

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

NAAS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



THE MOAT BUILDING

The Moat Building sits comfortably beside the old North Moat and provides within its walls a variety of theatre, song and dance for theatregoers and the like. It also provides a welcome stop for a cup of tea/coffee and a relaxing read through the morning paper. Although now an important part of Naas' cultural life it has served the town in many different ways in the past. An impressive building of fine cut stone it blends well architecturally into this the oldest part of the town. In the 1800's an early map indicates a school and church at the present location of the Moat Hall and yard.

The school was most likely a primary school and part of the national school system of the time but little is known about its workings. The then parish priest, Fr. Hughes, had been trying to entice the Christian Brothers to come to the parish for many years. Eventually, on 22nd August 1871 the first three brothers arrived and took up residence in the upstairs rooms of the Moat school. Fr. Hughes proved to be very economic in using sods of turf instead of bricks to make partitions between the rooms. A fact that was only discovered when in the 1960's the Moat club was making extensive renovations to the inside of the building.

In the early days there was no state aid for the school and the brothers had to have annual collections in order to survive. The money raised was used for the running and maintenance of the school. The first school opened on 4th Sept 1871 with one hundred and eighty eight pupils. The first superior was Br. Alphonsus Nolan and in 1896 the school entered pupils in the Intermediate certificate exam. In 1903 when the brothers moved to their new residence on Friary Road the intermediate school was moved from the lower to the upper story. In October of that year a new science laboratory was erected and in 1906 Br. Joachim Ryan was appointed superior.

The Moat building was considered so unsafe that in 1903 a special appeal had to be made for extra funds. This allowed improvements to be made and the installation of a central heating system. Former students would remember the trapdoor to the furnace in the schoolyard. In 1939 there were two hundred and seventy four pupils in the primary and ninety-two in the secondary school. In 1954 the primary school pupils moved to the new St. Corban's School at what was previously Brannigan's fields. There were plans to expand the Moat school with the ever increasing numbers but this was dropped and the new Secondary School (Meanscoil Iognaid Ris) opened in 1958 thus ending the illustrious school history of the Moat Building. It then became home for the Moat Table Tennis and Drama Club before being extensively renovated into what is now the first class Moat Theatre.