

## CHAPTER TWO

### William Hanly Ball M.A., fl.1859, and Robert Thomas Gowdy, 1860-1868

In 1859, William Hanly Ball placed an advertisement in the *Belfast Newsletter* offering boarding places at *Bangor Classical and Navigation Endowed School*. (He was the son of Nicholas Hanly Ball and Anne Gilbert and was a graduate of *Queen's College*. In S.E.Long's *The Parish of Dromara: A Short History* (1979), he is named as Curate in 1870, and as Rector from 1871 until his death in 1879)

**B**ANGOR CLASSICAL AND NAVIGATION  
ENDOWED SCHOOL.  
W. HANLY BALL, MASTER.  
Mr. BALL begs to intimate that he is prepared to receive a few Young Gentlemen as Boarders. The House is delightfully situated in the town of BANGOR, which is noted as a watering place. The Education of this school is of a very superior character, embracing Classical and Modern Languages, and all branches necessary for either Professional or Commercial pursuits.  
His Terms are very moderate, and the most satisfactory references given.  
An EVENING CLASS for Navigation will commence on the 1st of NOVEMBER. 3728

*Belfast Newsletter*, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 1859.

Just a month later, however, another advertisement appeared, inviting applications for the post of Master.

**S**CHOOLMASTER.—WANTED, FOR BANGOR  
NAVIGATION SCHOOL, a Schoolmaster capable of giving a first-rate Classical and Scientific Education. The salary is £60 a-year, with a free House, and £40 guaranteed from Scholars; but a good Master may realise a much larger sum. Applications, with references and Testimonials, to be forwarded by post to GODFREY LYLE, Esq., Bangor, County Down.  
Bangor, Nov. 14, 1859. 4168

*Belfast Newsletter*, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1859.

It is not known who, if anyone, was appointed as a result of this advertisement, but the following April, another advertisement appeared in the press.

**B**ANGOR ENDOWED SCHOOL.  
Families residing at Bangor for a short time during the Summer can avail themselves of the superior Course of Instruction afforded in this School, which comprises Classics, Science, Mathematics, French, English, and Navigation.  
For terms, &c., apply to W. J. MATHEWS, at the School.  
Bangor, April 27, 1860. 1640

*Belfast Newsletter*, 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1860.

Who was W.J.Mathews? Could he be yet another 'unknown' Master, or perhaps he was merely an administrative contact? In August 1860, the School was again – or still – advertising for a Master.

COUNTY OF DOWN.  
**B**ANGOR ENDOWED SCHOOL.  
WANTED, on the 1st November next, a Master for the above School, who can teach Classics, Science, and Navigation. Salary, £60 a-year, with £40 guaranteed from Scholars; also, a good House and Garden.  
Apply to GODFREY LYLE, Esq., Bangor. 3213

*Belfast Newsletter*, 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1860.

Until 2014, the name of the first Master of *Bangor Endowed School*, was thought to be Robert T.Gowdy.

Mr.Gowdy was appointed in October after “*a competitive examination*” and he was not slow to announce his arrival in Bangor.

COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION — BANGOR ENDOWED SCHOOL, CO. DOWN.—On Saturday week, the trustees of this foundation, accompanied by examiners in languages and sciences, met at the Clerical Rooms, Arthur Street, Belfast, to select a head-master. From the large number of candidates who had sent in testimonials, including ordained graduates and other alumni, both of Trinity College, Dublin, and Queen's College, six were selected, among whom one was to be chosen by competitive examination. Mr. Gowdy, of the Coleraine Academy, turned out the worthiest competitor in all departments. In classics, he specially excelled. The endowment is a valuable one, consisting of £2,000 Three-per-Cent. stock, with a very handsome modern house and garden. The foundation originated with the late Hon. Colonel Ward, of Bangor Castle, and the fund has not yet reached its maximum. We understand the trustees have kindly allowed Mr. Gowdy very considerable latitude as to the time for entering on duty, so that he may remain among us for a considerable period, should he not get a perfectly satisfactory adjustment as to his Coleraine establishment.—*Coleraine Chronicle*.

**E**NDOWED SCHOOL—BANGOR, COUNTY DOWN.

(Founded by Bequest of the Hon. Col. WARD.)

Patron—ROBT. EDWD. WARD, Esq., Bangor Castle.

Having been appointed Head Master of the above Establishment by the Trustees, I beg to call attention to the peculiar advantages of its situation and School accommodation, &c., and to intimate that I purpose (D.V.) entering on the duties of the School on 1st Nov. next.

Prospectus, with terms, testimonials, &c., free on application at the School Residence; or, at the Office of this Paper.

R. T. GOWDY, Head Master,  
(Proprietor and late Principal of the Coleraine Academy.)

15th October, 1860.

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*Belfast Newsletter*, 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1860.

Mr.Gowdy had been Proprietor and Principal of *Gowdy's Academy* or *Coleraine Academy*, which he had founded in 1846. It seems that in 1854 he became Headmaster of *Linenhall Street Academy* in Belfast, although he appears to have resumed some connection with his former school in 1860 and advertised that the *Academy* would resume on 1 August 1860. However *Coleraine Academical Institution* was inaugurated in July 1860, and the 1861 *Directory* states that the *Academy* was no longer in existence, as Mr.Gowdy had gone to be principal of *Bangor Endowed School*.<sup>1</sup> He remained as Principal of what was sometimes referred to as '*the Endowed Classical Boarding and Day School, Bangor*' until 1868. In 1862, he was also acting as Secretary of the *Bangor Gaslight Company*. That year he announced that a M.Chevalier would open French classes on 1 May.<sup>2</sup> The following year, *Griffith's Valuation Survey* described the school property as: *No.70 Main Street: Endowed School, Offices and Yard*. It was valued at £24, with gardens of two roods and twenty-three perches, (larger than the site originally granted), valued at £2, leased from Viscount Bangor.<sup>3</sup>

An undated advertisement, which featured a drawing of the Old Schoolhouse, and which listed Mr.Gowdy as Principal, and Viscount Bangor and R.E.Ward as Patrons, gives some details about Mr.Gowdy, the school curriculum and the successes of pupils. Of Mr.Gowdy, the advertisement claimed that he was,

*'chosen at competitive examinations among ordained graduate and other alumni of the Queen's University and of Trinity College Dublin; First Honour man in both Logic and Moral Philosophy in a class of more than eighty students in Belfast College'*.

A varied curriculum was offered, subjects including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, German, English Literature, Elocution, Geometry, Algebra, Geography, Astronomy, Penmanship, Navigation, Natural Philosophy, Mensuration, Arithmetic, Book-keeping, Music, History and Antiquities, Logic and Theology, '*etc.etc.*'.

Pupils were, claimed the advertisement, prepared for a variety of careers in '*Naval, Military, Civil, Nautical and Commercial life, as well as Scholastic Pursuits, The Arts, Painting, Medicine, Law, The Church and Indian Appointments*'. Mr.Gowdy was prepared to send a Prospectus with testimonials, list of references etc., free on application, and the advertisement claimed that,

*'Pupils have succeeded (always on first trial) at Addiscombe<sup>4</sup>, the Horse Guards, Admiralty, Dublin Castle etc. Reports furnished of the marked success of pupils in Dublin, London, Edinburgh, Paris, Belfast, Cork and Galway Universities. Pupils have gained first rank divinity, science, classical and medical prizes, diplomas, degrees, bursaries, scholarships and medals'*.

The terms for Boarders were stated to be '*Thirty guineas per annum, payable quarterly in advance*'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rev.T.H.Mullin, *Coleraine in Modern Times* (1979), p.100.

<sup>2</sup> *Belfast and Province of Ulster Directory, Volume 5* (1861); *Belfast Newsletter*, 28 April 1862.

<sup>3</sup> *The Primary Valuation of Ireland, Parish of Bangor*, 1863 (known as *Griffith's Valuation*). (P.R.O.N.I., VAL 2B).

<sup>4</sup> The *East India Company's Military Seminary* was established in January 1809 at Addiscombe Place, near Croydon. Its purpose was to provide up to two years' general and technical education for youths of between fourteen and eighteen who had been nominated for officer cadetships in the Company's forces. Attendance at Addiscombe was compulsory for artillery and engineer cadets, optional for cavalry and infantry cadets. After the demise of the Company in 1858, Addiscombe was converted into the Royal India Military College and continued to function till its closure in August 1861.

<sup>5</sup> A photograph of the Advertisement is in the author's possession.



Perhaps the School's first Prospectus  
(From the author's collection)

How any school could have attained such a remarkable degree of success inside its first ten years is hard to understand, so perhaps the successes mentioned referred more to Mr. Gowdy's teaching record, than to the pupils of *Bangor Endowed School*. However, one of his pupils, Henry Montgomery, speaking in 1912, 'looked back with pleasure to the times when he was under the guidance of Mr. Gowdy', from whom he had 'received a large part' of his education. He recalled the time when the original school was being built [sic] and he had attended the day classes 'and in later years, the evening classes'.<sup>6</sup>

## CONTROVERSY

However, Mr. Gowdy's running of the school did not meet with universal approval, for on 7 June 1862, John Dinnen, of Arthur Street Belfast, wrote to Messrs. MacDonnell & Gernon, Secretaries to the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests in Dublin, to complain that,

*'There is no class of free scholars admitted . . . nor in fact is [sic] there any such classes taught as intended by the founder, whose intentions have been entirely frustrated in this respect, as the inhabitants derive no advantage whatever from the institution, and but few are aware of their rights to the enjoyment of the intended privilege. No scholar is admissible for less than 10s 6d per quarter, and for extra classes, extra charges are made. . . . I need not inform the Commissioners how much such a school as that contemplated would be appreciated in a small maritime town like Bangor, with no traffic save that afforded by nautical avocations'.*

Along with the letter, Mr. Dinnen sent extracts from the schoolmaster's last circular, which included what were described as 'eulogiums on the advantages possessed by the institution as a medium for successful examinations', and details of Terms:

<sup>6</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 6 December 1912.

*'Boarders, £7-10s per quarter in advance, or £8-15s on Credit. Day Pupils, Junior English - £0-15-0, Senior do., with Geography and Junior Mathematics, per quarter – £1-0-0, Do., do., with Senior Mathematics, do. - £1-5-0, Do., do., with Classics and Mathematics, do. - £1-10-0, French being a separate branch will be 10s 6d extra. Private tuition, Hebrew, &c, by special agreement.'*

The Commissioners' reply, which was published at the same time, said that they were,

*'disposed to conceive that elementary education and instruction in navigation should be given gratuitously. . . . The Master and Trustees appear to be anxious to give proper effect to the charitable object, and they accordingly posted up a notice in the town of Bangor'.*

That notice read:

*'Bangor Endowed School. Founded by the late Right Honourable Colonel Ward. The Trustees beg to call the attention of parents and guardians in Bangor and neighbourhood to the fact that, in accordance with the charter of the school, Mr.Gowdy, the Headmaster, is prepared to give instruction in navigation and kindred branches, to boys intended for seafaring life, at the low rate of 10s per quarter. And on application by parents or others not able to pay the full fee, a reduction will be made if the Trustees consider the case a bona fide one. Dated 8 August 1862.'*<sup>7</sup>

Despite the comment in 1931, that *'many a sturdy sea captain had his first lessons in Navigation within its walls'*<sup>8</sup>, it is not clear for how long the teaching of Navigation continued, or indeed whether anyone ever took up the Trustees' offer, but in 1888, when the Educational Endowment Commissioners were making enquiries, prior to the framing of a new Scheme, Hon.Somerset Ward J.P. stated that, *'so long as I have known the school, it has not been used for navigation.'*<sup>9</sup>

### **BANGOR AND BEYOND IN THE 1860s**

While Robert Gowdy was building up his new school in Bangor, the character of Bangor underwent considerable change. Declining employment led to discontent with Bangor Corporation and so, as provided for by the Town Improvements (Ireland) Act, 1854, a meeting of inhabitants took place in 1862, leading to the election of the first Town Commissioners in 1864. That year an up-to-date paddle steamer, *PS Erin*, was introduced on the Belfast to Bangor route and the following May, the *Belfast, Holywood and Bangor Railway* was opened. The growth of a commuter population in Bangor was encouraged by the provision of free railway tickets to the proprietor (or tenant) of houses built within one mile of the station. Tickets for boat and train were interchangeable. Although some grand houses had been built on Seacliffe Road during the 1850s, and bathing at Pickie Rock became popular, it was not until the 1880s that *'the chastely designed villas'* were *'overspreading the landscape'* and *'The Bangor Season'* was in full swing. The 1860s saw the establishment of David McKenzie's embroidery and lace manufacturing business, wells being sunk at Ballymagee Street, Union Street (Holborn Avenue) and Main Street, the revival of the *Ulster Yacht Club*, which acquired its *'Royal'* prefix in 1870, and the building of the *Cottage Hospital* on Hamilton Road.<sup>10</sup>

The 1860s also saw the death of Prince Albert, the American Civil War, the opening of the Suez Canal and, nearer home the abortive Fenian Rising, which prompted W.E.Gladstone to disestablish the Church of Ireland and introduce the first of several Land Acts in his bid to *'pacify Ireland'*. At the same time, Europe's cultural heritage was being enriched by, among others, Dickens, Tennyson, Tolstoy, Cezanne, Monet, Rodin and Wagner, while Joseph Lister had

<sup>7</sup> *The Banner of Ulster*, 28 October 1862. (P.R.O.N.I., D/4/1).

<sup>8</sup> 'Memories of Long Ago', in *County Down Spectator*, 5 September 1931.

<sup>9</sup> *Educational Endowments Commission*, 1888.

<sup>10</sup> Grenfell Morton (ed.), *Victorian Bangor* (1972), pp 21, 26-28; Marcus Patton, *Bangor: An Historical Gazetteer* (1999), pp 12-13; W.G.Lyttle, *The Bangor Season* (1885), pp 30-32; G.H.Bassett, *County Down Guide and Directory* (1886), p.289.

discovered an effective antiseptic and Gregory Mendel had enunciated his law of heredity. Meanwhile Alfred Nobel's production of dynamite and Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* were pointing the way towards the twentieth century.

Mr. Gowdy was still Principal of the School in 1868<sup>11</sup>, but later that year he opened *The Ulster Select School (Collegiate and Commercial)* in Belfast.<sup>12</sup>

**THE ULSTER SELECT SCHOOL**  
(COLLEGIATE AND COMMERCIAL),  
3, Chichester Street (corner of Donegall Square East),  
CONDUCTED BY  
**R. T. GOWDY,**  
Graduate of Belfast Royal College, and Student of  
London University;  
Assisted by highly-qualified Masters.  
To be OPENED (D.V.) 1st AUGUST proximo.  
**P**ARENTS AND GUARDIANS DESIROUS  
of securing for their Sons or Wards the INTER-  
MEDIATE EDUCATION, so confessedly a want  
of the day, will do well to call and inspect the ar-  
rangements of THE ULSTER SCHOOL, where  
Education of the best sort, fitting youth either for  
College, the Competitive Public Examinations, or  
Commercial pursuits, will be given on moderate  
terms.  
Prospectuses may be had free, on application at  
the School-building, containing highest references,  
and detailing instances of the marked and often  
brilliant success of Mr. G.'s pupils in the various  
Colleges of the Empire, the Learned Professions,  
and all the great public departments—Civil, Mili-  
tary, Naval, and Commercial.  
A PREPARATORY SCHOOL will be orga-  
nised in a short time, conducted by an eminently-  
qualified and experienced Lady Teacher.  
A few Boarders will be received. Terms, 40  
Guineas per annum.  
3, Chichester Street, Belfast,  
July 14, 1868. 6800

*Belfast Newsletter*, 15 July 1868

<sup>11</sup> *Belfast and Province of Ulster Directory*, Volume 8 (1868).

<sup>12</sup> *Belfast Newsletter*, 15 July 1868.