

'The Forgotten Photograph...'

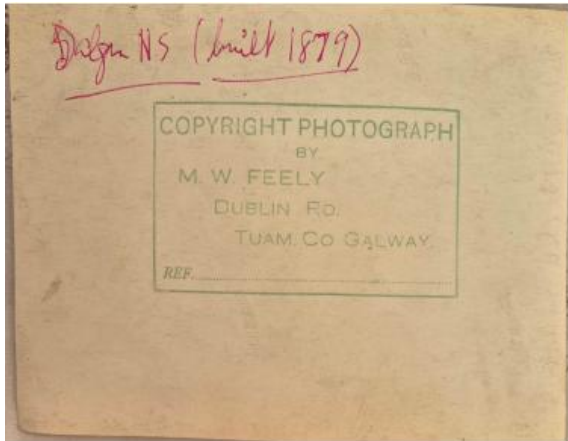
As the idiom goes, 'A picture paints a thousand words', this could never be so true, as to the relevance, of a black and white photograph, recently discovered among 'The Tuam Herald' archives, which has kindly been donated to Milltown Heritage Group, by Mary Burke of 'The Tuam Herald'. This neat photograph, approximately 4 inches by 3 inches, is of a splendid, roadside view, of the old, Dalgin National School, Dalgin, Co. Galway. Intrigue abounds, as to the origin and creation date of this treasured item, as the only information accompanying it, is a handwritten, red biro inscription on the back of the photograph stating, 'Dalgin N.S. built 1879'. It also contains on the back, a green ink stamped inscription which reads, 'Copyright photograph by M. W. Feeley, Dublin Rd, Tuam, Co Galway Ref. ... '

The photograph suggests that it was taken during the winter months, perhaps on a clear, bright and frosty morning, as the neighbouring trees are bare of leaves and strong sunlight is evident from the shadows cast by the building. A roadside footpath is visible in the foreground, adjacent to a capped stone wall and an entrance marked by two stone pillars leading to the small porch of the school. In the examination of the general upkeep of the building as captured, it shows relative neatness and no major dilapidation of the exterior, apart from the walls, which appear to be well worn. The roof is slated, there is guttering, a down pipe and a strong gable chimney sits proudly on the right-hand side. There are four full glass-paned windows visible also indicating at least two main classrooms.

Whether or not the school building was actually in operation at the time of the photograph is impossible to tell. It is known that the 'new Dalgin school' opened in 1955, however no corresponding photograph exists showing the 'new school' so, possibly, this photograph was taken to capture the existence of the old building, prior to its demise and the opening of the new school. An almost hidden, subtle clue, as to the possible age of the photograph, is located on the back, where it states in faint print, 'Agfa Brovira'. This indicates the photographic paper on which it was printed; that type of paper was most commonly used in the mid to late 1960s. We may therefore assume that the photograph was taken around this time. Alas, the old Dalgin school, has today, almost completely disappeared from view, having camouflaged itself into the immediate surrounding landscape, of thick ivy, bushes, brambles and trees, present on the site.

The name plaque of the school, can be seen in the photograph, where it once took pride of place on the entrance porch of the building. It is currently exhibited outdoors, in the Milltown Heritage Park. An interesting comparison may be made, as to the year stated on the plaque, it reads, 'Dalgin Male National School. 1877' however as mentioned, 'built 1879' is handwritten on the back of the photograph. Either way, despite the two-year discrepancy, the building served as a school for almost 80 years. In October of 2025, a special and unique event took place in Milltown when a committee of past pupils from Dalgin N. S. decided to celebrate the memory and existence of their former school. A Mass of Thanksgiving was held in St. Joseph's Church, Milltown, where all associated with the Dalgin schools were remembered. The evening culminated, with a book launch at a function in the Ard Ri House Hotel, Tuam.

Returning finally to the photo itself. Milltown Heritage Group are very grateful for having received it from the donor, as it complements wonderfully, the story of the development of primary education in our parish community and greatly enhances, our overall collection of information presented, regarding parish school records in general. The many hundreds of children who, down through the decades, passed through the school, undoubtedly could never have imagined that their school would render such intrigue in modern times! This 'forgotten photograph' has now become, a preserved treasure! Milltown Heritage Group. June 2026.



Back of photograph



Original Name Plaque



Old Dalgin National School