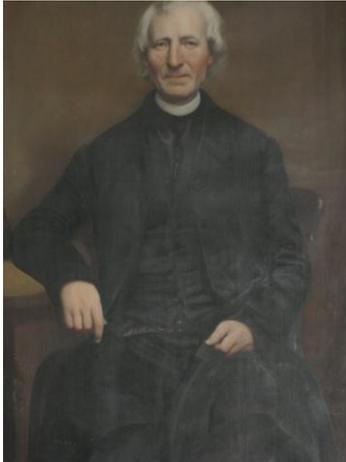


## History of the Faithful Companions of Jesus in Bruff



The Parish Priest, Dean Cussen (*pictured left*) invited the Faithful Companions of Jesus to Bruff in 1856. This remarkable priest had first met Madame d'Houët in Paris, where as a student he had pursued his ecclesiastical studies at St. Sulpice. He was appointed to the parish of Bruff in 1840, during a very dark period in the history of Ireland. When applying directly to the foundress to send some of her nuns to look after schooling in the parish, the only shelter he could offer was that of his mother's house. Madame d'Houët gladly accepted this offer and her nuns took up residence with Mrs. Cussen in Crawford's Lane.

From the arrival of the nuns, work in both the primary and secondary schools commenced and the rapid and extraordinary increase in the number of pupils seeking boarding school education soon called for more ample accommodation. No sooner had the Dean put the matter before his parishioners than his appeal was generously responded to and he bought the land on which the present convent was built in 1859. This generous response was testimony to the faith and values of the people of Bruff. The site chosen was just

below the town on the left bank of the Morning Star river. Since those early days the schools flourished in every department and much change and progress took place in an Endeavour to cater for the needs of the changing times, the growing number of pupils and the ever increasing demands of the curriculum set by

the Department of Education.

Enrollment in the boarding school reached its peak in the 1970's with one hundred and thirty four boarders. As a boarding school, it holds a special place in the hearts of generations of students. Although the day school opened in 1896, it was not



*Above: The original Convent Building with dining room, study hall and dormitory block*

*Below: Senior girls and the choir in the 1950s*



until the introduction of free education in 1967 that the number of day students increased significantly. In 1969, the school opened its doors to receive day boys, a move which was much appreciated by parents. Increasing pupil numbers necessitated the building of many extensions over the years, the last of which entailed the uprooting of the kitchen garden and the building of a fine new classroom block and ancillary accommodation in 1987. Some more land was acquired to accommodate extra playing fields.

The boarding school closed its doors in June 2001 due to less demand on a national level for boarding facilities. This fall off in demand coincided with a decreasing number of FCJ personnel. It was with mixed feelings that FCJ's and past pupils from the Golden Vale of Munster and further afield assembled on the 26/27 May 2001 to partake in rituals formalizing the ending of their much loved boarding school. While they were sad to see its closure, there was also an awareness that this was inevitable. The sadness was tempered by a feeling of deep gratitude for having been part of this great establishment. On reading the FCJ Annals of Bruff one cannot but notice the number of times mention is made of "happy students who look so healthy and well". Bruff always had the tradition of having good rapport between the sisters and the students in their care. Many strong and lasting friendships, forged during boarding school days have withstood the test of time.

In 2002 the last FCJ Principal resigned her post, and so after almost 150 years, a lay Principal was appointed to Bruff Secondary School by then known as Árd Scoil Mhuire FCJ. The keys of the school were handed over to the new Principal at a special liturgy to mark the occasion, celebrated by his Lordship Bishop Donal Murray on 27 August 2002.



*Above: President of Ireland, **Mary McAleese** is welcomed to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations at Árd Scoil Mhuire FCJ.*

During the past 155 years, the convent at Bruff has not only provided the rural population with educational facilities, both primary and secondary, but has fostered many a religious vocation planted by God in the hearts of those students of the Golden Vale.

Unfortunately and sadly, due to a number of factors, it became increasingly obvious in the new millennium that the school could not continue as a viable entity into the future. After much discernment and professional advice, it was decided that the school will close in 2012. At the time of closure FCJs will be celebrating 156 years of unbroken FCJ presence on the staff and more than 40 years of collaboration with lay colleagues in this educational endeavour.