KINSALE is a vibrant and picturesque town that sits at the mouth of the Bandon River. The town has a rich historical heritage and acts as an attractive tourist, market and service centre for the surrounding area. The narrow winding streets of the present town are inherited from medieval times and the town is lucky to have retained a wealth of beautiful buildings and shopfronts, particularly from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The name Kinsale is derived from the Irish, Ceann tSáile, (headland of the sea). The Vikings are said to have founded a settlement here but nothing survives from this period. The present town grew up on the site of an Anglo-Norman settlement founded in the 12th century. The town was granted its first Charter in 1334 and was enclosed by walls in 1381.

In 1601 the town witnessed the siege and battle of Kinsale, an engagement that led to the complete English conquest of Ireland. It was the defining engagement of the Nine Years War, in which forces led by the Gaelic lords Hugh O'Neill and Red Hugh O'Donnell fought the English Crown. These Ulster lords were supported by the Spanish, whose army landed in Kinsale and secured the town. They were soon besieged by Crown forces, and the Gaelic army undertook the long march south to relive them. Shortly after their arrival, the Crown won a quick and decisive victory. Afterwards two new artillery forts were built on either side of the harbour to deter any future invasion of Kinsale from the sea.

Since then, Kinsale has undergone many changes. The medieval town was concentrated on slightly elevated ground around the market area in front of St Multose's church. In the 16th century, as the town expanded, the area to the east, which was then wet and marshy, was reclaimed and became the Market Square. The town walls were extended to incorporate this expansion. The town had five main gates (see map opposite): Friar's Gate (A), Cork Gate (B), Water Gate (C), World's End Gate (D) and Nicholas Gate (E). The walls and gates were largely destroyed during the Battle of Kinsale but the names of the gates still survive today.

At the end of the eighteenth century further reclamation work was carried out. First the Long Quay (now Pearse Street) was in-filled and the reclamation of Emmet Place and Market Quay followed. Permission for the development of the pier and Pier Road was given to the Kinsale Harbour Commissioners in 1880.

above:
Approximate outline of the medieval town walls and gates.

SITES TO SEE *(refer to map overleaf for locations)*

1. Site of Carmelite Abbey: The present graveyard developed on the site of a Carmelite Abbey founded by Robert Fitz Richard Balrain in 1334. The abbey was supressed during the reign of Henry VIII (c.1541) and was badly damaged during the Battle of Kinsale (1601). Today little remains apart from a few architectural fragments.
2. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church: Built by the Carmelite order c.1860. It is in the Gothic Revival style and replaced a smaller chapel which had been built in the 18th century.
3. Desmond Castle: A late medieval urban tower house that was built c.1500 for the Fitzgerald family, Earls of Desmond, and which was later used as a prison. Today it houses a wine museum.
4. The Dutch House: An interesting and rare example of an early 18th century gable-fronted house built in the Dutch style using curvilinear gables.
5. St John the Baptist's Church: An impressive example of an early 19th century Roman Catholic church, built in 1832. The elegant and highly visible Neo-Classical facade overlooking the town reflects the growing confidence of the Roman Catholic population following Catholic Emancipation in 1829. The interior is worth visiting to see its elegant classical features and a statue of the builder, Fr. McNamara, by Edmund Hogan, a noted Cork sculptor.
6. The Market House: A rare example of an early 17th century market house, which was originally accessible by water. A stone bollard from this time survives in the pavement in front of the building. Market houses began to be built in the 17th century to facilitate and control the buying and selling of goods. The upper floors were often used as meeting places as in this case where it was used as the Townhall for many years. The distinctive facade, with ground floor arcade and topped by rare examples of curvilinear Dutch gables, was added in 1705. It is now the town museum.
7. St Multose's Church: Mainly 13th century in date, this is one of the oldest parish churches still in use in Ireland. It was altered and extended in the 18th and 19th centuries. The church contains an interesting collection of graveslabs dating to the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.
8. The Old Pound: This enclosed yard was originally used to impound stray animals and the confiscated animals and goods of traders who refused to pay their tolls and taxes. Today it contains information boards on recent archaeological excavations.
9. The Fish Market: Façade of the old fish market, built in 1784. The area now occupied by Pearse Street was originally a quay before reclamation in the late 18th/early 19th century.
10. Commercial building: An attractive and rare Arts and Crafts style shop facade built in 1905 and added to an older warehouse. Such warehouses were once a common feature along Long Quay before it was filled-in to create the present street.
11. Perryville House: Originally built as two townhouses c.1800, the building was converted to a hotel in the 20th century. The flamboyant façade with its ornate ironwork and plasterwork is an excellent example of late Victorian architecture.
12. Methodist Church: A Gothic revival Methodist church built in 1873. Methodism was introduced to Kinsale in 1748 by Charles Wesley, the younger brother of John Wesley who founded the Methodist Church.
13. Temperance Hall: built in 1885 by the League of the Cross, a temperance society founded in Liverpool.
14. The Mercy Convent: Begun in 1844, this imposing building once included a school for 700 pupils and was well known as a centre for lacemaking.
15. Fishermen's Hall: Built as a Church of Ireland hall c.1860, this building has been adapted to a variety of uses, including a fishermen's hall, a parish hall and residential use in recent years.
16. The Southwell Gift Houses: Built in 1682 by Sir Robert Southwell, a prominent figure and benefactor in Kinsale. The houses, which are arranged around a small courtyard, were originally intended to accommodate "eight poor, aged, helpless men and women". As well as housing, the complex included a common room and "an infirmary for any of Sir Robert's descendants who fell on evil days".
17. Municipal Hall: Former assembly rooms built c.1830 as a place for the upper classes to socialise. The building burnt down in 1922 and was rebuilt. It is now occupied by Cork County Council. The park to the east of the building is a former bowling green.
18. St John's Hill: One of the many excellent examples of mid-18th century townhouses in Kinsale with bow windows and weather slating, features which are typical of Kinsale.
19. Custom House: This substantial former custom house, built c.1740, is a reminder of the important role played by maritime trade in the economy of Kinsale in the 18th and 19th centuries.
20. Graving Dock and fish processing site, Scilly: This striking long building was originally built c.1820 for manufacturing fish boxes. A fish palace (pallice), a press for extracting oil from pilchards, was located adjacent to it. In front of the building is a u-shaped graving dock, built c.1860, which was used to carry out repairs to boats.

BOATS AND BOAT-BUILDING

Boat-building was an important industry in Kinsale in the 18th and 19th centuries. Before being reclaimed, the area now occupied by Pier Road was originally occupied by a number of boatyards, most of which were family-run (Barretts, Browns, Thuiliers) . In the eighteenth century quite large ships were built in Kinsale, the best known being HMS Kinsale, a fifth rate frigate, which was built at the Admiralty Dockyard at World's End, in1705.

HMS Kinsale

A Kinsale Hooker

Fishing was another key element of Kinsale's economy. In 1829, it is recorded that 4,612 men and boys were employed on fishing boats and another 1,415 were working in ancillary industries such as coopering, sailmaking and fishprocessing. Distinctive traditional boats known as Kinsale Hookers were a common sight at the quayside. Like the boat-building industry, fishing underwent a drastic decline in the 20th century.

Map of KINSALE Historic Town

Market Square, Kinsale

Produced by
CORK COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHORCAÍ

see website: **http://www.purecork.ie/map**

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Kinsale Historic Town

1. Site of Carmelite Abbey

2. Our lady of Mount Carmel Church

3. Desmond Castle

4. The Dutch House

5. St. John the Baptist Church

6. Market House

7. St Multose's Church

9. Old Fish Market

10. Commercial building

11. Perryville House

12. Methodist Church

13. Temperance Hall

14. Convent of Mercy

15. Fishermen's Hall

16. Gift houses

17 Municipal Building

18. Houses, St John's Hill

19. Custom House

20. Fish pallace and graving dock

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