Galway Judges
1922 - 2003
Galway Courthouse

This publication has been produced to acknowledge the contribution made by judges of the Circuit Court and the District Court in Galway city since the foundation of the State. Since 1922, there have been eight Circuit Court judges and four District Court judges assigned to administer justice in Galway city. Their names have been handed down from generation to generation, however, few people today may be familiar with them. Mr. Derry Buckley, District Court Clerk, has assembled a collection of photographs of the judges (with the exception of His Honour Judge Robert J. Doyle - the first Circuit Court judge). The photographs will be exhibited in Galway Courthouse as a tribute to these judges.

History of the courthouse

The present Galway Courthouse stands on the site of the former Franciscan Friary, founded in 1296 by Sir William de Burgh, on what was originally known as St. Stephen’s Island, beside the river Corrib. The Friary had a long history and in 1812 a courthouse, designed by the architect Richard Morrison, was constructed on the site. It was first opened to the public in 1815. Major renovations were carried out in 1839 and again in the 1890’s when the building was widely remodelled and re-roofed.

The most recent restoration was started in January 1994, when the building was extensively renovated. The two courtrooms, with ceilings some forty feet high were divided and a floor inserted in each about fifteen feet from the ground. This, along with other refurbishments, provided the following facilities: four courtrooms, new office accommodation and consultation and waiting rooms. Some 19th century features survive: the main staircase dating from c.1850 with its turned balusters and newels and moulded handrail, the barrel-vaulted ceilings of the original courtrooms, window shutters and bands of guilloche with lion heads and roses. The ceiling rose has a harp in the centre surrounded by eight panels.

The courthouse was officially re-opened by Ms. Nora Owen T.D., Minister for Justice, in December 1995.
In 1922, on the foundation of the State, he held the office of Recorder of Galway and continued in office as Circuit Court judge.
1922 - 1925

His Honour
Judge Robert J. Doyle

His Honour
Judge Charles S. Wyse - Power
1925 - 1948

His Honour
Judge Sir John Grattan - Esmonde
1977 - 1987

His Honour
Judge John Durcan
1950 - 1975

His Honour
Judge John Cassidy
1987 - 1996

His Honour
Judge Harvey Kenny
1996 - Present

His Honour
Judge Frank Martin
1976 - 1977

His Honour
Judge John Garavan
1981 - 2003

His Honour
Judge Seamus S. ÓSioráin
1971 - 1981

His Honour
Judge Sean Mac Giollarnáth
1922 - 1950

His Honour
Judge Tomás G. De Búrca
1950 - 1971

Judge of the District Court

Judge of the Circuit Court