DUNMANWAY (Dún Mánmhaí) is a charming tranquil market town in the middle of West Cork. The core of the town is the Market Square from which streets radiate out along the main access roads. These streets retain their 18th/19th century appearance with a mixture of shops and houses interspersed with public buildings. The town lies in the ancient territory of Carbery and straddles two tributaries of the Bandon river. This was part of the lordship of the McCarthy Reagh who had a castle at the west end of Castle Street. There is likely to have been a small settlement in the environs of the castle.

The English crown settled a colony there to provide a resting place for troops marching between Bandon and Bantry. By 1700, about thirty families lived in the town. The modern town owes its foundation to Sir Richard Cox, Lord Chancellor of Ireland and Speaker in the House of Lords, who came into possession of this area in the 19th century. He was granted permission to hold two annual fairs and a weekly market and also established a textile industry that, by the mid-18th century, had an international reputation for its products. Every year, on May 1st, the town’s spinning wheels and cloths were displayed for the prize of a coveted title and a year’s free rent. With the decline of the local textile industry in the early 19th century new industries were introduced. A brewery was built in 1831, producing 2,600 barrels annually. Also built at this time were a number of flour mills and tan yards. The coming of the railway was another important development that boosted the town’s economy.

The 19th century also saw the growth of education in the town with the arrival of the religious orders and the setting up of the Model School. Duffy’s Circus regularly over-wintered on the site of Galvin’s Filling Station (Main Street) with its exotic range of animals to be seen in town.

The town’s traditions are celebrated annually during the August bank holiday weekend when the traditional Ballabuidhe Horse Fair is held along with a gathering of the Dohenys.

1. Market Square: once occupied by the Market House, today it is a pleasant open space with a statue of Sam Maguire (1877–1927), one of the town’s famous republican’s whose name is immortalised in the Sam Maguire Cup - the All Ireland Senior Football Championship trophy.
3. Site of McCarthy Tower House: built in the late 19th century by the McCaryths. Nothing remains of the tower house today. It is said that stones from the building were re-used to build the Long Bridge on the road to Ballinena and a mill in the town.
5. Former Brideswell: built in the early 19th century. Thomas Hovenden, son of the town gaoler, was born here in 1840. He went on to become an internationally known painter and art teacher in America.
6. St Patrick’s Hall: dated 1815 with a later entrance block added in the 1900’s.
7. Convent and Chapel: designed by Dominick Coakley in 1888 for the Sisters of Charity. The community ran Maria Immaculata Secondary School and a Domestic Science School. In 2000 the Secondary School was amalgamated with the Vocational School and relocated to a new site on the Bantry road.
8. Former Methodist Church: built in 1836 and renovated in 1912 and converted into Atkins Hall in 2014 by the Atkins family. It now houses the Dunmanway Visitor and Cultural Centre. The Centre is open weekdays (except Wednesdays) 10am - 3pm and has an interesting display of local memorabilia and information.
9. St. Patrick’s Church: built in 1834 following the Catholic Emancipation and typical of the many churches built at this time across Ireland. The building reflects the growing confidence of the Catholic Church with its bold yet elegant style. The interior has fine artistic features including galleries, stained glass and a decorated marble reredos behind the altar.
10. Carbery House: said to have originally been built as a rectory in the late 18th century. It subsequently became the property of the Shuldhalm family.

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