

WONDER WANDER CASTLECOMER



INSTRUCTIONS

TAKE A 'WONDER WANDER' THROUGH CASTLECOMER:

- Wander through our streets, find the picture clues and delve into the stories that our town tells through its rich architectural heritage.
- Take ten minutes to spot the variety of doorways on our architectural scavenger hunt, or simply relax and enjoy our carefully curated self-guided tour of Castlecomer.
- Always remember to glance up, peer down, and never cease to WONDER!



Download more **FREE WALKING TRAILS**



SCAVENGER HUNT

HOW MANY OF THESE DOORWAYS CAN YOU SPOT AROUND THE SQUARE?



THE STORY OF CASTLECOMER

Norman settlers built a motte-and-bailey castle here in the late 12th century, displacing the O'Brennan Ui Duach chieftains who had previously held the territory. In the 1630s Sir Christopher Wandesforde acquired the lands and established a plantation settlement that formed the basis of the current town. The planters who came from Yorkshire brought new skills and industries including iron forging, weaving and pottery. The discovery of high quality anthracite in the mid-17th century fuelled rapid development and transformed Castlecomer into a leading coal mining centre.

people emigrated from the area. Despite adversity and bolstered by its collieries, the town remained a prosperous urban centre and many sought work on the coal seams during the late 19th century.

Closure of the mines in the mid-20th century marked the end of the industry that had shaped Castlecomer for three hundred years. Today the Coal Mining Museum tells the story of the town's proud mining heritage. Shaped by its people and rich natural resources Castlecomer remains a vibrant and resilient community.

Want to learn more about Castlecomer Architectural Conservation Area and other Architectural Conservation Areas in the county? Contact the Kilkenny County Council Architectural Conservation Officer.

During the Rebellion of 1798 many key buildings in the town were set alight. Lady Anne Wandesforde led the extensive rebuilding efforts in the early 19th century. Castlecomer endured great hardship during the Famine and thousands of



With special thanks to the local community for their assistance in developing the trail.

NATIONAL INVENTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh Kilkenny County Council

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TICK THE BOX AS YOU WONDER

1. THE BIG BRIDGE

Affectionately known by locals as 'the Big Bridge', this five arch masonry bridge spans the Dinin River also known as the Deen. It is one of a number of bridges, referred to as the 'Kilkenny Group' which were rebuilt following the 'Great Flood' of 1763 to designs by engineer George Smith.

Why not visit the Coal Mining Museum at Castlecomer Discovery Park, located in the former stable yard of Castlecomer House, just a short stroll outside the ACA?

2. AVALON HOTEL

This fine early 19th century residence was later used as the Castlecomer Collieries Company Offices.

Can you spot the 19th century lamp standard? Public lighting, using lamp standards like this one, first appeared on the streets of Dublin in 1825 and subsequently spread to towns across Ireland. Gas derived from coal was used to fuel many municipal lighting schemes.

Tipperary born Richard Sutcliffe, manager of Clogh Colliery in Castlecomer, invented the world's first coal-cutting machine in 1892, and a conveyor belt system for the movement of coal in 1905. Both inventions revolutionised the mining and extraction industries.

3. THE RECTORY WALL

The masonry arch that is visible low down in the rectory's boundary wall may indicate the presence of a culvert. Culverts were an important part of early drainage schemes.

The rectory was built in the early 1800s for the rector of Saint Mary's Church of Ireland. Why not visit the church? It's just over the Big Bridge, a short distance outside the ACA.

4. PHARMACY

Built around 1800, this house was later adapted for retail use at ground floor. The building's focal point is a classically detailed doorcase and fanlight. Glazed fanlights were used to illuminate otherwise dark hallways. Popular designs included spoked and spider's web designs, like this one.

The Square boasts a wealth of early 19th century doorcases.

Pause to discover these in our Scavenger Hunt. As you turn the corner on to Chatsworth Street, keep an eye out for the stepped gable of the former Deen Cinema. Built in 1957 the Deen entertained locals with films, as well as the occasional boxing match, until the 1970s.

5. CLOHOGUE HOUSE

Sealy Dobbs, a World War I veteran, lived here. With strong ties to Castlecomer, several family members served during the war, including his cousin Elizabeth Kelly Parker who took up a position as a hospital matron. It is estimated that some 200,000 Irishmen fought in Irish Regiments, and thousands of Irish women served in the nursing services and as ambulance drivers.

Note the curved corner to the wall of the house, this was designed to facilitate easy access to the rear yard.

6. FORMER INFIRMARY

This building is understood to be part of the old infirmary built by Lady Anne Wandesforde in the early 1800s. She also built a dispensary in the town to provide basic medical care and relief to the poor.

Located next door was the site of the town pound, a walled enclosure used to hold livestock seized by the sheriff in lieu of unpaid rents and debts.

If time allows, cross the bridge to an unconventional monument that celebrates Castlecomer's 5km 'Wellie Race'. This beloved tradition is held every New Year's Day.



7. WORKERS COTTAGES

The decorative timber bargeboards and finials are eye-catching features of these mid-19th century workers' cottages. Cottages like these often had a pigsty to the rear, providing additional food or income for the family.

As you make your way back along Chatsworth Street, keep an eye out for the former Royal Irish Constabulary Barracks (RIC). It was later used as a post office.

8. CREAMERY HOUSE

This substantial 18th century house was built by Robert Kane. In the early 20th century it was used as the Castlecomer Basket Factory & Pram Works, and subsequently as the Castlecomer Co-operative Creamery.

The finely carved limestone gate piers have recessed circular motifs that catch light and shade, and are referred to locally as sundials. The railings, known as Kane's railings, were made using local iron.

From here, take a moment to look back towards The Square. Lady Anne Wandesforde planted an avenue of lime trees there in the early 1800s. Many of the original trees survive.

9. SHOPFRONT ON BARRACK STREET

This projecting timber canopy is the last example of a shopfront style that was once common in Castlecomer. Thought to be unique to the town, these canopies offered shelter for the external display of goods. The hanging of meat carcasses outside butcher shops like this one, formerly Comerford's Butchers, would have been common prior to refrigeration.

10. COURT HOUSE

Designed by the Dublin architect Henry Aaron Baker, and commissioned by Lady Anne Wandesforde, this Market House was built in 1809. It was later converted to a courthouse around 1880 when the doorways on Kilkenny Street were blocked up to accommodate the new court chamber.

Can you spot the weighbridge to the rear? Weighbridges were used to weigh goods before being sold. This one, on Market Square, was large enough to accommodate a horse drawn cart.



11. SUNLIGHT VILLAS

Designed in the Arts and Crafts style by the Dublin based architect William Alphonsus Scott, this group of four houses was built in 1913 to accommodate officers of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). Scott is also responsible for the similarly picturesque housing in the village of Talbots Inch, just outside Kilkenny.

Scott, who died in 1921, had the surreal experience of reading his own obituary when he was mistaken by the press for another architect of the same name who had predeceased him in 1918.

12. CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Replacing an earlier church on the site, the foundation stone for the present building was laid in 1844. Works were abandoned during the Famine and it was completed in 1854. The principal elevation's octagonal corner turrets were originally capped with slender spires.

Among the more unusual features are the giant clam shells which flank the main entrance. Native to the



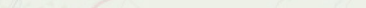
South Pacific and Indian Oceans, the giant clam can live up to 100 years and can weigh over 200kgs. These ones were initially intended as holy water fonts, and a similar pair can be found at St Audeon's Roman Catholic Church in Dublin.

13. COTTAGE

This charming end-of-terrace cottage, built around 1825, features decorative timber bargeboards with trefoil motifs, a detailing that is similar to a shamrock. It was home to generations of the Williams family who were well known stonemasons in the area. If you inspect the boundary wall, you may spot the family name carved into one of the stones.

14. PRESENTATION CONVENT

The former Presentation Convent was built in the late 19th century on lands leased from the Wandesforde family. The chapel at first floor, marked by a row of arched windows, was for the private use of the religious community. Generations of Castlecomer residents were educated in this building until its closure in 2007.



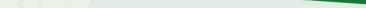
15. FLORENCE TERRACE

Built around 1900 by Captain Richard Henry Wandesforde, the terrace is named after his wife, Florence. The brickwork and decorative terracotta ridge cresting are believed to have been produced by the Durrow Brick & Tile Works Company, a company in which Wandesforde had shares. The wrought-iron railings that bound each property were manufactured further up the street at McCarthy's Forge.

As you make your way up Kilkenny Street, keep your eyes peeled for the slate-hung gable wall of the Commercial Establishment building. Vertical slate hanging was used to protect exposed elevations in the 18th and 19th centuries.

16. O BRÁONÁIN

One of many historic shopfronts within the ACA, this one features classically inspired columns with Ionic capitals. The Gaelic Revival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a renewed interest in the Irish language, seen here in the use of traditional Irish names and the cló gaelach script. How many more traditional shopfronts can you spot on the street?



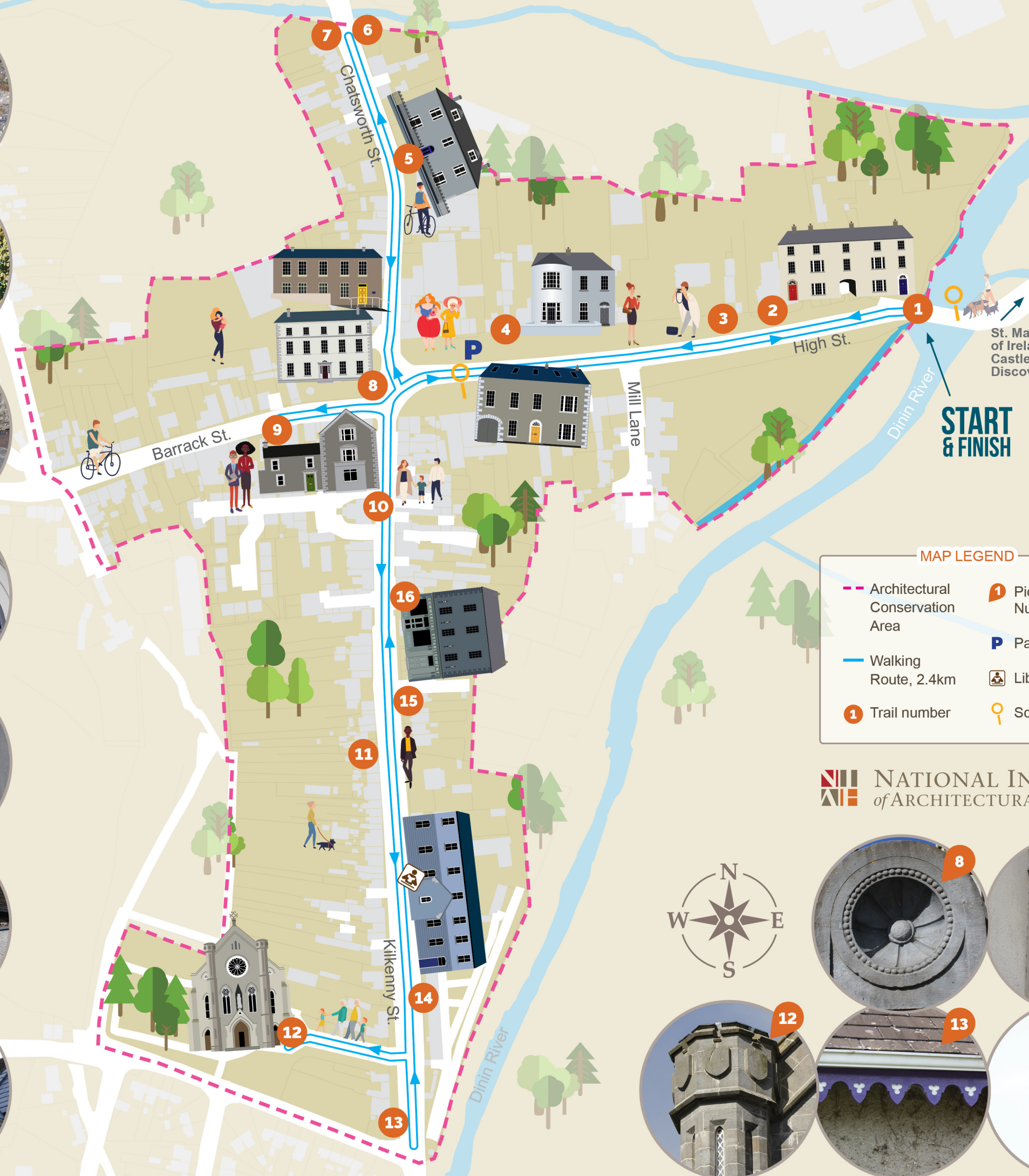
CASTLECOMER

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA

WALKING TRAIL

CAISLEÁN AN CHOMAIR

WANDER THE ROUTE USING THE PICTURE CLUES OR BREAK IT UP AND WONDER...



START & FINISH

St. Mary's Church of Ireland and Castlecomer Discovery Park

MAP LEGEND

- Architectural Conservation Area
- Walking Route, 2.4km
- Trail number
- Picture Clue Number
- Parking
- Library
- Scenic View

SRÁID NA BEAIRICE BARRACK STREET

Where do streets get their names?

Barrack Street is named for the infantry barracks which was built here in the early 19th century.

Have a look around and try and find the more unusual street names

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EZexploring

