

# Bantry Heritage Trail

## Atlantic Challenge & the Bantry Bay Longboat

In December 1796 a French Armada of 48 ships and 13,000 troops under the command of General Hoche and direction of Wolfe Tone, failed to land in Bantry due to adverse weather conditions. Most of the Fleet returned to France but a ship's longboat and her crew were washed ashore on Bere Island. They were quickly apprehended by yeomanry loyal to the crown, and under the command of Richard White of Bantry House who later received an earldom for services to the crown. The 'Bantry Bay Longboat' as she is now known, was brought to the boathouse at Bantry House, where she lay for 150 years. In 1944 she was presented to the National Museum of Ireland, transported to Dublin from Bantry by train and was subsequently transferred to the Maritime Museum in 1974.



*Army personnel preparing to take 'The Bantry Longboat' to Bantry Railway station prior to its transportation to Dublin, 1944.*

During the mid 1980s an organization called *Atlantic Challenge International* was founded and began building and racing replicas of these 38ft Bantry Bay longboats. With ten oars and three dipping lug sails these boats provide a great medium to teach different elements of seamanship and test both rowing and sailing skills of crews.



*Unité Sailing across Bantry Bay on the same waters where French fleet once sailed in 1796.*

In 1988 *Atlantic Challenge Ireland* was born and members from *Bantry rowing club* and *Bantry Bay sailing club* crewed a borrowed longboat and competed at the Atlantic Challenge contest in Douarnenez, France.

Due to local interest in the contest and Atlantic Challenge organization the Irish longboat 'Unité' was built to compete in Denmark in 1990. Since then the local rowers and sailors have represented both Bantry and Ireland on *Unité* at the biennial Atlantic Challenge Contest facing tough competition each time.

Over the years different crews from Bantry have won the prestigious contest four times, in Canada 1994, France 2000, USA 2002, and Italy 2006.



*Unité on the rowing leg of the 'Oars and Sails' race at The Atlantic Challenge in Bantry 1996.*

Over 16 countries are involved in Atlantic Challenge, at this time in 2010, over 70 replicas of the original longboat have been built worldwide ranging from Indonesia to the USA, and from Finland to Italy. The first longboats built took the French motto of /Liberté, Egalité /and/ Fraternité/ as their names. The Irish boat is named in honour of Wolfe Tone and his contribution to Irish independence as a leading republican figure and a founder member of the United Irish men.

*Unité's* tan coloured sails can frequently be seen in Bantry Harbour during the summer months, and she is moored less than 100m from where the original longboat was stored for over 150yrs. There are also Bantry Bay longboats in Cork, Waterford, Dublin and Antrim.

The original longboat, the oldest surviving vessel in the French Navy, is now on exhibit in the National Museum in *Collins Barracks*, Dublin, where Wolfe Tone himself was once imprisoned court martialled and convicted of treason.

*Diarmaid Murphy*



# Bantry Heritage Trail

## Emigration



During the Napoleonic wars the sea-lanes from Sweden were disrupted and Britain turned to Canada for vital timber supplies. Many of these lumber brigs docked in Bantry, discharging their timber and

in turn bringing fee-paying passengers to the New World. Initially, it was the adventurous and relatively well off who emigrated but when the famine struck in 1845 the destitute were forced to take to the lumber brigs. Conditions were so appalling, with the instance of death so high that they gained infamy as 'coffin ships'.

## The Dealy

William Justin Dealy of Bantry owned a ship, the Dealy Brig which made two trips per year into the Port of Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada between 1841 and 1848. All voyages originated in Bantry, bringing passengers out and timber, or deal, back. According to Griffiths' Valuations of 1852, William Dealy had his office and Deal Yard, leased from John Alexander Bird at No 12 the Quay, Bantry.

The advertisement below appeared in the Cork Constitution of 9 February:

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On that particular voyage advertised in February 1847 the "Dealy" sailed from Bantry in April to St John New Brunswick with 169 passengers, 7 crew and 2 apprentices. Crew members were allocated the following rations: 1lb bread 1 1/2 beef per man per day; 10 oz sugar, 1 1/2 oz tea, 4 oz coffee, per man per week; and 3 1/2 oz sugar to be served with lime juice per week, or vinegar.

Passengers on these emigration ships were entitled to be supplied with one pound of biscuit, daily during the voyage according to the Act of Parliament. On arrival at New Brunswick on 31 May they were held in quarantine in Partridge Island in the Port of St John's. Out of the passenger list of 169 who set sail, twenty-two had died at sea, forty were sick on landing and three had since died. As reported in the New Brunswick Courier, July 3, 1847 "From Brig Dealy, from Bantry, Bridget Conny, aged 10; Catherine Collins, aged 20; Ellen Haley, 17

The Lloyd's List of 1848 reports that The "Dealy" was totally wrecked off the Cornish coast on 13th November.

## Franciscan Monastery



Looking towards Bantry pier and town. In foreground, below the trees, is the site of the Franciscan Monastery.

The Franciscan Monastery known as Ard na mBráthar (the height of the brothers or monks) was built for the Franciscan order on land given by Diarmaid O'Suilleabhain of the O'Sullivan Bere clan. The burial grounds that surrounded it are still in use as a burial-place and are referred to as the Abbey Graveyard.

Some Franciscan manuscripts suggest the foundation of the original monastery was in 1320 but other authorities refer to it as 1460. Temporarily possessed by the English it was later sacked by Donal O'Suilleabhain in 1602 to prevent further use as a military base. It is recorded that the abbey cellars were well stocked with European wines and brandy and Donal O'Suilleabhain ordered his men to smash the kegs to prevent them being enjoyed by the enemy. The remains of the old priory are long since gone, a quantity of the stones having been used in building the stables at Bantry House in the 1840s. A few remaining stones have been fashioned into a small altar in the Cemetery grounds at which a yearly mass for the departed is said.

## La Surveillante

During the failed French invasion of 1796, the frigate La Surveillante was scuttled in Bantry Bay. The vessel was relocated in 1981 following sonar sweeps of the Bay in the wake of the Betelgeuse disaster. In 1987 diver Tony Balfe was authorized by the State to lift two cannon for identification purposes. An interpretive centre was built in the stables of Bantry House to document the history of the 1796 Armada. In 1997 the ship's bell was recovered from the site and is part of the exhibition.

### Bantry Town Plan

**Legend**

- 1 Bantry House
- 2 Bantry Pier
- 3 Old Court House
- 4 Bantry Quay
- 5 Bantry House East Gate
- 6 Bantry House West Gate
- 7 Bantry House
- 8 St. Francis Church
- 9 Bantry House Stables
- 10 Bantry House
- 11 Bantry House
- 12 Bantry House
- 13 Bantry House
- 14 Bantry House
- 15 Bantry House
- 16 Bantry House
- 17 Bantry House
- 18 Bantry House
- 19 Bantry House
- 20 Bantry House

**Heritage Trail**

- 1 Bantry House
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**Other Sites**

- 10 Post Office
- 11 Post Office
- 12 Post Office
- 13 Post Office
- 14 Post Office
- 15 Post Office
- 16 Post Office
- 17 Post Office
- 18 Post Office
- 19 Post Office
- 20 Post Office

Supported by the West Cork Development Partnership under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. Bantry Bay Harbour Commissioners



## The Trail Route

The Heritage Trail starts with display area 1, which can be found on the raised area of Wolfe Tone Square near St Brendan's Statue. From here you can see the road to the old railway pier. The car park by the harbour wall was reclaimed from the sea as recently as the late 1990s. Refer to the town map to locate the site of each display area. Also indicated are the Tourist Information boards that provide additional information for the visitor to Bantry.

To reach display 2, walk towards the far end of Wolfe Tone Square. If you look to your left you will see the Church of St Brendan the Navigator; from the church to the corner is the site of the old 'fish palaces', now long gone, but which once occupied most of that area. You will find the display board on the pavement at the left of the square, not far from the French Anchor. Here you can read a biography of Theobald Wolfe Tone who gives his name to the square. To view display 3, cross the road to the Tourist Information Office originally the Old Courthouse. The display is on the pavement opposite the main entrance. On the wall of the Old Courthouse are several commemorative plaques dedicated to Bantry patriots.

To continue, walk to the left of the Old Courthouse up Marino Street. On the left of the street is the old Methodist Chapel, now a medical centre. The stone piers of the Railway Bridge can clearly be seen just to the left of the Old Chapel. Continue up Marino Street, the Bridewell Lane is on your right, site of the old jail. Display area 4 is to the right, mounted on the wall under the arch that takes you behind the Warner Centre. Go under the arch, which opens out into a courtyard, once the yard of a large Tannery.

Take a left, which will bring you out onto Barrack Street. Display area 5 can be found mounted in the wall of the building which occupies the corner of Main St and Barrack St. Before you proceed further notice the building opposite in Main Street, which still has a slated front. At one time most of the houses here would have been similarly finished.

From this junction go to the left and up Main Street where, through the gates, you will see the old graveyard and ruin of Garryvurcha Church. On the churchyard wall is display number 6, showing the unique plan map of the burial ground. Opposite the church and across the road is display area number 7. The archway of the old English market can still be seen on the front of the building.

With the market arch to your left take the next left up Market Street, previously known as Pound Lane. Continue up the street following the bends as it winds up towards the junction at the top. Across the road, you will see display number 8, outside St Finbarr's Catholic Church. A little further up the road, on the pillar at the entrance to the presbytery, is a plaque stating the first Catholic Church in Bantry was sited there. To the right of the church, notice the steps. These lead up to Bantry General Hospital, built on the site of the old workhouse.

Passing the foot of the steps, continue past the building on your left that was once the Town Hall. A little further on the same side is the old dispensary building, set back from the road. To your right is Bridge Street. Here you can cross the road to display area 9, at the library building and waterwheel. Proceed down Bridge Street. On your right just below the waterwheel is a fine house, which was Bantry's first bank and which still retains its mooring rights. This street was once an open river.

At the junction with Main Street and New Street turn left and go up High Street. At the top of the street, glance to your left to see the cut away rock known as 'Godson's Folly'. The road ahead of you was the Customs Gap and leads to the Rope Walk. From here you will

see the Post Office where you will find display area 10. Walk down William Street and notice the yard to your left, now a car park, which used to be Warner's Butter Market. At the pedestrian crossing look to your right to see the gable end of the Anchor bar where display area 11 is mounted. After which you re-cross the pedestrian crossing. Keep to the pavement until you reach JJ Crowley's Bar. Mounted on the wall is display board 12.

At the end of the square continue past the Garda Barracks, cross over the road to display number 13, which is opposite the east gate of Bantry House. At this point you have the choice of continuing on the trail to display area 16. In doing so you can enjoy the magnificent views across the bay as you walk along by the quays and sea wall, past Bantry House and out to the Abbey. Alternatively, you may finish the trail here and simply return to Wolfe Tone Square.

To proceed with the trail to the Abbey, follow the pavement alongside the sea wall until you reach the pier and display area 14. A ferry sails regularly from the pier, taking passengers to Whiddy Island. Looking ahead gives a fine view across to the site of the old pier and bathing box. Look back across the harbour to see the old railway pier. Resume your walk along the footpath until you reach Blackrock and display 15. This viewpoint gives a spectacular panorama of the mountains surrounding the bay.

Walk the last section by the sea wall along to the Abbey graveyard, passing the main entrance to Bantry House and gardens. A little further on is the Sailing Club. Here the sea comes in under the road, filling the area to the left at high tide. It flows directly under what was originally an entrance lodge to Bantry House. At the Abbey you will find display number 16. Here you can enjoy the fine views and visit the monuments and memorials dedicated to those who died during the famine years, to those who lost their lives at sea and, more recently, those lost in the Whiddy Island disaster.

When you are ready to return, simply retrace your steps the length of the sea wall until you reach Wolfe Tone Square. Alternatively continue up the road, pass the Abbey and the Westlodge Hotel, take the first left which leads you into the Rope Walk. The site of the Kilnaruan Stone is signposted and is easily accessible to visitors. Continue once more along the road past the walls of Bantry House Estate and into Bantry town at the Customs Gap.

We hope you enjoy your visit to Bantry and that this trail has given you a small insight into the Bantry of times past. Pat Tone, a direct descendant of Wolfe Tone, officially opened The Bantry Heritage Trail on June 1 2006.

Bantry Tourism Association, who have produced the Trail, would like to thank Bantry Historical Society, Richard Harrison and local historian Donal Fitzgerald who did much of the original research, also local author, the late Michael Carroll for his assistance. Noel O'Mahony of Bantry Library provided historical references. Kate Arbon and Hazel Vickery worked on the project's development and research. Seamus Buckley worked on editorial. Axis Digital Media Ltd, Bantry on graphic design. The Irish translation is courtesy of Séan Kelly. Maps sketches and old photographs, many from the Vickery Collection and Lawrence Collection, add a fascinating pictorial history to the written accounts. West Cork Development Partnership has provided funding with additional donations from local people, Bantry Harbour Commissioners and Bantry Tourism Association. Thanks and acknowledgement is also given to Bantry people who have contributed their knowledge and assistance.

This project has been Supported by the West Cork Development Partnership under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

## Biographies of famous Bantry Men

### Captain Francis O'Neill



Francis O'Neill was born, the youngest of seven children at Tralibane, Bantry on 28 August 1848. At the age of 16, he became a cabin boy on an English merchant vessel. Francis learned to play the

flute as a boy in Tralibane and though he could not read music he was able to record the traditional airs to memory. After many voyages O'Neill married Anna Rogers and moved to Chicago where in 1870 he joined the Chicago Police Force. O'Neill rapidly rose through the ranks and in 1901 he was made General Superintendent. O'Neill, though busy with his career and a devoted family man, he was the father of 10 children, continued to pursue his passion for Irish music throughout his life.

Fellow police officer James O'Neill, from County Down, collaborated with him; together they published several volumes of Irish folk music. By the time Francis O'Neill died in 1936, he was responsible for the gathering and publication of the largest collection of traditional Irish music ever assembled, some airs dating back as early as 1550 or 1600. O'Neill left his great contribution to Irish musical heritage, appropriately enough, to the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

### William Martin Murphy



William Martin Murphy, born in Castletownbere, became an eminent Bantry businessman. His father founded Murphy and O'Connor deal-yard, which was on the site of the Maritime Hotel. Murphy became one of the

wealthiest businessmen in Dublin and an MP at Westminster. By 1913 he was chairman of the Dublin United Tramway Company and owner of Clery's Department Store and the Imperial Hotel. He gained notoriety for his opposition to James Larkin and James Connolly during the Dublin Lockout in 1913. He also owned the influential broadsheet, the *Irish Independent*.

### Con Connolly

The trade unionist Con Connolly was born on 23 June 1892 in Barrack Road. He was the eldest of 13 children. He was educated at St Finbarr's National School. After leaving school, he went to Cork City where he took up a job as a messenger boy at Lady's Well Brewery. In 1904 Connolly returned to Bantry where he became a carpenter's apprentice, without pay, in a timber yard owned by William Martin Murphy. He found employment on Garnish and tried to organise his fellow tradesmen in the Bantry area into a trade union but he was sacked and returned to Cork City.

Influenced greatly by Jim Larkin he joined the society of Carpenters and Joiners and was elected to the union committee in 1915. He served as the Chairman of the Cork branch from 1922-23. During this time he was involved in a six months lock out and with Jer Murphy he formed the Joint Industrial Company for the building industry. He remained joint chairman with Jer Murphy for 17 years. Con Connolly was elected president of the TUC 1952-53.

### Joe O'Reilly

Joe O'Reilly was born in Bantry and lived in High Street. He was a close associate of Michael Collins. O'Reilly was one of the key figures in Collins' intelligence staff. It was to O'Reilly that Collins said, "Yerra, they'll never shoot me in my own county," prior to his fateful journey to West Cork in 1922.

### John Sullivan

John Sullivan (VC) was born in Bantry in 1831. Sullivan was awarded the Victoria Cross during the Crimean War. The following is Sullivan's VC citation.

*"On the 10th of April 1855 at Sebastopol, in the Crimea, Boatswain's Mate Sullivan, as captain of one of the guns at Greenhill battery, volunteered to place a flagstaff on a mound to act as an aiming point. He carried out this dangerous task undeterred by continuous fire from enemy sharpshooters, and his action enabled the battery to open fire on hitherto concealed enemy guns, which were doing great damage."*

The decorations did not end there for Sullivan; he was made a Knight of the Legion of Honour by the Emperor of France. He was also awarded the Sardinian medal, the Turkish medal, and the Crimean medal with clasps for Inkermann and Sebastopol.

Many sons from Bantry fought and died for freedom in "the war to end all wars" 1914-1918.

