

# Guide to Inistioge

## A village for all seasons



Inistioge may justly claim to be one of the most prettily situated spots in Ireland... trees, the growth of centuries, line the sides of the central square; the clock chimes from the ancient abbey's tower; while the river, flowing through its many arched bridge, sings forever and unweariedly.

Clement Harding (1907)

Welcome to Inistioge. You have arrived in one of the most historic and beautiful villages in Ireland. We hope you will enjoy your visit and that this guide will help you become familiar with important buildings in our village and the history behind them.



## The way we were



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This quiet village has a history which links it with major events and figures in Irish history. Inistioge has been influenced by saints, armies, abbots and monks, religious reformers, poets, highway men, lords and ladies, revolutionaries and parliamentarians. The name of the village is from the Irish *Inis Tíog* – Tíog's island (but *inis* can also mean 'water meadow' which makes more sense here). Tíog we can guess was a local chief. It has long been associated with St Columba (Colmille). The saint or a follower may have been granted the site near the holy well, which still exists, on which to establish a monastic community in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Later it is likely to have been a Viking settlement as it is located at the lowest crossing point of the River Nore. A battle is recorded in the Annals of the Four Masters as taking place in 962 in which the men of Ossory (Kilkenny) defeated the Vikings. Following the arrival of the Normans,

the area was granted by King Henry II to Thomas FitzAnthony in 1169, and he established an Augustinian Priory in 1206. The first community of monks came from Bodmin Priory in Cornwall. The priors developed the walled settlement, but Inistioge declined after the Dissolution of the Monasteries by King Henry VIII in 1540. In 1566 the Priory lands were granted to Sir Edmond Butler. In 1649 the town was besieged and captured by the Cromwellians.

Inistioge prospered in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and it is from that era that the character of the present village developed. The village was part of the Woodstock Estate. Captain William Sweete bought the estate from confiscated lands after the Treaty of Limerick (1691), then, through inheritance by marriage, the Foyne and Tighe families owned the estate. They lived in Woodstock House, two



kilometres from the village, which was designed by Francis Bindon and built in the late 1740s. Members of the Tighe family were significant public figures in their day.

William Tighe (1766-1816) represented the borough of Inistioge in the Irish parliament until the Act of Union with Great Britain, which abolished that parliament in 1800. He was also a member of the Dublin Society, later called

the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) and interested in scientific, agricultural, social and economic improvements. His superb Statistical Survey of the county of Kilkenny (published in 1802), supported by a grant from the Irish Parliament before it was abolished, is the most reliable and comprehensive account of life in Kilkenny at the time.

The poet Mary Tighe (1772 – 1810) is best known as the author of the epic poem *Psyche; or the Legend of Love*, first published privately in 1805. (Text is now easily available on line.)



She only came to public notice after her death, when *Psyche* was republished with some of her shorter verse in 1811. *Psyche* became one of the popular narrative poems of the romantic era and was admired by her contemporaries, including Thomas Moore and John Keats.



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Lady Louisa Tighe (1803-1900) and her husband William Tighe (1794-1878) developed the extensive gardens and arboretum at Woodstock. Lady Louisa was the daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Richmond and, as a young girl of twelve, she attended the ball given by her mother on the eve of the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. On that night, her godfather, the Duke of Wellington, gave her a gift of his watch, saying that if he was victorious she could keep it as a memento. It is still a family heirloom with the Tighe family. She was held in high regard by the whole community

and her funeral in 1900 was marked by services in both churches.

However, the politics of land reform affected the Woodstock estate and the Tighe family left in 1912 following the sale of most of the estate of 22,000 acres under the Wyndham Land Act (1903). The house was closed up but again national politics impacted when it was occupied by British forces (Black and Tans) and Auxiliary police during the War of Independence. They left following the truce and Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 but civil war then followed and the Free State Army occupied it until 1<sup>st</sup> July 1922 when the garrison was withdrawn to Kilkenny and Woodstock was undefended. On the night of 2<sup>nd</sup> July, Woodstock House was burned by local anti-treaty-forces. In the following years, the gardens became a wilderness.



## The way we are

Woodstock House is still in ruins but the 19<sup>th</sup> century gardens developed during Lady Louisa's lifetime have been extensively restored by Kilkenny County Council and are open to the public. The restoration of the gardens is a wonderful example for how we can re-imagine and celebrate our legacy. A separate information leaflet is available on Woodstock Gardens and a visit is highly recommended.

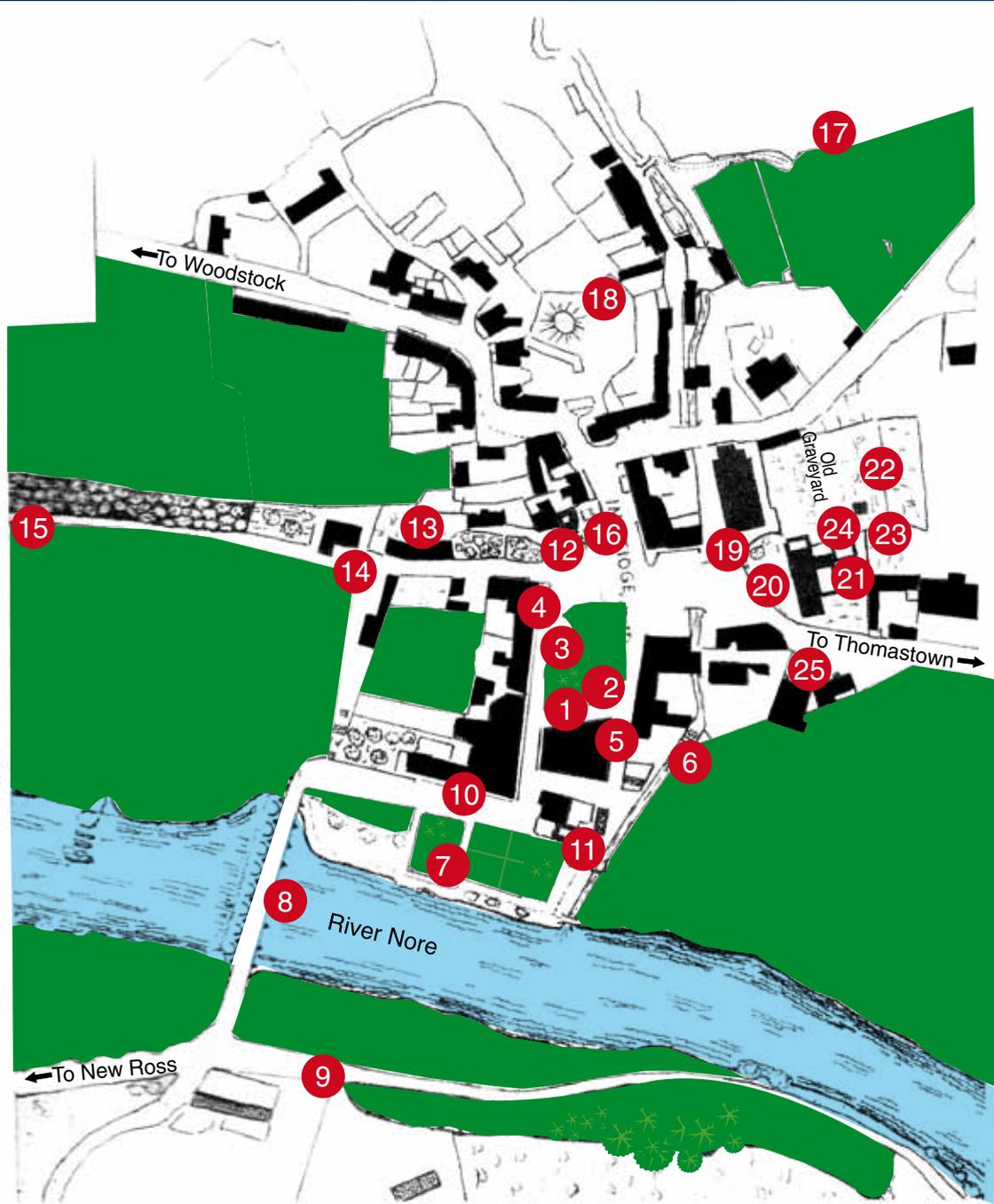
# INISTIOGE JEWEL OF THE SOUTH EAST

In the village today, community groups such as the Tidy Towns Committee, the Community Council, the Irish Country Women's Association, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the school and church communities and local businesses work hard to live up to our village's rich past, to preserve its legacy and plan for a future that is a good one for everyone who lives here or visits. We are very proud of our village and are delighted you have taken some time to be with us.



# WALKING TOUR OF THE VILLAGE

(this will take you about 40 minutes or maybe an hour with a leisurely stop for refreshments at one of our atmospheric pubs or cafes)



- 1** The Square, around which the village centres, was developed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century as part of the developments of the Woodstock estate. Inistioge was incorporated as a town by James I in 1608 and weekly markets on a Friday and an annual fair on December 13<sup>th</sup> were established. These were held on the Square. The Square is still a focus of village life where young and old meet and relax and where small children learn to play hurling.
- 2** This monument dates from 1628. The inscription reads: *this stone is to the memory of David Geraldin Baron de Brownsfoord and Johanne Morres*. It may be the base of a market cross or wayside cross, which local tradition says was smashed by the Yeomen during the suppression of the Rebellion of 1798.
- 3** Lady Louisa Tighe had the fountain erected in memory of her husband William Tighe in 1879. It is Gothic in style but with Irish images such as the shamrock.
- 4** One of the handsomest houses in the village was once an Almshouse. It is now part of O'Donnell's pub and a private house next door. Sarah Fownes Tighe (1743-1820) had the Almshouse built in 1788 to care for the widows of the district. Lace makers from Brussels were brought in to train the women in the craft which continued under the encouragement of Lady Louisa Tighe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The inscription over the door of the Almshouse reads: *Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*

**5** Old Methodist Hall. Methodism was the great religious reform movement in the Church of England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century which spread to Ireland. There was a strong friendship between William and Sarah Tighe and the founder of Methodism, John Wesley (1703– 1791) and he stayed at their other home at Rossanagh in Wicklow on a number of occasions. In 1789, Sarah commissioned a portrait of Wesley by George Romney, one of the leading artists in Britain during the last quarter of the 18th century. The portrait now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London. There was a Methodist community since at least 1795 in Inistioge, which, until the Hall was built, met in a schoolroom. The Methodist Hall was built following the granting of the lease of a plot of ground on the Square to the Methodist community by William Tighe in 1849, at a yearly rent of £1. The building was last used for worship in 1947 and is now a private home.

**6** Mill Stream flows from Mill Lane, where the 1837 and 1888 ordnance survey maps show a 'Corn Mill'. The Mill House still stands.

**7** The Green is a popular public space from which there is a good view of Inistioge Bridge. There is an information board with historical details and information on wildlife around the River Nore.

**8** In medieval times the river was crossed by a ford about 50 metres north of the present bridge. Traces of the ford are still visible at low water. The existing bridge was built by the Navigation Board in 1765 to a design by George Smith. It cost £900. The previous wooden bridge was washed away in a great flood during 1763. This 10 arch flat bridge has withstood all subsequent flooding, including the flood of 1947, when residents had to be rescued from their houses on the Square. The north side of the bridge is plain but if you walk to the south side you will see it is decorated with Ionic pilasters. This view of the bridge

can be seen from the avenue to Woodstock House and from Mount Sandford.

**9** Rock Road was built as a Famine Relief Road in the 1840s. If you walk across the bridge, in places you will see the marks of crow bars on the rock face. The 1839 Ordinance Survey map shows the rock face coming right down to the river here.

**10** Old School House, now a café, was built at the same time as the Almshouse. The present school, situated on the Thomastown Road, was built in 1938, and has been extended a number of times.

**11** This two-storey ruined medieval structure is called the Hundred Court. It served in medieval times as the manorial court of the Abbey and later as a petty sessions court house, though the building next door may also have been used as a court house.

**12** The ruin of a three-storey fortified medieval town house has pointed windows, each made with two slabs of granite leaning together, and a crenellated wall with pinnacles.

**13** There is a mention of a town wall in a 1608 charter but knowledge of the line of the wall over most of its length has been lost. It is thought that the remains of the town walls are now part of the boundary walls of these houses running south from this fortified house towards the River Gate.

**14** The River Gate was originally an entrance to Woodstock House. The lodge is now a private house. This road gives pedestrian access to a beautiful riverside woodland walk and nature trail. The walk goes by an ice house, once used by Woodstock House, in which a large number of Daubenton bats roost.

- 15** (If you wish to extend your walk, by about another half an hour, continue on this road and turn right uphill after about 200 metres and walk for about .5 km. Then turn to the path on your left to Mount Sandford where there is a Gothic Folly with a fine view over the bridge, river, water meadows, GAA grounds and the village.)
- 16** This Armillary Sphere (an instrument, used up until the 17th century, to explain the seasons, by showing the yearly oval path of the earth round the sun) was originally a part of the garden sculpture in Woodstock Gardens. It was moved here in 1965. The Garden in which it stands is the site of the former RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) barracks.
- 17** St. Colmcille's Holy Well, tucked away in the north-east of the village is worth the walk. There is a Pattern (Patron) Day Mass celebrated on the 9<sup>th</sup> June each year on the Feast of the saint. The stone work on the well includes a number of 16th Century carved stone panels which were probably salvaged from the Priory, following its suppression. One fragment has an image of Peter Rothe, whose family had a fortified dwelling in the village. It is a unique contemporary image of a member of one of the great merchant families of Kilkenny.
- 18** The motte of Thomas FitzAnthony's first fortification is located behind the houses halfway up the hill from the Square and survives to a height of 10metres and 12 metres wide at the top. Access is not available at present.
- 19** St Columcille's Church was built in 1836, following Catholic Emancipation in 1829. Fragments from the cloister of the original Augustine abbey have been incorporated into the north and east walls around the church. As well as clerical figures and devotional images such as a crucifixion, there is a the carving of a mermaid. The church was extensively renovated in 2011.
- 20** St Mary's Church was built in 1824. The porch of the Church of Ireland was part of the original Priory. The belfry and clock were donated by William Tighe in 1876.
- 21** The "Black Castle" in the churchyard behind the Church of Ireland was also part of the Augustinian Priory and is now the Tighe (Woodstock Estate) family mausoleum. Lady Louisa and William Tighe are buried here. There is no public access.
- 22** James Freney, 'Freney the Robber', an 18<sup>th</sup> century highway man, who was born in or near Inistioge about 1719, was buried here in 1788. His grave is unmarked. He wrote an account of his 'Robin Hood' adventures which was published in Dublin in 1754 and it was a best seller in its time. Here in Inistioge we are still searching for the legendary hoard of 'Freney's Gold' and tend to buy Lotto tickets in Barron's shop.
- 23** Also in the graveyard is a memorial plaque to George Browne who was born in Ballyneale about 8kms from Inistioge in 1906. His family emigrated to the UK and he spent much of his life in Manchester. He became a very active trade union organizer and a prominent member of the labour movement in that city. In January 1937, he was one of more than five hundred Volunteers from Britain who went to Spain in support of the democratic government following the fascist coup and outbreak of Civil War. He was posted to the front line as a soldier in the Fifteenth International Brigade. On 7th July 1937, aged just 30, he died in the Battle of Brunette during the defence of Madrid.

**24** In this mausoleum there is a marble figure by the renowned English sculptor, John Flaxman (1755–1826) of the poet Mary Tighe who is buried here.

**25** The Cois Abhann Centre and GAA grounds. The Centre is the newest public building in Inistioge (officially opened by President Mary McAleese in September 2011) but one that represents a proud history of local community activity, especially in relation to the Community Council and the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association), which is the national body which develops and organises the national sports of hurling, Gaelic football and handball. A separate but affiliated body organises camogie (women's hurling). Although the GAA was founded in 1884 and ran All-Ireland Championships from then, Kilkenny did not win their first hurling final until 1904 and went on to win seven between that year and 1913. The first football club in the village affiliated to the GAA was founded in 1889. Although teams from various parts of the parish were entered and played in championships, it was only when both sides of the parish amalgamated in 1955 to form The Rower Inistioge GAA Club that they became a force in Kilkenny hurling. They have won county finals in many grades and reached the pinnacle of success in 1968 when they won the County Senior Hurling Final.

Camogie was established formally by the GAA in 1904 and games were played here from 1910 onwards but reporting of games by the Rower Inistioge club only began in 1946. Enthusiasm for hurling and camogie has never waned in either Inistioge or Kilkenny generally which has a particularly proud tradition of hurling and camogie success. Kilkenny were All-Ireland Camogie Champions on 12 occasions and are the leading county in hurling with 34 All-Ireland titles (at the time of going to print). They were only the second county to win 'four in a row' from 2006 to 2009. Eddie Keher one of Ireland's most renowned hurlers is from Inistioge. Playing for Kilkenny, he has won six All-Ireland hurling championship medals. The village also has a vibrant Athletics Club.



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