

# Duffy: a man who suffered under the law

LAST OCTOBER Colin Duffy officially opened the 1996 Sinn Fein Slogadh in Gweedore, Co Donegal, days after his release from prison.

Recently, organisers of the annual event were discussing who should officiate at tonight's opening of the 1997 Slogadh in the Gaeltacht area of Mayo.

One organiser jokingly suggested Colin Duffy's name as a possibility. Many's a true word...

According to legal sources Mr Duffy will be available.

But he will probably prefer to spend his first day of freedom with the family and friends who are, by now, veterans of the campaigns to free him from charges which he has persistently claimed were attempts to frame him.

Mr Duffy first came to public attention in 1990 when he served two months on remand charged with the possession of 10 bullets.

He and two co-accused were eventually granted bail but one of the conditions was that they should appear regularly at Lurgan RUC station.

On March 6 1990, just minutes after the trio had left the station, they were targeted by loyalist gunmen.

Although Mr Duffy and companion Tony McCaughey survived the UVF attack, the third man Sam Marshall was shot dead. The charges against the men were later dropped.

In 1991 Mr Duffy served a year-and-a-half on remand charged with collecting information likely to be of use to terrorists but was

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Colin Duffy has survived a murder bid and twice been wrongly jailed, reports  
**Phelim McAleer**

acquitted in March 1992.

In June of the following year he was once again arrested, this time in connection with the murder of retired UDR soldier John Lyness in Lurgan.

Mr Lyness was hit 10 times in the neck and body by bullets from a 9mm Luger pistol, with at least one of the shots coming from close range.

Mr Duffy, a labourer, was convicted of the murder in July 1995 and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

But in September 1996, after much campaigning, that conviction was quashed when the appeal court found that the evidence of two key prosecution witnesses who claimed to be able to identify Duffy as the killer could not be relied upon.

During Colin Duffy's trial Lindsay Robb, a member of the Progressive Unionist Party's talks team, was described as a man of "obvious honesty" after he testified he had seen Mr Duffy and an accomplice murder of Mr Lyness and make their escape on bicycles. But in December of the same year Mr Robb, known only as 'C' during the trial, was sentenced to 10 years by a Scottish court for gun-running for the UVF.