



BANTRY (Beanntáir - territory of Beannt - an ancient king) is a lively market town (pop. 3,500) at the head of Bantry Bay.

The earliest known settlement in the area is the Early Christian monastery at Kilnaruane overlooking the town. The Normans invaded in the early 13th century and established a castle at Dunnamark but soon retreated. It was the Gaelic O'Sullivan Lordship of Beara that dominated the area in later Medieval times. The first small settlement in the current location was established in 1600 by English settlers keen to exploit the rich pilchard fisheries of Bantry Bay. After the turbulent 17th century, the town prospered and developed under the watchful eye of the Landlord Richard White, who had recently purchased the large estate. The town's population grew rapidly and by 1725 there were numerous fish processing plants, known as "fish palaces", where fish oil was extracted. Merchant ships visited regularly to transport local produce including cured and salted fish. The town expanded, arching over the river to create Bridge Street and New Street.

During the 1800s, the pilchard fisheries declined but other industries such as tanning, flour milling, textile production, iron smelting and brewing were established. Cereals, butter, pork, and beef were shipped out in great quantities and new quays and piers were built. However, the area was badly hit by the famine years of the mid-19th century. By the late 19th century, the development of new roads into West Cork and the arrival of the railway in 1881 revived the town's commercial activity. Tourism also flourished and Bantry became a popular destination.

The present town retains much of its 18th/19th century character with an elegant streetscape of two and three storey houses, as well as many original civic buildings. The survival of numerous traditional shop fronts reflects the commercial vibrancy of the town in the past. The town continues to be a lively commercial centre with numerous music and cultural events and is well known for its market with local crafts and artisan foods.



SITES TO SEE (refer to map overleaf for locations)

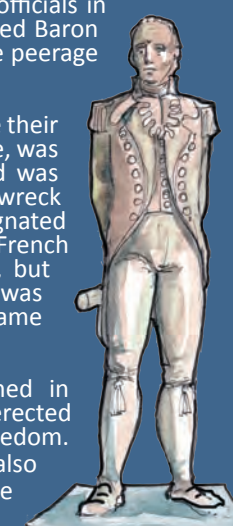
- 1. COURTHOUSE:** Built as a Courthouse and jail in 1824-1828 to a design by Cork-based architects, James & George R. Pain. The building was burnt in 1920's, restored and closed in the 1990's, now the Tourist Office.
- 2. METHODIST CHAPEL:** Built in 1866, designed by Richard Lee. It replaced a chapel built near the library in the 1730s. The basement was a school and the house beside it was the minister's Manse, built in 1879.
- 3. ST BRENDAN THE NAVIGATOR CHURCH OF IRELAND:** a prominently sited Gothic revival style church built in 1818 to a design by London architect Henry E. Kendall. The Church contains high quality woodwork, stained glass and a number of memorials to the White family of Bantry House.
- 4. ST BRENDAN'S NATIONAL SCHOOL:** Built in 1853 at the expense of Richard White, Earl of Bantry. It opened as a private school in 1855 and became a state National School in 1871.
- 5. RAILWAY STATION** (site of): The arrival of the railway in 1881 allowed easier access to markets and facilitated the growth of tourism. The original station was on high ground to the south of the town. In the late 1800s, land reclamation was undertaken which led to the creation of Egerton Square (now *Wolfe Tone Square*) and on the north side of the harbour a new station was built in 1892, the engine house and sections of the retaining wall along the line are still visible. A railway pier was

also built to accommodate steam ships that travelled on to Glengarriff, Adrigole and Castletownbere. Accommodation was available at the nearby Terminus Hotel. The railway closed in 1961.

- 6. STATUE OF ST BRENDAN THE NAVIGATOR:** this statue of the 6th century Saint Brendan, who is reputed to have sailed as far as America, was erected to commemorate the opening of the Whiddy Island Oil Terminal in 1969. It was created by Ian and Imogen Stuart of Dublin.
- 7. BANTRY HOUSE GATE LODGE:** An imposing classical-style gate lodge built in c.1845. The former Bantry Estate office, where rents were collected, stands adjacent to the lodge.
- 8. BANTRY HOUSE:** An impressive country house, original house built in the late 17th century by the Hutchins family. In the early 18th century it was enveloped by the present house built in a classical style, with many later additions and embellishments. The elevated position takes full advantage of the picturesque location with one of the best views of Bantry Bay. It has been the White family home since 1750 and houses a wonderful collection of art and furniture, much of it purchased in Europe by the Richard White, 2nd Earl of Bantry, in the 19th century. The house and gardens are open to the public.
- 9. FRANCISCAN FRIARY** (site of): Founded by Gaelic lord Dermot O'Sullivan in 1460 overlooking Bantry bay. It was destroyed in 1602 but some carved stones survive in the Abbey Graveyard where the friary once stood.
- 10. ANCHOR TAVERN:** Bantry retains a number of old traditional wooden shopfronts of which this is a good example.
- 11. WARNER'S CREAMERY AND BUTTER EXCHANGE:** Opened in c.1880 by William Warner who pioneered a blend of butter for the export market. It included dairies for blending and preserving the butter as well as sawmills and a joinery for making the butter boxes and firkins (barrels). By 1886, it employed over 100 men and was producing about 800 tons of butter a week in summer. In 1911 the property was leased to G.W. Biggs.
- 12. BLACKROCK TERRACE:** Built by local creamery owner William Warner on land leased from William Henry Hare, 4th Earl of Bantry, in 1886. Originally called Warner's Terrace, it was home to the business people of the town.
- 13. KILNARUANE EARLY CHRISTIAN ECCLESIASTICAL SITE:** Amongst the remains of the monastic site is the carved Kilnaruane Pillar Stone with one of the earliest depictions of a traditional currach boat in Ireland.
- 14. WORK HOUSE** (site of): In 1842-3, a workhouse was built to the south of the town (now Bantry General Hospital). It housed up to 900 starving Famine victims at a time in what were said to have been dreadful conditions. Communal burial pits were dug at the Abbey graveyard (9).
- 15. GODSON'S FOLLY:** In the first half of the 19th century, this section of street was cut through solid rock at the expense of a Mr. Godson who wished to improve access to his hotel on Wolfe Tone Square. Unfortunately the project ultimately bankrupted Mr Godson.
- 16. EARLY 19th CENTURY CORN MILL** (site of) which produced 12,000 bags of flour annually. It became a woollen mill in the late 19th century. Both mills were water powered by a vertical waterwheel and between 1912 and 1939 generated electricity for the town. The striking Library building was built on the site in 1974 to a 1962 design by Patrick McSweeney & Harry Wallace, with a replica waterwheel added to echo the past.
- 17. OLD TOWN HALL:** Built in 1885 on a site acquired by Canon Shinkwin, the Parish Priest to provide a public hall and meeting place for the townspeople of Bantry. Now part of the Centra shop.
- 18. ST FINBARR'S CHURCH:** Built in 1825 to replace an earlier thatched chapel. It was designed by Rev. Michael Augustine Riordan of Cork.

Its imposing appearance reflects the growing confidence of the Roman Catholic Church during the period of Catholic Emancipation. The transepts were added in 1846.

- 19. SISTERS OF MERCY CONVENT:** Built between 1859 and 62, it was designed in a Romanesque style by John Pine Hurley. It was largely funded by Sister Fanny Murphy, a member of a wealthy Cork family. The girls' school, which formed part of the complex, also included a lace school. A beautiful chapel was added to the Convent in 1877-78. The Convent closed in 2010.
 - 20. MARKET ARCH:** Built as a Poor Law relief effort in 1840, this was the formal entrance to the English Market. A market was held in this area from at least 1679. In contrast to the grand entrance, the market stalls were protected by a thatched roof. Fairs were held three times a year and the weekly market was held on Saturdays. A livestock market was held just below the Catholic Church in what is now Market Street.
 - 21. GARRYVURCHA GRAVEYARD:** The ruins of the first Church of Ireland church built in Bantry town c 1720, replacing the medieval parish church at Kilmocmogue some 9 km north-east of the town. The graveyard includes the burial vault of the Earls of Bantry and the unmarked grave of Ellen Hutchins, botanist.
 - 22. VICKERY'S INN:** Built in the early 1800s as a private house and extended and developed as a hotel from 1850 to 2006 by the Vickery family. They also ran a coaching service to Bandon, Macroom and Killarney and offered sight-seeing coach excursions to hotel guests.
 - 23. GODSON'S HOTEL:** (now O'Mahony, Farrelly and O'Callaghan Solicitors) See No. 15.
 - 24. SAND QUAYS:** These cobbled quay were built in the 19th Century to bring in coral sand dredged from the harbour and used as a fertiliser to improve the agricultural land.
- WOLFE TONE AND THE 1796 FRENCH ARMADA**
- In December 1796, 43 ships and 14,700 men set sail from Brest under the command of General Hoche, accompanied by the Irish rebel leader, and founder of the United Irishmen, Theobald Wolfe Tone. The aim of the United Irishmen was to win back control of Ireland from British rule and they persuaded the new French revolutionary government to help. This French Armada planned to land at Bantry and then march on to Cork, gathering local reinforcements along the way. However, bad planning and bad weather scattered the fleet; some turned back, some headed to the Shannon, and some arrived in Bantry Bay. The French ships remained in the bay almost a week but were unable to land due to stormy conditions. Frustrated, Tone wrote: "we were near enough to toss a biscuit ashore".
- Richard White of Seafield House (now Bantry House) gathered together a local militia and alerted officials in Cork of the impending invasion. He was created Baron Bantry for his efforts, and later elevated to the peerage as the 1st Earl of Bantry in 1816.
- Eventually the remaining 35 French ships made their way back to France. One frigate, La Surveillante, was judged unfit to make the return journey and was scuttled in Bantry Bay. The site of the shipwreck was rediscovered in 1979 and is now a designated National Monument. In 1798 a second French invasion was attempted at Killaloe, Co. Mayo, but it once again ended in failure. Wolfe Tone was eventually captured and died in prison the same year.
- In 1899, the Square in Bantry was renamed in honour of Wolfe Tone. In 2000 a statue was erected to commemorate his efforts to gain Irish freedom. An anchor from one of the French ships, also displayed in the Square, was recovered from the sea near Whiddy Island in 1980.



FAMOUS FACES

Ellen Hutchins (1785-1815), born in Ballylickey and buried at Garryvurcha, Bantry, is renowned as Ireland's first female botanist. A gifted botanical illustrator, she conducted ground-breaking work on non-flowering plants such as lichens and seaweeds, cataloguing and collecting over 1000 species in the short period between 1808 and her early death from TB in 1815.



Tim Healy (1855-1931), who was born in Bantry, was a prominent Irish nationalist politician, journalist, author and barrister. His political career began in the 1880s under Charles Stewart Parnell's leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party and continued into the 1920s when he was appointed first Governor-General of the Irish Free State.

Captain Francis O'Neill (1848-1936) was born in Trilbane near Bantry. As a young boy in West Cork he developed an interest in Irish music and learnt to play the fiddle, flute and uilleann pipes. After emigrating to the US in the 1860s, he joined the Chicago police force and rose in the ranks to become Chief of Police from 1901-1905. On retiring, he tirelessly collected and published 1000s of traditional Irish tunes for posterity.



Map of **BANTRY** Historic Town



Vickery's Inn, New Street (22)



Produced by CORK COUNTY COUNCIL COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHORCAÍ

Map available for download at: www.purecork.ie

Design and images by Rhoda Cronin-Allanic 2017





BANTRY

historic town



1. Former Courthouse



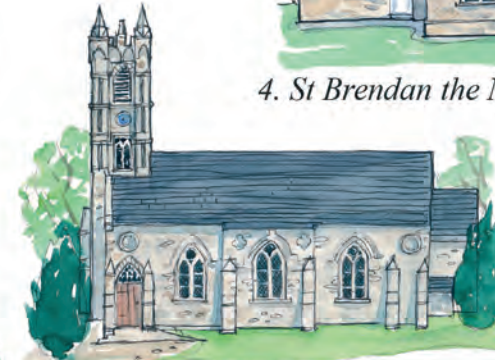
2. Former Methodist Chapel



4. St. Brendan the Navigator National School



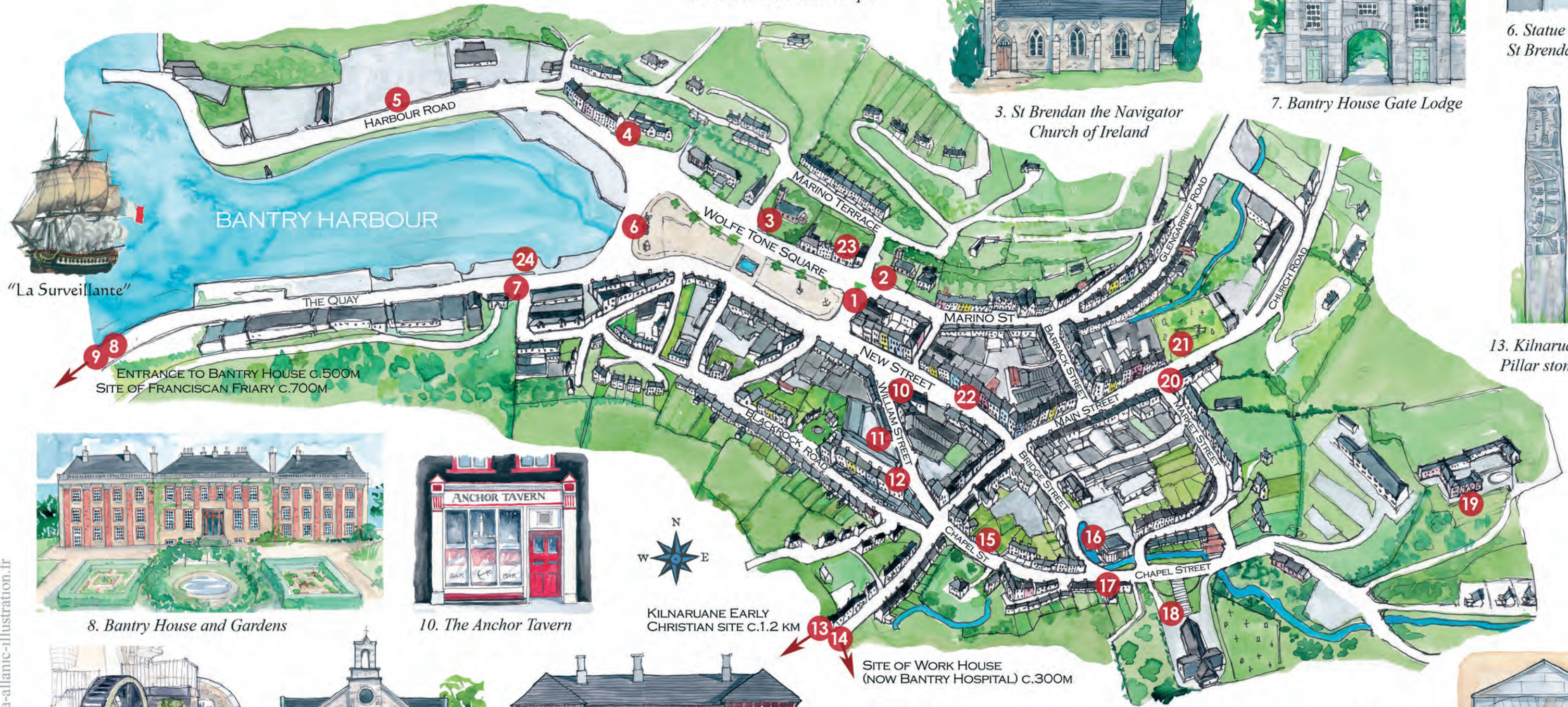
6. Statue of St. Brendan



3. St. Brendan the Navigator Church of Ireland



7. Bantry House Gate Lodge



13. Kilnaruane Pillar stone



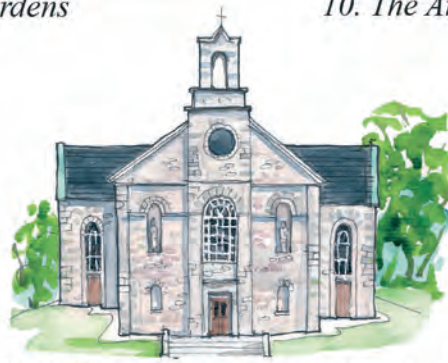
8. Bantry House and Gardens



10. The Anchor Tavern



16. Site of mill



18. St. Finbarr's Catholic Church



19. Former Mercy Convent



Left, the coat of arms of Bantry Town. The motto is a line taken from a 16th Century Irish poem by Aonghus mac Daighre ui Dhálaigh, one of a celebrated Munster literary family. "NÁ CLUINTER CLAOITECHT ORAIBH" - "NEVER MAY DEFEAT BE TOLD OF YOU!"



20. Market Arch

