BANTRY (Bheanntraí - territory of Beann – 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 Kilnaneane overlooking the town. The Normans invaded in the early 13th century and established a castle at Dunnamuck but soon retreated. It was the Cecilia 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 1729 it was home to a large community. 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 railways 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 and commercial buildings in the town is testimony to its 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 overlaid 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 1790s. The building was used as a school and the house beside it was the minister’s Manse, built in 1879. It replaced a chapel built near the library in the 1730s. The basement was built in 1866, designed by Richard Lee. It replaced a chapel built near the library in the 1730s. The basement was designed by London architects, James & George R. Pain. The building was

3. ST BRENDAN THE NAVIGATOR CHURCH OF IRELAND: This church was built on the site in 1974 to a 1962 design by Patrick McSweeney & Hutchins, Botanist. Amongst the

4. BANTRY HOUSE GATE LODGE: An impressive country house, original house built in the late 18th 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 alterations. The revetted position takes full advantage of the picturesque location near the best views of Bantry Bay. It has been the White family home since 1750 and 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 garden are open to the public.

5. FRANCISCAN FRIARY (site of f): Founded by Gaelic lord Dermot O’Sullivan in 1486 overlooking Bantry Bay. It was destroyed in 1602 and some carved stones survive in the Abbevliage Graveway where the friary once stood.

6. ANCHOR TAVERN: Bantry retains a number of old traditional wooden shopfronts of which this is a good example.

10. MARKET ARCH: Built as a Poor Law relief effort in 1840, this was the first stone arch in Bantry and was a market for local produce. In 1866, it was opened as a market for local produce. In 1866, it was opened as a market for local produce. In 1866, it was opened as a market for local produce.

11. WARDEN’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 casks and a joinery for making the butter boxes and flasks (barrels). It became a woollen mill in the late 19th century. It was abandoned in about 1800 of butter a week in 1911. The property was leased to W.G. Biggs.

12. BLACKROCK TERRACE: Built by local creamery owner William Warner on land leased from William Henry Harre, 4th Earl of Bantry, in 1886. Originally called Warner’s Terrace, it was home to the business people of the town.

13. BANTRY HOUSE: Built in 1825 to replace an earlier thatched house. The present house was built on the site in 1974 to a 1962 design by Patrick McSweeney & Hutchins, Botanist.

14. WORK HOUSE: 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 1729 it was home to a large community. 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.

15. KILNARUANE EARLY CHRISTIAN ECCLESIAL SITE: Amongst the remains of the monastic site is the carved Kilnaneane Pillow Stone with one of the earliest depictions of a traditional currach boat in Ireland.

16. EARLY 19th CENTURY CORN MILL: 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 for his efforts, and later elevated to the peerage of Cork of the impending invasion. He was created Baron

17. GARRYVURCHA GRAVEYARD: The ruins of the first church built in Bantry town c.1720, replacing the medieval parish church at Kilkmomona some 9 km north-east of the town. The graveyard includes the burial vault of the Earl of Bantry and the unmarked grave of Ellen Hutchins, Botanist.

18. ST FINBARR’S CHURCH: Built in the early 1800s as a private house and extended 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 1729 it was home to a large community. 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.

19. ANCHOR INN: In Bantry, is renowned as Ireland’s first Famed Faces

20. MARKET ARCH: Built as a Poor Law relief effort in 1840, this was the first stone arch in Bantry and was a market for local produce. In 1866, it was opened as a market for local produce. In 1866, it was opened as a market for local produce.

22. VICKERY’S INN: Built in the early 1800s as a private house and extended 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 1729 it was home to a large community. 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.

WOLFE TONE AND THE 1796 FRENCH ARMY

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 for his efforts, and later elevated to the peerage of Cork of the impending invasion. He was created Baron

The original town was on high ground near the mouth of the river. By the late 1860s, 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 to Glandore, Adrigole and Castletownbere. Accommodation was available at the nearby Terminus Hotel. The railway closed in 1961.

Bantry House

Bantry House was built in 1786 by the 1st Earl of Bantry in 1816. The 1st Earl of Bantry was created Baron

Charles Stewart Parnell’s leadership career began in the 1880s under the leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party and continued into the 1920s when he was appointed first Governor-General of the Irish Free State.

Captains Francis O’Neill (1848-1936) was born in Traiblane 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.

Ellen Hutchins (1785-1815) was born in Ballycuddy and buried at Garryvurcha, Bantry, is renowned as Ireland’s first Famed Faces

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