# **Exhibition:**

# The Kildare Place Society and Schooling in the Nineteenth Century

National Museum of Ireland: Decorative Arts & History

Collins Barracks, Dublin

# **Background Information for Teachers**

Between September 2012 and June 2013, the Museum of Decorative Arts & History in Collins Barracks, Dublin hosts an exhibition entitled 'The Kildare Place Society and Schooling in the Nineteenth Century'. This exhibition was undertaken to mark 200 years since the foundation of the Kildare Place Society (KPS). The exhibition contains artefacts and publications from the Plunket Museum of Irish Education and the Kildare Place Society Archives, both of which are housed at the Church of Ireland College of Education (CICE) in Rathmines, Dublin. The exhibits have been chosen to give an impression of what it was like to be a schoolchild in nineteenth-century Ireland, particularly in the schools supported by the Kildare Place Society.

The Kildare Place Society Archives and the Church of Ireland College of Education Archives include a large collection of early school textbooks, classroom materials, equipment and teaching aids related to schools in Ireland throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some of which are on display in the exhibition. One example is the Darton Scroll, an early teaching aid (see PowerPoint Slide 11). It consists of posters stuck onto long strips of calico and wound around a wooden roller. This was gradually unrolled during a lesson to the great excitement of the watching pupils.

There are also objects from the Plunket Museum of Irish Education on display in the exhibition. The Plunket Museum is located in a converted stable yard at CICE. It documents the history of teaching and learning in Ireland from Celtic times to the present day. It has a reconstructed model classroom from the early 1900s as well as smaller model schoolrooms from the period 1900–1950. Some of the objects in the museum were developed and used by the Kildare Place Society in their schools. A selection of these items, including reward tickets, monitors' badges, inkwell holders and inkwells, and old school benches are included at the exhibition in Collins Barracks.

#### **Preparation for Exhibition Visit**

A visit to the exhibition is intended to encourage children to think about schools in the past and to find answers to the following questions:

- What was schooling like in the 1800s?
- How do we know about schools from that period?
- What evidence can be examined now?
- What evidence might have been destroyed?
- What items in the exhibition show that the Kildare Place Society tried to develop materials that would interest children in going to school?

See PowerPoint Slides 2 and 3 for more details.

#### **Curriculum Links**

The content of the exhibition will provide opportunities for teaching and learning in a number of curriculum areas, such as history and English. The Primary History Curriculum places an emphasis on the use of evidence by pupils of all class levels. It advises that children should be given opportunities to observe, handle, examine, question and draw conclusions from historical evidence. A visit to this exhibition and the use of the PowerPoint presentation adopt this approach as well.

### A Brief History of Nineteenth-Century Schooling

This section can be used by teachers to extend children's understanding of schools and schooling 200 years ago. The information has been presented in a way that is intended to suit primary school children.

Some 200 years ago, in the early 1800s, there were no national schools in Ireland unlike today. (It may be necessary to explain to children that the early 1800s is also known as the early nineteenth century.) This was because the national school system only began in Ireland in 1831. However, many children did attend some kind of school even before there were free national schools. We know this because it has been calculated that two out of every five children of school-going age were enrolled in a school of some kind at that time (Coolahan, 1981: p10). Many of these were small private schools. In 1824, there were about 11,000 schools in Ireland with a total of half a million children attending them. The most common type, with about 9,000 schools, were private 'pay' schools, most of which were hedge schools (Coolahan, 1981: p10).

# **Hedge Schools**

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, secret schools were set up in Ireland for children who could not attend school otherwise. They were known as hedge schools and intended for Catholic children. This was as a direct result of the strict laws (Penal Laws) in Ireland in existence since about 1695 that forbid Catholics from setting up schools or from sending their children abroad to school. Most hedge schools taught reading, writing and arithmetic. Many taught Greek and Latin in addition.

Children of wealthy families often had their own private teachers who taught them in their own homes. Children who could not afford to attend pay schools or have private tutors were entirely reliant on the work of charitable organisations to provide them with the very basic skills of reading, writing and computation. Even with this number of schools, in some parts of the country in the 1800s there were no schools of any kind.

#### **Pre-visit Activity:**

- Ask the children why they think there were no schools in some places in Ireland at that time.
   Remote areas? Poor districts?
- If poorer children could not go to school, what do you think became of them when they were older?
- What kind of work might they have done instead of going to school? Helping on farms as farm labourers? Chimney sweeps? No work?

# **Curriculum Link SPHE/Citizenship**

#### **Pre-visit Activity:**

- Discuss the right of every child to an education. Link it to current practices and the lack of opportunities for free education for children in many countries.
- Link the topic to Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 (see below):

'States parties recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
- (b) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
- (c) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
- (d) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.'

### **Schooling in the Nineteenth Century Exhibition**

#### **Pre-visit Activity:**

• Where did the exhibition artefacts on view at Collins Barracks come from?

The artefacts came from the Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, Dublin 6, where they have been stored for many years. This college is one of the oldest teacher training colleges in Ireland and Britain. It traces its origins to the Kildare Place Society Training Institution, which was also called the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland. In the 1800s, it was widely known as the Kildare Place Society due to its headquarters being located in Kildare Place in central Dublin.

The Kildare Place Society was founded in 1811 by a group of professional people and businessmen. These people basically wanted to provide education for the poor in Ireland. We know about the work of the Kildare Place Society because it left many records behind, such as yearly reports and correspondence between its schools. These records are now kept at the Church of Ireland College of Education, which has some close historical links with the original Society.

From 1811 onwards, the Kildare Place Society gathered money from individuals and the Government and set up schools for the poor. They also published a large number of schoolbooks. Private contributions and the receipt of government grants from 1816 enabled the Society to begin to build a Model School that could be used for training teachers (see PowerPoint Slide 19). The Society also began to give grants towards building and running schools in other parts of Ireland. The Society contributed to teachers' salaries and sent out school inspectors to the schools it supported. By 1825, the Society had supported 1,490 schools, containing around 100,000 pupils and had already trained 207 teachers (Parkes, 1984).

At the exhibition in Collins Barracks, you will see examples of some of the Kildare Place Society schoolbooks and library books from the early 1800s as well as some of the reading and spelling charts published and used in the schools of the Society. You will notice a large scroll in the exhibition called the Darton Scroll (see PowerPoint Slides 11–14). No records are extant to inform us where this scroll was kept or who used it, but it was obviously for children and placed on a roller so that the information shown could be regularly moved. You can view some pictures of farming scenes or biblical scenes that children in those days would clearly have enjoyed looking at in school.

#### **Teacher Training**

The Kildare Place Society paid great attention to teacher training that was largely influenced by the monitorial system developed by Joseph Lancaster in England. Lancaster (1778–1838) developed a monitorial method of teaching sometimes called the 'Monitorial System' or 'Lancastrian System', which was a method of educating the poor where more advanced students taught younger less advanced ones. This system allowed a small number of adult masters – and mistresses – to educate large numbers of pupils at low cost in basic and often advanced skills. From about 1798 to 1830, this system of teaching large groups using monitors was highly influential. Later it was displaced by the 'modern' system of grouping students into age groups rather than by their rate of progression.

In 1819, the Model School in Kildare Place in Dublin was ready to be opened by the Society. It had two large schoolrooms, one for boys and one for girls. Each schoolroom could hold around 400 pupils – enormous numbers by today's standards. Modest accommodation was also provided for the teachers-in-training, initially all males, who stayed for four to six weeks before being awarded a certificate of competence to teach.

## **Explanation point:**

In the pre-visit PowerPoint presentation, draw children's attention to slides that show a monitor with children standing in a semicircle. When you visit the exhibition, you will also see a picture of a small group of children being taught by a similar monitor. You can also see some badges worn by KPS monitors.

At the exhibition in Collins Barracks, you will see samples of needlework that still survive in the archives of the Society in the CICE. You will also see some needlework samples from a needlework specimen book or sampler dated 1831. Needlework was important given that only girls did needlework at that time (see PowerPoint Slides 9–10).

# **Books Published by the Kildare Place Society**

At first, spelling and reading materials were published in tablet or chart form. You will see one of these charts in the exhibition. One of the first books, *The Dublin Spelling Book* (see PowerPoint Slide 17) had a series of spelling lessons, arithmetic tables and reading passages. You will see some of these early books at the exhibition.

# **Pre-visit Activity:**

- Ask the children to look at the PowerPoint pre-visit slide of spellings with words of not more than three letters. (Slide 17)
- Ask why the spelling book was arranged in this way.

- What would it have been like to learn and recite spellings in this way?
- Would it have helped children then to become 'good spellers', do you think?

The Dublin Reading Book was published next (see PowerPoint Slide 18). Both texts stressed the importance of developing comprehension and reading skills and contained stories with an emphasis on moral education, such as 'Dishonesty Punished' and 'The Advantages of a Constant Adherence to the Truth'. Schoolbooks in areas such as arithmetic and geography were also published, accompanied by a series of some thirty maps. These also contained more advanced prose and poetry. Indeed many books included quite interesting pictures.

#### **Pre-visit Activity:**

- Ask the children to comment on what the book contained, from looking at the table of contents.
- Ask would they like to see the real books from that time.

In 1816, a cheap book department was set up which led to the development of the library of affordable readers. This was known as cheap books or chapbooks. Some texts were editions of popular tales, such as *Robinson Crusoe*, and travel or natural history books, while others were written specifically for the Society. By 1824, the Society had printed almost one and a half million books.

#### **Pre-visit Activity:**

- Ask the children do they think that was a lot of books and why so many were published.
- Why did children not buy books then in their local shop?

#### **The Darton Scrolls**

Some images in the PowerPoint slides are taken from scrolls known as the Darton Scrolls. One scroll in particular can be seen at the exhibition. Each scroll can be rolled up and when opened out, it looks like a long roll of wallpaper made of sheets of paper stuck onto a strip of calico wound around wooden rollers at either end. These were once on rollers in a wooden box. The sheets were printed by William Darton of Holborn Hill, London and are dated from the early 1820s. At one time the Darton Company produced educational games as well as books.

Some sheets from the scroll can be seen in the PowerPoint slides. The rolled-up scrolls have information on many things, including history, geography, arithmetic and Bible stories. Some of these were brightly painted. Indeed some of the painting might have been done by children who were employed as painters before the days of colour printing.

# **Specific PowerPoint Slides**

#### Slide 2: What is the exhibition on schooling about?

- Inform the children that we can collect oral evidence from people who live now (in the present time).
- We can ask people about schools going back to about 70 years ago. However, we cannot interview people about schools much further back than that.

#### Slide 4: How do we learn from museum exhibitions?

- The teacher needs to draw the children out on what they might see in a museum.
- Ask about the different types of museums that exist.
- Explain what an exhibition is.
- Ask children to imagine what an exhibition of schooling long ago might contain.
- What do they think might have survived from old schools over 100 years ago?
- Where might such old things have been kept?
- Get children talking about the image. For example, a sample of needlework taken from a book of needlework samples dated 1831 that shows work probably undertaken by teachers planning to teach needlework to girls.
- Ask the children why might needlework have been an important skill 200 years ago. Is it still an important skill for children to learn in school?

## Slide 5: Schooling in the nineteenth century

- Discuss the different types of evidence and artefacts that museums contain. For example: documents, images, paintings, real items from the time, collections of folk history, oral stories, etc.
- Focus on the exhibition and on the types of artefacts that the children will see examples of.
- What is an artefact? 'Any surviving object which has been used by people in the past for
  practical and/or aesthetic purposes is an historical artefact ... examining artefacts can help
  children to appreciate the ingenuity of people in the past.' SESE: History: Teacher
  Guidelines (1999: p81).

### Slide 9: Samples of needlework

- Using the visual images as a stimulus, ask children what they like about the needlework samples on display in this slide.
- Explain that these samples are taken from a book of samples of needlework from the 1830s.
- Do they look in good condition for objects so old?
- Would they like to see the real items at the exhibition?
- Which would they like to see most and why?
- Ask the children why it might have been important for girls to be able to do such needlework.

• Also ask why the Female Model School in Kildare Place in Dublin would have kept specimens of needlework undertaken by pupils.

#### Slide 14: The Darton Scrolls

- Ask the children what is meant by good and evil dispositions.
- Ask do they think that this scroll is old and why.
- Considering its age, do they think that it is well preserved or damaged?
- Why does evidence sometimes get damaged?

#### Slide 15: A monitor teaching other pupils

- Who were the monitors?
- Why did they teach children then?
- The Kildare Place Society approved of the monitorial system developed by Joseph Lancaster in England. Lancaster (1778–1838) was the founder of a monitorial method of teaching sometimes called the 'Monitorial System' or 'Lancastrian System', which was a method of educating hundreds of children at the one time by using one teacher and many helpers known as monitors. The teacher would choose older and more advanced pupils to teach the younger less advanced ones. This system meant that a small number of adult masters could educate large numbers of children at low cost. From about 1798 to 1830, this system of teaching was very well regarded and popular. Hence, it was probably why the Kildare Place Society trained its teachers to use this method of teaching in Ireland.
- Draw children's attention to the fact that this system was replaced by the system of grouping students into age groups. Ask children to think of good points for each system.

#### Slide 16: Monitor at work

- The image of a monitor at work is taken form a book published by the Society called *The Schoolmaster's Manual*, first published in Dublin in 1825.
- The book was used by the Society for training its teachers.

## Slide 17: The Dublin Spelling Book

- The Dublin Spelling Book was published by the Kildare Place Society.
- Ask children what they think of having a spelling lesson like this one, which teaches words of three letter or less.
- Ask children how large they think the book is?

# Slide 18: The Dublin Reading Book

Ask children what they think of the contents of this English reading book, printed in 1830.

#### Slide 19: Style of training and The Schoolmaster's Manual

• The Schoolmaster's Manual was developed to support teachers.

- Discuss the Kildare Place Society style of teaching.
- Ask the children why the pupils are in a semicircle.
- In 1819, a Model School was opened in Kildare Place, Dublin, which ran a training course for teachers.
- The school consisted of two large schoolrooms, one for boys and one for girls, each holding around 400 pupils. The pupils were divided into groups or 'drafts' for reading and writing and alternated between reading in small semicircles under the supervision of a monitor, as illustrated in the image.

# Slide 20: The Natural History of Reptiles and Serpents

- Kildare Place Society also printed reading books that had some wonderful pictures.
- Ask the children do they think this book was designed for children or for adults.
- Ask them why the Kildare Place Society published such books. Here it can be explained that
  at the time in Ireland there was not a good selection of reading material available that was
  suitable for children or affordable. The Kildare Place Society filled the gap by publishing large
  numbers of these materials.
- In 1816, the Society set up what it called a cheap book department, which led to the development of the library of affordable readers, or chapbooks. Some texts were editions of popular tales, such as *Robinson Crusoe*, and travel or natural history books, while others were written specifically for the Society.

#### Slide 21: Rustic Scenes for Infant Schools

- This selection of images called 'Rustic Scenes for Infant Schools' is taken from two rollers of images called the Darton Scrolls. They date from the 1820s.
- The rolls contain different sheets of pictures and some sheets have the name of William Darton, Holborn Hill, London, which gave the rolls their name. Beautifully hand-coloured, the rolls must have been very attractive for children.
- It is not clear which schools used these images as no information was found explaining their usage.

#### Slide 23: Slates Up!

• The book *Slates Up!* is available at The Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, Dublin 6. It is also on sale at the bookshop in Collins Barracks Museum.

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