



Archive News

NEWSLETTER OF THE IBVM, INSTITUTE & IRISH PROVINCE ARCHIVES

April 2022

Teresa Ball, Educator, Business Woman, and Friend

Dear Friends,

In this edition of our Archive News newsletter, we continue to explore Teresa Ball IBVM, her life and her many attributes. A foundress of a new branch of the IBVM and Mary Ward's Institute, educator, formidable businesswoman and friend, she occupied many roles throughout her life, which can be uncovered through her correspondence in archives dispersed across the globe.

Right: Books were presented as prizes to pupils in Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham, to encourage studies and assimilation into boarding school life. This book was presented to pupil Agnes Beirne in 1858, for 'Application' and signed by 'Mrs Ball', (Teresa Ball IBVM).

Above: MC/PHO/03/21, Sister and pupil, Loreto Killarney



Teresa Ball IBVM, Educator

The school established by Teresa Ball IBVM and her companions was based on the educational model that she had experienced as pupil and teacher in the Bar Convent, York. Some of the earliest entrants into the novitiate were also past pupils from York, strengthening the transmission of this model of education.

The curriculum established was that which suited the needs of the middle-classes, with an emphasis on a core curriculum of history, geography, arithmetic, foreign languages, 'accomplishments' with the option for extra classes in dancing and music. This curriculum reflected the concerns of middle-class society and socially acceptable tuition for women as future wives, mothers or increasingly women religious.

A high standard was expected of the pupils, encouraged by the distribution of prizes which focused not alone on academic success, but on application, general behaviour, all reinforced by positive discipline.



The same curriculum was introduced and replicated in each subsequent Loreto foundation around the globe, giving a continuity to a 'Loreto'/'Loretto' education from Canada to Mauritius.

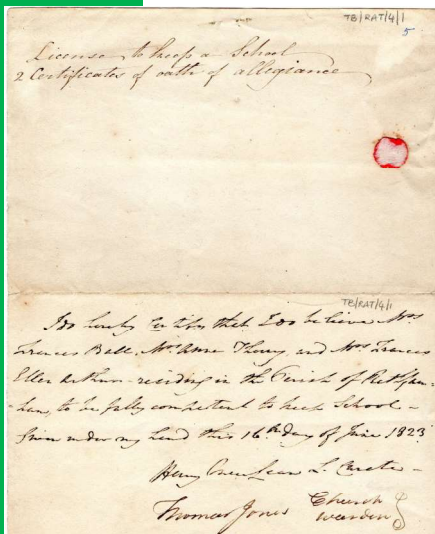
Whilst it is impossible to ascertain the experiences of all pupils, in general pupils

seemed to enjoy their years in Rathfarnham, and later Loreto foundations, sending their daughters and nieces to their alma mater.

The introduction of sodalities including the 'Children of Mary' was widely used to encourage good behaviour and devotional practices which many pupils maintained throughout their lifetimes.

In 1846, Teresa Ball IBVM, opened the first enclosed retreat for past pupils in Loreto North Great George's Street. It was well attended and soon became an annual event,

offering opportunities for past pupils to reconnect with former classmates and their shared Loreto past.



'If you have to correct a child for something, be brief and to the point, otherwise she will begin to count the panes of glass in the window.'

Teresa Ball IBVM

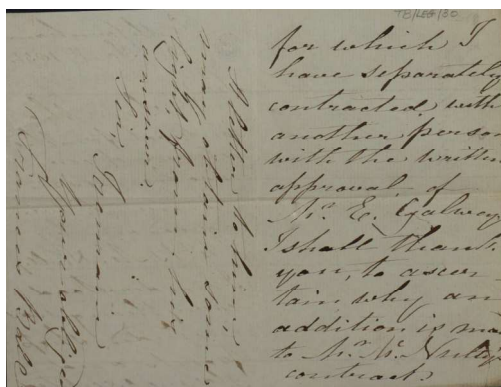
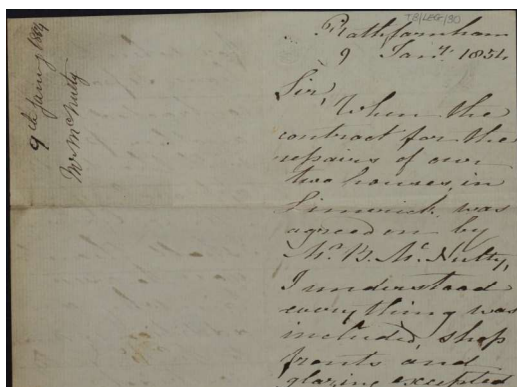


Images

Left: TB/ADM/01, license to keep a school 1822

MC/PHO/05/10, taken by Michael Corcoran IBVM

Right: TB/RAT/04/04, premium for prizes awarded to pupils, signed by Teresa Ball IBVM



Left: TB/LEG/30, letter to James Sinnott, solicitor, in 1854 regarding renovations of two houses in Limerick

Teresa Ball IBVM, Business Woman

The daughter of a prominent businessman and merchant, Teresa Ball was familiar with business and commercial transactions. Files of Teresa's correspondence reflect her keen business mind, eye for detail and grasp of finances and property management.

James Sinnott, was engaged as solicitor, and worked with other business agents dispersed throughout the country. Property and farm management drew her particular attention, with a careful attention to detail. In January 1854, Teresa wrote a series of letters to Sinnott regarding renovations on two properties in Limerick city. She provided specifications for the renovations and requested that timber from the Co. Galway convent in Lough Cooter be valued. Two months later she queried the receipt of an invoice for plastering work completed in the buildings. Invoices were not simply accepted and paid on receipt!

Many Loreto convents involved the purchase of substantial houses and their accompanying demesnes the large tracts of agricultural land were important both as assets and in providing food and an additional source of income for communities and school. Excess produce and the offspring of livestock were sold; farm labourers and managers were employed to oversee the management of the land and farms.

Teresa Ball was a Dublin woman, born into a wealthy middle class, merchant family, and we can safely assume no prior knowledge or experience of managing estates or land. From the occupation of Rathfarnham House and demesne (Loreto Abbey) in 1822, Teresa oversaw the improvement of the grounds and land; the orchard was restored from its 'bog' like state, garden walls were raised and

farming commenced. Trees were felled in spring 1846, in June, grass on the expansive lawns were "mowed and removed", and the "hay rick" was completed by the 14th of July. There are almost annual references in the Annals, (compiled by Teresa Ball), to the all-important saving of the hay which secured winter fodder for livestock, along with the weeding of fields, creation of drains to provide access to fresh water for the Abbey dairy herd and removal of trees. The planting of potatoes, a staple food of not only the poorer classes, was regularly recorded, and indicates the importance of the farm to the welfare and income of the community.

Attention to detail and the economic viability of the foundation and community was not just limited to Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham, where Teresa Ball resided. She took a keen interest in the management and financial welfare of



all other foundations. In 1858, she gave detailed instructions to the Superior in Loreto Manchester on how best to arrange a 'Bazaar' to raise funds for the community, and in 1855, Conception Lopez, Superior, Loreto Bray apologised after sending the 'wrong' pig to the farm in Rathfarnham, and offered to exchange the animals if Teresa Ball wished!

Teresa's financial acumen and business astuteness ensured that by her death in 1861, the Institute was on a sound, financial footing, and her appointees as Superiors well trained and aware of their responsibilities in providing for and maintaining their communities, pupils and employees.

Image MC/PHO/05/09, Sisters in the grounds of Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham



Teresa Ball IBVM, Friend

Throughout her lifetime, Teresa Ball had 'missioned' many woman to establish and support new 'Loreto' foundations in Ireland and across the globe. She had little hope of seeing those who departed for international missions again, and described herself as the mother of the Maccabees as she watched the first boat departing Dublin Bay for India in 1841. Teresa established a regular

correspondence with each Superior and community, creating a lasting bond with Rathfarnham. Letters crisscrossed the oceans in a flurry of correspondence, sharing news, updates, advice and support, and for many, Teresa remained 'My dearest Irish Mother'.

Poor weather conditions and the many demands placed on Teresa, sometimes resulted in delays in the receipt of correspondence from Ireland. Letters with news of communities, Sisters, and new ministries were eagerly awaited and welcomed. Austin Hearne, Superior of Mauritius, wrote of the pleasure the arrival of a letter from Teresa

brought to the community, 'Your valued and welcome letters are always received...with delight and love'. Teresa used letter writing to full advantage, filling her letters with updates on the trials and successes of other missions and ministries, citing the examples of new ministries in education to encourage others to broaden the horizon of their work. Aware too, of the sacrifices made particularly

by those who left Ireland, she regularly included updates on family members who were also Sisters, communities and individual Sisters known to the recipients. She encouraged free and open communication from those in her care, emphasising her perception of her role as confidante, advisor and guide.

The Bar Convent York, its community and school retained a very special place in Teresa Ball's affections. Her 'mother abode', she

maintained a lifelong correspondence with former community members and her niece, Alphonsa of Jesus Ball, who entered religious life there. She shared some of the burdens of leadership with her counterpart, Angela Brown, in York, and in 1843, she poignantly wrote from the newly established convent in Dalkey, on the Dublin coast of her physical proximity to York. 'I am nearer to you since 2nd August when our little colony, now amounting to 40, came to the sea.' Practical advice on the installation of hand-operated washing machines, preparations for undertaking a new 'free school' in York, the observance

of customs and rituals were freely shared.

Significant dates in Teresa Ball's life were recalled in York and in 1851 the community there recalled that 'Today ... is the anniversary of your leaving St Mary's. You cannot think it is forgotten here...where all your anniversaries are commemorated.' Close

bonds of friendship and sisterhood expanded between the two branches of Mary Ward's Institute.

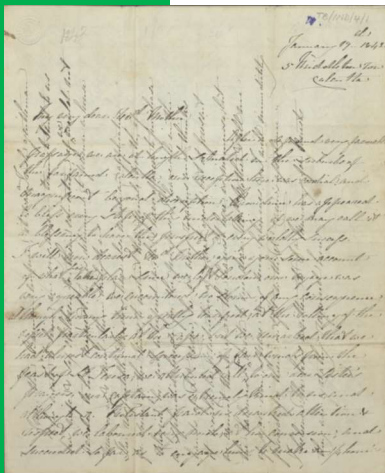
Through the nurturing of personal relationships with Sisters, careful and deliberate maintenance of regular correspondence and a spirit of openness and confidence, Teresa Ball ensured that enduring

'bonds of the most sisterly union', were established and maintained between all IBVM branch houses.

Their unity is a lasting legacy to her work in sustaining and nurturing connections and oneness.

'I am delighted to be of the least use to my loved children, above all in foreign climes'.

Teresa Ball IBVM, 1857



Images

Left: TB/IND/04/01, first letter received from newly arrived Sisters in India, January 1852

Above: MC/PHO/03/20, photograph by Michael Corcoran