



MACROOM (Maigh Chromtha- "the crooked plain") owes its origins to its location on a fording point where the ancient route between mid-Cork and west-Kerry crossed the Sullane River. The town lies in the medieval territory of Múscraigh Mittine. The Normans attempted to conquer this area in the late-12th/early-13th century but were driven back by the Gaelic Mac Carthy clan who went on to establish the powerful lordship of Muskerry in the 15th century. They built Macroom Castle on the east bank of the river and a settlement is shown around the castle on the 17th century Down Survey map.

After the turbulence of the 17th century, Macroom grew into a successful market town, and by the late 18th century had begun to resemble the town we see today. It was developed by the joint owners Lord Bernard (Earl of Bandon) and the Hedges-Eyre family. Among the industries established in Macroom at this time were a distillery and a woollen mill. Rock salt was also brought from England via Cork and distributed from the town for use in salting butter for export. In the 1800s Sir Robert Eyre took sole control of Macroom, and began an expansion program, building flour mills and tanneries. He funded a new market house and transformed the old castle into a country house. Tolls were collected at the entrances to the town on market days to pay for upkeep and facilities. Macroom became a vibrant and thriving hub. The principal trade was corn, purchased here by Cork merchants. A weekly market was held on Saturday and from January till May there was a weekly market for pigs.

In the 18th and 19th centuries many people lived in lanes off the main thoroughfares of the town. These lanes were lined by rows of small single-storey houses usually thatched. Macroomians recall the lane names such as Duggan's Lane, Batten's Lane, Holland's Lane, The Forge Lane, Bridewell Lane, and Temperance Lane.

Macroom retains its authentic rural market town ambience and its long Main Street and Market Square with traditional shop fronts portray a strong sense of its 18th and 19th century character.

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

1. THE MARKET SQUARE: The spacious market square, enclosed by the Gothic Gate House (12) to west and the Town Hall to the east, remains the heart of the town. In the 19th century corn, vegetables and livestock were traded here. The current weekly Tuesday market continues the tradition.

2. CAST IRON POST BOX: Wall-mounted Victorian post box, installed c.1880. The top of the box bears the crown and royal cipher of Queen Victoria.

3. RAILWAY STATION: The storage shed of the railway station, which opened on 12th May 1866, still stands. The railway linking Macroom to Cork City closed in 1947 and the site of the station is now the town's bus station.

4. FAIR GREEN: The present-day mart building stands close to the site of one of the town's two fair greens (the other was in Masseytown) which were in use in the mid-19th century. Fairs were held alternatively at the Market square and on Masseytown Green.

5. BRICK CHIMNEY STACK: In 1905 Mr. Thomas C. Bird founded the Macroom Electric Company to provide electricity to private consumers. A more powerful generator was later installed and this brick chimney was built to carry the smoke from the generator. In 1912 the company was purchased by the Manchester Electric Light Company and provided street lighting as well as a domestic supply to some houses.

6. TOWN CRIER STONE: Located on the corner of Chapel Hill and Main Street, this flat topped stone was used as a horse-mounting platform and also used by the Town Crier to make important announcements.

7. ST. COLMAN'S RC CHURCH: The appointment of Very Rev. Canon James Roche as parish priest of Macroom in 1792 marks the start of the planning of a new Roman Catholic church. It was built in the early 19th century but was remodelled and extended by Dominic Coakley in 1893. Its Gothic Revival style is typical of churches of its date with pointed arch window and door openings, buttresses and a fine ribbed stucco plaster ceiling. This, along with the use of contrasting local sandstone and limestone, creates an impressive edifice.

8. SAINT MARY'S CONVENT: Built in 1858 on a site donated by Mary Ann McSweeney. A tunnel under New Road leads to the nun's burial ground close to St Joseph's Mound.

9. BOYS AND GIRLS NATIONAL SCHOOL: Built c.1890 in a similar architectural style to the adjoining convent and church. This single-storey building with gable-fronted end bays and unusual windows and doors, displays fine stonework that adds to the character of the streetscape.

10. TOWN HALL: This striking building on the east side of Market Square was built in 1904 on site of the old market house and replaces earlier market stalls known as 'the bulks'. The central breakfront, projecting gables, and contrasting stone detailing make for an unusual building. It became the Town Hall in the early 20th century and is now the Cork County Council offices for the Macroom Municipal District.

11. STONE MONUMENT: Erected in the Square in 1945 to the memory of the 7th and 8th Battalions of Cork No.1 Brigade, this monument displays some intricate interlaced carving in the Celtic Revival style.

12. GATE HOUSE TO MACROOM CASTLE: The ornate neo-Gothic gate house, built by Robert Hedges in the early 19th century, dominates the western side of Market Square. The gate house with its central archway is flanked by slim turrets connected to an embattled curtain wall reflecting the style of architecture of the former castle and house within. The entrance is flanked by a pair of 18th century naval cannons which were given to Olive Hedges by the Whites of Bantry House.

13. MEDIEVAL MACROOM CASTLE (site of): Built by the McCarthy Lords of Muskerry in the 15th century, it controlled a strategic crossing point on the Sullane River. It was probably a tall rectangular tower house, similar to nearby Carrigphoooca Castle. It was repaired by Teigue McCarthy in 17th century, later passed to the Penn family and by the 18th century it was rebuilt into a country house.

14. MACROOM CASTLE HOUSE: In the early 19th century Robert Hedges Eyres commissioned the architect Robert Pain to rebuild the 18th century house in a gothic style that may have incorporated some sections of the earlier MacCarthy castle. The result was a large rectangular three-storey block with irregular fenestration and gothic towers and turrets. The house was burnt during the Civil War in 1922 and demolished in 1967, leaving only the western wing overlooking the river that we see today. Robert Hedges Eyres built the ornated Castellated Gateway (12) on the western side of the town square. The demesne is now part of the Macroom Town Park and some of the high demesne wall survives along Castle Street.

15. STONE DOOR SURROUND: A possible 17th-century doorway with shouldered arch inserted on the left side of the arched entrance to the Castle Garage. The door surround is likely to have come from the castle.

16. OLD BRIDEWELL: This three-storey building at the junction of Castle Street and Bridewell Lane was the barracks and bridewell which was replaced by the RIC barracks (No.20) in Masseytown.

17. CHURCH OF IRELAND CHURCH: Built in 1824 to a design by George Richard Pain. A polygonal chancel was added in 1869. It stands in the old graveyard and occupies the site of the medieval parish church. The church has an attractive stained glass window by Heaton, Butler and Bayne.

18. MACROOM BRIDGE: This magnificent 18th century road bridge over the Sullane River is composed of a series of semi-circular arches. It was widened in the late 18th century and later two wide segmental arches were inserted on its west side. These once provided overnight refuge for the poor attending the local market. A unique macabre feature is the hangman's hole, set in the third arch from the east but now difficult to see. A memorial to the Gaelic writer, an tAthair Peadar Ó Laoghaire (1839-1920), can be seen on the parapet wall.

19. MASSEYTOWN: Named after the Massey family who lived in Mount Massey House, this area, located on the west side of the river, was the administrative and industrial hub of the town in the 1800s. The main street was known as *Bóthar na Sup* (road of the wisps or straw). It was renamed New Street in the late 19th century when many houses were rebuilt. A number of traditional shop fronts survive along the street.

20. RIC BARRACKS: Built in the late 1800s by local workmen as part of an employment scheme devised by Sir Robert Eyre. The Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) was the police force in Ireland from 1822 to 1922. The barracks is still in use as the Garda Station.

21. COURT HOUSE AND BRIDEWELL: Built in the 1820s to a design by George Pain. The elegant yet austere appearance reflects the serious business within.

22. TANNERIES (site of): There were a number of tanneries in this area during the 19th/early 20th century. They were generally located on the outskirts of the town as turning animal skins into leather was a smelly process.

23. WATER PUMP: In the 19th century water supply was provided in towns and villages by this type of water pump. Technically they were not pumps as they were gravity fed from a nearby reservoir and provided much need fresh water for the surrounding houses.

24. WALTON'S MILLS: The Walton Brothers' flour mill in Masseytown is still in use producing the popular and internationally famous 'Macroom Oatmeal and Flour'. Water to power the milling machinery was delivered by a mill stream fed by a weir across the Sullane River circa 2km to the south/west. The mill stream can be seen in Macroom Town Park and running alongside Masseytown Road.

25. WORK HOUSE, BURIAL GROUND AND FEVER HOSPITAL: Built in 1843 to the designs of George Wilkinson. It was burned down in 1921 and replaced by the Community Hospital in 1932. A section of the old building remains, known as *Tigh na mBocht* ("House of the Poor"). Recent archaeological excavations recorded the foundations of some of the Work House buildings.

26. BEALICK CORN MILLS: Built by the Harding family in the late 18th century. In 1899 the mill's water-wheel was used to generate electricity for Macroom, which was one of the earliest towns in the country to have electric streetlights.

27. STANDING STONE PAIR: In a field opposite Bealick Mill, this pair of stones was once part of an alignment of 3 stones and was erected in the Bronze Age (1,500-800 BC). These stones and other monuments in the surrounding area show Macroom was a popular place to live in prehistoric times. According to tradition this field is the site of the *Battle of Bealach Leachta* (978 AD) in which Brian Boru's forces defeated the army of the King of Munster.

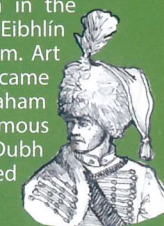
William Penn (1644-1718) was a prolific writer, social campaigner and early member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). He is believed to have spent his childhood in Macroom Castle, which was owned by his father, Sir William Penn senior. In 1681 Charles II gifted Penn a large tract of land in North America, including the states of Pennsylvania and Delaware, in payment for a debt owed to his father. He was instrumental in the founding of Philadelphia.



Boetius MacEgan was appointed chaplain general of the Ulster forces in the 17th century, and he accompanied the Confederation forces on many campaigns. In 1646 he was proposed as Bishop of Ross by the Papal Nuncio, and consecrated at Waterford in 1648. However, he never gained access to his Bishop's See because it remained under Protestant control. MacEgan helped to raise forces to fight Cromwell in Macroom in 1650. He was captured at the Battle of Macroom and was hanged in The Square, reputedly using the reins of his own horse. He was buried at Aghinagh and is remembered locally as a martyr.



Airt Uí Laoghaire was an Irish Catholic, and captain in the Hungarian Hussars. Local tradition tells that his wife-to-be Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill first saw Art at the market in Macroom. Art lived in Raleigh House, Macroom, and it was here that he came into conflict with a local landowner and magistrate Abraham Morris in the 1770s. The feud ended in Art's murder. The famous lament *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire*, composed by Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill upon learning of his death, has been described as the greatest Irish love poem of the 18th century.



An tAthair Peadar Ua Laoghaire (1839-1920) was born in the parish of Clondrohid, Co. Cork. A Catholic priest and author, he is seen as one of the founders of modern Irish language literature. *Séadna* (1894) is the first major literary work of the Gaelic Revival. He went on to write several well-received serials and books including an autobiography *Mo Scéal Féin*, and several translations into modern Irish of medieval Gaelic texts. He died in Castlelyons, where he served as parish priest.



MACROOM HISTORIC TOWN



Remains of west wing of Macroom Castle House

PRODUCED BY
COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHORCAÍ
CORK COUNTY COUNCIL



<https://purecork.ie/plan-your-trip/tips-info/download-a-map-of-cork>

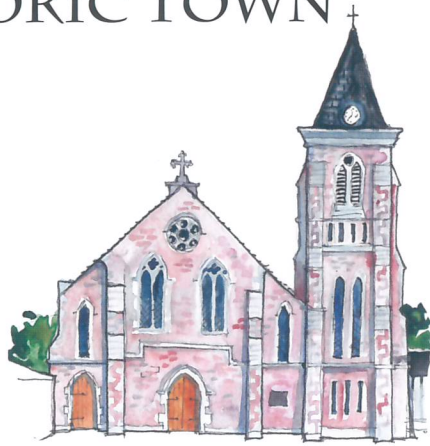
NOT FOR COMMERCIAL USE.
FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY.
DOES NOT PROVIDE ACCESS.
Design and images by Rhoda Cronin Allanic
Text by Elena O'Brien Turk
Printed December 2021



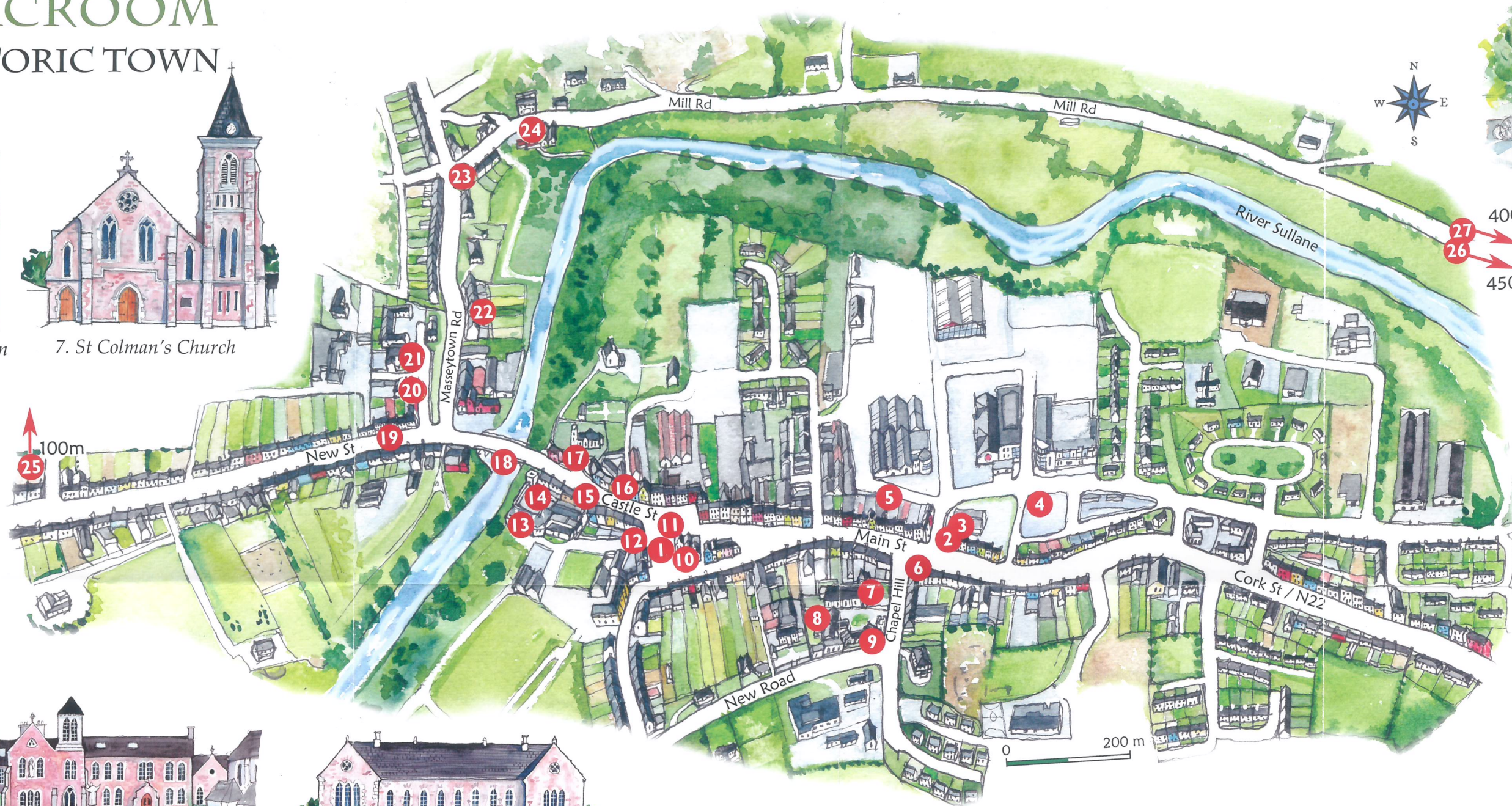
MACROOM HISTORIC TOWN



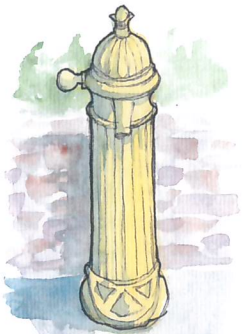
2. Victorian postbox



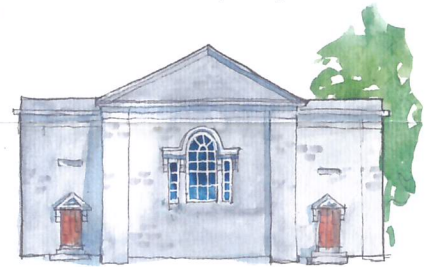
7. St Colman's Church



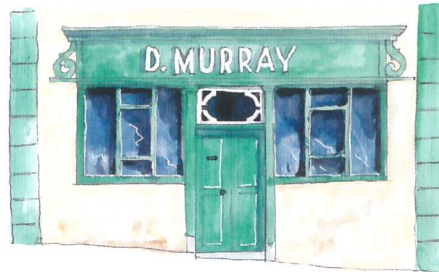
26. Bealick Mill



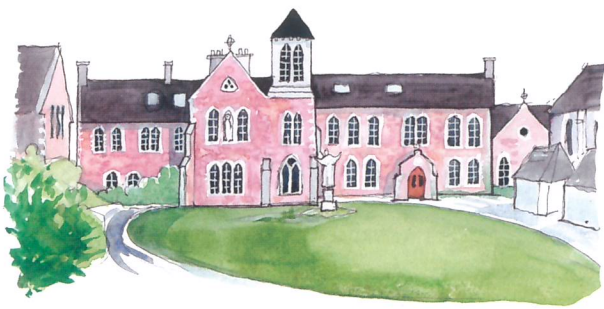
23. Water pump



21. Courthouse



19. Traditional shop front, Masseytown



8. St Mary's Convent



9. Boys and Girls National School



10. Town Hall



12. Gate House, Macroom Castle



15. Arched entrance and possible late medieval doorway, Castle Street



16. Old Bridewell



17. Church of Ireland Church



18. Macroom Bridge

"Those who wish to shake off gloom, let them repair to sweet Macroom"