

Castletownbere, also known as Castletown Berehaven, is an attractive town in an impressive setting, backed by high hills and sheltered by Bere Island. The safe harbour has been used by fishing vessels, native and foreign, for many centuries.

The area has been inhabited since prehistoric times as attested to by numerous prehistoric stone monuments.

In the medieval period a small settlement may have developed around Castle Dermot (16) which stood at the east end of the town. In the 18th and 19th centuries the area was part of the Bantry Estate. The town that we see today grew up in the early 19th century following the development of copper mining in Allihies and the establishment of a British naval base on Bere Island.

The architecture of the streetscape reflects its 19th century origins, with a strong emphasis on brick details. In the mid-19th century, the town had a bridewell, coast guard station and a salt manufactory. Fair days were held once a month on Main Street and in the Square.

Until the 20th century, road connections to Castletownbere were poor and the easiest means of access was by sea. The Bantry Bay Steamship Company, founded in 1883, provided freight and passenger services between Bantry, Castletownbere, Bere Island, Adrigole and Glengarriff until 1946.

For almost 130 years an important British naval base existed on Bere Island and many of the officers were accommodated in the town. Even after the declaration of the Free State in 1922, Bere Island remained a British port, one of three so-called Treaty Ports in the country; these were seceded to the Irish State in 1938.

In the 1950s and 60s there was a major resurgence of the fishing industry. Deenish Island was purchased and developed by the Department of the Marine in the 1970s and today Castletownbere is the largest white-fishing port in the country.



The "Princess Beara", one of several steamboats owned by the Bantry Bay Steamship Company

Sites to see (Please refer to map overleaf for locations. Sites marked with an asterisk are outside the area covered by the map)

- 1. COACH HOUSE:** This building was originally a quayside warehouse. Known locally as the coach house, the building had many uses such as an abattoir, a hatchery and a fish processing plant. Today it is an art gallery and music venue.
- 2. ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS (AOH) HALL** (now O'Donoghue's Garage): The AOH was a Catholic organisation founded in New York in 1886. This building was used for their meetings and recreational activities in the early 20th century.
- 3. WAR OF INDEPENDENCE MEMORIAL:** The Celtic cross was erected to commemorate the contribution of the Berehaven Battalion I.R.A. in Ireland's Fight for Independence.
- 4. ST PETER'S CHURCH OF IRELAND:** Built in 1841 to replace Killaconenagh church which was located outside the town (25).

5. THE BEARA BAY HOTEL: This imposing building was originally a Coastguard Station with a slipway to the rear onto the foreshore, which is now reclaimed land. British Army and Naval officers had a roller skating rink in what is now known as 'The Hall'.

6. GARDA STATION: Built in the 1860s as a Royal Irish Constabulary barracks to replace an older barracks and courthouse. It was burnt in the Civil War and reoccupied by the new Civic Guard in 1927.

7. TALLON ROAD: Named after Daniel Tallon, Lord Mayor of Dublin, who visited the area in 1898, accompanied by his Castletownbere-born secretary James Kennedy, to view works being carried out under the Mansion House Committee's Relief Fund setup to alleviate poverty.

8. STANDING STONE: One of several standing stones in the area, this example is 3.2 m in height and was probably erected in the Bronze Age, perhaps as a grave or boundary marker or ritual monument.

9. RUINS OF OLD PROTESTANT SCHOOL: One gable, with arched windows, is all that remains of the Protestant school located at "The Rock" at the west end of the town.

10. FORMER ROYAL NAVAL HOTEL: Built in the early 1800s as a residence for Bobby White, rent collector for the Lee White Estate, Bantry House. It was converted to use as a hotel in the late 19th century and is now a private house.

11. BLACKSMITH'S FORGE: This former forge was originally one of four forges located in the town.

12. MACCARTHY'S BAR: This is a one of a number of fine traditional shop fronts in the town. It had a number of interesting residents and visitors.

13. ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE SACRED HEART: Without doubt the most striking building in the town, it was built in an imposing Neo-gothic style in 1911 on the site of an earlier 19th century RC Church. The granite came from the Mountains of Mourne in Co Down and was brought by sea. Much of the funding for the building was donated by the British Naval personnel based in Berehaven and by the Irish in the U.S.A. The interior is enriched by a fine display of craftsmanship in stone, wood and stained glass. The strong architectural form reflects the growing confidence in RC Church following a long period of suppression.

14. CONVENT OF MERCY: The Sisters of Mercy came to Castletownbere in 1864 and moved to this location in 1912. In the late 20th century, dwindling numbers led the sisters to move to a new convent near the hospital which closed in 1994.

15. HOUSES WITH PORTHOLE WINDOWS: These three buildings were commissioned by Mrs. Pace, the wife of a U.S. Admiral based in Berehaven, who lived in the middle house. The decorative porthole windows in the attic, mimicking those of a ship, are intriguing and are said to have been cast in Canada.

16. SITE OF CASTLE DERMOT: The castle which gives the town its name was built around 1474 by Dermot McCarthy on a high rock at or near 'Castle House', the offices of the Fast Fish Co. The McCarthys were allies of the powerful O'Sullivan family.

17. WRECK OF 'THE TRAFALGAR': Visible at low tide, 'The Trafalgar' was a 19th century wooden vessel that made a number of voyages with emigrants to America.

18. TIMOTHY C. HARRINGTON MONUMENT: On the site of the old Harrington homestead, this monument was erected on the centenary of the Land Act of 1903 to commemorate Timothy Harrington who was instrumental in devising the Act.

19. BRANDY HALL BRIDGE & HANDBALL ALLEY: The name Brandy Hall evokes the centuries-old smuggling trade in Beara. The bridge was built in the early 19th century to replace Aghakista Bridge (20). The adjacent handball alley was built on the site of the old Brandy Hall National School which was demolished in the 1950s.

20. AGHAKISTA BRIDGE: A disused humped-backed bridge over the Kista River on the old road into town. It is narrow and lacks parapets to allow laden packhorses to pass easily. It may date to the 17th century. The remains of a tuck mill, known as 'Florry Kelly's mill', can be seen beside the stream. These tuck mills, tucked/shrunk the woollen cloth by churning it in vats.

21. SITE OF WORKHOUSE: Built in 1852 to a design by George Wilkinson, the workhouse housed up to 600 destitute people in the wake of the Great Famine. It was demolished in the early 20th century and some of the stone was reused to build St Joseph's Villas.

22. LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS' HOUSES* (1.4 km from centre): A terrace of three flat-roofed former lighthouse keepers' houses, built in the late 19th century, and now occupied by the Irish Lights Service.

23. ST FINIAN'S CEMETERY* (1 km from centre): A new cemetery was developed close to town on land donated by the Earl of Bantry. Contrary to his wishes it was consecrated by Bishop Moriarty in 1875. It contains many interesting burials including those of Pádraig Ó Laoghaire, a Gaelic scholar and Patrick Pearse's Irish teacher, Dean Halahan the last rector for Castletownbere and a number of Commonwealth war graves.

24. DERREENATAGGART STONE CIRCLE* (2km from centre): This multiple stone circle may have originally consisted of 15 stones, only 12 of which survive and some of which have fallen. Stone circles generally date to the Bronze Age when it may have been used for ceremonies associated with the changing seasons. Fulacht Fiadha, a Bronze Age cooking site, occurs 30 meters to south west.

25. KILLACONENAGH CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD* (2 km from centre): The graveyard, known as the Glebe, contains the remains of a Church of Ireland church, the construction of which was funded by the Board of First Fruits in 1812. It was built on the site of the medieval parish church of Killaconenagh and was soon abandoned in favour of a more convenient site in the centre of the new town where St Peter's Church was built in 1841.

26. RUINS OF DUNBOY CASTLE* (3.9 km from centre): This tower house, probably built in the 15th century, was the principal stronghold of the O'Sullivan Beares. It was besieged and destroyed by English forces in 1602. In the 1650s, a star-shaped bastioned fort was built on the site: this was a new type of fortification designed to withstand and launch an artillery attack.

27. PUXLEY MANSION* (3.6 km from centre): Originally built in the early 18th century by the Puxley mining family, the present Neo-Elizabethan structure is the result of extensive rebuilding carried out in the 1860s to a design by John Christopher. It was burnt by the IRA in 1921 and lay in ruins for decades before recent restoration work.



24. Derreenataggart Stone Circle

Map produced in collaboration with Beara Historical Society.

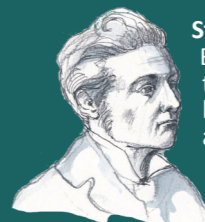
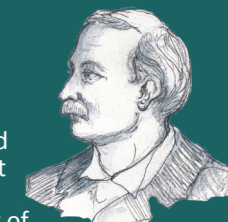
NOT FOR COMMERCIAL USE - FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY.

DOES NOT PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE BUILDINGS

FAMOUS FACES

Timothy Charles Harrington (1851 – 1910)

A politician and journalist whose family was evicted from a small-holding near the town. He became secretary of the Land League and the National League and was imprisoned several times. He was one of Parnell's closest lieutenants and was elected as a Nationalist M.P. from 1883 to 1910 and was Lord Mayor of Dublin from 1901 to 1903. He played a major role in the Land Act of 1903 which enabled tenants to purchase land from landlords on reasonable terms. This Act had a major impact on rural Ireland.



Standish James O'Grady (1846 – 1928)

Born in The Glebe, Castletownbere, O'Grady was the son of a Protestant rector. He became a well-known author, journalist and historian who played a formative role in the Gaelic Revival; he influenced WB Yeats, Lady Gregory, AE Russell. His popular English versions of the Irish heroic sagas earned him the title "The Father of the Gaelic Revival".

Dr Aidan MacCarthy (1913-1995)

Born in MacCarthy's Bar (12), MacCarthy served as a Medical Officer in the RAF during WW II. He was posted to Singapore in 1942 where he was captured by the Japanese. In 1944 he was among 980 POWs being transported to Japan when their ship was torpedoed by a US sub. He was one of a handful of survivors who were moved to a POW camp at Nagasaki. Having witnessed the dropping of the atomic bomb on the city, he was eventually released in August 1945. He died in London in 1995 and is buried in Castletownbere. MacCarthy tells his extraordinary story in his book "A Doctor's War" and his experiences were also recounted in the 2015 documentary film "A Doctor's Sword".



Map of Castletownbere Historic Town



Main Street (No. 14)

Produced by
CORK COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHORCAÍ



Map available for download at:
www.purecork.ie



Design and images by Rhoda Cronin-Allanic 2018





CASTLETOWNBERE

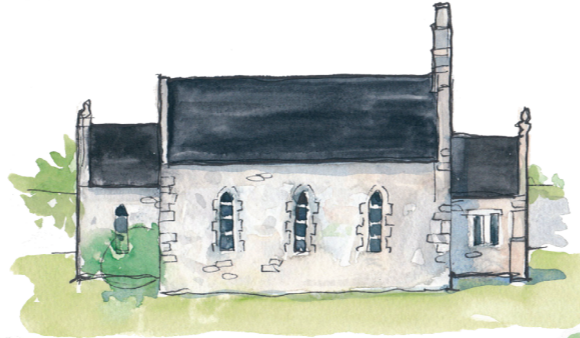
Historic Town



5. Beara Bay Hotel



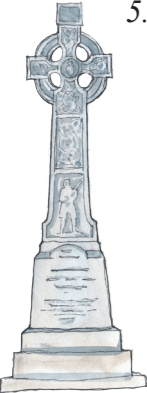
6. Garda Station



4. St Peter's Church of Ireland



22. Lighthouse Keepers' Houses



3. War of Independence Memorial



10. Former Royal Naval Hotel



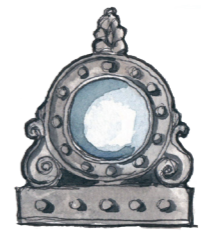
12. MacCarthy's Bar



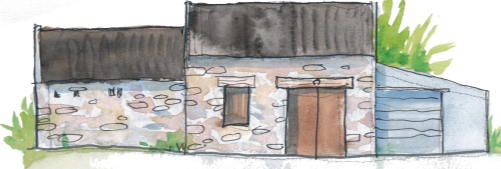
20. Aghakista Bridge



19. Brandy Hall Bridge



15. Porthole Window, Main Street



11. Former Blacksmith's Forge



13. Sacred Heart Church



14. Former Convent



DÓNAL CAM O'SULLIVAN (1561 – 1618)

In the Medieval Period, the Beara Peninsula was ruled by Gaelic lords, the O' Sullivan Beares. Their main stronghold was Dunboy Castle (26), located on the coast about 3 km south west of Castletownbere.

Dónal Cam O' Sullivan (b.1561) was the last O'Sullivan chieftain to rule Beara. In 1594 he joined with Hugh O'Neill of Tyrone and Red Hugh O'Donnell of Ulster in an attempt to drive the English out of Ireland with help from Philip II of Spain. In December 1601, he took part in the Battle of Kinsale which ended in a crushing defeat for the Irish and their Spanish allies. In June 1602, Dunboy Castle was besieged and destroyed and many of O'Sullivan's followers were massacred on Dursley Island. Dónal Cam was outlawed and left Beara with his remaining followers in December 1602 to seek refuge with the O'Rourkes in Co. Leitrim. Their gruelling 500 Km trek in the height of winter is one of the epic tales of Irish history. Of the 1,000 that left Beara only 34 arrived at O'Rourke's castle.



Dónal Cam went into exile to Spain where he was made a Knight of Santiago. He was murdered in Madrid in 1618.

The "Beara-Breifne Trail", a popular walking and cycling route, follows the line of Dónal Cam's long march north.

