

A Sign posted Walking Tour Of Sligo City

MAP OF SLIGO

PINEY TOWNSHIP

Scale 200 Feet to One Inch

How to use this booklet

This Tourist Trail is a sign posted walking tour through some of the most interesting parts of the city of Sligo. It is basically an historic one, but it does not pretend to show everything of historic interest in the city. Since Sligo is in the heart of the Yeats Country, you can expect to see some places associated with the famous brothers, William Butler Yeats, the poet, and Jack Butler Yeats, the painter. The poet said: "The place that really influenced my life was Sligo".



The Trail is sign posted using signs similar to the arrow shown here. These will help you to follow the trail. You should continue walking in the direction indicated by the last signpost, until the next one is sighted. Each sign has a number and these numbers are keyed to the text. The map in the centre pages of this booklet indicates the route taken by the Trail.

1 Trail 1 - Temple Street

Our trail begins outside the Tourist Information Office in Temple Street. Across the road from the Tourist Office you can see Summerhill College.

Summerhill College was founded in 1857, in Athlone, and transferred to Sligo towards the end of the last century when the cutstone buildings on the north side of the road were built. This is a leading secondary school offering a comprehensive education. Its past pupils have included William Bourke Cockran, orator, lawyer and statesman, who served six terms in the American House of Representatives between 1886 and 1909; Father Edward O'Flanagan, founder of Boys' Town, Nebraska; John McCormack, the world renowned singer, Father Michael O'Flanagan, who in 1919 played a prominent role in the establishment of the first Irish Parliament; and Father Thomas O'Kelly, Gaelic scholar, dramatist and poet, who composed two of our best known Gaelic songs – "Barbaro" and "Seoithin Seoitho" – and made a prize-winning translation into Gaelic of W.B. Yeats famous play "Cathleen Ní Houlihan". More recent past pupils include Tommie Gorman RTE broadcaster, Albert Reynolds former Taoiseach and Shane Filan, Mark Feehily and Cian Egan all of Westlife.

Turning right you soon come to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

2 Trail 2 - Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Since the reign of Henry VIII, Catholics of the diocese of Elphin were deprived of a Cathedral, and successive Penal Laws deprived all Catholics in Ireland of religious, political and civil rights. In 1874, less than fifty years after the Catholic Emancipation, Cardinal Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin, solemnly opened this Cathedral which had been built by Laurence Gillooly, Bishop of Elphin (1858-1895). The architect was George Goldie. The style can be best described as Renaissance Romanesque. The nave and aisles are connected by arches which are supported by 18 massive stone pillars of finely chiselled limestone.

One of the chief attractions of the Cathedral is the magnificent lighting effects, especially in the early morning or late evening, of the 69 stained-glass windows supplied by Loblin of Tours, France, one of the leading stained-glass craftsmen on the Continent at the time. The Altar and Tabernacle are in beaten brass symbolically recalling the first Bishop of Elphin, St. Asicus, a worker in copper and silver. Over the Alter is a splendid brass baldachino, the pillars of which are in polished Aberdeen marble with elaborately carved foliated capitals.

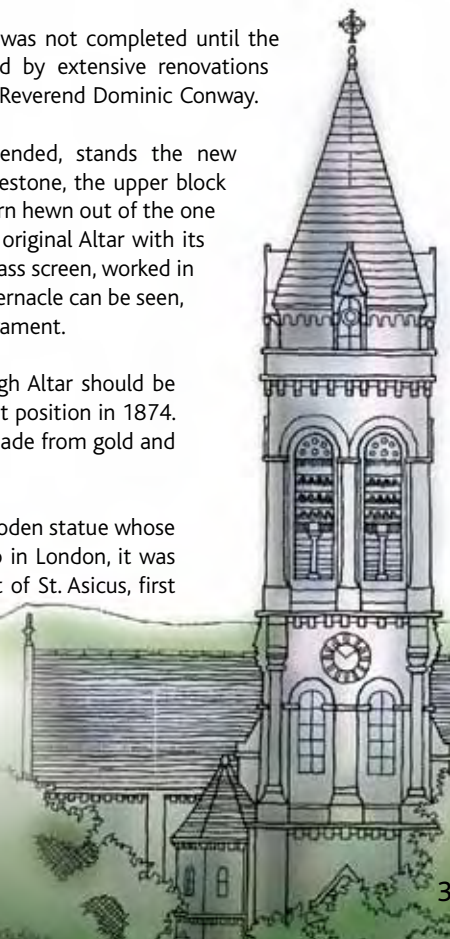
Though the Cathedral was consecrated in 1874 it was not completed until the following year. In 1975 its centenary was marked by extensive renovations undertaken by the then Bishop of Elphin, the Most Reverend Dominic Conway.

In the centre of the Sanctuary, which was extended, stands the new Altar, formed of two solid blocks of Ballinasloe limestone, the upper block beautifully honed with chiselled edges. A new Lectern hewn out of the one block of limestone replaces the original pulpit. The original Altar with its baldachino has been preserved; the addition of a brass screen, worked in a four-leaf shamrock pattern through which the Tabernacle can be seen, makes this an impressive shrine for the Blessed Sacrament.

The Statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary over the High Altar should be noted. It is of alabaster and was placed in its present position in 1874. It was solemnly crowned, in 1955, with a diadem made from gold and precious stones donated by people of Sligo.

At the back of the nave, near the door, is a small wooden statue whose origin is lost in antiquity. Found in an antique shop in London, it was identified by experts in the British Museum as that of St. Asicus, first Bishop of Elphin.

On the plaque beside the statue is a photostat copy of a folio from the Book of Armagh, written in 807 A.D. (chiefly in Latin), which mentions that he was "coppersmith to Patrick and made altars and caskets (for books) and also square alter plates (patens)."



There is an old saying, "you know you are in Sligo when you hear the chimes." The carillon with peal of nine bells, the largest weighing nearly one and a half tons, was erected in the tower in 1876. It was made by Murphy of Dublin and donated by Peter O'Connor of Sligo.

Directly opposite the Cathedral is the Gillooly Hall. The Gillooly Hall was built in 1885 by local architect PJ Kilgallen of Abbeyville. It was built to commemorate the late Bishop of Elphin Laurence Gillooly.

Keeping the Cathedral on your right turn right at the traffic lights. You are now in John Street.

3 Trail 3 - St. John's Church

Formerly called St. John's Lane, this street takes its name from the church of St. John the Baptist which was designed in 1730 by the great German architect, Cassels, who came to Sligo to build Hazelwood House. Among other notable buildings by Cassels are Leinster House (*seat of the Irish government*), The Rotunda, Powerscourt and Carton.

After his tour of Ireland in 1752 Archdeacon Pococke said that St. John's was the finest church he had met with. "It is in the form of a cross", he remarks, "with galleries at every end except the East. The roof is a curious piece of work." The present building shows some elaborations on the Cassels theme, the chief ones dating from 1812, when changes were made intended to transform it into a Gothic edifice. "It is said that Cassels was influenced very much by the Basilican pattern in the early Roman architecture. One feature of his work in St. John's was unfortunately eliminated in the nineteenth century (1812), when an oblong chancel was substituted for the original apse. This was a great mistake..." (*Bishop Tyndall*). Cassels' windows are also gone, but the present ones are attractive to the eye and have a pleasing effect on the interior which still shows Cassels' original conception of a massive central chamber in which the congregation gather round the Lord's Table. The style of the earlier windows can be seen in the tower which has remained unchanged.

On the wall of the north transept (*near the pulpit*) there is a brass tablet to the memory of Susan Mary Yeats who died in London in January 1900. She was William Pollexfen's eldest daughter who, on 10 September 1863 was married to John Butler Yeats in this church. They became the parents of William and Jack Butler Yeats.

According to Séan O'Faolain "the best Protestant stock in all Ireland is in Sligo". This stock reached its zenith in the first half of the 19th century when the Wynnes, Gore-Booths, Coopers and Percevals were the leading families. In the churchyard of St. John's rest many generations of Protestants extending back to Sir Roger Jones who built the first church here in the early 1600's (*he died in 1637*). In the alterations of 1812 the mensa of his tomb was taken from Cassels' apse to the churchyard where it lay badly damaged by the removal, for over 70 years. In 1883 it was placed in its present position inside the church (*at the back of the nave*) by the Past Masters of the 'Light of the West' Lodge of the Free Masons.

W.B. Yeats's grandfather, William Pollexfen, in his old age, walked from his home every day to supervise the building of his tomb in this churchyard. The finished work, low-walled with solid black chains, can be seen from the main entrance of the church.

Bram Stokers mother Charlotte Mathilda Blake Thornley, is also buried in this churchyard. It is said that her more famous son got inspiration for 'Dracula' from observing the 'walking dead' on visits to Sligo with his mother during the cholera outbreak circa 1832!



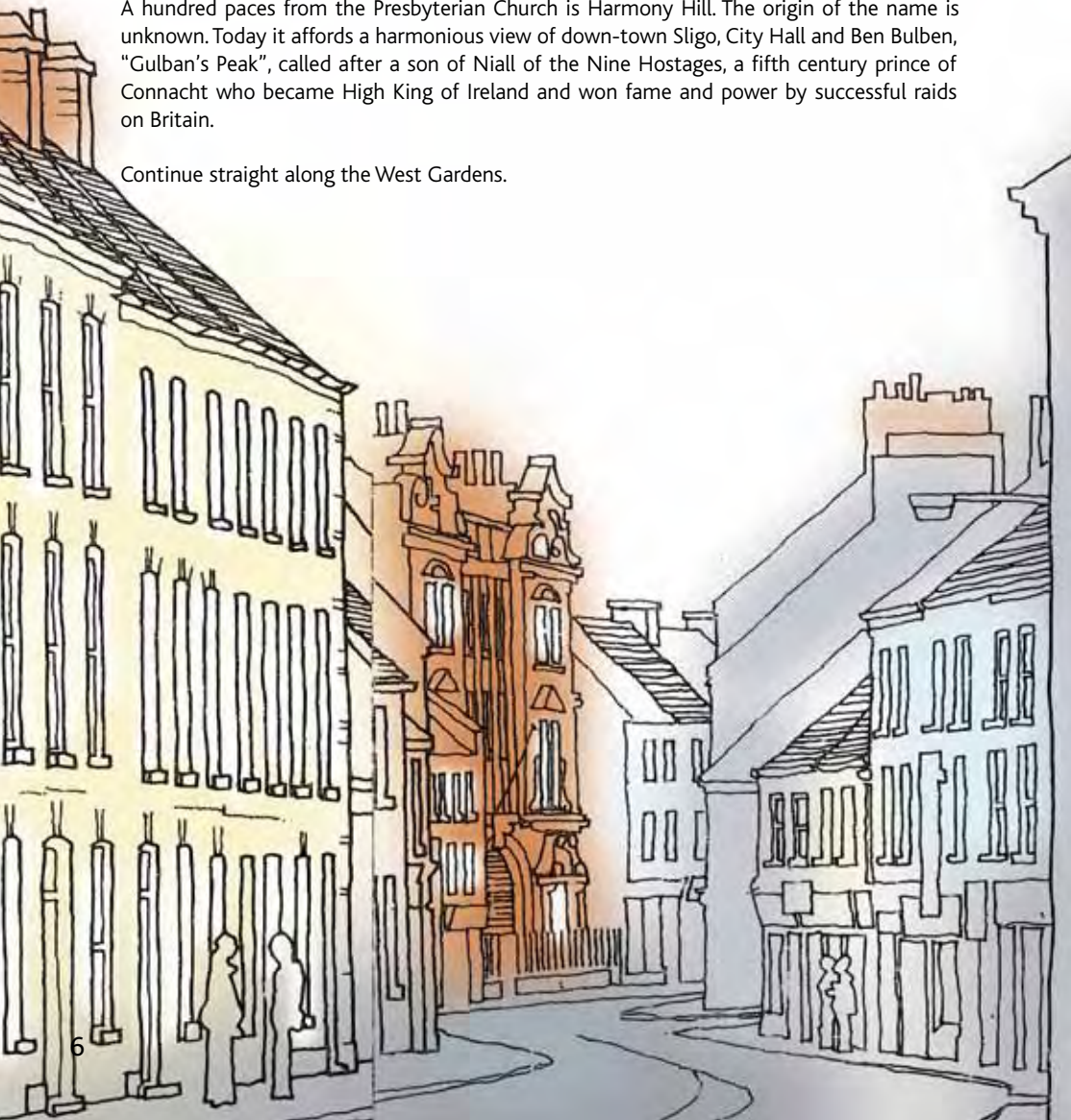
4 Trail 4 - Harmony Hill

After leaving St. John's Church continue down John Street and take the first right turn. This brings you into Charles Street at the top of which stands the Presbyterian Church which was erected in 1828.

The first Presbyterian minister of whom anything very definite is known was the Rev. Samuel Henry who came to Sligo in October 1694 from the Presbytery of Edinburgh.

A hundred paces from the Presbyterian Church is Harmony Hill. The origin of the name is unknown. Today it affords a harmonious view of down-town Sligo, City Hall and Ben Bulbin, "Gulban's Peak", called after a son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, a fifth century prince of Connacht who became High King of Ireland and won fame and power by successful raids on Britain.

Continue straight along the West Gardens.



5 Trail 5 - High Street

The most important building in High Street is the Church of the Dominican Order, commonly called "the Friary". Opened in 1973, it was designed by Pearse MacKenna to meet the liturgical requirements of the Second Vatican Council. It replaced an imposing Renaissance Gothic Church of 1845 designed by Sir John Benson, the architect of Hyde Bridge. The lovely apse of the old church has been preserved at the back of this one, and it is worth seeing.

High Street is very old. It was already there in medieval times and was once part of the old south road out of Sligo. No trace remains of the numerous inns like "The Spinning Wheel", or the numerous hotels like "The York Hotel" which lined this route in the middle of the 19th century. Nor is there any trace of traders of those days – the Allinghams who made barrels, Denis Bradley who sold nails, Robert Bartie who made candles and a general merchant named Martin Milmoie who died in 1908 having been mayor of Sligo. Milmoie was a kinsman of Sligo born Martin Milmoie, alias Milmore, one of the most prominent American sculptors of the 19th century, who died in 1883 aged 39 years.

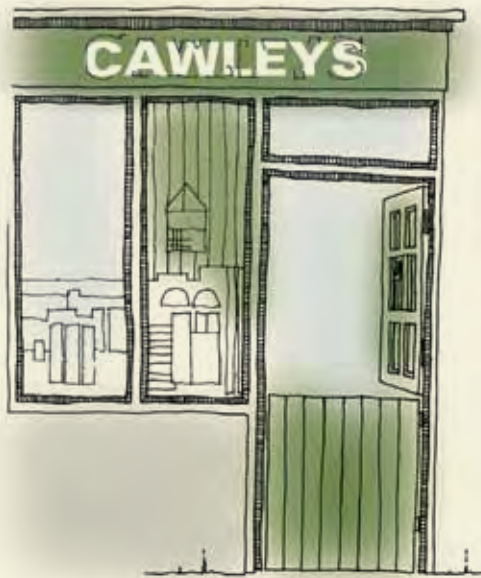
6 Trail 6 - Old Market Street



High Street branches left into Old Market Street which was known as Correction Street up to the 1830's because of a "House of Correction" which existed near the site of the present Garda Barracks. This was also called Jail Street from an old jail which in 1878 was incorporated into the present Courthouse.

In the last century the most prominent name in the street was Peter O'Connor, general merchant and timber importer, the same man who in 1874 presented the chime of bells to the Cathedral. On 15 March 1846 an advertisement placed by Sligo newspapers announcing the departure for Quebec on the 6th April of the "First Class Sailing Bark, Industry. Cost of passage Sligo to Quebec, and thence to New York, will not exceed £2.1s.6d." The exodus had begun. Hundreds of thousands were moving to the sea ports because of the widespread potato failure in the previous Autumn. In the following year, 1847, over 13,000 people sailed out of the port of Sligo.

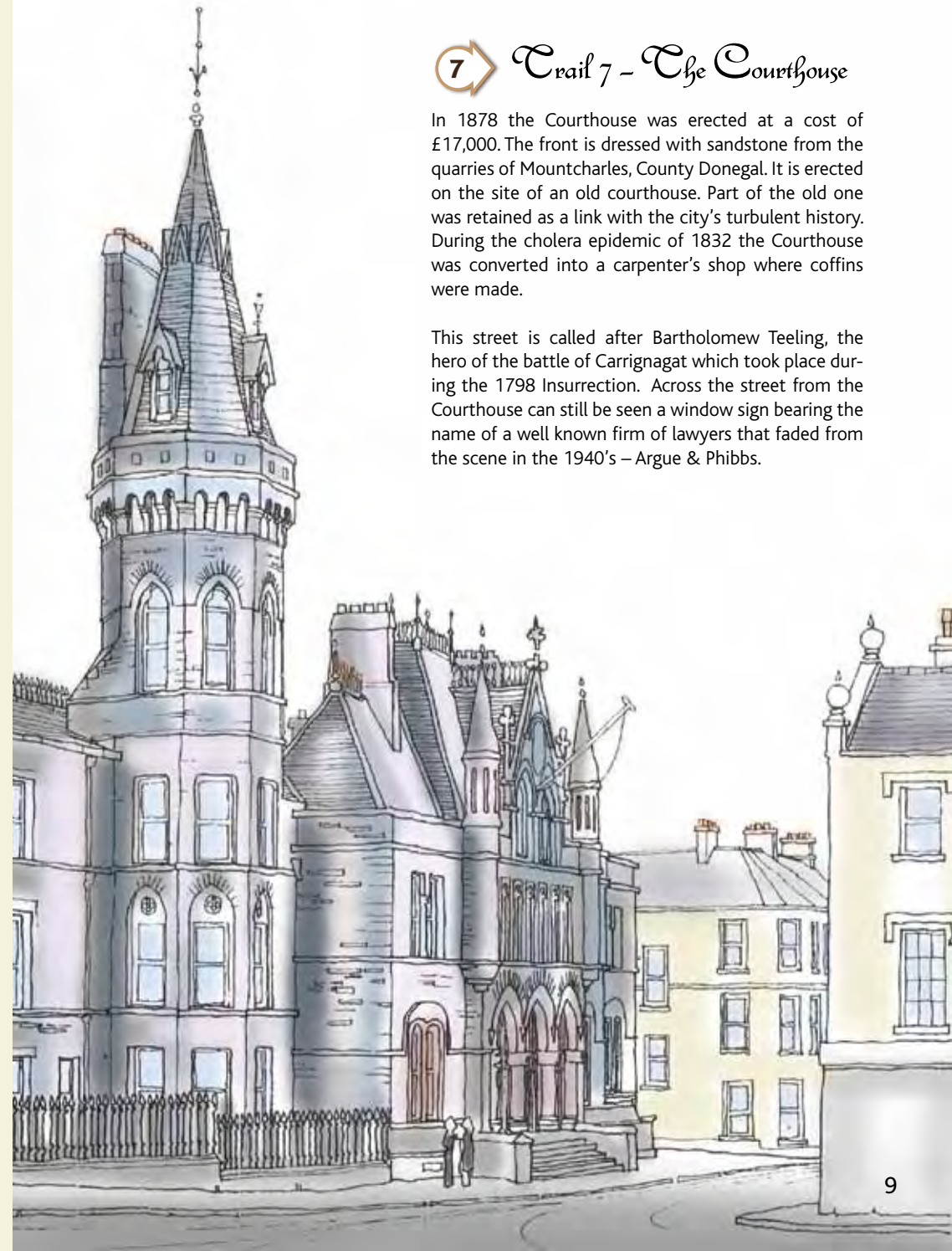
As you walk down Old Market Street towards the Courthouse flat-topped Benbulbin again looks down on you solemnly across the rooftops. This limestone plateau has for long attracted the attention of botanists from home and abroad. Dozens of alpine and arctic alpine plants have been counted on the summit which is nearly two thousand feet high. In the middle distance green fields and trees are visible, reminding one that from any part of this City you can be in open countryside within ten minutes.



7 Trail 7 - The Courthouse

In 1878 the Courthouse was erected at a cost of £17,000. The front is dressed with sandstone from the quarries of Mountcharles, County Donegal. It is erected on the site of an old courthouse. Part of the old one was retained as a link with the city's turbulent history. During the cholera epidemic of 1832 the Courthouse was converted into a carpenter's shop where coffins were made.

This street is called after Bartholomew Teeling, the hero of the battle of Carrignagat which took place during the 1798 Insurrection. Across the street from the Courthouse can still be seen a window sign bearing the name of a well known firm of lawyers that faded from the scene in the 1940's - Argue & Pibbs.



8 Trail 8 - The Abbey

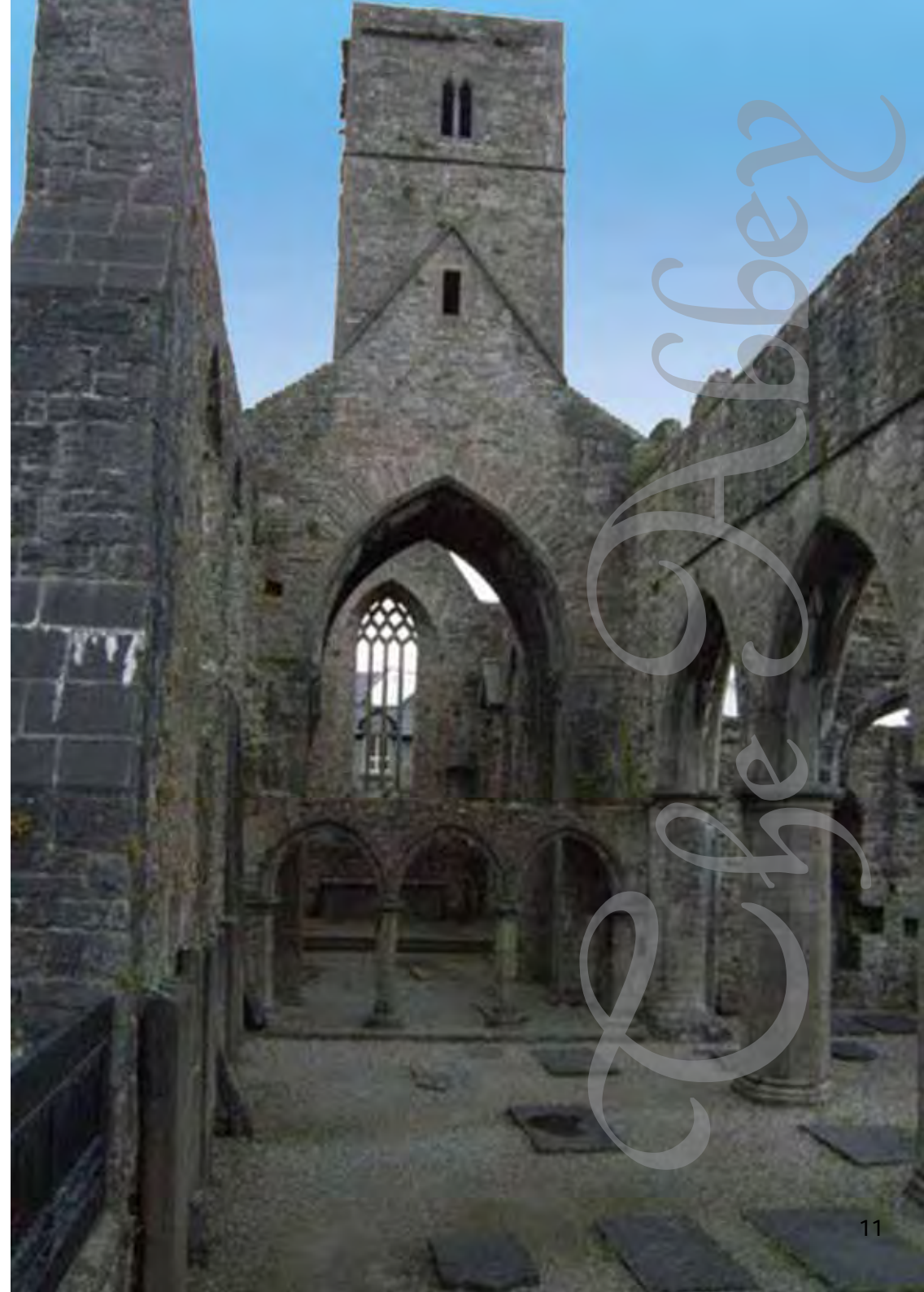
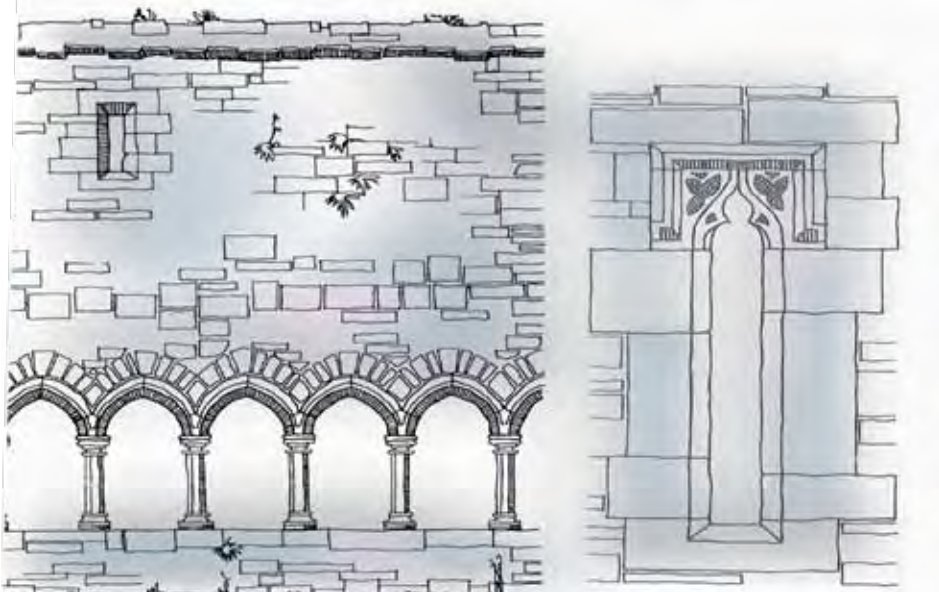
After passing the Courthouse the first right turn takes you to the Abbey, which is Sligo's most distinguished architectural treasure. It is the only medieval building which survives in the city. It was founded in 1252 or 1253 for the Friars of the Dominican Order by Maurice Fitzgerald who had already built a fortified castle close to the site of the Abbey. Accidentally destroyed by fire (*from a candle*) in 1414, the Abbey was almost immediately rebuilt in its present style.

The church has a nave with side transept, and a tower at the junction of all three. The eight lancet windows on the south side of the choir are from the 13th century. The beautiful four light east window dates from the 15th century as does the elaborately carved stone high altar beneath it. This altar is the only one of its kind remaining in situ in any monastic ruin in Ireland. An unusual feature is the rood-screen (*partly reconstructed*) which ran across the church separating the choir from the nave.

The Abbey is the burial place of kings and princes including Tighernen O'Rourke, King of Breifne, who died in 1418, and successive chiefs

of the O'Connor Sligo Clan. The wall monument on the south side of the high Altar was placed there in 1624 to the memory of Sir Donagh O'Connor who petitioned Elizabeth 1 not to dissolve the Friary. His petition was granted on condition that the friars became secular clergy. Note that a lancet window was blocked up to accommodate the O'Connor monument which has the Crucifixion on top, below it Saints Peter and Paul and below them Donagh O'Connor and his wife Elinor. A second window was blocked up in building the tower which probably dates from the 15th century.

In a recess in the north wall of the nave is the elaborate altar tomb of the O'Creans, reputed to be the wealthiest family in Sligo in the 16th century. The front panels of this monument, erected in 1506 or 1507, show the Crucifixion in the centre with the Virgin Mary and Saint John on either side; other figures are probably to be identified with are Saint Dominic (*in friar's robes*) Saint Catherine (*with remains of a wheel*), Saint Peter (*with keys*), Saint Michael (*with raised sword and shield*), and there are other unidentified figures.



As is usual in Dominican foundations, the conventional buildings lie to the north of the church. The cloisters originally formed a square of which three sides remain in fair preservation. The arches and their ornamented pillars display fine workmanship. On the upper floor or the north side of the cloister can be seen the corbel which supported the small oriel window lighting the reader's lectern in the refectory.

On the night of 1 July 1642, the soldiers of Sir Frederick Hamilton sacked the town of Sligo, killing every visible inhabitant. They "fell upon the abbey, set fire to everything they could, within and outside the church and conventual buildings, and burned altars, altar ornaments, vestments and various articles of value committed by the towns people for safe keeping to the friars" (*O'Rorke*). A legend persists that the silver bell of the ruined abbey lies at the bottom of Lough Gill, and only the perfect are privileged to hear it when on occasion it peals over the city.

W.B Yeats wrote of this shocking event in *The Curse of the Fires and the Shadows*: "All the monks were kneeling except the abbot who stood upon the altar steps with a great brass crucifix in his hand. 'Shoot them'. cried Sir Frederick Hamilton, but nobody stirred for all were new converts and feared the candles and the crucifix. For a little while all were silent and then five troopers who were the bodyguards of Sir Frederick Hamilton, lifted their muskets, and shot down five of the friars. The noise and the smoke drove away the mystery of the pale altar lights, and the other troopers took courage and began to strike. In a moment the friars lay about the altar steps, their white habits stained with blood. 'Set fire to the house', cried Sir Frederick Hamilton and a trooper carried in a heap of dry straw, and piled it against the western wall, but did not light it, because he was still afraid of the crucifix and of the candles. Seeing this, the five troopers who were Sir Frederick Hamilton's bodyguards went up to the altar, and taking each a holy candle set the straw ablaze".

9 Trail 9 - The Garavogue river

Turning left after leaving the Abbey, you will soon come to the river.

The name Sligo comes from Sligeach, meaning "The Shelly Place", which was an ancient name for the River Garavogue. As far back as 1782 this area alongside the River was called Corkran's Mall after Thomas Corkran, a ruthless merchant who outraged public opinion by 'utilising the Abbey as a quarry': he paved streets and built houses with stones taken from the old monastery. Wood-Martin writes: according to MS. on this subject, the spoilation did not bring good luck to its author as Mr. Corkran's ultimate fate was rather peculiar. He was wealthy and pompous: one night having accompanied his wife to the theatre, the lady's anger became in some way excited to such a degree that she lifted her hand and struck him in the face publicly. As soon as possible Mr. Corkran vindicated his outraged dignity by selling off his property, absconding to America, and deserting the lady who had so deeply offended him". No tears were shed when the name "Corkran's Mall" was changed to President John F. Kennedy Parade". But there were some who felt that a better way could have been found to commemorate the American president. Kennedy himself would hardly have agreed with the obliteration of a significant place name that has survived for two centuries.

The arches around six windows on the river side of the Embassy should be noted. These are traces of the old Linen Hall built in 1764. It was a large mart for the linen industry, an extensive and remunerative one in Sligo in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1833 that observant traveller, Inglis, was struck by "the superiority in appearance of the Sligo population over that of the

neighbouring western counties... nearly all were shod, and the amount of clean linen displayed surprised him". The Linen Hall served more than commerce. It was here that "the subscription dance" was held every night during the annual race meeting which lasted a week and which took place on Bomore Strand at Rosses Point.

"The salmon are not in the tides as they were of old" says Yeats' Old Fisherman. Nevertheless, as you cross the river into Bridge Street on the final stretch of your trail, you are likely to see someone fishing for salmon irrespective of the time of year it is. Thereby hangs another tale, and this is how it is told by historian Terence O'Rorke:

"The salmon fishery of the bay is remarkable for the number of quality fish, and for the fact that they are in season throughout the whole year. Naturalists have not been able to ascribe satisfactorily for this fact, but the authors of the old lives of St. Patrick ascribes the valuable peculiarity to the blessing of the Saint. The Vita Tripartita tells that the Saint, having his missionary rounds reached the Sligo river in the winter season, and being greatly fatigued and in need of refreshment, having asked fishermen of salmon whom he met at the river, was informed by them that salmon were never taken from there in the winter. However they offered to cast their net and having done so, took a fine salmon which they presented to the saint. He, in return for their kindness, blessed the Sligeach and imparted to it the privilege of yielding salmon all year round."

The bridge spanning Bridge Street was built in 1682 and is the one depicted on the old civic seal. Sligo's second bridge Hyde Bridge was opened in 1852. More recently Hughes Bridge named after one of Sligo's former mayors opened in 1988, and there are also two footbridges spanning the river today.

Immediately after crossing the Bridge you will see on your right The Velvet Room night club. These buildings became known as Lough Gill Brewery about 1842 when Charles Anderson moved his brewing business across the river from Water Lane (*then called Brewery lane*) to this site on which, according to a strong tradition, housed one of Sligo's notorious Hell Fire Clubs. In 1905 Alderman Edward Foley acquired the Brewery. Under the Foleys it evolved into a mineral water factory which was in operation until 1972.





15



CITY HALL

ULSTER BANK



LIBRARY & MUSEUM



AIB BANK



THE MODEL THE MALL

11

16

METHODIST CHURCH



GENERAL POST OFFICE



YEATS MEMORIAL BUILDING

13

HYDE BRIDGE

RIVER CARAVOQUE

10

Stephen St.

FORMER BREWERY



17

Wine St.



FORMERLY POLLEXFEN SHIPPING OFFICES (Now Mc Canny Solicitors)

14

O'Connell St.

9

Bridge St.

John F. Kennedy Parade

FORMER LINENHALL

ABBAY



Abbey St.

8

3

John St.



CATHEDRAL



ST JOHN'S CHURCH

4

Charles St.



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Harmonia Hill

Church St.

5



DOMINICAN FRIARY



COURT HOUSE

Teeling St.

7



GARDA BARRACKS

2

Temple St.



1

6

High St.

Old Market St.

Bridge Street leads into Stephen Street. On the way you will notice the attractive building of Allied Irish Banks which up until the wholesale merger of banks in the early 1970's, housed the Provincial Bank, the first bank to open in Sligo. It opened in this street in 1826. Among its first clients were many of the landed gentry of Sligo – the Coopers, Ormbys, Walkers and Wynnes. The present Renaissance style building was erected in 1880.

10 Trail 10 - The Library and Museum

In 1954 Sligo County Library moved from the temporary quarters in the old model school on the Mall to this pretty chapel which, together with its adjacent manse, was built in 1851 for the Congregational or Independent Church. In 1955 the County Museum opened in the manse. It also contains the Nobel Prize Medal awarded to Yeats and some valuable unpublished letters from Yeats to Ethel Mannin, Oliver St. John Gogarty and James Stephens.

Keeping the library on your left a 5 minute stroll takes you to The Model.



11 Trail 11 - The Model

The building which today houses The Model, and is home to The Niland Collection, has played many roles in the growth and development of Sligo, from its completion in 1863 to the present day. In many ways, No.22, The Mall, has reflected the changing nature of Sligo itself, from small market town to vibrant gateway city and cultural centre for the North West.

Originally built in 1862 as a Model School it was designed by Architect, James H. Owen in an Italian-Romanesque style, with a central block and two wings. The present building was completely refurbished and extended by McCullough Mulvin Architects in 2000, and extended again in 2008 by Architects Sheridan Woods. In 2008 The Model underwent another transformation as part of a County Council Cultural Development project.

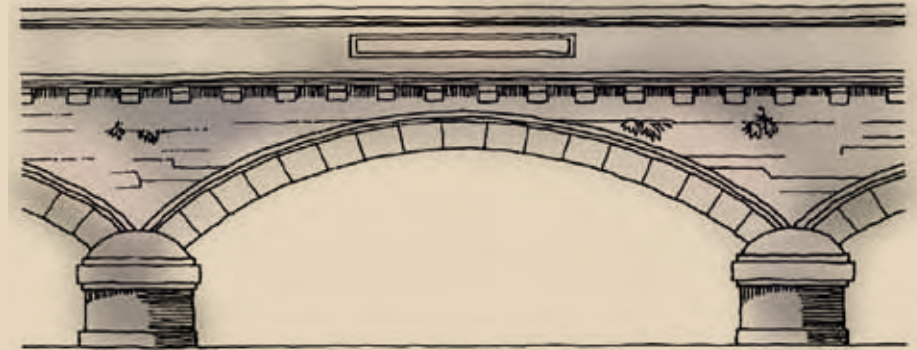
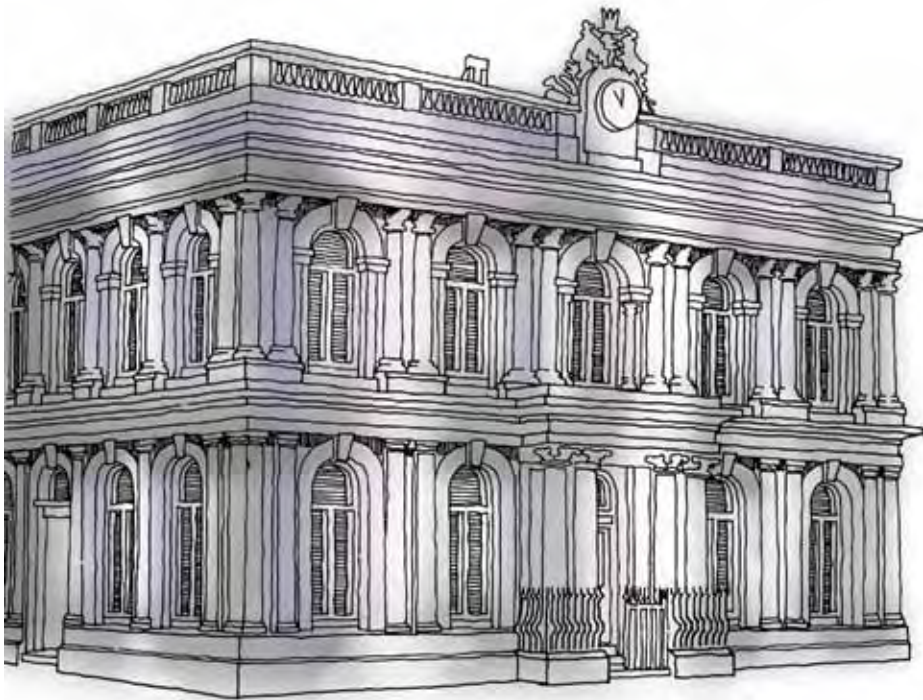
The award winning building is home to the impressive Niland Art Collection, featuring works by John and Jack B. Yeats, Estella Solomons, Paul Henry and Louis Le Broquy among others. The acclaimed contemporary exhibition programme features several major exhibitions annually drawn from noted national and international contemporary artists. Previous artists have included Andy Warhol, Patrick Hall, Sean McSweeney, Mark Orange, Runa Islam, John Shinnors, Camille Souter, William Kentridge, Jaki Irvine and Barrie Cooke among others.

12 Trail 12 - The Ulster Bank

Stroll back in the direction of the library keeping it on your right. Just after the library on your right is Holborn Street. A one minute stroll takes you to number 5, Holborn Street. It is here that Spike Milligan's father Leo was born and a plaque to commemorate the Milligan family is on display.

Retrace your steps and you are now at the Ulster Bank. This is the one Sligo building which W.B. Yeats remembered in Stockholm when he went there to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature which he won in 1923. The Swedish Royal Palace impresses him - "the windows, the details of the ornaments" - and reminded him of this Classical Renaissance building although, as he later admitted, he had hardly seen it for forty years, since his boyhood in Sligo. The Bank was completed and opened for business in 1863. In that year Sligo was 25 hours from Dublin by coach.

Across the street is the firm of Barton Smith which has been in this locality for over 200 years, although it was not until 1823 that the Smiths moved to their present building. Charles Phillips, a celebrated 19th century lawyer and orator, was born in this street. A friend of Daniel O'Connell, he became known as "the Protestant campaigner for Catholic Emancipation" Outside the Ulster Bank is a bronze statue of W.B. Yeats 'wrapt in his own words' by artist Rowan Gillespie erected in 1989.



13 Trail 13 - Douglas Hyde Bridge

Hyde Bridge is one of the main bridges over the Garavogue River on which the city is built. "Jack B. Yeats once, half in fun, told a friend of mine that he learned to paint by leaning over . . . the Garavogue Bridge . . . the bridge that has the cataract and the music of falling water to mock the grunts and belches of the traffic" (*Benedict Kiely*). The bridge is named after Doctor Douglas Hyde (1860 - 1949) who became first President of Ireland in 1938. It was designed by Sir John Benson, the distinguished 19th century architect who was born in Collooney, County Sligo. The first stone was laid on 1 May 1846 "in presence of a large crowd of spectators, a bottle of the genuine native being decapitated on the stone" (*Wood-Martin*). It was completed in 1852 and named Victoria Bridge after the reigning English Queen. It replaced a bridge built in the middle of the 17th century. Douglas Hyde was one of Ireland's most distinguished men of letters. Orator, poet, dramatist and Gaelic scholar, his literary output in Irish and English was immense, and his contribution to the Irish Literary Revival was outstanding. He was a friend of W.B. Yeats who admired his ability to write fresh Gaelic verse, and wrote of him: "He had the folk mind as no modern man had it . . . he wrote in joy and at great speed because emotion brought the appropriate word. Nothing in that language of his was abstract, nothing worn out."

14 Trail 14 - Yeats Memorial Building

The quaint red-brick building beside Hyde Bridge is now a memorial to William Butler Yeats. It was erected in 1895 by the Belfast Banking Company. The architect was Vincent Craig, brother of Sir James Craig (later Lord Craigavon). After the establishment of the Irish Free State the Belfast Banking Company decided to confine its operation to the Six Northern Counties, and transferred its Sligo business to the Royal Ulster Bank which named this branch The Royal Bank of Ireland. It remained in business until the early 1970's when it became part of the Allied Irish Bank Group. On 16 May 1973 the building was given over as a free gift to the Yeats Society. In 1958 a Yeats County Festival was organised as part of Sligo's contribution to the National Festival called An Tostal. It was then that the idea of an Annual Yeatsian event first occurred and shortly afterwards the Yeats Society was formed with the chief objective of organising an annual Summer School.

The local committee, under the chairmanship of the late Frank Wynne, sought the advice of Sligo-born Thomas Rice Henn (1901- 1974), Reader in English at Cambridge University, and an acknowledged Yeats scholar. Eighty students attended the first Summer School in 1960. In 1965 Dr. Henn took over as director of the school and, before he relinquished his post four years later, the school had achieved an international standing and was and continues to attract students from all over the world. In August 1966 Dr. Henn was made a Freeman of the Borough.

In his acceptance speech he said "There are few parallels in literary history of Yeats' connection

with this country. The Sligo-Yeats connection is unique, far more established and more unquestioned than any other in English literary history. There is no other example in English - except Shakespeare, and a great deal of that is legend - of boyhood appearance in poetry, a countryside perpetually living in the poetry . . . Sligo's reputation in the worldwide sense will be Yeatsian".

"The people of this county North Sligo are a peculiar race, quite Gothic in appearance, fair complexioned, with light hair, blue eyes, and very handsome. The women are remarkable for their strength and the thickness of their limbs . . . they are all a civil, intelligent and obliging people . . ." George Petrie, 1837.



15

Trail 15 - The City Hall

Across the street from the Yeats Memorial Building is another red brick building, the Post Office, erected in 1901. Flanking it are the stores of Henry Lyons and Co., a firm established in 1835. Its business was carried on in Market Street until 1878 when the bulk of these buildings were erected here. After passing the Post Office the first turn right brings you to the City Hall in Quay Street.

The foundation stone of City Hall was laid by the Mayor, W.A. Woods, on 12 October, 1865. A typical example of Italian Renaissance style, it is one of the most graceful city halls in the country. Here many distinguished people have become Freeman of Sligo, including Countess Markievicz, formerly Constance Gore-Booth of Lissadell, who became a rebel against the Anglo-Irish landed gentry into which she was born. For her part in the 1916 Rising she was sentenced to death but her sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. She was released from jail and in July 1917 she returned to this hall to be made a Freeman of the Borough.

In the same year the City Hall was the centre of a bizarre conflict between two public bodies. The Nationalist Corporation of Sligo became bankrupt. The Conservative County Council obtained an order from the Supreme Court as a result of which "every penny which came to the municipal coffers had to be handed over to the county, so that the Corporation officials and even the scavengers could not be paid".

Eventually the bailiffs took possession of the City Hall, and all its movable effects, including the books of the Public Library which was then housed there, were put up for sale. Fortunately the city had a substantial Mayor in that year, Dudley M. Hanley, who purchased the effects so that they could be "retained for civic use".



There is a strong local tradition that the City Hall stands on the site of the "New Fort" erected by the Cromwellians. In 1689, during the Williamite Wars, the Fort was captured by Sarsfield who reinforced its defences and those of the Green Fort on the other side of the channel to such an extent that Sligo was the last of the Western garrisons to surrender after the Jacobite defeats in 1690. Nothing remains today of the Cromwellian Fort.

16 Trail 16 - Wine Street

We now retrace our steps into busy Wine Street, so called from the wine vaults which the Bulteels had at the corner of this street and O'Connell Street. Wesley Chapel was opened in 1832. As far back as 1775, the Methodists had a chapel in Sligo, in Bridge Street, a small building with "an exceedingly low thatched roof." Between 1758 and 1789 John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, visited Sligo 14 times. He found the roads very disagreeable. He described how, on one occasion, travelling in Sligo circa 1777 "his post-chaise was held fast in a slough on the road, how he himself was carried over the morass on the shoulders of a stalwart peasant, and the delay and difficulty experienced, until by help of the assembled crowd the coach was at length by sheer brute force hauled to the right side of the quagmire."



The principle exports are corn, butter, and provisions; and the chief imports, iron, timber, salt and every article of West India produce, which are distributed over a very large tract of country, this being the only port of importance between Londonderry and Galway". Less than 30 years later (3 December 1862), the first train steamed into Sligo and was greeted by the band of Sligo Rifles. In another thirty years the Middleton-Pollexfen Shipping Line had one small schooner left, and by the end of the century it too was gone.

In the early 1870's the streets of Sligo were divided into three classes. The first class were to be swept daily, the second twice a week and the third class once a week. Adelaide Street was in the third class. The terrace of "vernacular" stone houses on the right hand side prepares the visitor for the cut-stone piles ahead – the Cathedral, St. Mary's Presbytery, Summerhill College and the Gillooly Hall which commemorates Bishop Laurence Gillooly, the man responsible for it all.

We hope you enjoyed your tour of historic Sligo. For more information please visit our website www.discoverireland.ie/sligo

17 Trail 17 - The Pollexfen Ships

At the corner of Wine Street and Adelaide Street stands the impressive stone building formerly The Western Wholesale Company and now home to McCanny Solicitors.

This was once part of the extensive property of the Pollexfen family. On the roof can be seen the turret from which William Pollexfen trained a telescope on his ships going in and out of port over a century ago. A century ago the Pollexfens and the Middletons were the largest ship owners in Sligo. During the first half of the 19th century they owned a large fleet of sailing vessels. About 1860 they began to use steam to cater for the ever increasing numbers of emigrants.

The early 1860's saw the highest emigration figures in Sligo since the great Famine. In 1864 as many as 400 per week sailed for America and Canada. In 1867 when his grand-son, W.B. Yeats, was two years old, William Pollexfen saw the "Erin's Hope" arriving in Sligo Bay.

The 138-ton brigantine, in charge of American Fenian officers, had sailed from New York with a cargo of arms and ammunition. It was refused permission to enter port and, after lying at anchor in the Bay for six days, sailed back for New York.

Before turning left into Adelaide Street stand at the Western Wholesale corner, and look to your right. You will glimpse some of the tall stone warehouses near the docks, reminders of the great days of Sligo Port described by Lewis: "In 1834, 47 vessels in the foreign trade entered inwards and two cleared outwards and 354 in the coasting and cross-channel trade entered inwards and 508 cleared outwards; there were 17 vessels belonging to this port in that year.



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