

'A WORLD APART' – The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargable

This exhibition curated by the Donegal County Museum and the Archives Service, Donegal County Council in association with the HSE was inspired by the ending of the provision of residential mental health services at the St. Conal's Hospital site. The hospital has been an integral part of Letterkenny and County Donegal for 154 years. Often shrouded by mythology and stigma, the asylum fulfilled a necessary role in society but one that is currently undergoing radical change. This exhibition, by putting into context the earliest history of mental health services in Donegal hopes to raise public awareness of mental health. The exhibition is organised in conjunction with Little John Nee's artist's residency in An Grianan Theatre and his performance of "The Mental". This project is supported by PEACE III Programme managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by Donegal County Council.

Timeline

This Timeline covers the period of the reforms in the mental health laws.

1745 - Dean Jonathan Swift:

On his death he left money for the building of Saint Patrick's Hospital (opened 1757), the first in Ireland to treat mental health patients.

1774 - An Act for Regulating Private Madhouses:

This act ruled that there should be inspections of asylums once a year at least, but unfortunately, this only covered London.

1800 - Pressure for reform is growing:

This is sparked off by the terrible conditions in London's Bethlem Hospital, where you could pay a penny to go see the lunatics chained to the walls.

1808 - The Lunatics (Paupers and Criminals) Act:

This ensured that rates (taxes) could be raised to pay for asylums.

1814 - Ireland's First Asylum Opens:

Richmond District Lunatic Asylum in Dublin, now Saint Brendan's Hospital, Grangegorman, was the first purpose-built public lunatic asylum in the country.

1821 - The Lunacy (Ireland) Act of 1821:

This Act allowed local authorities to provide appropriate accommodation for the mentally ill.

1828 - County Asylums Act:

This ensured at least 4 inspections of asylums per year, that those who were "improperly confined" could be released, that records of admission were compulsory and had to be signed by two doctors.

1844 - First attempts to train Psychiatric nurses in St Patrick's Hospital, Dublin:

1845 - Lunatic Asylums Act:

This made it compulsory for each county to have an asylum.

1846 - The Office of Inspection of Lunacy was set up.

1866 - Donegal District Lunatic Asylum opens on 8th June 1866

1886 - Idiots Act:

This was the first law to make provision for education and training for those with mental disability, rather than illness of insanity.

1890 - Lunacy Act:

This was the most detailed of the Acts and stated that detention of a lunatic person could only be ordered by a judge and must be limited by time.

1905 - Syphilis Bacteria Identified:

This was thought to be major cause of General Paralysis of the Insane and much mental illness.

1907 - Eugenics Education Society:

This Society was established to promote population control measures on undesirable genetic traits, including mental defects.

1908 Report by Royal Commission on Care of Feeble-Minded

1913 Mental Deficiency Act:

This Act established the Board of Control to replace the Lunacy Commission. Every council was required to set up a Mental Deficiency Committee to provide for mentally disabled people under 4 categories: 'idiot', 'imbecile', 'feeble-minded' and 'moral defective' (under which unmarried mothers could be detained in asylums)

1919 The General Nursing Council of Ireland was established

1922 The Irish Free State was formed

This is an important exhibition which depicts the untold history of the Donegal District Lunatic Asylum – 1866 to 1922 and for many families of our community the exhibition will bring back a flood of memories. The joint working group established by the Donegal County Museum and the County Archives to research the history behind the institution has experienced many challenges, evoked many emotions that ranged from excitement, awe, amazement, poignancy to that of great enjoyment and satisfaction. Whilst I acknowledge the great historical importance this exhibition conveys to a unique health institution in bygone years it cannot create the lived experiences and stories of the individuals and staff who resided behind those landmark walls. I hope that this exhibition will encourage you to reflect and pose many questions about the care of the mentally ill in Ireland during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Today's Mental Health Services are delivered throughout all our communities across County Donegal. Previous and current national Mental Health strategies and legislation have tasked local mental health services to provide a quality focused service. Mental health services locally are underpinned by the principles of equity and advocacy. Central to mental health care locally is the individual's voice and choice regarding their recovery and rehabilitation. On behalf of HSE West and Co Donegal Mental Health Services I would like to express my sincere thanks to all who contributed in any way to the success of this exhibition.

I hope you enjoy the exhibition and encourage others to come and see it.

Kevin Mills, HSE
Director of Nursing
Donegal Mental Health Services



Project supported by PEACE III Programme managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by Donegal County Council



Date	STATE ON ADMISSION	

HISTORY

The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

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The nineteenth century could be described as the century of the asylum, with a worldwide growth in the institutional care of the insane. New developments in psychiatry aimed to treat mental illness like any other illness. The lunatic asylum was developed therefore as an independent institution, separate from prisons and general hospitals. In Ireland the Richmond Asylum (1810-5), now Saint Brendan's Hospital, Grangegorman, was the first purpose-built public lunatic asylum in the country.



Donegal Lunatic Asylum Image courtesy National Library of Ireland

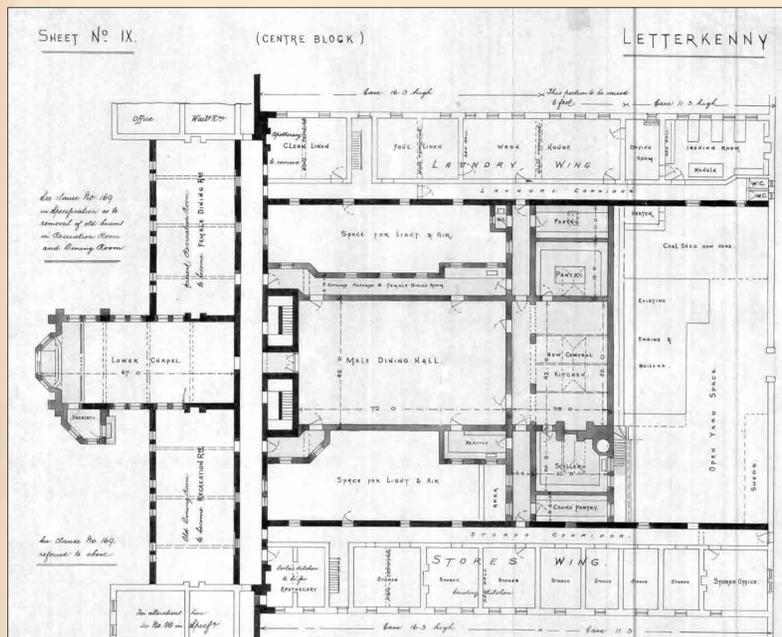
Queen Victoria appointed a Commission "to investigate and conduct a full enquiry forthwith into the state of the Lunatic Asylums and other Institutions for the custody and treatment of the insane in Ireland." This Commission made a report dated 18th December 1858.

The Derry Asylum catered for the counties of Londonderry, Donegal and Tyrone. According to the report there were only 22 patients in Derry from Donegal. Others were cared for in the following Donegal Workhouses.

Stranorlar	-	2 Patients
Donegal	-	8 Patients
Dunfanaghy	-	1 Patient
Glenties	-	8 Patients
Inishowen	-	12 Patients
Letterkenny	-	2 Patients
Milford	-	12 Patients

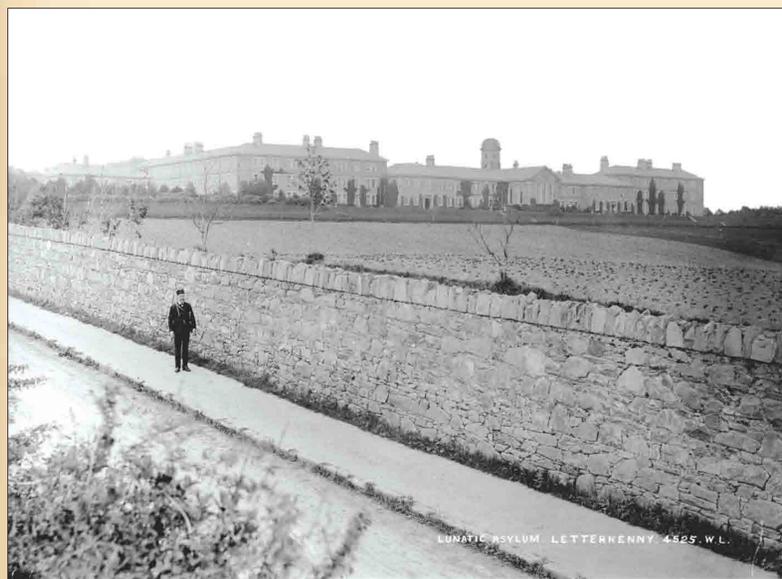
According to the report compiled by the police for this report there were 152 lunatics at large in Donegal as follows:

31 Males & 15 Females (Lunatics)
66 Males & 40 Females (Idiots)



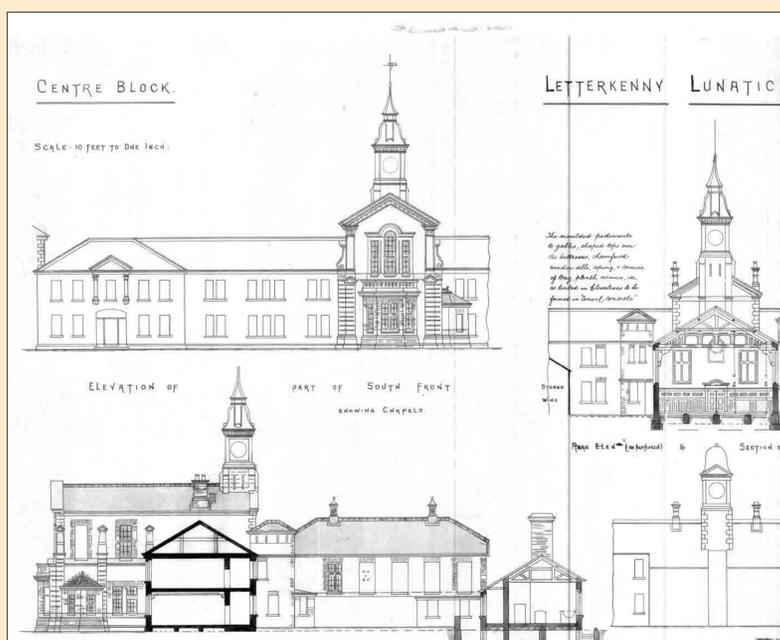
1983 Plans Copyright HSE

Prior to the 1830s, mental health care in Ireland and in most of Europe was unplanned at best, unkind and cruel at worst. Workhouses, established under the Poor Law Act, 1838, were used to house the insane poor. They were however unsuitable for the treatment of the mentally ill. In 1843, a House of Lords Committee recommended the establishment of a Central Criminal Lunatic Asylum in Dundrum, the enlargement of existing asylums, and the building of new ones. The Grand Juries were given the responsibility for the provision of lunatic asylums and fever hospitals.



Donegal Lunatic Asylum Image courtesy National Library of Ireland

The 1845 Lunacy Act established the Lunacy Commission. Its main role was to supervise the building of a network of publicly owned county asylums and to monitor their regulation. Under the Lunacy Act 1880 the Local Authorities had legal obligation for the care of the mentally ill. Prior to October 1854 there are few records to let us know the plight of mentally ill in Donegal. Patients with any form of mental illness were housed at the Derry City infirmary, in twelve cells in a shed on the hospital grounds or, in the absence of any other suitable accommodation, in the cells at Lifford Gaol.



1983 Plans Copyright HSE

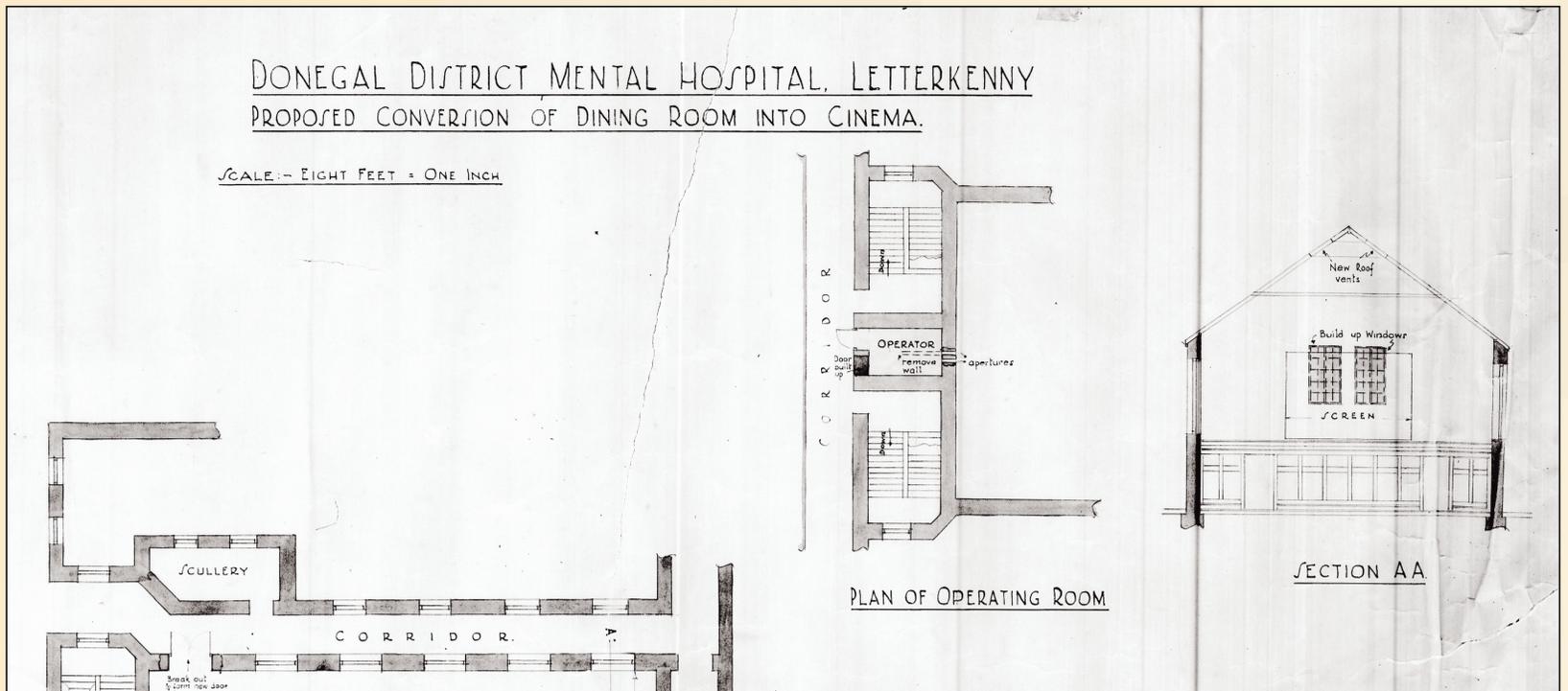


Date	STATE ON ADMISSION

HISTORY

The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargeable
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1983 Plans Copyright HSE

A Grand Jury order dated 4 February 1860 directed the Board of Control of Lunatic Asylums "to provide accommodation for the Lunatics of County Donegal". The decision was made to build the Donegal District Lunatic Asylum in Letterkenny to accommodate 300 patients - 150 male and 150 female. Architect George Wilkinson who was employed by the Poor Law Commissioners designed the building. The building is based on the plans for a Military Barracks in Calcutta, India. Construction began in 1862 and was completed in early 1866 at a cost of approximately £37,887.5.3, which is roughly equivalent to over €1,928,000 today.

and dining hall, was built. It is still known as the New Building. The hospital's chapel was built in neo-Norman style in the 1930s.

At its peak St. Conal's provided accommodation for over 800 patients. To cater for these numbers a large number of staff was required. In the 1960s nursing staff numbers reached close to 500.



Donegal Lunatic Asylum Image courtesy National Library of Ireland

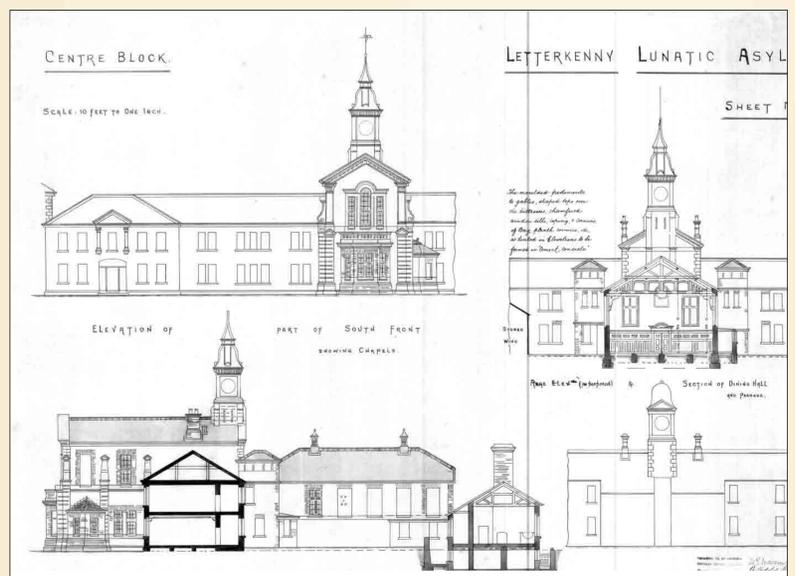


Donegal Lunatic Asylum Image courtesy National Library of Ireland

It was officially opened on June 6 1866 and was to be known as the Donegal District Lunatic Asylum. It was put under the control and management of a Board of Governors who held monthly meetings in a part of the building known as the Boardroom. They were relieved of their administrative functions under the Local Government Act of 1898. Until 1942 a Committee of Management ran the hospital, after which Donegal County Council took over responsibility. The County Council later changed the name of the hospital to Tírconail Mental Hospital and eventually to St. Conal's Hospital.

The first resident Medical Superintendent was Dr James Alex Eames and the first Clerk was Mr. Stuart Russell.

Patient numbers increased steadily between 1860 and 1900. To meet these demands two wing buildings were erected in 1880 at a cost of £4,365.0.2. These two wings were joined to the main building in 1895. In 1904, a three story building with a clock tower, fireproof floors and a separate kitchen



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Date

STATE ON ADMISSION

REASONS FOR ADMISSION

The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargable



Donegal District Lunatic Asylum Patients. Donegal County Archives Collection.

By the 1890's the majority of Irish doctors and most of the Asylum Resident Medical Superintendents believed insanity was mainly hereditary in origin. Intermarriage was one of the factors contributing to this according to many Superintendents. Dr. E.E. Moore, Letterkenny Asylum considered that the main cause of insanity in 70% of admissions to the asylum was hereditary.

“Inmate X whose discharge was ordered at last meeting as “Relieved”, his wife refused to take him out, the Committee cancelled the order for his discharge and sanctioned his continued detention”.

Committee of Management of Donegal District Lunatic Asylum, 1915, Donegal County Archives.

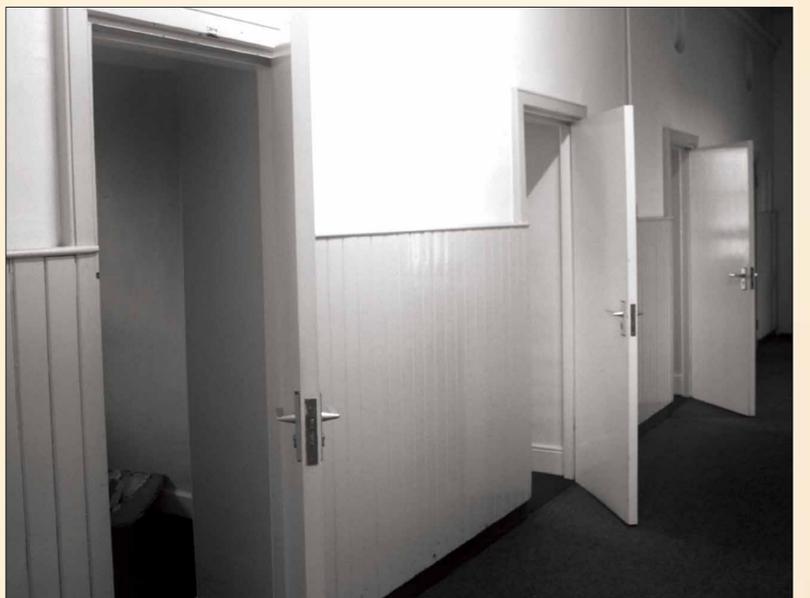


Many believed that poor nutritional standards were also a major influence on insanity. Tea and bread had become the main food for most poor families. Many people had developed the habit of drinking large amounts of tea after it had been left 'stewing' at length. Tea drinking was being spread by travelling tea salesmen throughout the countryside.

Dr. E.E. Moore, Letterkenny Asylum wrote 'this tea-drinking is becoming a curse, and the people are developing a craving for tea just as great as that which a drunkard has for alcohol...'

Tea however was served twice a day to the patients in Letterkenny Asylum and they employed a firm of tea testers in Dublin.

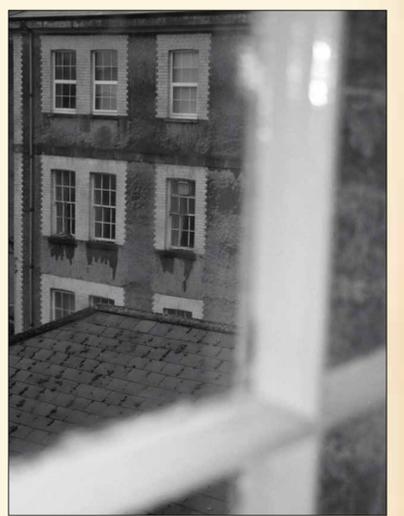
A large percentage of inmates admitted were never released again and died and were buried in the asylum graveyard. Sometimes even when a person was discharged, relatives refused to take the patient home and they had to remain in the asylum.



Seclusion Cells. Donegal County Museum Collection.



Stone steps worn by male patients. Donegal County Museum Collection.



View from a window. Donegal County Museum Collection.



Date	STATE ON ADMISSION	

CARE & TREATMENT

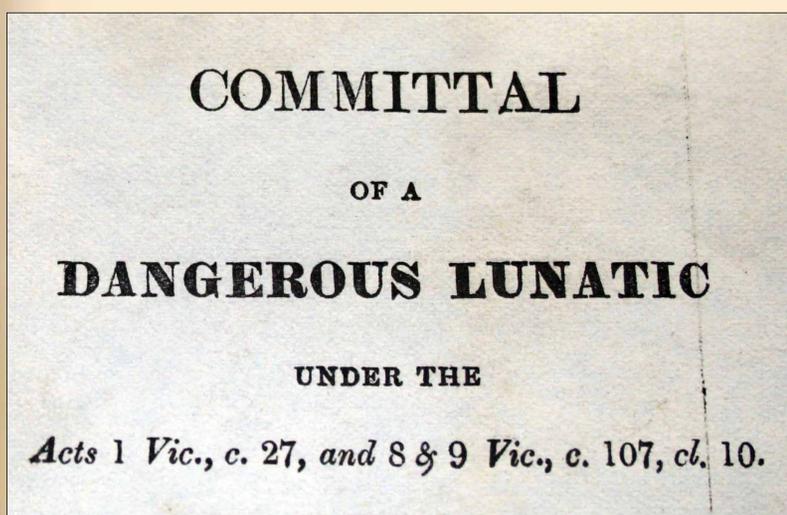
The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargable

Mental illness and learning disability have been known of since earliest times but the organisation of care, protection and treatment of these did not begin until modern times. Before psychoanalysis and psychiatric medications, mental health was largely a mystery. Doctors did not know how to treat the symptoms of disorders such as schizophrenia, depression and anxiety. As a result, doctors attempted a variety of treatments that seem cruel by modern standards. Because these doctors had no formal training in the area, many followed their own ideas or beliefs about mental illness and tested their theories on patients in asylums.

By today's standards the regime in asylums was primitive. With no psychiatric therapy or drug treatment available, many of the more disruptive and violent inmates needed to be restrained physically and padded cells, manacles, muzzles and straight jackets were used from the beginning in the Donegal District Lunatic Asylum. Use of the straitjacket (or straight waistcoat as it was known in the D.D.L.A) was considered more humane than the use of ropes or chains.

In late 19th century the first attempts were made to develop forms of treatment. Early cures included hot and cold-water treatments like cold sheet therapy where patients were tightly wrapped in cold damp sheets to



Courtesy Grangegorman Community Museum.

CORONER'S INQUEST AT LETTERKENNY LUNATIC ASYLUM.
(From our Correspondent.)

LETTERKENNY, MONDAY.—A melancholy case (the first) of suicide occurred at our Asylum on Friday evening. The unhappy victim was only about 16 years of age, and he had been only eight or ten days here. At four o'clock on Saturday Doctor Long, Coroner, and the following jury held an inquest on the body:—Messrs. William Hegarty (foreman,) Robert M'Mullen, John Gallagher, jun., Robert Moffatt, Neil M'Cormick, Charles M'Cormick, George Kennedy, John Baxter, Robert Anderson, Bryan Doherty, Neil Diver, James Diver, Hugh Callaghan, and John Coyle.

After the jury had viewed the body, considerable evidence was taken, including that of Dr. Eames, resident physician; John M'Connell, clerk and storekeeper; Thomas Wason, attendant; James Kyd, attendant; Thomas Mowbray, attendant; Alexander Cross, attendant; Michael Moore, attendant; Margaret Shannon, attendant; Thomas Logue, attendant; Michael Donohue, assistant. The jury returned the following verdict:—

"We find that the deceased, George Gallagher, not being of sound mind, memory, and understanding, but lunatic, on the 28th day of September, 1866, one end of a certain necktie did fasten to a roller in a certain room in the Asylum, situate at the parish of Conwal, in the county of Donegal, and the other end thereof about his own neck, did fix, tie, and fasten, and therewith did hang, suffocate, and strangle himself, of which he instantly died. And from the evidence produced, we believe that due attention has been paid by the attendants to the patients under the direction and superintendence of Doctor Eames, in whom we have every confidence in the discharge of his duties. We hope in future that the locking of the doors will be strictly attended to."

Donegal Democrat 1866.

Division	Assisting in Kitchen	Needlework	Knitting	Fancy Work	Assisting in Laundry	Cleaning the House	Miscellaneous Employment	Upholstering and Polishing Hair	Unemployed	Confined to Bed	Total Employed	Total Unemployment	Refusing to Work	Mentally Unfit	Bodily Unfit	No Work available	Other Causes	Dormitories	Single Rooms
7	3				2	4			8	6	8	8							1
8	1	1			2	4			12	7	12	12							1
9					5	5			10	10	10	10							
10	8				1	9			24	10	24	24							2
11		8	10		6	4			5	28	5	5							16
12																			
13					8	8			19	16	19	19							
14	1	1	4		8	6			16	19	16	16							
Hospital	1		3		1	9			13	6	13	19			19				
Total	14	10	17		33	49			107	6	109	113		94	19				19

Names of Attendants putting Patients to bed on night of Wednesday 1st March 1922.

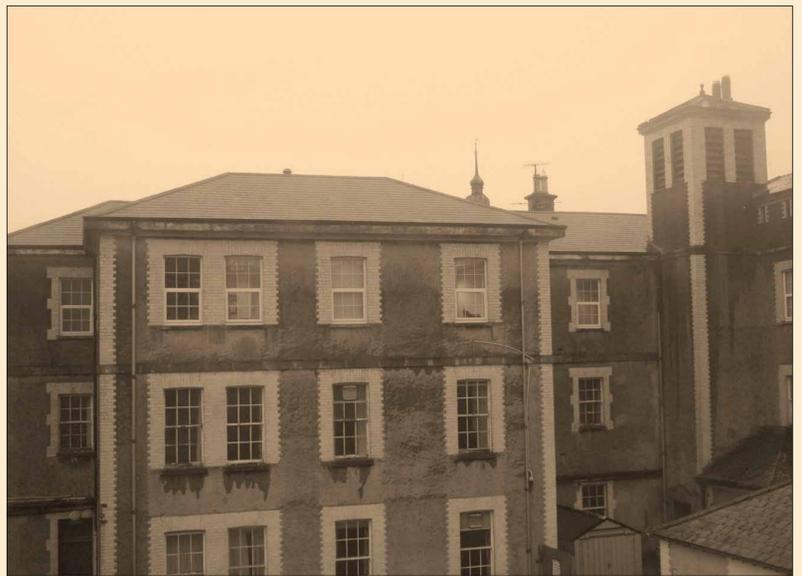
Patients were sent to work every day apart from Sunday. Donegal County Archives Collection.

reduce agitation and clear the brain. Other water therapies included cold shower treatments and hot baths. These early treatments could be considered the first shock therapies, which would later typify the asylum system.

The use of mechanical restraints was steadily phased out although solitary confinement and straitjackets continued to be used. Men and women were housed in separate divisions (wards) and were put to different work within the asylum such as working on the farm, sewing or laundry. Employment was seen as a key part of a patient's treatment. Routine or productive work would distract patients and help relieve the symptoms of depression (melancholia) and promote self-control. Activities for male inmates included carpentry, gardening or other outdoor work on the farms. The attendants who supervised the patients were often employed because they had skills such as gardening, joinery or agricultural skills, which could be used to help provide occupational therapy for patients. There were also financial benefits for the asylum. Inmates made many items that the asylum required, from clothing to shoes. By the end of the era most attempts to restore patients to sanity were largely replaced by programmes of control. Best practice was judged by inmates' docility.

Disorders of both body and mind were believed to be inheritable conditions. The chronic sick, the mentally impaired and the insane were therefore urged against marriage and having children. But insanity was not always a deterrent as a Donegal priest wrote;

'If there be money in the question, or a farm, insanity would not be considered'.



Donegal County Museum Collection.



Date	STATE ON ADMISSION

CARE & TREATMENT

The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargable
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Exercise

Patients were encouraged to walk about in the asylum grounds to benefit from fresh air and sunlight. Those unable to walk could sit in the airing courts on benches next to the wards and on the asylum farm. From the 1930's patients were brought out on walks around Letterkenny by the nursing staff.

Nutrition

In the late 19th century the health of most people was still badly affected by poverty and poor nutrition. Access to more and better quality food was seen as essential to a patient's recovery. The physical illnesses which patients suffered often accompanied symptoms of insanity. Curing or improving a patient's physical health would often help improve their mental well-being.



Donegal County Museum Collection.

Diagnoses

The most common ailments found in lunatic asylums were:

- Delusional insanity
- Dementia
- Epilepsy
- General paralysis of the insane
- Idiocy
- Inebriation
- Paresis of the insane
- Puerperal mania
- Syphilis

Some of these terms are still in use today, but they may now have different meanings. For example, many "dementia" patients were most likely suffering from what we now term severe depression, catatonia or schizophrenia.

Visiting

Family and friends of patients were permitted to visit, although this was not usual. Families often had to travel long distances and travel was very expensive. There was also significant stigma and fear associated with mental illness. This attitude prevented many families maintaining contact with their loved ones whilst in asylums.

Recovery

Many patients recovered and were discharged. When a patient's overall health had greatly improved, they could be placed on a month's trial to see if they were sufficiently recovered to cope with living outside the asylum. However, until the development of care within the community in the 1990s, systematic care for people released from asylums was limited.

DONEGAL DISTRICT LUNATIC ASYLUM.																				
Expenditure of Diet on <i>Saturday the 1st day of January</i> 1870																				
BREAKFAST.				DINNER.				SUPPER.												
Dietary.	M.	F.	Total.	Dietary.	M.	F.	Total.	Dietary.						M.	F.	Total.				
...	15	63	78	Ordinary ...	129	104	233	Tea ...	133	105	238									
...				Mutton Chop ...				Cocoa ...												
...				Beef Steak ...				Coffee ...												
...		11	11	Bread and Milk ...	3	11	11	Bread and Milk ...					11	11						
...	118	42	160	Rice ...				Stirabout ...												
...				Extra ...	1	1	2	Extra ...												
	133	116	249		133	116	249						133	116	249					
				Tea	Shell Cocoa	Coffee	Sugar	Bread	Milk	Meal	Potatoes	Beef	Mutton	Rice	Molasses	Flour	Butter	Pepper	Salt	Corn Flour
forward ...	388	56	12	120	10	1276	520	495	295	11	466					29	24	42		
this day, per Diet Scale for the above ...	57	3		14	8	169	79	80	38	11	116							4	7	
... for Attendants Supper ...	5																			
... for 2 Officers ...								3	2	1	7					3 1/2				
... for 29 Attendants ...	14			5	10	36	3		6		21					3 1/2				
...	460	66	10	140	12	1485	594	535	325	1	606					3 1/2	32	28	49	

The Issues to be carried forward from the first to the last day of the Week when the Total should agree with that at foot of Provision Check Account.

Diet book, the patient's diet was the same every day. Donegal County Archives Collection.

<i>John Boyle</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>16 years</i>	<i>Pauper</i>	<i>9 months</i>	<i>Phthisis</i>	<i>Resident Physician</i>	<i>1866</i>	<i>John DeLorne</i>
<i>1866</i>						<i>Certified</i>	<i>Letterkenny Asylum</i>		<i>Deputy Registrar</i>

First patient death in the Asylum. Courtesy of Civil Registration, HSE.



Date	STATE ON ADMISSION
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STAFFING THE ASYLUM

The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargable
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CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.
Two Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.

FORM A. No. on Form B. 9

RETURN of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 2nd of APRIL, 1911.

Number.	NAME AND SURNAME.		RELATION to Head of Family.	RELIGIOUS PROFESSION.	EDUCATION.	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX.		RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION.	PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE.			WHERE BORN.	IRISH LANGUAGE.	If Deaf and Dumb; Blind; Imbecile or Idiot; or Lunatic.	
	Christian Name.	Surname.				1.	2.		3.	4.	5.				6.
1	James	Donovan		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	27		Stoker & Attendant in Asylum	Single				Co. Mayo	Irish & English	
2	James	McNeill		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	27		Engineer in Asylum	Single				London, City		
3	Patrick	Fisher		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	26		Plumber in Asylum	Married				London, City		
4	William J.	Evring		Presbyterian	Read & Write	51		Master in Asylum	Single				Co. Donegal		
5	Patrick	Boyle		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	29		Sailor in Asylum	Single				Co. Donegal	Irish & English	
6	Edward	McLaughlin		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	38		Guardian in Asylum	Single				Co. Donegal		
7	Robert	Allison		Presbyterian	Read & Write	55		Bandmaster in Asylum	Single				Co. Donegal		
8	Robert	McGowan		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	70		Asylum Attendant	Widower				Co. Donegal		
9	Samuel	McDonnell		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	37		Asylum Attendant	Single				Co. Donegal	Irish & English	
10	William	Allison		Presbyterian	Read & Write	58		Asylum Attendant	Single				Co. Donegal		
11	John	Byrne		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	36		Asylum Attendant	Married				Co. Donegal		
12	Andrew	McDonald		Irish Church	Read & Write	52		Asylum Attendant	Single				Co. Donegal		
13	William J.	McDonnell		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	41		Asylum Attendant	Single				Co. Donegal		
14	Andrew	McLaughlin		Roman Catholic	Read & Write	39		Asylum Attendant	Single				Co. Donegal		
15	George	Buchanan		Presbyterian	Read & Write	46		Asylum Attendant	Married				Co. Donegal		

I hereby certify, as required by the Act 10 Edw. VII, and 1 Geo. V., cap. 11, that the foregoing Return is correct, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I believe the foregoing to be a true Return.

Signature of Enumerator: *James McLaughlin*
 Signature of Head of Family: *Stewart P. McNeill*
 Clerk of Asylum: *Stewart P. McNeill*

Recruitment of Attendants was a constant problem and attracting and retaining the most suitable staff was difficult. Not everyone was suited to the job which was a mixture of nursing, supervision and security. Employees were required to sign an Obligation, which was their employment contract, which set out their conditions of behaviour.

"1. Those employed in the wards in the care of the patients, as their Attendants, should remember that their first duty is to treat them with unvarying kindness, respect and attention. Feelings of mutual good will, can, with few exceptions, be successfully cultivated between Attendants and those under their immediate care, and doubts may be justly entertained of an Attendant's fitness, when these are wanting."

Many attendants left because the work was so difficult and strenuous and many of them fell ill to diseases such as TB. Most of the staff lived on or near the asylum. Even if the men were married they were often only allowed to spend one night a week at the family home. Women had to leave their jobs when they married.

The Royal Medico-Psychological Association began the regulation and training of psychiatric nurses in the late 1800's. The extent to which asylum staff took up the training depended on what encouragement they received from the Superintendent. There was little encouragement for an attendant to take exams over a considerable period, as their wages would only increase annually by £2. The basic level of education of many of the attendants meant that they were not capable of taking the exams.

"No instruction in the course laid down by the Medico-Psychological Association is given to the attendants."
Inspector of Lunatics Annual Report 1880's.

CLERK

1. It shall be the duty of the Clerk to keep a correct account, in a book provided for that purpose, of all supplies received by the Steward under contract, or purchased by him under direction of the Superintendent. He shall keep a careful account of all articles used and consumed in the Asylum daily, and at the end of every month, he shall make an exhibit of the receipts, expenditures, and disbursements--arranging the different articles used under appropriate headings, that the actual cost and consumption of each article, for each day, shall be correctly shown. He shall keep the ASYLUM ACCOUNT, the PHYSICIANS' DWELLING ACCOUNT, the GARDEN ACCOUNT, the OFFICE ACCOUNT, the FARM ACCOUNT, and the IMPROVEMENT AND REPAIRS ACCOUNT, each separate and distinct from the other, and make out separate and distinct monthly exhibits of each. He shall also make out, in connection with the exhibits of the above accounts, a table showing the combined total cost per day, and the combined total cost per month, with an average cost per day; and the average cost of each patient per day, and the average cost of each patient per month, together with any other items that may be of interest and utility to the Asylum. He shall make out a table showing what bills are to be paid on the last month's expenditures, and, also, a table exhibiting the Superintendent's estimate for the expenditures of the ensuing month.

2. It shall be the duty of the Clerk to keep a correct account of the patients received--entering, at the time of their admission, in a book provided for the purpose, a condensed copy of each commitment, with the facts set forth in the certificate of the examining physicians accompanying the same. He shall also note, in the same connection, the condition of the patient, as found by the Superintendent or Assistant Physician, at the time of admission.



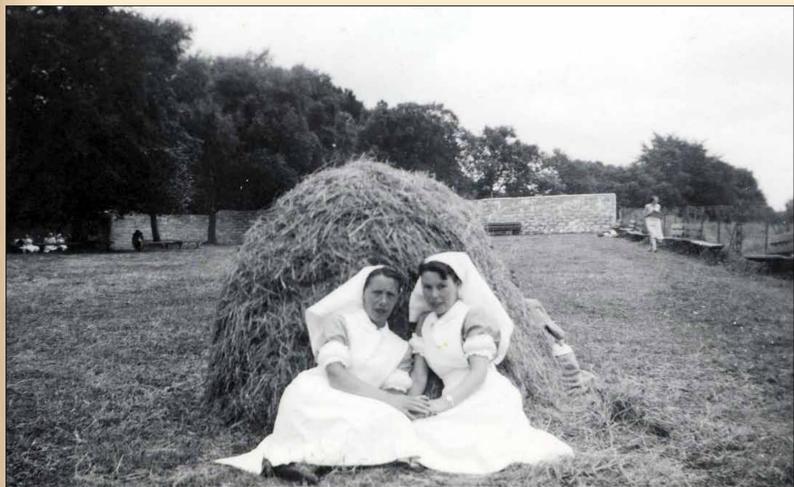
Date	STATE ON ADMISSION
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THE ASYLUM FARM

The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargable
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By the late 1800s some doctors in charge of psychiatric institutions believed that employment was a key part of a patient's treatment. Routine or productive work would distract a patient and help relieve the symptoms of depression (melancholia) and promote self-control. Patients who were fit and capable of physical activities were given supervised work. The majority of residents were employed on a daily basis. The men usually worked in the garden or on the farm or miscellaneous jobs. The women worked in the laundry, did general cleaning, sewing or made clothes for patients. These activities not only helped the patients, but also provided extra food and saved money on the cost of supplies for the hospital.



Nurses on Asylum farm, note the benches around the walls where the patients are sitting.

The Asylum farm was purchased from John R Fleming in about 1906. Shortly afterwards Mr. Gallagher was appointed Land Steward and lived with his family in a house near to the farmyard. Philip Bryson was the dairyman. The cows were all hand milked and the milk was carried to the Asylum by donkey and cart. At that time the patients were required to do all the farm work and three wooden sheds were erected near the farm where they took their meals.

In 1913 the Donegal District Lunatic Asylum had over 112 acres of land tilled and 53 acres under grass.

DISTRICT MENTAL HOSPITAL, LETTERKENNY.	
Landsteward's Report for Month of <u>August</u>	
Produce consumed:-	
Milk - 2067 gallons @ 1/- per gal	103
Beef - 2388 lbs @ 4/9 ^d per lb	49
Pork - 400 lbs @ 4 ^d per lb	6
Potatoes - 24 stons @ 5 ^d per st	
Offal of 14 pigs - @ 1/6 each	1
Onions 28 lbs	
Parsley - 466 bunches @ 2 ^d per bunch	3
Scallions - 262 doz @ 2 ^d per doz	2
Pears - 54 Quarts @ 6 ^d per qt	1
Beans - 24 Quarts @ 6 ^d per qt	
Lettuce - 3 doz @ 3 ^d per doz	
Cabbage - 105 doz @ 1/- per doz	5
Carrots - 2 1/2 doz @ 1/- per doz	
Rhubarb - 18 stons @ 1/- per st	
Landflowers - 1 1/2 doz @ 1/- per doz	
Raspberries - 8 lbs @ 4 ^d per lb	
Black currants - 5 lbs @ 6 ^d per lb	
Apples - 18 stons @ 1/- per st	
Tomatoes - 24 lbs @ 1/- per lb	1
Carrots - 3 stons @ 1/- per st	
	£ 177

Land Steward's report on produce.

DONEGAL DISTRICT ASYLUM, LETTERKENNY.
ASSISTANT STOREKEEPER WANTED.
 THE Committee of Management of the above Asylum will on **TUESDAY, 14th OCTOBER, 1902**, consider Applications from suitable Candidates for the above Situation. Wages, £20 per annum, with Board, Washing, and Residence in the Asylum.
 Candidates to be eligible for the post must belong to County Donegal, and be between 16 and 22 years of age. Their Character must bear the strictest investigation, and they must produce a Medical Certificate testifying that they are in sound health, and a Baptismal Certificate as to their age.
 Each Candidate must be proposed and seconded by members of the Committee.
 From the eligible Candidates the appointment will be determined by a Written Competitive Examination, to be held on a future date in the Boardroom of the Asylum, the Subjects of which will consist of—
 1. Arithmetic, including Vulgar and Decimal Fractions and Ordinary and Cross Totals.
 2. Tabulating Returns.
 3. English Composition.
 4. Dictation to test Handwriting and Orthography.
 5. Bookkeeping.
 Testimonials as to Character, with Baptismal Certificate of age and Medical Certificate of health, to be addressed Dr. Moore, Resident Medical Superintendent, and endorsed on outside of cover, "Candidate for Assistant Storekeeper," and lodged here not later than **ELEVEN o'clock a.m.** on the **14th OCTOBER** next.
 Tenure of office to terminate with **Three Months' Notice** on either side, except in the case of misconduct, the Person appointed being subject to the General Rules and Regulations for the management of the Asylum.
 (By Order)
STUART RUSSELL,
 Clerk of Asylum.
 15th September, 1902.

LANDSTEWARD AND ATTENDANT WANTED.
 THE Committee of Management, at the Monthly Meeting to be held on **18th MAY, 1918**, will proceed to appoint a **LANDSTEWARD and ATTENDANT.**
 Wages, £50 per Annum, with House, Allowances, &c., valued at £40 per Annum. A deduction of Three per Cent. per Annum will be made on Wages and Allowances under the Superannuation Act, 1909.
 Applicants outside Asylum Service must not exceed Thirty Years of Age. Certificate of Age to be produced.
 Candidates must attend on any day (Sunday excepted) between Ten a.m. and One p.m. from 28th April to 11th May, 1918, for the purpose of being medically examined.
 Candidates to be in attendance at **ELEVEN o'clock** on 18th prox. with Originals of Testimonials. The Appointment will be on probation for **Three Months.**
 (By Order)
C. L. CALLAGHAN,
 Clerk of Asylum.

DONEGAL DISTRICT ASYLUM, LETTERKENNY.
FAT PIGS FOR SALE.
 THE Committee of Management invite **TENDERS** for **TWO FAT PIGS**, to be seen at the Asylum on application to the Landsteward. Tenders for same, addressed Dr. Moore, Resident Medical Superintendent, and endorsed on outside of cover "Tender for Pigs," will be received up to **TEN o'clock a.m.** on **10th August, 1909.** The highest or any Tender not necessarily accepted.
 (By Order)
STUART RUSSELL,
 Clerk of Asylum.
 31st July, 1909.

It was almost self-sufficient supplying itself with milk, meat, bread, vegetables, poultry, eggs and even honey. There was a full time qualified poulteress; she looked after the poultry and the eggs.

The most suitable male patients were sent in gangs with a Charge Attendant to work on the farm, in the garden and grounds or in the poultry section. No patient was forced to work so it was the "charge" with the most tact and persuasion that could get the most work done. One of the gangs assisted with the hand milking of about fifty cows and another with the pig herd. When pigs were ready for the factory a number of farm staff and patients would drive the animals from the farmyard via the High Road and the Port Road to their destination.

The patients were also brought out to the farm for exercise and many benches were placed around the farm to provide fresh air and exercise.

Date	STATE ON ADMISSION
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STRIKE

The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargable

The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum changed its name after the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922, first to Triconail Mental Hospital then to Donegal District Mental Hospital. It eventually became known as St. Conal's. The strike of 1924 remains one of the most controversial ever experienced in Donegal. It had its origins in 1918, when a dispute over terms and conditions ended within a week.

In March 1918 there had been a week-long strike and in October of that year another strike had been threatened. A special meeting of the Committee was held on the 23 October 1918. William Logue of Derry Trades Council and John Lawlor of the Asylum Workers Union negotiated with the Committee. Agreement was reached and a strike averted. It is not clear what the salaries were but the following are probably correct: Married male attendants 16 shillings per week; unmarried, 10 shillings; unmarried female, 6 shillings and 6 pence; married female living-in, 9 shillings, and living-out, 12 shillings. The Committee agreed to shorter hours but it was agreed by both sides that 'owing to the nature of the duties a satisfactory arrangement required careful considerations', so final terms were adjourned. Later changing the hours for patients to rise from 6am to 7am shortened the hours worked.

The following was the agreement concluded between the union and the Committee:

"That the non-union members, through the Committee, join the union at the next meeting; on the condition that if a strike is declared sufficient attendants will be allowed to remain on duty to feed and look after the patients on the male and female side".

In 1924, in order to save on costs the Committee decided to reduce the salaries of attendants by 10 per cent from the 1st of April.

On the 1st April, 100 staff walked out leaving 6 staff to care for the 616 patients.

Over the next few weeks extraordinary scenes were witnessed. The Civic Guard baton charged crowds,



Civic Guards outside the Asylum in 1924. Courtesy Derry People.

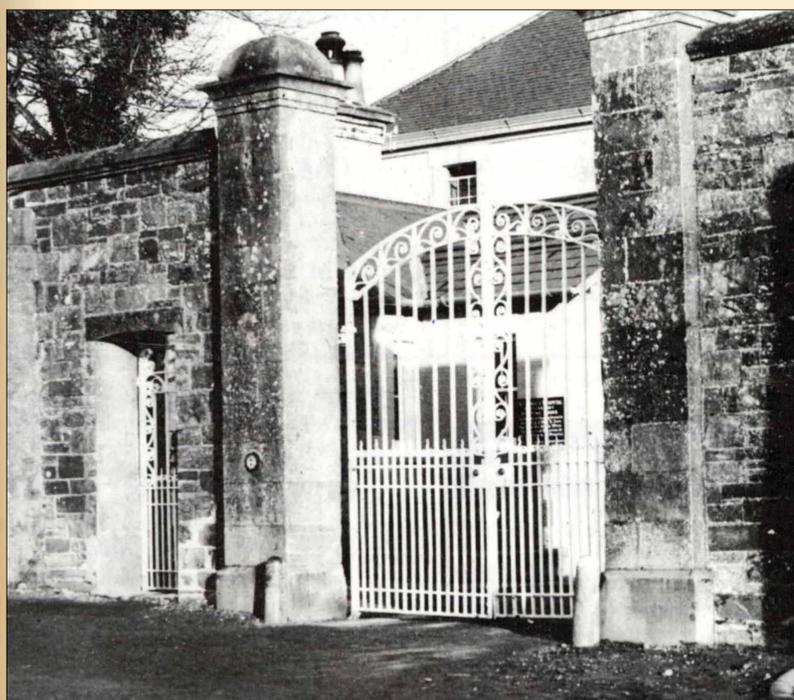
merchants were boycotted and milk was dumped into the River Swilly. The strike was reported in newspapers around the world, even in Australia.

The strikers manned the entrance to the hospital to dissuade others from taking their places. Some went to extremes: the cook and assistant storekeeper were kidnapped, but later released. Volunteers to replace the strikers came from all over Ireland. The Guards were called and they baton-charged the crowd injuring two people.

On 6 April two male attendants went to Letterkenny railway station with a horse and cart. On the way a hostile crowd surrounded them yelling, shouting and calling names. It became so wild that the Guards were called and they baton-charged the crowd, injuring two onlookers.

On 20th April, 6 female attendants who replaced striking attendants were arrested and charged in court for assaulting the head nurse, the only female member of staff who did not go on strike.

On the 14th April, the Committee of Management passed a motion dismissing all the strikers. Staff from outside Letterkenny replaced them.



Gates of the Asylum. They stood 14 foot height.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848-1954),
Saturday 5 April 1924, page 31

Irish Asylum Strike.

Similar Troubles Foreshadowed.

(Bywire.)

LONDON, April 3.

With the engineers also on strike with the attendants, the 600 patients at Letterkenny Asylum, County Donegal, Ireland, for several days lacked heat for cooking, but they had plenty of bread and milk. Many of the milder assisted the six attendants who did not come work.

The conditions at the asylum are now fairly normal. An engineer, boilerman, and three stokers were found among the patients, and they succeeded in restarting 10 boilers, consequently the cooking arrangements have been restored. Forty male and 30 female patients are performing the duties of attendants.

A number of the lunatics who escaped, including the most dangerous, have been recaptured.

Similar strikes are foreshadowed elsewhere in the Irish Free State. The members of the committee of management today confessed themselves helpless to carry on, and threw the responsibility on the Free State Government. A number of ex-service men offered their services, but they were intimidated by the strikers.

The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842-1954),
Saturday 5 April 1924, page 17

THE ASYLUM STRIKE. MANAGEMENT RESIGNS.

LONDON, April 3.

With the engineers also striking, the 600 patients at Letterkenny Asylum (County Donegal) lack heat for cooking, but they have plenty bread and milk. Many milder cases are assisting the six attendants who did not strike. A number of these who escaped, including a dangerous case, have been recaptured. Similar strikes are foreshadowed elsewhere in the Free State.

The committee of management to-day confessed it was helpless to carry on, and threw responsibility on the Free State Government. A number of ex-service men offered to work, but have been intimidated by the strikers.

LONDON, April 4.
It is stated that the position at the asylum is now fairly normal. An engineer and three stokers among the patients succeeded in restarting the boilers, consequently cooking arrangements have been restored. Forty male and 30 female patients are performing the duties of attendants.—Bamber.

Date	STATE ON ADMISSION	

SEOSAMH MACGRIANNA

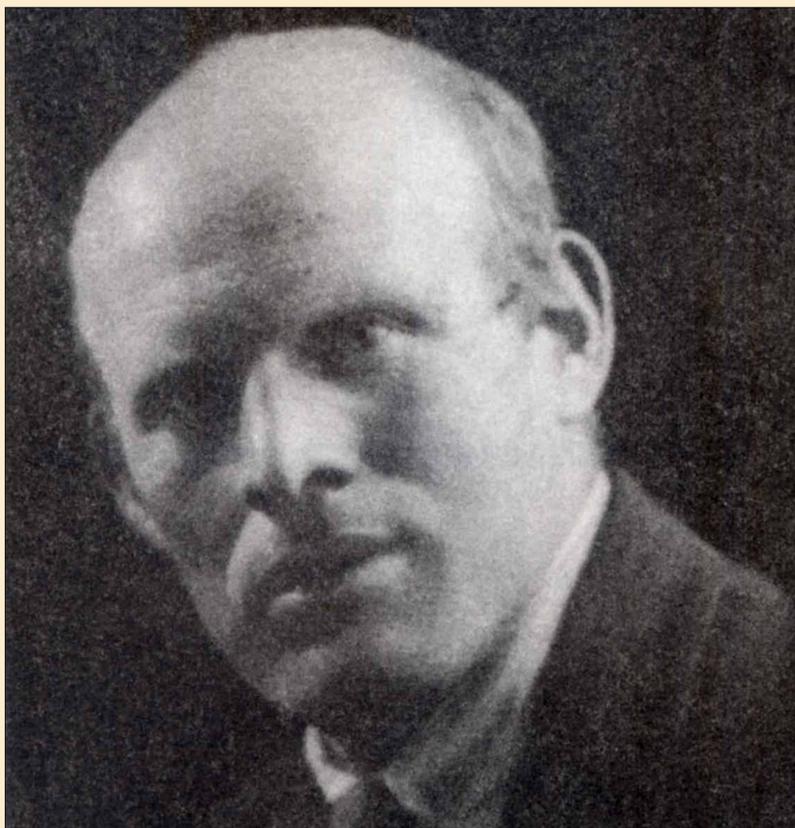
The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargable

Seosamh 'Joe Fheilimí' Mac Grianna (pseudonym 'Iolann Fionn') was born in Ranafast, Co. Donegal, in 1901 and was educated in St.Eunan's College, Letterkenny, and St.Columb's College in Derry. He became involved in IRA politics and wrote plays during the War of Independence and in the Civil War, on the anti-Treaty side. He was imprisoned by the Free State in August 1922. Later in life he removed himself from politics.

MacGrianna was treated for severe depressive psychosis in Grangegorman Hospital, Dublin between 1935 and 1936. He was unable to finish *Dá mbíodh ruball ar an éan* and he believed that his writing career had come to an end, "thráigh an tobar ins an tsamhradh. Ní scríobhfaidh mé níos mó. Rinne mé mo dhícheall, agus is cuma liom." ("The well dried up in summer 1935. I will not write anymore. I did my very best, and I don't care.").

He met Margaret (Peggy) Martin (variously O'Donnell) in Liverpool and they had a son, Fionn. During the 1950s, the Irish language activist and writer Proinsias Mac an Bheatha together with members of Conradh na Gaeilge and An Comhchaidreamh raised a fund to support Mac Grianna. Mac an Bheatha describes his acquaintance with MacGrianna in "Seosamh Mac Grianna agus cúrsaí eile" (1970) and states that while he knew him he may have lived in great poverty and was much reduced otherwise, but that there was no trace of insanity in anything he said or in any of his actions. "Tá sé as a chéill adeir daoine. Ach an bhfuil? Ní fhaca mise cúis ar bith lena mheas nach raibh a chiall aige- Ní dhearna sé gearán. Níor iarr sé cuidiú. Níor thóg sé callán. Bhí sé múinte, cneasta liom.."
 In 1957 Mac Grianna returned to Donegal but his health did not improve. Following the suicides of his wife and later his son in 1959 Mac Grianna was placed in St.Conal's Hospital in Letterkenny where he stayed until his death on 11 June 1990. He left only sporadically, to go to Dublin in 1971 to collect the Butler prize for "An druma mór" and in 1972 to participate in the "Éigse Uladh", which was dedicated to his work.



Frontispiece taken from Fionntan de Brun, *Seosamh Mac Grianna: An Mheín Ruin (An Clochomhar, Tta., 2002)*. Courtesy of the Archives, James Hardiman Library, National University of Ireland, Galway.

Mac Grianna works include *Dochartach Dhuiblionna agus Scéalta Eile* (Baile Átha Cliath, Cú Uladh, 1925); *Filí gan Iomrá* (Baile Átha Cliath, Oifig an tSoláthair, 1926); *An Grá agus an Ghruaim* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1929); *Eoghan Ruadh Ó Néill* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1931); *An Bhreatain Bheag* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1933); *Pádraic Ó Conaire agus Aistí Eile* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1936); *Na Lochlannaigh* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1938); *Mo Bhealach Féin* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1940); *Dá mbíodh Ruball ar an Éan* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1940); *An Druma Mór* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1969); and *Filí agus Felons* ([Nollaig Mac Congáil, eagathóir] Baile Átha Cliath, 1987).



Date	STATE ON ADMISSION	

DID YOU KNOW?

The Donegal District Lunatic Asylum

Number of Registrar	Name	Where Chargable

- Life in the asylum was hard. Strict discipline and routine were seen as essential for people to get better.
- The first patients admitted into the asylum on the 1st May 1866 were female.
- The asylum was like a separate world and was self-sufficient. Patients chopped wood for fires, cleaned floors, grew food, washed sheets and even made the nurses uniforms!
- Security was of vital importance. All doors were locked and windows had slips on them to prevent them from opening more than five inches. No bars were on the windows but they were shuttered at night. A wall of approximately 12 feet high with a large set of gates surrounded the entire asylum grounds. The gates were kept locked day and night, so no one could escape.
- The entire inside of the asylum was whitewashed with lime every day apart from Christmas Day to kill germs as disinfection was not widely used until the 1960's.
- On the grounds of the asylum, there is a cemetery, which was used for patients until the early 1900's. There was a separate area for the burial of those who died from Typhoid Fever. In the record of causes of deaths there is one recorded case of Anthrax!
- The word lunatic has its origins in Latin where it meant a type of madness affected by the phases of the moon (Luna).
- Family or friends were required to pay £10 towards the maintenance of the patient in the asylum, unless they were classed as a pauper lunatic.
- In 1905, the management committee decided in response to a communication from the Irish Cattle Dealers' Association that only Irish beef, mutton and bacon would be used in the asylum. It was also decided that 'an experiment to be made partially supplying the asylum with pork raised on the premises as soon as convenient'.
- In order to have an adequate water supply, a reservoir was dug on the grounds in 1867, which could hold 50,000 gallons of water and measured 200 x 70 x 6½ feet.
- The asylum was instrumental in the provision of the Lough Salt water scheme for Letterkenny. Water meters were installed in the Asylum in 1905.
- In 1916, the Asylum Clerk was asked "to write to the manager of the Railway Company and request that he reduce the charges for the conveyance by rail of the remains of deceased pauper lunatics from the asylum."
- The Tea cabinets held 200lbs of tea.
- From the mid 1930's, the Oatfield Confectionary Company produced a special 1lb bag of mixed sweets, which was given to each of the patients at Christmas time. This continued up until the closing of the residential section.
- Charles Mc Clafferty was appointed Bandmaster in 1913.
- In 1913, the wage of the Head Attendant was increased from £45 to £50 annually.

- The Church of Ireland, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church and the Roman Catholic Church each had a Chaplain appointed to the asylum.
- Until the Mental Treatment Act in 1945, it was not possible to get voluntary treatment for mental illness and you could only enter a mental hospital by being certified into it.
- A cinema was installed into the large dining room in the 1930's. Films were shown once a week.
- Many patients recovered and were discharged or relieved. When a patient's overall health had greatly improved, they could be placed on a month's trial to see if they were sufficiently recovered to cope with living outside the asylum. This was only possible however if family or friends were willing to accept them home.
- From the 1930's on some of the patients were taken out on daily walks around Letterkenny and were brought to events such as the circus.



St Conal's today. © Copyright Paul Rooney.



© Copyright HSE.

Date	STATE ON ADMISSION	

