CLONAKILTY

(Cloich na Coillte-the rock of the wood) is a market town located at the head of a tidal inlet. Though settlement in the area goes back to the Neolithic as evident by the near by portal tomb at Aghaglaslin, the town itself is a creation of the 17th century. Richard Boyle, the first Earl of Cork, developed the town as a commercial hub through royal grants and the settlement of English families. His descendants, the Earls of Shannon, dominated the town in political, commercial and social terms well into the 19th century. The town was burnt during the 1641 rebellion but slowly recovered and by the 18th century it was a successful market town with a focus on textile manufacturing, particularly linen and cotton, as well as brewing, and the production of corn, potatoes and poultry in the surrounding countryside. Despite its coastal location the harbour had largely silted-up by the 18th century, subsequently larger vessels used Ring harbour at the mouth of the estuary. Clonakilty developed significantly in the late-18th and early-19th centuries resulting in the construction of townhouses, notably around Emmet Square, as well as a variety of denominational churches, public and commercial buildings. The 1880s saw the arrival of a railway line operated by the Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway Company. Today, Clonakilty continues to be an important market town for the West Cork area and its lively character and colourful architectural heritage make it an attractive place to live and a popular tourist destination.

MacCurtain Hill streetscape displaying the typical vibrant colours of West Cork

Sites to see *(Please refer to map overleaf for locations. Sites marked with an asterisk (*) are outside the area covered by the map)*

1. ASNA SQUARE: This open area was created in the late19th century by removal of some houses. It is named after Tadgh O'Donovan Asna, a local leader on the 1798 Rebellion, whose statue stands in the square. Also in the square is the *Kilty Stone*, relocated here from a nearby castle and reputedly the stone that gives the town its name.

2. MARKET HOUSE: Clonakilty was an important market town from the late 17th century and this market house was the focus of that activity. The arches to the ground floor were originally open allowing access to the market area while the upper floor served as the town hall where the town corporation met and held functions.

3. BARRACKS: A three storey late 18th century infantry barracks. It accommodated 4 officers and 68 privates and occupies a strategic position to the north of the town. The barracks was burnt in 1921 and rebuilt as the present two storey Garda Station in 1926.

4. KILGARRIFFE CHURCH OF IRELAND: Built in 1818 on an elevated site overlooking the town, it occupies the site of an earlier 17th century church built by Richard Boyle. This replaced Kilgarriff medieval church located to the west of the town. The restrained neo-Gothic style with an embattled tower at the west end is typical of the Church of Ireland parish churches built throughout Ireland in the early 19th century. The graveyard contains many interesting 18th and 19th century headstones and chest tombs.

5. RECORDERS ALLEY: Provided public access to the river Fealge.

6. CHURCH HALL: This Church of Ireland parish hall was built c.1880.

7. MYRTLE GROVE HOUSE: A substantial two storey 18th century residence, remodelled into its present ornamental appearance in the late 19th century when it became the parochial house for the Catholic Church. In the 18th century one of the rooms was used as the meeting house for the growing Methodist congregation and later in 19th century it was used by the conservative protestant group the Plymouth Brethren.

8. No. 2 NATIONAL SCHOOL: Built in 1887 as the second Methodist school to accommodate increasing numbers. It is now the West Cork Regional Museum and houses a fascinating collection of local artefacts.

9. TECHNICAL SCHOOL: Built around 1900 to provide vocational training. The school with its central breakfront, prominent quoins and inscribed name plaque is an interesting building on the edge of town.

10. BOYS' NATIONAL SCHOOL: This former school was built in 1884 on the site of an early 19th century Catholic chapel.

11. SPILLER'S LANE: A group of 19th century industrial buildings now converted into an attractive walk-through retail complex.

12. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH: This magnificant neo-Gothic church, designed by the architect George, C. Ashlin, was opened for worship in 1880. It replaced an earlier church on an adjacent site which in turn replaced a chapel on Chapel Lane (32). The interior retains fine examples of late 19th century craftsmanship.

13. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (now a post office): Built in 1861 in an elegant Neo-Gothic style. Due to declining numbers it was sold in 1924 when it became the post office. Clonakilty takes pride in its unusual Post Office which still retains its original form and character.

14. STONE BRIDGE: The town is built on the river Fealge and its tributaries, necessitating a number river crossings and also an elaborate water management system, including channelling of the river. Many new underground culverts were identified recently during archaeological monitoring. The stone bridges appear to date to the redevelopment of the town in the 18th/19th century. This example is the most visually attractive with its three elegant semicircular arches.

15. MICHAEL COLLINS STATUE: A bronze statue of the local Irish patriot and revolutionary Michael Collins (1890-1922), by Cork sculptor Kevin Holland. It was erected in the square in 2002.

16. EMMET SQUARE: Formerly known as Shannon Square, after the Earl of Shannon under whose auspices the square was laid out between 1795 and 1805 to accommodate the growing number of wealthy merchants in the town. The Square is surrounded on three sides by elegant two- and three-storey Georgian houses. Michael Collins lived in the square between 1903 and 1905 and *Michael Collins House* museum is at the east end. Here one can learn about the struggle for independence in Ireland from 1798 to 1922. This features the story of three local patriotic leaders, Tadhg an Asna O'Donovan, Jeramiah O'Donovan Rossa and Michael Collins.

17. BREWERY: A brewery complex, built in 1807 by Richard Deasy, replacing an earlier brewery located at the east end of town. The buildings, which are arranged around a courtyard, were extended and modified many times. Its best known products were *amber ale* and *wrastler porter*. The brewery closed in 1940. Its tall industrial brick chimneys are an iconic image of the town.

18. METHODIST CHURCH: To accommodate the growing numbers a new church with a school was built in 1860 on the site of an earlier church. This pretty church is built with local stone in a neo-Gothic style.

19. HILL'S MILL: This mill, which straddles the river, was built in the early 19th century by Thomas Hill & Co and is now occupied by Cork County Council's offices and library. Cork County Council won the Europa Nostra Award in 1987 for its restoration.

20. SHAMBLES: Site of early 19th century fish and meat market.

21. COURTHOUSE AND BRIDEWELL: Built in 1826, the architect George Pain designed the building in a typical style using a solid restrained classical form of architecture, reflecting the somber nature of the buildings function. The survival of the jail at the rear is unusual as is the fine high enclosing stone wall.

22. WHEEL OF FORTUNE: A cast-iron water pump installed in 1890 as part of a scheme initiated by the Earl of Shannon to provide clean running water for the townspeople. The pump was made in the Hive Iron Works, Cork City. Affectionately known as the Wheel of Fortune.

23. LINEN HALL: This building marks the entrance to the spacious Linen hall built by the Earl of Shannon in the early 19th century. The finished woven linen cloth was brought here to be marked, measured and sold. Clonakilty was an important centre for linen manufacture from the 1740s until the mid-19th century. Most of the weaving was carried out on hand looms in the weavers own homes. However, the town had one large Linen mill at the east end of the town which no longer survives. In the early 19th century, there were approx 400 looms in operation in the town, employing up to 1000 people.

24. BRIDGE, ROSSA STREET: This example of a triple-arch stone bridge is typical of a number of bridges in the town; the use of elliptical arches is unusual and facilitated a level road surface. Another unusual feature are the houses built over the bridge.

25. SAND QUAY and GRAIN STORE: This former quay got its name from the fact that it was the landing place for flat-bottomed boats, known as Clonakilty sandlighters. These were designed to carry heavy loads of sea sand which was used by local farmers to improve the quality of their land. An impressive three-storey former grain store survives from the 19th century when this was a busy quay. The quays were infilled in the late 20th century with the construction of the bypass.

26. FEVER HOSPITAL: Built by the Board of Works in 1850 as a hospital for victims of the diseases that ran rife during the Great Famine. It was subsequently used as a barracks, medical dispensary and, thereafter, as a boys' secondary school. It awaits a new use.

*27. RAILWAY STATION: In 1886, Clonakilty was linked to the Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway line which had been established in 1851. The station was located behind the old barracks [3] but little remains today. The line closed in 1961. The railway is the central theme of the popular Model Railway Village with wonderful miniature models of Clonakilty, Kinsale, Bandon and Dunmanway.

*28. CONVENT OF MERCY: Founded in 1856. The present building was completed in 1864 on the site of Scartagh Cottage. The sisters were invited here by a local priest who was eager to provide a Catholic education as opposed to a multi-denominational school which was provided in the town. The convent includes a chapel designed in 1866 by the renowned Victorian architects E.W. Pugin and G.C. Ashlin.

*29. UNION WORKHOUSE: Built in 1850-52 in the wake of the Great Famine to accommodate the poor and the destitute. The area was devastated during the famine, hence the saying *'Clonakilty God help us'.* Replaced in the 1950s by the present Clonakilty hospital.

30. DEASY'S SHIPYARD: The Deasy family, prominent brewers and merchants in Clonakilty since the late 18th century, founded a shipyard here. It flourished in the mid-19th century and produced a number of large schooners including the "Mary Ann" and the "Catherine". The family also developed a bit of a reputation for smuggling!

Mary Ann Schooner

*31. FAIR FIELD: Regular fairs were held here for the selling of cattle, sheep and pigs and the Autumn markets were noted for the sale of turkeys and fowel. Today it is now a popular playground.

*32. ROMAN CATHOLIC CHAPEL *(SITE OF)* **:** This is the first Roman Catholic chapel built in the mid 18th century following the relaxation of the penal laws. It was typically located on the outskirts of town. It collapsed in 1798 killing two people and was replaced by a new church (12) in town.

A treasury of traditional shopfronts

Clonakilty is lucky to have retained a large number of colourful traditional shopfronts- some old and some new- which add immensely to the town's charm and architectural heritage. Glazed shopfronts developed in the 18th century to replace the open stalls of the medieval period. As glass-making technology developed, window panes became larger and allowed traders to show off their wares to great effect. The pleasing proportions, elegant glazing and carved detailing of these shopfronts show the influence of 18th century formal neo-Classical design which was given a vernacular twist by local joiners and sign painters.

Early 19th century shopfront, Pearse Street

The tradition suffered greatly in the latter part of the 20th century when mass produced signage and sleek modern materials became the norm. However, Clonakilty was one of the few towns in Ireland where the tradition continued, and indeed went through a renaissance, due in no small part to the efforts of local master craftspeople and to a determination on the part of the local authority and business owners to retain this valuable aspect of the town's built heritage.

CLONAKILTY
Historic Town Map

[17] Deasy's Brewery

CLONAKILTY
Historic Town

1. Statue of Tadhg an Asna

2. Old Market House

3. Barracks

4. Kilgarriffe Church of Ireland

6. Church of Ireland Hall

14. Bridge, Bridge Street

12. Church of the Immaculate Conception

13. Presbyterian Church

15. Statue of Michael Collins

16. Emmet Square
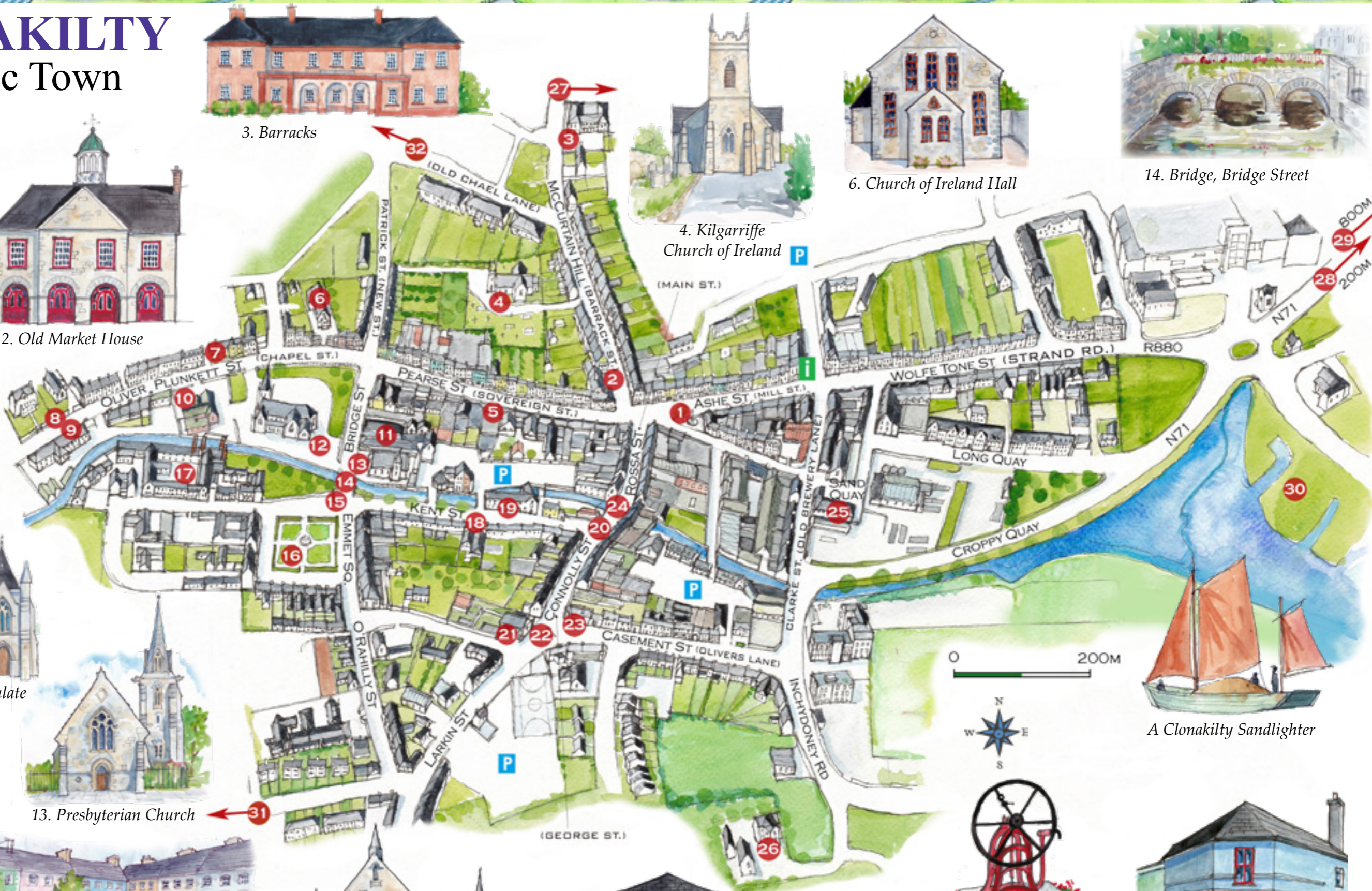
18. Methodist Chapel

21. Courthouse and Bridewell

22. The Wheel of Fortune

23. Old Linen Hall

A Clonakilty Sandlighter

(OLD CHAEL LANE)

PATRICK ST. (NEW ST.)

McCURTAIN HILL (BARRACK ST.)

(MAIN ST.)

WOLFE TONE ST. (STRAND RD.)

R880

N71

N71

OLIVER PLUNKETT ST.

(CHAPEL ST.)

PEARSE ST. (SOVEREIGN ST.)

ASHE ST. (MILL ST.)

LONG QUAY

BRIDGE ST.

ROSSA ST.

CLARKE ST. (OLD BREWERY LANE)

Sand Quay

KENT ST.

EMMET SQ.

CONNOLLY ST.

CROPPY QUAY

O'RAHILLY ST.

CASEMENT ST. (OLIVERS LANE)

INCHYDONEY RD.

LARKIN ST.

(GEORGE ST.)

BOOM

200M

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