

[Hazelwood IC]

Newtownabbey

I went out to the hazel wood

Because a fire was in my head

'The Song of the Wandering Aengus' W. B. Yeats

Celtic tradition has assigned a tremendous importance to hazel woods. It was from the River Boyne that the young hero Fionn MacCumhail pulled the great salmon of knowledge; knowledge gained from the nuts of the nine hazel trees that surrounded its source.

Nestling on the shadowy slopes of Cavehill, lies the remnant of a once great hazel wood. When a group of parents met in 1985 to create a school that would bring wisdom and enlightenment to the darkness of North Belfast torn apart by sectarian struggles; the name Hazelwood seemed to encapsulate their dream of a school whose staff and pupils would shine like beacons and be rooted in a wisdom that would spread far and wide.

It was far from the dreamy slopes of Cavehill that the Hazelwood College was to have its beginnings. Having been refused permission to lease the Old Throne Hospital site and The Graymount Girl's site, it was proposed to open the school in the old Co Op building in York Lane. Pupils, teachers and parents all chipped in with the cleaning and on 2nd September 1985 the school opened.

[<http://www.hazelwood.org.uk/>]

With more and more pressure being brought to bear on government and ever increasing support from politicians, Hazelwood began to grow. It was not until the following year that the school relocated to its permanent home, the Graymount Girls school site, at the bottom of the Whitewell Road. This was no state of the art school. A dilapidated Georgian manor stood among a hotch potch of derelict 1950's school buildings. That indomitable Hazelwood spirit shone through and soon there was a vibrant school of over 400 pupils. It was only a matter of time and a small matter of £9 million to create the Hazelwood we have today. Gone are the old tired classrooms that served Graymount so well replaced with state of the art classrooms. Graymount house has been lovingly restored to its former glory and sits at the very heart of the school, a reminder of both our past and our future.

As we approach our thirtieth year, we have student population of over 900. While we were set up to bring together pupils from both the Protestant and Catholic communities, our light has continued to shine so brightly that children from many different ethnic groups and pupils with a wide variety of educational needs have all been attracted to come and study at Hazelwood College, creating a richness of diversity which sums up what Hazelwood is about.
