

## Christmas at the Courthouse

Santas visiting times will be December 7<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>. Monday – Friday at 5pm & 7pm. Saturday & Sunday at 1pm, 3pm & 5pm. Phone (0035374) 41733 to book.

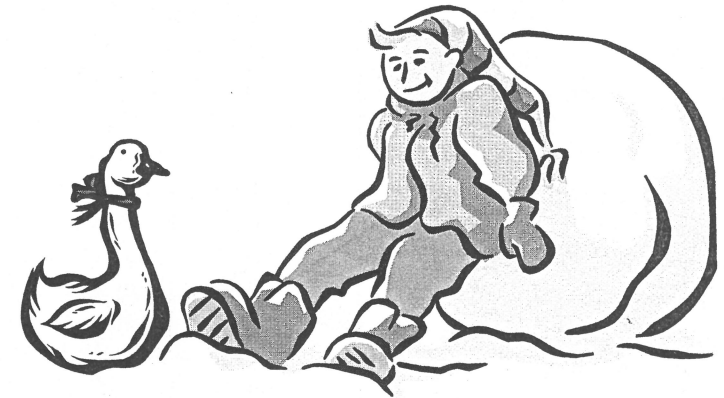


### The Elves are Here!

The first of Santa's helpers arrived at the Old Courthouse in Lifford this week. "It's always a rush at this time of year and its such a big job that we like to get started early" said Scrunch, one of the senior pressie wrappers. Snowflake, another Elf, added "The first thing we have to do is to get the Toy Factory up and running". As soon as they landed the Courthouse was a frenzy of activity as they cleared out some of the downstairs cells to set up their operational H.Q. It's here that all the toys will be made & wrapped so that they're ready for Santa's big day. When we asked Breezy what Mr Claus was up to these days she said " Oh, first he took Rudolph & his friends to the vet for a check up. Then he got the sleigh re-painted. Now he's having practice runs with the reindeer team in Lapland. He's very fussy you know – a real professional". So, its all systems go at the Courthouse these days, although Santa won't be here for a while. He plans to check on things next month and if you want to see him and his elves he'll be visiting the Courthouse between **December 7<sup>th</sup> – December 19<sup>th</sup>**. To set the scene we have arranged with the **Ramblin Scallywags Puppet Theatre** to entertain us with their special 'Christmas Carol' show. **But remember you'll have to book. If you want to see the show, meet Santa, receive a present & visit the Elves in the Toy Factory, the times are Monday – Friday at 5pm & 7pm. Saturday & Sunday at 1pm, 3pm & 5pm. Phone (0035374) 41733 to book.**



Christmas is coming and the geese are getting fat,  
Please put a penny in the old man's hat;  
If you habn't got a penny, a ha'penny will do,  
If you habn't got a ha'penny, then God bless you.



**Free Issue**

Lifford Association for Tourism, Commerce & Heritage Ltd.

Listening to older people it appears from two possible concepts. Firstly, the night's sport was to lift the sorry spirits of the emigrant and 'convey' them more happily on their journey. Alternatively, many of the party would stay on in the house until the next morning when the journey would begin. They would then walk in convoy some part of the road with the emigrant. (From 'Between the Jigs and Reels' by Caoimhin MacAoidh)]



James McCauley

## THE AMERICAN CONVOY

[Intro: In our first part of James McCauley's recollections of emigration to America at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which we published in our last Newsletter, we gave the title 'The American Wake'. As far as Donegal is concerned this description is inaccurate as the following explains:

CONVOY – A gathering of friends and neighbours for singing, dancing, playing tunes, story telling, games etc. which took place on the night before a person left the locality to emigrate. This term is used throughout Donegal and in most Ulster counties in place of the more southern term American Wake.

“When there would be more than one leaving the same townland or district the rule was that there would be a gathering of people in every house and they used to go from one house to the other if they were any way convenient to each other; and they generally spent a number of hours in each house back and forth. Sometime before morning then if there were three leavin' we'll say, they all would come to the one house, and all the people would follow them and they would remain there until they all left together. They always had the same convoy if they were leavin' for Canada or Australia or any far off country, but I have never seen or heard of a convoy for people going to England or Scotland or any country near home. Perhaps a few neighbours might call in to see the person leavin' for Scotland or England, but

## Harpe's Bar

Main Street  
Lifford

074 41628



December

Sun 1<sup>st</sup> Tricia

Fri 6<sup>th</sup> Dave Wilder

Sat 7<sup>th</sup> Nighthife

Fri 13<sup>th</sup> Fully Booked

Sat 14<sup>th</sup> S. Gallagher  
Sun 15<sup>th</sup> Streebife

Fri 20<sup>th</sup> Philis

Sat 21<sup>st</sup> Kenneth/  
Undiscovered

Soul

Sun 22<sup>nd</sup> Joe Quigley

Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Fresh Vibes

Sat 28<sup>th</sup> David  
Wilder

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Orders for Turkeys, Hams

and Fresh Ducks now being

taken.

Merry Xmas & Happy

New Year to you all.

## The Courthouse Restaurant



Christmas Parties

During December The

Courthouse Restaurant is

available for Christmas

parties. Book now for a 5

course Christmas Meal at only

€20.00 per person. Wine

available or bring your own

drink. To book ring 074

41733.

cries for 'Water, for God's sake some water', made his heart bleed. He also told the sad story of two brothers who died on 6<sup>th</sup> July from dysentery and were consigned to the deep ocean with their remaining brother their only mourner. He was also suffering from the same complaint and succumbed to it on the 9<sup>th</sup> - leaving two orphans. One was only 7 years old and seemed quite oblivious to his loss and just proud that he had his father's coat to cover him. How many poor souls were cast into the sea like this? It is believed that 20,000, one in five, died on the coffin ships during 1847, but this is only an estimate. With so many dying on board and being cast into the deep, we will never know the true number. Between the census of 1841 and the census of 1881, the population of Ireland declined to barely half of what it had been.

For those who may not have had the fare to the 'New World', there was the workhouse; whole families disappeared through these gates never to be seen again. During my research I came across an article that told of 4,000 female orphans, aged between 14 and 18 years, who had agreed to emigrate to South Australia between 1848 and 1850. Of these 4,000 over 100 came from the Donegal area. They were despised by the locals in Sydney and Melbourne who called them "damned whores, doormats of the

*Western world, dirty brutes, professed public women and barefooted little country beggars."* The Captain and Matron of one of the ships recorded that "they were notoriously bad in every sense of the word, violent and disorderly, obscene and profane in their language, many of them prostitutes and many of them not orphans at all." On the contrary, all of these girls had lost one or both parents during the worst years of the Famine and were mostly from small towns, so it is difficult to believe the comments made about them.

*Lists of the girls who left from Donegal can be found in the 'Donegal Annual' No.53. 2001' and 'The Great Famine in South-West Donegal 1845-1850' by Pat Conaghan. Other References: Robert Whyte's 1847 'Famine Ship Diary'.*

*'The Irish Famine, A Documentary History' by Noel Kissane.*



the people of the townland or district wouldn't come in, as they would do if the person were going to America or some other far off land.

I think the reason for that was because there was always the chance that the person going to England or Scotland wouldn't be too long away - most of them would come home in a couple of years at the longest but the person going to America, Australia or Canada was going far away, and the chances were that I might never return as happened in thousands of cases.

These convoys must be in vogue a long time. They are going since I remember and long before it, because I heard my parents and grandparents talk about them away in the distant past. They are not so much the custom now. People are used to leavin' home and comin' and goin' at every turn about and things are travellin' fast and at any time that a person takes a notion of comin' home it doesn't matter where he or she is, they can come from the ends of the earth in a matter of hours if they have the money. A few people still call in to see the people that are leavin', and an odd one of them still travel around to leave their neighbours good bye and to let them know what day they are leavin', but there are never any big gatherings or big nights the same as was goin' in my young days. Indeed the custom is more or less dying out for the past

thirty years, but before that time, as I have said, it was the common custom all over the countryside. These customs had their good and bad points. It was nice to see the people gathered but it was hard on the creatures leavin' home. They were kept out of their beds on the night before they left and then they were leavin' home tired, sleepy and heart broken and sometime after they reached the other side it took them a while to pick up before going to work.

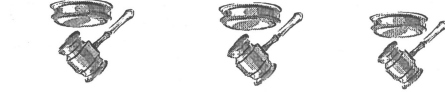


Songs were sung surely at these gatherings and very often sad ones, and very often the singer would take the person who was leavin' by the hand and after a few verses the next thing would happen, especially if they had a few drinks, would be that both would be in tears, and after a short time nearly everybody at the gatherin' would be cryin'.

I heard about one man who sang a song in the mornin' before he left. He come up an' he put his back to the kitchen fireplace, and started a song. And the song was --"The Ship that will never return"- I don't remember the words of the song, but I know that was the song that he sung. It was a sad song, and he was

a good singer and made a good job of it. He left everybody in tears, and it seems that he knew he himself that he wouldn't return, and neither he did. He died in America, and I heard people who knew him say that he died of a broken heart".

Typed by Bernie Kerr, on work



HEAR YE! HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

In our last issue we dealt with the building of the Courthouse in Lifford and the significance of the architect, Michael Priestley, in the North West. This time we will turn our attention to the pomp and ceremony which surrounded the activities at the Courthouse. The following extract is based on an article by Seamus Ua Domhnaill which appeared in the Strabane Carnival booklet (1960). It gives us a flavour of what it was like when the court was in session at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

"For a day or two before the opening of the Assizes all available

public remained at a respectful chamber. Police saw to it that the lordships alighted and proceeded with solemn judicial dignity to their fanfare was sounded as their the dickey and opened the door. A liveried footman jumped down from coach drew up at the entrance, a of District Inspectors. When the of the County Inspector and a couple rigid attention under the critical eyes they stood with chins held high in ranks in front of the Courthouse, and helmets had been drawn up in two the constabulary in their spiked Forty or fifty sturdy constables of behind provided an escort.

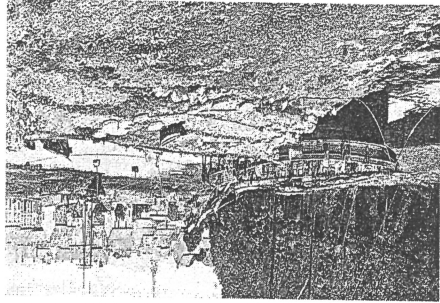
Alexander Weir.

accommodation in Lifford was taxed to bursting point as Court officials, barristers, solicitors, jurymen, police and litigants sought lodgings for the three or four days over which the sittings usually lasted. Two judges travelled the circuit, one handling criminal proceedings while the other dealt with actions of equity. The latter cases were heard in the smaller courtroom now occupied by the Library. The judges and their personal staff stayed at Dunboy House, then owned by Mr Alexander Weir.

At a quarter to eleven each morning a gleaming black coach, drawn by four fine-stepping horses, bore the bewigged judges in their ermine trimmed robes to the Courthouse. The High Sheriff rode with them, and mounted police in front and

for cooking'. Maybe this was the case on some ships, but in many it wasn't. With most of the people in bad health before they started the journey, the lack of nutrients over a long period of time and the lack of a medical check before the ships departure meant that it wasn't long before the journey took it's toll. Many would not have been at sea before and seasickness would have only helped disease set in quicker.

A ship that hit the headlines in 1846 was the *Danube*, which departed from Donegal Town for Nova Scotia in July, within 24 hours the passengers were put on short allowance of water, only two quarts per day, instead of three as provided by law. There were no provisions on board for the passengers. The contract tickets issued to the passengers by the *Danube* stated that they should receive from the vessel three and half pounds of bread or biscuit weekly, with other provisions. The *Danube* landed on Partridge Island, New Brunswick, in a very wretched state, and many of them with fever, from starvation and want of water. One young woman died on the Island of fever; the rest of the passengers, though much debilitated, recovered slowly. The master of the ship, Captain Alexander McNaughton, was summoned, charged and fined.



'The Harbour, Donegal Town'

Typus soon made its presence felt among the passengers on many ships. 'Ship fever' or 'road fever', as it was more commonly known, was easily passed on by body lice, which was not fully realised at the time. Many people appeared healthy but would just fall down with fever at any time during the voyage. Those who did make the journey without illness were lucky, but unfortunately the fever could come on them at any time and many died in quarantine in such places as Grosse Isle, Canada.

There were also insufficient medicines on board to treat the afflicted. Robert Whyte reported in his diary that the captain's wife did her best, making flour porridge with drops of laudanum in it, which gave some relief from the dysentery, but only for a short time. She was very distressed with the suffering of the people.

By 27<sup>th</sup> June, Whyte states that the moaning and raving of the patients kept him awake nearly all night and



from their areas. Included among those who contributed was Ray N.S. with a very short account of the event. At the very end, however, the little boy who collected the story writes:

“This boat can still be seen in Lough Swilly when the water is very low”. I wonder if any of our readers would know if it’s still visible?

## The Famine and Emigration



Emigration was already an established part of Irish life before the Famine came to its height in 1847. In that year over 12,000 people departed from Derry to face the perils of the ocean, rather than stay here and face starvation and disease, but for many that was going to come anyway.

It is estimated that about a million and a half emigrants from Ireland crossed the Atlantic to North America during the years of the potato blight and there was an even larger emigration across the Irish channel to Britain.

Though many ships were in good order, with the owners providing a

relatively efficient service, there were a minority in business who cut corners and tarred the entire trade with the brush of neglect, and because of them came the term ‘coffin ships’. Apart from death there can be nothing as painful as having to say goodbye to loved ones, knowing deep down that they would probably never see each other again.

With their choices limited here, whole families would say goodbye to their loved ones at such places as ‘*The Crying Bridge*’ near the grotto at the foot of Muckish mountain. Then off they would go to the port of Derry to board a ship bound for the ‘New World’ but little did some realise what was ahead of them.

From Robert Whyte’s 1847 Famine Ship Diary, I could only feel an essence of the helplessness he must have felt on the journey to America that started out from Dublin around the 30<sup>th</sup> May 1847. By the 17<sup>th</sup> of June he stated that many of the passengers were suffering from fever and dysentery, most of the water on board had gone foul due to being badly stored, and there wasn’t enough food on board to feed the ‘*hungry wretches*’.

The shipping adverts promised, ‘*The usual allowance of Fuel, Water, Medicines, and 1lb of good American Navy bread or Flour will be supplied daily to each Adult Passenger during the voyage, free of charge; also convenient apparatus*

distance from the entrances until their lordships passed through, but they were then permitted to enter the gallery and the back of the court in such number as the limited seating accommodation allowed.

To decide what cases should go for trial the Grand Jury held their deliberations in a large room upstairs. The Petty Jury, consisting of ‘twelve good men and true’, sat in two pews on the left of the judge’s bench. They were not allowed to have communication with anyone throughout the hearing and, if they failed to reach a decision before a reasonable hour, they were obliged to spend the night locked up under constant guard.

While the old gaol was in use, prisoners were brought from it via an underground passage to the cells beneath the Courthouse. A look at one of these cells will bring home the awful conditions under which unfortunate human beings were doomed to spend years of confinement. In later years the prisoners were brought from Derry gaol in a closed black coach known as the ‘Black Maria’ from which they were transferred to the cells below to await the calling of their cases.



When each man’s turn came he was taken up a narrow stairway and hustled into the dock, which was an iron-barred enclosure facing the judge’s bench. The gate of the dock was locked and the key placed in the custody of a burley policeman who stood guard there. As an additional precaution the prisoner was handcuffed to one of the two warders between whom he sat throughout the hearing. Many a man had his last look at the blue sky and the green slopes of Knockavoe as he gazed from this dock through the high window behind the judge’s chair.

It is a pity that the records of the trials and tragedies enacted within its walls have not survived. Voices that rang through its corridors in bygone days have long since been stilled – voices raised in vicious accusation, in perjured testimony, and in dramatic defence.”

## A CURIOUS OLD CUSTOM

This concerns the old bridge at Lifford and the Courthouses at both Lifford and Omagh. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century if, by the end of the Assizes, a jury could not reach a unanimous verdict in a case, they were sent to the ‘verge’ of the county to be dismissed. In the case of Tyrone and Donegal the shared ‘verge’ was the middle of the old bridge at Lifford.

This is how the news broke on Christmas Eve, 1894:

"The most painful part of the sad recital, however, is the apprehension entertained as to the safety of a man named James McLaughlin, of Buncrana, known as 'the pilot', his son, and another lad, a relative, named Wilkie. It appears these three left Buncrana in a decked fishing boat named the Rob Roy with a cargo of gravel for Letterkenny. (The cargo was to be used in the building of St Eunan's Cathedral). The vessel was observed on a bank below Ramelton, apparently abandoned. The small boat was subsequently found floating bottom upward, and the gravest fears were expressed that those on board had taken to the little boat which capsized. On the other hand, it is urged that their proximity to the Inch shore renders their safety almost certain. The most alarming feature, however, is that up to a late hour last evening no tidings had been received of them".

When two bodies were washed up on the beach, the worst fears of the families were confirmed. The third body was never found - the three James had perished.

Recently, I came across another reference to the tragedy. In 1937, the Irish Folklore Commission asked all of the National schools in the country to help collect stories

'The S.S. 'Shane's Castle' is thrown high and dry on a field near Ramelton'.

The S.S. 'Menai' smashed into Fahan Pier and left it "twisted in the most fantastic manner, looking like a huge ribbon".  
'The S.S. 'Inishowen' was thrown right on top of the pier at Ramelton'. It was reported that a vessel had gone ashore below Dunree Battery and was dashed to pieces'.  
'The gravest fears are entertained that a laden three-master has become a wreck'.



### THE 'ROB ROY'

With steamboats and schooners being tossed about like toys, small boats like the 'Rob Roy' stood little chance against the gale. I have a personal interest in the fate of the 'Rob Roy' because the crew that might were my relatives. The captain, Caher Ro James McLaughlin, was my grandfather's brother. The other crew members included his son, James (Junior) and nephew, James Wilkie of Bonagee.

"Patk. Donnelly, indicted for the murder of John Beavers, on the 1<sup>st</sup>

February last, near Dungannon. In this trial, the jury retired at twelve o'clock on Friday morning, and remained in one night, and on Saturday was removed, together with the prisoner, to Lifford bridge, on the verge of the County. Upon the arrival of Justice Torrens the jury were called over, and not having agreed, the Judge then discharged them. If a jury in Lifford or Omagh disagreed to a verdict, the presiding judge had it in his power to send them to the verge of the county to be discharged. To a Lifford jury it was no great hardship but to an Omagh one, and especially in springtime, it was certainly a severe punishment on men who, acting on their oaths, had agreed to differ. The judge who now-a-days would send a jury to this quaint spot to be released, would deserve to be crowned with cap and bells".

(If there are any legal history students out there who could explain this strange practice and when it ceased could you drop us a line?)  
*Photo of Lifford Bridge, courtesy of PRONI D/1422/A/1/19/1-39.*

### MEMORY LANE

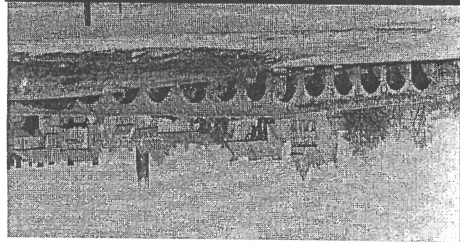
We received this lovely letter from a lady who paid us a visit a few weeks ago. She was making her own trip down memory lane and these are some of the recollections inspired by her visit to Lifford.

"I really enjoyed my call to Lifford and thank you for your kind

The account below is taken from an old, undated newspaper cutting found in the Co. Donegal archives

"The two recesses on either side of the 'curtain' wall [of Lifford Bridge] marks the dividing line between Tyrone and Donegal called the 'verge' of the counties. A curious old custom was connected with them. If a jury in Lifford or Omagh disagreed to a verdict, the presiding judge had it in his power to send them to the verge of the county to be discharged. To a Lifford jury it was no great hardship but to an Omagh one, and especially in springtime, it was certainly a severe punishment on men who, acting on their oaths, had agreed to differ. The judge who now-a-days would send a jury to this quaint spot to be released, would deserve to be crowned with cap and bells".

During our research we actually came across a case where this bizarre ceremony took place. On August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1827, The Strabane Morning Post recorded the following incident when, lock, stock and barrel, the judge, the prisoner and the jury upped-sticks and went to the middle of Lifford Bridge:



## LITTLE STORIES FROM THE COURTHOUSE

On Wednesday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1831, the following case was heard at Lifford Assizes before Chief Justice Doherty.

In the dock was Sarah Robinson, a spawife, who was accused of stealing a gold watch, value £50, the property of Sir T.C. Style of Cloghan Lodge.

'Sir T.C. Style examined. Had been from home; when he returned, found prisoner engaged in telling the fortune of a child, his daughter; found her using a tray and a piece of chalk; prisoner pretended to be dumb; had seen the watch two hours and a half before; it was in a small card box, in consequence of the glass having been broken; sent prisoner out of the house; in about half an hour after missed the watch; had prisoner brought back in a quarter of an hour after; had her minutely searched; found on her person the lid of the small box, but never recovered the watch; prisoner proved, by her extreme volubility, that she had wonderfully recovered her speech, the organs of which appeared in no respect defective.

Being found guilty, the Judge said, he would not pass sentence upon her until the following evening; and, in the meantime, perhaps, by her art, she might be able to give Sir Charles

some information as to where the watch could be found'

(Strabane Morning Post, April 5, 1831)

Note: 'Spawife' – an 18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish term for a woman who can supposedly foretell the future.

## THE STORM

GREAT DESTRUCTION IN  
THE NORTH-WEST.

MANY VESSELS DRIVEN  
ASHORE.

SHOCKING FATALITIES IN  
CO. DONEGAL.

DERRY JOURNAL,  
DECEMBER 24, 1894.

The most severe storm since the 'Night of the Big Wind', which devastated Donegal in 1839, struck on the weekend before Christmas, 1894. Inland, houses, churches and factories were stripped of their roofs, chimneys, tiles and windows. "Scarcely a house of any description escaped." At sea, ships scurried for cover as the elements whipped the waves into a boiling fury. The severity of the storm can be gauged by some of the statements issued at the time:

'Five trawlers have been driven ashore and almost smashed to matchwood'.

welcome and interest. We visited Coneyburrow House where my Aunt and cousins, the McFaddens, lived; and were welcomed by Mrs Quigley, the present owner, who very kindly brought us in for a tour and it was lovely to hear that she is trying to bring it back to its former glory. How many memories it brought back of my childhood spent there, going down the lane at the back to Russell's Sweet factory and being given a quart tin (before plastic) full of boiled sweets, bull's eyes, brandy balls, satin pillows etc. Before we returned to boarding school in Ballycastle, Mrs Snodgrass used to bake us a mouth-watering lemon sponge cake. She was a terrific cook. And, of course, the annual Garden Party in Coneyburrow for the local hospital. The matron, Mrs Heslin, was my sister Nancy's' Godmother; and my cousin, Annie Heron, was a nurse. She married John Cooney, a guard, from Co. Clare. They were my Godparents and I used to spend a lot of time in 'the Barracks'.

To get back to the Garden Party: my dear friend Kathy Bonner (who later became Mrs Danny McNamee) and I used to go around the guests with trays of little flowers to sell for funds; there would be a tennis tournament on one side of the avenue, and on the other side, on the big lawn, a whist drive would be held, while in the evening a dance would be held in the big dining

room with music by Hugh Tourish and his trio.

Kathy's parents were wonderful people. Hugh had a terrific garden and to this day I never see big broad beans without thinking of Bonners' and sitting round the fire eating big feeds of broad beans out of enamel dishes, smothered with big lumps of fresh butter and pepper. Gorgeous! John Devine and Johnny Porter were two visitors regularly to Bonners and I imagine they may have been members of the local mummers group who did the rounds at Christmas. One memory I have of Coneyburrow is my sister Nancy and myself in our nighties peering through the banisters of the back staircase, gazing in excited fear at this great display of locals chanting:

"Here comes I, wee Devil Doubt,  
If you don't give me money  
I'll burn you all out,  
Money I want and money I crave,  
If you don't give me money  
I'll put you all in your grave".

Does anyone left there now remember The Mummers, or is it another tradition gone with the years?

Please remember I was only nine when I left Lifford but what I can recall is very clear and precious. Does anyone remember the Egg Factory opposite the hospital? You could get cracked eggs for next to nothing, which was great, especially

around Christmas and Easter if your hens weren't laying. I remember loads of straw all over the floor, I suppose to make it easier to clean up breakages.

I made a phone call to Bernie McFadden last week on her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. She is the last of the family who lived in Coneyburtow, and she was really thrilled to hear of our visit to her old home and that it is in such good hands.

Well, I'm afraid that's about all I can contribute. Once again, thanks for a very enjoyable visit.

Moira Dunne (nee Heron),  
Portmarnock,  
Co. Dublin.

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Selection of Electric and Gas Appliances.

Open 10am-6pm, Closed 1-2pm

We would like to take this

opportunity to wish all our

customers a Merry Christmas and

a Happy New Year!

## Carole's Hairdressers

Phone 074 41902

Wishing All Our Customers

a

Merry Christmas and a

Prosperous

New Year from all



Main St, Lifford

Open 9.30am-5.30pm Tues-Sat

## John Duff

The Diamond, Raphoe.

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SUPPLIERS OF PRIME

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BAKING ORDERS FOR

Christmas.

WE WISH ALL OUR CUSTOMERS A

VERY MERRY XMAS AND A HAPPY

NEW YEAR

*Downward Stability to be placed in Solitary Confinement for 48 hours for swearing.*

TURKNEY'S REPORT.  
JAN. 1<sup>st</sup> 1830

*Found articles in the day room*

*belonging to Patrick Mc Dermott*

*Patrick Hanrahan and Joseph*

*Dougherty.*

OBSERVATIONS

*The miller of Patrick*

*Mc Dermott Patrick Hanrahan*

*and Joseph Dougherty to be stopped*

*for one day for having a pair of*

*scocks a caps and a dirty bag lying*

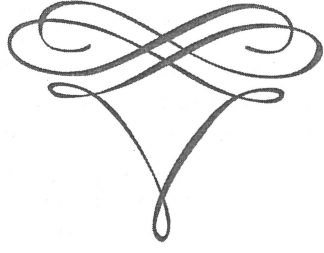
*in the day room windows.*

On the bright side, the straw in their

mattresses was only a week old,

having been changed on Christmas

EvE.



WEANS

The easiest way to convince my kids that they don't really need something is to get it for them.

JOAN COLLINS

A man soon finds out what is meant by a spitting image when he tries to feed cereal to his infant.

IMOGENE FEY

The only time a woman wishes she were a year older is when she is

expecting a baby.

MARY MARSH

I love children. Especially when they cry – for then someone takes

them away.

NANCY MITFORD

The best way to keep children home is to make the home atmosphere happy – and let the air out of the

tyres.

DOROTHY PARKER

There's one advantage to the music the younger generation goes for today, nobody can whistle it.

GLORIA PITZER

Dear Mother: I'm all right. Stop worrying about me.

17-year-old Egyptian girl in a papyrus letter, C2000 BC.





**HAPPY  
NEW YEAR!**

LIFFORD GAOL,  
DEC. 31<sup>st</sup>, 1829 – JAN. 1st, 1830.

This extract is taken from the Turnkey's Report and Governor's Observations in Lifford Gaol. It describes the misdemeanours spotted by the guards as they did their rounds and the punishments handed down by the governor, William Fenton. This usually took the form of a withdrawal of their milk ration, which was a severe blow given the already meagre diet. In some cases, the punishment was solitary confinement – not a pleasant option in the middle of winter.

**TURNKEY'S REPORT.**  
DEC. 31<sup>st</sup>, 1829.

*Patk Walker did not turn out in proper time for roll call.*

*John Gallaugher and Cornelis Kelly had not their beds properly made.*

*Chas Brown and Condy Boyle quarrelling about the fire.*

*Michael McBride did not stand in his cell door at lock up as ordered.*

*Bernard Reilly swearing.*

#### OBSERVATIONS

*The milk of Patrick Walker to be stopped for one day for not turning out in time for roll call.*

*The milk of John Gallaugher Cornelius Kelly to be stopped for one day for not having their beds properly made up.*

*Charles Brown and Connel Boyle to be placed in Solitary Confinement for 48 hours for repeatedly disturbing the ward in disputing about the fire.*



**FAREWELL, MASTER.**

**R.I.P.**

*A WINTER'S TALE*

Many years ago, before the ravaging hands of the improvers changed it, there was an old gabled house in my locality complete with a half-door, a flag-stoned kitchen, an open fireplace, and hobstones so large that a fully grown man could sit in comfort on each side of them. The house and its immediate vicinity was the Fitzwilliam Square of our locality because a herbalist lived there who had a herbal remedy for all the ills and injuries of man and beast in the district.

He also had an Irish terrier. This dog, when his master was picking the herbs through the fields on summer evenings, guarded the house from the inside. He lay on the flat top of a high box by the window. The herbalist always pulled across the curtains on this window to protect the fire from the sunlight while he was out. When the dog heard the click of the iron bolt on the gate that gave access to the house, he would rise and with his front paw, draw the curtain back to see who was coming. If it was a local, he returned to his bed on the box, but if it was a stranger, he went

to the door which the herbalist left open on these occasions and would not let the stranger inside. One day for no apparent reason, the dog left the house and did not come back.

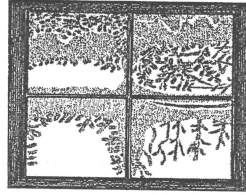
At the close of a dull winter day two years later, the old herbalist died. In the small hours of the following morning while the neighbours were keeping a vigil at the wake, they heard an unusual and insistent sound at the front door, and when someone opened it, the long lost Irish terrier entered the kitchen. The hum of conversation was replaced by a stricken silence as the dog wended his way through the kitchen and into the room where the old herbalist was laid out. He lifted his two front paws, placed them on the coffin, and looked intently on the rigid features of his dead master for a few moments.

He then dropped his paws gently on the floor and still disregarding the wondering eyes that were focused on him in the kitchen, he walked out of the front door and into the raw pitch blackness of the winter morning and was never seen or heard of in the locality again.

By the late Patrick McGettigan,  
Ballindrait,  
Lifford.

From the Strabane/Lifford Notes,  
1982.

## HIS LAST LOOK



"Oh, help me to the window,"  
The old man sadly said  
As she raised him up so gently  
Upon their feather-bed.

"Twas the kitchen of a cabin  
With a drooping roof of thatch:  
Four panes were in the window  
From where he wished to watch.  
With a blanket roll'd around him,  
In socks that were not new,  
He shuffled... while she helped him  
To bid that last adieu.

The panes were dim and frosty...  
Perhaps his eyes were sore?  
"I think," said he, "I'd see it  
More clearly from the door."  
She could not well refuse him  
Although the day was cold:  
For he hadn't long to linger  
As he was very old.

The garden and the hedges  
Were white with winter snow:

"Ach," said he, "I'm dreaming  
Of Christmas long ago."

He gazed across the valley  
And over by the town...  
Then sighed – and she sighed with  
him:

Her tears were rolling down.

"Now that will do, my darling!

This is the end o' me:

The glen and sky and river

Were all I cared to see.

"When soon I'll have to leave you  
As all of us must go,

Please pray for me, a ghra ghill!

At my grave near Castle Doe."

She led him to the bedside

Where years ago they prayed

When life was young and happy –

And neither was afraid.

For fifty years her husband –

A strong man in his day:

Now weak and wan and dying –

Fast heading for the clay.

She gently pressed his pillow:

Back drooped the dear old head:

And, ere she knew, her lover

Was sighing... silent... dead.

Upon a brown deal coffin

The soil was shovell'd slow:

Her old man now is sleeping

Beneath a wreath of snow.

By Dominic O'Kelly.

## IN SEARCH OF THE HOLY GRAIL



At the risk of

Lifford being deluged by metal

detecting treasure hunters this story

is still worth telling. It was related to

me by local man, Jim Donohoe, and

involves a medieval group known as

the Knights Templars.

Founded in 1120 AD, they were an

international military order who had

taken monastic vows to defend

Christendom. Famous for their

exploits in the Crusades, their chief

role was as an armed escort to

protect pilgrims to the Holy Land.

The Knights gradually developed

into a great, powerful army,

acquiring enormous wealth and

property. Their last crusade,

however, eventually led to their

downfall when they turned on their

own – a Christian sect called the

Cathars who were based in the south

of France. This brought them into

direct conflict with the King of

France and Pope Clement V who

finally had them suppressed in 1312

AD.

On hearing of the Pope's intentions,

the elite of the Templars and their

followers hurriedly prepared to

leave France along with 28 ships full

of treasure. Then they seem to have

vanished into thin air. Yet, we do

have one clue where they ended up

and this is re-inforced by a local

Lifford tradition that the treasure is

buried somewhere in the vicinity of  
the town. The legend goes that the  
treasure was to be taken to a place  
'where three rivers meet'. But why  
here, especially since Lifford as a  
town did not even exist at that time?  
There are several possible  
explanations. Firstly, to escape the  
combined wrath of the King and the  
Pope, it would seem sensible to get  
as far away as possible and you  
don't get much further west than  
Donegal. Secondly, there would  
have been two internationally  
known places of pilgrimage in this  
area. One that is still visited, would  
have been Lough Derg. However,  
there is another possible destination,  
one which would have also been  
internationally recognised,  
especially by such as the Knights  
Templars. That place was the  
ancient Abbey and monastery at  
Clonleigh – the sanctuary of St  
Lugadius or St Louis. Apart from  
being a simple place of prayer it was  
also an established theological  
centre of learning and with the Foyle  
navigable up as far as Lifford, what  
better place to bring 28 ships filled  
to the gunnels with golden goodies?  
Boys, oh Boys – there could be a  
lot of Lifford gardens feeling the  
spade this Spring! IT COULD  
BE YOU!

