

## **Wolfe Tone, Michael Reynolds and the 1798 rebellion**

**Rebellions occurred in France and America in the late 1700's. Wolfe Tone, one of Ireland's most respected Republicans, was very impressed by the French Revolution. He liked the French ideals of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity". Grattan's Parliament in Dublin didn't represent Ireland's 3 million Catholics or the Presbyterians in the North of Ireland ("Dissenters" as they called themselves) very well. Wolfe Tone, Napper Tandy and Thomas Russell set up the Society of the United Irishmen in 1791. The United Irishmen had two aims:**

**\* to reform parliament and**

**\* to unite Catholics and Protestants into one nation**

**Napper Tandy said he wanted to replace the names Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter with the word Irishman.**

**The Society of the United Irishmen made very little progress so, in 1796, they became a secret society and decided to fight for reform. In December 1796 Wolfe Tone brought a fleet of French ships carrying French soldiers to Bantry Bay. The ships were unable to land due to bad weather and had to return to France (with Wolfe Tone on board).**

**Local people had seen the ships in Bantry Bay and soon the authorities realized that a rebellion had been planned. The authorities set about putting a stop to the rebellion. The army searched for arms and information in a very ruthless way. Suspected members of the United Irishmen suffered such punishments as : floggings, pitch-cappings and half-hangings. According to Robert Kee in his book "Ireland: A History" (p.75) Athy in Co. Kildare was the first place in which the wooden triangle, on which victims were spreadeagled and flogged, was set up. He quotes an eye-witness:**

**"There was no ceremony used in choosing victims, the first to hand done well enough... They were stripped naked, tied to a triangle and their flesh cut through without mercy. And though some stood the torture to the last gasp sooner than become informers, others did not and one single informer in the town was enough to destroy all the United Irishmen in it".**