

BLARNEY is a pretty village located on the Martin River a short distance from Cork City. In the medieval period, Blarney became one of the principal strongholds of the MacCarthys of Muskerry. In the fifteenth century the chief of that clan, Cormac Láidir MacCarthy, built the now famous Blarney Castle.

The MacCarthy lands were forfeited to the Crown in the late 17th century and their lands at Blarney were purchased by Sir James Jefferyes, Governor of Cork. He built a Queen Anne mansion, which is now in ruins, adjacent to Blarney Castle. He also carried out extensive landscaping and land improvement works. Between 1765 and 1782, Sir John Jefferyes established over a dozen water-powered mills in Blarney, mainly producing linen and cotton. By the late 18th century Blarney had become a planned estate village with a thriving textile industry. In 1846 Sir George Conway Colthurst married Louisa Jane Jefferyes of Blarney.



Blarney's bustling industrial character continued to develop into the 19th century. A small textile mill run by Timothy Mahony operated in the village from about 1750. Today the world famous Blarney Woollen Mills, a craft retail centre and hotel established in the former Mahony's Mills, is a major economic force in the village. The tourism industry has also played an important role in the economic and physical development of the village. From early in the 19th century, visitors were attracted to Blarney by its picturesque ruins and wooded landscape. The building of the Cork and Muskerry Light railway, completed in 1887, did much to improve the accessibility of the village to tourists in the late 19th century until its closure in 1934.

In the second half of the 18th century until about 1920, Cork city was the centre of a vast butter and provisioning trade that saw Irish butter being exported all over the world. A number of roads were developed to facilitate the ease of movement and one such road passed through Blarney. A restored 19th century farm cart, similar to those used to transport butter, can be seen near Shean Bridge (12).



SITES TO SEE (refer to map overleaf for locations)

- 1. BLARNEY HOUSE AND DEMESNE:** Built by Sir George and Lady Colthurst in the early 1870s, Blarney House was designed by Sir Thomas Lanyon of Belfast in the Scottish Baronial style. The house remains the home of the Colthurst family and is open to the public during the Summer months.
- 2. BLARNEY CASTLE:** A stronghold of the MacCarthys of Muskerry who ruled this area in the medieval period. The present castle is composed of two conjoined towers. The earlier, attributed to Cormac Láidir McCarthy, probably dates to the period 1440-1480 and the other dates to the 1500s. The castle was besieged and badly damaged by Cromwellian forces in 1646.
- 3. FORMER TRAM STATION AND PLATFORM** (now the Erin Gift Store): The Cork and Muskerry Light Railway Line, commonly known as the 'Muskerry Tram', ran from Cork city to Blarney between 1887 and 1934.
- 4. THE SQUARE AND VILLAGE GREEN:** This spacious green was laid out in the 1760s, a key element of planned towns and villages of the time. It is surrounded by terraces of houses many built to accommodate weavers and their families. A guard house once stood near the north western corner of the square to watch over the valuable linen sheets laid out to bleach in the surrounding fields.
- 5. STOPFORD HOUSE:** Built for Rev. Stopford, the rector of Blarney, and reputed to be the oldest house in the village. In 1798, the house was raided by Catholic rebels opposed to the paying of tithes, an unfair tax to support the Church of Ireland. Their leader, John Buckley, was hanged in the village green.
- 6. HANDBALL ALLEY:** Irish handball has been played since at least the 16th century and was particularly popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
- 7. OLD SCHOOL HOUSE:** the first national school in Blarney, it opened in 1838/39 and closed when the Colthurst School was built in 1898 on nearby St. Ann's Road.
- 8. COLTHURST SCHOOL:** Opened in 1898 on a site donated by Sir George Colthurst. The school building has since been altered and incorporated into the new primary school.
- 9. CHURCH OF IRELAND CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION:** The Church of Ireland parish church, moved to this location in 1766 from the medieval parish centre at Garrycloyne (a few kilometres to the north). It is built in a Classical style and designed in the new town layout to over look the village green. The graveyard contains a number of interesting headstones, tombs and vaults, including a First World War grave.
- 10. MUSKERRY ARMS:** A popular public house since 1838.
- 11. CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION:** This fine example of late 19th century Roman Catholic Church is built on elevated ground donated by local landowner, Mr. John F. Corkeran. The building was mainly funded through local subscription. The church is highly decorative with a wonderful display of craftsmanship and is worthy of a visit.
- 12. ST HELEN'S CONVENT** (site of): Founded in 1892 by Nicholas and Ellen Mahony of Martin Mahony & Bros. Woollen Mills. It was occupied by the Sisters of Charity until 1990. Nothing remains except the Convent Hall which plays an important role for the Blarney community. The new convent is occupied by Missionary Sisters of Charity whose founder, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, visited in 1996.

13. SHEAN BRIDGE: This three-arched stone bridge is the start of The Martin Valley Trail to Waterloo, a 2.5km riverside walk leading to Waterloo.

14. MILLSTREAM ROW: This was the first (c.1861) of a number of distinctive terraces of industrial houses built by the Mahony Brothers for workers at their mill. Their distinctive economical curved tarred roofs are copies of those used in the 19th century Industrial Village at Portlaw, Waterford.

15. BLARNEY WOOLLEN MILLS: Timothy Mahony operated a small textile mill here in the mid 18th century. This was rebuilt and expanded in 1824 for the spinning and weaving of wool and employed some 800 people in the 1880's. It developed an international reputation and was the main industry in the area until it closed in 1973. The mill played a central role in Blarney life. This is reflected in the local children's rhyme cited overleaf, the sham referring to the Shamrock Stores, a company shop where provisions could be bought on credit. In 1975 Christy Kelleher purchased the mill and turned it into a successful visitor centre and gift shop. Although no longer a functioning mill it continues as a thriving international business while still retaining its industrial character. The tourist office is housed at the entrance gate lodge.

16. OLD MARKET HOUSE (now the Claddagh and Lantern Restaurants): this was where the business of the village was transacted in the 18th and 19th centuries. An 18th century visitor remarked that "many hundreds of pairs of stockings were sold here weekly".

17. OLD COURTHOUSE (now the library): A magistrate, usually the local landlord, dealt with petty crimes such as illegal pub opening hours, minor theft, and drunk and disorderly cases.

18. ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY BARRACKS (now the Garda Síochána Station): In early June 1920, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) attacked the building and badly damaged it. The RIC were especially targeted because of their role as local representatives of and intelligence gatherers for the British administration.

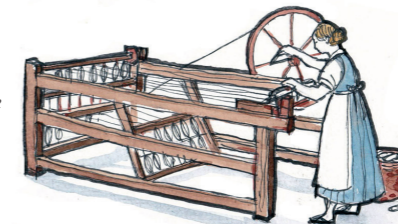
19. BLARNEY CASTLE HOTEL: A family run hotel since 1837. It was from this hotel that the IRA launched their attack on the barracks next door by setting off a bomb against the connecting wall.

20. OLD PROTESTANT SCHOOL (known as Prosser House): In the late 18th century, Thomas Prosser left service in the Castle to teach and run a school here. By 1835, the school had 63 registered pupils.

21. LODGE: This handsome gate lodge at the entrance to Blarney House is typically ornate, embellished with decorative features such as finials, ridge tiles, and bargeboards.

22. GOTHIC BRIDGE: An ornate 19th century road bridge, now part of a pedestrian walkway, is decorated with gothic "quatrefoil" panels adding elegance to the river crossing on the edge of the Blarney demesne.

Right: a "spinning Jenny" used in the textile mills in Blarney in the late 18th century, revolutionised the textile industry by allowing a single worker to spin multiple spindles at once.



Map produced in collaboration with Brand Blarney and Blarney and District Historical Society. For further information scan the QR code.

Blarney, The Gift of the Gab

The use of the word Blarney to denote eloquent and persuasive speech is said to originate in the 16th century when Elizabeth I attempted to persuade Cormac MacDermot MacCarthy to give up his lands, including Blarney, as proof of his loyalty to the Crown. Cormac repeatedly offered wordy excuses causing the Queen to declare in frustration "Odds bodkins, more Blarney talk!"



The origins of the practice of kissing the Blarney stone in order to gain this gift of persuasive speech are obscure, as are the origins of the stone itself. Blarney, and particularly Blarney Castle, have been a popular destination since the early 19th century with many famous visitors. Scottish novelist and poet Sir Walter Scott visited the castle in 1825. In a 1946 radio broadcast, 'The Adventure of the Blarney Stone', Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson visit Blarney Castle and witness a murder as a nasty local businessman falls through the gap in the battlements while kissing the stone!



Other famous lips to have kissed the Blarney stone include Laurel and Hardy, Winston Churchill, Mick Jagger and Bart Simpson!

Map of BLARNEY Historic Village



Produced by CORK COUNTY COUNCIL COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHORCAÍ



see website: <http://www.purecork.ie/map>

Design and images by Rhoda Cronin-Allanic 2017





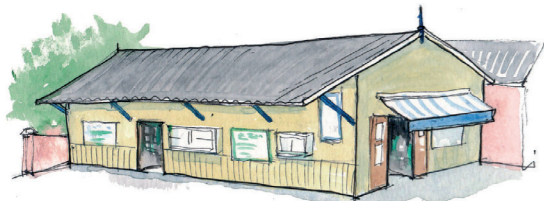
BLARNEY

An 18th-19th century planned industrial

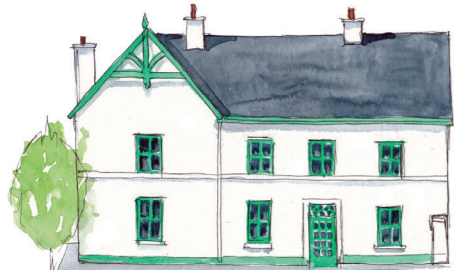
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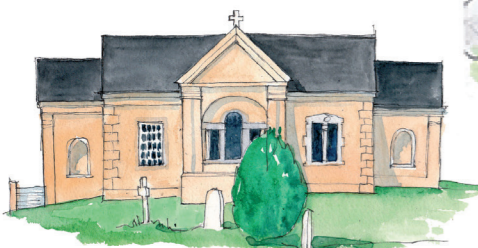
2. Blarney House



3. Former tram station



5. Stopford House



9. Church of Ireland Church



1. Blarney Castle



11. Roman Catholic Church



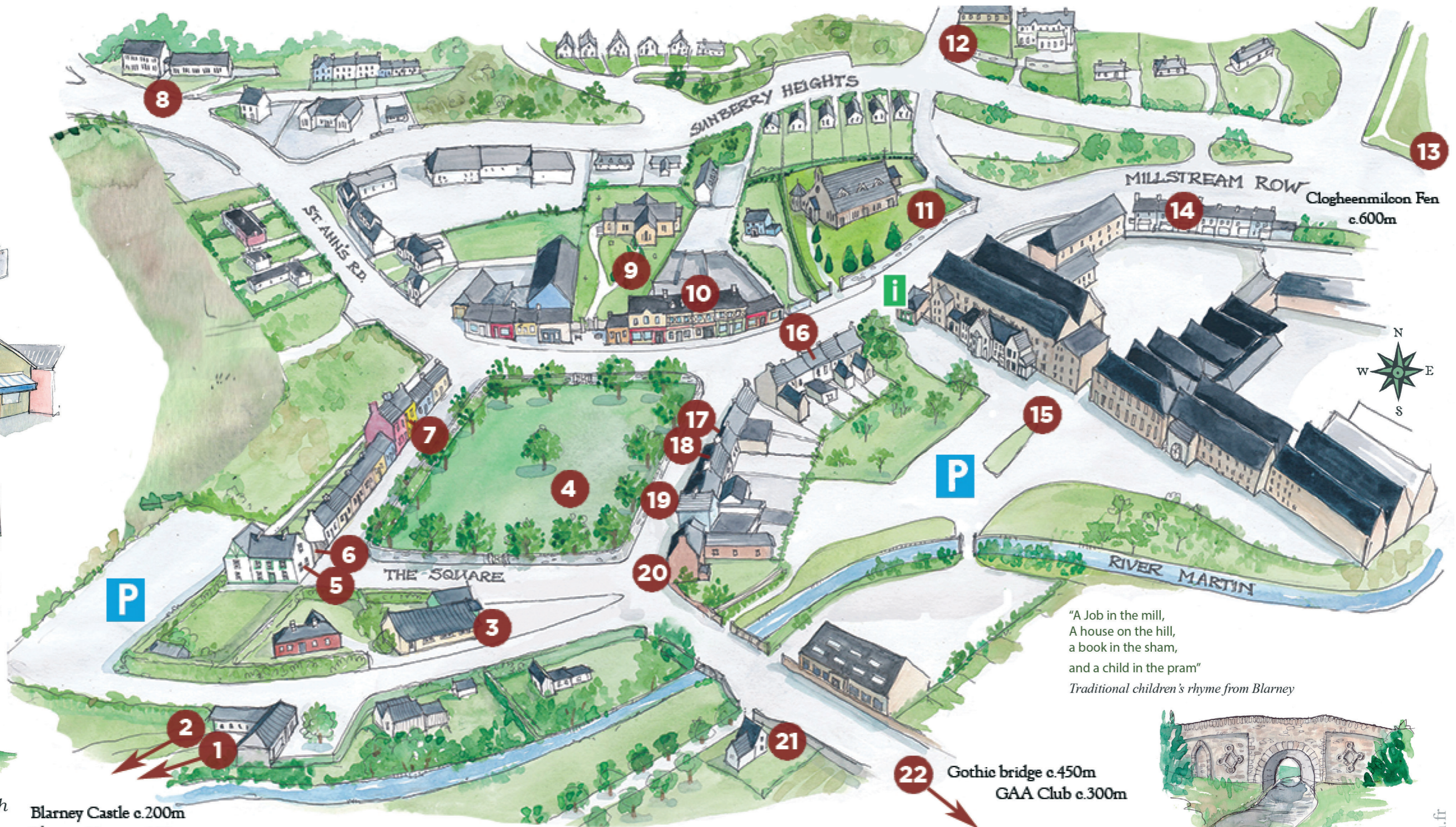
14. Millstream Row



15. Blarney Woollen Mills



21. Gate lodge



Blarney Castle c.200m
Blarney House c.300m

"A Job in the mill,
A house on the hill,
a book in the sham,
and a child in the pram"
Traditional children's rhyme from Blarney

22 Gothic bridge c.450m
GAA Club c.300m



22. Gothic Bridge

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