



MITCHELSTOWN is a pleasant market town at the foot hills of the Galtee Mountains. It is one of the finest historic planned towns in Ireland retaining its original plan after two centuries of growth and change. It was laid out in the 18th and early 19th centuries by the King family, who variously held the titles of Baron Kingston, Viscount Kingsborough and Earl of Kingston. The town plan used the natural features of the site to great advantage, with the picturesque mountains as its backdrop. The present town replaced an older settlement originally called Villa Michel was founded by the Normans in the 13th century. This village was located near the medieval castle to the west of the present town. By the 14th century, the area belonged to the White Knights, chiefs of the Clangibbon, a branch of the powerful FitzGerald dynasty. Their castle in Mitchelstown was destroyed in the wars of 1641. In the 17th century, the Kings, Barons Kingston, became owners of the White Knights lands through marriage. By the late 1700s, their estates totalled over 60,000 hectares, by which time a neo-Classical styled county house was built as their family seat.

Between 1776 and 1825, the 2nd and 3rd Earls of Kingston built the present town to a design by John Webb, a student of the famous English landscaper, Capability Brown. The new town was designed to make use of striking vistas and on a grid pattern with wide main streets intersected by smaller streets and two spacious squares, one Georgian in style and the other for markets. Principal streets were closed off by views of important buildings or the nearby mountains.

The influence of the Kingstons on the locality began to wane in the second half of the 19th century when agrarian strife ended the landlord system of land ownership. This unrest created great tension between the landlord and tenants of the Kingston estates which made international headlines.

Mitchelstown today with its wealth of architectural heritage and preserved streetscapes remains one of the finest Georgian towns in Ireland.

Sites to see *(Asterisk indicate sites outside the town)*

- 1. NEW MARKET SQUARE:** Markets in Mitchelstown date to the 13th century. Their continuance was confirmed by Royal Charter in 1618. Weekly markets are still held every Thursday.
- 2. KINGSTON ORPHANAGE:** Established in the late 1700s by Lady Caroline, Dowager Countess of Kingston (1755-1823).
- 3. MARKET HOUSE:** Designed by James Pain, this impressive market house was built by George, 3rd Earl of Kingston in 1823. It also housed a court room. On 9th September 1887, it was the venue where Edward Carson (later an MP and Irish Unionist leader) was Crown prosecutor against John Mandeville and William O'Brien MP, because they had encouraged the Kingston tenants to resist eviction during the Land War.
- 4. ALLIED IRISH BANK:** Neo-Classical style bank built circa 1900. The style and size of the building shows the growing importance of these financial institutions at that time.
- 5. SAINT FANAHAN'S WELL*:** Saint Fanahan is the local patron saint, whose feast day is celebrated on 25th November. A long pleasant -tree lined mass path leads to the well. It runs on top an ancient double earthen bank, a once common feature in the rural countryside. Traditionally, pilgrims visited the well in the nine days leading up to the feast day. Seeing an eel in the well was believed to lead to miraculous cures for various illnesses. A carved stone on the bridge, thought to be of St. Fanahan, came from the rubble of the demolished Catholic church in 1978.
- 6. MARY CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN CATHOLIC CHURCH:** The church tower and spire are all that remain of the handsome Roman Catholic church, built in 1834, on this elevated location overlooking New Market Square. The prominent location with its elegant 40-metre high spire is unusual for an Irish Catholic church of this period. The present church was consecrated in 1980.
- 7. PRESENTATION CONVENT:** The Presentation Sisters founded a convent on this site in 1853. Until the closure of the convent in 2002, the nuns provided invaluable education for the girls and boys in the area.

8. MITCHELSTOWN MARTYRS' MEMORIAL: To John Casey, John Shinnick and Michael Loneran, who were killed in a riot during the Land War on 9th September 1887. The story of the riot and the shooting of the three men by police made international headlines and became known as the *Mitchelstown Massacre*. The position where they were killed are marked on the ground with a cross one in Market Square and two in Upper Cork Street.

9. BANK OF IRELAND: Striking purpose-built bank, c. 1900.

10. RAILWAY COTTAGES: The cottages on Railway Road are all that remain of the Fermoy/Mitchelstown Railway which ran between 1891 and 1953.

11. FEVER HOSPITAL: This two-storey building was built in 1823 by George 3rd Earl of Kingston to treat and care for the sick.

12. BRIGOWN ABBEY RUINS*: Saint Fanahan (Findchú) reputedly founded a monastery here in the early seventh century. The site was attacked by Vikings in 839AD when a round tower is mentioned and one of its monks was murdered. The round tower was struck by lightning in 1720 and its remains were demolished in 1807. The core of the church is pre-Romanesque and probably 11th century. It was altered a number of times from the 12th century onwards so that the remains are now a mosaic of different rebuilds. A modern sculpture of Saint Fanahan (32) can be seen outside the Garda Station on Upper Cork Street.

13. MULBERRY LANE: In 1820, Lady Caroline established a silk industry in Mulberry Lane and planted 400,000 mulberry trees on which silkworms feed. The enterprise was a success for a short period. Cottages for the workers were built along the lane. A few survive to this day.

14. SAINT GEORGE'S CHURCH: Lady Caroline commissioned this church in 1801. It was rebuilt in a neo-Gothic style in 1830 and features fine stained-glass windows and one of the oldest working organs in County Cork. The location is significant as the church with its elegant spire closes the vista at the south end of George Street as viewed from Kingston college (23). The church closed in 2016. The adjoining graveyard has many fine examples of 19th century tombs and headstones. It is now an Arts and Heritage Centre.

15. MILITARY BARRACKS*: Built in 1823 to house a small military detachment. It was burned by the anti-Treaty forces during the Civil War in 1922.

16. ICE HOUSE*: Built in the late 1700s on the Mitchelstown Castle demesne. Ice, gathered from nearby waterways, was stored in the icehouse which was used to keep meat and other goods cool or frozen. It is now separated from the demesne by the N72 and is accessible to the public.

17. KINGSTON SCHOOL: Established circa 1800 by Lady Caroline as a school for Protestant children. The school closed in the 1930s.

18. BRIDEWELL: A local prison built circa 1790 for detaining petty criminals. The later porch is supported by finely carved timber posts which came from a pavilion overlooking the artificial lake in the demesne of Mitchelstown castle.

19. SHOPFRONT, KING STREET: A well-proportioned 19th century timber shopfront, one of several fine examples in the town. Traditional shopfronts like this became a feature of Irish market towns of the period. The design incorporates classical elements with columns supporting an entablature that served as the name board or fascia.

20. FREEMASONS' LODGE: In 1731, this building at the corner of King Square was the home of Grand Lodge No. 1, Ireland, which was the first warranted lodge of freemasonry in Ireland - later transferred to Tuckey street in Cork City.

21. KING SQUARE: This elegant Georgian square was laid out in the 1770s as the principal element in the new town's design. Note the date plaques on the corner of King Square and George Street dating the completion of the square to 1780. The southern side consists of private residences. Kingston College (23) occupies the northern side. Tennis and croquet were once played on the lawns of the square.

22. WATER PUMP: Dating from 1825, this cast-iron pump supplied water to the local residents of the Square. The bee hive symbol of the Hive Iron

Works, Cork, is embossed on the sides crediting the foundry where it was made.

23. KINGSTON COLLEGE AND CHAPEL: Built between 1764 and 1776 as a complex of alms houses for 'decayed gentlemen and gentlewomen of the Church of Ireland as by law established'. James, 4th Baron Kingston, provided £25,000 to build the original 22 houses with a chapel at the centre. It was extended in the 1890s when the number of houses increased to 31. Beneath the chapel is the burial vault of the King family.

24. ENTRANCE TO MITCHELSTOWN CASTLE: The two tall slim gothic piers formed the entrance to the demesne. They reflected the neo-Gothic style of the big house that once stood within. To the left of the gates stands the former land agent's house, now a private residence.

25. MITCHELSTOWN CASTLE (site of): In the 1760s, like many of the landed gentry of the time, the Kings built a large comfortable classical styled country house on the site of the medieval castle. The house was lavishly rebuilt in 1823 in an imposing neo-Gothic style by 'Big George,' 3rd Earl of Kingston to a design by James and George Richard Pain. It was set in a designed landscape or demesne enclosed by a high stone wall enclosing 500 hectares, which were reserved as the private grounds of the King family. It contained all the features of a grand demesne: a large deer park planted with woods, ornamental and walled gardens, farm buildings, ornamental man-made lakes and an ice house (16). It also contained the site of the medieval church and burial grounds (26). The castle was one of the largest neo-Gothic houses in Ireland. The nearest comparable example is Lismore Castle. Mitchelstown Castle was looted and burned by Republicans in 1922 and subsequently demolished. The stones were reused to build the new Mount Melleray Abbey, County Waterford. The site of the castle is now occupied by Dairygold, one of the leading Irish agri-food companies.

26. SITE OF MEDIEVAL CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD: Located adjacent to the site of the medieval castle and later houses. The date of the church is unclear but it most likely dates to before the Reformation of the 1540s. It was abandoned and demolished when the new Church of Ireland church (14) was built in George Street. The graveyard was damaged in the past and contains several relocated headstones.

27. KINGSTON ARMS HOTEL: Built in 1780 as a hotel. Hotels sprang up in the 18th and 19th century with improved communication to provide accommodation for the weary traveller. In 1940 it was converted into offices and its outbuildings were converted for butter and cheese making.

28. MANOR MILL: This corn mill was built late 18th century on the south bank of the Gradoge River. Between the 1930s and 1970s, it was used as a butter-box making factory and store for cheese.

29. WORKHOUSE: The workhouse opened at the end of the Great Famine in 1851. Designed to accommodate 600 paupers, in its year of completion over 1,200 of the poorest of the poor found themselves within its walls. For a brief period between 1914 and 1916, the workhouse was used as a military barracks. It was burned during the Civil War in 1922 and the buildings were demolished in the 1950s leaving the high enclosing walls. There is a small cemetery at the rear, which contains several unmarked burials.

30. COACH LANE: Got its name from the carriage makers and wheelwrights who lived and worked there in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is now known as Arch Avenue.

31. CATHOLIC CHAPEL: Built circa 1780, this building served as a Catholic chapel until 1834 when the new church (6) was built overlooking New Square. It served as a school until 1857. In 1899, with the establishment of Mitchelstown Rural District Council, it became the Town Hall, by which name it is still known even though the Council was abolished in 1925. Victims of the Great Famine are buried in the grounds where a sculpture was erected to their memory in 1997.

32. STATUE OF ST FANAHAN: Limestone statue by Clíodhna Cussen (1981).

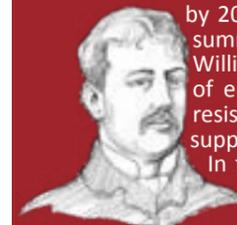
33. CAMPAIGN HOUSE: In the 1880's it was the headquarters of the Mitchelstown branch of the Land League and the Plan of Campaign which sought land reform through reduced rents and increased tenant rights. Two doors from the RIC barracks, the building was barricaded with tree branches at the height of the resistance campaign. The name survives on the building and reminds us of an important part of Mitchelstown's past history.

FAMOUS FACES

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759 – 1797), English writer, philosopher and women's rights advocate. Her most notable work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, was centuries ahead of her time in seeking social, political, economic and educational equality for women. Between 1786 and 1788 she was employed by the Earl of Kingston as governess to his large family. She died giving birth to her daughter Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*.



John Mandeville (1849-1888), a leader of the Land League who led the tenant farmers in the area in a campaign to reduce rent by 20%. On September 9th 1887, Mandeville was summoned to Court in Mitchelstown along with William O'Brien (MP) where they were convicted of encouraging tenants on the Kingston estate to resist evictions and rent increases. A crowd of 8000 supporters paraded into town and a riot broke out. In the chaos that followed, three men were shot by police. Mandeville endured two months in Tullamore Jail and died soon after his release in July 1888. His funeral was attended by 20,000 people. In 1906 a statue of him was erected in New Market Square.



William Trevor (Cox) (1928-2016) was born in Upper Cork Street, Mitchelstown, in 1928. An internationally renowned author of short stories and novels he was elected as a member of Aosdána and knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for services to literature. Mitchelstown Heritage Society commissioned a sculpture to Trevor in 2004. His best known works include "The Ballroom of Romance" and "Fools of Fortune".

Mitchelstown Historic Town Map



Produced by
CORK COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHORCAÍ
see website: <http://www.purecork.ie/map>



Design and images by Rhoda Cronin-Allanic 2018



MITCHELSTOWN

Historic Town



2. Kingston orphanage



3. Market House



5. St Fanahan's Well



22. Water Pump



6 Church of Mary Conceived Without Sin



7. Convent



11. Fever hospital



14. St George's Church of Ireland



16. Ice House



17. Kingston School



18. Bridewell



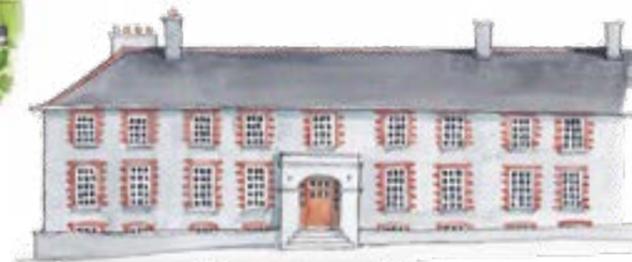
19. Shop front, King's Street



24. Entrance to site of Mitchelstown Castle



25. Mitchelstown Castle (now demolished)



27. Kingston Arms Hotel



28. Manor Mill



29. Entrance to Work House site



32. Statue of St Fanahan



There are a number of heritage signs in the town and environs with more detailed information.

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Map produced in collaboration with Mitchelstown Heritage Society.

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