

THE MEN BEHIND THE GLASS

• NE OBLIVISCARIS •



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

ESTD 1894

Lesson 1
The School System in Edwardian Ireland



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LESSON 1

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN EDWARDIAN IRELAND

There were two types of school systems in Ireland in Edwardian Ireland.

National schools were the most common type. These schools were state funded and pupils paid no fees to attend. In 1917, there were 8,060 National Schools in Ireland attended by 699,472 pupils. Around a quarter of these schools were in Ulster (2,686) and were spread across the province. Many modern day primary schools can trace their roots back to being national schools, such as St Peter's in West Belfast.

Public or grammar schools were the other type. Before the First World War, it is estimated there were around 300 public or grammar schools in Ireland attended by between 4,000 to 6,000 pupils. These schools were largely fee paying with parents paying from their private income for children to attend. Many pupils attended as day students but many schools had boarding departments where pupils could live during term time. Examples of public and grammar schools include Clongowes Wood College, Blackrock College, Cork Grammar School, Methody College (Belfast) and Campbell College, Belfast. Like many National schools, many of these grammar and public schools still operate today.

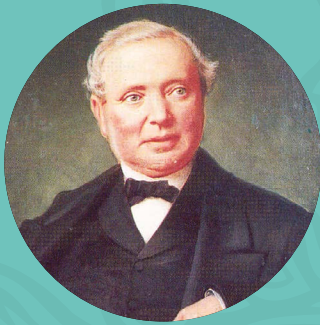


Campbell College, Belfast



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Henry James Campbell
(1813 – 89)

College Campbell was named after Henry James Campbell (1813 – 89). Born in Newtownards and of Ulster-Scots heritage, Campbell made his fortune through linen manufacturing. He learned the trade through working for companies based in Belfast and Liverpool before establishing his own company, Henry Campbell and Co. in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey in 1859. When Campbell died as a bachelor in 1889, he left behind an estate worth £240,000 (around £29 million in today's money!), for the founding of a school or a hospital. The trustees of the estate, decided to build a school and in 1890, purchased the Belmont Estate in Belfast. Campbell College (named in its benefactors honour) opened in September 1894.

WHO ATTENDED THESE SCHOOLS?

The type of school that children attended was largely determined by the social class, occupation and income of their parents.

The children of working class families predominantly attended National Schools. The parents in working class families tended to be employed in manual jobs that required them to use their hands, bodily labour or muscle power. These occupations were often physically demanding, requiring employees to work long hours, often for low wages. This meant few parents could afford expensive school fees of public or grammar schools.

Children from middle class families largely attended private and grammar schools. These parents, usually the father, largely worked in non-manual roles that demanded skills, knowledge and qualifications obtained through attending college or university and sitting exams. These jobs often paid high salaries enabling parents to send their children to private or grammar schools.

LIFE AT SCHOOL

This lesson will compare National Schools from the Belfast District with Campbell College, before and during the First World War.

Campbell College was named after Henry James Campbell (1813-89). Born in Newtownards and of Ulster-Scots heritage, Campbell made his fortune through linen manufacturing. He learned the trade through working for companies based in Belfast and Liverpool before establishing his own company, Henry Campbell and Co. in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey in 1859. When Campbell died as a bachelor in 1889, he left behind an estate worth £240,000 (around £29 million in today's money), for the founding of a school or a hospital.

The trustees of the estate, decided to build a school and in 1890, purchased the Belmont Estate in Belfast. Campbell College (named in its benefactor's honour) opened in September 1894. It was a boys only school which, when opened, welcomed in 213 pupils (57 of which were boarders). It had a lower school, the former was for pupils aged 9 to 13 and the latter for students aged 13 to 18. The school motto was *Ne Obliviscaris* (Latin for 'Do Not Forget'). The cost of boarding at Campbell in 1913 cost £78 per year but the cost of attending just day time tuition was £16.



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WHICH SCHOOL WOULD THE CHILDREN OF THESE WORKERS GO TO? WHICH ONES WOULD BE CONSIDERED MIDDLE CLASS OR WORKING CLASS?

Role	Annual salary in 1914	Type of school	Class
Second Lieutenant, junior officer in the British Army (infantry)	£155		
Private in the British Army	£18.25		
Robert McNeil, First Headmaster at CCB	£900		
Turner in shipbuilding yard (Belfast)	£109.25		
Agricultural labourer	£43		
Compositor in printing trade (arranging letters to print pages of text)	£94.77		
Elementary teacher	£80 to £120		
Lieutenant-Colonel, senior officer in the British Army (infantry)	£494		
Domestic servant (House keeper)	£30-£60 (1906)		

THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

At National Schools, educational authorities believed pupils should be trained to be better citizens and be trained for the jobs that they would be expected to do as adults.

The Inspectors of schools in 1910 wrote that: 'The chief aims of all primary education (is)...the formation of character, the training in good habits, and the development of intelligence.'

Education authorities also thought to teach children where they stood in society. The Commissioners who inspected the schools thought that it was of the 'very highest importance to school discipline' to teach 'punctuality, deportment, politeness, and good manners'.



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*After the Great War, the newspaper the **Belfast News Letter & Industrial Review** believed that Campbell College represented the 'British System' public school system in that it **'produce(d) men with individuality and initiative, capable of acting on their own'**. This education was valuable because 'there are many lessons a boy learns at school outside the curriculum, which may not win him universal distinctions, but make him a man who can do service to the Empire; and when one who is little more than a boy in years takes his place in India or Africa or the Malay States, and finds himself face to face with the **responsibilities of jurisdiction and command**, dealing with subject races with no one near to turn to for advice, it is just these lessons that stand him in good stead.*

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At Campbell College the focus was similar yet different. On one hand the school sought to make good citizens. The Headmaster, before the First World War, said that the end 'product' that Campbell sought to produce was a boy that was '(self-disciplined, self-controlled, strong in character, strong in body, (and) strong in intellect' so they could be 'useful citizens' of the Empire.

Like National Schools, Campbell sought to prepare its pupils for the jobs they were expected to do after they left school. However, the roles they were being prepared for were very different from those that most National school children were expected to fill. Campbell boys were being prepared for senior and leadership roles in civil service, armed forces, professions (medicine, law, the church) or industry either at home in Ireland or in the Empire. They were being prepared to pass the necessary exams to obtain entrance to university or College.

ATTENDING SCHOOL

In National Schools, pupils could start as early as 3 years old and leave at 14. In 1914, an Inspector, Mr Honan, wrote: "The age at which children go to school varies with the locality and distance to be travelled. In the city they go at about three years of age. The parents being poor, the mothers too often have to work, and as the school is the nearest approach to a Creche. The 'babies' (young children around 3) are sent to get them out of the way and off the streets. As a rule they leave as soon as the law permits." The reason so many children left at aged 14 (the legal minimum) was parents needed children to work to ensure the family had enough money to live.

Though school attendance was compulsory under the Irish Education Act, 1892, only two thirds of children attended on a regular basis. The 1892 Act said that children aged 6 to 14 had to attend 150 days of school per year, although often it was closer to 119 days. Today, children have to attend around 190 days of school in a calendar year.



At Campbell College, attendance was very different. Children would enter the school aged 9 having been schooled at home or at an infant school. Most pupils would leave aged 18. Pupils were expected to attend 100% of the time and the regulations specified that 'boys are not allowed to be absent from School unless with the previous permission of the Head Master, which is only given for imperative reasons'.



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The workhouse

In the UK in Victorian and Edwardian times, the workhouse, known as 'the spike', was a place where those unable to support themselves were offered accommodation and employment. Life in a workhouse was intended to be harsh, to deter the able-bodied poor and to ensure that only the truly impoverished would apply. In 1917, 91 of the 8,060 National Schools in Ireland were located in workhouses in order to help less well-off children.

WHAT SUBJECTS DID CHILDREN STUDY AT SCHOOL?

The subjects that students learnt varied considerably between those at a National School and those at Campbell.

Campbell College, Belfast learnt different subjects at different times:

School/age	Subjects
Lower School (for those aged 9 to 13)	Subjects studied included: English (broad subject covering reading, elocution, grammar and biblical instruction), Arithmetic, Latin, French, Natural and Physical Sciences, Drill and Gymnasium.
Upper School (aged 13/14 to 18)	Curriculum in the Upper School was tailored to meet an individual's 'intellectual powers... or special needs'. Subjects included: Latin, Mathematics, Modern Languages, English (which included History, Language and Literature), Physical and Natural Sciences and a Business Studies equivalent subject that included elements of accounting, banking and insurance.

The subjects taught at National Schools were similar but different:

Age/gender	Subjects
Aged 3 to 14, boys and girls	<p>The ordinary subjects were School subjects were: English, Arithmetic, Kindergarten and Manual Instruction (teaching of children around aged 3 to 5), Drawing, Elementary Science, Singing, School Discipline and Physical Drill (marching).</p> <p>Other subjects such as Irish, French, Latin, Mathematics, and Instrumental Music, could be taught in National Schools but only if they did not interfere with the other subjects listed above.</p>
Girls	Cookery, laundry work and needlework.
Boys	Woodwork





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HEALTH AND SCHOOLING

The prevalence of disease and illness during Edwardian times was much greater than today and sickness among school children could have a major impact on education.

One report on illness in National Schools found in the Belfast area in 1914 that epidemics of scarlatina (skin rash), whooping-cough (a type of cold), diphtheria (infection that could lead to organ damage) and measles (skin infection that could be fatal) were all prevalent during the year, necessitating the closing of many schools for long periods.

At Campbell, a range of measures were taken to control ill health among pupils. All were screened for disease on their acceptance into the school. The school employed a full time school nurse or matron and had a dedicated doctor for the school. It also built a sanatorium, a mini hospital on the school grounds, where sick pupils would remain until they were well enough to return.

TEACHERS AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The conditions in which school children learnt varied considerably between Campbell College and National Schools.

Teachers

In 1908 Campbell College had 16 masters, giving a ratio of around one teacher for every 12 pupils. In National Schools, the ratio of teachers to pupils was around 44 to one. In 1904, 60% of all national schools were single teacher schools and teachers were often responsible for multiple age groups at once.

A report on teachers in 1914 in National Schools reported: "The teachers as a body are hard-working, and many discharge their duties with marked ability. The women assistant teachers especially deserve praise for the readiness and zeal they show often at considerable expense and labour, in their efforts to fit themselves better for the teaching of branches which require special training." However, it was reported that only '80 per cent of the male teachers are trained (and)...only about 50 per cent of females'. The situation was the opposite at Campbell College, where all teachers had been to University.



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SPORTS AND LEISURE AT SCHOOL



A game of rugby being played at Campbell College.

Campbell College wrote in its prospectus that it 'stands in grounds nearly 70 acres in extent, thus affording ample room for playing fields of every description'. A wide range of sports were contested at Campbell, including boxing, fencing, hockey, tennis and soccer. The most popular sport without a doubt was rugby: "...life at Campbell College was dominated by rugby; to us boys it appeared that this was what we were there for."



Image Above
1st XV (1914)



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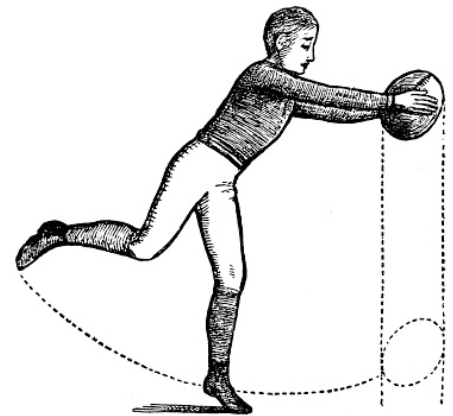
Several Old Campbellians (OCs) went on to represent their country on the rugby field, the first of which, James Allison, made his debut against England in the 1899 Home Nations Championship (now the Six Nations). At the time he was 18 – the youngest centre to have appeared for Ireland.

At the first Speech Day in 1901, Campbell's first Headmaster Robert McNeill proclaimed: "It is now acknowledged that physical education is as necessary as intellectual and moral, and our athletics have been organised with the object of giving the exercise and recreation necessary to keep the body in the best condition for doing their fullest mental work."

The next headmaster, Robert MacFarland also felt strongly about the boys participating in sports and physical activity. To ensure that all boys received the positive benefits of 'games', he made them compulsory.

In comparison, National Schools had few facilities to encourage sports or games.

Mr. Honan, an inspector on the Belfast area, reported that 'about 50 per cent of the city schools have no playgrounds; 20 per cent have playgrounds of moderate dimensions; and 30 per cent, are suitably supplied'.



BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

Campbell College was described in its prospectus for parents as having 'school buildings (with)...no expense was spared in their equipment; everything, therefore, is in accordance with the most recent scientific requirements...The Dormitories, Classrooms, Bathroom, Laboratories, and all the accessories leave nothing to be desired'.

This compares markedly with the conditions which were described in National Schools. For example, one inspector wrote that 'a very serious defect in the Belfast buildings is that most of them are on the streets, where the noise of the passing traffic is so great as to render oral teaching at times almost impossible'.



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Group Discussion Task

Compare and contrast the nature of education in schools in Ulster 100 years ago with the education you receive today. How do they compare? What are the differences? Has education improved?

QUESTIONS

- ① How did social class affect the type of school that a child could attend?
- ② What were the differences in the education received by a boy attending Campbell College and a child attending a National School?
- ③ What problems did National Schools face in delivering education to their pupils?
- ④ What type of work did both types of school prepare pupils for after they left?

Extension

The curriculum at Campbell and National Schools was not only dedicated to preparing pupils for college, university and work but also as 'good citizens'. What kind of qualities do you think Campbell and National schools tried to instill in their pupils?

Digital Task

This can be completed as a group/paired activity or an individual activity.

Using sound recording/editing software, script and conduct an interview with an Old Campbellian or National school pupil about their time at school. What was life like at school? What did they enjoy? What didn't they enjoy? What were the conditions like?

Plan and storyboard your interview to include details from the resource. On completion of your interview, evaluate the quality of the recording, editing and usefulness of the information. Is there anything that you would do differently the next time? Listen to interviews created by classmates and offer constructive praise and feedback.





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