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Notre Dame Training College Glasgow and the Liverpool Connection

By

Stephen J. McKinney

Abstract

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, the opening of Notre Dame Training College for Women in Dowanhill Glasgow provided the first opportunity for Catholic women to train as teachers in a Catholic College in Scotland. This article provides some insights into the history of the origins of the College, which opened in 1895, and the strong series of connections with the Notre Dame College in Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. The achievements of two pioneering sisters of Notre Dame in Glasgow are highlighted. Sister Monica Taylor was an eminent scientist and Sister Marie Hilda was a leading expert on child guidance.

Introduction

As the number of Catholic schools in Scotland began to grow in the mid to late nineteenth century, the need for qualified Catholic teachers became a pressing issue. The Sisters of Notre Dame played a key role in the training of female Catholic teachers for Scotland. Their contribution is examined in this article from a number of perspectives. The article will commence with an overview of the role of the College in Mount Pleasant in Liverpool, run by the Sisters of Notre Dame. Mount Pleasant provided qualified female Catholic teachers when there was no Catholic College in Scotland. This will be followed by an account of the establishment of Notre Dame Training College for Woman in Dowanhill, Glasgow in 1895 by the Sisters from Mount Pleasant. Finally, the article will highlight two of the Sisters in Glasgow who made a significant contribution to education. Sister Monica Taylor was an eminent scientist and Sister Marie Hilda was an international pioneer in Child Guidance.

The early opportunities for formal training of Catholic teachers for Scotland

The Teacher Training Colleges in Scotland in the nineteenth century were operated by different protestant denominations: The Church of Scotland, The Free Church of Scotland and the Episcopal Church. The majority of female and male Catholic teachers in Scotland who were qualified acquired their Catholic qualifications from England and there were a number of possibilities.¹ There were two Colleges for the training of female teachers: The College at Wandsworth run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and Mount Pleasant College in Liverpool run by the Sisters of Notre Dame. There was one for training male teachers, St. Mary's in Hammersmith was established in 1850 with the support of the Catholic Poor School Committee to train religious novices and opened to laymen in 1855.² There was another less well-known source of Catholic female teachers for Scotland. The Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus opened a Teacher Training College for women dedicated to All Souls in St Leonards-on-sea in 1856.³ This College closed in 1863. There is a record in 1862 of two former students

teaching in Scotland. While it is unclear whether they were Scots-born or English teachers who had moved north, they contributed to the qualified Catholic teaching workforce. However, the majority of the qualified female teachers in Scotland were trained at Mount Pleasant in Liverpool prior to the opening of Notre Dame, Dowanhill.⁴ This important connection with Scotland was to be consolidated with the arrival of the Sisters from Liverpool to establish a Teacher Training College in Glasgow.

Mount Pleasant, Liverpool

Mount Pleasant was opened to provide qualified teachers for England and, as has been seen, Scottish women were also trained. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur were founded in Belgium by Julie Billiart. The Sisters began to teach and establish Catholic schools in different parts of England, including Liverpool, in the mid nineteenth century. The Sisters had trained teachers from the earliest days, usually their novices who followed a type of pupil teacher formation. The small, but influential Catholic Poor School Committee, was founded in 1847 to support Catholic schools and exerted pressure on the managers of Catholic schools to increase the number of qualified teachers. In 1848 there was a recognition at two separate meetings in York and London that Training Colleges for Catholic men and women were required.⁵

Mr Allies, the secretary of the Catholic Poor School Committee was sent to Namur with a formal request that the Sisters of Notre Dame open a Teacher Training College in Liverpool. Two Englishwomen who had joined the order were to be instrumental in the foundation of the College in Liverpool. Sister Mary of St. Philip, originally Frances Mary Lescher, had been educated to a high level before joining the order and was to be the first Principal of the College. Sister Mary of St. Francis was a wealthy widow, previously the Honorable Laura Petre, who provided substantial financial support for the new College, estimated at over £10,000.⁶ Agreement was reached in October 1855 and the Sisters opened the Teacher Training College for women at 96 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool.

Notre Dame College, Dowanhill

Archbishop Eyre, the first Archbishop of Glasgow after the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1878, was anxious to establish a Teacher Training College in Glasgow and sought the help of the Notre Dame Sisters at Mount Pleasant.⁷ He was very conscious that the lack of certificated Catholic teachers and heavy reliance on pupil-teachers was impacting on the quality of learning and teaching in many of the Catholic schools. He negotiated with Namur and Mount Pleasant and it was agreed that the Notre Dame Sisters would establish a Teacher Training College in Glasgow. Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid, who was to be the first Principal of the College, and three other sisters arrived in Glasgow on Monday August 20th, 1894.⁸ They were visited by Sister Mary of St Philip from Mount Pleasant on the 23rd of August and she and the sisters received an official welcome from fifty-four former Mount Pleasant students who were working in Scotland. Margaret Moloney, one of the organisers of the event, read an address that welcomed the sisters and the establishment of a Catholic Teacher Training College

in Scotland. The tone reflects the ardent desire to provide the Catholic training in Scotland though, at times, adopts a defensive position:

...the Church recognised the necessity of supplying a long-felt want to enable her Catholic children to compete with their Protestant brethren on equal terms without endangering their faith.

On a lighter note, there were some difficulties with the afternoon catering as there were not enough cups for tea for the large number assembled (they had only expected thirty). Sister Dorothy Gillies reports the following observation of Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid:

But we managed to get enough 'ponies' (small wine glasses) and they each had a glass of wine and a piece of cake – standing – as there were so few chairs.

The reaction of the former students is not recorded but it is safe to presume they found the *ad hoc* arrangements most agreeable.

On September the 8th the scholarship class commenced. The sisters received many visitors who arrived to welcome them to the city, including Canon Chisholm a local Catholic priest who invited Dr. Ross the Principal of the Church of Scotland Training College to meet them. There was an informal opening on January 8th, 1895 and a formal opening ceremony on January 14th, 1895. The number of qualified female Catholic teachers increased and this started to have an impact on the quality of the learning and teaching in the Catholic schools in Scotland in the lead-up to the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918 which enabled Catholic schools to be leased or sold to the state.⁹ The links with Mount Pleasant remained strong and are exemplified in the careers of two internationally renowned sisters: Sister Monica Taylor and Sister Marie Hilda.

A Pioneer in Science: Sister Monica Taylor

Sister Monica Taylor is recognised as an inspirational lecturer in Notre Dame College and as an eminent scientist. She was born in St. Helen's Lancashire and trained at Mount Pleasant between 1896 and 1898 before joining the Sisters of Notre Dame and being sent to Namur. After she was professed in 1900, she returned to England and was sent to Dowanhill in 1901.¹⁰ She was unable to pursue a degree at Glasgow University as the congregation did not allow her to attend lectures. She pursued an external degree with London University and she was granted permission to work in the laboratories at the Zoology Department of Glasgow University, as long as she was strictly chaperoned by another sister.¹¹ Professor Sir Graham Kerr was insistent that she attend lectures (with the chaperone) and she successfully completed the degree. She continued her studies and was awarded a DSc by the University of Glasgow in 1917. She pursued a dual role as Head of Science at Notre Dame College and researcher. She retired from the College in 1946. Her achievements were celebrated with the award of an honorary LLD from the University of Glasgow in 1953. Sister Monica who died in 1968 was famous as a protozoologist who conducted original research into amoeba. Some of her work has been

recorded in a series of academic research articles and she was consulted by scientists from different parts of the world.

A Pioneer in Child Guidance: Sister Marie Hilda

Sister Marie Hilda was a leading figure in the early development of Child Guidance and was a driving force in the establishment of the Notre Dame Child Guidance Clinic.¹² Sister Marie Hilda was born as in Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham in 1876.¹³ She studied at Mount Pleasant, Liverpool and entered the Mother House of Notre Dame in Namur in 1898. She joined the staff in Dowanhill in 1904.¹⁴ She continued her studies and graduated with a first-class honours' degree from the University of London. Initially she lectured in History, Logic, Latin, Mathematics and Psychology. As the College developed, she was appointed Principal Lecturer in Psychology. She was very noted for being focussed on her teaching but also for conducting research.

The work began with the children who attended Note Dame Primary School (at that point the Montessori school). Child Guidance had evolved in America after the first world war and a number of Child Guidance clinics were formed in London in the late 1920s. The timing and location of the first Child Guidance Clinic in the UK is disputed, William Boyd argues that he set up the first Child Guidance Clinic at Glasgow University in November 1926.¹⁵ Sister Marie Hilda was prompted in 1930 by Dr. Rusk, a lecturer at Jordanhill College, to consider opening a Child Guidance Clinic. She supported Lady Margaret Kerr in establishing a Catholic Child Guidance Clinic in Edinburgh in April 1931. She successfully applied to the Commonwealth Fund for financial support and, with approval from the Archbishop of Glasgow and the Director of Education, the Notre Dame Child Guidance Clinic was opened in September 1931. The Notre Dame Clinic was conceived to be part of the Training College.

Child Guidance was not focussed on the delinquent child nor, in the terminology of the time, the 'mentally defective' child. It was concerned with the 'normal' child who experienced challenges that might affect their mental health and progression into adulthood.¹⁶ The Child Guidance Clinic was operated by a team of professionals: a psychiatrist, a psychologist and a psychiatric social worker. Sister Marie Hilda was the psychologist and Director of the Clinic. The Clinic was a great success and the number of referrals began to escalate: the number of children in 1935 was 247 and this increased to 462 in 1944.¹⁷ Later, Sister Marie Hilda helped to set up a Notre Dame Child Guidance Centre in Liverpool, which was opened on the 4th of October, 1943.¹⁸ This was the first Catholic Child Guidance Clinic opened in England and her involvement at the early stages signified the recognition of her expertise and the link between the two Notre Dame Colleges. The Clinic was similar to the one in Scotland in a number of important ways. It was directed by Sister Beatrice, a member of the staff of Notre Dame Training College in Liverpool. Although the Clinic was Catholic it admitted children who were not Catholic.

It is important to note some points. First, Sister Marie Hilda was a national and international figure. She merits recognition because of her work with the Notre Dame Child Guidance Clinic in Glasgow and also because of her position as a leading pioneer and proponent of Child Guidance in the world. Her work was recognised in London and the United States.¹⁹ Further, the importance of the Notre Dame Clinic is recognised in most scholarly research into the history of Child Guidance in the United Kingdom. Second, when it became clear at the establishment of the Notre Dame Clinic that there were insufficient Catholic psychiatrists in Scotland, she employed non-Catholic psychiatrists. She was strongly criticised for adopting this expedient course of action. However, she argued that this was acceptable as long as the Notre Dame Community had control of the community and the Clinic was supported by a Catholic psychiatric social worker and a Catholic priest.²⁰ Third, the Clinic was indisputably Catholic but there were no religious discriminatory practices in the admission of children to the Clinic. The Clinic accepted children of all denominations or none as long as they were referred by an accredited person or public body.²¹ Fourth, although the Clinic was supported by the Archbishop of Glasgow and other members of the Catholic Church, she faced quite serious opposition to the Notre Dame Clinic from those within the Catholic Church who were suspicious of psychology.

Concluding Points

The connection between Glasgow and Liverpool was invaluable for the preparation of Catholic female teachers for Scotland. Mount Pleasant provided the majority of certificated female teachers before the opening of Notre Dame in Glasgow and provided the sisters who would establish and teach in the new College in Glasgow. Sister Monica Taylor and Sister Marie Hilda were both trained in Mount Pleasant and Sister Marie Hilda helped to set up the first Catholic child Guidance Clinic in England, in Liverpool.

The education of female Catholic teachers in Scotland was enhanced by the opening of St. Margaret's College for Women in Craiglockhart, Edinburgh in 1920. The two Colleges were merged into the national Catholic College, St Andrew's College, in Bearsden near Glasgow in 1981. St. Andrew's College was merged with the University of Glasgow in 1999 helping to form the Faculty of Education, later the School of Education in 2010. The School of Education continues the mission to prepare Catholic teachers, a mission that characterised the educational endeavours of the Sisters of Notre Dame and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

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