

Congratulations to all of these Donegal women who will be 40 on the 7th May. Special birthday wishes to Geraldine Edwards of Lifford who is in the crowd somewhere!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



The Old Courthouse News

The summertime is coming



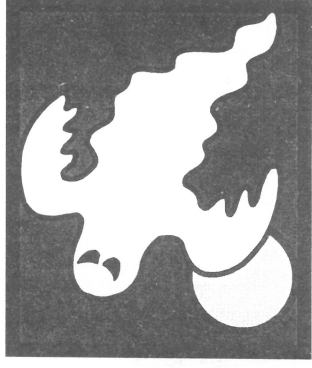
Free Issue

Strange goings on at the Courthouse

I met Jim Donohoe in Lifford the other day. "Have you heard the ghost story about the Courthouse?" he says. "There was a Francis Bradley who was on trial for the murder of Adam Grierson, a land agent responsible for evictions in the 1860's. This was his 3rd trial because at the other two trials the jury could not agree on a verdict. At this 3rd trial a priest who knew Bradley, Father McGroarty, was called to give evidence. He said he would like to call one witness who had not yet testified – he would like to call the dead man, Adam Grierson. At that he opened a book from which he began to read. As he read, the Courthouse grew darker and darker. Outside, the horses began to get very nervous and started to rear up. It was only when the judge called on the priest to stop did things return to normal. In the end Bradley was finally acquitted because the jury still couldn't reach a verdict. I went straight back to the Courthouse to tell Angela the story and she said "I think we might have something in our files about the Bradley case". Sure enough we had a newspaper article on the 2nd trial which we started to read.

Just then the phone rang and Mary at reception said "There's a man here who wants to speak to someone about a case that was held here years ago". So off I went to speak to him.

At reception I met Micky Mullen from Inver and invited him back to the office where Micky said, "I was wondering if you would have any information on a murder trial that was held here in the 1860's? The Francis Bradley trial? You see there was a priest involved in that case, a Fr. McGroarty, well he was a relation of mine". A startled Angela looks up from her newspaper, "I'm just reading about that". Coincidence or what! Spooky more like! Especially when you're reading the "Celestine Prophecy" at the same time.



As you approach Castlefirm at Xmas time it's lit up. In Lifford we don't have any Xmas lights. With any luck we may have one tree and one only – that's it. I would like to see lights outside business premises of all sorts: public houses, the post office, the garda barracks, restaurants, the county council etc. At Lifford maybe would be brighter this year than it has ever been. Lifford needs this. It's a border town and it's the first town you see as you come out of Northern Ireland and into Donegal and it's a very dull, miserable looking town at Xmas. It definitely is something that needs to be done. So if anybody out there can help in any way with advice because there may be funding there; that we're losing out on; that we could get in order to get those things.

That also means that we would need help from businesses in the town; to put their hands in their pocket and brighten up their premises. It's about time we did something. I mean, this is April. There's no point in leaving it until October to look for something like that. If we got it going now we could have the stands up by the start of the autumn and everything ready – the same as all the other towns. They know it's Xmas. I mean, it might only be a

tree outside a business but for a lot of people that brightens up their Xmas, especially weans.

A lot of people talk about it but they won't do anything about it. I can understand that because they feel they're going to be out money and may have to put a bit of work into it but sure a penny makes a pound at the end of the day. And I know it's supposed to attract vandalism and one thing and another but at the end of the day you're going to get that anyway. You'll get that in any town. But this is not for the vandals this is for the decent people in the town and people coming into the town."

If you want to help you can contact me, Mary, at the Old Courthouse, Lifford.

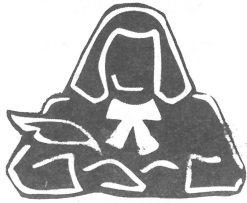
Dear Readers:

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,

Lifford,
Co. Donegal
Tel. (074) 41733.

Your Letters



The Old Courthouse News

We have been asked by several people about the Courthouse News and who writes the articles. To be fair to everybody else involved in the production we have decided to mention the whole kit and caboodle, so here goes:

Main Articles; Angela Mulreany and Billy Patton,

Other contributors; Gerald Mc Menamin and the public,

Typing; Angela Mulreany, Phone Gillian, and Connie upstairs.

Folding and chief stapler; Mary Egan,

Catering; Geraldine Edwards (see our page 3 girl on the back page), Bernie Driver, Connie Sweeney, Rose O' Neill, Maggie Friel, Jacqueline Mc Govern, Betty McCready, Kate McGavigan, Patricia Devine, stray dogs and last years turkeys.

Funding; L.A.T.C.H., F.A.S. and the cap on the pavement.

Photocopier/Scanner; Phone Gillian

Gossip Column: Manus O' Donnell and Donegal County Council.

Thank You

Bernie Driver of Rossgier, Lifford would like to thank all those who brought presents, came to the house and attended the wedding of her daughter Grainne to Ian Freen on the 6th April 2002. Special thanks to Coulter Blackburn and Garrett Friel for supplying the two cars and everybody else who helped to make the day special.

Gartan Clay

I wonder if any of your readers would know the story behind Gartan Clay and if it is still possible to find it. All I know is that the clay is a protection against rats and drowning and only members of the Friel clan can gather it. If anyone can help I'd be grateful.

Yours, Mrs.Edwards
Lifford.

Mary's Xmas Appeal

We interviewed a concerned Lifford resident who had this to say about Lifford at Christmas time. We know it might not be seasonal but this woman is thinking ahead, so read on.

"If anybody out there could give us some advice on funding for Xmas lights, Xmas trees and the stands that go up on the walls at Xmas time, could they contact me.

Quips & Quotes

Story of a failure
Hired, Tired, Fired.

When it comes to work, there are many who will stop at nothing.

I may get to work late, but I make it up by leaving early.

"A man is a success if he gets up in the morning, and gets to bed at night and in between he does what he wants to do"

Bob Dylan

"Service to others is the price you pay for your room here on earth"

Mohammed Ali

"The trouble ain't that people are ignorant: it's that they know so much that ain't so."

Josh Billings

"Ignorance gives one a large range of probabilities"

George Eliot

LIFE

Our thanks to young Karen of Ballybogan who sent us in this little story about her outlook on life.

"Why do people do stupid thing's? Are they looking for attention or help?" Some people waste life and so many die fighting for it. I know people try and do what they can but sometimes it doesn't get through.

Somebody told me that when a baby smiles they can see angels. I wonder if there is a heaven? You hear people talking about it and you smile to yourself and think "Is there a God and Angels in that beautiful place up there in the sky?"

Tom Hanks once said, "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get or what's coming next." We should enjoy life because we only have one.

I remember when I was young I thought life was like a bird flying up high in the sky where heaven is, to be free, and not having a worry in the world, but then I saw one lying dead and then I said "everything must die sometime."

They say life is too precious to waste and too precious not to share. So remember don't waste the life you have now, because we will not get another one.

Evening Classes Art Exhibition

An exhibition of the students work will be on view in the Courthouse During the Summer months.



THE BUTTERFLY CHILD

In our first issue I told you about the birthday bash I was going to, to raise funds for the 'Butterfly Children'. Over £2000 was raised and a great night had by all along with a lot of sore heads next day!!! All monies have gone to help 'Debra Ireland'. Epidermolysis Bullosa is a distressing and painful genetic skin disorder, causing skin layers and internal body linings to separate and blister at the slightest touch. These children have skin as delicate as a butterfly wing, hence the name.

known EB. Such was the lack of knowledge of the condition 18 years ago, thank God things have moved on a lot since then.

The family have met and made some wonderful friends over the years because of this condition. One family whose daughter was a sufferer became great friends. They would regularly meet at the Paval Kozak Clinic in Spain but sadly she died at the young age of 13 years old, which is heart-breaking to them as well the fear that must go through them at the thought of the consequences of this condition.

Eileen was never told what she was entitled to; she had to find out for herself and now has been receiving a carer's allowance of £79 a month since he was 16. Stephen attended Great Ormond Street Hospital in London until he was 16, another thing she had to fight for, as there is a specialist team there for EB sufferers. They don't have one in this country as yet, but they do have an EB nurse now in Dublin who serves the country.

Eileen has brought Stephen up as close to normal as possible. She said it would have been easy to treat him as an invalid but she didn't allow this to happen. This attitude has served him well. Eileen knows that Stephen could have been treated differently, put in a corner, untouchable, but because of her attitude Stephen has learnt a positive outlook and doesn't let the condition

20 Castle St
Strabane
6 Days a week
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Main Street
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Every Wed.
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NHS & Private Testing
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Kids go free (large range of free
specs)

Designer Frames: Guess,
Kangol, Calvin Klein & many
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Fast Food Takeaway

Letterkenny Road
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Open Thursday - Sunday

8 till late

Our menu includes:

Garlic Mushrooms, Kebabs, Fish,
Chicken, Burgers, Chicken
Nuggets, Sausages, French Fried
Onions and much more!

Erin Bar

Bridge Street

Lifford

41471

May

Fri 3rd Erin's Karaoke
Sat 4th Rio
Thurs 9th Karaoke
Fri 10th Competition
Sat 11th Larry
Sun 12th Party Boys
Karaoke
Fri 17th Double Tops
Sat 18th Twilight
Sun 19th Friends
Sat 25th Twilight
Sun 26th Tommy
Fri 31st Erin's Karaoke

Karaoke

Competition

beginning 9th May,
every Thursday for 8
weeks - teams of four
people. Competition is
limited to 12 teams so
get your team in now.
€1000 in prizes
sponsored by Guinness.

The Roads of Dear Old Donegal

A lady from Glenties sent us this lovely little ditty recently and we would like to dedicate it to Donegal County Council and all prospective TD's looking for the vote!

*'I have travelled far and wide, and I've sailed on every tide,
Then to come back to my home I heard the call.
Things have altered here it's plain
But some things are still the same,
Like the pot-holed roads of Dear Old Donegal!*

*But I'm singing all the way 'cos I'm goin' home today.
I don't care about the rattlin' at all
or the lurchin' and the jolts
and the breaking nuts and bolts
On the pot-holed roads of Dear Old Donegal.*

*It's the best car that I could get, and it isn't paid for yet,
But what matter if the exhaust took a fall
And the tyres are all in shreds,
And have worn off all the treads
On the pot-holed roads of Dear Old Donegal.*

*The old car's a total wreck, but I'm happy, what the heck,
For when I get home I'm goin' to have a ball.
There is damage to my spine otherwise
I'm feelin' fine*

On the pot-holed roads of Dear Old Donegal.

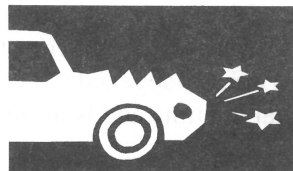
*I'll just bump along the miles, never mind about me piles,
I'll get there even if I have to crawl.
I'll get past the winning post
When the car gives up the ghost
On the pot-holed roads of Dear Old Donegal.*

*All me sufferin' will end when I turn the final bend
And see Mammy waitin' by the garden wall,
Though I'm battered and I'm bruised
And me body's been abused
By the pot-holed roads of Dear Old Donegal.*

*When I reach me final rest, with me hands across me chest,
Don't be giving me a coffin or a pall.
Lay me out inside me car
And then cover me with tar
In a pot-hole in a road in Donegal.*

*Then the Angels they will sing that I've done a noble thing,
And me life it wasn't wasted after all.
And the word will go around
That since I went into the ground
There's one pot-hole less in Dear Old Donegal.'*

Thank you, Catherine Dooley!



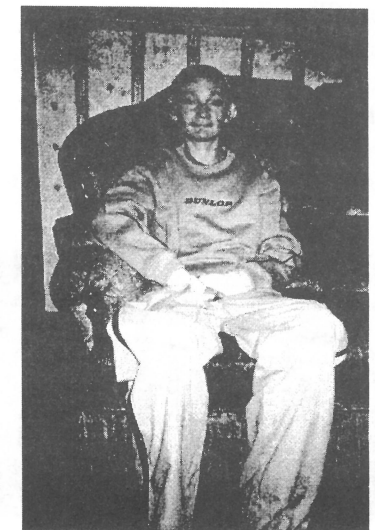
hold him back. He is a very independent young man who has great determination.

Stephen told me that he goes to Deele College in Raphoe. Initially he was worried about going to school there but as he said himself, "They have been Brilliant, unbelievable, so nice to me. They take it in turns to carry my bag for me, and are a great help and support." Stephen is in 4th year now and would like to go into Arts and Crafts when he leaves. He likes to draw, cartoons being his favourite at the moment. The one thing he hates is getting his bandages changed as it is so painful. But his personality shines out of him, - I felt this had also been passed on genetically! His mum has shown great courage and determination over the years and this has been passed on in Stephen who is at the age where he would like to be going out to pubs and discos. He has been, but Eileen worries about him being hurt in anyway.

On the 9th Dec 2001 Stephen and his parents were invited to a ball in the Holiday Inn by the 'Make a Wish Foundation' who had done so much for him in the past. This included a meeting with his heroes, Liverpool F.C. who presented him with an autograph book, which was his pride and joy. To help repay the foundation, Stephen decided that he wanted to auction the autograph book. It was bought by a man from

Lifford for £400 who then refused to take it so Stephen got to keep it. I have since learned who this man is, I won't mention any names but I believe he's good for fags!!! What a lovely gesture, its stories like that, that restore your faith in human nature, and if you read this Sir, there's a family who would love to see you calling on them. Stephen didn't have to make the gesture in the first place, but he is grateful and has appreciation for all that is done for him even though he suffers from this awful, painful condition. Meeting Stephen and Eileen was heart warming, he smiles through it all, there is no 'poor me' or any sign of self-pity and just takes each day in his stride.

If you would like any information on dBra Ireland . Contact: 10 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2. Tel 01 6776855.



The Old Courthouse at Lifford

The former stronghold of the O'Donnell family, chieftains of the area, today Lifford is still the administrative capital of the County and home to the "Seat of Power" Visitor Centre.

Housed in the restored 18th Century Courthouse, this award-winning heritage centre attracts thousands of visitors every year. There are audiovisual Courtroom re-enactments of famous trials followed by a visit to the dark dungeons below. In this area you can hear the gaolers keys clanking, the shutting and banging of the cell doors and the discussions between prisoners and their visitors. Tour guides will also be in period costume which all lends an air of reality to the proceedings.

After your experience you can dine in the historic Courthouse restaurant which is open to the public 6 days a week, serving meals all day with Sunday Lunch our speciality.

Opening Hours:

Monday – Friday 9am – 4.30pm
Sunday 12.30pm – 4.00pm

Late opening for groups arranged

on request.

Conference facilities also available.

Open all year.

Phone:

074-41733

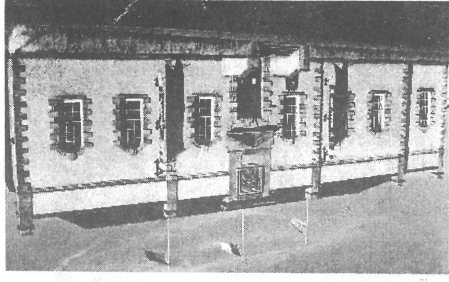
Fax:

074-41228

Website:

www.infowing.ie/seatofpower

Email: seatofpower@eircom.net



Phice- a pike, a long shafted weapon

with a pointed blade on top and a

curved blade on the side. O'Donnell

had a reputation as a master

pike (man). He was arrested, held

and tortured at Letterkenny before

being transferred to Lifford Jail.

"The change brought little

improvement in conditions. The

food was barely sufficient to keep

body and soul together. The

prisoners were permitted a quarter

of an hour exercise in the yard each

day and their hunger used to be so

great that they pulled and greedily

devoured any weeds or blades of

grass they could find growing at the

base of the wall."

O'Donnell's maltreatment did not

stop there. When the case against

him collapsed, rather than free him

he was first ordered to fight an

armed, mounted dragoon with a pike

his only means of defence. In March

1799, thousands gathered to watch

the duel, which was held in a field

near the junction of the Finn and the

Mourne. Yet, even when Manus

managed to unhorse the dragoon and

pin him to the ground thus securing

victory, his freedom was still

denied. Instead, he was taken back

to Lifford jail where he was to

receive 500 lashes. Fortunately,

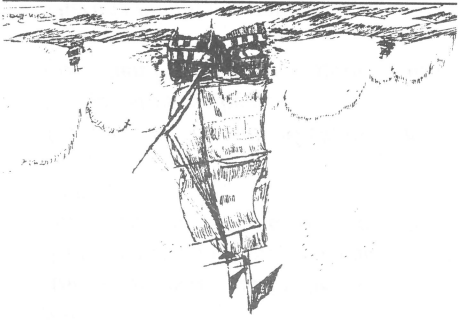
Lord Cavan, commander of the

northern army, happened to be in the

vicinity at the time and hearing of

the events at Lifford ordered
O'Donnell's immediate release.

Other Lifford prisoners associated
with the 1798 rebellion included the
crew of "La Hoche", the French
frigate on which Wolfe Tone was
captured. While in jail they would
have had the use of the "Napper
Tandy" hand – ball alley which was
erected out of subscriptions by "the
people of Lifford and other
sympathisers throughout the country
for the enjoyment of the French
internees". It stood at the back of the
1793 gaol and was located where the
old Orchid dance hall used to be. In
a final twist of irony the captured
vessel "La Hoche" was refitted and
renamed "The Donegal" and
subsequently fought at the Battle of
Trafalgar under Nelson during the
Napoleonic War. But that's another
story. Next month we will turn to
developments from the 1820's when
the final episode of Lifford jail
began.



means of it, the prisoners in the debtors' and womens' end may converse from their windows with those in the Crown end". As mentioned in the last issue, conversation was against the prison rules and strictly forbidden and was punished by a withdrawal of the inmates' milk ration.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of records, apart from these occasional glimpses very little is known about the inmates of the Courthouse or the jails. However, because of their high profile character we do have some information about the more famous prisoners. It was in the new jail, for instance, that a leading member of the United Irishmen, James Napper Tandy, was confined while waiting on his final trial.



James Napper Tandy

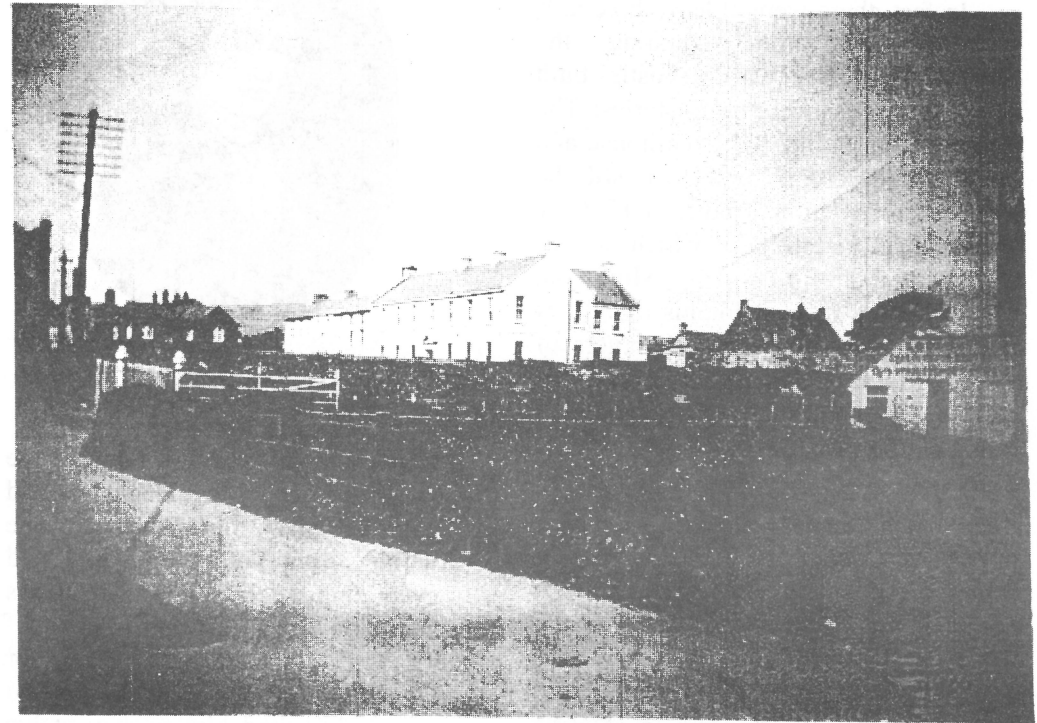
As we have seen from our study of the Turnkey's report, conditions for the average prisoner were sparse. However, if you had the means then life inside could be much less harsh. Napper Tandy, for example, was not forced to do prison work, there were no restrictions on his visitors or on his letter writing. At times he had friends join him for meals and to play dice. On one occasion he even ordered a hogshead of port from his son, a wine merchant in Dublin. All of this resulted in a complaint to Dublin Castle that he was "living boisterously, indulging in rows and parties and disseminating the most seditious doctrines to all and sundry in the gaol"- an accusation which his son vigorously denied saying that it was no more than a smear campaign against his father.

When he was finally brought to trial he entered a plea of "guilty" to the charge of treason and was sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. However, when Napoleon Bonaparte intervened on Tandy's behalf he was eventually released into exile in France. He sailed to Bordeaux on the 7th March 1803 and died there the following year.

In stark contrast to Napper Tandy's treatment was that meted out to follow insurrectionist "Captain Manus "a Phice" O' Donnell (a

Memory Lane

Does anyone recognise this unusual photograph of Lifford Diamond? It shows Docherty's Coachworks on the right and the old Hansard school where the present day Council offices now stand. Missing from the picture is the row of eight cottages, which were built c1937 on the spot where the front of Lifford Jail used to be. (Photo supplied by B. Ramsay, Derry)

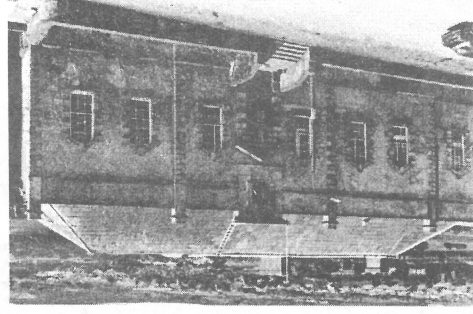


Lifford Jail

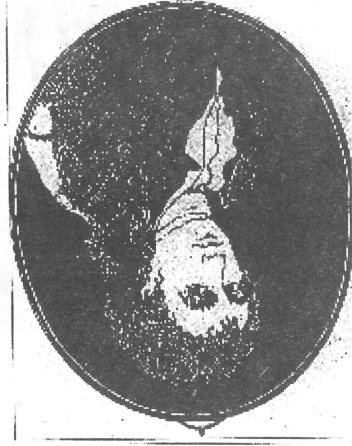


In the last issue of "The Old Courthouse News" we looked at the running of the prison in some detail. This month we will turn to more general aspects of the jail and some of its famous prisoners.

In fact, there were at least three jails in Lifford not counting the dungeons of the various castles built in the area over the centuries. The first was in the Old Courthouse and the underground cells can still be seen today. It was built in 1746 by Michael Priestley for which he was paid a total of £136.19.6 Mind you, Mick had to wait for his money as the Grand Jury (the forerunners of the County Council) didn't make the final payment until 1755, some nine years later.



It was in this jail that the famous John Mc Naghten was held while awaiting trial for the murder of his fifteen-year-old "wife", Mary Anne Knox. Apparently "Lifford gaol had to be used to hold Mc Naghten since the Strabane prison was not considered either secure enough or clean enough for such a prisoner".



John McNaghten

Born into a wealthy family, the well-educated Mc Naghten had gambled away his family fortune while still a young man and had even embezzled £800 to feed his addiction when he was Collector of Taxes in Coleraine. The M.P. for Donegal, Andrew Knox took pity on him and invited him to stay at his house at Prehen, near Derry. While

there he was attracted to Knox's daughter, the young heiress, Mary Anne and, unknown to her father, arranged a very dubious marriage ceremony.

Although the marriage was declared null and void, Knox decided to take his daughter to Dublin out of harm's way. Hearing of this, Mc Naghten decided to ambush the coach and abduct the young girl. In the skirmish that followed, however, he mistakenly shot and killed Mary Anne while she was trying to shield her father.

After a fierce struggle and attempted suicide Mc Naghten was finally captured and brought to Lifford. On the 7th of December 1761, Mc Naghten who had also been shot in the fracas, was carried into Lifford Courthouse. Found guilty, at 1pm on the 15th December he was led from the jail to be hanged. At the first attempt, however, the rope snapped and despite encouragement from the assembled crowd to escape, Mc Naghten climbed the ladder again, remarking that no-one would ever call him "half-hanged Mc Naghten". There was no mistake the second time and despite his final wish he is still known as "half-hanged Mc Naghten" to this day.

The Rev. John Graham also gives us an interesting insight into the design of the jail although, in his opinion, the layout had disadvantages as well as benefits: "The "T" form of this gaol though favourable to the prisoners hearing divine service in all parts of it is very inconvenient in one respect, by

The New Gaol Lifford in 1798

