

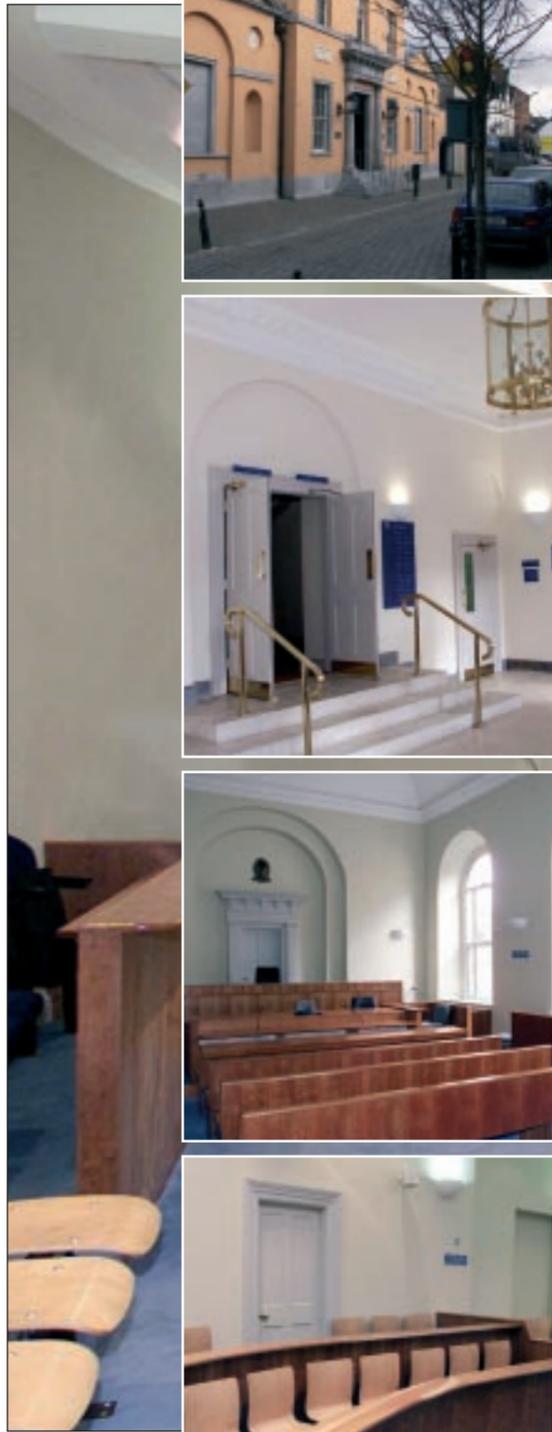


COURTS SERVICE  
*An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna*

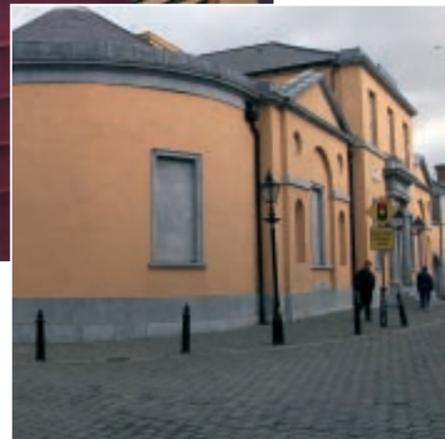
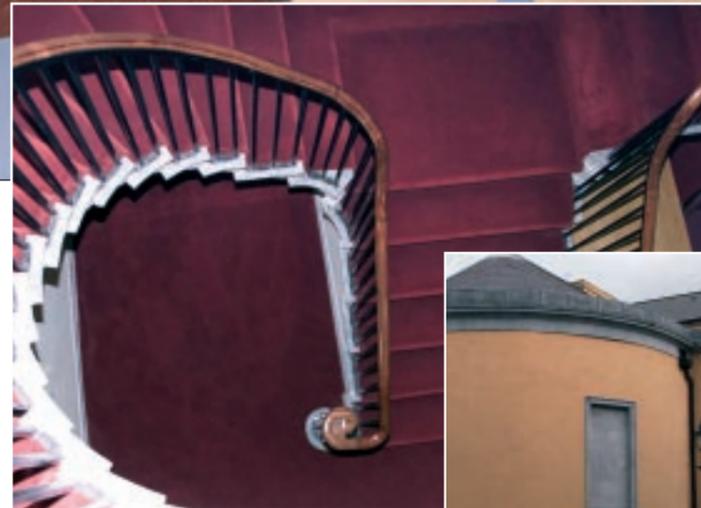


# Portlaoise Courthouse





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The design of Portlaoise Courthouse, completed circa.1805, is attributed to Richard Morrison. Whilst not documented, the attribution is based on similarities with his Courthouses at Naas and Wexford. Dr. Edward McParland has shown that, in plan, these buildings can be described as variations of Gandon's designs for Nottingham Courthouse. The building is a neo-classical design on a corner site, single storey over basement with a two storey breakfront centre block and a later three storey block to the rear. The corner is articulated by a curved connection to the original gaol designed in 1789 by Richard Harman, Gandon's clerk of works for the Custom House, Dublin. The gaol now houses an Arts Centre and ancillary Court accommodation.

The pavilions at each side of the two storey entrance block bear a striking resemblance to similar features in Wexford County Court dating from 1803. Internally, the relationship of the two Court Rooms to the Entrance Hall with the Staircase on the entrance axis is remarkably similar to Naas. The recessed doorways, articulated by flanking columns, can be seen in Pollacton, near Carlow, a house designed by Morrison for Sir Charles Burton and dated circa. 1803. However, the Pollacton design was more elaborate and decorated as might be expected in a significant private house. The building was remodelled by J. Rawson Carroll in 1875. Since that time, it is clear that many alterations have occurred, probably due to the demands of changing usage patterns and maintenance.

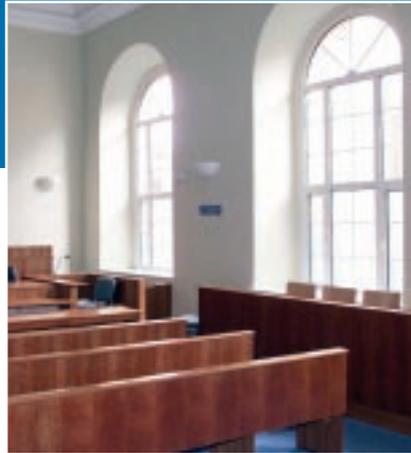
### The works carried out

The recently completed works were designed to update the building to meet the current requirements of court functions and to comply with building regulations. This enabled a complete rationalisation of the internal circulation by the installation of a new escape staircase and lift which, together with a wheelchair ramp, have made the building fully accessible to the disabled.

Externally, the main alterations have been the reinstatement of the curved pitched roof over the larger Court Room and the Main Entrance Steps, both removed some time ago. The external render was replaced. As the building had been re-roofed in the recent past, only minimal maintenance works were undertaken to the remaining roofs. The exposed stonework was cleaned and carefully repaired. The correct historic pattern windows were reinstated in the Main Street and Church Street elevations. These works have restored the original appearance of the building.

Internally, significant alterations and repairs were undertaken. Major alterations to the layout were undertaken to accommodate the changing welfare, administration and public functions of the building whilst rationalising the circulation pattern within the building. Significant works were necessary to ensure the buildings survival, the major tasks being the eradication of dampness and timber decay, structural repairs and replastering. The building was upgraded to meet fire requirements. Complete new services (heating, electrical, P.A. and telephone systems) were installed, particular care being taken to provide adequate ventilation in the Court Rooms by natural air movement (supplemented by fan assistance when necessary). Complete re-decoration and new furniture completed the works. Where original or historic features had survived, the columns in the Entrance Hall, the stone floor in the Rear Hall, the curved stone staircase etc., these were carefully retained and conserved. While no evidence could be found to suggest that a stone floor would have existed in the Entrance Hall, it would have been traditional in such spaces and a new Portland Stone floor, laid to a traditional diamond pattern with plain border was laid. It must be noted that these works, on a very confined site, were undertaken in conjunction with the adjoining Arts Centre and Laois County Council and it is doubtful if either building could have been completed in isolation. The building now stands ready to celebrate its two hundredth anniversary and continuing the function for which it was originally designed.





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## Building Team

Architects:  
*David Slattery, Architect, Historic Building Consultant.*  
(*David Slattery, Alistair Lindsay*)

Structural Engineers:  
*Michael Punch and Partners.*  
(*Michael Punch*)

Services Engineers:  
*MacArdle McSweeney Associates.*  
(*Patrick Cummings*)

Quantity Surveyors:  
*M.J. Turley and Associates.*  
(*Michael Turley*)

Clerk of Works:  
*Jack Cunnane.*

Main Contractor:  
*Michael Glennon (Moate) Ltd.*  
(*Michael Glennon, Sean Duffy*)

Electrical Sub-Contractor:  
*John Fletcher Ltd.*  
(*John Fletcher*)

Mechanical Sub-Contractor:  
*Patric Engineering Ltd.*  
(*Stephen Sterritt*)

## Judges

*His Honour Judge Anthony Kennedy* (Judge of the Circuit Court), *His Honour Judge Carroll Moran* (Judge of the Circuit Court), *Judge Mary H. Martin* (Judge of the District Court)

Midland Regional Manager:  
*Mr. Christopher Lehane.*

### Court officials:

County Registrar:  
*Mr. James Cahill.*  
*Tel. 0502 21340*  
*Fax. 0502 22606*

Chief Clerk:  
*Ms. Sheila Larkin.*  
*Tel. 0502 21340*  
*Fax. 0502 22606*

District Court Clerk:  
*Mr. Jack Purcell.*  
*Tel. 0502 21158*  
*Fax. 0502 20828*