

Bantry Bridewell Prison

We look at some data from a number of annual reports on the Bridewell Prison in Bantry in the 1842 to 1856 period.

REPORT of the INSPECTORS-GENERAL on the GENERAL STATE OF THE PRISONS OF IRELAND

From the 21st Report, dated 1842, we read:

“Bridewells of County Cork

These minor Prisons are under the management of the Board of Superintendence of the County Gaol and whenever a vacancy for a Keeper occurs, an experienced Turnkey of good character, is selected from the County Gaol for the situation.”

The following table shows the number of committals in Bantry in each of the four years:

Year	1839	1840	1841	1842
Committals	365	322	309	367

And the report goes on to state about Bantry Bridewell:

“This is one of the best that I have inspected in the County. It was in very good order, and in point of cleanliness and regularity quite satisfactory. The Register and Accounts were made up very regularly.”

23rd Report, dated 1844, we read:

“*Bantry* – I found this bridewell in perfect good order, very clean, and regular”

27th Report, dated 1848, we read:

“*Bantry* – There were confined here 2 males only, and the place was undergoing repair. The main sewer is defective, and the prison consequently in a dirty state. The bridewell altogether however was clean and in good order, and the books well kept. There are 2 day-rooms and 2 cells for females, and 3 for males, quite insufficient to meet the wants of this district, and the building might easily be extended. The keeper seems intelligent and attentive to his duties.”

28th Report, dated 1849, we read:

Bantry
Keeper: Daniel Casey
Salary per annum £25 0s.0d.
Number of Prisoners per annum 1,120
Cells for males 4
Cells for females 2
Day-rooms 2
Is there water on the Premises? No

30th Report, dated 1851 we read:

“*Bantry*, 30 June. Remarkably clean and orderly. Registry correct. 6 male prisoners and 2 female prisoners. No water, and no sewerage. 97 prisoners during the quarter; committals, past year, 558. Average cost of dietary for past year, 2¾ d. per day; total amount £41 17s. 1d. Local inspector frequently visits. Keeper’s salary, £20 per annum.”

33rd Report, dated 1854, we read

Bantry, Total committed 241

Report states “*Bantry* – 2 males; the house very clean, but out of repair in some parts; the sewers rather foul; the bedding sufficient, but old; water brought from a distance of three quarters of a mile; petty sessions fortnightly; transmittals, committals and registry regular; local inspector visits frequently, but makes no entry; dietary in last quarter, males, 3d.; females 2¾ d. A female prisoner having made her escape, while waiting for her bail-bonds to be perfected, the matter was reported upon by the resident magistrate; but as it was about to be further investigated by so competent a tribunal as the Board of Superintendence, I did not think it necessary to institute an official inquiry, especially as the Keeper had hitherto borne a high character for zeal and attention.”

35th Report, dated 1856, we read:

“*Bantry* – 1 male prisoner; 37 in same quarter; The house clean and orderly, but several repairs required, which, however, were about to be executed. The sewers had been lately cleaned, and it is intended to erect a tank so as to supply, in rainy weather, the means of flushing them. Bedding sufficient, but some of the blankets very thin. Diet 3¾ d. for both sexes on an average. Petty sessions fortnightly, and transmittals regular. Registry and committals correct. The local inspector visits, but does not make entries.”

Also the report includes:

Cost of Subsistence, Fuel and Incidents, also of Salaries of Keepers &c., of Bantry Bridewell in the Year 1856.

Number of Committals	Males	106
	Females	30
Of whom were Drunkards	Males	21
	Females	3
Number Supported at Public Expense	Males	106
	Females	30
Number of Meals actually issued		1,459
Cost of Meals		£10 10s. 1d.
Cost of Straw, Candles, Fuel, &c.		£ 6 0s. 0d.
Incidental Expenses		£ 7 18s. 7d.
TOTAL		£24 8s. 8d.
Cost of Dietary per head per day		3 ⁵ / ₁₁ d.
Keeper’s Salary		£25 0s. 0d.

References: various Annual Reports on the General State of Prisons of Ireland

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