

(Maura.)

The Old Courthouse News Advertising Rates

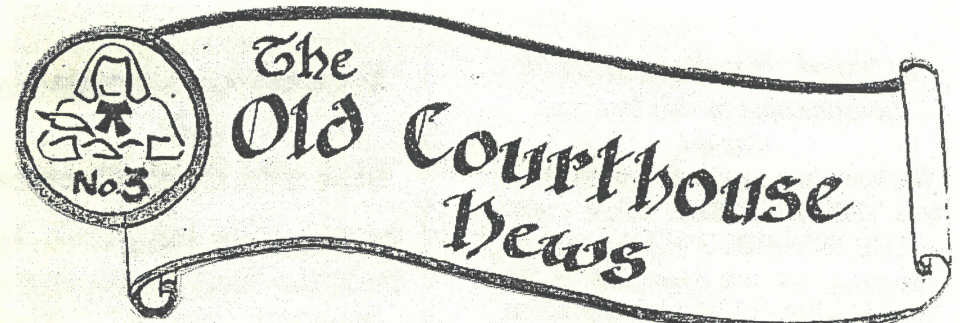
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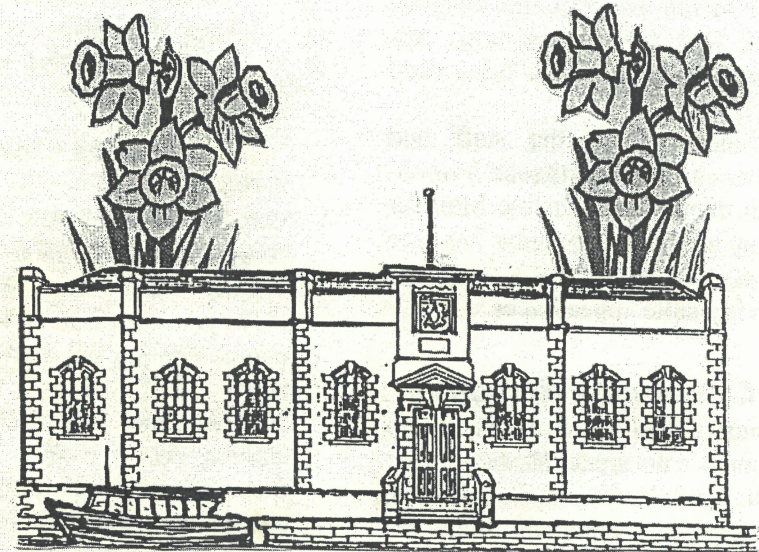
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Spring is in the Air!



**Free
Issue**

LIFFORD ASSOCIATION FOR TOURISM, COMMERCE & HERITAGE Ltd.

Lifford Exclusive!!!!
Invisible man to visit Donegal
Capital

We have just received confirmation that THE INVISIBLE MAN - yes! - THE INVISIBLE MAN - will be appearing (or not appearing as the case may be) in Lifford Diamond on and off all day - Monday the first of April. Afterwards he will be having dinner in the underground dungeon at the Old Courthouse with Mr. Napper Tandy who has been dead since 1803.

On behalf of all the staff and prisoners at the Courthouse I would like to thank The Invisible Man for coming to Lifford to show his face and wish him all the best in his future invisible appearances.

Old Courthouse Restaurant
 We would also like to thank all our customers who made Mother's Day and St. Patrick's Day such enjoyable occasions. In comparison things are quieter for the next few weeks. Please note that we will be closed on **Good Friday March 29th** and **Monday April 1st**

We will be open as usual on Easter Sunday 12.30pm - 4pm serving our top quality Sunday Lunch speciality.

Happy Easter!!!



Evening Classes
At
The Old Courthouse

Bookings still being taken for:
Colour Me Beautiful
 Beginning Tuesday 23rd April
 7.30 - 9.30pm for 8 weeks £100

Dressmaking

Every Thursday night 7.30 - 9.30pm - £80 for 8 weeks

Evening Classes
 Would you believe that some of our very successful winter evening class programme is coming to an end? Where has the time gone? However, we do have another **New** course coming up; starting Tuesday April 23rd from 7.30-9.30pm "Colour me beautiful" will be running for 8 weeks. So for all those essential tips on make-up and colour co-ordination in the dress-sense department why not pay the Old Courthouse a visit. Please note that booking is essential as places are limited. **Spring is in the air!!!!** On the subject of dresses take a note that due to popular demand the dressmaking class on Thursdays between 7.30-9.30pm will now run for an extra few weeks. Any one interested in taking part on any of these courses can contact Gillian to book a place on 074-41733.

Margaret Goemey
 04871 397809
 April 8 30

S.A.G



Having recently made enquires through IRELAND'S OWN as to where the tradition of putting S.A.G. on the back of an envelope came from I received some lovely letters from as far away as Cork and Belfast and this is the story of how that tradition started; it owes its origin to a miracle performed by the Saint in the eighteenth century: "A certain merchant left Spain for Peru. Although his wife wrote several letters to him, she never received a reply. Finally she invoked St. Anthony's aid. With childlike confidence she went to the Franciscan Church in Oviedo where she placed a letter into the hands of a statue of the Saint, begging him to deliver it to her husband. Later she returned to the church and to her great joy found, in place of her letter, a reply from her husband, together with several gold pieces. The letter, which may still be seen at Oviedo, is dated Lima, July 23, 1729, and states that the wife's letter was delivered by a Franciscan Father." From this grew the tradition of writing S.A.G. on the back of an envelope or using the St. Anthony Guide stamps.

To Do or not to Do!!!

"A cynic is one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing"
Oscar Wilde

"Some problems are so complex that you have to be highly intelligent and well informed just to be undecided about them"
Laurence J. Peter

"Journalism is literature in a hurry"
Matthew Arnold

"Ideas are funny, they don't work unless you do"

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work"
Thomas Edison

"Why go out on a limb? That's where the fruit is!"
Mark Twain

"Behold the turtle, he only makes progress when he sticks his neck out"
James Bryant Conant

"One fifth of the people are against Robert F. Kennedy(U.S. Politician)

Your Letters

America's link to Lifford Gaol

The other day we had an unusual request from an unusual visitor to the Courthouse. A Mr. Bradley all the way from the U.S.A. went on a tour of the Courthouse with its cells and courtroom re-enactment of famous trials. Before he left however, he asked for permission to hold the old key to Lifford Gaol which is on display in the O' Donnell's clans room. It turned out that his great, great, grandfather, a man by the name of O' Connell, was once the keeper of the key. We reckon that this must have been the key to the old Gaol built in 1793. What a real sense of history it must have been to Mr. Bradley to hold a key which his ancestors held 200 years ago.

Red Hugh Terrace:

In our first newsletter we asked for information about the whereabouts of the stones after Lifford Gaol was demolished and how far afield they had travelled. Well, Charlie O' Donnell called in to see us a couple of weeks ago. He lives in the row of cottages in Lifford Diamond where the old Gaol used to be. Charlie said "I don't know how far afield they

went. All I know is I'm still digging them out of my front garden"!

Dear Readers:

If anyone would like to make a contribution to the Old Courthouse NewsLetter either in the form of an article, local news, a short story, a poem or even a joke you are more than welcome.

Please send your submission to
The Old Courthouse News,
The Courthouse,
Lifford,
Co. Donegal
Tel. (074) 41733.



Freedom From Despair!!!



"The anxiety and fear are overpowering me, I can't settle in one place, looking out the window, walking from room to room, smoking cigarette after cigarette. Where is he? Why can't he come home? Why does he lie to me? He said he was only going to buy cigarettes. That was 5 hours ago! We have no money as it is. So where is he getting the money to drink like this?"

IS IT ME? He tells me I can't cook, that I look like shit, I'm always moaning, going on at him, I must try harder. I do my best to keep the house spotless, the children fed and quiet but it's still not enough, I'm lonely and depressed. I love him and just want us to be a happy family, but he obviously doesn't love us or want to be with us. He'd rather be with his cronies in the pub. It's their fault if they wouldn't buy him drink

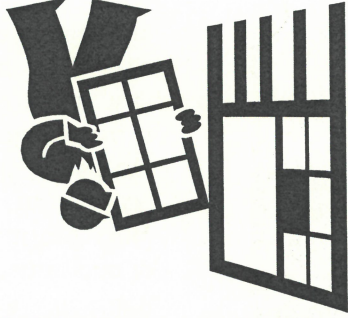
and the landlord - he's just a greedy pig. When he does come home what sort of a mood will he be in? Will he get on to me? I know I'm a stupid bitch who should keep her mouth shut, but I'm worried about having no money and the responsibility of the children seems to be all mine. I'm tired, angry and lonely and just don't understand why my life is like this. Why can't he see what is happening?" Anon.

Why? Because he has a problem with drink and he can't help it. It has him in its clutches and there is nothing I or anyone else can do. I have had to learn to let go and mind my own business. What I have written is exactly how I felt about my life, myself and the man I love, who I was really starting to hate. I hated life but when it came to the stage that I hated myself so much I wanted to end it, then I knew I had to do something. So I rang the Samaritans and that call literally saved my life, my children's and eventually the drinker's too. I was told on the phone about AL-ANON, who they were and how to find them. I was advised to give it a go, so I did. I went to my first meeting 4 years ago and learnt a new way of living. At AL-ANON members receive comfort and understanding and learn to cope with their problems through the exchange of experience, strength and hope. The sharing of problems binds

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Prop. R Porter

AL-ANON is there for anyone who needs it and is fully self-supporting through members' voluntary contributions; the groups are non-professional and have no opinions on outside issues or religious affiliations. AL-ANON was started in the late 1930s by close relatives of recovering alcoholics; AL-ANON adopted their Steps and Traditions having found them sound and wise. You can contact AL-ANON on a 24hr Confidential Help line on 00 44 20 7403 0888 or you can call 01 873 2699 between 10.30am-2.30pm. For further information write to:

AL-ANON Information Centre
Room 5,
Capel Street,
Dublin 1.

individuals and groups together in a bond that is protected by a policy of anonymity; every thing is confidential and this has been very important to me. Members learn that there are things they can do to help themselves and indirectly to help the problem drinker. Changed attitudes that come from greater understanding of the illness can result in the drinker looking for help (and that's what happened for us). I learned to accept alcoholism as an illness and so it lessened the impact on our lives. By removing my preoccupation with the drinker's behaviour I was able to focus on my own development and sense of identity. This in turn helped me to become a better parent as I realised I was emotionally neglecting the children. Children who grow up with alcoholism are often deeply affected. They may suffer neglect, verbal abuse or physical violence. Research shows that at least one in every twelve people is adversely affected by problem drinking. Damaged family life - poor health - social isolation - work inefficiency - violence and crime: these are recognised consequences of alcohol misuse. *But not only the drinker suffers.* It is estimated that as many as four million people in the UK and EIRE are seriously affected when someone close to them has a severe drinking problem.

HARTES BAR

LIFFORD (074) 41628

APRIL

WED 3RD

MR MEN

FRI 5TH

ASTRO

SAT 6TH

PETE & JERRY

SUN 7TH

JODIE GALL

WED 10TH

MR MEN

FRI 12TH

CRISMA

SAT 13TH

SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

SUN 14TH

STREET LIFE

WED 17TH

MR MEN

FRI 19TH

D. WILDER

SAT 20TH

JOE QUIGLEY

SUN 21ST

FLUFFY DUCKS

FRI 26TH

FRESH FIBES

SAT 27TH

CAINTE

SUN 28TH

TRISHA

Memory Lane



LIFFORD POST OFFICE STAFF, 1935.

Back Row: Paddy Early, Eddie Sweeney, Jack Harte, Tom Carlin, James Fullerton, Sean O'Neill, Bob McClay. Front Row: Paddy McGovern, Paddy Kelly, Willy Ramsey, Alfie Ford (Postmaster), Sean Bonner, Jim McDevitt, Tom Kelly, John Reid. Seated: Larry McGarrigle.

The above photograph was sent in by Billy Ramsey whose father William was overseer at Lifford Post Office between 1935-1955. In those days the family lived in part of the old Hansard school which they shared with the Shiels family. This is now the site of the Donegal Co. Council Offices. Back then Billy remembers his uncle Barney keeping the house warm by shaping blue clay and coal slack into 'fire balls' the size of a 16lb shot which gave off a fierce heat when placed in the fire. This was also the time when Miss McDonagh the local teacher rode back and forth to Murlog school on a large prehistoric Daisybell; when Barney Boyle had 'The Green Cafe'; when smuggling was a national past-time; when stories circulated about those who were hanged at Lifford being quick-limed in the underground passage which joined the jail to the Courthouse, and when Tommy Daly, William Ramsay's great friend, was one of the great boatmen on the Foyle.

Toot Takes All

Bookmakers

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MAIN STREET

LIFORD

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GRAND NATIONAL 6TH APRIL

ANTE-POST

ALL BETS ARE NOW NON

RUNNER = MONEY BACK

WHY NOT CALL AND SEE OUR

RANGE OF SPECIAL BETS!

Report

1 Aug 28th 1829 visited the House at 6 O'Clock found all regular. J. Hankey

2 Aug 29th inspected the sentinels posts found them clean

3 Distributed 30 Hammors this morning John Dornie

4 visited the House at 10 O'Clock found all regular &

5 the Doctors Apartments in good order. Inspected the Cells Beds and

6 Windows found John Colbourne's Bed not made up John Gubbins Cell

7 Wants the Comd Inspection and Governor inspected the House

8 at two O'Clock found Chas. McEadden Hugh Doherty Sr Hugh Doherty

9 for James Gubbins Roger Kelly Edward Gubbins and Hugh Cannon had

10 Not their Beds properly made. visited the House at 6 O'Clock

11 found all regular Collected 50 Hammors this evening John Dornie

12 Clean Campbell a Bedon wearing in the presence of the Governor at lockup

13 Aug 30th inspected the sentinels posts found them clean John Dornie

14 visited the House at Eight O'Clock found all regular. The Doctors

15 Apartments in good order. Inspected the Cells Beds and Windows

16 found them in good order. Frank McKeighlin Wm Hanlon Shindy

Seven

17 Patrick J. and Dan McEgan. John Colbourne. St. Morgan of No 5 and

18 John Gallagher of No 6 Ward left their Night Bucket in a dirty state

19 In their cells visited the House at one O'Clock found all regular

20 Darby Shales warning Inspector expressions before the Wm of the

21 Ward visited the House at 6 O'Clock found all regular John Dornie

Shankey

22 Aug 31st visited the sentinels Cells this morning found them Clean J

23 Distributed 26 Hammors this morning John Dornie

24 visited the House at 8 O'Clock found all regular

24 Draw changed this Day No Broken Cars

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Thursday 28th March
Grand Karaoke Final

Saturday 30th March
Hi-Sir

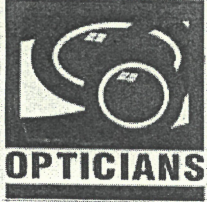
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Lifford Gaol Aug. 29th 1829.

In our last issue we gave some of the background history to the "Turnkeys Report for Lifford Gaol 1829-31". This month we will look at some of the contents. Unfortunately, for the purpose of the newsletter, the extract opposite, from Aug. 1829, has been greatly reduced from the A3 size original. Even so, given the clarity of the handwriting, it is still possible to follow the daily routine for both the jailer and the jailed. To further help us follow the Turnkey on his rounds, a diagram of the prison has been added. Each line of the report has also been numbered as a reference point.

Line 1; This refers to the final inspection at 6pm on Aug. 28th, when James Sharkey "visited the house" which is the general term the turnkeys used for the gaol. Apart from Sharkey there were two other turnkeys at that time- John Birnie (line 3) and William Colhoun. A month later 2 others had joined the ranks- James Buchanan and Richard Lonigan. Sharkey and Birnie were certainly in for the long haul as we know from other records they were still drawing wages 20 years later.

Line 2; August 29th. Inspections began again the following morning at 6am. The "sentinels posts" refer to the 3 sentry points manned by military guards, possibly armed with blunderbusses like the one issued to Lifford jail and now on display at the Courthouse. This military presence was to be withdrawn the following month.

Line 3 and 11; John Birnie's duty on the 29th was to distribute and collect the hammers which were used by the prisoners to break stones as part of their hard labour sentence. Other occupations included pounding bones for manure and weaving. The women were employed in needlework, spinning, washing and general prison duties.

Line 5; Those who owed money but didn't have the means to pay were confined in prison. They were kept in a separate part of the jail referred to by the Turnkeys as the Debtors Apartments (see Diagram). While there they were subject to the same rules and regulations as the ordinary prisoners - see line 12. "Alexander Campbell, a debtor swearing in the presence of the Governor at lock-up". For this offence his milk ration was stopped for one day.

Line 5-6: At least once a day as a security measure there was a detailed inspection of all the cells including all locks and windows.

Line 6 and 8-10: One of the most common breaches of prison rules concerned beds. If the beds were not made in strict accordance to the regulations then the prisoners were punished by having their milk ration confiscated for up to 3 days. The prisoners on the receiving end on the 29th August were John Colhoun, Chas Mc Fadden, Hugh Docherty Senior, Hugh Docherty junior, James Gubbins, Roger Kelly, Edward Gubbins and Hugh Carron. It may not sound much today but to lose the milk ration from an already meagre prison diet was a serious blow. Even as late as 1854 there were only 2 "meals" per day. Breakfast consisted of 4ozs of indian meal, 4ozs of oatmeal and 1 pint of buttermilk. Dinner varied slightly during the week- for two days they received 12ozs of bread and 1 pint of gruel then 2 days on 14ozs of bread and 1 pint of new milk and finally they were served 6ozs of oatmeal, 6ozs Indian meal and 1 pint of new milk for 3 days.

Line 6-7: "John Gubbins Cell wants the comb". So far this has presented us with a bit of a puzzle. It's possible that prisoners were issued with combs for hygiene reasons but this explanation somehow seems unlikely. It could mean that his cell should be thoroughly combed i.e. searched. Finally we know that some of the men were occupied at weaving. In other prisons like Pentonville this work was carried out in the prisoners cell. Is "the comb" part of the Weaving process? Further research may provide the answer.

Line 7: Apart from the regular Turnkey visits and inspections, the governors and inspectors also toured the gaol on a regular basis. Nine times out of ten they would find something amiss as in both instances which occurred on the 29th. In 1829, the governor was William Fenton and the Rev. Edward Clarke was the local inspector of the gaol. Rev. Clarke also doubled as the chaplain of the prison. Like the turnkeys Sharkey and Birnie both Fenton and Clarke were still at Lifford 20 years later.

After the 98 prisoners in custody on the 29th were locked up at the end of the day an eerie silence descended on Lifford gaol. No doubt the exertions of a day spent wheeling and breaking stones contributed to this. The main factor, however, was that talking after lock up and before lock-out in the morning was forbidden. Speaking in Irish at any time was also on a seemingly endless list of possible offences. Other examples in this brief but detailed look at life in Lifford gaol can

be seen in lines 16-19 where the 8 men had their milk ration stopped for 2 days because they had "left their night bucket in a dirty state in their cell" and again on (line 20) when Darby Shales was sentenced to solitary confinement for the rest of the day for using "improper expressions".

With the start of the new day the continuous round of inspections, spotting and reporting misdemeanours started all over again. The only light relief to this gloomy routine is indicated on (line 25) "straw changed this day" which meant they had fresh clean bedding to sleep on that night.

Next month we will move on from this detailed picture and take a look at the more general situation in the big "House" in Lifford.

- A WORK AND EXERCISE YARDS
- B BATHS
- D DEBTORS APARTMENTS
- E ENTRANCE
- F FEMALE PRISON
- G GOVERNORS HOUSE
- H HOSPITALS (Male & Female)
- K KITCHEN
- L RECEPTION WARDS, COOK HOUSE
- S SOLITARY CELLS
- W WORKSHOPS

