



**SCHULL** Overlooked by the bare slopes of Mount Gabriel, the picturesque coastal town of Schull (also known as Skull) is a popular holiday and sailing destination. The name appears to derive from the Irish word *scoil* meaning a school but, alternatively, may be an anglicisation of the word *scumhall* meaning a steep hill or a narrow cove.

The Schull area has been occupied since at least Neolithic times (3600- 2500 BC) as evidenced by the nearby megalithic portal tomb at Arderrawinny (on private land). This tradition of tomb building continued into the early Bronze Age with the wedge tomb at Altar (Toormore) [8]. During the Bronze Age, copper mining was carried out on the slopes of Mount Gabriel [28]. Mizen was an important source of copper at the time.

There is documentary evidence that there was a settlement here from the late 12th century, probably a fishing village based around the sheltered harbour. Fishing and the preserving of fish continued to be a mainstay of the economy well into the 20th century; in 1959 the town was the third largest fishery in Ireland.

The present streetscape developed in the 18th and 19th centuries with the construction of terraces of 2-3 storey houses with shops on ground floor. Schull and its environs suffered greatly during the famine of 1845-49 and in 1851 a workhouse [31] was established to the north east of the town. By the late-19th century the town had a number of thriving businesses including grocers, a bakery, a forge, a saddle maker, banks, several pubs and an inn. Due to its remote location and surrounding rugged terrain, Schull was more readily accessible by sea than by land until well into the 19th century. In 1886 a narrow gauge rail link was opened between Schull and Skibbereen thus greatly improving access. Also in the late 19th century, a new road, known as the New Cut, was built alongside the railway line replacing the old *Butter Road* which is now a popular walkway.

## 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 SCHULL BAROMETER:** In 1889 this stick barometer was gifted to the people of Schull by the London Meteorological Office following a series of lectures given by Captain Tomby on the advantages of barometers for fishermen and sailors.

**2. THE COURTYARD:** Formerly called Hibernian House, this fine late 19th century townhouse and commercial premises housed several businesses including a drapery with a tailor's and seamstress' overhead, a grocery shop and a bar, with a grain store, bottle store, bakery and boat yard to the rear. It retains many original features including timber shop fronts and a carriage entrance with spur stones to protect the jambs from damage by cartwheels. The fine wrought iron grilles were made by McCarthy's of Skibbereen whose name, along with the date 1890, is stamped on the iron work.

**3. CUNARD LINE TICKET OFFICE:** In the early 20th century this building, housed an agency for the Cunard Line.

**4. ARDMANAGH HOUSE:** Built in the early 19th century as the residence of Major J. Wynne, it later became the parochial house. It is now occupied by Cork County Council offices.

**5. MUNSTER AND LEINSTER BANK:** Now an arts centre, this purpose-built bank building was constructed in the early 1930s using stone salvaged

from the Church of Ireland church on Cape Clear. The Irish banking system was established in the 19th century and played an important role in sustaining the local economy. Bank architecture tended to be solid and exuded a sense of stability, prosperity, and honesty.

**6. PROVINCIAL BANK:** Built as a bank c.1900, this finely crafted building is now a local library. It is built of brick with limestone detailing and has ornamental roof finials. It creates an attractive end to the streetscape.

**7. METHODIST CHURCH AND SCHOOL HOUSE:** Wesleyan Methodist chapel was built in the early 19th century. The small stone and brick building adjacent to it was a schoolhouse. These are now a private residence.

**8. ALTAR WEDGE TOMB:** This wedge-shaped tomb dates to the transition between the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, i.e. 2300 - 1800 BC. When excavated in 1989, a small quantity of burnt human bone was found within the chamber and some whale or dolphin bones were discovered in the entrance. As is common for megalithic tombs of this type, the entrance is typically facing south-west with what seems to be a deliberate alignment on Mizen Peak across the bay.

**9. THE MANSE:** 19th century former Methodist minister's house.

**10. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH OF IRELAND:** Built in a Neo-Gothic style in 1852-5 to a design by Cork architect Joseph Welland. It replaced an earlier church [12]. The organ originally stood in St Finbarre's Cathedral, Cork, but was moved to Schull in 1889.

**11. GROVE HOUSE:** An early 19th century rectory which became a private home and then a guest house. Grove House has received many well-known literary and artistic figures over the years, including George B. Shaw, Jack Yeats and Edith Somerville.

**12. MEDIEVAL PARISH CHURCH:** Though the core of the church is medieval with an ogee-headed window in the north wall, it was extensively rebuilt in the mid-18th century by the Church of Ireland and continued in use as the parish church until Holy Trinity built in the mid-19th century (10), after which it became a ruin. Its distance from the town indicates that the settlement may have shifted from here, probably in the late-17th /early-18th century, from this location up to the main road.

**13. THE COLLA SHIPWRECK:** The remains of a 16th or 17th century ship were discovered during the archaeological monitoring of dredging on the west side of Schull Harbour. The vessel, which may have been a pirate ship or trading vessel, contained exotic goods including South Sea coconuts and Iberian pottery. The wreck site is now protected by a no dive zone.

**14. PROTESTANT SCHOOL AND TEACHER'S HOUSE:** 19th century school and teacher's residence, now a private house. The Education Act of 1831 was the beginning of mass education, initially at primary level. Although the State assisted, the various religious denominations built and ran their own schools despite attempts by the state to integrate them. Some schools provided a teacher's residence, of which this is a typical example.

**15. SOUTH TERRACE:** This row of neat two-storey houses was built c. 1900 as workers houses. The western most house was a medical dispensary.

**16. SCHULL COAST GUARD STATION:** This two-storey building, now a private house, was the first coast guard station established in Schull in the early 19th century. It was part of a strategic network of coastal protection to curb piracy and smuggling and to assist navigation. In the 1860s, a new coastguard station, designed by Board of Works Architect E. T. Owen, was constructed to the east of the town but it no longer exists.

**17. GRAIN STORE:** Known as Furlong's Stores, later as the Cork Milling Co., this imposing 19th century grain store provided convenient storage for grain adjacent to the pier.

**18. \*BEACONS:** A pair of stone navigation beacons built on Long Island and Goat Island in the 1860s to mark the entrance to Schull Harbour.

**19. SCHULL PIER:** Many such piers were built around Ireland's coast during the 19th century to develop the fishing industry and to improve communications in remote areas. Schull Pier dates to the mid-19th century and became a keystone of the local economy where fish were

landed, salted and packed into barrels before being exported. In the late 19th and early 20th century the Clyde Shipping Company operated a weekly steam ship service along the Cork/Kerry coast. In 1893, the railway line [28] was extended as far as the pier thereby greatly improving Schull's ability to export fish to markets in Cork and further afield.

**20. ANCHOR:** A large iron anchor on display near the pier was salvaged from the sea off Mizen Head and is believed to have come from one of the ships of the French fleet which attempted an ill-fated landing in Bantry Bay in 1796.

**21. RAILWAY BRIDGE:** This single arched stone bridge was constructed c. 1893 to allow the railway line to be extended as far as the pier [19]. It was blown up by the IRA during the War of Independence in the 1920s to prevent the line being used by the British Army to move troops.

**22. WAREHOUSE:** The three storey 19th century warehouse was used to store grain and also salt which was used to cure fish. Opposite the warehouse is a stone wall with a stile allowing access to the stream.

**23. ST MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH:** A typical early 19th century Catholic Church built in 1827 on elevated ground within the town. It represents the new freedom to build RC churches following the relaxation of the Penal Laws. It has a characteristic bell cote on the south gable. The church is said to have been built by Welsh masons. it was refurbished in 1903 and again in the 1980s.

**24. CATHOLIC YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY HALL:** CYMS hall, now a community hall, built on the site of the 19th century town hall. The CYMS was founded in Limerick by Richard Baptist O'Brien in 1849 following the devastation of the famine to provide support to and foster social and spiritual co-operation with its members.

**25. BOYS' NATIONAL SCHOOL:** Built in 1895 on the site of an earlier National School. It functioned as the boys' school until 1998 when it was amalgamated with the Convent Girls National School.

**26. CONVENT OF MERCY:** Built c.1907, this two-storey former convent displays interesting characteristics of early 20th century architecture with side chimneys and a steeply pitched hipped roof with decorative ridge tiles and finials.

**27. \*MOUNT GABRIEL:** The site of over thirty copper extraction sites dating to the Early/Middle Bronze Age (1700 to 1400 BC; See panel to right for more information).

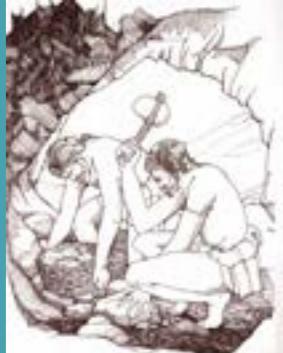
**28. RAILWAY STATION:** The Skibbereen and Schull light railway was opened in 1886, greatly improving access to the town. The line stopped carrying passengers in 1947 and finally closed in 1953. Some of the infrastructure survives today including the former station which is now a private residence.

**29. \*STANDING STONE:** Located on a private laneway on the south side of the R592 to the east of the town. This 1.65m high rectangular stone is aligned NE-SW, which is typical of Bronze Age monuments and perhaps orientated on some celestial event such as the setting sun at midwinter. Standing stones were erected in the Bronze Age to mark burials or route ways or as ritual markers.

**30. \*CORN MILL, Cooradarrigan:** A small rural 19th century watermill, which retains its wooden waterwheel. The waterwheel drove the millstones to grind corn into flour for the local community. A former wool carding mill stands to the east. Carding is a mechanical process that disentangles, cleans and mixes the woollen fibres prior to spinning.

**31. \*SCHULL WORKHOUSE RUINS:** Built in 1851 in the aftermath of the Great Famine, Schull workhouse was one of about 130 workhouses built in Ireland. It was designed by George Wilkinson, architect to the Poor Law Commissioners, and was built at a cost of £6000 to house 600 inmates. Surrounded by a high stone wall, one can still see the remains of the administration building where inmates were admitted; the dormitories and the hospital. It was burned down in 1921 during the War of Independence to prevent it being used as a barracks by the British army.

Since Bronze Age times, the exposed hills of the Mizen Peninsula have been known for their mineral resources. In the period between 1700 and 1400 BC Mount Gabriel, to the north of the town of Schull, attracted Bronze Age miners who sought out copper deposits to smelt with tin in order to produce bronze weapons and tools. Using stone hammers and fire to split the rock faces, they dug over 30 shafts into the hillside. Bronze Age mines have been found in several other locations on the Mizen Peninsula, including at nearby Goleen and on Horse Island.



In the early 19th century, the Schull area once again became the focus of mining, much of it small scale and short-lived. Mining resumed on Mount Gabriel and a new copper mine was opened at Coosheen, on the east side of Schull Bay. This small mine, which was operated by Captain Thomas between 1839-77, was renowned for the richness of its deposits. Barytes, which was used as a paint additive and in the making of paper, was also mined on Mount Gabriel and at Derreenlomane near Ballydehob. A mill for crushing barytes into powder was located in the townland of Coosheen.

## SCHULL Historic Town Map



[19] Schull pier, c. 1900



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

Design and images by Rhoda Cronin-Allanic 2019

PURE  
CO  
RK



# SCHULL

## Historic Harbour Town



2. The Courtyard



4. Ardmanagh House



5. Former AIB Bank



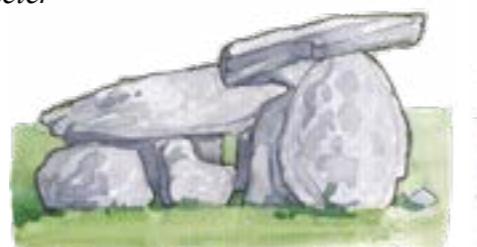
6. Former Provincial Bank



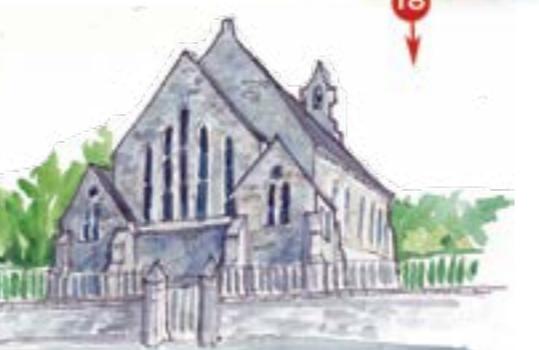
1. The Schull Barometer



7. Methodist Chapel and School House



8. Altar Wedge Tomb



10. Holy Trinity Church of Ireland



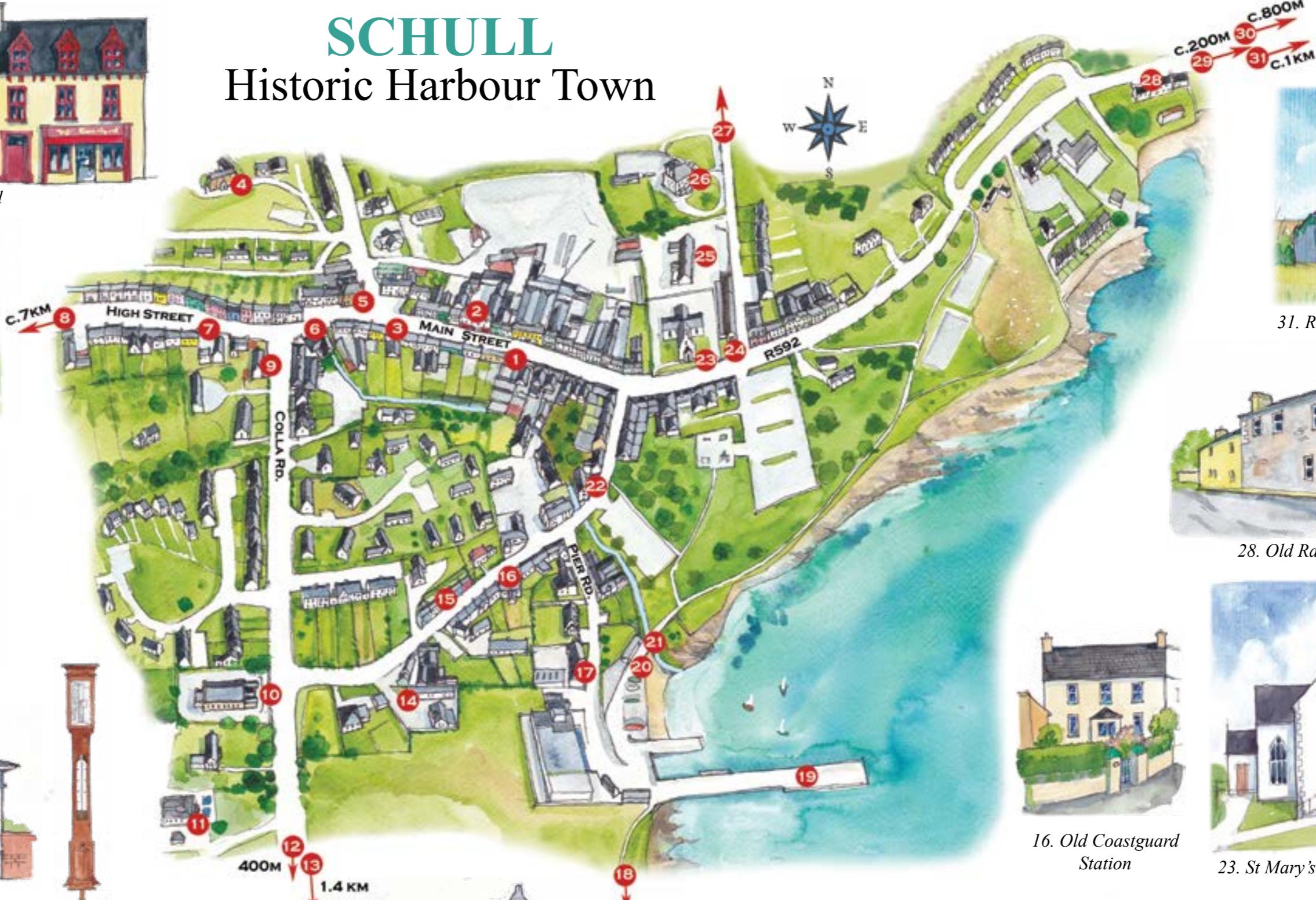
12. Medieval Church



20. Anchor



21. Old Railway Bridge



31. Ruins of Schull Workhouse



28. Old Railway Station



16. Old Coastguard Station



23. St Mary's Catholic Church