

# BANTRY THROUGH THE AGES

# BANTRY HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY THE EARLY YEARS

Bantry Historical & Archaeological Society is a vibrant and progressive local history society based in Bantry, and covering the town of Bantry and its large hinterland. The society was founded at a meeting held in Bantry Library on Friday 10th March 1978 and was named Bantry Historical & Archaeological Society, conveniently referred to as Bantry Historical Society.

In 2018 Bantry Historical Society is celebrating the 40th anniversary of its founding. Earlier in the year, the society launched a new journal to mark the occasion - *Journal Volume Three* edited by Dr Colum Hourihane which has proved exceptionally popular. As part of the ongoing celebrations, this exhibition is designed to show some of the achievements of the society to date, and highlight some of our local heritage

### EARLY YEARS OF THE SOCIETY

The early members immediately set about researching and documenting all the local information they could find. The earliest written record of the society is of an AGM held on 20th January 1979 in the Boys Club. Officers elected were

- President:.....Patricia Greacen
- Chairman:.....Tadg Casey
- Vice Chairman: .....Eugene O'Sullivan
- Hon Secretary: .....Mrs Maeve McCarthy
- Asst Hon Secretary: .....Mrs Margaret Quigley
- Treasurer: .....Donal Fitzgerald

Committee: Mary Breen, Kathleen O'Riordan, Alice West, Colum Hourihane, Sheila Harrington, Arethusia Greacen.

One year later, Kathleen O'Riordan took on the role of Hon Secretary - a position she held for several years. In December 1990 Margaret Ducker became PRO, and like her colleague, she too held that role for a very long time.

December 1990 sees Margaret Ducker become PRO, and Sheila Harrington was Archivist, Joan O Sullivan took charge of Bantry Museum - all four held office for a long time, and contributed much to the work of the society. Other officers were Mrs Joan Kingston, President. Michael Keohane, Vice Chairman and Betty O'Donoghue became Hon Treasurer when Donal Fitzgerald became Chairman.

**Today Bantry owes a huge debt of gratitude to these founding members and early activists who took pride in their local area, and acted accordingly. They set the example, and it's now up to us who live in the area to follow in their footsteps and support local history projects**

### SOME LOCAL SITES OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE VISITED BY BANTRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN EARLY DAYS OF THE SOCIETY

#### 1 CARRAIG NA CAOINTE - Rock of Lamentations

This is a small rock outcrop situated in a slightly elevated location with a commanding view, across the water, of Reendisert Court, a fortified tower house. Local legend tells us that, in late 17th century when people were hanged at Reendisert Court, this is where relatives gathered to witness the executions, and the ceremony of lamenting ("caoining") took place on this rock

#### 2 ST BARTHOLOMEW'S WELL

Coordinates 51° 16' 23.62", -9° 23' 15.89"

Situated in townland of Gortroe, Bantry, this has been a place of pilgrimage for generations. 24th August was patron day/pattern day, and therefore was a day of special devotion and celebration.

The annual Pattern Day here, like many other such events, got out of hand when a fight broke out between two men, who came for the celebrations, and one died as a result of his injuries. The holding of Patterns ceased at this well as a result, but occasionally the well is still visited, especially by natives of the area who return home on holiday. At one time, pilgrimages were made to here before dawn.

#### 3 SHANDRUM MORE FORT

This ringfort is a very large fort with deep outside "walls" still clearly visible (noted in 1983 by Mrs Kathleen O'Riordan).

In the early days of the 20th century, local children often played in and around this fort, and there are tales of them throwing stones down a small opening therein, and they could hear the stones rolling down from one step to another for a considerable distance.



Photo Credit: Seamus Larkin

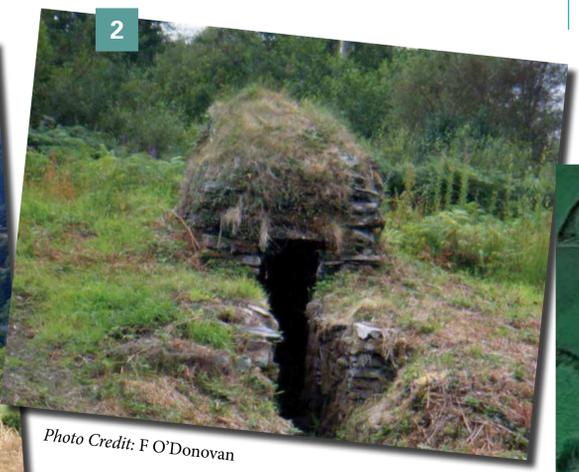


Photo Credit: F O'Donovan



Photo Credit: Google Maps



EXHIBITION PRODUCED BY THE BANTRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Designed by gentlydownthestream.design

Bantry Historical Society would like to acknowledge the support of Cork County Council and the Creative Ireland Programme. The Creative Ireland Programme - an all-of-Government five-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022, which places creativity at the centre of public policy. Further information from creative ireland.ie and ireland.ie



# BANTRY THROUGH THE AGES

# BANTRY HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY ACHIEVEMENTS

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF BANTRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

- 1 Established Bantry Museum
- 2 Provided plaques, marking special sites or events
- 3 Launched four successful publications (all required reprints due to popular demand)
  - *Journal Vol One* edited by Kathleen O'Riordan & Donal Fitzgerald
  - *Journal Vol Two* edited by Donal Fitzgerald
  - *Bantry Remembers 1916 to 1921* edited by Angela O'Donovan
  - *Journal Vol Three* edited by Dr Colum Hourihane
- 4 Assisted provision of Heritage Information Boards in Bantry town
- 5 Initiated (with NPWS and Madeline Hutchins) the annual Ellen Hutchins Festival, which in its first year, 2015, achieved Best Hidden Heritage Award.
- 6 Organised five separate very successful events to mark centenary of 1916
- 7 Provided a new website [www.bantryhistorical.com](http://www.bantryhistorical.com)
- 8 Compiled a photographic record of all business premises in Bantry town, including staff in those premises
- 9 Lectures/Talks are held during the winter/spring months on various topics, while outings/field trips are organised for the summer months.

### BANTRY MUSEUM

This little museum holds an eclectic mix of artefacts, including some items that were manufactured in Bantry such as The Coomhola Anvil which was fashioned at the Iron Ore Smelting Works at Mill Little, Coomhola, during early 18th century See *Figure 1*. Also a woollen blanket made in Bantry from the Woolen Mills in Bantry can be seen there See *Figure 2*. Of more recent origin is a Flatley cloth drier made in the Flatley plant at Newtown in 1960's.

It took almost a decade of hard work and negotiating and sourcing artefacts and historical data, before Bantry Historical & Archaeological Society proudly opened its brand new enterprise, namely Bantry Museum in the little building on the rock behind Bantry Fire station on Sunday 3rd August 1986. Eugene O'Sullivan and Patricia Greacen were particularly active on this initiative.

The local and business communities have been very supportive of this project, and it continues to be staffed by volunteer members with help from Solas. The Museum is very popular with visitors and locals alike, as their comments testify:

"A true gem! What a beautiful place to visit..."  
 "WOW! It might be small but it packs a punch with so much fascinating stuff..."  
 "There are amazing items in here, old pictures, old clothes that the women wore..."  
 "Really good collection - local material of a disparate nature but fascinating"



Photo Credit: F O'Donovan



Photo Credit: F O'Donovan



Photo Credit: F O'Donovan



Photo Credit: F O'Donovan



Photo Credit: F O'Donovan

Photo Credit: Seamus Larkin



6



7

Photo Credit: F O'Donovan

### PLAQUES

A number of plaques were erected through the efforts of the Society:

- 'Cath Céim an Fhia' commemoration plaque on a large stone was jointly provided with Cumann Staire Uíbh Laoghaire. See *Figure 4*
- The remaining stones left thrown around Árd na mBráthair were gathered and an altar was fashioned out of them by Denis Harrington, Cork Co Council, with an informative plaque provided nearby by the society.
- Léim an tSagairt site at Newtown got an informative plaque also. Tadg Casey was instrumental in this, while Kathleen O'Riordan, in her usual forensic-style approach, documented the unusual history of this stone See *Figure 5*
- Commemorative Plaque beside Bantry Library unveiled at a special ceremony organised by Bantry Historical & Archaeological Society on Easter Sunday 2016, in memory of the local members of Irish Volunteers who paraded from Bantry to Kealkil Easter Sunday 1916, on instructions of Terence MacSwiney, later Lord Mayor of Cork See *Figure 6*.
- Small plaque in Ballylickey showing birth place and residence of Ireland's First Female Botanist, Ellen Hutchins. Also provided a special plaque at her burial site - Garryvurrucho Burial Ground - awarded by National Comm. for Science and Engineering Commemorative Plaques in recognition of the huge contribution Ellen Hutchins has made to science in Ireland See *Figure 7*.

### BANTRY MARVELS

Extract from letter of John O'Connor, Dingle to The Grapevine, Oct 2017 about his visit by sea to Bantry.

"On the way along the Quay to the town I came across two historic boat enclosures (which are from pre-famine times) with slipways at each end. The stone and cobble work that went into their making is still intact and now weeping with weed which adds, in its own way, to the attractiveness of the constructs and helps to tell their story. The quaintness of the elliptical-shaped shelters, which are visible in the 1896 and 1944 OS maps, is remarkable, and to my knowledge unique to the location and without replication in any other Irish port (I stand to correction on

this). The discovery of these old slipways prompted me and my companion, Barry Curtin, to photograph and video the exceptional curiosities. Barry subsequently sketched the slipways and one is now available in the form of a poster which we hope will highlight the unique character of these marvels of masonry.

I welcome the development of Bantry Marina but I urge that if any future development of Bantry's inner harbour in the direction of the Old Quay occurs that it is judicious and considerate of the historic gems existing in the harbour"

This area of Bantry Quay, sometimes called the Sand Quay was always highlighted, and its uniqueness emphasised, in the early guided town walks by Donal Fitzgerald and others.



Drawing: Barry Curtin



# BANTRY THROUGH THE AGES

## PREHISTORIC ENVIRONS OF BANTRY.

People have foraged and farmed this part of the world for the past 10,000 years at least. The earliest peoples arrived here at the end of the Ice Age, in the Mesolithic (the middle stone age c.7,500-4,000BC) and lived by hunting and gathering in small mobile groups. To date the only evidence for this earliest phase of human activity in West Cork are two ground stone points, probably used for fishing. One was recovered from Ratooragh near Schull and another from the sea off Minane Island near Castletownbere. To date no settlements have been discovered however this is not so surprising, due to the changing coastline of the south west of Ireland which has seen the inundation of the shorelines over the last 6000 years with a rise in sea levels of between 2-3m, probably drowning out much early settlement evidence. The Neolithic period (4,000-2,500BC) saw the spread of the farming way of life. It was these early farming communities who left the first traces of human activity in the area with the building of the first Megalithic (big stone) monuments in the area, (Ardawinny portal tomb and Cape clear passage tomb) this phase also saw the introduction of the use of pottery and new methods of working stone.

The Bronze Age (2000-600BC) marks a very important period in South West Ireland, a period of great technological progress, with developing agricultural economies, new funerary traditions and extensive trade connections. Worship of the Sun seems to have been a constant feature in the prehistoric southwest. Solar symbolism is seen in the earlier passage tomb art and the many examples of rock art in the wider region. With the arrival of the gold technology in the early Bronze Age we begin to see the production of prestige objects such as the 'Lunalaé' and 'sun discs' an example of a gold 'sun disc' was found in a quarry, Sparrogrado, Ballydehob in 1844 - see Figure 1.

As the Bronze age progressed higher concentrations of gold objects were produced, in Cork sixty six gold objects of the late Bronze age have been recorded many of these have been lost, this list of Bronze age objects includes a gold bracelet found at Brahalish near Bantry, now in the British Museum - see Figure 2.

# LOCAL ARTEFACTS HELD IN OTHER MUSEUMS



3

### DOONOUR STONE MOULD EARLY BRONZE AGE

This rare artefact now housed in the National Museum Dublin, was recovered by local man Mr. Cornelius O'Brien, Glanlough, Donoor, on the north side of the sheeps head peninsula, In 1966 when Mr. O'Brien was removing stones from a small field on his farm, unfortunately no other structure or feature of interest was noted in the vicinity.

The mould is shaped from a block of sandstone which has matrices on all six faces for casting of developed bronze axeheads of the Ballyvalley/Toormore type, and also a dagger matrix. These 'developed' bronze axeheads have been dated to the later stages of the Early Bronze age c.1800BC. <sup>1</sup>

It measures 0.31m x 0.225m x 0.14m, some surfaces are natural while others are artificial.

No evidence for the use of a formal lid for this type of mould has been found, added to the very uneven upper surfaces of these axe heads and it is thought that clay may have been used instead to seal the mould matrices. Some of the matrices showed discolouration and the friable nature of some of the internal surfaces were clear indicators that hot metal had been poured into the matrices. The block would most likely have been set in a bed of sand before the pouring of the metal to ensure proper distribution of the metal.

Other open stone moulds have been found at Lyre, near Carrignavar, north Cork, and at Kilcronat, near Youghal.

A similar 8 matrix axehead mould from Ballyglisheen Co. Carlow has been compared to the Doonour Mould showing similar longitudinal chisel or traction tool marks as the Doonour mould. <sup>2</sup>

### BRONZE FIBULA BROOCH 150 AD

A bronze fibula brooch, possibly dating back to 150 AD, on loan from Mr T A Vickery, Garage Proprietor, Bantry. Loan No. 175 dated 20th May 1948.

The fibulae brooch developed over a long period of time in a variety of shapes but are generally based on the safety pin design, used for fastening garments, both decorative and practical.

The term itself is of latin origins referring originally to Roman brooches, but the term is generally used to refer to this style of fastener which were common into the post-Roman and early medieval world, but were generally replaced in Ireland and Scotland by the Pennanular Brooch



4



5



### PENNANULAR BROOCH 600 AD

discovered in Tooreen Bog, Kealkil in 1930.

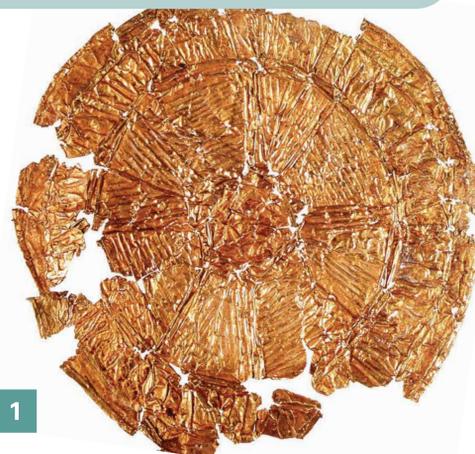
These clothes fasteners are associated with the Early Medieval period in Ireland, they are part of a long tradition of utilitarian fasteners beginning in the Iron age but by Early medieval times (700-900 AD), they had become highly ornate brooches using precious metals and crystals much prized by the social elite of Ireland and Scotland.

Generally consist of a long pin attached by its head to a ring, the pin often moves freely around the ring as far as the terminals. The true pennanular style the ring is open, with a gap between the terminals to allow the pin to pass through, a very effective way to fasten loosely woven cloth.

Worn by both men and women, on one shoulder by men and at the breast by women with the pin pointing up! Irish law code specified in the result of injury from a pin to another individual, the wearer was not at fault provided the pin did not project too far out and the brooch was worn in these ways by the sexes. Another law, the Senchas Mór, specified that 'the sons of major kings when being fostered should wear brooches of gold having crystal inserted in them, while the sons of minor kings need wear only silver brooches'. <sup>3</sup>

NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK 2018  
18-26 AUG

BANTRY HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
Celebrating 40 years  
1978 - 2018



1



2

<sup>1</sup> O'Brien, W. 'TIVERNI, A Prehistory Of Cork' The Collins Press, Cork 2012.)

<sup>2</sup> O'Kelly M.J. 'JRSAL', 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Laing L.R. 'The Archaeology of Late Celtic Britain and Ireland c.400-1200 AD', Taylor and Francis, 1975

Figures 1 & 3 have been reproduced with the kind permission of the National Museum of Ireland  
Figure 2 has been reproduced with the kind permission of The British Museum  
Figures 4 & 5 have been reproduced with the kind permission of the Cork Public Museum

# BANTRY

THROUGH THE AGES

## MONUMENTS IN THE AREA

Monuments to be found around the Bantry area include

### STONE CIRCLES

Generally consisting of a ring of free standing stones, uneven in number and symmetrically arranged, with an 'axial' stone set directly opposite a pair of entrance stones. Many stone circles seem to be deliberately aligned NE/SW, towards the sector of the horizon where the sun rises and sets at the cross-quarter days of the year. In Ireland there are two main groupings of stones circles in mid-Ulster and in South Kerry/West Cork.

### RADIAL- STONE CAIRNS

A mound or cairn usually constructed of stone, delimited by a series of spaced stones set with their long axes aligned towards the centre of the circle, although their precise function is not fully understood, through their association with stone circles and stone rows they also appear to belong to the ritual tradition of the Bronze age

### BOULDER BURIALS

Another monument which again appears to belong to the ritual tradition of the Bronze age. These interesting megaliths generally consist of large boulders resting on three or more low stones, standing above ground without any covering cairn or mound. seventy plus examples have been recorded in Cork and Kerry, with no other examples identified to date outside the area they seem to be an innovation of the south west of Ireland.

### STONE ROWS

These monuments also of the Bronze megalithic tradition, are defined as being a row of three or more stones erected in a line. The majority of examples in Ireland occur in West Cork/South Kerry. Two main types have been recognised - a Cork and Kerry group, in which the row comprises up to six stones, usually c. 2m in height, with their long axes usually set in line. Secondly the mid-Ulster group, rows comprise numerous stones, usually not exceeding 1m in height. Often found in association with other monuments, creating a complex, they share some characteristics with stone circles, such as astronomical alignments, distribution, and dating, they also appear to be relics of the ritual, ceremonial and commemorative traditions of the Bronze age (c. 2400-500 BC).

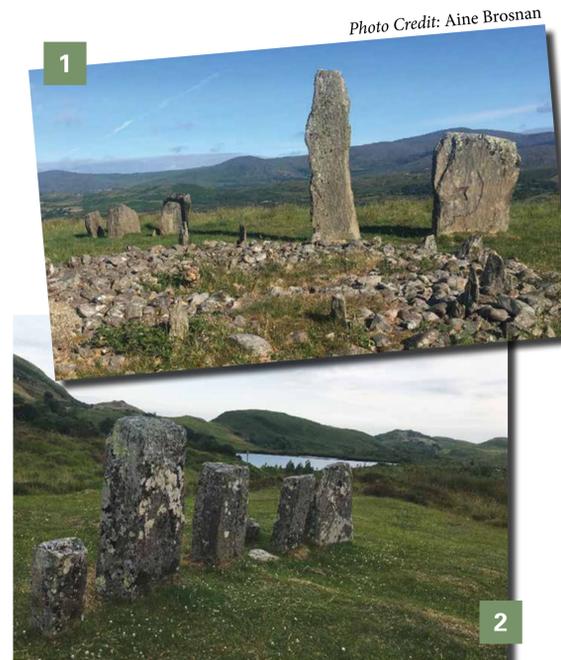


Photo Credit: Aine Brosnan

Photo Credit: Aine Brosnan

### 1 KEAKIL STONE CIRCLE

This Bronze age megalithic complex, located in the Maughanaclea hills above Keakill village, is dramatically sited with almost a 360° panorama of the surrounding landscape, with views of the Sheeps head, Beara and the Shehy mountains to the north and east. Maughanasilly stone row is located just over the next ridge to the North. This site was excavated in 1938 by O'Riordan and comprises of a five-stone circle, a standing stone pair to the N.E. and to the east a radial stone cairn This is a fascinating relic of the ritual tradition of the middle/late Bronze Age (c.2400-500) not to be missed.

### 2 MAUGHANASILLY STONE ALIGNMENT

Prominently set overlooking Toureen lake on the NW slopes of Knockbreen this five stone alignment is aligned NE-SW. Excavations in 1977 by Dr. Ann Lynch (1981,69-74) produced a carbon 14 date from basal peat overlying the site of 3265+/-55 bp and a thumb-shaped flint scraper. These monuments are also thought to have played a role in Bronze Age astronomical observations some say in particular lunar observation, but this monument is aligned with winter solstice sunset.

### 3 MILL LITTLE MEGALITHS

Another Bronze age ritual complex, this site, 50m west of the Cooleenlemane river consists of a five-stone circle, three boulder burials to the SW, and a pair of standing stones to the south. Described as a complex because of the location of several monument types together some have suggested that this may have allowed multiple opportunities to observe astronomical events such as the eight cross quarter days of the year( Solstices, Equinoxes, Imbolc, Bealtaine, Lughnasa and Samhain and/or perhaps different monuments were the trade marks of different tribal groupings.

### 4 CARRIGANASS CASTLE

This O' Sullivan castle is a great example of a well conserved medieval tower house. Located on the northern bank of the Ovane river this strategic location offers commanding views in all directions. Reputedly built by the infamous Donal Cam O Sullivan in 1540. Marks the most northerly point of the O'Sullivan Beare territory. The tower consists of four storeys originally including an attic with surrounding walkway around parapet walls. The first and third floor were vaulted and there are a number of mural chambers, passages and rectangular recesses in the walls. The surrounding bawn wall with its projecting towers were built at a later date probably in the seventeenth century. The northern wall features 7 gun loops and 3 pistol loops are located in the SW bastion, which interestingly also contains a columbarium or dove cote, with four tiers of nesting boxes visible at first floor level. The castle was surrendered after the fall of Dunboy in 1602.

### 5 HOLY WELL AND BALAUN STONE BEACH 'LADY'S WELL'

This holy well is a great example of the continuing folk tradition of the veneration of springs and wells which probably stretches back beyond the veil of Christianity. The well is traditionally visited on Lady Day August 15th. It has been semi enclosed by a stone built dome, lined internally by well coursed, water-rolled stones. Set slightly behind to the SE a well built, stone altar can be seen, adorned by many Christian religious objects. A small bullaun stone also sits on the West side of the altar, reputedly brought to the holy well in the 1950s from an unknown location according to local knowledge. It is a sub- rectangular block of sandstone with its bowl carved on the upper surface measuring 0.13m X 0.1m X 0.08m in depth. The exact function of these stones is a bit of a mystery, frequently found in association with Christian monuments they are thought to have been used for some religious or ceremonial purpose.

Photo Credit: Dan Sullivan



Photo Credit: Aine Brosnan



Photo Credit: Aine Brosnan

### 6 KILNARUANE PILLAR STONE

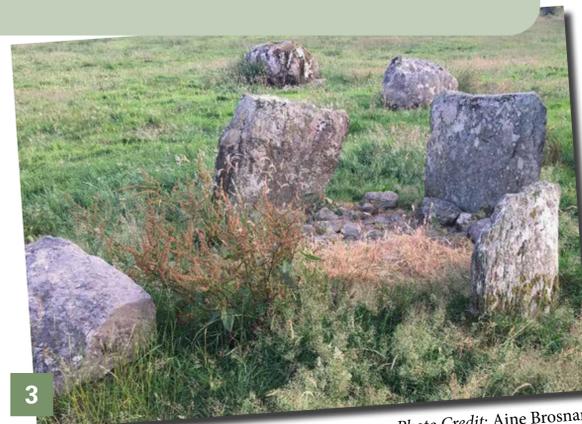
This is an iconic piece of early medieval stone carving located within a much eroded early ecclesiastical enclosure. It stands 2.05m high. Both the SW and NE panels display, sadly much eroded, early Christian iconography. The SW face is divided into four panels. Two pieces of ribbon interlace on the upper panel, next a praying figure, third a Greek cross; and on the bottom panel St. Paul and St. Anthony are seated at a pedestal table holding bread. NE panel is divided into 3 panels faint traces of spiral interlace, next two pairs of four legged animals; thirdly is famous boat scene with four oarsmen in a boat and a fifth figure leaning forward steering at the stern, the boat travelling through a sea of crosses. there are two incisions on the top of the pillar suggest attachment of a further feature. some have suggested it may have originally been a cross.

### 7 AHAKISTA STONE CIRCLE

This is an example of a multiple Stone circle again located with fine views to the south and west. It consists of 11 stones, the site has seen significant disturbance and a number of stones lie on the ground.



Photo Credit: Aine Brosnan



3

Photo Credit: Aine Brosnan

NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK 2018 18-26 AUG

BANTRY HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY Celebrating 40 years 1978 - 2018



# BANTRY

THROUGH THE AGES

# GEMS OF BANTRY

BY HAZEL VICKERY

Sometimes we complain that Bantry town has changed so much over the years. Naturally there have been changes, some good and some not so good!

We pass features of the town daily but do we really see them?

As we walk around the town we only look at ground floor level, not the overall streetscape. But if we look up we will see that there have been relatively few changes to the main structures of the buildings.

The fine workmanship displayed in the facade of a number of buildings attest to the importance and affluence of the town in the nineteenth century. On the Square are buildings whose scale and proportions form a distinctive edge to both the north and the south which are all set off by the former Court House, now the Tourist Office.



5



6



1



2

The Post Office which was originally two buildings and Blackrock Terrace have changed very little. See Figures 5 & 6.

Plaster-work writing still remains on some shop fronts, though some no longer trading by that name, and are painted to blend in with current shop colours. See Figures 7 & 8 & 9

Perhaps the building that is most unchanged is Evans' Shop on the Square. Notice the wrought-iron work on the ground floor windows See Figure 10.

Some buildings retain their original features at ground level: pillars See Figures 11, 12 & 13. The oriel windows of the Anchor Tavern are unchanged. See Figure 14. The iron arch over the pedestrian entrance to the Old Methodist church which once held a lantern is still in situ. See Figure 16.



7



9



8



3



10



11



12



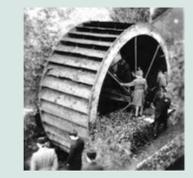
13



4

Perhaps some buildings were built by the same builders and craftsmen or designed by the same person. For example the brickwork around the windows in Bridge St, William Street and the Square. See Figures 1, 2 & 3

In the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage's appraisal of the Gift Shop could also be said about a number of the buildings in Bantry town. It states "Built as part of an attractive terrace, this house retains its overall character and form in spite of some alterations. The retention of decorative render detailing adds interest to the facade. Together with its neighbours, this building contributes significantly to the streetscape of Bantry town". (www.buildingsofireland.ie) See Figure 4



**OTHER PICTURES OF INTEREST**  
Original water wheel before it was removed.  
The Square which has changed little over the years



14



16

