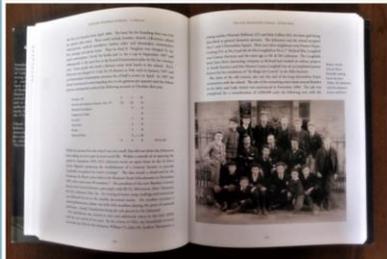
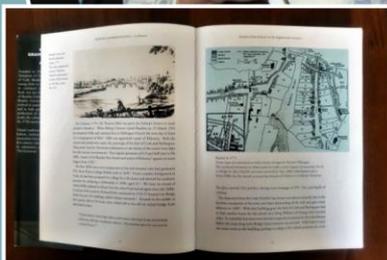


# Grammar School - A History'

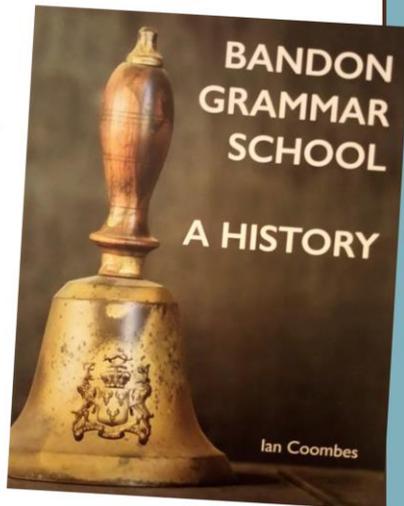


November 25th 2019 marked a very important day for Bandon Grammar School, with the Launch of 'Bandon Grammar School – A History' written by our Principal Ian Coombes. A past pupil and teacher of the school, and Principal for over 24 years, the book took Ian Coombes three years to write but many more years of research. It traces the history of the school, which goes back to 1642, up to the present day. Published in hardback, stretching to over 440 pages and packed with photos, it is beautifully finished and is a must for historians and anyone with an association with the school.

The details contained within the remarkable publication bear tribute to a scholarly devotion to detail by the author. However the meticulousness is well balanced by the eloquence of the narration, allowing the reader a very accessible read.

We congratulate Mr Coombes on his perseverance and dedication to the publication. All proceeds from the book sales go towards the school's Development Fund, as plans are afoot to further enhance the superb facilities at the school in preparation for the next generation of Bandon Grammar School students.

Mr Coombes saw his book being launched by the school's most famous son, the inimitable Graham Norton. In addition to launching the Book, Mr Norton also focused attention on the Secret Postcard Auction in aid of The Burren Chernobyl Project. Past pupils and members of the public were invited to send in a piece of art and they did not disappoint, with hundreds of beautiful cards, from many famous and some not so famous individuals.



The school is enriched and guided by traditions derived from almost four centuries of service in education stretching back to the mid seventeenth century. The prosperous, growing new town of Bandonbridge needed a classical school and the First Earl of Cork,

Richard Boyle, proprietor of the town, took responsibility for providing a Free School for boys. Boyle chose a site south of the town wall in Coolfadda (now St.Patrick's Street) and began erecting the building in 1636 but the founding document providing for an endowment is his will dated December 1642 . The first pupil in the 1650s we know of was Sir Richard Cox, later entrepreneur, lawyer, soldier, Chief Justice and Lord Chancellor of Ireland (1703-07). The first recorded master is William Scroggs in the 1650s. Our school history was researched and published in '*Bandon Grammar School – A History*' in 2019 by Ian Coombes, past pupil and headmaster 1999-2010 and 2014-2022.

## **LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

In the troubled seventeenth century the school had to move several times. It was housed in the North Gate Castle in the 1680s and in buildings on the eastern side of Bridge Street by the early eighteenth century. Towards the end of that century it was located in a house owned by the Devonshire Estate, then briefly at Hill House in the early nineteenth century. The master Rev. William Sullivan (1805-1825) ceased to take boarders for a time and conducted school from the new courthouse where rooms were available. That unsatisfactory situation was remedied in 1826 when a large investment by the patron resulted in an excellent and appropriate remodelled Georgian building being made available for the school on Devonshire Square (Now Allin Square). A new able and ambitious master, Rev John Browne was appointed (1826-42) and he raised the school to great heights academically. The school expanded and a second house was rented for the master. By the late 1940s the school had rented or purchased all four linked houses and needed a new site.

The inspirational educator W. Ivan McCutcheon (1944 – 1971) with the assistance of JLB Deane and the Incorporated Society, bought Richmount House in 1956 and built a new school around it. Mr Richard Bryan laid out the grounds for sports and a model farm to teach agriculture. Another wave of expansion and new facilities followed in the 1980s under Alwyn C. Williams (Headmaster 1972-1993) during which the Williams Building, Sports Complex , McCutcheon Hall, Library, New Astroturf and rugby grounds were constructed. In the twenty first century the school has almost doubled in size again. The Deane Building, new Dining Hall and Technical Block incorporating some of the most advanced ICT systems in Ireland indicate our ambition to provide the best facilities for our pupils and staff. Boarding facilities have been expanded and modernised while our sports facilities are upgraded to be among the best in the country. Pedestrianisation of the central campus has given ample safe space for outdoor socialising and dining that became so vital in the Covid 19 pandemic. A development committee is working on the next phase.

*School Tour to Rhineland 1963.*

*Mr McCutcheon pioneered tours to the continent with a first tour to the Netherlands*

### **PATRONAGE & GOVERNANCE**

The founder Sir Richard Boyle, Great Earl of Cork decreed in his will that his heirs must support the school in perpuity and pay the master and usher (assistant master) £20 per year. In 1753 the fourth Earl of Cork died and his Irish lands passed through his daughter Charlotte to her spouse the fourth Duke of Devonshire. Thereafter the head Irish agent at Lismore managed the school on behalf of the Devonshires up to the sale of their Bandon Estates in the 1890s. The Arnott family of Dublin bought the remaining land and were patrons of the school up to the hand over to the Incorporated Society for Promoting Protestant Schools in Ireland in 1956. The Church of Ireland has always had a central interest in Bandon Grammar School and provided a major loan for the purchase and building of the new school in 1956 – 58. A local Board of Directors chaired by Mr JLB Deane took over management with a lease from the patron in 1975 and it has spearheaded development ever since. The 1998 Education Act had a positive influence on evolving school structures commencing with the foundation of the representative Student Council. In 2012 a Board of Management representative of the partners in education was founded. Bandon Grammar School Association was also replaced by a Parents' Representative Association at that time. They, along with the highly dedicated staff and management team, guide the progress of the school.

*School Group Spring/Summer 1906 – Co Education in Action*

### **PERSONALITIES AND EVENTS**

Few records exist from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the early past pupils were the United Irishmen Arthur and Roger O'Conner, followed by George Bennett, historian of Bandon, Richard Caulfield noted Cork antiquarian and first Queens College (UCC) librarian and a host of prominent clergy, scholars, doctors and army officers. In 1903 the school became one of the first Irish schools to become co-educational with the admission of both day and boarder girls pioneered by Mr H.G. Johnston (1892 – 1931)

Other prominent twentieth century past pupils include Lennox Robinson, playwright and Abby Theatre Director who worked with WB Yeats and Lady Gregory; Albert Robinson CBE, comptroller Inland Revenue (1932-38) Somerset House, London; Thomas Belcher Deputy Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Mounties) and Ristead O'Glaisne Irish Scholar, author and journalist.

More recently Bertie Smith, former international rugby referee, Robert Splaine (former manager of the Irish show jumping team), Darren Sweetnam (Cork Senior hurler and Munster rugby and Ireland rugby player, Gavin Coombes, Munster and Ireland rugby) and the Harte twins, Conor and David (Olympians with hundreds of Senior Irish Hockey Caps) are current well known sports personalities.

By far the best known past pupil is Graham Norton, top BBC chat show host. In 2012 Graham Norton returned to officially open the modern Deane Building.

## **RECREATION & SPORT**

The school has a very long tradition in extra-curricular activities and sport. From fencing, dancing and music in the 1820s to 'racquets' (squash) in the 1870s on to dozens of activities today the school puts emphasis on developing each pupil in the broadest sense. Rugby, Cricket and Athletics were popular by the 1890s among the boys. Hockey and tennis followed in the early twentieth century. Sports Day dates back to at least 1890 and our tradition of book prizes for academic excellence is recorded as far back as 1808. Drama and Music were well developed by 1890. Today, interests across a great range of activities are catered for from chess and reading clubs to drama, debating, music and a wide range of sports. The school pupils regularly win regional and national competitions in the Arts, Debating, Science, Mathematics, Sport, University academic prizes and scholarships. They progress to colleges and universities across Ireland and around the world.

## **THE FUTURE**

Today Bandon Grammar School has over 700 pupils (120 of whom are boarders) and over 100 staff. With over 30 hectares of grounds we have ample space for recreation and development in quiet surroundings, ideal for young people to have the tranquillity and stimulation for intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual growth. Pupils from all over the world, from diverse backgrounds, cultures, faiths and races work together in harmony to achieve the very highest standards.

***May 2022***