



Past Pupil Memories









Q&A WITH DR. MAEVE O'ROURKE

We were delighted to welcome our past pupil, Dr. Maeve O'Rourke, back to our school this year. During a fireside chat with Mr. Dunne, she recounted some of her memories and sources of inspiration when she was in school while also providing our Senior Cycle students with an insight into her work in the area of Human Rights.

WHAT WERE YOUR FAVOURITE SUBJECTS IN SCHOOL AND WHY?

I loved art, music and languages. I look back now and feel so grateful that I had all that time in school to develop my passions - to get an education in areas that I can now go back to and pick up again, especially when I want to take a step away from the rushed day-to-day. I feel very creative and I'm extremely fortunate to have found a career that allows me a lot of freedom to develop my own ideas, and to communicate them and work on them in the ways that I find most interesting and effective. Aside from the subjects that came naturally to me, I studied Chemistry for the Leaving Cert. I learned a lot from that experience: I really got a sense that if I put enough effort in, I could manage to figure out difficult concepts.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE CO AND EXTRA CURRICULAR LIFE OF THE SCHOOL TO YOU?

I made the most of the opportunities we had outside the classroom. I played violin in the orchestra and I really looked forward to the nights when we got to join professional musicians to play for the Transition Year musical. I sang in the folk group, and I loved accompanying choirs and ensembles on the piano. I played tennis and hockey for school teams from

First to Sixth Year, and I participated in all kinds of debating including Concern debates, and French and Irish Times debating. I was in the Justice and Peace group, and I had a great time participating with my friend Clodagh Power in the Young Scientist exhibition during Transition Year.

OF ALL THE ACTIVITIES YOU WERE INVOLVED IN WHEN YOU WERE IN SCHOOL, WHAT CLUB MOTIVATED YOU THE MOST AND WHY?

I think the musical side of school life was my greatest interest - and my parents and I chose Dalkey because of its brilliant reputation for music education. Sr. Francis Jerome, RIP, had filled several cupboards on a corridor near the library with instruments she brought from the old Loreto Abbey in Rathfarnham so I had the chance to take some lessons with her on the cello and the Irish harp, as well as piano and violin. I loved the camaraderie, the experimentation, and the freedom and relaxation that all our musical and singing groups and activities allowed. And we were able to contribute to the community, playing carols at the turning on of the Christmas lights in Dalkey, busking for charity on Grafton Street, bringing music into nursing homes, and enhancing the various religious services we participated in during the school year.



WHAT SUBJECTS AT SENIOR CYCLE INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE LAW AT THIRD LEVEL?

I remember being very confused about how to decide on a university course, and how to know whether a law degree would be a good fit given that it seemed quite removed from any Leaving Cert subject. I think I figured out, and I would tell secondary school students now, that being interested in English in particular - in reading (lots) and writing, and in constructing an argument and communicating orally - is a good indicator of an aptitude for law. History and Politics & Society are very relevant Leaving Cert subjects, given the topics involved and the research, analytical and communication skills they develop. Students with an interest in Business might also wish to consider a degree involving at least some legal studies.

I wanted to pursue a degree that would enable me to help people and contribute to social change. I found the social justice parts of our religious education at Dalkey inspiring, and I really enjoyed being part of the Justice and Peace extra-curricular group. I remember my teachers as strong feminists who supported us to reflect on and write about current affairs and social issues. Bean Murdoch, who taught me English and Irish for the Leaving Cert, was particularly influential in this regard. I remember being fascinated by my Junior Cert History and CSPE teacher, Ms O'Callaghan's stories of camping out in protest at the plans to develop Wood Quay decades previously. Ms O'Callaghan also supervised my class in researching and writing to Tony Blair about Sellafield for our CSPE project, which I found very exciting.

COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR PROGRESSION FROM STUDENT OF THE LAW TO BECOMING A LECTURER?

I studied Law at UCD, which was wonderful and involved a life-changing 'study abroad' year at the top 20-ranked University of Minnesota Law School. Straight after my undergraduate degree, in 2009, I went to Harvard Law School for my Masters, following which I was awarded a Harvard fellowship to spend a year working in the human rights law field. I spent that next year at the London office of Equality Now, a women's rights organisation that works to end discrimination against girls and women in law in countries all over the world. I then trained as a barrister in London: I worked for a year as a barrister in Family Law and for another year on a huge environmental/tort law case against Shell Nigeria, on behalf of 15,000 people from Bodo, in the Niger Delta, whose livelihoods were destroyed by oil spills in 2008.

From the time I had studied at Harvard, however, I had become involved in voluntary legal work and campaigning with the 'Justice for Magdalenes' group. I wanted to find a way to continue this kind of out-of-court legal research and advocacy work (which I now understand as the technique of 'movement



lawyering'). While training and practising as a barrister in London between 2011 and 2014, I was spending all of my spare time working with Ireland's Magdalene Laundries survivors - recording their testimony, doing archival research, writing detailed legal analyses of the available evidence, making arguments to the United Nations and other human rights bodies, communicating with politicians and civil servants in Ireland, writing in the newspapers and online about the need for reparation, gathering public support through coalitions with other organisations and phone and email/letter-writing campaigns, and researching and advocating a human rights-based framework for redress. I decided to study for a PhD, which I completed in 2018, under the supervision of a previous UCD lecturer of mine, Prof Fiona de Londras, then at Birmingham Law School. My aim was to find a job in academia with the freedom to research, teach and practise human rights law in ways that I found most compelling. I worked for one year after my PhD as Senior Research and Policy Officer for the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, and in 2019 I joined University of Galway (formerly NUI Galway).

I now work as a Lecturer in Human Rights at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, which is part of the University of Galway School of Law. I am Programme Director of the Law (BCL) and Human Rights undergraduate degree - which means I'm lucky enough to supervise and mentor a group of about 25 students who are passionate about a career in the human rights field, from First Year to Fourth Year. Alongside other



teaching, I also established a postgraduate Human Rights Law Clinic, which supports approximately 30 Masters students each year to participate in human rights and social justice campaigns.

SOME OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CASES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN IN IRELAND HAVE BEEN GROUNDBREAKING, WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO WORK ON THE MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES CASE?

I am proud and grateful to have worked with Magdalene Laundries survivors to achieve the 2013 State apology by Taoiseach Enda Kenny, and a range of other justice measures. The Government's implementation of its redress promises has not been perfect, and I am still involved in advocacy to try to improve matters. In 2015 I set up an evidence-gathering and advocacy project called 'The Clann Project' to help people who wanted to make a witness statement and send a copy to the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation. I worked hard to help achieve the Birth Information and Tracing Act in 2022, which finally gives adopted people a clear statutory right to their identity and personal files. I have been deeply involved in campaigning to have a national Site of Social Conscience established at the site of the last Magdalene Laundry to close in Ireland, at Sean McDermott Street in Dublin 1. And I was privileged to meet hundreds of Magdalene Laundries survivors, and to hear how they wish their experiences to be remembered, when I helped to organise the 'Dublin Honours Magdalenes' gathering in Dublin in 2018. The women unanimously said that they want young people to understand how children's and women's human rights were violated, and how the state's structures of protection were entirely absent. They want the public - and particularly young people - to learn from the past so that we can ensure that similar abuse never happens again.

I feel immensely privileged to have met and learned from Ireland's strongest and most compassionate people. I find it humbling and motivating that so

many people who have survived the inhumanity of family separation, incarceration, cruel and inhuman punishment, denigration, stigmatisation, denial of education, servitude and enforced poverty want to tell their stories.

They do it with the aim of making sure that other people, particularly the children and young people of today and the future - including those who are migrants and members of other marginalised groups - are protected from the kind of abuse that they suffered. They do it because they hope and believe that Ireland can be a better place and that the public will make sure of it.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A STUDENT WHO IS INTERESTED IN STUDYING LAW AT UNIVERSITY?

When I was in Sixth Year, I asked some girls I knew from the school hockey team - who were then in First Year of university - to take me to some lectures so that I could get a sense of what studying Law would be like. I went to one lecture in UCD and one in Trinity, and they were such fascinating and useful experiences. I think any university lecturer would be glad to have a secondary school student attend for a taster: all you need to do is ask. It is possible to attend the courts as an ordinary member of the public, and this is another really good way to see if you are interested in the law. If you google, you will find lots of lists of 'books to read for students interested in law'. It is also important to remember that there are several pathways to university and to a Law degree. It is worth seeking out advice from school and third level sources about the many options that exist.

Thank you to Dr. O'Rourke for this insightful interview and we wish her success with her new publication '**Human Rights and the Care of Older People**'.





THE CLASS OF 2003 20 YEAR REUNION

It was a warm, bright day on the 9th September 2023 for the Class of 2003's twenty year reunion. An Autumn heatwave made it one of the hottest days of the year. As I walked to the school entrance, I was struck by the stunning views of Dalkey Island. Even after seeing this view hundreds of times, the idyllic setting and accompanying sounds of the sea always stop me in my tracks for a moment. The vitality of the place, a combination of the bracing sea and breathless view is enough to make anyone hold their breath!

In the distance, a tidal wave of sound as the sight of familiar faces brought forth whoops of delight and shouts of 'hello' as I entered the school lunch room (formerly the Second and Third Year Locker Room). The warm and friendly chat was instantaneous, it was like picking up from where we left off 20 years ago! We were all greeted by the Principal Mr. Robert Dunne and Deputy Principal Ms. Gráinne Byrne who had arranged a drinks reception with the added bonus of cakes and treats baked by the current pupils.

The tour of the school, led by Mr. Dunne, allowed us to retrace our footsteps of years gone by and check out our favourite haunts. There were several screens around the school reminding us of our Yearbook photos from First Year to Sixth Year! As we walked the school corridors, the chatter and giddy excitement brought me back to the time spent in classes, on lunch breaks and at our lockers.

The school itself is how we remembered it, with some fantastic upgrades. The new Hockey pitches (we played on grit!), the new Sports Hall, the upgraded Science Labs, the Lecture Theatre, the Serenity Garden and the upgraded Library, all of which are impressive additions. We were also delighted that some of the Basketball teams and Hockey players from the class of 2003 had made it to the sports Wall of Fame!

One of my favourite parts of the school will always be Room 10, where you can view the sight of waves





crashing against the rocks in the winter with the best view of Dalkey island, along with the fond memories of Mr. Bernard O'Boyle's English class. As my classmates entered the room, we automatically sat at our former seats from 20 years ago. Looking across the room I was transported back to Sixth Year, reading Macbeth and taking copious notes instructed by Mr. O'Boyle!

The memories of our school days were very much alive and enthusiastically discussed as we entered a room or walked the corridor, like the cooking smells when walking past the Home Economics rooms, the warm and inviting atmosphere in the Religion room, being quizzed on the Módh Coinniollach by Mr. Tim Griffin in the Irish room, the head sets we wore in the Language Lab and the Science Lab experiments we conducted. We were even given permission by Mr. Dunne to climb the steps to the all time forbidden Staff Room to the amusement and thrill of my classmates! The sound of laughter and fun ringing through the hallways is one of the nicest memories, and during Choir exams when singing floated around the school.

I would like to thank Mr. Robert Dunne and Ms. Gráinne Byrne for opening their doors to us and providing such

a warm welcome. After the tour we headed to Dalkey for food and drinks and the evening afforded us the opportunity to catch up on each other's news and rekindle those school friendships. Tears of laughter and nostalgic stories were recalled of our school play 'Annie', the TY trip to Barcelona, Hockey trips and the trip to Glendasan.

What I took away from the day was the atmosphere of warmth and care we experienced all through the six wonderful school years is still present. The ethos and essence of the school remains the same, friendships are characterised by respect, honesty and compassion and there was and still is a dedication from the staff that we recognised and valued. Reflecting on it all we realised just how lucky we were to have attended the school and gained such valuable friendships, which will last a lifetime. That evening we promised each other not to leave it another 10 years and another reunion is imminent!

MICHELLE HUGHES

HEAD GIRL CLASS OF 2003





THE CLASS OF 2013

10 YEAR REUNION





CLASS OF 1971

REVISITING OUR ALMA MATER

A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME & MEMORY

On a beautiful sunny morning in April, seven past pupils of Loreto Abbey Dalkey returned to pay a visit after 53 years! We were all boarders at the school. We were met by the Principal Mr. Dunne, Deputy Principal Ms. Byrne and several members of Staff peeped in to say hello. The moment we stepped through the door, we experienced the warm welcome, the smiles, and the relaxed atmosphere, and over a steaming cup of coffee we were able to share our stories, adventures, hopes and dreams of our teenage years.

We embarked on a delightful tour of the school, each corner evoking cherished memories. However, we couldn't help but notice the absence of the familiar bed-lined dormitories. In their place stood the impressive Computer Room, Science Laboratory, Language Room, and Music Room, emblematic of the modern, state-of-the-art facilities demanded by the school in 2024.

We remembered leaving the Study Room for 30 minutes to have a bath. This time restriction meant that we had to run along a corridor until we saw a nun. Then we walked past her, until out of sight, we raced to the dormitory, to collect our toiletries, have our bath and be back within the allocated time. The corridors were filled with classical music from the students practising their instruments, while we had a bath further down the corridor. Witnessing the evolution of the school was truly remarkable. Despite the myriad of changes, there remained an unmistakable sense of belonging.

Other recollections that surfaced included the mandatory practice of wearing the mantilla before entering the Church. Consensus was unanimous regarding the altered ambiance of the church in the absence of its long benches. Furthermore, we reminisced about the tradition of singing the hymn

Daily, Daily Sing to Mary during May. This hymn was sung at the Oratory in front of the statue of Mary which was situated on the school grounds. It's worth noting that the weather wasn't always favorable; memories of strong winds blowing from the sea and resulting in legs tinged blue, remain vivid.

Wednesday evening tea gatherings were a cherished tradition in the Refectory, offering students the opportunity to indulge in their "Tuck," a collection of snacks and treats provided by visitors from home. This same space has since been repurposed as the Home Economics Room. The anticipation of being summoned to the front Parlour was always met with excitement, signaling the arrival of a visitor. The Parlour was permeated with the pleasant scents of beeswax and lavender polish. We derived equal joy from our friends' visits to the Parlour, as any confectionery delights received were often shared amongst peers. I recall fondly Mr. Kuntz's deliveries of the freshest fruits and vegetables, a memory that has instilled in me a lifelong appreciation for yellow and green peppers! Strangely enough, at exam times for the Intermediate Certificate and Leaving Certificate, the sun always seemed to be shining and warm.

It was a truly remarkable moment for Gráinne Kelly to witness her former pupil, Deirdre Butler, in action as she passed on the science baton. Deirdre's passion and dedication have undoubtedly left a lasting impact on her Chemistry students, inspiring them to reach new heights.

Reflecting on our time as students, we acknowledged that perhaps we didn't fully grasp the beauty of the splendid sea views surrounding our school. Yet, in our youthful exuberance, our minds were often preoccupied with other matters.



Some time has elapsed since our visit, yet the memories continue to resurface. It seems that being immersed in such a stimulating and uplifting environment instills the students with a profound sense of drive and passion as they embark on their chosen career paths. We express eternal gratitude to the inspiring Loreto Sisters and dedicated teachers who imparted their wisdom to us. Additionally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our parents for the decision to enroll us in this exceptional school, providing us with unparalleled opportunities for growth and learning.

We extend our sincere well wishes to all students and teachers for their future endeavors. Despite the considerable challenges facing education today, we commend your dedication and perseverance. We eagerly anticipate the opportunity for another visit in the foreseeable future.

**PAULA ROBINSON, SIOBHÁN O'BRIEN,
GRÁINNE KELLY, DEIRDRE KUNTZ,
NIAMH WILLIAMS, ANN O'BRIEN &
KATRICE SHERIDAN**

CLASS OF 1974

