



History of Ballina Town

Ballina is the largest town in Mayo with a population of 10,000 people and was founded by Lord Tyrawley in 1723 but the settlement on the banks of the Moy existed long before the early 18th century, the original name of the town was Belleek or in Irish, Béal Atha an Fheada (mouth of the ford).

Ballina town is situated in Kilmoremoy parish, named for the ancient monastic site of Cill Mhór na Muaidhe. The remains of the church and enclosure are still visible at Leigue Cemetery on the Killala road. The town nestles on the Moy plain, with the Ox Mountains to the east and Nephin to the west.

Ballina town developed as a small sea port and market town on the estuary of the River Moy, it expanded after The Quay was built in 1836. In the early 20th century coal, cement, tar, timber, and food (tea fruit and coffee) were among the items imported into Ballina. It was a significant port for the export of livestock to Great Britain until World War II. The Quay is now primarily used for pleasure boats.

The Quay, Bunree and Ardnaree are the oldest parts of Ballina town and were originally part of Co. Sligo until the Local Government Act of 1898. A castle was built later on the same site. The remains of the Augustinian Abbey dated to 1427 can still be seen on the east bank of the river beside the Neo-Gothic-style St. Muredach's Cathedral. The Ardnaree area was disturbed by the English conquests of the 16th and 17th centuries, the most notable event being the Battle of Ardnaree in 1586.

Battle of Ardnaree: September 23, 1586

In the 16th century the Mac Philbins and Mayo Burkes rebelled against the brutal English rule. They had enlisted the help of Scottish settlers (Scottish mercenary light infantrymen). Sir Richard Bingham, governor of Connacht, surrounded the camp by night and slaughtered some 2000 men, women and children. He then went on to hang the leaders of the Burkes. The former lands of Mac Philbins and Mayo Burkes were given to English settlers.

In 1723, Lord Baron of Tyrawley established the linen industry. He brought a large number of skilled flax and linen workers to the town. The factory did not last more than thirty years. He also obtained a patent for fairs and markets which increased trade to the town. From the mid 18th century Ballina also became a garrison town with the erection of the Military Barracks and

staff quarters in 1740. The Ham bridge was built in the early 19th century, which accelerated the growth of the town across the river Moy.

In 1798 came the French invasion through Kilcummin and Humberts arrival in Ballina when the local garrison, under Col. Sir T. Chapman and Major Kier of the Carbineers retreated to Foxford.

The Workhouse was built in 1835 and the Courthouse and Bridewell was built in the 1840s. In 8th May 1873 the railway came to Ballina.

After the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, Ballina Urban District Council changed the town's street names to honour those patriots killed in the Republican cause since 1798. Knox Street which was named after a landlord family was changed to Pearse Street, Gore Street was changed to Lord Edward Street, Arran Street to Tone Street, King Street to O'Rahilly Street and John Street to Casement Street.

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