the 19th November to the 2nd Decr. (amounting to £3) while waiting for classes to be arranged for a new centre and an application from Miss Byrne to be supplied with a new stove, the one belonging to her equipment having been rendered useless owing to its immersion in the tide.'*¹⁰⁶

This proved a costly lesson for the Committee who directed the Secretary *'to notify the Instructors that, in future, they will be held responsible for the safe custody of the equipment, unless that they can show that any mishap they may meet with is not due to their neglect.'*¹⁰⁷

As it turned out, none of the claims were paid as the Local Government Auditor told them that if they paid them *'he would be obliged to surcharge the Committee with the amount [the account for the man who carted the equipment] and that he would also likely have to surcharge the Committee with the amount paid [amount paid by Miss Byrne to the men].'*¹⁰⁸

2.4 CARETAKING

In terms of cleaning rooms used for classes, caretakers in the classes provided around the county were few and far between. The minutes of 10 November 1908 reveal that the Inspectors report on the working of the Technical Scheme for 1907-8

*'reported favourably in general on the working of the classes and their results but stated that in the case of the Domestic Economy Classes, the Registers had not been carefully kept, nor had sufficient attention been given to the cleanliness and arrangement of the class rooms. Miss McCaffrey the Instructress wrote stating that the Departments' Inspectors expected the class rooms to be cleaned and done up before opening the classes and also the floor to be scrubbed every week and suggesting that the Committee should allow a small amount for this work. The Committee decided on the motion of Father Doherty, seconded by Monsignor Walker to authorise Miss McCafferty to get the class rooms washed out at the opening of the classes, but directed the Secretary to inform her that she is to get the pupils attending the classes to scrub out the floors each week, as this should be part of their Instruction.'*¹⁰⁹

When the two Technical Schools in Ballyshannon and Letterkenny were opened in 1914, caretakers were taken on for them and *'the Committee fixed the remuneration to be paid to them at 10/- per week each, payable monthly.'*¹¹⁰ Their duties included having to *'attend the heating apparatus, dust the school each day, wash out the school once a fortnight, be in attendance each night from before the beginning of the classes until after the termination of same, and be responsible for locking up and seeing that everything is in order and safe, and also to assist the Principal of the School in any way that he might require.'*¹¹¹ The main Committee also added the addition *'that they are to be required to provide attendance at the Domestic Economy Classes, and wash up after same, and also lock up after the Day Classes as well as after the night classes.'*¹¹² The caretaker of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 14 January 1913, p.4

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 10 November 1908, pp.2-3. The writer of the minutes spelled the teachers name in two different ways.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 13 October 1914, pp.4-5

¹¹¹ Ballyshannon Local Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 23 September 1914, p.1. The word fortnight was spelt this way by the writer of the minutes.

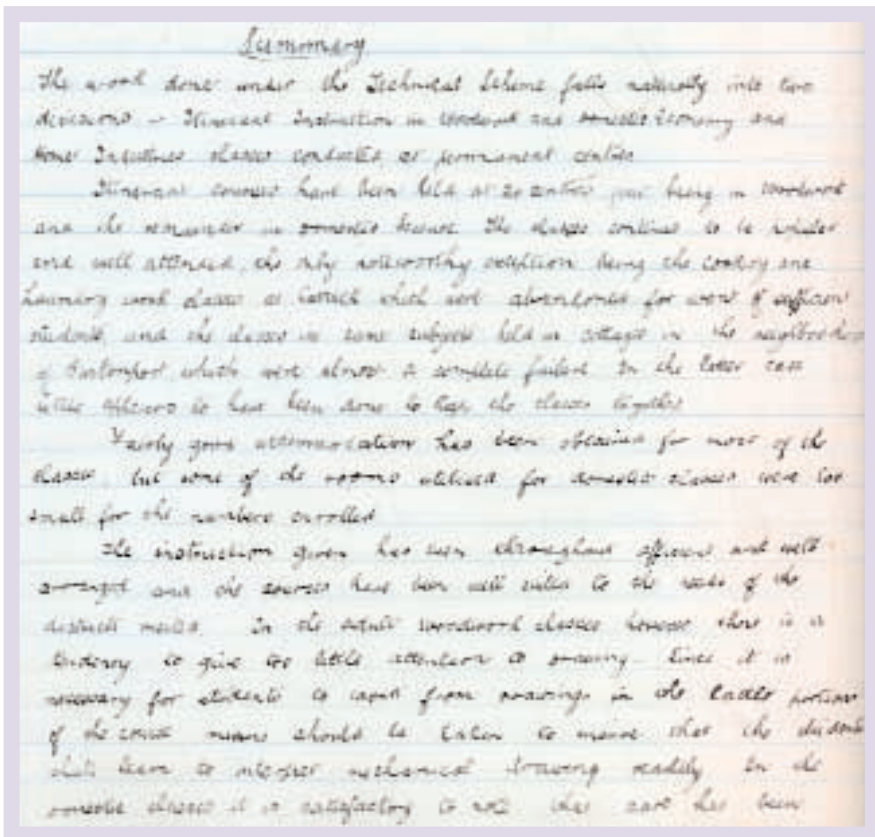
¹¹² County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 13 October 1914, p.5

the Letterkenny Technical School also had to 'set and light the fires each day, clean out the grates...and be responsible for...seeing that the fires are all extinguished.'¹¹³

Mr Patrick Patton was appointed the first caretaker of Ballyshannon Technical School¹¹⁴ while Mr Alfred Peoples was appointed the first caretaker of Letterkenny Technical School.¹¹⁵

2.5 INSPECTORS REPORT

The minutes of 08 October 1912 provide a copy of the Department's summary of the Inspector's report on the working of the Scheme. It tells us that at this stage in 1912 the work of the Technical Scheme had two distinct sections – 'Itinerant Instruction in Woodwork and Home Industries classes conducted at permanent centres.'¹¹⁶



¹¹³ Letterkenny Local Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 29 September 1914, p.2

¹¹⁴ Ballyshannon Local Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 23 September 1914, p.2

¹¹⁵ Letterkenny Local Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 29 September 1914, p.2. Mr Peoples died on 20 January 1923.

¹¹⁶ County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 08 October 1912, p.3

taken to cultivate visitors and hotels. The students doing home learning should however be required to wear white gloves.

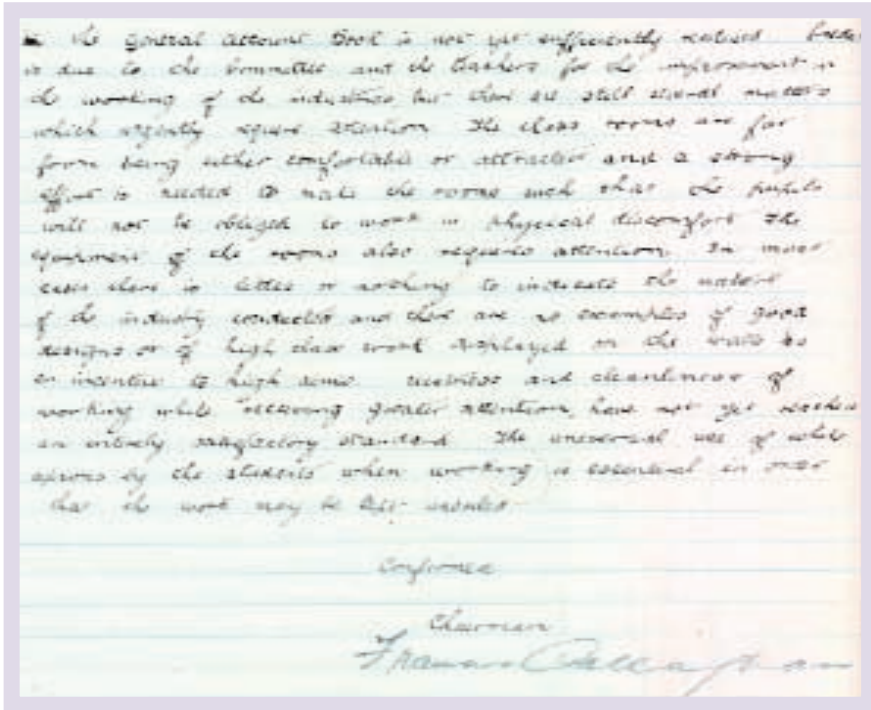
The equipment for the Short-cut classes has been kept in excellent condition.

Less classes have been conducted at jobs and shopping at such centres. These classes have in the past met with limited success owing to time constraints. In the first place it is not realised that the efficiency content of an industry depends on its being continuous permanently in the same centre and in the second classes have too often been chosen in districts which were unsuitable on account of the fact that the local industry was different from the one introduced. It is satisfactory to see that it has now been decided to continue all classes which show signs of success. The choice of centres however still remains somewhat haphazard, owing to the year to year changes in resources and technology which are situated in better districts fails owing to insufficient effort being put into the underserviceability of this policy. The industry at Bellshannon has made very good progress and is now an established success at Carrigrohane, while the progress is somewhat slow and the turnover small. The instruction is efficient and the projects of the class are satisfactory.

The Knitting industry was depressed during a great portion of the year but notwithstanding this difficulty, the class centre at Clontarf has made an excellent beginning and should, with capable management, develop into one of the best home industries. The class sewing class has made progress although the number of students is limited.

In the ornithology and basketry centres the very successful classes which has been held for some years, were unfortunately discontinued during portion of the year but were mainly re-opened later. The former workers gradually returned but in the interval the standard of work had fallen considerably. In basketry there is an improvement but the success of the class has been retarded by the existence of local agencies. Efforts should be made to secure a more regular attendance in the centre, and to obtain more remunerative work.

Generally speaking there is a prospect of developing successful industries in the vicinity of the present policy is vigorously advanced to. The activities have in the centre have well been but the necessity of gradually entering into each construction.



This report, like all of the Inspectors Reports on the work of the Co Donegal Committee over this period, was a generally positive one containing plenty of ideas for improvement.

2.6 TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

The first mention of technical schools comes in 1913 when the minutes of the Committee meeting of 14 January tell us that 'a resolution of the County Tyrone Technical Committee with reference to the urgent necessity for a building for Technical schools was, on the motion of Father Doherty seconded by Father McMenamin adopted and the Secretary was directed to write and request the members of Parliament for the County to press on the Government to provide funds for the purpose in their next budget.'¹⁷⁷

The minutes of 20 March 1914 tell us that a Dr Garrett of the Department (of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland) was present at the meeting. A letter was read from the Department which included 'a Schedule dealing with the financial transactions of the Committee in respect of the Scheme of Technical Instruction in non-Agricultural subjects which was in operation in the County during the Academic year 1912-13...The statement showed that there was a balance of £830 : 14 : 10 to the credit of the Committee on the 31st July and the Secretary said that he estimated there would be a balance of close on £1000 at the close of the present academic year.'¹⁷⁸ The good financial management of the Committee that led to this healthy balance was to lead to the creation of Technical schools in the County. The minutes go onto to further tell us that;

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 14 January 1913, p.6

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 March 1914, pp.2-3

The Secretary mentioned that he had been considering that, if the Committee thought it advisable, it might be possible to establish two Technical Schools in the County with the balance which would be available on the 31st July next and that he had had an interview with Dr Barrett on the matter.

Dr Barrett informed the Committee that he thought it would be quite possible to establish two schools with the £2000 which is expected to be available, and gave particulars as to the expenditure which would be incurred in connection with same. He suggested Ballyshannon and Letterkenny as the two towns in which the schools could be established with the best chance of success being the two towns with the largest population in the County.

The Committee instructed the Secretary to mention specially in the Agenda for next meeting that this question will be under consideration.

The Committee also authorised the Secretary, at the suggestion of Dr Barrett, to visit Limavady and Magherafelt Technical Schools before next meeting to see how they are ~~worked~~, etc.

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The next meeting of 21st April 1914 considered the matter further. The Secretary submitted a report on his visits to the schools in Limavady and Magherafelt and reported that *'the people of Limavady and Magherafelt Rural districts had been so satisfied with the results attained that they had recently, in the case of Limavady, acquired and, in the case of Magherafelt, erected handsome schools on loans obtained from the Board of Works, the district Council of each*

*district having agreed to levy a farthing rate to pay off same.'*¹⁰⁹

(i) Ballyshannon & Letterkenny

After further discussion, the proposal *'that we establish two schools in Ballyshannon and Letterkenny'*¹¹⁰ was carried. *'It was then resolved...to fix the salary of the Principal of the schools, who will also conduct a short course of*

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 March 1914, p.3

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 April 1914, p.2

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.3

*instruction in some other part of the County in the Summer, at £175 per annum, with third class Railway fare, car hire when necessary and a maintenance allowance of 4/- per night when absent from his headquarters on the business of the Committee. It was further resolved...to appoint Mr James O Neill, the Committee's present Manual Instructor, as Principal of the schools from 1st August 1914 on the same conditions as to tenure of office as he has also been appointed on each year. It was also resolved...to authorise the Secretary to make all arrangements for the establishment of the schools.'*¹²²

The matter was further progressed at the Committee's meeting of 22 May 1914 when it was reported that;

'The Secretary (reported) that with Dr Garrett of the Department and Mr O Neill he had visited Ballyshannon for the purpose of trying to secure a suitable building for the Technical School to be established there, and had inspected several houses. He was of opinion that a building in the Mall belonging to the Sheils' Trustees was the most suitable of any he had seen but Dr Garrett did not consider it suitable. It would take a considerable sum of money (roughly estimated at £400) to make the necessary improvements and put in a heating installation. He understood that the Trustees would be prepared to carry out all the improvements desired by the Committee and put in a heating installation if the Committee would contribute the sum of £75 towards the cost of the improvements and take the house on a lease for 10 years (surrendable at the Committee's option at the end of five years on the Committee's giving six months notice) at the rent of £30 per annum. The Secretary also gave particulars of some of the other buildings inspected. The Committee decided...to take the Mall House on the terms mentioned, subject to the Department's approval.

*The Secretary also reported that he had visited Letterkenny with Mr O Neill and inspected the only two houses there which were in any way suitable for school purposes viz:- a vacant house in Southwell Terrace and a vacant house in the Main St. known as Henderson's premises. This latter was much the more suitable and could be had at a rent of £20 per annum on a similar lease, as in the Ballyshannon case, the Committee to make all the necessary improvements and repairs (probably costing £50 or £60) at their own expense. The Committee agreed...to take these premises on the terms stated.'*¹²³

The use of these two buildings was duly sanctioned by the Department so there was really no time lost in establishing the schools. The first technical schools opened in the county in Ballyshannon and Letterkenny in October 1914 under the principalship of Mr James O Neill, who was to go to become the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of County Donegal Vocational Education Committee in 1930. Individual local committees were set up for the two schools who set class times - it was 'decided that Night Classes should begin at 7.30pm and Day Classes at 3.00pm'¹²⁴ for Ballyshannon and 'that night classes should begin at 7.30pm and Day Classes at 4.30pm'¹²⁵ for Letterkenny.

Mr O Neill devised a system of fees, prizes and scholarships for the two schools which were adopted by the Committee. The fees were;

A. Introductory Course	£0 : 2 : 6
B. Specialised Classes	
one subject	: 4 : 6
two or more subjects	: 3 : 0
C. Schoolboys Class	
(woodwork and drawing)	: 1 : 6 ¹²⁶

The proposed prizes and scholarships were;

¹²² Ibid. This was changed in September to second class railway fare and a larger maintenance allowance of 5/- per night after Mr O Neill wrote to the Committee stating that his cost of living would be greater and his work more arduous. (County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 01 September 1914, p.3)

¹²³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 22 May 1914, p.3

¹²⁴ Ballyshannon Local Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 04 August 1914, p.2

¹²⁵ Letterkenny Local Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 31 July 1914, p.1

¹²⁶ County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 21 July 1914, p.2

*'Prizes will be awarded by the Committee to students in attendance at the school who diligently pursue a proper course of study. The prizes will be given in books, instruments and other articles likely to be of service to students in their studies.'*¹²⁷

The 'Conditions Governing the Award of Prizes' were as follows;

1. *The student must take up a course of study approved by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.*
2. *(a) Ninety per cent, if possible, attendance must be made to obtain a first prize
(b) Eighty per cent, if possible, attendance must be made to obtain a second prize*
3. *The student must have gained at least 50 per cent marks in the homework done during the session*
4. *An attendance of at least 20 hours must be made at an approved course in the session following that in which the other conditions have been fulfilled*

The 'Value of the Prizes' were;

Preparatory Course	First Class	4/-
	Second Class	2/6
Specialised Course	First Class	6/-
	Second Class	4/6

Students in day classes (i.e. classes commencing before 4 pm) are only eligible for prizes at half the above rates.

In terms of examinations, it was proposed that *'students who sit for the Department's examinations shall have half their examination fees paid by the Committee, provided they have made at least 80 per cent possible attendances at their classes up to date of entry.'*¹²⁸ In terms of scholarships, it was proposed that *'entrance scholarships will be awarded by the Committee to the 15 students in the school who obtain highest marks*

*for attendance and homework during the session 1914-15.'*¹²⁹

By November Ballyshannon had 144 students enrolled, undertaking introductory courses in English, mathematics, manual instruction and domestic economy; commercial courses in book-keeping, commercial arithmetic, commercial correspondence and shorthand; farmers courses in practical calculations and manual instruction; domestic science courses in advanced cookery and housewifery, cookery and housewifery, dressmaking and needlework and a schoolboys manual training course in drawing.¹³⁰ While the Letterkenny Technical School had 174 students enrolled, including a class of eight National School Teachers learning French.¹³¹

A social evening was also organised for students with the aim of encouraging them to continue with their classes.

(ii) Carndonagh & Buncrana

In terms of expanding the provision of Technical Schools around the county, the minutes of 20 November 1917 tell us that a resolution was passed *'that a Technical School on the lines of Ballyshannon and Letterkenny be established in Carndonagh to supply the wants of the Rural District of Inishowen which, owing to its geographical position is shut out from getting any benefit from the Schools in the County.'*¹³²

The Department however, did not look favourably on this proposal as *'it is considered, in the first instance, that owing to the small population of this centre – 668, according to the 1911 Census Returns – it is unlikely that a sufficient enrolment would be obtained to support a permanent school throughout a complete session. Furthermore, an account of the distance of Carndonagh from the permanent centres already established, it would be impossible to conduct the proposed school in conjunction with*

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.3

¹²⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 July 1914, p.3

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ballyshannon Local Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 18 November 1914, pp.1-2

¹³¹ Letterkenny Local Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 01 December 1914, p.1

¹³² County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 20 November 1917, p.2

the schools at Ballyshannon and Letterkenny and the appointment of additional staff, for whom there would be insufficient employment, would, accordingly, be necessitated. It would, of course, be possible to transfer the present Technical School staff to Carndonagh after the Easter term each year, and to conduct classes there for a short session before the summer vacation.’¹³³

This proposal was met with astonishment by the Committee who resolved ‘that this Committee consider the letter of the Department of the 22nd January, 1918, No. T 13370-17, re the Committee’s proposal to establish a Technical School at Carndonagh, as entirely unsatisfactory and regard the Department’s alternative proposal, that the staff at present engaged teaching at the Ballyshannon and Letterkenny Technical Schools should be transferred to Carndonagh after the Easter term each year to conduct classes there for a short session before the summer vacation, as absurd. The Committee desire to point out that they would not have to rely solely on the population of Carndonagh for students for the proposed school. There is a teeming population within a very short radius of Carndonagh and the Committee is confident that a large number of students from this area would attend the school. The Committee further desire to point out that, from its isolated geographical position, Inishowen is cut off from deriving any advantage from the existing Technical Schools in the County.’¹³⁴

The response from the Department was that ‘should the Committee, when formulating their Scheme, adduce reasons which will satisfy the Department as to the need for such an institution, and as to the prospects of success which will attend the project, the Department will be prepared to afford their favourable consideration to the inclusion in the Scheme of provision for the establishment of a permanent centre of Technical Instruction at Carndonagh.’¹³⁵

The Committee, in considering the Scheme of Technical Instruction for 1918-19, ‘considered the question of establishing Technical Schools at Carndonagh and Buncrana and...unanimously decided to establish Schools at both centres, subject, in the case of Buncrana, to the Department being satisfied with the undertaking given by the Buncrana Urban District Council to levy in future years a rate of 2d in the £1 for Technical Instruction purposes.’¹³⁶

It would appear that the Department approved of this proposal as they approved a special grant of £250 towards encouraging and helping the Committee with this task.¹³⁷

Finding premises in Buncrana was difficult as the Secretary found that ‘owing to Buncrana being such an important military and naval base at present, every house in or about it was occupied and not even rooms in separate houses could be obtained. In the circumstances it would not be possible to establish a school in Buncrana this session.’¹³⁸ After consulting with the Department, it was felt that ‘there was no reason why the Committee should not go on with the establishment this session with the school at Carndonagh and leave over the establishment of the Buncrana school until premises for same are available there.’¹³⁹ Financial assistance towards the cost of equipment was provided by the Congested Districts Board. Mr Martin Griffin, a commercial instructor at Armagh Municipal Technical School was appointed Principal on condition that he also conducted commercial classes in the Letterkenny Technical School until such time as the school was established in Buncrana. Mr George Clinghan was appointed the first caretaker of the school. Although it is not clear from the minutes, it would seem that the Carndonagh Technical School opened for business in October 1918.

¹³³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 26 February 1918, p.2

¹³⁴ Ibid. pp.2-3

¹³⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 31 May 1918, p.3

¹³⁶ Ibid., p.4

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.4

¹³⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 06 August 1918, p.3

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.4



Martin Griffin, who became the first Principal of the Carndonagh Technical School in 1918 and also became the first Principal of the Buncrana Technical School in 1925 until 1940.

(iii) Buncrana

The matter of premises for Buncrana was revisited in July 1919, but suitable premises were still not available. Itinerant classes were to continue for the meantime. The matter was revisited each year thereafter until a decision of sorts was taken in 1924 as *'it was decided to await developments in the Scheme of Technical Instruction before acquiring premises for a School at Buncrana.'*¹⁴⁰ This of course was met with protest from the Buncrana Urban District Council but was not just the Committee's opinion - it was also *'the considered opinion of the Department's Inspectors.'*¹⁴¹ The Council, who had collected rates towards the payment of Technical Instruction in the town over the previous two years in anticipation of a new

Technical School and had lodged it with the Committee, demanded a refund. The Committee were reluctant to do this until the matter was finally closed. An offer of premises in Buncrana was lost by the Council due to the delay in establishing a school. Eventually the Committee again wrote to the Department to enquire about establishing a school and finally received a favourable response in 1925 when the Department stated in a letter that *'it the Committee after careful examination of all the circumstances considered that a Technical School should be organised in Buncrana, the Department would raise no objection to this project being proceeded with.'*¹⁴² And so *'it was agreed to establish a School at this centre as requested by the Urban Council.'*¹⁴³ Again, although it is not clear from the minutes, it would seem that the Buncrana Technical School opened for business around September 1925 with a twenty year lease on the former Greenbay furniture shop in the Main Street (Flanagan's furniture shop today). Mr Griffin, the Principal of the Carndonagh Technical School was now to also become the Principal of the Buncrana Technical School, a post he held until 1940.

(iv) Milford

In 1927, consideration was given to establishing a Technical School in Milford but financial assistance could not be procured from the Department for it.¹⁴⁴ This was not mentioned again until 1934 (see next chapter) and only began to receive serious consideration at the Committee meeting of September 1945.

2.7 IRISH

Irish classes flourished across the county during this period. A *'report on occupation of pupils who attended Irish Classes during the session 1929/30'*¹⁴⁵ highlighted the various backgrounds from which those who availed of Irish classes came from;

¹⁴⁰ Tironaill Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 16 September 1924, p.1

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 28 October 1924, p.1

¹⁴² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 09 April 1925, p.2

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meetings of 14 June 1927, p.3 and 02 August 1927, p.3

¹⁴⁵ County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 21 October 1930, p.3

Occupations	No. of Pupils
Employees of Public Boards	27
Tradesmen	21
Teachers	94
Solicitors	1
Civic Guards	45
Shop Assistants	36
Bookkeepers and Clerks	17
Students	33
No Occupation stated	208
Solicitors' Clerks	4
Domestic Servants	18
Farm Labourers	42
Dressmakers	11
Farmers	118
Railway Officials	2
School Children	68
Shop Keepers	3
Customs Officials	13
Postal Officials	20
Total	781

2.8 HEALTH & SAFETY

When it came to health and safety issues, regulations were not quite as tightly maintained as they are today, as the following extract reveals;

Mr McDaid, vice-principal of the above named school [Letterkenny Technical School], reported that when the caretaker was extinguishing the oil lamps in the Commercial Room on the night of 26th September, one of them exploded and fell to the floor. The caretaker succeeded in carrying the burning mass downstairs and threw it on to the street. In doing this his hands and clothing were slightly burned.

The Secretary stated he was reporting the matter to the Insurance Company, and on the motion of Mr Nyhan, seconded by Captain Hamilton, he was instructed to apply to the Company for adequate compensation for the caretaker. Mr McDaid also reported that it would be

necessary to obtain oil lamps for the Engineering Room in addition to the three others required to light adequately the main building, as the lamps which had been got from the County Council were out of order.¹⁴⁶

On the motion of Mr Nyhan, seconded by Captain Hamilton, it was unanimously agreed to provide the necessary lamps and also to obtain two fire extinguishers for each of the four schools.

CONCLUSION

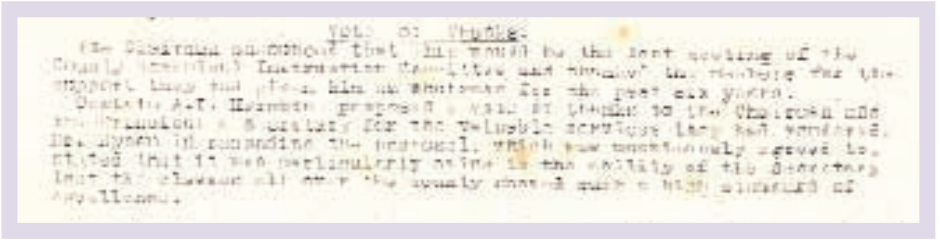
With the new Vocational Education Act about to come into being, technical education and training was to be placed on a statutory footing by the infant Irish government. Interestingly multi-denominational education was not acceptable in the fledgling Irish state and this position was reflected in a resolution received from Co Monaghan Technical Instruction Committee 'regarding the amending of the Vocational Education Act so as to provide for religious instruction [which] was on the motion of the Chairman, seconded by Father Reid, referred to the Vocational Education Committee.'¹⁴⁷

In winding up the County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee as it stood in October 1929, the minutes¹⁴⁸ concluded with a vote of thanks;

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 30 September 1930, p.2

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 October 1930, p.3

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.4. The Chairman was Mr Eugene Mahony.



The year 1930 was to close with considerable achievement by the Committee. Four Technical Schools had been established, there was considerable expansion of the instruction on offer, both in terms of the various geographical locations, which were now referred to as continuation centres, and the subjects. County Donegal Vocational Education Committee finally came into being on 04 November 1930 with Mr James O Neill appointed by the Committee as the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ This was the only time the CEO was to be appointed by the Committee themselves. The minutes of 16 May 1934 tell us that the Department wrote to the Committee to inform them that *'the Minister for Education had under consideration the question of the procedure to be followed by Vocational Education Committees in the filling of vacancies in the post of Chief Executive Officer, and that he had decided to appropriate course to be taken in filling vacancies in the office in question should, in future, normally be that of reference to the Local Appointments Commissioners.'* (p.3)

3. 1931-1966

INTRODUCTION

This was a period of remarkable expansion within the life of Donegal VEC. A substantial building programme was undertaken across the county despite the financial difficulties that continuously existed, particularly in the formers years, created by war and this expansion was reflected in the growth of the Committee's finances.

3.1 COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Committee members were expected to take their work seriously. If not, there were consequences. In 1934 for example, two members, one of whom was a T.D., were disqualified from membership of the Committee because they *'had not attended any meetings of the Committee during the six months ended December, 1934.'*¹⁵⁰ This was to happen on numerous occasions during this period. The same regulation applies today.

The Committee were continuously concerned with the operation of the Scheme within the county and in 1937, a sub-committee was appointed *'to consider the re-organisation of the scheme [with] the Chief Executive Officer instructed to compile statistics relating to enrolments, attendances etc. for the past three sessions'*.¹⁵¹ Their report concluded the following;

¹⁵⁰ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 11 December 1934, p.1

¹⁵¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 May 1937, p.1

- Recommendations made by the Sub-Committee appointed to deal with the revision of the Scheme of Instruction.
- The following Recommendations made by the sub-committee appointed to deal with the revision of the Scheme of Instruction were unanimously accepted:
- (1) More supervision of classes on the part of the Chief Executive Officer.
 - (2) A rotation of class centres, regard to be had to the continuance of centres where successful classes had been conducted.
 - (3) That back numbers of the Journal "An t-Ulster" be supplied free for the use of Irish classes to provide reading matter of a suitable type.
 - (4) That in future no premises should be rented as a classroom unless sanitary accommodation is available or will be provided.
 - (5) That General Subjects Classes be closed when the attendance thereat falls below eight on three consecutive occasions, unless there are special circumstances to be taken into account.
 - (6) That instruction in music be given at centres where teachers capable of dealing with this subject are available, and that in future appointments of part-time teachers of General Subjects preference be given to applicants capable of teaching music.
 - (7) That no increase in wages be granted to the caretakers at Bunrens and Ardara.
 - (8) That the following be the arrangement of class centres for Session 1938-39 provided proper accommodation can be obtained at those that are new centres: Cleveunabille, Derrick, Ardara, Crough, Downings, Termon, Rathmullan, Bannilton, Crosscuttle or Shroves, Noville, Dunaff and Ballyliffin; Dungloe and possibly one other centre to be served by the staff of Loughsaur School.
 - (9) That caretaking at any centre where practical classes only are being conducted be paid for at the rate of 5/- per week.
 - (10) Arrangements for Teachers for Session 1938-39:
 - (a) That Mr. Leoius Anderson, at present engaged at Ballyshannon School, act as teacher-in-charge and Manual Instructor at Loughsaur School and that he be paid an extra £20 (salary) per annum for so acting.
 - (b) That Miss Teresa Boyle, at present engaged as Domestic Science Teacher in Ballyshannon School, be transferred to Loughsaur School and that Miss E. Mad Mills replace her at Ballyshannon.
 - (c) That a teacher of Rural Science and General Subjects be advertised for and that he be assigned in the first place to Loughsaur School.
 - (11) That the services of Mr. Joseph A. Chapman, Manual Instructor, be dispensed with at the end of Session 1937-38.
 - (12) In connection with the proposal to provide a new school at Letterkenny, Mr. Bastible, County Medical Officer of Health, be asked to furnish a report on the present condition of Letterkenny school from a sanitary point of view.

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE

Award/ 5/11/38

In 1947 the location of the Committee's offices came up for discussion. They were informed that 'when the Letterkenny School was being designed extra rooms were provided on the assumption that Mr O'Neill's successor would be located in Letterkenny. That decision was arrived at after giving consideration to Letterkenny as

the central point in the county.'¹⁵² The Committee 'unanimously agreed to locate the office in Letterkenny and to utilise the existing accommodation in the Technical School.'¹⁵³ The transfer of the office took place in 1949 with the appointment of Michael Cryan as CEO.

¹⁵² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 November 1947, pp.1-2

¹⁵³ Ibid., p.2

By 1950, the arrangement within the school for accommodating the Chief Executive and his staff was really not suitable. This included the following considerations;

- (1) *Headmaster and Chief Executive Officer could not conveniently use the same office, even if such office were a large one.*
- (2) *The Headmaster of Letterkenny School would require a separate office for interviews with parents, students of day and night classes, prospective employers, traders and their representatives, as well as dealing with the day to day office work incidental to the organisation and control of a large school.*
- (3) *A staff room was also necessary in Letterkenny School.*
- (4) *A small store downstairs might be converted into an office, but such conversion, even by changing about of existing rooms, would not solve the general office problem created by transfer of Chief Executive Officer to Letterkenny School.*
- (5) *Existing office accommodation in order to cater for Chief Executive Officer and office staff, as well as for Headmaster and school staff would have to be augmented considerably whether by extension to existing school building through utilising the spare store downstairs as woodwork store, and converting the existing woodwork store to office use, i.e., as an entrance to new office built to rear of school; or building an entirely new office detached from but adjacent to school.*¹⁵⁴

It was agreed to source suitable alternative office accommodation for the Chief Executive and his staff. Sanction had still not been received from the Department in April 1951 even though the matter was becoming more urgent. The CEO felt that *'it was essential that his office should be completed by the time that the Engineering Instructor whom Committee*

*proposed to appoint, took up duty in Letterkenny, i.e., next September [1951]. His temporary office accommodation in Letterkenny was in a class-room which would be required by the Commerce teacher as soon as the engineering classes were organised.'*¹⁵⁵ By May the Department finally approved the office accommodation which was to be an extension to the Letterkenny school.¹⁵⁶

During this period the Committee continued to meet in the County Council offices in the main, until 1956 when they held a few meetings in the various schools. It was suggested by one Committee member, Mr Byrne, in 1957 to continue this practice but no final decision was taken on it.¹⁵⁷ Meetings continued to be held in the County House, Lifford until the mid-1960s, when they began to move about the county again for some meetings, to some of the schools and the Great Southern Hotel, Bundoran.¹⁵⁸ However, this did not become a permanent fixture until the mid-1980s.

3.2 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

In terms of this particular post, regulations related to appointment to it began to tighten up shortly after the introduction of the Vocational Education Act in 1930 when the Department issued a ruling in 1937 by way of a circular letter (No. 17/37, 28 October 1937) which *'intimated that the approval of the Minister for Education will not be given in future to the terms and conditions of appointment to a vacant post of Chief Executive Officer unless a fluent spoken knowledge of Irish and ability to fulfil the duties of the post through the medium of Irish are included as essential qualifications of the post.'*¹⁵⁹ This was of particular significance in a county like Donegal which had the biggest Gaeltacht area in the country. As previously noted, the Department had already decided in 1934 that Committees could no longer select their CEO.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 January 1950, pp.5-6

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 April 1951, p.6

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 May 1951, p.3

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 January 1957, p.4

¹⁵⁸ The Great Northern Hotel in Bundoran today was known as the Great Southern Hotel until the mid-1960s when it was bought over by CIE.

¹⁵⁹ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 16 November 1937, p.3

James O'Neill oversaw the growth and expansion of the Committee's business until 1949 when he retired. The esteem in which he was

held was reflected in the minutes of the last meeting he attended on 18 October 1949;

18/10/49. Retirement of the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chairman referring to the pending retirement of the Chief Executive Officer, said that day's meeting unfortunately brought to an end the long association Mr. O'Neill had had with vocational education in Donegal. It was with the deepest regret they saw him leave them. The years had made him such an integral part of vocational education that it would be difficult to visualise meetings without him. They had always found him a present and conscientious official, a perfect gentleman and a counsellor and friend. They hoped that before him lay many years of well-earned retirement.

Miss Downey said Mr. O'Neill was not only an efficient officer but a friend to all the members and the teachers.

Mr. McGeal said Mr. O'Neill was very attentive and extremely obliging. Messrs. Dalton and Killea also joined in the tributes.

Mr. Brennan said Mr. O'Neill was practically the pioneer of vocational education in the county. He went round organising classes when vocational education was hardly known in Donegal.

Replying, the Chief Executive Officer said:- "I am somewhat embarrassed on this occasion and at a loss for words with which to thank you not only for the kind references made to me to-day but for the kindness and consideration that I have always experienced from this Committee during the long period I have been privileged to serve it - now upwards of forty-six years. I have always found myself in the fortunate position of having, as I might say, a personal friend in each member. If I were proud of anything at all I was certainly proud of having attained that standing.

"I have no experience of working for any other committee but I feel sure that no official could have a nicer opportunity than I have had. I have been told by inspectors who have experience of the working of Committees up and down the country that nowhere do meetings pass off more harmoniously than here in Donegal. That is a splendid tribute to the qualities of heart and heart possessed by the members of this Committee. I am sorry in a way that my term of office is now at a close, and I will miss these pleasant meetings at Kiffers', but I realize that the time has come when a younger and more active man should have the guidance of affairs.

"I thank you again most sincerely for your great kindnesses and wish each of you the blessing of good health and length of days to carry on the good work in which you are engaged."

Michael Cryan who had been the Chief Executive Officer in Leitrim and Wexford was to take over from him in 1949 until 1971. In 1967, the CEO's duties were increased when he became the Transport Liaison Officer (TLO) for the county at the request of the Department.¹⁶⁰

3.3 FINANCES

The introduction of the 1930 Vocational Education Act saw a substantial increase in the finances that the Committee were dealing with as Table 4 illustrates;

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 February 1967, p.8

TABLE 4 – TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION SCHEME FOR 1932/33 ¹⁶¹

<u>FINANCE.</u>	
The estimated receipts and expenditure for 1932/33 are as follows:	
<u>Receipts:</u>	
Credit balance on 1st April, 1932.....	43933
Grants from the Department (basic grant).....	5088
Additional grant from the Department equal to the proceeds of a rate of 4s. in the £.....	356
Annual local contribution from the rating Authority (4d. in the £.).....	2298
Tuition fees.....	140
Grant from McDevitt Trustees towards the cost of running Engineering Classes in Ballyshannon.....	100
Bank Interest.....	50
Total.....	518,315
<u>Expenditure:</u>	
Salaries of present Staff.....	25,798
Salaries of Staff to be appointed (B).....	824
Remuneration of part-time teachers (C).....	1784
Travelling and maintenance expenses of teachers.....	394
Travelling expenses of Members of Committee (Administration).....	70
Other Administration charges (Printing, Stationery, etc.).....	115
Carpetlayers' wages (Technical Schools) - four.....	312
Carpetlayers' Wages (Continuation Centres).....	270
Class Materials.....	308
Books, Stationery, etc. (Technical Schools).....	12
Equipment (New and re-newsals).....	1393
Rents and Rates (Technical Schools).....	140
Cleaning materials, heating & lighting (Tech. Schools).....	118
Repairs to premises.....	50
Hire of rooms, cleaning, heating and lighting (Itinerant).....	590
Removal of equipments.....	40
Scholarships (Irish).....	100
Payments to teachers under Section 56 (V.E.Act).....	50
Total.....	418,282

The income and expenditure of the Committee was governed by the rules and regulations contained in the Vocational Education (Accounts, Audit and Procedure) Regulations, 1931, which remained in use up until the mid-1980s.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 February 1967, p.8
¹⁶¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 28 November 1931, p.5



In commenting on the Auditor's report for the period 01 October 1929 to 03 November 1930 and 04 November 1930 to 31 March 1932 the minutes noted that;

*'T.J. Dunne, Esq., Local Government Department Auditor, reported that he had audited the Committee's accounts for the periods mentioned and that the accounts were carefully kept and were well presented for Audit.'*¹⁶²

These same comments can largely be said to apply today! However, the rapid expansion that began to take place from the late 1930s also took its toll on the Scheme's finances. The largest expenditure by far during this period was on the building of schools, so when the new school was being built in Letterkenny in the early 1940s, two rooms had to be cut out of the original plan owing to financial constraints (these were later included before the building was finished). At times the financial situation seemed hopeless - when further consideration

was given to the expansion of schools in 1945, Captain Scott said *'judging from their present financial position he saw no hope whatever of building more schools within the next ten or fifteen years.'*¹⁶³ Nevertheless, the Committee did manage to continue with their expansion. This was partly helped by grants from the County Council, under Section 51 of the 1930 Act, whereby they provided £22,700 for the Ballyshannon school and £28,300 for the Donegal Town school. By 1957 however, the Council was no longer in a position to fund further schools as *'the Capital indebtedness of that body had increased by almost £2,000,000 during the past five or six years; and that, consequently, the Council regretted that it could not entertain any further applications from the Committee for grants for new Technical Schools.'*¹⁶⁴ This issue arose at a time when the Committee were about to build schools in Carndonagh and Milford. Department funding for Donegal was, for quite some time *'amongst the lowest in the country.'*¹⁶⁵ Finances, it would seem, were always a balancing act.

In 1960, the financial scheme had increased considerably. Pay As You Earn (PAYE) income taxation was introduced on the 01 October, necessitating the employment of a further clerk/typist as the CEO had found that *'he himself and his two permanent assistants were now unable to cope with the volume of work in the Scheme, which was growing from Session to Session.'*¹⁶⁶ By this time, the annual expenditure had risen to £77,298.¹⁶⁷ The Committee's finances at this stage were looked after by the Hibernian Bank Ltd. in Letterkenny (who were later taken over by Bank of Ireland who have been looking after the VEC's financial account since then).

(i) Fees

In 1951 the various class fees were increased by the Committee after considering the Department's Circular Letter No. 11/51. The CEO had decided on the amounts after consulting *'a summary of the fees charged in all County Schemes, which had been prepared by, and made available to him thorough the courtesy of the Chief Executive Officer of the County Westmeath Vocational Education Committee'*¹⁶⁹;

	Recommended Tuition Fee	Increase on Present Fee
Day Courses in Permanent Schools at Urban Centres (Sessional)	10/-	5/-
Day Courses in Loughanure School (Sessional)	5/-	2/-
Day Courses at Rural Centres (Sessional)	5/-	new type of course
Sessional Night Classes at Urban Centres	10/-	7/-
Half-Sessional or Short Course of Night Classes at Urban Centres	5/-	new type of course
Night Classes at Loughanure (Sessional or Other)	5/-	3/-
Half-Sessional Classes at Rural Centres	5/-	4/-
Short Courses at Rural Centres i.e., Dressmaking	2/6	1/6
Demonstration Lectures in Cookery	Free	
	Recipes to be printed and sold at nominal cost, e.g., 2d per demonstration.	

3.4 SUBJECTS TAUGHT

The minutes reveal that the Committee were continuously concerned with the practical application of the teaching they provided;

‘The Secretary was instructed to arrange with the headmasters of the various Schools for more time and attention to be given to the study of Typewriting and Shorthand as a sound knowledge of these subjects is essential for anyone seeking a post in an office.’¹⁷⁰

Wherever possible the Committee provided classes in subjects that would ultimately lead to employment for the pupils. This included hotel cookery, rural building construction, farriery and general smithwork, weaving, fishing and skipping of fishing boats,

boat-building etc. Local industry also made numerous requests for training, which were always looked after, where possible. Requests received from local textile factory owners in Buncrana¹⁷¹ and Donegal Town,¹⁷² were good examples of this;

¹⁶² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 October 1932, p.2

¹⁶³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 October 1945, p.4

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 September 1957, p.1

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.3

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 September 1960, p.11

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 July 1959, p.2

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 January 1965, p.4

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 July 1951, p.8

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 14 September 1932, p.5

¹⁷¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 October 1946, p.4

¹⁷² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 September 1964, p14 – Request received from Magee & Co Ltd., Donegal Town for the VEC to provide or fund a weaving instructor to enable them to train young men so that they could then provide them with employment in their own homes in order to combat the unemployment in the Glencolumbcille area.

"Buncrana,
14th October, 1916.

"County Donegal Vocational
Education Committee,
Ballyshannon.

"Dear Sirs,

We, the undersigned manufacturers, having factories situated in Buncrana, hereby make application to your Committee to have Industrial Training Classes for girls established in the local technical school. We have already discussed this matter with the headmaster and Mr. McKenna, the Department's Inspector, and the general opinion is that such classes would serve the following purposes:-

- (a) The girls attending such classes (for a period of one year at least) would receive a better standard of education than they do by leaving the National School at 14 years of age.

- (b) That during such training it would be possible to discern the girls best suited for factory employment; and those not suited could have their activities diverted in some other direction.
- (c) That such a course of both Industrial and Domestic training would give the girls a much broader outlook, and make them feel something more than mere "factory girls".
- (d) That the factories would receive not only a much better type of girl, but girls who were to some extent trained, and thus eliminate the "raw" or "green" type as recruited at present. This would place local concerns on a par with some of the larger centres where such classes already exist.

We respectfully ask your Committee to give the matter early consideration, and it is scarcely necessary to add that should classes materialize in the near future, the headmaster and other teachers would receive our fullest co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

"Per Mr. J.M. Arthur & Co., Ltd.,
(Sgt.) W.P. McCarter.
Per John McLaughlin & Co., Ltd.,
(Sgt.) Joseph McLaughlin (Director).
Per A. E. Grant & Sons,
(Sgt.) W.J. Frazer."

W.P. McCarter would go on to join forces with the American textile company Fruit of the Loom and became one of the biggest employers in the county in the 1990s, employing over 3,000

people in factories in Buncrana (two), Milford, Raphoe, Malin Head and across the border in Campsie, Co Derry.

In 1949, the Minister for Education ordered that

“the expression “technical education” shall for the purposes of the Vocational Education Act, 1930 (No. 29 of 1930), include instruction in the subjects connected with music which are specified in the Schedule in this Order:

Schedule

Playing of musical instruments

Vocal music, including voice training, scale memorising, ear training, sight reading and choral training

Formation and training of choirs and orchestras

Theory of music

*Appreciation of music*¹⁷³

In 1951, engineering began to be introduced into some of the schools, firstly to Letterkenny and gradually to others, particularly were requests were specifically made for it, such as Stranorlar.

3.5 GENDER ISSUES

The unequal position of females in Irish society during this period is reflected in the minutes. For example, female teachers who got married had to resign their post and the minutes record numerous examples of this. However, one slight exception to this way of thinking came from the Buncrana Local Committee which submitted a resolution in 1931 which stated;

*‘That the Committee are of opinion that the ban on married ladies should be removed until there is a waiting list of Domestic Science teachers, and that all teachers required should be available at the date of the opening of the Session.’*¹⁷⁴

Clearly it wasn’t entertained. In 1945, with the Second World War making life difficult for everyone, the Department agreed to pay an Emergency Bonus to whole-time teachers.

Notice the difference in the rates paid;

*Married men,
widowers and widows 11/- per week
Married women and
unmarried men and women 9/- per week*¹⁷⁵

The thinking of these times was also highlighted in terms of the structuring of classes;

*‘The Secretary stated that enquiries had been received from several centres asking if boys and girls might be taken together for instruction at Continuation Classes. It was unanimously agreed to adhere to the ruling already made in respect of the matter, viz:- that boys and girls be taught separately.’*¹⁷⁶

However, this ruling was relaxed a few months later when it was *‘unanimously agreed to allow boys and girls to attend General Subjects Classes during any Sessional term.’*¹⁷⁷

Nevertheless, in 1945 the Committee was to have its first female member, Miss M. Deeney with *‘the Chairman referring to the fact that Miss Deeney was the only lady ever to be elected a Member of the Vocational Education Committee, welcomed her as an outstanding educationalist.’*¹⁷⁸ Today there are seven female Committee members out of twenty-three, while the current (and first female) Minister for Agriculture and Food, Mary Coughlan, T.D. was the Committee’s only female Chairperson from 1991-92.

3.6 INSTRUCTORS

(i) Salary Scales

Moves were afoot in the early 1930s to develop common salary scales for staff as this extract from the minutes of 16 March 1932 show;

¹⁷³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 12 April 1949, p.3

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 October 1931, p.5

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 February 1945, p.3

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 13 December 1932, p.1

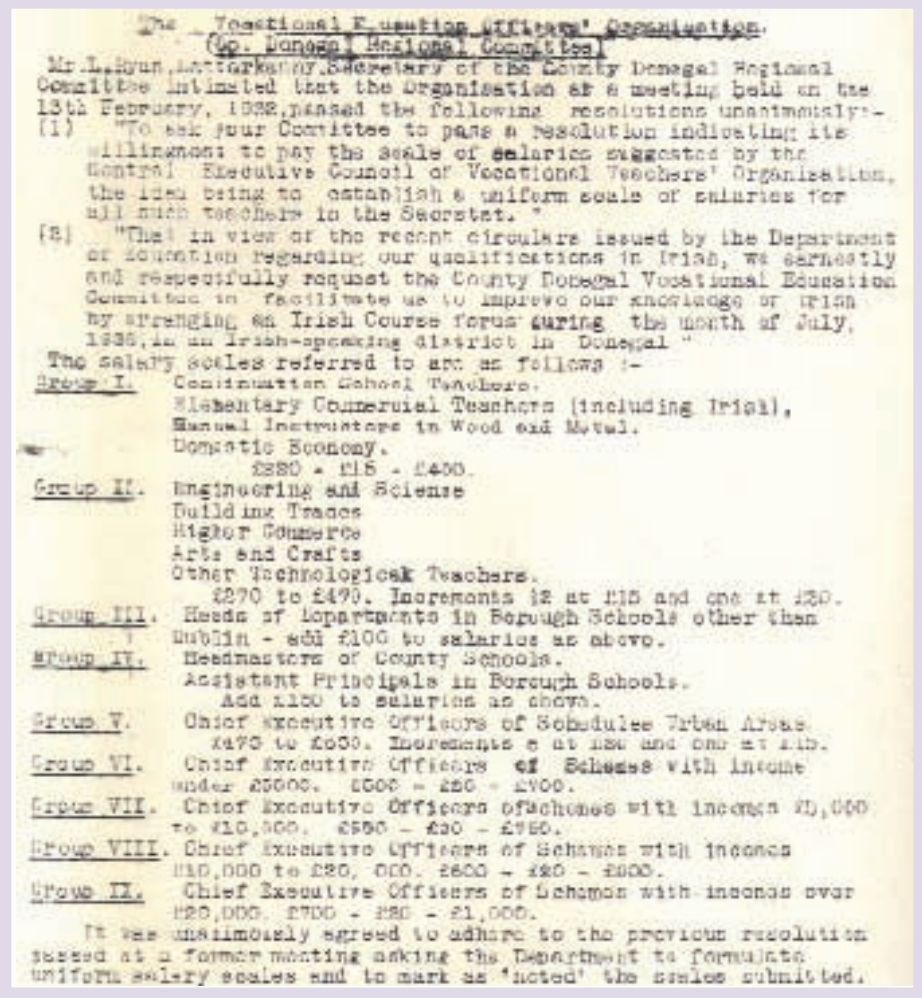
¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 April 1933, p.2

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 September 1945, p.1

'Mr L Ryan, Letterkenny, Secretary of the County Donegal Regional Committee intimated that the Organisation at a meeting held on the 13th February, 1932, passed the following resolutions unanimously:-

(1) 'To ask your Committee to pass a resolution indicating its willingness to pay the scale of salaries suggested by the Central Executive Council of Vocational Teacher's Organisation, the idea being to establish a uniform scale of salaries for all such teachers in the Saorstát.'⁷⁹

The salary scales referred to were as follows;



⁷⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 March 1932, p.3

Consideration of the issue came up at the Committee meeting of 17 May 1933 but it was decided that;
*'After some discussion regarding the salary scales set out in the Department's Memorandum V.7. (copies of which had been supplied to the members) it was unanimously agreed to adjourn consideration of the putting of the scales in operation until the meeting to be held in November, 1933, when the Scheme for year 1934/35 would be formulated and when it would be known what moneys exactly would be at the Committee's disposal.'*¹⁸⁰

However, a decision was taken in August 1933 when;
*'It was unanimously agreed that the normal scales of salary as set out in the Department's Memorandum V.7. be applied to all whole-times teachers with the exception of those engaged in teaching one subject only, such as dressmaking; and that for the purpose of this application all whole-time temporary teachers be placed on a permanent basis. Scales to be effective from 1st October, 1933.'*¹⁸¹

Memo V7, while having been revised from time to time, continues in use with the last edition issued in November 1974.

(ii) Qualifications

In terms of teachers being properly qualified, the minutes reveal that;

*'The Chief Executive Officer was directed to notify all teachers (temporary and permanent) who are not fully qualified in the subjects which they are teaching, that the Committee requires them to take immediate steps to secure approved qualifications of a standard as set out in the Department's Memorandum V.7., Clause 14., as this matter would be had regard to when appointments again come under review.'*¹⁸²

Moreover, in deciding to provide a course of Irish for the Committee's staff in 1932, it was also *'unanimously decided that all temporary whole-time teachers who are obliged to acquire a knowledge of the Irish language in accordance with the terms of their appointments be compelled to attend the course; that permanent full-time teachers under 30 years of age be recommended to attend; and that permanent full-time teachers over 30 years of age be allowed freedom of choice as to whether they will attend or not.'*¹⁸³

In 1930, it was queried as to whether teachers employed by the scheme required a knowledge of Irish. The CEO felt that *'other things being equal preference was given to an Irish speaker [and] on the suggestion of the Chairman it was unanimously decided to have this inserted in advertisements in future.'*¹⁸⁴ Teachers were required to have a qualification in Irish, in the form of the Ceard Teastas Gaedhilge. (The absolute requirement for this qualification was only done away with during the 1999/2000 academic session.)

The Gaelic League felt that this requirement should go even further when they passed a resolution *'asking Vocational Education Committees in future not to employ any officer of teacher who is not competent to conduct his business through the medium of Irish.'*¹⁸⁵ However, while the Committee *'were prepared to give every encouragement for the study and use of Irish'*, it was considered by them that this particular resolution *'went too far'*.¹⁸⁶

In 1938 the issue was raised about teachers attending Irish classes in Carraroe, for the purpose of securing the necessary qualification in Irish, and not in Donegal. It was felt by one particular Committee member that *'the Irish spoken in the West of Ireland was for all practical purposes and entirely different language from*

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 May 1933, p.1

¹⁸¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 01 August 1933, p.3

¹⁸² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 12 June 1934, p.2

¹⁸³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 April 1932, p.1

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 04 November 1930, p.3

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 May 1932, p.3

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

*what they had in the North of Ireland. Expression and pronunciation were different and any person brought up in the atmosphere of the Donegal Gaeltacht would have very great difficulty in acquiring at a West of Ireland centre a knowledge of the language sufficient to qualify in the examination for the Ceard Teastas. There were four of the best Irish speaking centres in County Donegal and he did not see why the teachers could not attend at one of these centres and be examined at the end of the course by the Department.*¹⁸⁷ The Committee agreed to make arrangements to facilitate this and to *'ask the Department to have the Committee's teachers examined by an Ulster examiner at the termination of the courses which the teacher will attend this session.'*¹⁸⁸

Training courses (known as in-service training today) for teachers were always provided in the summer time up until the 1980s.

(iii) Vice-Principals

The concept of school Vice-Principals was raised in 1961. At that time there were none in any of the Schemes around the country. The CEO *'did not anticipate the need for such appointments in any of the Co Donegal Schools for some years to come. He did, however, think that with the development of the Scheme and the employment of some Schools, the appointment of Vice-Principals may be considered in four or five year's time.'*¹⁸⁹ In 1964, Memorandum V.7 was revised to allow VECs to *'designate a teacher to assist the Headmaster in the performance of some of the organising, supervisory, administrative work connected with the school and the teaching duties of the Headmaster.'*¹⁹⁰ Unfortunately there was no extra remuneration for such a post.

3.7 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In-service training has always been available for teaching staff since the Committee was first set up. Invariably this involved attending courses arranged by the Department in Dublin, Galway or Cork. But training was also provided for the Committee's other staff as well. In 1932 for example, it was decided to provide a course of Irish for their staff *'of four weeks duration in an Irish-speaking district [and] unanimously decided that it be held during the last two weeks of August and the first two weeks of September.'*¹⁹¹

This continues to be the case today, but principally to meet the administrative requirements of the Official Languages Act, 2003.

3.8 TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

By 1934 there were still the four permanent schools (Ballyshannon, Buncrana, Carndonagh and Letterkenny) and fourteen continuation centres around the county – eighteen centres of education and training in total.¹⁹² However, there was a serious need for expansion of the permanent Technical Schools across the county and this was the overriding concern of the Committee during this period. Many sites were purchased for small one or two roomed schools around the county, for example in Glengad and Clonmany in Inishowen or Creeslough.

In December 1950, the CEO arranged an 'interview' with the Minister for Education, General Richard Mulcahy, to discuss furthering the development of the building programme in Donegal; *'at the termination of the interview he [the Minister] authorised the Chief Executive Officer to inform the Committee that he would be prepared to consider favourably, definite proposals from them.'*¹⁹³ After discussing the issue it was decided that immediate action was needed in submitting proposals to the Minister and that the CEO *'be requested to recommend to Committee, say, ten centres at which one-roomed schools might be immediately provided.'*¹⁹⁴ A list was duly put together for the Committee's consideration at the next meeting and again after some discussion and amending, the list of proposed centres that was agreed included;

Ardara	Creeslough
Carrick	Rosnakill
Teelin	Milford
Glencolumcille	Glenvar
Arranmore	Rathmullan
Dungloe	Cloghan
Parish of Gweedore	Clonmany or Urris
Gortahork	Culkenny [Glengad]

Killybegs was later added to this list as well. The CEO was duly instructed *'to prepare a Memorandum in connection with the above centres based on population, school statistics, etc.,*

for submission to the Minister for Education.’¹⁹⁵
 A further meeting was held with the Minister in December 1951. It was agreed to allow the Committee to build two three-roomed schools at Carrick and Gortahork, however, if a grant was made available from the Department, it

‘would not cover more than the staffing of the two schools, that is, the cost of six teachers.’¹⁹⁶
 The Committee were to be responsible for the building of the schools out of its ordinary funds. In 1958 the Committee’s building programme was further examined;

Committee's Building Programme

Chief Executive Officer advised Committee that in a comprehensive survey of the County based on population, attendance at Primary Schools, Villages, etc., which he made in 1951, and which was accepted by Committee at that time, he had recommended the following places as being the most suitable for Committee's control by Minister:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Ballymaginnis | 7. Carrick |
| 2. BERRIGAL | 8. Greenlough |
| 3. Glenties | 9. Milford |
| 4. Killybegs | 10. Letterkenny |
| 5. Carrick | 11. BERRIGAL |
| 6. Letterkenny | 12. Greenlough |

Schools had been provided at Letterkenny (1916), Berrigal (1940), Berrigal (1945) and Carrick (1945) previous to the time when that report was made.

Chief Executive Officer recommended Committee's building programme since 1950, and pointed out that of the Centres on the original list of 1951, for which no buildings had yet been provided, there remained only Killybegs and Greenlough. He also stated that in the meantime, Committee had decided to add the following Centres to their building list:

Naville

One of the schools in the western portion of the County i.e. the site which stretches from Doyles to Hart,

due to the excellent attendance at nearly all the Day Schools, Committee had also decided that in order to cater properly for such attendance, and to bring some of the schools already built up to normal requirements e.g. inclusion of children and engineering on the curriculum, the following alterations should be undertaken concurrently with the building of new schools and on opportunity offered, since they were welcome of various urgency:

1. Extension to Berrigal School
2. Extension to Carrick School
3. Extension to Carrick School
4. Extension to Letterkenny School.

Sub-Committee having reviewed the general pattern of development agreed that the western portion of the County should be catered for by provision of Day Schools, and that at least one school should, in the first instance, be provided for the centre in that area which was best served by village transport. The representatives of Doyles and St. Johnston (from which an application for the local funds of the Irish Home-owners' Association had been received) were dismissed. It was unanimously agreed that of these two centres, Doyles had the better claim.

Recommendation

‘That Doyles be added to Committee's list of Centres at which three Day Schools are to be provided.’

ABRX

□ JIRMAN

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 June 1938, p.3

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 June 1938, p.3

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 April 1961, p.6

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 September 1965, p.12

¹⁹¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 April 1932, p.1

¹⁹² This is according to the number of caretakers who were re-appointed at the meeting of Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee of 18 July 1934 (p.1 of Minutes)

¹⁹³ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 19 December 1950, p.6

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.7 Today schools and centres from this list within the direct remit of the VEC at Carrick, Arranmore, Gortahork, Milford and Cullkeny (Glengad).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 January 1951, p.7

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 January 1952, p.5

The report clearly illustrates how much progress the Committee had made in the provision of permanent schools since its inception in 1930.

Modernisation was also a concern with extensions (or plans for them) being added to existing schools (Raphoe, Letterkenny, Bunrana, Stranorlar, Milford, Donegal Town and Carrick by 1964) or, when this was not possible, prefabricated classrooms, which were first introduced in the 1960s. Plans were also being drawn up for schools in Creeslough and Clonmany and a site was being sought for Killybegs.¹⁹⁷ This modernisation also included attempts to make improvements to school transport provided for pupils by Córas Iompair Éireann (CIE) and the Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway Company across the county and the provision of telephones (coin box) to each of the day schools (Carndonagh, Bunrana, Milford, Stranorlar, Donegal, Ballyshannon, Carrick and Loughanure) in 1959. This modernisation was taken a step too far for the Committee when in February 1964, they discussed a request from Stranorlar Technical School for a television set for the school. The matter had to be referred to the Department 'for a direction in the matter' as the CEO advised that 'if a television set were to be provided for one school, the claims of all the other schools for sets would have to be considered also.'¹⁹⁸ Numbers attending the schools rose steadily with 1,595 in total attending by 1964.¹⁹⁹ The numbers, which were the highest ever recorded at that stage, consisted of;

Under 14 years of age	256
Aged 14-15	586
Aged 15-16	456
Aged 16-17	234
Aged 17-18	52
Aged 18 +	11

This was the background against which the Department of Education was to release its report *Investment in Education* in 1965.

(i) Glenties – McDevitt Institute

The McDevitt Institute, which was an independent educational establishment in the Glenties area wrote to the Committee in 1933 to inform them that;

*'the Trustees had decided to remodel their Curriculum as from the 1st September, 1933, bringing the Institute under the Technical Branch of the Education Department, and that they were prepared to co-operate with the Committee in their work in the Glenties locality.'*²⁰⁰

However, by 1946, the Institute began to run into financial difficulties and requested the Committee to 'provide the Institute with the services of a Woodwork Instructor and a Domestic Science Instructress'²⁰¹ which the Committee duly agreed to. Further assistance was applied for in 1951 as 'the income from Trust Funds would in future scarcely maintain the buildings and provide scholarships to the school on the present basis.'²⁰² It was agreed by the Committee to pay all of the salaries of the staff and caretaker from the beginning of the 1951/52 session. While the Department agreed to this, they pointed out that 'to give effect to the proposal, however, it will be necessary for the Committee, after consultation with the Trustees, to appoint to its service in the normal way, with the consent of the Minister, the staff to be assigned to the Institute.'²⁰³ In effect this meant that one further teacher had to be brought into the service of the Committee, as one of them was ineligible, due to the lack of a qualification in Irish. The Institute continued to function throughout this period as an independent second-level school, albeit funded by the VEC.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 September 1964, p.11. Despite going as far as having sketch plans drawn up (in the case of Clonmany), these schools did not come to fruition in the end.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 February 1964, p.9

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 April 1964, p.4. The total amount recorded in the minutes is 1,592. However, these numbers total 1,595.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 01 August 1933, p.2

²⁰¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 November 1946, p.2

²⁰² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 June 1951, p.8

²⁰³ Ibid. Letter from the Department of Education No. 3322/51 contained in the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 1951, p.5

(ii) Milford

The issue of creating a permanent school in Milford, last mentioned in 1927, was again given further consideration in 1934 as the following extract from the minutes illustrates;

'Mr Baxter [Committee member] stated that the people of Milford were desirous of having a Technical School established in the town. He understood that funds were at the disposal of the Government for the erection of Schools and asked for advice as to the procedure to be adopted to have such a project initiated.

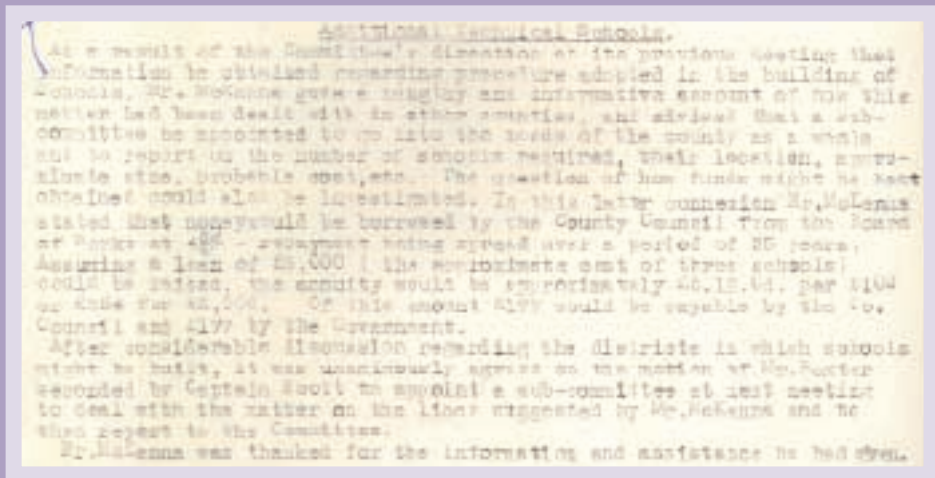
Captain Scott, supporting Mr Baxter's claim, said if there was another School to be built it should be erected in Milford.

Dr. Molloy stated that up to the present they had not spent anything on building, the idea being to

test out the Scheme and eventually to find out if there was a demand in certain areas and then to consider the question of building. Also that it was intended that the Gaeltacht should have first consideration as it had been neglected in the past. Mr Baxter pointed out that a School in Milford would serve a large section of the Gaeltacht.

*The Chairman suggested that without mentioning any centre they should find out how funds could be obtained for building and this was unanimously agreed to; the Chief Executive Officer being instructed to have such information for the next meeting if possible.'*²⁰⁴

This wasn't exactly what Mr Baxter had looked for. Nevertheless, the report given at the next meeting²⁰⁵ ensured that the matter of more schools was further progressed by the Committee;



²⁰⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 September 1934, p. 3

²⁰⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 09 October 1934, p. 2

The following month a sub-committee was set up 'with power to add to their number'

- (1) To investigate the needs of the county as a whole in respect of Technical and Vocational Education.
- (2) To consider all matters pertaining to the erection of additional School buildings and how best funds could be obtained for such purposes.
- (3) To consider the position as regards attendance, etc. at the existing Continuation Centres and to make any recommendations thought desirable, and
- (4) To consider the advisability of appointing an itinerant Woodwork Instructor and an additional teacher of Engineering. The sub-committee is to report to the County Committee in due course.²⁰⁶

The sub-committee finally reported back to the Committee at their meeting of 16 July 1935. They had 'narrowed the issues to those awaiting immediate attention viz: the provision of additional school buildings, and the examination of the position of the present Continuation Centres with a view, amongst other things, to making the scheme more elastic.'²⁰⁷ It was then decided by the sub-committee at their first meeting 'that two new schools should be built, one at Annagry or in that neighbourhood, and one in Stranorlar parish.'²⁰⁸ A number of people were asked to make enquiries about suitable sites. Regarding Stranorlar parish, two were identified, one in Stranorlar and one in Ballybofey. The sub-committee also agreed that 'when the finances of the Scheme are next being dealt with the Department be asked to increase the present Gaeltacht grant by sum of £200.'²⁰⁹ Milford, it seemed would have to wait another while.

The sub-committee further recommended;

Further in reference to the building of schools it was unanimously resolved after a long discussion to recommend the Committee to undertake the building of six different schools within the next five years, the building of the Annagry and Stranorlar schools to take place forthwith. The sub-committee also unanimously recommended 1-

- (a) The employment of Mr. Charles McLaughlin, Architect, Letterkenny, as the architect for the scheme, and
- (b) That the County Council be asked at its meeting to be held on the 30th July, 1935, to raise a loan of £5,500 - this being the estimated cost of the schools recommended to be built in Annagry and Stranorlar areas.

With reference to other Continuation Centres it was resolved that a system of rotation be instituted so that all centres in the county should in turn be able to reap the advantages of technical education.

It was suggested that a two-year course be the standard and that the Chief Executive Officer and the Department's representative having considered the attendance and progress at the various centres already in existence, shall furnish the Committee with such suggestions as will enable the Committee to implement this rotative scheme.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 November 1934, p.2

²⁰⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 July 1935, p.4

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

The matter of a school in Milford was given further consideration again in 1945 when the Committee decided it was next on the list to be dealt with after Donegal Town.²¹⁰ Throughout the 1940s, woodwork classes were conducted in the courthouse by the VEC. Neil Blaney, T.D. continuously pushed for a school in Milford on a number of occasions. In 1947 a number of sites were inspected for the school and it was finally agreed to purchase a site from a Mr William McMahon on the Ramelton Road consisting of 3 acres, 2 roods and 26 perches at a cost of £275.²¹¹ However, the Department didn't agree that it was suitable.²¹² As it turned out, the Committee meeting of December 1948 was informed by the Department that *'owing to present financial exigencies and difficulties in the building trade, the Minister was at present unable to authorise the Committee to proceed with the programme of development.'*²¹³ This put paid to the buildings in Ballyshannon, Donegal Town and Milford for a while.

In 1951 experimental day classes were organised and conducted again in the Milford Courthouse. The number enrolled was limited to twenty-four because of a lack of facilities. The one teacher in charge of the centre taught Irish, English, Mathematics, Mechanical Drawing and Woodwork and after the second year (1953) the students were entered for the Group Certificate examination and sat for it in Letterkenny Vocational School and continued to do so until 1956 when the Department allocated an examination centre to Milford Courthouse. In 1954 the Department was finally *'willing to authorise the Committee to have sketch plans prepared for five-roomed school at that centre.'*²¹⁴ This meant that 1957 was to be the last year in the Courthouse as the new vocational school was completed and opened on 01 December with 96 students and James McCallum as its first Principal.



Male students at Milford Vocational School 1957-59 with staff. Kneeling left-right are Willie Fleming, Pat Friel, Eamon McDaid, John McCreadie, J. McClafferty and John Buchanan. Seated right left-right are Phonsie Gibbons, Lexie Simms, W Duffy, Billy Buchanan, John Ward (teacher), James McCallum (Principal), Larry Collins (teacher), Michael Galagher, Bernard O Donnell, Eamon Giles and Owen Logue. Standing left-right are Tommy Reynolds, Seamus Sweeney, Joe Graham, Seamus McKeague, George Mackey, Paddy Black, Michael McFadden, Paddy Lynagh, John Boyce, Chris McClafferty, Pat Shields, Michael Coll and Hugo Whoriskey. Back row left-right are Michael McGinley, John Shields, Michael Coll, Denis McBride and Daniel Friel.

²¹⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 September 1945, p.4

²¹¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 September 1947, p.2

²¹² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 March 1948, p.1

²¹³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 14 December 1948, p.2

²¹⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 March 1954, p.2



The former Vocational School in Milford which operated from 1957 to 1999 and today operates as an Adult Education and Training Centre.

(iii) Annagry/Loughanure

Regarding Annagry it was reported that;

- (a) *At Loughanure a splendid site is available immediately above the Loughanure Lake and within one hundred yards of the main road from Dungloe to Crolly.*
- (b) *At Crolly three sites are available convenient to Crolly factory.*
- (c) *The great difficulty was experienced in the Annagry district as land in the immediate vicinity of Annagry village is at a high premium; one site was offered in the village but it was considered unsuitable owing to its uneven and rocky nature.*²¹⁵

As it turned out, the Committee received offers for a further ten sites in Annagry.²¹⁶ In the end 'it was accordingly decided to acquire the site at Loughanure which consists of one acre or thereabouts on the terms offered by the owners, viz: £12 per rood.'²¹⁷ The school at Loughanure was officially opened on 03 October 1938 by the Bishop of the Diocese the Most Revd. William MacNeely, as the Minister for Education was unavailable. Lucius Emerson (who had been appointed as a manual instructor at

Ballyshannon Technical School in September 1936) was appointed the teacher-in-charge and Bernard Boyle (Conell) as its first caretaker. Two years later, in July 1940, Lucius Emerson applied for a transfer as teacher-in-charge or headmaster to Stranorlar school. He had to apply as normal to the advertisement for same which he was successful in obtaining. Patrick O'Donnell, the rural science teacher, was to take over from Mr Emerson as teacher-in-charge.

(iv) Stranorlar

The site offered in Stranorlar came at a price of £200 for an acre which was considered to be too high. One of the Committee members, Canon Cafferty said that 'in order to get over the difficulty he was prepared to give a statute acre on Church property of which he was the registered owner under the Irish Land Commission. The plot is on the main road, is convenient to the Railway Station and can easily be connected with water, light and sewerage.'²¹⁸

The Committee took him up on his offer and agreed to pay the sum of £100 for the site. Preparations for building the school at Stranorlar took quite a while to be put in place. The contract was agreed to November 1938. However, at the Committee in April 1939, a letter from the Committee's solicitor informing them that he had received a letter from the contractor's solicitor asking if a clause could be inserted into the contract 'to the effect that in the event of a general European war prices of material and labour should be increased as a result contractor will be allowed as an extra the amount of such increases.'²¹⁹ The Committee agreed that the proposal 'to insert such a clause in the contract be considered if, and when, circumstances arise warranting its consideration.'²²⁰

As it turned out, when the school opened in September 1940, Europe was engulfed in the

²¹⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 July 1935, p.5

²¹⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 03 December 1935, p.2

²¹⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the special meeting of 31 March 1936, p.1

²¹⁸ Ibid. p.2

²¹⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 April 1939, p.1

²²⁰ Ibid. p.2

Second World War and Cathal Hannigan (pictured below today, aged 81), one of the first students to enrol in the new school, recalls how the ripples could be felt even in East Donegal; *“people talk about the good old days, yes there was a lot to be said about them but times were also tough, rationing was in effect and generally there wasn’t a lot of money about”*. With petrol rations among other things causing prices to rocket, it wasn’t easy getting the school built. However, as it turned out, nearby Drumboe Castle was to be demolished and the stone from its walls served to build the first storey of the school. When the site was being cleared a substantial gravel pit was discovered which meant that the prohibitive cost of quarrying was avoided.

This request was agreed by the Committee. In 1949, he was transferred to Ballyshannon and E McDevitt, the Rural Science teacher became the Principal. *‘By 1950 the day class enrolment had risen to 103²²² and to 264 by 1981.²²³* This building (pictured below) has remained as the school in Stranorlar to the present day. In June 2005 it was announced that a new school will be built for Stranorlar on the Committee’s 6.79 acre site at Drumboe Lower, Stranorlar, to be ready for occupation by September 2007.



Cathal Hannigan, aged 81, one of the first students to enrol in the new Technical School on the Main Street of Stranorlar in September 1940.



Stranorlar Technical School which was built in 1939 and opened in 1940 and is the oldest of the VEC’s schools today. In June 2005 a new school was announced and is due to open in 2007.

As previously noted, Lucius Emerson became the teacher-in-charge and Joseph McHugh was the first caretaker. In 1941, Mr Emerson applied to the Committee stating that *‘he had now completed five years’ teaching service and asked to be appointed as headmaster of Stranorlar School on the same terms as apply to other similar appointments in the county.*²²¹

²²¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 November 1941, p.1

²²² Kelly James. ‘The Old Finn’ in *The Donegal Magazine*, No. 5, 1981, p.27

²²³ Ibid.

(v) Letterkenny

By 1935, having opened in 1914, Letterkenny Urban Council believed the school in Letterkenny, with 224 pupils, to be 'wholly inadequate and that we call on the Donegal Vocational Education Committee to give serious consideration to the immediate need of providing a new and up-to-date school which will meet the needs of this first rate institution.'²²⁴ The Council also offered the Committee a free site to assist with this. This matter of course was referred to the sub-committee considering the matter for the county. In 1938, the County Medical Officer of Health furnished the Committee with a report of the inspection of the school that he had been requested to carry out as a result of a recommendation made by the sub-committee set up the previous year to consider the revision of the scheme. He was of the opinion that the premises were

'very unsuited to a large town like Letterkenny. The building appears to be pretty old, and the classrooms are not adequate for the number of scholars in attendance. In addition, there is no ground available at the rear. As a result, there is no yard or play-ground accommodation where students could congregate at lunch-hour and other free periods. I am of opinion that a new Technical School is required, owing to the unsuitability of the present premises, which were evidently not built for the purpose they now serve.'²²⁵

On foot of this report the CEO was instructed to ascertain whether the Urban Council's offer of a free site was still available. The site, 'approximately one acre two roods'²²⁶ was available just opposite the Cathedral and was inspected by Charles McLaughlin, Architect both for the Committee and on behalf of the Department. The Department finally approved the site in August 1940 and the school itself finally opened on 26 April 1944.



The Letterkenny Technical School which operated from Ard O Donnell from 1942-1987, pictured as it stood in the 1940s. On the right is the building as it stands today, which accommodates both the VEC's Administrative Offices and the Letterkenny Adult Education and Training Centre.

²²⁴ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 16 April 1935, p.1

²²⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 June 1938, p.1

²²⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 23 August 1938, p.2



Students at Letterkenny Vocational School in April 1957. Standing back row left-right are John Joe O'Donnell, Benny Sweeney and Johnny Callaghan. Standing middle row left-right are Billy Crosson, Donal McAteer, John Diver, Corney Conaghan, Shaun Crawford and Pat McTaggart. Seated front row left-right are Harry Russell, E. Kelly, Fonce O'Donnell, Denis Gorman, Denis McConolouge, Pat Kennedy and Fenton Coyle.



Three teachers from Letterkenny Vocational School pictured on a school tour to Derry in 1957. Left-right are John Byrne, Paddy McGeehan (Headmaster) and Liam O'Donnell who later became CEO of Co Meath VEC.

(vi) Buncrana

In 1935, Buncrana Urban District Council were also making representations to the Committee for a new school building in the town as this resolution passed by them indicates;

*'That we the Buncrana Urban District Council request the Donegal County Council to apply for a grant under the Vocational Education Act to erect a new Technical School in Buncrana as the present building is altogether unsuitable and must retard the future development of the Vocational Education Scheme in this town; and that we also request County Donegal Vocational Education Committee to make provision for such new school in its proposed building Schemes.'*²²⁷

It was to be another ten years before this request was part-way met when the Committee purchased the former Masonic Hall (built in 1875 and pictured below as it stands today) on the Shore Road in 1944/45 for £1,650.²²⁸ In the meantime, the Principal, Martin Griffin died and was replaced by Michael McAlinney in 1940, who was to remain Principal for the next thirty-two years until 1972.

²²⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 June 1935, p.2

²²⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 November 1943, p.3



Michael McAlinney, who was Principal of the Buncrana Technical School from 1940-1972.

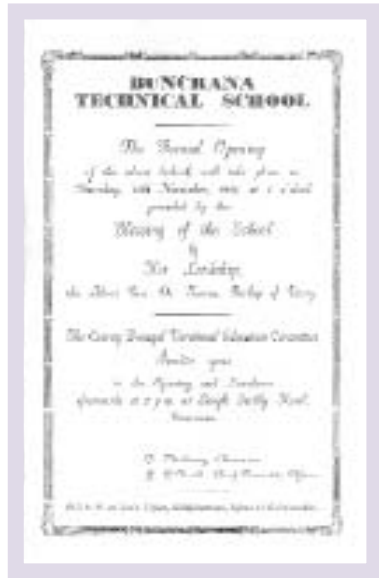


The Buncrana Technical School (1945-1982) at Shore Road, Buncrana, which operates as an Adult Education and Training Centre today

The school was officially opened on 14 November 1946 by Bishop Farren of Derry (pictured below with the full staff compliment of four and the local Parish Priest). Also shown is the official invitation sent out for this opening with the menu and toasts provided on the day. Both give a glimpse of life in the 1940s.



Guests pictured at the official opening of the Buncrana Technical school on 14 November 1946 are left-right Michael McAlinney, Headmaster; Áine Hegarty, Irish and General Subjects; Kathleen Diamond, Domestic Science; Bishop Farren of Derry; Ellen Lafferty, Commerce and Monsignor McShane, P.P. Buncrana.



The official invitation to the opening of the Buncrana Technical School on 14 November 1946 (above), along with the menu and toasts on the day (next page).



In 1960 the Committee began to consider the purchase of a site for a new school in Buncrana. The Trustees of the McClintock Housing Estate offered a number of sites for sale to them. However, the Department informed them that *'since there was no prospect of approval being given for the erection of a new school in Buncrana for a considerable time, the Department considered that the incurring of such heavy expenditure now on the purchase of a site could not be justified. Sanction to Committee's proposal could not therefore be given.'*²⁹⁹ A new school was not to be built for almost another twenty years.

(vii) Donegal Town

The first mention of a school in Donegal Town was made at the Committee meeting of 18 September 1935, when it was mentioned that provision had been made for a centre in Donegal Town, but not for a school. This matter was then referred to the sub-committee set up to look at the issue of provision within the County.

Ten years later the issue was raised again when *'the necessity for a new Vocational School in Donegal Town'* was discussed. Mr Brian M. Brady, T.D., who raised the issue *'recalled that the Committee had promised the late Canon McCaul,*

²⁹⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 October 1960, p.6

*P.P., a school would be provided at the first opportunity. He was aware that they could not erect a new school now, but as a preliminary he would like to see steps taken to secure a suitable site.*²³⁰

A sub-committee was set up to do this and much toing and froing over a variety of sites, it was eventually agreed in 1948 to purchase a site owned by a Mr McGowan in the townland of the Mullins for the sum of £300.²³¹ However, as stated earlier, this was to be put on hold for a while by the Department. In the meantime, the Committee received a number of deputations requesting that the school be built. It was eventually agreed by the Committee *'to proceed with the erection of a school in Donegal and to ask the Minister to authorise that the erection of a school in Ballyshannon be proceeded with in the Financial Year 1950-51.'*²³² In the end though, the Committee were persuaded to an extent by the County Engineer to purchase a plot on the grounds of Donegal District Hospital for £100.²³³

However, the Department of Health would not approve the sale of this plot. Eventually, in 1950, another site was purchased for £450 from a Mr Breslin.²³⁴

The school was not to open until 1954 (and was opened officially on Monday 06 June 1955 by the Minister for Education, General Richard Mulcahy, T.D., who also officially opened the new Ballyshannon School on the same day).²³⁵ The first staffing of the school was a total of seven staff members consisting of a rural science teacher, a manual instructor (wood-work), a domestic science teacher, a commercial and general subjects teacher and an Irish teacher, along with a caretaker and Principal. Paddy Rooney, who was the rural science teacher and Principal at Loughanure Technical School at the time, was appointed as the first Principal.



Paddy Rooney, the first Principal of the Donegal Town Technical School from 1954-1975.



The Donegal Town Technical School, 1954-1982. Today it operates as an Adult Education and Training Centre.

²³⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 September 1945, p.4

²³¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 July 1948, p.1

²³² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 June 1949, p.3

²³³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 November 1949, p.1

²³⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 July 1950, p.3

²³⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 May 1955, p.5 and 'Donegal Schools Blessed and Opened' in the *Donegal Democrat*, Friday 10 June, 1955

(viii) Moville

The first reference made to erecting a permanent school in Moville was in 1936 when *'a memorial signed by prominent residents in Moville and District asking that a permanent centre be established at Quigley's Point, for instruction in Domestic Economy, Woodwork and Commercial subjects, was submitted.'*²³⁶ A further request was made in 1952. Unfortunately, despite numerous attempts by the people of this area and their representatives, it was to be 2001 before a permanent school in Moville was to open its doors to pupils.

(ix) Carrick

The first mention of a school in Carrick was made in October 1940 when Carrick Parish Council *'enquired as to the possibilities of having a Rural Technical School set up in Carrick'*²³⁷ as two schools were now built in Loughanure and Stranorlar. The request was simply marked as *'noted'* and when the request was submitted again in 1945 *'it was stated that one or two other districts had prior claims and that Donegal Town was first on the list.'*²³⁸ However, the Committee finally agreed to purchase a site from a Mr Byrne for £300 in October 1952²³⁹ and this was approved by the Department the following month.

When the school finally opened it had one (woodwork) teacher, Con O'Donnell, a native of Rannafast and twelve students. The school was situated in The Red House on the Teelin Road until 1958, with a maximum of eighteen and a minimum of twelve boys enrolled over the years. In 1958, with fifty-nine students, a new two roomed school was opened. Con O'Donnell, the Principal was joined by another teacher, Peggy Delap, Home Economics, a native of Gweedore and the school, which was boys only up to then, became a Co-Educational school. In

1959 two more rooms, which were built by trainee teachers on a woodwork and building construction course, were added and Pádraig Ó Beirne from Teelin was appointed as Principal. There were seven teachers and Gerrard Breslin joined the staff. Enrolment grew over the years and rooms had to be rented in The Red House and in The Old National School in Carrick. In the 1969/70 school year five prefabs were added to the school at this time there were 196 students and fifteen teachers with rooms in the Old National School still being used.



Guests pictured at the official opening of Carrick Technical School in 1958 are standing left-right Patsy O'Donnell (1st), James McElhinney (3rd), Liam Cunningham, T.D. (4th), Sean Ó Cinneide (5th), Joe Brennan, T.D. (8th) and seated left-right Michael Cryan, CEO (2nd), Monsignor Tom Molloy (4th), Con O'Donnell, Principal (7th)

²³⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 July 1936, p.4

²³⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 October 1940, p.2

²³⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 February 1945, p.2

²³⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 October 1952, p.3

(x) Bundoran

At the Committee meeting in September 1945, while discussing a school for Donegal Town, 'Mr Quinn and Mr Hudson [committee members] advocated the provision of a small school at Bundoran.'²⁴⁰ It was agreed by the committee that it would be dealt with after Donegal Town and Milford. It was eventually decided by the Committee that a large room would be added for adult classes (alternating, for example, between woodwork and domestic economy) to a building that was being erected there by the County Council. The CEO did not 'hold out much hope of Department's agreeing at an early date to a Day School in Bundoran because of the comparatively short distance of Ballyshannon from Bundoran, i.e., 4 miles approximately.'²⁴¹

(xi) Ballyshannon

By 1946 the school in Ballyshannon was in bad need of major repairs estimated at £7,597, not including the cost of buying the building or other incidentals. It was also not considered worth the cost to add on two further rooms. Minor repairs were carried out but the Committee began the process of looking for a site for a new school building. One was procured on College Street, belonging to the Sheil Trustees, to be rented at £28 per annum and to pay £250 for the existing buildings.²⁴² As stated earlier, the Department called a halt to the building programme in 1948. However, as the building in Ballyshannon was in such a bad state, the Committee felt that the matter of a new school was quite urgent and they requested the Department to let them proceed with this, even if the other two projects (new

schools for Milford and Donegal Town) were to be delayed.²⁴³ In the meantime, Lucius Emerson was transferred from Stranorlar to become Principal of Ballyshannon in 1949.

In 1953 the newly built vocational school in Ballyshannon moved from the Mall to College Street, with classes commencing there on 07 January 1953 and it was officially opened by the then Minister for Education, General Richard Mulcahy, T.D. on Monday 06 June 1955 (he also officially the new Donegal Town School on the same day).²⁴⁴

Numbers in the school steadily increased over the following decade from 104 students in 1953/54 to 172 in 1964/65,²⁴⁵ necessitating the exploration of an extension, but with makeshift wooden classrooms added as a stopgap.



Pictured at the official opening of the new Ballyshannon Technical School in College Street on 06 June 1955 is the Minister for Education, Richard Mulcahy, inspecting a guard of honour accompanied by the Principal Lucius Emerson in his FCA uniform. The house on the right of the photo was the home of former Principal James O'Neill.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 September 1945, p.4

²⁴¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 27 March 1956, p.8

²⁴² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 February 1948, p.1

²⁴³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 January 1949, p.2

²⁴⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 May 1955, p.5 and 'Donegal Schools Blessed and Opened' in the *Donegal Democrat*, Friday 10 June, 1955

²⁴⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 December 1964, p.8

²⁴⁶ Begley, Anthony and Finn, Billy. *A Century at Ballyshannon Vocational School*. Browne Printers, Letterkenny, 2000, p.11



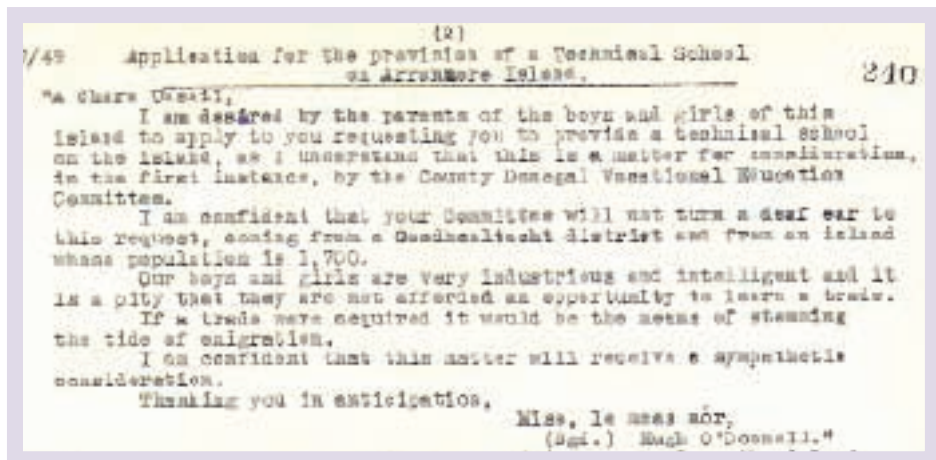
Outside Ballyshannon Technical School in 1938 are, seated left-right Michael Walsh (secretary), James O'Neill (CEO of the VEC and formerly the first Principal of the school), Lucius Emerson, Paddy McIntyre, Paddy Slevin and standing left-right are Liam Slevin and Bartley Loughlin.²⁴⁷



A school group at Ballyshannon Vocational School circa 1960 with Principal Lucius Emerson, second from the right on the back row.

(xii) Arranmore Island

In 1949, the Committee received a request from Mr Hugh O'Donnell, Leabrannagh, Arranmore Island, requesting that a technical school be erected on the island;



²⁴⁷ Begley, Anthony and Finn, Billy. A Century at Ballyshannon Vocational School. Browne Printers, Letterkenny, 2000, p.3

Unfortunately, in light of the Department's halt on buildings, the Committee were unable to consider the request. Nevertheless, they decided to ensure that classes were provided and set about looking for suitable classroom accommodation.²⁴⁸ However, this was not to be. The Arranmore School Action Committee was set up twenty years later and began a twenty year campaign to have a school set up, which finally happened in 1990.

(xiii) Gortahork

The Committee bought a site from a Mr M Carr, McFadden's Hotel for £250 in October 1952 with a view to establishing a school in Gortahork. Work on the school took place over the next few years and it was finally completed and handed over to the Committee on 07 January 1961 when the day school opened for instruction on 11 January with an enrolment of forty pupils. Mr Michael Ward was the first Principal.



The Gortahork Vocational School from 1961 until the early 1972. Today it operates as an Adult Education and Training Centre.

(xiv) Dungloe

One of the fastest schools to go up in the county, from start to finish was that of Dungloe in 1952. The Committee received a request from the local Committee in Dungloe *'for a two-roomed Technical School for adult classes in woodwork, domestic economy and commerce.'*²⁴⁹ A site was to be donated and £200 was to be raised to *'provide free a minimum of 600 man hours per week in unskilled labour for the making of doors, windows etc. in wood, to provide free the transport of stones, blocks, sand, gravel etc. to the site, and to provide free also two cement mixers, a block-making machine and sufficient shuttering for the erection of encased walls.'*²⁵⁰ The Committee were very impressed with this proposal and the CEO had already prepared a sketch plan of the school which he was instructed to submit to the Department for early approval. By September the CEO was able to report that the *'erection of new school at Dungloe by voluntary labour, and in conjunction with the Local Building Construction Course conducted there, was now nearing completion.'*²⁵¹ The official opening of the school took place on Monday 20 October 1952. In 1956 however, the vocational school began to be used as a secondary school with a Mr P O Donnell charged rent by the Committee for this purpose.²⁵²

(xv) Carndonagh

By 1952 the parish hall (the Colgan Hall) being used as the school building in Carndonagh was proving inadequate for meeting the needs of the local community. Members of the Carndonagh Parish Development Committee wrote to the Committee outlining the need for a new building. The bottom line was that *'no further expansion is now possible unless a new school building is provided.'*²⁵³

In discussing the request, it was pointed out that Milford had had a long standing claim for

²⁴⁸ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 14 March 1949, p.2

²⁴⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 February 1952, pp.7-8

²⁵⁰ Ibid. p.8

²⁵¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 September 1952, p.6

²⁵² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 25 September 1956, p.3

a school for many years now and that 'the Department's refusal to allow them to purchase sites by money raised on loan was an unfair and unjust interpretation of the regulations since the sites were required for permanent buildings which would be provided in a short time. Such sites were fortunately now available both at Carndonagh and Milford, but they might not be so at a later date.'²⁵⁴ Members who were Dáil Deputies were requested to raise the matter with the Minister and the CEO to raise the matter with the Department, particularly the issues of erecting two schools concurrently at Milford and Carndonagh.

The Department eventually gave the go ahead and a two acre site was acquired in 1954. However, in June 1956 the Department wrote to the Committee stating that 'because of the difficulty experienced at the present time in relation to the financing of works of capital expenditure, it was not found possible to include this school on the building project list of Vocational Schools to be erected for the school year 1956/57.'²⁵⁵ This was to set the school back by a number of years but it was eventually officially opened by Mr Neil Blaney, T.D., Minister for Local Government in 1959.



The turning of the sod on the new vocational school in Carndonagh by Fr Bonner, P.P. circa 1957/58.

(xvi) Gweedore (Derrybeg)

In January 1954 the Department approved the purchase of a half acre site for £100 from a Mr E Gillespie, Stranacorka, Derrybeg for a one-roomed school. Unusually it was to be built by teachers-in-training on a woodwork and building construction course during the summer of 1954, on the Department's condition that 'Committee would be responsible for the total cost of the building, including building materials, wages of labour employed, Architect's fees etc.'²⁵⁶ which of course the Committee agreed to. This method of building was so successful that it was used the following year to add an extension of one room to the Loughanure school. The Derrybeg school was finished by October at a total cost of approximately £3,000.²⁵⁷ Mr M. Spillane was appointed teacher-in-charge and took up his post on 24 January 1955 and initially twenty-three boys enrolled in the woodwork day class.²⁵⁸ By 1964, the Committee began to look at erecting an extension to the school at a cost of £27,465:6:4.²⁵⁹ In 1966, with 47 students enrolled, staffing arrangements for the school were proving difficult as the Department would not sanction the necessary staffing and reports of these difficulties even circulated in the national press. The Committee had to meet its staffing needs, rather unsatisfactorily, through a combination of teachers visiting from other schools one or two days a week. Although there had been a teacher-in-charge for a couple of years, the first Principal of the school was a Mr T McGee whose appointment was approved in September 1967.

(xvii) Raphoe

A permanent school for the Raphoe area was first mooted in 1956 when the Committee were asked to consider 'the desirability of erecting two room technical schools, one at

²⁵⁴ Ibid. p.4

²⁵⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 June 1956, p.3. Department Letter No. F:16/1/1

²⁵⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 December 1953, p.6

²⁵⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the Finance and Buildings Sub-Committee meeting of 05 October 1954, p.5

²⁵⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 28 January 1955, p.11

²⁵⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 December 1964, p.6. This was the amount tendered by Mr M Slevin to be completed over 65 weeks as accepted by the Committee.

*Newtowncunningham and another at Raphoe, or at some other suitable centres in the area between Burt and Lifford.*²⁶⁰ It was emphasised that this was a large area of the county with no form of continuous instruction. The CEO, however, recommended that *'if Day School instruction was to be provided in the proposed schools, three room buildings should be provided.'*²⁶¹ In 1958, as outlined above, the provision of a school in Raphoe was recommended. This would eventually become Deele College which opened on 29 March 1965 (by the Minister for Local Government at the time, Neil Blaney, T.D.) on two acres purchased for £500 and on which the school stands today, albeit with a further seven acres added to it on which the school building was extended in 1985.

Uniquely, the school ran a summer farm school during the month of June (pictured below) for young farmers for a number of years from 1964, organised by Dessie Griffin. The students stayed with farming families in the area while attending the summer school. The summer school consisted of classes in farm management, farm accounts, the use of machinery, stock judging and visiting local farms in the area. Demonstrations in the use of various farm implements were given by commercial organisations (e.g. Massey Ferguson) and the students had an opportunity to use the farm machinery on the school site. The first Principal of Deele College was James (Terry) McDermott (who later became CEO of Wexford VEC), followed by Dessie Griffin and PJ McGowan today (pictured below, left to right).



²⁶⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 July 1956, p.14

²⁶¹ Ibid.



Deele College Raphoe which opened in 1965 and was extended in 1985, pictured as it stands today

(xviii) Killybegs

Killybegs had been on the Committee's building list for quite a while. For many years the people of the town had sought a vocational school. In 1954 Eugene O Rourke opened St. Mary's private secondary school but it did not get the full support of the local community as it catered for academic education rather than the vocational education which was required by the majority of the townspeople. Mr O Rourke established a Marine class in the school for fishermen who wanted to learn navigation which met with a good response and was one of the first such classes in the country. When the instructor, Paddy Gower, a former Irish Naval captain, went off to Canada, the classes ceased. At the October meeting in 1962, Committee member Frank Muldoon put forward the motion *'that this Committee request the Department to sanction the erection of a new Technical School in Killybegs; and in view of the special and exceptional circumstances applying to that area, permission be given to proceed with plans.'*²⁶² It was initially decided that as a first step a conference should be held of all the interested parties (representatives from the Departments of Education and Land and Fisheries, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and local interests in Killybegs) 'to determine:

- (a) *the type of school building which should be provided.*
- (b) *the various specialised courses dealing with the fishing industry, which should be included on the curriculum of such a School.*
- (c) *how these courses were to be fitted into apprenticeship periods of workers.*
- (d) *How the whole project was to be financed.*²⁶³

Approval was granted in principle by the Department in December 1962 and a site authorised. However, due to opposition from nearby centres of population, a second-level vocational school was to be denied to the area for many more years until 1973.

3.9 OTHER SCHOOL MATTERS

(i) School Meals

In November 1952 it was decided to pilot school meals (i.e. a hot midday meal) in the Letterkenny Technical School. This was on foot of a visit by Committee staff to Strabane Technical School which was one of the schools in the Strabane district involved in supplying a hot meal to over 500 pupils every day and acquiring information on a similar scheme in Longford Technical School. It was decided that the Committee would provide the necessary extra equipment to cook the meals and pupils would have to provide their own plates, fork, knife etc. *'Pupils (both boys and girls) would be required to assist in preparing and serving meal; and also in washing and cleaning up after meal.'*²⁶⁴ Pupils were to be charged for the meals at a rate of 6d and 1/-but vegetables were to be supplied free of charge from the school garden. The success or otherwise of this scheme is not mentioned until 1959 when, in discussing school transport and the length of days some pupils had to put in, in order to get to and from school, it was stated that the school meals scheme in Letterkenny *'had to be abandoned, since the numbers to be catered for were too large, and the cooking operations upset the normal school work.'*²⁶⁵

²⁶² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 22 October 1962, p.6

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 November 1952, p.7

²⁶⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 February 1959, p.8

In 1963 the provision of canteens was proposed again and it was again decided, as an initial step, to try it out in the largest school in the county, Letterkenny which now had 200 pupils attending it during the day.²⁶⁶ However, it would seem that it did not last long for such provision was again suggested in 1964 when it was suggested that ‘a beginning should be made with some of the new Schools for which Committee was submitting plans to Department of Education.’²⁶⁷ However, it was felt that ‘such facilities, however desirable, were beyond the financial competency of Committee at present time.’²⁶⁸ It was ‘considered that a lead should be given by the Department of Education in the matter’,²⁶⁹ a view unanimously endorsed by the Committee. Unfortunately, this was a lead that was never given, certainly not in Donegal.

Today provision is made by the Department of Social and Family Affairs for school meals for those second-level students who are in danger of leaving school early.

(ii) Use of Schools for External Purposes

It is interesting to note that in 1953, the Department requested the Committee to observe certain recommendations for the use of vocational school premises and grounds for external purposes.²⁷⁰ Throughout the minutes it is noticeable that the Committee continuously turned down numerous requests by various groups to use the schools for a range of meetings. The guidelines agreed by the Committee included;

1. *That facilities be provided in their schools for meetings of Macra na Feirme, Bantracht na Tuaithe, Cumann na Croise Deirge, Cultural Organisations or Societies, and Students’ Unions properly constituted; also for exhibitions, lectures or shows of an educational nature on condition that all such*

functions do not clash with provision of instruction.

2. *That Headmaster of School, or a member of school staff nominated by him, have right of access to all meetings held on school premises.*
3. *That teachers of practical subjects concerned be present of groups allowed in classrooms, workshops or kitchens.*
4. *That application be made each Session, preferably in the month of September, to Chief Executive Officer by every group requesting use of school premises for a lecture, exhibition or show of an educational nature, be made through Headmaster of School to Chief Executive Officer in sufficient time for its consideration, if necessary, at meeting of Committee prior to date of proposed function.*
5. *That when caretaker of school is required to come on duty specially to attend to the needs of the group meeting at night, he be paid a suitable gratuity by the group concerned.*
6. *That organised groups using School premises for their meeting make good any damage done to furniture, fittings, walls, etc., by any of their members on the occasion of such meetings.*
7. *That all meetings terminate not later than 10.30pm.*

(iii) Holidays

In the interests of widening the educational perspective of students, various schemes were engaged in, including the Farming Holiday Scheme. The scheme was illustrated by the following excerpt in the minutes of 1959, when the CEO of City of Dublin VEC, Mr M Gleeson, wrote concerning the scheme which they had been operating for a couple of years. He was suggesting for this particular year that ‘four country boys from Ballyshannon area should visit Dublin boys’ homes, and that Donegal Committee might pay the travelling expenses incurred in such visit.’²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 June 1963, p.6

²⁶⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 July 1964, p.13

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 November 1953, p.10 Circular Letter No. 103 of 25/06/34

²⁷¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 June 1959, p.4

It should also be noted that for many years, well into the 1960s, schools had to apply on a yearly basis to the Committee for a few days off for mid-term breaks.

3.10 HOTEL TRAINING SCHOOL, BUNDORAN / CATERING COLLEGE, KILLYBEGS

During the 1950s and 1960s training was provided by CERT (Council for Education, Recruitment and Training) in the Hotel Training School based in the Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran in the form of a six month course over the winter when the hotel was closed. Both staff and students boarded in the school, funded by the VEC and Bord Fáilte. Other students also received scholarships to attend the Hotel Cookery Course in St Mary's College, Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin and the Hotel Training Course in Athenry. This provision was established in 1955 when three staff were appointed (two domestic science teachers and one hotel trained staff), one of whom, Mary Doogan (nee Cunningham), became its first Principal.²⁷² A Bord Fáilte staff member, Hugh Larkin in its first year and Hugh Bennett thereafter, also advised the staff. The training school, which consisted of training junior cooks, waitresses and housemaids, held its first course from October 1955 until April 1956 with thirty students from all over the county who had passed an interview in the Technical Schools in Carndonagh, Letterkenny, Donegal Town and Ballyshannon. The following year, 1956-57, the enrolment doubled to sixty with students now coming from many other counties which included Sligo, Mayo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Monaghan, Cavan and Louth. In the 1957-58 year the numbers increased to ninety and students were coming from all over the country.

Blackwoods of Sligo, Whites and Vaughans of Ballyshannon supplied foods stuffs and household materials, meat came from Meehans of

Bundoran and milk and vegetables came from McGowans in Kinlough. The school day started at 7.30am with breakfast at 8.00am and classes beginning at 9.00am until 2.30pm (which included lunch). Free time was available from 3.00-4.30pm and evening meals were taken from 5.30-6.30pm. Evening classes were held from 7.00-9.00pm and some recreational time was included from 9.00-10.00pm. The training school also provided short training courses of one week's duration to local guest house owners and provided equipment demonstrations for local hotel owners. In 1959 CIE bought the Great Northern Hotel and it became the Great Southern Hotel where the course continued for another year. The school moved to Walshe's Hotel in Portnablagh for two years in 1960 but returned to the Great Southern Hotel in 1962.

By 1966, the six month course was catering for around seventy-two trainees at an overall cost of £8,770. The Committee found that it was in a *'very unsatisfactory financial position'*²⁷³ at this time and as it turned out the hotel became unavailable for the course for the 1966/67 session. In July 1966 CERT informed the VEC that they had inspected St Columba's hospital in Killybegs, which was due to close and proposed that if the Committee were to acquire the building from the County Council who owned it, it could be converted into a catering college.²⁷⁴ This proposal began to take real shape in 1967 when the County Council *'proposed to ask the Committee to pay to them, for St Columba's Hospital, the sum of £6,811, which amount represents the Capital balance outstanding, following outright purchase of the property by the Council.'*²⁷⁵ Understandably the Committee *'unanimously decided that this payment to County Council be made out of Loan of £50,000 to be raised from Commissioners of Public Works for the purpose of acquiring, renovating and equipping the building as a Hotel Training School'*²⁷⁶ and this it duly did.

²⁷² Mary was the Principal for the first five years until she had to give it up when she got married in 1960 as the government's marriage bar prohibited her continued employment. The information on the activities of the school and photograph were supplied by Mary as written records are not available.

²⁷³ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 19 July 1966, p.8

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 February 1967, p.9

²⁷⁶ Ibid.



Staff and students at the Bundoran Hotel School in 1957. Included in the photograph, standing on the front row from left-right are Noel Huggard, Ashford Castle, Cong, Co Mayo; Hugh Bennet, Bord Fáilte; Norah Healy; Mary Doogan (nee Cunningham), Principal; Lily O Callaghan; Cáitríona Cunningham; Rita Wall (nee McLoughlin); Monsignor Thomas J. Molloy, Chairman, Co Donegal VEC and Michael Cryan, CEO, Co Donegal VEC.

3.11 LETTERKENNY REGIONAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE (RTC)

The first mention of a further education or technical college for Co Donegal was made in 1965 when one of the Committee members, Mr P O Donnell ‘pointed out that a college of this type [Technical College] was to be provided in Sligo, and he considered the claim of County Donegal for such a College, located at Letterkenny, was as urgent as that of Sligo.’²⁷⁷ After discussing same, the Committee decided that this claim would be put to the Minister by ‘the delegation appointed to meet the Minister on proposed school buildings.’²⁷⁸ However, there was no further progress reported on a technical college until 1967.

3.12 STATUS AND USAGE OF IRISH

Concern about the Irish language was never far from the Committee’s mind. In 1951 they were informed that the Minister for Education had enquired from the CEO ‘if any special steps were being taken by Committee to further the position of the Irish language. The Minister was anxious

that the native language should be used as much as possible in dealings between Committee and Department, e.g., in correspondence, and also in the administration of their Educational Scheme generally.’²⁷⁹ The Chairman and CEO put a number of proposals together (listed below) which were put before the Committee for their approval and were unanimously accepted;

1. That Department of Education be requested to issue bilingually letters which are to be submitted to Committee at their meetings.
2. That Chief Executive Officer conduct the general correspondence of the Committee with the Department through the medium of the Irish language.
3. That Committee’s minutes be recorded in English until such time as the majority of the members of Committee decide to have minutes recorded in Irish.
4. That as from commencement of Session 1951/52 official correspondence on educational matters between Chief Executive Officer and Headmasters of Schools be through the medium of Irish.
5. That likewise correspondence in educational matters between the Chief Executive Officer and teachers, except those who do not hold the Ceard Teasta Gaedhilde, be through the medium of Irish.
6. That correspondence between Chief Executive Officer and Headmasters or Teachers on financial matters, such as school accounts, expenses etc., be, at discretion of Chief Executive Officer, conducted in English if it appears to him to be necessary or advisable to do so.
7. That as from commencement of Session 1951/52 Applications Forms, etc., for Day School Courses be printed or typed in Irish; also all Notices displayed on School notice boards by officers of Committee, for Day School groups.
8. That the Irish language be introduced gradually into the existing administrative system with regard to keeping of records, etc., as opportunity offers.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 19 October 1965, p.11

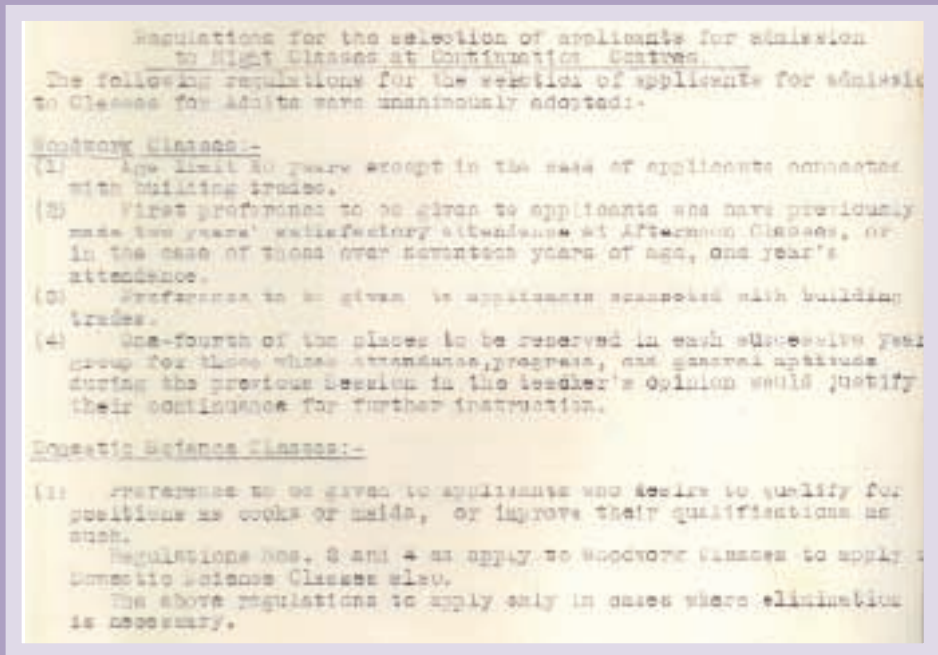
²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 January 1951, p.1

The introduction of the Official Languages Act in 2003 has ensured that similar proposals have been put together in 2005, albeit on a larger scale and with legal reinforcement.

3.13 ADULT EDUCATION

The first formal reference to adult education was in the format of night classes in 1932 when the Committee set regulations *'for the selection of applicants for admission to classes for adults'*²⁸⁰



It was later brought to the Committee's attention by the Department that *'in certain classes [evening and night] conducted in Session 1935/36 the majority of the pupils enrolled were under 14 years of age, and pointed out that as the purpose of the Vocational Education Act is to provide for*

*post-primary education, the purpose is not being fulfilled where classes are constituted in this manner.'*²⁸¹ The Committee issued an instruction to all teachers *'not to enrol as a pupil in any class anyone who is under 14 years of age on the date on which the class first meets.'*²⁸² Nevertheless,

²⁸⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 13 December 1932, p.1 under the agenda heading of 'Regulations for the selection of applicants for admission to Night Classes at Continuation Centres'.

²⁸¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 03 August 1937, p.3

²⁸² Ibid.

this issue would be raised again in 1959 by the Department which stated that, 'concerning the enrolment of young children in night classes:

- (a) *That it is not proper under any circumstances to accept children under 14 years of age.*
- (b) *Students over 16 years of age may be enrolled, so long as such action does not interfere with adults seeking admission to the Classes.*
- (c) *Although Committee and School Staffs have a discretion to accept school children between 14 and 16 years of age, it is not advisable to do so, and the practice should not be encouraged.'*²⁸³

For the most part, night classes for adults were for woodwork and domestic science in the earlier part of this period and expanded somewhat towards the latter half to include subjects such as art, metalwork, weaving etc.

CONCLUSION

In 1965 the Department of Education and the OCED released the report *Investment in Education* which '*collected important statistical data for the first time, intended to indicate the resources available, and the efficiency with which they were used. It provided striking evidence of the lack of opportunity for poorer children to proceed to secondary and higher education.*'²⁸⁴ As Lee eloquently states '*after its exposure of the waste of talent fostered by an educational system based on low intellectual and relatively high financial entry requirements to advanced levels, it was no longer possible to sustain fond illusions about the wonderful educational performance.*'²⁸⁵ Building grants for second-level schools had already been introduced in 1964, Regional Technical Colleges were to be estab-

lished with which the VECs would have an important role to play in terms of their management and it was announced by the then Minister for Education Donogh O'Malley, T.D. that second-level education was to be made free. With 1966 being one of the last years of paying for education by local communities (in terms of books, transport etc.), exciting times lay ahead for the country and this of course was to very much have repercussions on developments in Co Donegal.

²⁸³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 June 1959, p.2

²⁸⁴ Lee, J.J. *Ireland 1912-1985 Politics and Society*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 361

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

4. 1967-1999

INTRODUCTION

As already indicated, the beginning of this period was marked by the introduction of free second-level education,²⁸⁶ and free post-primary school transport, introduced by the then Minister for Education, Donagh O Malley, T.D., a reduction in the entry age for second-level schooling to twelve years from 01 September 1968, the introduction of new subjects/support services such as guidance in 1969,²⁸⁷ the introduction of a new examination grading system²⁸⁸ and the introduction of the Leaving Certificate in 1969, albeit initially only in two schools, Letterkenny and Ballyshannon.²⁸⁹ These initiatives were to produce vast improvements in County Donegal in terms of a considerable increase in numbers attending second-level schools and greater mobility with free school transport, which was coordinated by the VEC across the county. Assistant Headmasters were appointed for the first time in 1968²⁹⁰ as were clerical assistants a few years later in order that Headmasters and Assistant Headmasters *'would be much more economically employed on the organisation and supervision generally of the schools (and indeed giving as much teaching service as possible) than in spending several hours per week on routine clerical work.'*²⁹¹

Up until now, the Committee was mainly concerned with expanding the provision of second-level vocational schools across the county. Other private or religious secondary schools had also opened in various towns so from the early 1970s. The need began to arise to consolidate this provision and amalgamations of a number of schools began to take place. At the same time the Committee began to expand its services in other areas with the opening of the Catering College in Killybegs in 1969 and the acquisition of the Gartan Estate. The VEC's first female Principal, Mary McLaughlin, was appointed in 1973 to the Catering College (known today as the Tourism College Killybegs).

During this particular period the Committee continued their monthly meetings in the County Council offices at County House, Lifford until 1985 when it was decided to begin rotating them around the schools²⁹² and in 1991 the Committee elected its first female Chairperson, Mary Coughlan, T.D. (who has been the only one to date). The VEC's activities were overseen by three CEOs – Michael Cryan retired in 1971 and Edward Gibson took over for the next five years until 1976, when he moved to Co Wexford to become CEO there. Seán Ó Longáin, a native of Co Mayo, was appointed as CEO in 1976 and continues in office up to the present.

²⁸⁶ For example, the minutes of 17 October 1967 (p.4) tell us that the Department's Free Book Scheme initiative was introduced by the Committee during that academic year. However, the following year the Committee estimated that they required £9,656 for 1,757 students that were eligible for the scheme out of 2,156 students attending the day schools but were only given a grant of £4,560 by the Department, creating a shortfall of £5,096. (Minutes of meeting of 19 November 1968, p.9)

²⁸⁷ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 25 February 1969, p.7 re Department's Circular Letter No. 6/69 of 29 January 1969.

²⁸⁸ The new grading system consisted of A (85-100%), B (20-84%), C (55-69%), D (40-54%), E (25-39%), F (10-24%), No Grade (Under 10%)

²⁸⁹ Committee members were *'very disappointed, indeed perturbed, to learn the Department should even contemplate having only two senior cycle centres in a county so extensive as Donegal, in which there are at present twelve vocational schools.'* (Minutes of the meeting of 17 December 1968, p.6). This request was put to the Department who then added Carndonagh, Letterkenny, Donegal, Derrybeg and Carrick (provisionally) to the schools providing the Leaving Certificate in 1969.

²⁹⁰ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 21 May 1968, p.9. The following assistant head masters were appointed – L. Emerson (Ballyshannon), S. Gildea (Carndonagh), O. Plunkett (Donegal), T. Walsh (Gortahork), W. O'Donnell (Letterkenny), A. O'Friel (Milford), D. Griffin (Raphoe) and M. Finn (Stranorlar).

²⁹¹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 February 1968, p.4

²⁹² Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 January 1985, p. 15

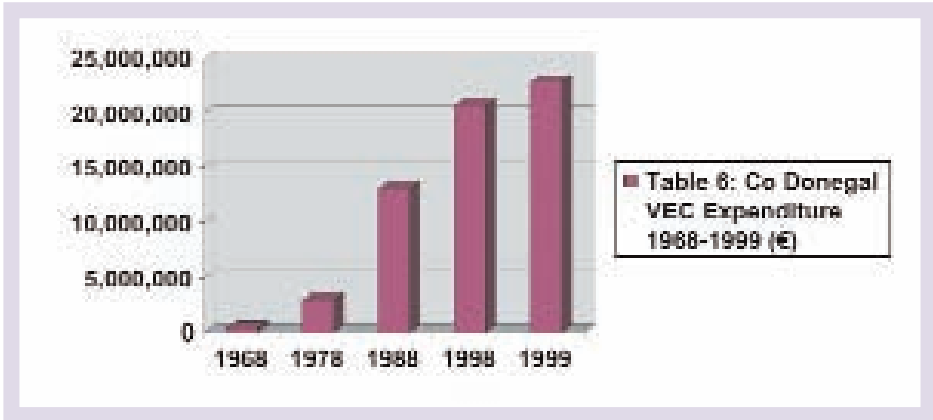
4.1 FINANCES & STAFFING

The expansion of the Committee's services was reflected in the increase of its financial expenditure. At the beginning of this period in 1968 expenditure totalled £262,499 (equivalent to approximately €333,305 today) as illustrated in the annual scheme below. (Income did not match this but was made up by receipt of a special grant of £148,700 from the Department). Expenditure increased from €333,305 to

€22,777,065 by the close of this period in 1999, as Table 6 below illustrates. In 1973 Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC) and this brought an added dimension to the finances provided by the Department in terms of the European Social/Structural Fund (ESF) which was to add considerably over the years to the funding available for Adult Education Services, the Tourism College Killybegs and the Regional Technical College in particular.

TABLE 5 - ANNUAL SCHEME 1968/69

<u>TABLE I - EXPENSES</u>	
	£
Administration	11,141
Instruction	172,282
Maintenance of schools and classes	60,132
Scholarship	8,854
Travelling and Maintenance expenses of teachers under Section 50	500
Miscellaneous Expenditure	8,600
	<u>£262,499</u>
<u>TABLE II - RECEIPTS</u>	
Balance on 1st April, 1968	4,208
Grants from the Department	59,042
Amount of Annual Local Contribution from the rating authority	79,154
Tuition fees	500
Sale of class materials and products	150
Sale of garden produce	250
Subscriptions and Donations	100
Other sources	9,580
	<u>£117,794</u>



By 1968 the work of the CEO and his office staff had also increased considerably, to the point where they were working very long hours and were unable to take much of their annual leave. The CEO pointed out to the Committee that *‘the Educational Scheme had developed to such an extent that in School Session 1967/8, Committee*

*employed 115 whole-time teachers and 15 part-time teachers, while their expenditure from Ordinary Account on the Scheme (not to mention the various Capital projects in train) amounted to £218,318 for the financial year 1967/68.’*²⁹³ After discussing *‘the best method by which the burden of work...could be eased,’*²⁹⁴ the Committee decided;

1. That an estimate be made of the number of hours overtime worked by Miss Conaghan during the past two years, and that subject to Department's approval, she be paid a lump sum, in respect of same; the amount to be decided upon in consultation between Department and Chief Executive Officer.
2. That a post as staff officer carrying suitable responsibility, or post of comparable status with appropriate salary scale, be created in office of Chief Executive Officer, and that subject to Department's approval Miss Conaghan be promoted to this post.
3. That in consultation with the other Chief Executive Officers in Category 2 viz. those of Counties Mayo, Galway and Kerry, Chief Executive Officer be authorised to negotiate with Department of Education for the number and type of additional staff (other than post mentioned in paragraph 2 above) who would normally be required in these Counties; with of course, particular reference to the needs of Co. Donegal.

²⁹³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 September 1968, pp.11-12

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p.12

Fortunately the following year, in February 1969 the Department 'set out the clerical staffing arrangements [for VECs] of which the Department would be prepared to approve, taking into account the size and importance of various categories of schemes, but based generally on the number of whole-time teachers employed in each scheme.'²⁹⁵ Donegal was to benefit from two additional staff members by qualifying for one senior clerk, two clerical officers and two clerk/typists. (By 1979 this had increased to two senior clerk, seven clerical officers and four clerk/typists). Eight months later in October, the CEO and his staff found themselves short of space once again and took over the classroom in the Letterkenny Vocational School adjoining his office.

However, financing and staffing of the Committee's scheme was particularly difficult during the 1980s, reflecting the grave situation of the national economy in general and the public sector in particular during these years, with major restrictions on financial expenditure and an embargo placed on recruitment. This improved during the 1990s, again reflecting the buoyant national situation during the 'Celtic Tiger' years.

The Committee's Administrative offices during this period were, in the main, housed in the Letterkenny Vocational School in Ard O Donnell. However, on a number of occasions the availability of space became an issue and this meant that the offices moved a number of times, firstly in 1980 to offices on the first floor of what was Thompson's Seed Stores on the Port Road, where Gleneely House is located today, then to offices beside the Community Centre around 1985 before finally returning to Ard O Donnell in 1987 when the Vocational School itself transferred to its new building at Windy Hall.

4.2 VOCATIONAL/SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS - RATIONALISATION IN THE 1960S & 1970S

As already noted the *Investment in Education* Report in 1965 highlighted the low levels of

participation in second-level education and tertiary education at that time. In addition the World Bank became involved in investing in facilities in second-level education and was committed to rationalising the existing facilities in terms of providing larger school units at second-level. Co Donegal experienced particular rationalisation of its existing second-level educational services in the 1960s and early 1970s.

(i) Glenties - McDevitt Institute (St Columba's Comprehensive)

In 1964 the Department of Education announced that four comprehensive schools were to be built around the country and Glenties in Co Donegal was to be the site for one of them, which became St Columba's Comprehensive today. (The other three schools were at Carraroe, Co Galway, Cootehill, Co Cavan and Shannon, Co Clare). In essence this signalled the beginning of the end for the McDevitt Institute which closed its doors for the last time on the 31 August 1968. As it turned out, by that time it 'was becoming full to capacity and there was very little room for expansion.'²⁹⁶

(ii) Gweedore (Derrybeg)

In 1968, fourteen years after it had opened, the Vocational School in Derrybeg began to run into difficulties when the Department wrote to the Committee to inform them of the Minister's decision that post-primary education in the Derrybeg/Bunbeg area was to be provided in one centre only. The existing two schools in question, Ard-Scoil Mhuire in Bunbeg and the Vocational School in Derrybeg were only about one and a half miles apart from each other. In essence this signalled the beginning of the amalgamation of the two schools, the first of its kind to be undertaken by the Committee.

By a gradual process, the Department of Education, from 1969 to 1974, persuaded the parents of students in the area that the amalgamation of the Derrybeg Vocational School and Ard-Scoil Mhuire in Bunbeg into a Community

²⁹⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 25 February 1969, p.7

²⁹⁶ McCafferty, Richard. 'St Columba's Silver Jubilee' in *Scoil Chuimsitheach Cholmille. Silver Jubilee*. 1993, p.6

School represented the best solution for the students and parents of the area. In the early 1970s Pobail Scoil Gaoth Dobhair eventually opened in late 1973 and finally received its new building in 1980. The Derrybeg school building continued to be used as an adult education and community centre and was eventually disposed of by the VEC to Coiste Forbatha Gaoth Dobhair in 1988.²⁹⁷ This building has been a centre for An Chrannóg which formed the nucleus for Acadamh na hOllscolaí áochta Gaeilge which the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) opened in a refurbished industrial unit in the Business Park in Gweedore in September 2005.

(iii) Dungloe / Loughanure

In 1969 the Committee decided to put the two-roomed school, built in 1952 up for sale. It had been lying vacant for a few years *'due to the fact that Woodwork Teachers and Domestic Science Teachers were not available to take evening and night classes in the school'*²⁹⁸ and in the meantime they had been approached by the Dungloe Tourist Development Association who wanted to use the building for tourism promotion.

The Committee were intending to build a new vocational school in the town and were also approached by the local Development Committee in 1971 requesting a new vocational or community school for the area as they felt that *'because of restricted space, limitations of subjects offered, and inconvenience of location, the existing Vocational School in Loughanure is unable to meet local demands.'*²⁹⁹ At this stage *'the Department had agreed in principle to the transfer of the Day School Courses from Loughanure to a new school to be erected in Dungloe.'*³⁰⁰ Following some considerable discussions it was decided that a community school should be erected in Dungloe incorporating the Vocational School in Loughanure

and the High School (Ard Scoil) in Dungloe to be known as Pobail Scoil na Rosann (Rosses Community School) to provide services for the pupils and their parents in the Rosses area. The school was opened in the early 1970s while continuing to use both buildings i.e. the Vocational School in Loughanure and the Ard Scoil in Dungloe. The new building of Pobail Scoil na Rosann was opened in 1978. The Committee disposed of the Loughanure school building to Coláiste Mhuire in 1979 with the approval of the Department of Education *'on condition that the building continues to be used as an Irish College and that it also be used as a community centre.'*³⁰¹

(iv) Gortahork

In 1971, ten years after the school opened, local parents in the Gortahork area held a meeting with the Department of Education to discuss the future provision of the education scheme in that area. The Department were beginning to favour *'a Community School established in Holy Cross College, Falcarragh, and that the classes in the Vocational School, Gortahork, could be transferred to that school; that transport would be provided for the Vocational School pupils; and that Department would be prepared to spend about £200,000 on providing the proposed Community School.'*³⁰² A community school was duly built in Falcarragh (Pobailscoil Chloich Cheannfhaola/Falcarragh Community School) and opened its doors in 1972 involving the closure of the Vocational School in Gortahork at the same time. The Vocational School building in Gortahork has been maintained and substantially enhanced as an Adult Education Centre from 1975 and is a key element of the Committee's structure of six dedicated Adult Education and Training Centres throughout the county today.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 May 1988, p.5

²⁹⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 September 1969, p.14

²⁹⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 April 1971, p.6

³⁰⁰ Ibid. p.7

³⁰¹ Correspondence from Department of Education, 20 February 1979

³⁰² Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 16 March 1971, p.9

(v) Carndonagh

The Vocational School which opened in 1959 had to cater for the whole of North Inishowen. Thus numbers enrolling at the school expanded at a rapid rate, so much so that the school not only became the largest school under the aegis of the Committee but one of the largest in the country. By the early 1970s there were also two other smaller schools in the town, under the patronage of the Bishop of Derry. In 1971, discussions began to take place on establishing a Community School in Carndonagh. It would appear that the ecclesiastical authorities were initially opposed to this idea but at a meeting in the town in July 1972 with a Mr Maloney, Principal Officer of the Development Branch of the Department of Education, when the details of what was involved were outlined *'the Ecclesiastical Authorities...had agreed to co-operate in the venture and the meeting had accepted the proposals...by an overwhelming margin.'*³⁰³ When the Community School opened shortly after this in 1974 it was no longer within the remit of the VEC.

(vi) Ballyshannon

By 1973 conditions in the Ballyshannon vocational school had become totally overcrowded with classes even being taught in the bicycle shed. The Committee decided an extension was needed for the school but the Department deferred making a decision on it as they *'were examining the possibility of having a single school in Ballyshannon.'*³⁰⁴ At this time there was three second-level schools in the town - the Vocational School, De La Salle College and the Convent of Mercy, together with a long established secondary school named Ard Lughaidh in Bundoran under the Louis Sisters. Following many debates the Department of Education eventually decided on the amalgamation of the three schools in Ballyshannon to form Coláiste

Cholmcille or Ballyshannon Community School. The Community School opened for business in 2000, bringing to an end eighty-six years of whole time second-level vocational education and training in Ballyshannon.

In parallel with the amalgamation of the three schools in Ballyshannon the Committee became involved, at the request of the community, in providing second-level education in Bundoran in the Ard Lughaidh premises. Initially the provision was as an annex to Ballyshannon Vocational School from September 1992 to 2000. In the year 2000 Coláiste Cholmcille, Ballyshannon and Magh Éne College, Bundoran were established as separate entities. Students within the common catchment are free to choose to attend either Coláiste Cholmcille, Ballyshannon or Magh Éne College, Bundoran. The existing school premises at College Street, Ballyshannon is now a dedicated Adult Education and Training Centre.

(vii) Buncrana

In 1972 the Principal of the Buncrana Vocational School, Michael McAlinney, retired and was replaced by Michael McLaughlin who then retired in 1977 to be replaced by Danny O'Brien, the year the Department of Education and Science (DES) sanctioned the school to provide the Leaving Certificate. Mr O'Brien was to oversee the school's transition to a new building which saw Phase 1 being built in 1979 and Phase 2 started in 1982. Staff and students moved into the new building, which was officially opened by Minister for Education Gemma Hussey, T.D., on the Shore Front in 1982. A third phase was also built and this was officially opened by Mary O'Rourke T.D., Minister for Education, in 1988. The college has a capacity for 375 pupils. Danny O'Brien retired in 1997 and was replaced by Mary McLaughlin in 1998 who is the current Principal.

³⁰³ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 18 July 1972, p.3

³⁰⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 October 1973, p1



Michael McLaughlin
Principal, 1972-1977



Danny O'Brien
Principal, 1977-1997



Mary McLaughlin
Principal, 1998-Present

(viii) Carrick

During the 1973/74 school year a further four prefabs were added to the Carrick Vocational School as enrolment in the previous year had reached 259 students. However, the establishment of the 'rebel' school in Killybegs in December 1970 subsequently resulted in a drop in enrolment to 230 students. At this time there were seventeen teachers. In December 1976 the Principal Pádraig Ó Beirne died in office and Gerrard Breslin was appointed to the post. In 1982/83 Phase 1 comprising a science laboratory and engineering room was built, followed by a substantial new school building which was officially opened by the then Minister for Education, Mary O'Rourke, T.D., in 1990. Enrolment in the school reached a high of 333 in 1988/89.



Carrick Vocational School which opened in 1990, pictured in 2005.



The local newspaper headlines, following the opening of the new Carrick Vocational School building in 1990.

In 1995 Gerrard Breslin retired from the post of Principal and Tony Boner was appointed. In 2003 the Deputy Principal Seán Burke retired and Anne Marie Luby was appointed in his place.

(ix) Donegal Town - Abbey Vocational School

Over a period of time, up until 1970, successive Ministers for Education had sought to have the two schools in Donegal Town, the Vocational School and Ardscoil na gCeithre Máistir, a private secondary school, amalgamated. The two schools had co-operated whenever possible on educational provision in the town. Finally in 1970 Mr P O Cleirigh, the Manager and Headmaster of Ardscoil na gCeithre Máistir agreed to an amalgamation with the VEC.³⁰⁵ The property and staff of the school transferred en bloc to the VEC. Initially the closure, and subsequent amalgamation, of Ardscoil na gCeithre Máistir was to be completed on a phased basis. As it turned out, at the request of Mr O Cleirigh, the school was closed entirely on 01 August 1971.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 July 1970, pp.12-13. This building is used today by Adult Education Services and is also sometimes referred to as the Four Masters building or the O Cleirigh school.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 March 1971, p.8



Ardscoil na gCeithre Máistir, Donegal Town.

The Vocational School in Donegal Town continued at Drumcliff until 1982 when a new school building to cater for 565 pupils on a four-teen acre site at the Glebe, Donegal Town was opened. The new school (pictured below) was to receive a further three extensions from 1982 to 1997 to accommodate the growing number of students. Today the school caters for over eight hundred day students and over sixty staff.



Pictured above at the opening of Phase 1 of the Abbey Vocational School in 1982 are standing left-right Clement Coughlan, T.D.; Rev. Dr. Seamus Hegarty, Bishop of Raphoe; Seán Ó Longáin, CEO, Co Donegal VEC; Richard Tracey, main contractor; Clr. Colm Gallagher; Dr Martin O Donoghue, T.D., Minister for Education; JJ Harvey, Principal.



Abbey Vocational School, Donegal Town, which opened initially in 1982 and was further expanded until 1997. It is the largest school under the aegis of the VEC



Pictured at the opening of the Phase 4 of the school in 1997 are left-right Clr. James McBrearty; Pat 'The Cope' Gallagher, T.D.; JJ Harvey, Principal; Rev. Dr Philip Boyce, Bishop of Raphoe; Michéal Martin, T.D., Minister for Education & Science; Clr. Peter Kennedy; Seán Ó Longáin, CEO, Co Donegal VEC; Mary Coughlan, T.D.; Clr. Colm Gallagher; Rt. Rev. James Mehaffey, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe; Dinny McGinley, T.D. and Mary Ann Kane, Deputy Principal.



Mary Anne Kane, Principal of the Abbey Vocational School, Donegal Town.

(x) Letterkenny

As we saw earlier, Letterkenny Vocational School was one of the first to open in the county in 1914. For most of this period it continued to operate from the building on Ard O Donnell which today houses the VEC's Administrative Offices and Adult Education and Training Centre. It was the first school in the county to take students abroad to the Continent for an educational trip during the Easter holidays of 1970.³⁰⁷ However, by 1974 conditions had deteriorated badly to the level were *'there were 19 class groups and only 15 classrooms, and conditions were so bad that a bus had to be hired to accommodate a class.'*³⁰⁸ Eventually in 1977 a new site was purchased at Windy Hall on the Kilmacrennan Road and the school moved premises in 1987.



Letterkenny Vocational School at Windy Hall on the Kilmacrennan Road which opened in 1987, pictured as it stands today.

(xi) Bundoran - Magh Éne College

In 1992 the Louis Sisters who had provided second level education in Bundoran for almost thirty years, under the patronage of the Bishop of Clogher, made known their decision to withdraw as education providers in the town with the closure of Ard Lughaidh scheduled for 1994. This would mean that students would have to

travel to Ballyshannon to be educated. A group of townspeople from Bundoran came together with a united vision of retaining a post-primary school in the town. The VEC was approached and asked to provide a second level educational service in the town which they agreed to do and began operating one as an annex to Ballyshannon Vocational School with effect from September 1992.

In August 1992 the first enrolment of what was to become Magh Éne College was held in an upstairs room of Homefield House (formerly Stella Maris, Domestic Science School). The target was to have forty students enrolled to prove the school's viability. Such was the commitment of parents that eight students who had already successfully completed first year in Ard Lughaidh were re-enrolled in Magh Éne to meet the target which ensured that there were thirty-six students attending the school when it opened its doors in Homefield House on 01 September 1992. A further fifty were to enrol the following year. Pat Geagan of Homefield House allowed the use of her own private kitchens for Home Economics and television room for meetings/rehearsals, with use of four classrooms and playing courts also available while Bundoran GAA also made their playing fields available. Students were bussed into Ballyshannon Vocational School for practical classes while the Great Northern Hotel provided use of its pool. All other classes were taught on site.

Parents of students/community group not only funded the school from September-December 1992 but also helped with extra-curricular activities, provided transport and taught music during lunch breaks. In 1994 the school moved into the old Ard Lughaidh school building with the consent of the Diocese of Clogher and the Sarah Crudden Charitable Trust. This movement brought even more challenges – an old building with limited resources. With a limited budget available parents continued to be a core support

³⁰⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 January 1970, p.5

³⁰⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 15 October 1974, p.4

by having 'paint-ins', putting up basketball nets, fundraising, making and erecting school signs and providing equipment. In 1996 John Mc Lean took over the mantle as Acting Principal and later became Principal of Magh Éne College in 2000 when Coláiste Cholmcille opened in Ballyshannon.



Magh Éne College, Bundoran

(xii) Killybegs - The Rebel School & St Catherine's

In 1970 the VEC took over control of St. Mary's private secondary school, which had been opened in 1954 by Eugene O Rourke and now had sixteen pupils enrolled. In a response to a submission by the Killybegs Development Committee the then Minister for Education, Pádraig Faulkner T.D., stated that he could not sanction a school for Killybegs for such a small number of pupils and *'a big problem is that a new school in Killybegs would have adverse effects on the Vocational Schools in Donegal and Carrick, the latter would be badly hit.'*

The minutes reveal that the Committee experienced considerable difficulty in trying to secure a site for a school in Killybegs during the 1960s.³⁰⁹ After many promises and disappointments over the years the people of the Killybegs community decided to take matters into their

own hands and set up the Killybegs Community College in the Old Niall Mór National School. Money was collected locally and teachers employed and the school, which was known locally as *'The Rebel School'* received nationwide publicity. Twenty-one students enrolled in the school - fourteen girls and seven boys. Patrick McGill, a 75 year old retired national school teacher was the Principal of the rebel school from 1970 until 1973. Boat builders, Charles McCahill and Paddy Keeney gave woodwork lessons, while Sean McNelis, a director of a local engineering company and former teacher taught metalwork. Mary Meehan taught Domestic Science to the girls and Mary Breathnach taught Business Studies. The Parish priest, the Very Reverend Canon A. Carrabin D.D. taught Religious Instruction and Maths. The Headmaster of the local national school, Dermot O'Callaghan taught Irish and French was taught by Mrs. Anne Graglia, a former teacher home on holiday from Italy.

Following the 1973 general election, Richard Burke T.D., the new Minister for Education, said he was very impressed by the effort of the Killybegs people in providing education and finance it themselves and in June 1973 he approved a new school for the town. However, as a new building could not be provided in the short space of time prefabs were provided as a temporary measure. In the meantime Pádraig Ó Beirne took over as Principal from 1973-1974 and the current Principal Joe Ward was appointed in 1974, a post he remains in today. Fourteen years later, after battling to get a permanent building, the new school was finally opened in November 1987 and today has an enrolment of 348 full-time and 20 part-time students catered for by a staff of thirty-two full-time and part-time teachers, offering a full range of programmes both for second-level students and adults. The strong community partnership continues to thrive within the school, illustrated by the fact that the Physical Education/community hall was jointly financed by the Department of Education, the Killybegs Development Association and the Parish Council and is used

³⁰⁹ Ibid. Minutes of meetings of 1964, 1965.

jointly for school and community use. It is used by the school during the day and by the community from 7 p.m. each evening, every weekend and during school holidays.³¹⁰



The residual prefabs at Killybegs removed after the new building opened in 1987.



Pupils and staff of the 'Rebel School', October 1972. Included in the photo are Very Rev. Canon Carrabin D.D. (Religious Instruction and Maths), Charles McCahill (Woodwork), Sean McNeilis (Metalwork) and Patrick McGill (Principal).

³¹⁰ This was one of the first joint usage arrangements to benefit both the school and the community and has now become a model for many such projects throughout the country.



St Catherine's Vocational School Killybegs today.

(xiii) Tory Island – Colaíste Phobail Cholmcille Oileán Thoraí

In the late 1970s parents on Tory island attempted to bring second-level education to the island as their children were leaving at the age of twelve to continue their education at Falcarragh Community School. However, this wish was not to be realised for another twenty years when, in 1999, the island's co-operative Comharchumann Oileann Thoraí 'invited members of Meithal Forbartha Na Gaelthachta and Donegal VEC to the island to make their case for secondary education on the island. At that time there were twenty-eight pupils in that national school and the need for secondary education became critical.'³⁹¹ The meeting resulted in the founding of Colaíste Phobail Cholmcille with facilities being provided in the local community centre, where classrooms were partitioned to cater for the twenty students and seven teachers (from Scotland, Switzerland, Galway, Derry and the mainland). This continued to be the case until 2005 when work began on a

new school building located on the site adjacent to the Ionaid Pobail and on land leased from the Comharchumann. The building in the Colaíste Pobail will include three specialist rooms for Home Economics and Science and Technology together with a staff room and Principal's office.

(xiv) Arranmore Island - Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada on Arranmore Island, named after Dr Eugene McDermott who spear-headed the action committee who pursued the setting up of the school, officially opened its doors on 08 October 1990. Initially the school was housed in a prefabricated building until 1993 when a new building was opened to provide permanent accommodation for two additional classrooms, a science laboratory, a home economics room and a woodwork room, along with an office and a large culture room (Ionad Éalíona) which is also used as the school computer room. The old prefab is still used today as the school library.



The original school building on Arranmore Island 1990-1993

³⁹¹ Magee, Declan. 'Work Gets Underway on New Tory Secondary School'. *Donegal Democrat*, 23 June 2005



The new school building on Arranmore which opened in 1993.



The current staff group at Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada from left (front): Noreen Marin, Mona Bonner, Mary Doherty. Middle left: Pauline Comack (Principal), Sally Mc Cafferty, Celia O Donnell, Caroline Mc Cauley, Noreen Muldowney (secretary). Back (left) Daniel Doherty (Deputy Principal) and Fred Gallagher.

(xv) Ballinamore - Gairmscoil Chú Uladh

In September 1982 the county's second (and the VEC's first) all-Irish school opened in Ballinamore (operating out of the premises of the local Irish College, Cholaiste Chu Uladh) in the central Gaeltacht area stretching from Glenfin to Doochary and Glenties. The local community, led by primary school Principal Don McGlynn, had fought a long campaign with the Department of Education to have education through Irish available to cater for the Gaeltacht Lar. Previous to this young people had to attend

second level schools in Ballybofey or Glenties or the other nearest all-Irish second-level school in Gweedore, all of which were simply too far away. The school opened with twenty-three students, two part-time teachers and the Principal, Maitiu O Murchu. Initially it was operated by the VEC on a one year trial basis. The following year a further ten pupils enrolled and staff numbers were also increased. Numbers attending the school did remain small for some years numbering around 30-40 students. However, as numbers began to grow, a proper school building was required and this opened in 1984 with 120 students. By 1998 this number had increased to 161. The growth of the school was overseen by Principals Denis Doherty, Fionnuala Uí Channaí and Fiona Ní Chnámhsí, the current Principal.



The first class groups in Gairmscoil Chú Uladh in 1982.

³¹ 'Ballinamore Vocational School' in the *Donegal People's Press*. 08 April 1998.



The new school building in Ballinamore which opened in 1994

(xvi) Milford

By the late 1970s, the school building which had opened its doors in 1957 was no longer adequate for the needs of the Milford area. The school had been built with five classrooms to cater for approximately 100 students and numbers had risen considerably in the intervening period. The only 'extension' the school had received was the addition of twenty-one prefabs. A seven acre site was purchased in 1986 with the Department finally approving a new vocational school for five hundred pupils for the town in December 1992. However, it took a further four years, until 1996, to gain approval for the project to go to planning stage with the go-ahead given by Niamh Bhreathnach T.D., the then Minister for Education. Two years later in 1998 contracts were finally signed for a new school which opened in 1999 and was officially opened in June 2000 by the Minister for Education and Science, Dr Michael Woods T.D.



Pictured at the signing of the contracts for the new school in Milford on 09 April 1998 are standing left-right Seamus O Beaglaioich, Chairperson, Board of Management; Cathal Greene, Principal and seated left-right are Brendan Deery, Architect; Brendan Loughran, Contractor; Clr. Peter Kennedy, Chairperson, Co Donegal VEC, Clr. David Alcorn, Vice-Chairperson, Co Donegal VEC and Seán Ó Longáin, CEO.



Mulroy College, Milford which opened in 1999.

4.3 ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES

In the previous period and for most of the first half of this period, adult education classes continued mainly in the form of night classes run in the various schools around the county and organised by teachers within those schools. In 1969 the Department held a conference on Adult Education in Athlone which the CEO and five teachers (who were engaged in various forms of adult education around the county) attended. The conference was addressed by the Minister for Education who announced that the *'Department of Education was instituting a survey of adult education for the whole country with a view to assessing the extent to which various bodies, including Vocational Education Committees, were engaged in the work, and co-ordinating their efforts. It was proposed as a result of the survey to establish an authority to control and direct adult education. An ad hoc council [Aontas – the National Association for Adult Education] was elected at the Conference, on which County Donegal Vocational Education Committee as a statutory body was given one member. This Council would meet periodically to help and advise on the survey being carried out by the Department.'*³⁹ Mr P Gallagher, Headmaster, Ballyshannon School was the VEC's representative on the Council. This meeting not only led to the establishment of Aontas but also the publication of the Murphy Report on Adult Education.

Ten years later in 1979 the Department allocated two Adult Education Organisers posts to the VEC thus putting this section of the Committee's business on a firmer footing. These posts were filled by Peter Boyle and Hugh Dorrian. In 1984 Michael Fox replaced Peter Boyle. Programmes and services by this stage included self-financing classes (night classes), the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and some basic literacy classes. As we have already seen, the old vocational school building in Gortahork was operating as an Adult Education and Training Centre (AETC) while the old school buildings in Buncrana and

Donegal Town began operating as AETCs in 1982. An AETC began to operate from the VEC premises on Ard O Donnell in Letterkenny from 1987, while in 1999, when the new vocational school opened in Milford, the old school building also began operating as an AETC. The AETC in Ballyshannon opened in the old vocational school building on College Street a year later in 2000. The Senior Traveller Training Centre (STTC) opened in 1988 and the Letterkenny and Buncrana Youthreach programmes opened in 1989 followed by the Lifford and Glengad programmes in 1999. However, the Youthreach and Traveller Training programmes were not at that time within the remit of the Adult Education Service.

In 1990 Hugh Dorrian left his post to become Principal of the Letterkenny Vocational School, leaving Michael Fox as the sole AEO. The Department of Education would not permit the Committee to fill the vacant post again until 1999 with the appointment of Ms Cróna Gallagher (North County) and Dr Martin Gormley (South County). For most of this period adult education was grossly underfunded and it was not until mid-1999, with the publication of the Government's Green Paper on Adult Education Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning that any significant funding began to come on-stream to develop services adequately for the first time.



An art night class in Ballyshannon Vocational School in 1976 with artist Joseph McLaughlin. (On the right of the front row is Lucius Emerson).

³⁹ Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee. Minutes of the meeting of 20 May 1969, p.7

4.4 GARTAN OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE (OEC)

In May 1968 the Department wrote to the Committee requesting their 'co-operation in the acquisition of above property [Gartan Estate at Churchill for School of Ecology], initial cost of which would be in the region of £11,000.'³⁵⁴ Naturally, the Committee were delighted to have been chosen by the Department for such a school. In July 1968 the Department granted approval for the purchase of the property, from the well known local artist Derek Hill, for the purchase price of £10,595 to be paid for through a loan which would be reimbursed by the Department through grants. The Johnston or Lough Veagh estate, comprising 87 acres in total, had been a working farm, employing many local people, but at this time it had fallen into disrepair. The intention was to develop a field studies centre, utilising the estate itself and the nearby mountain, forest and coastal areas. However, 'it was in such a dilapidated condition that they would not be suitable for adaptation for the purpose of a Field Centre.'³⁵⁵ The Committee were now left to sort out this problem. They were advised by the Department to seek an amendment to the restrictive covenants under which they had purchased the lands with a specific intention in mind. The Department was not in a position either to fund any further developments, either capital or current, for quite a while due to an acute shortage of funds.³⁵⁶ So initially a very basic, renovation of the old stables and outhouses took place soon after the main Lough Veagh House was demolished in 1975. The decision to demolish was taken in view of the state of structural disrepair and the prohibitive cost of repair and renovation of the old house.

The Centre functioned in its early years, through the 1980s, as a self-catering hostel. This facility was used by schools and colleges, scout and youth groups, mainly from the Donegal and Derry areas.

It also provided an occasional base for more specialist training courses, including the Outdoor Education Diploma course, through which many of today's leading figures in Outdoor Education received much of their training. At the time, Outdoor Education, a relatively new concept, attempted to cover areas of experience previously referred to as outdoor pursuits, adventure education, conservation education, environment, geomorphology and science studies, local history, outward bound and rural studies. Gartan received sanction, in 1988, to operate as one of nine recognised Outdoor Education Centres countrywide, run under the auspices of the respective VECs. The Centre's first Director was Eugene Gallagher, a teacher from Donegal Town. Other core staff included one instructor, caretaker, groundsman/driver and secretary. Sadly, Eugene was involved in a fatal accident while on a mountaineering trip to Ecuador in January 1990, at a time when the Centre was establishing itself as a fully functioning OEC. Ursula MacPherson was then appointed Director, a post she holds today.

OECs are expected to operate on a 'self-financing' basis while being in receipt of a grant via the VEC, from the Department of Education and Science to cover a modicum of core staff salary costs and equipment. Crucially, each Outdoor Education Centre would depend for viability and survival on generating funds through course fees. Thus Outdoor Education Centres developed, and Gartan competed in every way with fully financed and well established OECs in Northern Ireland. With its survival dependent on generating business which might assist in developing the core education function, Gartan OEC, with Co Donegal VEC, set about developing its business to provide for all concerned with Outdoor Education, adventure sports, tourism, industry and enterprises.

³⁵⁴ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 May 1968, p.2

³⁵⁵ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 16 December 1969, p.3

³⁵⁶ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 17 February 1970, p.3



Standing left-right are Gartan OEC staff members – Bróna Duddy, Instructor; Ursula MacPherson, Director and Charlie Cassidy, Senior Instructor at a winter mountaineering course in Scotland in 2000.



Gartan Outdoor Education Centre, set on 87 acres in central Donegal.

Given its location the Centre was ideally suited to develop a role in provision of introductory and specialist courses in various water and land based adventure sports, to provide for both skills development and instructor and leadership training on behalf of the relevant National Governing Bodies. The location also perfectly fitted the purpose of developing a niche within outdoor and adventure tourism. Management Development courses for industry enterprises have also been developed by the Centre, and an increasing role in the provision of courses for those with special needs has been identified.

The VEC and Gartan OEC have been very much supported in the capital development by the contributions made by Department of Education and Science, Fáilte Ireland, Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism, Lottery funds and North West Tourism. It gained approval to run courses on behalf of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland, the Irish Canoe Union, the British Canoe Union. Gartan OEC also became a 'Recognised Teaching Establishment' of the Irish Sailing Association. The Centre also advises, and is involved at a very practical level, on Outdoor Education Diploma and Degree course syllabi, at Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Castlebar Campus.

4.5 HOTEL SCHOOL / TOURISM COLLEGE, KILLYBEGS

Renovations and substantial extensions were undertaken to St Columba's Hospital, which had been acquired by the VEC from the County Council, between 1967 and 1969 with funding provided by CERT and Bord Fáilte, now Fáilte Ireland. The Hotel School opened for students in the winter of 1969 in the buildings which had been converted and substantially extended. It was officially opened by the Minister for Labour, Mr Joe Brennan, T.D., on the 11 May 1970.³⁷ Because the Committee had received substantial funding from Bord Fáilte for the refurbishment and extension of the College, it was obliged to rent the College as a hotel to CERT during the summer months for a period of ten years.

Mr Seamus Gildea was appointed as the College's first Principal and was succeeded in 1973 by Ms Mary McLaughlin who was Principal from 1973 to 1986. Ms McLaughlin was succeeded in turn by Mr Brian Whitelaw who is the current Principal of the College which has been redesignated as the Tourism College Killybegs (TCK). The College was substantially extended with funding from the Department of Education and Science to provide additional kitchens, dining room and reception area in 1985.

³⁷ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 April 1970, p.8

4.6 LETTERKENNY REGIONAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE (RTC)

At the November 1967 meeting, the Committee were finally able to welcome a new Regional Technical College for Letterkenny as *'it had been announced by the Government that one of the new Regional Technical Colleges to be provided, had been allocated to County Donegal.'*³¹⁸ The report of the steering committee on technical education had recommended that a local technical college only should be established in Letterkenny. However, the key interests involved in Donegal inclusive of two former Committee members – Mr Neil Blaney, T.D., then Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and the Most Reverend Dr McFeely, Bishop of Raphoe had been involved in securing an investment in the Regional Technical College in Letterkenny.

In terms of managing the new college, *'the Board of Management would be appointed under section 21 of the Vocational Education Act, 1930; and that the College Council would be appointed by the Vocational Education Committee in whose area the Regional Technical College is situated.'*³¹⁹ In effect Co Donegal VEC, its successive CEOs from 1971 to 1992, through the Board of Management of the College, were responsible for the management of the College, together with the internal management of the College comprising the Principal, Heads of Schools and others in the development of the programmes and facilities. Significantly the Vocational Education Committee and the final Board of Management in 1990 relocated the Business Studies and Art and Design faculties from the Port Road Campus to the 'New Building' at St Conal's Hospital under a lease arrangement with the then Northern Western Health Board (NWHB). This relocation facilitated the very substantial capital investment which has been undertaken to the campus at the Port Road and which was substantially completed during 2004.

Under the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992, the Letterkenny Regional Technical College, now Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) became a separate body corporate legal entity and was granted an autonomous governing body. The Committee continues to play a significant role in relation to nominations and recommendations for appointment to membership of the governing body by the Minister for Education and Science. The investment in the LYIT, which is a sister statutory educational entity with Co Donegal VEC and which shares conjointly with the Committee in the provision of life long learning for the county, is of significance in the development of the county inclusive of social, cultural and economic development.

4.7 SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS

Staff and students of Donegal VEC schools and centres had numerous sporting successes across a range of sports during this period. In 1993 a number of staff members at Gartan Outdoor Education Centre were involved in the first ever Irish ascent of Mount Everest, via the North Ridge on the Tibetan side. Robbie Fenlon, a full-time staff member, Dermot Somers and Dawson Stelfox, regular specialist staff members, were team members. Dawson Stelfox, Expedition Leader, made it to the top.

In terms of GAA Football, the Donegal Schools team had remarkable success, most notably when they won the All-Ireland Football final in 1984, 1985, 1995, 1996 and 2001. Prior to 1960, Gaelic games in the vocational schools in the county consisted of an annual friendly match between neighbouring schools. In 1960 Eddie McDevitt, Principal of Stranorlar Vocational School and Monsignor Dan McDyer, then of the McDevitt Institute, Glenties, organised an inter-schools competition at senior level only. They were joined in 1962 by Dessie Griffin, then of Carrick Vocational School and took part in the

³¹⁸ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 21 November 1967, p.1

³¹⁹ Ibid. Minutes of the meeting of 20 May 1969, p.6

Ulster inter-county competition which rewarded them with Ulster titles in 1964 and 1965, but lost in the All-Ireland semi-finals in 1964 to Offaly and 1965 to Galway. By all accounts, Eddie McDevitt (who has since passed away and is pictured below with the team captain, Patrick Gallagher) did a huge amount of work in the early years.



The Donegal Vocational Schools Gaelic Football Team who won the 1984 All-Ireland. Standing left-right are Charles Bonner, Roger McShane, Brian Mor Gallagher, Denis Carberry, Niall Campbell, Eamonn McNeilis, Eamonn Cunningham, Jimmy Brennan, John Joe Doherty, John Connell and Owen Bonner and seated left-right are Joe Boyle, Luke Gavigan, Manus Boyle, Conal McFadden, Rory O'Neill, Patrick Gallagher, Cormac McGarvey, Donal Bonner, David Meehan, Conor White, Paul Carr and Brian Coyle.



With the expansion of the vocational school system throughout the county, the games advanced to the present healthy state whereby all but three of the post-primary schools in Donegal take part in competitions organised by CLG Na nGairmscol in both football and hurling. The 1984 victory was particularly significant as not only was this the first year for the Donegal team to win the Vocational Schools All-Ireland Championship, it was also the year that the GAA celebrated their own centenary. It is also worth noting that most of the victorious 1992 Co Donegal Senior Team began their football careers with the Donegal vocational school teams.

In terms of athletics, numerous successes also abound. For example, in 1993, Sharon Foley, a student in Deelee College, Raphoe attained a new Irish record in the high jump.³²⁰ Of particular significance in this, the centenary year, is the success of David Hegarty, a student at St Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs who is currently the 2005 Irish U-14 Pentathlon Champion.

Individual schools have also had their own successes. A number of schools in the south of the county have been particularly successful at basketball, winning numerous All-Ireland finals (for example, St Catherine's in Killybegs is the only 'A' school in the country and have won three All-Ireland finals, the Abbey Vocational School, Donegal Town won the boys All-Ireland Basketball final in 1995 and in the same year the under-16 girls team in Carrick Vocational School also won the All-Ireland Basketball final, while in 2001 Magh Éne Senior Girls won the All-Ireland Schools D Competition). Pictured below are members of the Abbey Vocational School who made the headlines of the local newspaper and the Carrick Vocational School winning team, both in 1995.

³²⁰ Ibid. Minutes of meeting of 21 June 1993, p.17



The Donegal U-16 Schools Soccer Team which won the prestigious Ian Rush International Soccer Tournament in 1993 in Wales. Ten of the players on the team were from Vocational Schools. Included in photograph is Martin Gormley (formerly Milford Vocational School) and Seamus Clerkin (Stranorlar Vocational School).



Soccer has also presented many successes and accolades for both students and staff. In terms of student teams for example, there have been success at local, regional, national and even international levels (see next photograph). At an individual level, successes include the likes of Barry Tourish, currently a student at Stranorlar Vocational School, who is a member of U-16 Ireland Soccer Team, having also been a member of the U-15 team in 2004. Staff members have also led the way - Alex Harkin (currently Vice-Principal in Stranorlar Vocational School) was involved in the setting up of the FAI Schools International Team in 1988 and was the team manager for its first four years. Two other staff members of Stranorlar Vocational School (Paddy McDaid and Rory White) were also members of the FAI Schools International Team in their youth.

4.8 NORTH-SOUTH ACTIVITIES

Co Donegal, by virtue of its geographical location, has, in the main, remained largely cut off from the rest of the state and due to political determinations in the early part of the twentieth century, from its natural hinterland in Northern Ireland. With the outbreak of the Troubles in the late 1960s which lasted for more than thirty years, there was little interaction with Northern Ireland. However, from the 1980s onwards, individual schools began to create links with schools in Northern Ireland through small exchange programmes funded by the likes of Co-operation North, as it was then. This was to steadily increase over the years until the 1994 republican and loyalists ceasefires and the 1998 Good Friday Agreement presented new opportunities to increase and strengthen these links.

New opportunities for co-operation and links were created through the European Union (EU) Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation which saw projects such as Life Long Learning Through Sport (formerly Youth Sport Foyle), a cross-border/after school sports project and the North-West Arts Academy, both in partnership with the Western Education and

Library Board (WELB), run very successfully over eight years, together with the establishment of Youth information centres in Letterkenny in partnership with the Donegal Youth Service and Donegal Town in partnership with Foróige, and in joint partnership with WELB. The VEC also became a member of the North South Education Forum (NSEF) established in 1998, which is a partnership of the six border county VECs and the five Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland. The Forum provided its members with the space to learn about each others education and training systems and create worthwhile, long-term partnerships. Projects such as these ensured that Co Donegal VEC played its part in the building of peace in the latter half of the twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

This particular period in the history of Co Donegal VEC again saw considerable expansion in the provision of education and training around the county. The number of schools expanded from seven to twelve and towards the end of the period adult education provision was put on a much firmer footing. The Committee also expanded its services to the areas of outdoor education and youth services. With the advent of the peace process the north-south dimension of the Committee's work also prospered and developed.



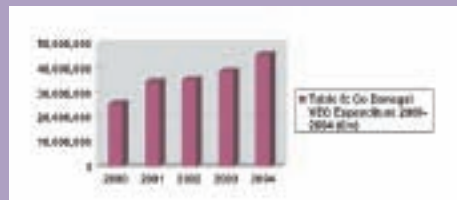
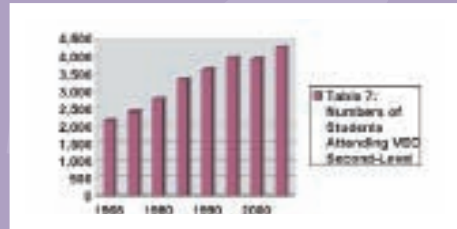
5. 2000-2005

INTRODUCTION

The late 1990s onwards were characterised by a plethora of legislation impacting directly on the work of the VEC, reflecting both the further modernisation and maturation of the society within which the organisation now operated. In particular the VEC (Amendment) Act 2001 saw considerable changes to the way the VEC would operate with the various functions now firmly divided between reserved and executive. Of particular importance was that the Act allowed for parents and staff representatives to be directly elected onto the Committee, a progressive departure and one that ensured that the cooperative partnership between the VEC and the local communities it serves was put on a much firmer footing.

Without a doubt services have now grown considerably to reflect the considerable growth in the volume of activity now under the remit of Co Donegal VEC. While second-level schools still account for the majority of its activities, comprising up to fifty-five percent of the Committee's business, (see Table 7 for growth in numbers over the last few years), it is certainly no longer its main preserve as adult education and other services including, for example, youth services which were placed on a

statutory footing within VECs with the 2001 Youth Work Act which has yet to be fully implemented, now make up forty-five per cent of its business.³²¹ Total staffing levels rose to 1,708 employees at the end of 2004. This huge growth is also reflected in the Committee's finances with overall expenditure rising from €25.6 million in 2000 to €45.2 million in 2004 (see Table 8).



³²¹ Seán Ó Longáin, CEO, quoted in the 'Sunday Interview' in *Your Local Sunday*, 15 May 2005

5.1 ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

At the heart of the smooth running of the business of the VEC is the support provided by the staff of the Administration Offices in Ard O Donnell, Letterkenny. Staff numbers have increased particularly in recent times, again reflecting the increasing volume of work being carried out. Pictured below is the current staff cohort.



Standing left-right are: Eamon McGranaghan, Clerical Officer, Finance; Eileen Dennison, Assistant Staff Officer, Corporate Services; Margery Quinn, Clerical Officer, IT Training Centre; Jillian Espey, Clerical Officer, Letterkenny AETC; Sandra McConnell, Assistant Staff Officer, Human Resources; Siana McCready, Clerical Officer, Student Support Services; Aidan McCloskey, Acting Staff Officer, Finance/IT; Eileen Doherty, Administrative Officer, Human Resources; Niamh Heraghty, Assistant Staff Officer, Corporate Services; Clare Houston, Clerical Officer, IT Training Centre; Claire Boyle, Staff Officer, Corporate Services; Linda Harley, Staff Officer, Human Resources; Jackie Gallagher, Assistant Staff Officer, Corporate Services; Sharon McDaid, Senior Staff Officer, Finance; Rosaleen Harkin, Acting Assistant Staff Officer, Human Resources; Catherine Doherty, Senior Staff Officer, Finance; Yvonne Haughey, Assistant Staff Officer, Payroll; Frances Patton, Clerical Officer, Student Support Services; Myles Sweeney, Assistant Staff Officer, Adult Education Services

Pictured seated left to right are: Ciaran Cunningham, Administrative Officer/Head of Payroll/IT Services; Marie Donnelly, Assistant Staff Officer, Student Support Services; Siubhan Gillespie, Senior Staff Officer, Human Resources; Frankie Quinn, Administrative Officer/Head of Corporate Services; Finola Furey, Assistant Principal Officer/Head of Human Resources; Seán Ó Longáin, Chief Executive Officer; Jim McGlynn, Assistant Principal Officer/Director of Services; Bonnie Oliver, Administrative Officer, Estates Management; Brenda Doherty, Acting Senior Staff Officer/Head of Student Services and Paddy Kelly, Assistant Staff Officer, Estates Management.

Absent from photograph are Aisling Lyttle, Assistant Staff Officer, Finance and Catriona McKay, Assistant Staff Officer, Payroll.

5.2 SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS

(i) Coláiste Ailigh, Leitir Ceannain

Tá sé deacair stair Choláiste Ailigh a scríobh, mar níl sí ann, mar stair, go fóill. Tá a stair á cruthú againn ach an lá, tá an tochailt, saothrú agus giollaíocht ar siúl go fóill agus beidh sé tamaillín beag eile sula bhfeicimid an bláthú iomlán. Is cúis mhaite dúinn mar phobal scoile, scoláirí, tuismitheoirí agus múinteoirí, a bhfuil bainte amach againn taobh istigh d'achar ghairid. Thosaigh an turas le Gaelscoil Adhamhnáin agus na tuismitheoirí ansin a raibh fis acu 'an Ghaeilge a athlonú i log an Lagáin', mar a dúirt Proinsias Ó Maonaigh ag ócáid bhronnta duaiseanna an choláiste anuraidh. Ba í dúthracht na dtuismitheoirí sin chomh maith le lántacaíocht an Choiste Ghairmoideachais a ba chúis le fíorú na haislinge.

Ceapadh Michéal Ó Giobúin mar phríomhoide i mí Aibreáin agus d'oscail an scoil, Gaelcholáiste Pobail Leitir Ceanainn, mar a bhí uirthi ag an am, ar an 2 Meán Fómhair 2000 i seomraí seal-adacha san Institiút Teicneolaíochta i Leitir Ceanainn.

Bhí cúig scoláire is fiche agus seisear múinteoir i láthair ar an lá sin, gan leabhair nó caile. Ní raibh aithne mar is ceart ag na múinteoirí ar a chéile fiú. Bíodh sin mar a bhí, ní raibh aon easpa misnigh orainn. Áit inteacht idir amascaíocht agus anord, d'éirigh linn scoil a chruthú. Níorbh fhada gur bhog pobal na scoile go Teach Sprackburn ar an Bhóthar Ard, áit ina bhfuil muid go fóill, ag fanacht go fonnmar ar an lá a thiocfas an foirgneamh úr agus buan.

Tá aitheantas buai againn ó Aire Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta ó 2003.

Buan, mar is buan a bheidh muid. Ón am a chuir muid tús faiteach léi, tá an scoil tar éis fás go mór. San am i láthair tá 130 scoláire agus 14

d'fhóireann ag obair sa scoil agus tá ach an dealramh ann go mbeidh an fás sin ag leanstan ar aghaidh go cionn cúpla bliain eile. Tá scoláirí againn, ní h-amháin ón ghaelscoil i Leitir Ceanainn ach ó Fhánaid, An Charraig Airt, An Tearmann agus ó Bun Crannacha.

Ag deireadh mhí Mheán an Fhómhair 2005, d'fhógair an Roinn foirgneamh scoile buan do Choláiste Ailigh faoi chlár Phartaíochta Phoiblí Phriobháidigh (PPP) an Rialtais, an chéad cheann dá leithéid do Choiste Gairmoideachais Chontae Dhún na nGall.



1ú Bliain Coláiste Ailigh 2000, le foireann na Scoile ó clé: Úna Ní Bhriain (Leasphríomhoide), Proinsias Mac a'Bhaird, Maria Nic a'Bhaird, Michéal Ó Giobúin (Príomhoide), Celine Ní Gallchoir, Seosamh Mac Ceallabhui



Colaiste Ailigh, Teach Sprackburn, Leitir Ceannain

(ii) Mulroy College, Milford

In June 2000, the new school building in Milford, Mulroy College was officially opened by the Minister for Education and Science, Dr Michael Woods, T.D. The Principal Cathal Greene retired in 2004, after seventeen and a half years in his post and Rita Gleeson was appointed as the new (and first female) Principal in October 2004.



Pictured at the official opening of the new Mulroy College, Milford in June 2000 are left-right Cathal Greene, Principal; Most Rev Philip Boyce, Bishop of Raphoe; Rt Rev James Mehaffey, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe; Seán Ó Longáin, CEO; Dr James McDaid, T.D., Minister for Tourism & Sport; Dr Michael Woods, T.D., Minister for Education & Science; Clr Paddy Kelly; Clr Harry Blaney and Mr Frank O Kelly, Chairperson, Co Donegal VEC.



Rita Gleeson, current Principal of Mulroy College, Milford, who was appointed in 2004 as the first female Principal of the school.

(iii) Moville Community College

In 2001, sixty-five years after it was first requested, a new school, Moville Community College, opened its doors to eighty-nine pupils in Moville, becoming the fourteenth school within the VEC's remit. The school was initially housed in a number of prefabricated structures which are still in use today, but as student numbers grew so also did the need for a permanent building. This project finally came to fruition in September 2005 when the doors to Phase 1 of a brand new building were opened to students. Today, four years later, the student numbers have grown to 471 with a staff of fifty.



First year students on their first day at the Moville Community College on 03 September 2001



Phase 1 Moville Community College which opened its doors to students and staff on 05 September 2005

(iv) Raphoe - Deelee College

One of the highlights for Deelee College in recent years came in November 2002 when Her Excellency, Mary McAleese, Uachtarán na hÉireann visited the school (*pictured below with Principal PJMcGowan behind her*). During her visit she viewed a selection of work and achievements displayed by the students which included practical work, academic work and community involvement displays. She then addressed students, staff and invited guests emphasising the importance of an all round education, an awareness of our culture and the importance of contentment in life and afterwards mingled freely with the staff and students. In 2004 a further extension has been sought for the school for completion by 2007



(v) Tory Island – Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille Oileán Thoráí

This year will be the last one spent in the community centre for the school. In May 2005 building began on a new second-level school for the island. It is a unique project as it is being built as an extension to the community centre, concentrating all of the services (school, community hall and health centre) in the one area and maximising the benefits for the community by integrating the school services

(second-level and adult) with other community services. As one would expect, building on an island presents its own problems and weather conditions dictate that the work must be completed before the winter sets in. All the building materials for the project, including the sand, have to be brought from the mainland by barge. The school is being built by a local contractor and the work takes place even on the weekends to ensure that the building is completed on time for the end of October 2005.



The new Coláiste Pobail building on Tory Island, nearing completion in September 2005. The school is being built as an adjunct to the island's community centre (Ionad Pobail).



The staff of Coláiste Phobail Cholmille Oileán Thorai in September 2005



VEC Committee members and staff visit Tory Island for the June 2005 meeting of the Committee.

(vi) Bundoran - Magh Éne College

In March 2000 John Mc Lean became Principal of Magh Éne College. A new identity (Magh Éne College) and uniform were chosen. Today the College has a teaching staff of twenty-five, support staff of five and over 320 students and offers a comprehensive educational programme including a Transition Year, LCVP and PLCs and Night Classes. In September 2004 work began on a new school building (*pictured below*) to cater for three hundred pupils and is due for completion in January 2006, to be based on a thirteen acre site on which a ninety-nine year lease agreement has been reached with the Diocese of Clogher and the Sarah Crudden Charitable Trust.



Magh Éne College Bundoran – old and new school buildings together in September 2005



Current teaching staff of Magh Éne College Bundoran

(vii) Principals of Second-Level Schools

Pictured below are thirteen of the fourteen Principals who manage the Committee's second-level schools around the county today.



Pictured standing left to right are Paddy O Connor, Letterkenny Vocational School; Fiona Ní Chnámhisi, Gairmscoil Chú Uladh, Béal an Átha Móir; Rita Gleeson, Mulroy College, Milford; Anthony Doogan, Moville Community College; Póilín Uí Chomaic, Árainn Mhór; Máire Clár Nic Mhathúin, Pobalscoil Colmcille, Oilean Thóraí; PJ McGowan, Deele College, Raphoe and seated left to right are Joe Ward, Killybegs; Micheal Ó Giobúin, Colaiste Ailigh, Leitir Ceanainn; Mary Anne Kane, Abbey Vocational School, Donegal Town; Seán Ó Longáin, CEO; Mary McLaughlin, Crana College, Bunrana; Frank Dooley, Stranorlar Vocational School; Tony Boner, Carrick Vocational School. (Absent from photograph is John McLean, Mage Éne, Bundoran)

5.3 ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES

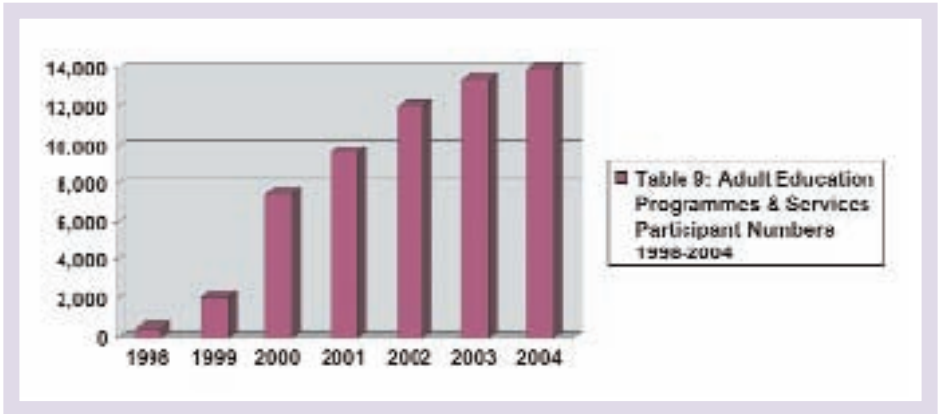
In 2000 the Government finally published a White Paper on Adult Education *Learning for Life* and as a result the funding available to adult education services nationally was substantially increased. Co. Donegal VEC was well positioned to avail of this development with the appointment of two new AEOs the previous year.

A concerted effort was made over the following five years to draw down funding which would dramatically increase the number and range of educational opportunities available to adult learners in the county. Numbers increased from approximately 521 in 1998 to 13,971 in 2004 as

Table 9 illustrates. Existing programmes (self-financing classes, literacy/basic education and VTOS) expanded, as did the Youthreach programme for early school leavers which was now brought in under the remit of Adult Education Services, along with the STTC and the IT Training Centre. New programmes and support services were established, namely the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Community Education Support Services and the Adult Learner Guidance Service. Childcare facilities were developed in Letterkenny, Milford and Bunrana to support adult learners with children. Efforts were made to integrate the work of individual programmes and to provide a cohesive service for learners with the establish-

ment of the Senior Staff Liaison Team and in-service training for staff became a priority. Former schools were renovated. The Committee now has six dedicated adult education centres at its disposal, with Milford and Ballyshannon coming on board in 1999 and 2000 respectively.

It was during this period also that the Adult Education Service began to work closely in partnership with relevant local, regional and national voluntary and community organisations and statutory agencies and became involved in a wide variety of projects and initiatives. Adult Education Services now account for up to 45% of the VEC's core business.³²²



Pictured below are the county coordinators/ heads of programmes and services and Adult Education Officers within Adult Education Services.



Standing left to right: Áine McLaughlin, VTOS Coordinator; Maeve McGarvey, Community Education Support Programme; Patricia Britton, BTEI County Coordinator; Martina Needham, Basic Education Programme Coordinator. Seated left to right are Sandra Buchanan, Youthreach County Coordinator, Dr Martin Gormley, Adult Education Officer (South County), Cróna Gallagher, Adult Education Officer (North County) and Sean Debney, Adult Learner Guidance Service Coordinator. (Absent from photograph is Antoinette Breslin, IT Training Centre Manager).

³²² Seán Ó Longáin, CEO, quoted in the 'Sunday Interview' in *Your Local Sunday*, 15 May 2005

5.4 TOURISM COLLEGE KILLYBEGS

The Tourism College Killybegs has continued to grow in terms of academic programmes, students and investment since the year 2000. In order to enhance the academic opportunities available to students, an agreement for academic integration between the Tourism College Killybegs and the Letterkenny Institute of Technology was concluded in October 2001. As a result of this agreement the Tourism College Killybegs is in a position to offer awards under the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). In 2005 the College offered degree courses for the first time, namely Bachelor degrees in Business Studies in Bar Management and Culinary Arts.

The Committee and the College continue to secure substantial capital investment in the College. In April 2002 Dr Michael Woods, T.D., Minister for Education and Science officially opened two new buildings on the campus. These buildings are the Millennium building which houses the Millennium training restaurant and state of the art kitchens. In addition, the report of the review group appointed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) (Kelly report) on behalf of the Committee of the College approved of a capital investment of €5.9 million to enhance the facilities of the College. It is anticipated that this investment will take place within the next three years.



The Millennium building which houses the Millennium training restaurant and state of the art kitchens which was one of two new buildings opened on the campus by the Minister for Education & Science Michael Woods T.D., in April 2002. (The main college building in yellow is reflected on the glass).



At the official opening of two new college buildings in April 2002 are left-right, Seán Ó Longáin, CEO; Minister Mary Coughlan, T.D.; David Alcorn, VEC Chairperson; Terry McEniff, Chairperson, Board of Management; Pat 'The Cope' Gallagher, MEP; Dr Michael Woods, T.D., Minister for Education & Science and Brian Whitelaw, Principal.



The winning team who participated in Chef Ireland 2004/2005. The team received: 8 Gold Medals, 3 Silver Medals, 6 Bronze Medals, 7 Certificates of Merits, 4 Overall Awards, 2 Hygiene Certificates, Overall Junior Hygiene Award for Standards of Excellence and the Grand Prix for Outstanding Practices & Knowledge of Hygiene.



A group of chefs together with the Principal proudly show off their medals.

5.5 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 2005

The Committee put together in 2005 heralded new changes under the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001. This allowed for two staff representatives and two parents representatives onto the Committee for the first time. Their first meeting took place in March 2005 and are now set up to continue with the work of the County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee first set up in 1905.



Pictured at their first meeting held in the Radisson SAS Hotel, Letterkenny on March 2005 are standing from left-right are Clr. Dessie Larkin, Niall Blaney, T.D., Clr. Pearse Doherty, Clr. Pádraig Ó Dochartaigh (Vice-Chairperson), Joe O'Donnell, Anne Marie Luby, Clr. Philip McGlynn, Bernie Mulhern, Clr. Denis McGonagle, Clr. Ciaran Brogan, Hugh McDaid, Clr. Rena Donaghey, Clr. Philip Diggin and PJ Blake. Seated from left-right are Anne Flood, Mary McGowan, Clr. Terence Slowey (Chairperson), Seán Ó Longáin (CEO), Clr. Dermot McLaughlin, Francis McDaid, Clr. Elizabeth McIntyre and Clr. Alice Bonner.

5.6 NEW DEVELOPMENTS

A range of new developments are currently taking shape within the VEC, most notably the introduction of the five year Strategic Education Plan (including yearly service plans), provided for under Sections 9 and 30 of the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) Amendment Act (2001). The Education plan will define the role and function of the VEC and set targets for its educational activities for the years 2006 to 2010.

Within education nationally, the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework, which places all forms of formal education on a ten level spectrum, will make a huge difference in the structuring of education provision both nationally and locally here in Co Donegal by enabling learners and employers to understand and compare different types of qualifications and clearly identify the routes for progression at each level.



(i) Second Level Schools

- Magh Éne Bundoran

In 2004 work began on a new school building for Magh Éne. Staff and students are due to move into the school in January 2006.

- Stranorlar Vocational School

In June 2005 a new school was announced for Stranorlar to open in September 2007, sixty-seven years after the first school opened.

(ii) Adult Education Services

Co Donegal VEC now has a firmly established Adult Education Service which provides a wide range of programmes and supports to adult learners across the county and is linked to local, regional and national organisations and networks. Much, however, remains to be done. Although lavish compared to previous eras, funding is still inadequate, particularly in a county which has one of the highest levels of educational disadvantage in the country. Programatically, VTOS, Youthreach, Workplace and Family Learning, BTEI could be expanded; new initiatives to improve access for target groups which are traditionally difficult to engage in learning and distance learning programmes need to be developed. Support services such as Adult Guidance, childcare and transport, must be made available on a much wider basis; community education support must change and grow to meet emerging needs of local communities; progression opportunities for those already on the learning ladder must be improved. The Service has identified quality as one of its priority issues and embedding the FETAC Quality Assurance System and other quality systems into provision will be a considerable challenge. The image of the Service must be streamlined and programmes must be professionally marketed. Buildings must be maintained and up-to-date equipment and resources secured to ensure a safe and welcoming physical learning environment. Most crucially, perhaps, the staff teams must be offered the relevant opportunities for professional and personal development which will allow them to deliver services of the highest standard to adult learners in Donegal.

(iii) Gartan Outdoor Education Centre

From October 2004, the Lough Veagh Boathouse was built (see photograph on next page) and opened in October 2005. This fine building will accommodate day bookings, and will also provide coffee shop facilities for visitors to the Estate. This development also includes a biomass boiler system, marking a move towards sustainable energy systems, with less reliance on fossil fuels. Gartan OEC is the first centre in

Ireland to venture down this road, and will continue to pursue this policy. Currently, approximately 6,000 people, both young and not so young, pass through Gartan OEC annually, and this number is steadily increasing.



(iv) Local Music Education Service Partnership

In late 2004, Co Donegal VEC was successful in its application to pilot a local music education service (one of only three in the country). This particular service aims to provide instrumental/vocal tuition in four genres of music (classical, traditional, rock/pop and jazz) to children and young adults. In addition the service also provides instrument rental from its instrument bank to those availing of tuition. All pupils of the service are also invited to join a relevant ensemble or choir to enhance their musical and social skills. Tuition is largely held in the VEC's network of schools, colleges and centres throughout the county. Choral tuition is also available in localised areas with provision for transport to rehearsals. The project is being implemented in partnership with a range of other organisations including Donegal Education Centre, Donegal School of Music, the County Development Board, Donegal County Council, Music Network and Udaras na Gaeltachta.

One of the key guiding principles of the LMESP is that music has the potential to make a vital contribution to all our lives. Learning to play an instrument or singing in a choir helps to build confidence, explore creative expression, learn discipline and acquire the skills for social interaction. As the service develops, it is intended to host workshops, seminars, master classes and performances, in partnership with the wider music community the wider music community within the island of Ireland.

CONCLUSION

The work of the Committee has continued to develop and progress steadily over the last one hundred years. Looking back, huge changes have taken place not only in the development of the organisation itself but also within education and training throughout the county. Co Donegal VEC has grown and developed from a few itinerant instructors who travelled around the county providing communities with valuable and necessary training in technical subjects such as domestic science, manual instruction and agricultural training in 1905, under the guidance of the Tír Chonaill Joint Technical Instruction Committee, to having four technical schools opened by 1930, to being the fifth largest VEC in the country today with fourteen second-level schools and colleges (extending from Bundoran to Moville and from Raphoe to Arranmore and Tory Islands), the Tourism College Killybegs, an Outdoor Education Centre located on eighty-seven acres at Gartan, Churchill, extensive part-time education provision for thousands of adults in six dedicated Adult Education & Training Centres and numerous schools/colleges and community-based centres, together with support for youth service programmes including Youth Information Centres in Donegal Town in collaboration with Foróige and in Letterkenny with Donegal Youth Services and the addition of a Local Music Education Services Partnership (LMESP) in co-operation with the Donegal School of Music.

The Committee's mission statement is '*to promote, offer and support accessible, inclusive and holistic learning opportunities which will enable young people and adults to empower themselves to reach their full potential in society*'

and its core values in an era of life-long learning of valuing, respecting and fostering the potential and contribution of learners, parents, volunteers, staff and partnership in order to meet the needs of local communities, are central to this.

In many ways, these values are epitomised by Co Donegal VEC's early pioneers including Dr Patrick O'Donnell, the first Chairperson of the Tír Chonaill Joint Technical Instruction Committee, James O'Neill, Co Donegal VEC's first CEO and Lucius Emerson, one of Co Donegal VEC's early instructors and Principal, who at the age of 93 years in June 2005 was awarded an M.A. degree by HETAC 'in recognition of his outstanding achievement in learning and scholarship outside the confines of third level education.'³⁹³

Without a doubt much has been accomplished over the last one hundred years and the pioneering spirit of these early Committee and staff members can also be found within the Committee and staff body of the VEC today thus ensuring that vocational education and training in County Donegal is in good hands as we face into the next one hundred years.



Lucius Emerson, who passed away in September 2005, with his MA award in June.

³⁹³ '93-year-old's unique MA achievement' in the *Donegal Democrat*, 11 June 2005. Lucius won a scholarship to St Jarlath's College in Tuam in 1927 where he studied carpentry and woodwork. As documented earlier in this book, his first job was as a technical instructor in the Technical School in Ballyshannon in 1936. He then became the teacher-in-charge of the newly established Loughanure Technical School in 1938, moving on to become the teacher-in-charge of the Stranorlar Technical School in 1940 and headmaster a year later in 1941. He then returned to Ballyshannon in 1949 where he was the Principal until the mid-1960s.

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Donegal People's Press
Your Local Sunday

www.donegal.ie
www.donegalhistory.com
www.donegalvec.ie
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www.nli.ie
www.tui.ie

APPENDIX 1 - CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF COUNTY DONEGAL VEC

- 1891 Land Act creates the Congested Districts Board
- 1895 Recess Committee examine Ireland's agricultural and industrial resources and its development (resulting in the passing of the Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act)
- 1898 Local Government (Ireland) Act passed
- 1899 Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act passed
Grand Jury of Co Donegal holds its last meeting
- 1900 Donegal County Council established
Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee set up by County Council
- 1905 Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction separate the Committee in two to become the Technical Instruction Committee and the Committee of Agriculture
Co Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee holds its first meeting on 21 November
- 1912 Committee appoint a finance committee for the first time
- 1914 First Technical Schools open in the county in Ballyshannon and Letterkenny
James O Neill (Manual Instructor) is appointed Principal
- 1918 Technical School opens in Carndonagh with Martin Griffin as its first Principal
- 1924 Ministers and Secretaries Act passed, putting technical instruction under the remit of the Department of Education
- 1925 Technical School opens in Bunrana with Martin Griffin as its first Principal
- 1926 Department sets up commission to 'enquire into and advise upon the system of Technical Education in Saorstát Éireann in relation to the requirements of Trade and Industry.'
- 1930 Vocational Education Act passed
County Donegal Joint Technical Instruction Committee is transformed into Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee (VEC) which sets up its office in the Ballyshannon Technical School
Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee holds its first meeting on 04 November
Eugene Mahoney elected Chairperson
James O Neill appointed as the VEC's first CEO
- 1931 Vocational Education (Accounts, Audit and Procedure) Regulations issued
- 1932 VEC's expenditure for the 1932/'33 scheme is £12,282
- 1933 McDevitt Institute, Glenties, seeks financial assistance from VEC
- 1937 Department no longer allow VECs to appoint their own CEOs
- 1938 Loughanure Technical School officially opens with Lucius Emerson appointed as teacher-in-charge
- 1940 Stranorlar Technical School officially opens with Lucius Emerson appointed as teacher-in-charge
Michael McAlinney appointed Principal of Bunrana Technical School
- 1942 Letterkenny Technical School moves to its new building on Ard O Donnell (present day VEC Administration Office)
- 1944 New Letterkenny Technical School officially opens in Letterkenny at Ard O Donnell
VEC purchases Masonic Hall in Bunrana for £1,650
- 1945 Ms M Deeney becomes the first female member of the Committee
- 1946 Bunrana Technical School officially opened by Bishop Farren of Derry
- 1949 VEC moves offices from Ballyshannon Technical School to Letterkenny Technical School
Cormac Breslin, T.D., elected Chairperson
James O Neill retires as CEO
Michael Cryan appointed CEO
Lucius Emerson transferred from Stranorlar Technical School to become Principal of Ballyshannon Technical School
- 1950 Monsignor Thomas J Molloy elected Chairperson
Technical School opens in Carrick

- 1952 New school built in Ballyshannon, moving from the Mall to College Street
Technical School built and opened in Dungloe
- 1954 Donegal Town Technical School opens at Drumcliff
- 1955 Minister for Education Richard Mulcahy officially opens Technical Schools in
Ballyshannon and Donegal Town on 06 June
Gweedore (Derrybeg) Technical School opens
Hotel School opens in the Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran with Mary Doogan
(nee Cunningham) as its first Principal
- 1957 Technical School opens in Milford with James McCallum as its first Principal
- 1958 Technical School opens in Carrick
- 1959 Neil T. Blaney, T.D., officially opens new Technical School in Milford
New Technical School building officially opens in Carndonagh
- 1960 Eddie McDevitt introduces Gaelic games to the Technical Schools of the county
- 1961 Technical School opens in Gortahork
- 1964 Ballyshannon Vocational School wins the Donegal Vocational Schools
Gaelic Football Championship
Technical School opens in Gweedore (Derrybeg)
- 1965 Technical School opens in Raphoe with James (Terry) McDermott as its first Principal
Monsignor Daniel J. Furey elected Chairperson
OECD publishes the report 'Investment in Education'
- 1967 Donagh O Malley, T.D., Minister for Education, introduces free post-primary education and
transport
CEO become Transport Liaison Officer (TLO) for post-primary school transport in the county
Regional Technical College (RTC) announced for the county
- 1968 VEC's expenditure for the 1968/'69 scheme is £262,499 (€333,305)
McDevitt Institute, Glenties closes
- 1969 VEC purchases Gartan estate (known locally as Lough Veagh Estate) from Mr Derek Hill for
£10,595
Catering College, Killybegs opens its doors to students
- 1970 VEC purchases Ardscoil na gCeithre Maistir in Donegal Town from Mr O Cleirigh
- 1971 Neil T. Blaney, T.D., elected Chairperson
Edward Gibson appointed CEO
Gortahork Vocational School amalgamated with Holy Cross College to form Pobail Scoil
Chloich Cheann Fhoala
VEC becomes involved as management authority of Letterkenny Regional Technical College
- 1972 Gortahork Vocational School closes for use as a second-level school but continues as
an Adult Education and Training Centre
Michael McLaughlin replaces Michael McAlinney as Principal of Buncrana Vocational School
The 'Rebel School' begins operating in Killybegs
- 1973 Pobalscoil Gaoth Dobhair (Community School) opens, involving the closure of the
Gweedore (Derrybeg) Technical School
Killybegs rebel school given recognition by Department of Education
VEC appoints its first female Principal, Mary McLaughlin, at the Catering College, Killybegs
Ireland joins the European Economic Community (EEC)
- 1974 Senator Paddy McGowan elected Chairperson
Carndonagh Vocational School amalgamates with other two other second-level schools
in town to become a Community School and is no longer within the remit of the VEC
- 1975 Site purchased for new Vocational School in Buncrana
- 1976 Edward Gibson, CEO, leaves to become CEO of Co Wexford VEC and is replaced by Seán Ó
Longáin

- 1977 New ten acre site purchased for Letterkenny Vocational School at Windy Hall for £35,000
Danny O'Brien replaces Michael McLaughlin as Principal of Buncrana Vocational School
- 1978 Loughanure Vocational School amalgamates with the secondary school in Dungloe
- 1979 VEC disposes of the Loughanure Vocational School building
Department allocates two Adult Education Organiser (AEO) posts to Donegal which are filled by Peter Boyle and Hugh Dorrian
Clr. Patsy O'Donnell elected Chairperson
- 1982 Clr. Hugh Dorrian elected Chairperson
Donegal Town Vocational School closes at Drumcliff and a new school building, the Abbey Vocational School, Donegal Town is opened by Minister for Education
Dr Martin O'Donoghue
VEC opens its first all-Irish second-level school, Gairmscoil Chú Uladh in Ballinamore
- 1983 Clr. Sean McEniff elected Chairperson
- 1984 Clr. JJ Reid elected Chairperson
Two Adult Education Organisers (Hugh Dorrian and Michael Fox) appointed
Co Donegal wins the Vocational Schools All-Ireland Gaelic Football Championship for the first time
- 1985 Neil T. Blaney, T.D., M.E.P. elected Chairperson
Substantial extension of Raphoe Vocational School completed
Co Donegal wins the Vocational Schools All-Ireland Gaelic Football Championship
- 1987 St Catherine's Vocational School, Killybegs officially opened
Letterkenny Vocational School officially opened by Neil T. Blaney T.D., VEC Chairperson
VEC Administration Offices move into Letterkenny Vocational School building at Ard O'Donnell
- 1988 St Fiachra's Senior Traveller Training Centre opens
Gartan estate receives recognition as one of nine Outdoor Education Centres (OEC) from Department of Education
- 1989 First Youthreach centre opens in the county in Letterkenny
Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act passed
- 1990 New Vocational School opened in Carrick by Minister for Education Mary O'Rourke, T.D.
Old school building transferred to Carrick Mental Health Association
Hugh Dorrian leaves post as AEO to become Principal of Letterkenny Vocational School
Youthreach centre opens in Buncrana
Vocational School opens on Arranmore Island
- 1991 Mary Coughlan, T.D., elected Chairperson, the first and only female Chairperson to date
- 1992 Clr. Dermot McLaughlin elected Chairperson
Mage Éne College, Bundoran opens as an annex to Ballyshannon Vocational School
Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 thus ending direct VEC involvement
- 1993 New Arranmore Vocational School building opened by Pat 'The Cope' Gallagher, T.D.
Neil T. Blaney, T.D., M.E.P. elected Chairperson
Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act passed
- 1994 Paddy Harte, T.D., elected Chairperson
- 1995 Co Donegal wins the Vocational Schools All-Ireland Gaelic Football Championship
Tony Bonner replaces Gerrard Breslin as Principal of Carrick Vocational School
Ethics in Public Office Act passed
- 1996 Co Donegal wins the Vocational Schools All-Ireland Gaelic Football Championship
- 1997 Clr. Peter Kennedy elected Chairperson
Organisation of Working Time Act passed
Freedom of Information Act passed

- 1998 Three further phases of Abbey Vocational School (Donegal Town) opened by Minister for Education and Science Michéal Martin, T.D.
Youthreach centre opens in Glengad
Donegal VEC joins the North South Education Forum, a partnership between the six border VECs and the five Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland
Education Act passed
Employment Equality Act passed
Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act passed
- 1999 Frank O Kelly elected Chairperson
Two Adult Education Officers (Cróna Gallagher and Martin Gormley) appointed
Vocational School established on a trial basis on Tory Island conjointly and on the same site as the Comharchumann building
Qualifications (Education & Training) Act passed
- 2000 Clr. Dessie Larkin elected Chairperson
Ballyshannon Vocational School amalgamated with De La Salle College and the Mercy Convent, Ballyshannon to become a Community College ending eighty-six years of second-level vocational education and training in Ballyshannon
Minister for Education announces a new Vocational School/Community College for Moville
New Vocational School building in Milford, Mulroy College, is officially opened by Minister for Education & Science, Dr Michael Woods, T.D.
Coláiste Ailigh opens in Letterkenny
First ever White Paper on Adult Education Learning for Life is published
Youthreach centres open in Gortahork and Lifford
VEC's expenditure for 2000 is €25.6 million
Education (Welfare) Act passed
Equal Status Act enacted
- 2001 Clr. David Alcorn elected Chairperson
New Community College opens in Moville
Vocational Education (Amendment) Act
Youth Work Act
Teaching Council Act
Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act passed
Children's Act passed
Standards in Public Office Act passed
- 2002 Clr. Jim Sheridan elected Chairperson
Old Vocational School in Ballyshannon becomes sixth Adult Education & Training Centre in the county
Sixth Youthreach centre opens in Ballyshannon Adult Education & Training Centre
President Mary McAleese visits Deele College, Raphoe
Ombudsman for Children's Act passed
- 2003 Clr. Dermot McLaughlin elected Chairperson
Coláiste Ailigh receives official recognition from Department of Education & Science
Protection of Employees (Fixed-Time Work) Act passed
Data Protection (Amendment) Act passed
Official Languages Act passed

- 2004 Work begins on a new school for Magh Éne College, Bundoran
Numbers availing of Adult Education programmes and services reaches 13,971
Numbers attending VEC schools reaches 4,259
VEC staff levels reach 1,708 persons
VEC's expenditure for 2004 is €45.2 million
Youthreach centres are designated centres for education
Education for Persons with Special Needs Act passed
Equality Act passed
Public Service Management (Recruitment & Employment) Act passed
Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act passed
- 2005 Clr. Brendan Byrne elected Chairperson for six months (February-July)
Clr. Terence Slowey elected Chairperson
New Vocational School announced for Stranorlar
New Vocational School building announced for Coláiste Ailigh, Letterkenny under the Government's Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme
Moville Community College moves into its new Phase I building
New Vocational School completed for Tory Island
New boathouse completed at Gartan OEC
Adult Education Services Quality Assurance System approved by FETAC as a registered provider, the first VEC in the country
Clr. Dermot McLaughlin, Chairperson, Co Donegal VEC, officially opens Buncrana Adult Education and Training Centre Crèche
Lucius Emerson, aged 93, former Principal of Ballyshannon Vocational School and who began work with Co Donegal VEC in 1936 receives an M.A. degree from HETAC in June, in recognition of his outstanding achievement in learning and scholarship outside the confines of third level education (and passes away in September at the age of 94)
County Donegal Vocational Education Committee celebrates its 100th anniversary

APPENDIX 2 - JOINT TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS 1905-2005

Dr. Patrick O'Donnell	1905-1923
Eugene Mahoney	1923-1947
Cormac Breslin, T.D.	1947-1950
Monsignor Thomas J. Molloy	1950-1965
Monsignor Daniel J. Furey	1965-1971
Neil T. Blaney, T.D.	1971-1974
Senator Paddy McGowan	1974-1979
Clr. Patsy O'Donnell	1979-1980
Clr. Hugh Dorrian	1982-1983
Clr. Sean McEniff	1983-1984
Clr. JJ Reid	1984-1985
Neil T. Blaney, T.D., M.E.P.	1985-1991
Mary Coughlan, T.D.	1991-1992
Clr. Dermot McLaughlin	1992-1993
Neil T. Blaney, T.D., M.E.P.	1993-1994
Paddy Harte, T.D.	1994-1997
Clr. Peter Kennedy	1997-1999
Frank O Kelly	1999-2000
Clr. Dessie Larkin	2000-2001
Clr. David Alcorn	2001-2002
Clr. Jim Sheridan	2002-2003
Clr. Dermot McLaughlin	2003-2004
Clr. Brendan Byrne	2005-2005 (6 months)
Clr. Terence Slowey	2005-Present

APPENDIX 3 - CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS 1930-2005

James O Neill	1930-1949
Michael Cryan	1949-1971
Edward Gibson	1971-1976
Seán Ó Longáin	1976-Present

NOTES

