

# WONDER WANDER ENNISTYMON



NATIONAL INVENTORY of ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

## INSTRUCTIONS

### TAKE A 'WONDER WANDER' THROUGH ENNISTYMON:

- 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 features on our shopfront scavenger hunt, or simply relax and enjoy our carefully curated self-guided tour of Ennistymon.
- Always remember to glance up, peer down, and never cease to WONDER!

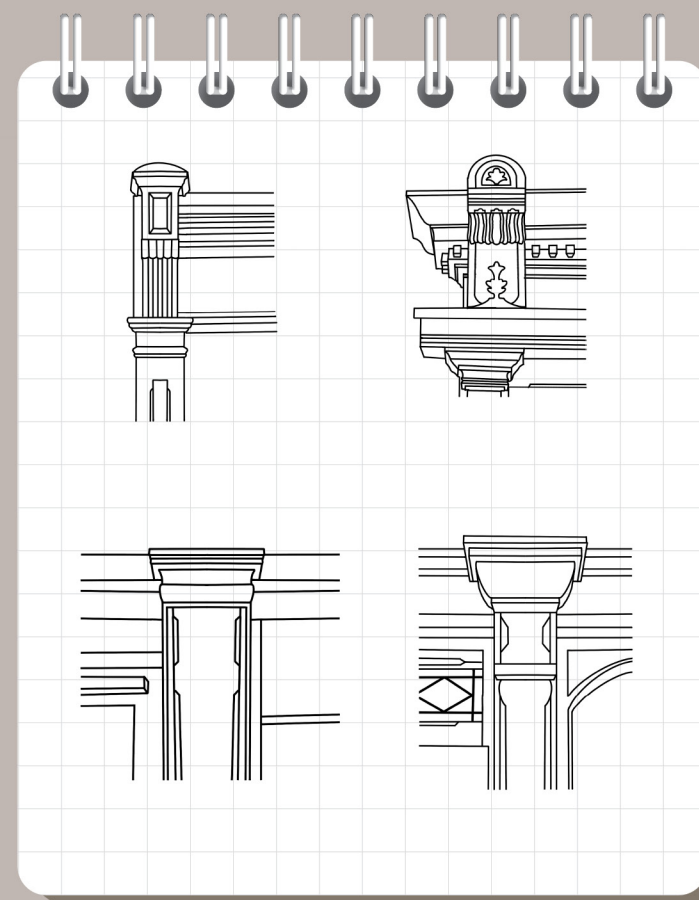


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## SCAVENGER HUNT HOW MANY OF THESE TRADITIONAL SHOPFRONT FEATURES CAN YOU SPOT ON MAIN STREET?



## THE STORY OF ENNISTYMON

Ennistymon developed around a medieval tower house that was strategically sited on a bend of the Inagh River. Though it is unclear who built the castle, by the 16th century both tower house and town were held by the O'Briens of Thomond. The castle was largely replaced in the 18th century when Edward O'Brien built Ennistymon House as his fashionable new residence.

The town expanded rapidly as a result of its busy weekly markets in the early 19th century, a period which saw the Napoleonic Wars drive increased demand for Irish goods. By contrast, the 1840s and 50s brought famine and hardship which devastated the area.

By the second half of the 19th century Ennistymon House and estate had passed to Colonel Francis Macnamara, who undertook a number of ambitious

projects, including the opening of the Butter Market in 1870. The arrival of the West Clare Railway in the late 1880s further boosted trade, as well as tourism, with visitors drawn to the town's scenic river cascades.

During the War of Independence a number of homes and businesses were burned in reprisals for an ambush at nearby Rineen. By the 1930s Ennistymon House had found a new use as the Falls Hotel, serving tourists to the town and beyond to west Clare. Ennistymon is a thriving economic and cultural centre renowned for its local character and charm.

Want to learn more about Ennistymon's Architectural Conservation Area and other Architectural Conservation Areas in the county? Contact Clare County Council's Conservation Officer.



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

## TICK THE BOX AS YOU WONDER

### 1. ENNISTYMON LIBRARY

Designed by Anthony O'Neill and opened in 1981, this library showcases contemporary Scandinavian influences with its extensive use of glass and timber. The slender covered walkway is a distinctive feature of O'Neill's work in Clare, and can also be found at his branch libraries in Kilrush, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Ennis and Shannon.

The sandstone flags used to cap the building's masonry buttresses are a reference to the traditional flagstone roofs that are characteristic of the county.

### 2. FORMER BUTTER MARKET

Market days were a hive of activity, bringing farmers, merchants, and agents to the town. Butter was weighed, graded, and stored at this purpose-built market house.

The opening of the West Clare Railway helped to improve the transportation of goods, such as butter, across the country and beyond, and Irish dairy produce was traded all over the world.

### 3. FORMER ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH OF IRELAND

St. Andrew's was built in the Gothic Revival style in 1830, probably to designs by Limerick born architect, James Pain. Pain, who had studied under the celebrated English architect John Nash, was appointed architect to the Church of Ireland for the Province of Munster in 1823, and was a prolific church builder in the region. Distinguished by its elegant octagonal tower, the church was deconsecrated in 1989 and is now a thriving cultural venue.

St. Andrew's replaced an earlier 18th century church, the ruins of which stand on Church Hill, just a short distance outside the ACA.

### 4. MERRIMAN SCULPTURE

This sculpture celebrates the life and works of Brian Merriman, an Irish-language bard who was born in 1749 near Ennistymon. Merriman created *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche*, *The Midnight Court*, a playful and satirical poem in which the women of Ireland place men on trial for failing to live up to their marital expectations.

### 5. WATER HYDRANT

This cast-iron water hydrant was installed in the early 1900s as a communal source of water for nearby homes and businesses. Cast-iron hydrants could be highly decorative with some, like those found on nearby Monastery Lane and Station Road, sporting lion-head spouts. Unusually this one was cast with a ram's head!

### 6. FORMER CONWAY'S GROCERY

This shopfront dates to 1948 when the premises was occupied by Conway's general grocery. The metal bars at the side of the shopfront are remnants of an awning mechanism. Retractable fabric awnings were once a common feature of commercial streets and were used to both shade internal window displays and to protect goods displayed on the pavement.

### 7. BYRNE'S

This late 18th century house, which was later used as a public house and shop, retains a handsome timber shopfront as well as traditional commercial interior. An internal window at the back of the shop admitted light to the room behind and

### 8. FORMER MUNSTER BANK

The Munster Bank was established in 1864 at a time of great growth and expansion in banking. This branch was one of two banks that opened on this street in the late 19th century. The bank's name was originally displayed in the blind window at first floor level. The decorative cast-iron sill railings with acanthus leaf motifs derive from ancient Greek and Roman architecture.

### 9. FORMER COURTHOUSE

This former Quarter and Petty Sessions courthouse was built in the early 1800s and is a reminder of Ennistymon's role as a legal and administrative centre in the past. The court held its final case in 1980 and the building is now in use as an art gallery. Built of local sandstone, the use of brick dressings suggests that the building was originally intended to be rendered.

### 10. STACK'S

Take a look around Main Street and note the variety of building heights. This building was originally two storeys, but like many of its neighbours, an extra storey was later added to provide additional accommodation for the shopkeeper's family. It was once home to renowned writer, musician, folklorist and storyteller, Eddie Stack, whose parents were well-known publicans in the town.

### 11. FORMER WALL'S SHOE MAKERS

Connole & Wall's Boot and Shoe Makers was established in the early 20th century with a workshop for the cutting, assembly, and stitching of the leather, located to the rear of the shop. John Lennon is said to have purchased a pair of hobnail boots here during the Beatles visit to Clare in the 1960s. The building is also the childhood home of Joe and Steven Wall, members of the rock band 'The Stunning' and later 'The Walls'.

### 12. DEVITT'S

Now a hardware store, Jim Devitt opened a drapery business here in the early 20th century. The property was one of a number to be damaged and looted by Crown Forces on the night of the 22nd September 1920 during the War of Independence, in reprisal for an ambush by the Mid Clare Brigade of the IRA at nearby Rineen.

### 13. FORMER NAN AHERN'S PUBLIC HOUSE

Like many urban buildings in the past, this premises was multi-purpose and included a family home, a bar with a combined grocery, and a milk distribution business. Nan Ahern, who ran the business in more recent times and continued to serve pints well into her 90s, is fondly remembered by locals.

The handsome timber shopfront has unusual, low level windows providing natural light into the basement.

Note the fine flagstone pavement which was once common in towns and cities throughout Ireland. Keep an eye out for further sections of historic pavement on Main Street.

### 14. THE BRIDGE

A toll house once stood on the eastern side of this 18th century bridge to collect a charge that was levied to enter the town. Today one of the best examples of a surviving toll house can be found at Athlunkard Bridge, on the Clare Limerick border.

The plaque set into the parapet wall commemorates Michael Conway, a volunteer with the Mid Clare Brigade of the IRA, who was killed here in a skirmish during the War of Independence.

From the footpath you can catch a glimpse of the cascades, with Ennistymon House, now the Falls Hotel, in the distance. A fish pass was constructed in the 1960s to allow salmon to travel upstream to spawn.

### 15. GRIFFIN'S PUBLIC HOUSE

This public house has been run by members of the Griffin family for generations. Did you know that in the late 1800s Ennistymon boasted 52 pubs? One for each week of the year!

The building had previously been used by the Sisters of Mercy, prior to the construction of a purpose-built convent, close to the Roman Catholic church.

If you have time why not visit the Church of Our Lady and Saint Michael, just a short distance outside the ACA? It was built in early 1950s by the celebrated architects Liam McCormack and Frank Corr.

### 16. FLAGSTONE ROOF

Nestled in the later 19th century streetscape, this unassuming property may be one of the oldest surviving buildings in the town. Now appearing sunken in the street, it's likely the building pre-dates the construction of the bridge, when street levels are understood to have been raised.

It is roofed in sandstone flags, a material that was quarried at Moher and Liscanor, and was once characteristic of County Clare. Can you spot the other remaining flagstone roofs in the town?

### 17. FORMER KERIN'S HOTEL

This prominent three-storey building once served as a hotel, post office, and public house. The widening of the street in this location, reflected in the building's stepped elevation, marks the transition from the 'Old Town' to the later 19th century 'New Town'.

Before finishing the trail, wander through the carriage archway to reveal dramatic views of the cascades as well as the hydroelectric plant installed by the Falls Hotel in the 1950s.

# ENNISTYMON

## ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA

# WALKING TRAIL

INIS DÍOMÁIN

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



### MONASTERY LANE

Where do Streets get their names?

Monastery Lane is named for Mount St. Joseph's Monastery and school, established at the western end of the lane by the Christian Brothers in the early 19th century.

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

#### MAP LEGEND

- Architectural Conservation Area
- Walking Route, 1.5km
- Trail number
- Picture Clue Number
- Parking
- Scenic View

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