

**BALLINA -
a town of
great historical
significance**

St. Muredach's Cathedral, Ballina
(image: www.mayo-ireland.ie)

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The town of Ballina

In 1723 Lord Tyrawley, an Irish officer in the British Army, formally founded the north Mayo garrison town of Ballina, known in Irish as *Béal Átha an Fheadha* (the mouth of the ford). It lies at the mouth of the River Moy near Killala Bay, in the Moy valley and civil parish of Kilmoremoy, with the Ox Mountains to the east and the Nephin Mountains to the west.

It began as a prosperous seaport and market town on the estuary of the River Moy in the 16th century. Rich in history, the town has evolved since General Jean Humbert marched through its streets during the French Rebellion in 1798, yet the town's heritage remains evident and there is plenty to discover which includes the following:

St. Muredach's Cathedral is the Catholic cathedral of the Diocese of Killala. Work on the building commenced in 1827 under the patronage of Reverend John MacHale (1791-1881), Coadjutor Bishop of Killala, and was designed in a Gothic Revival style by Dominick Madden from Galway. The stone was quarried locally with the roof and ceiling completed before the Great Famine of 1845. The spire was finalised in 1855, designed by the architect James Joseph McCarthy (1817-1882), and it was further developed throughout the 19th century.

The River Moy has been a focal point for centuries and is currently famous for its salmon fishing. It has two bridges, which are located on either side of the Cathedral, which are known locally as the Upper and Lower Bridges.

The Upper Bridge was constructed in 1836 by Thomas Ham and cost £3,000. The Lower Bridge was built around the same time, most probably by William West, with an estimated cost of £1,200.



St. Michael's Church, Ballina
(image: buildingsofireland.ie)

St Michael's Church of Ireland was erected in 1738 just fifteen years after the town was founded. The original church consisted of a simple nave chancel and tower. The building was transformed into a T-shape by Thomas Ham. Both the graveyard and the church contain interesting memorials.

Ballina Workhouse was one of the largest workhouses in the country. Its foundations were laid in 1840 by local landowner, Edward Howley of Ballina House at a cost of £12,000. It was completed before the Great Famine when the population of Ballina was approximately 7,000. It was originally built to accommodate 1,200 – 1,400 people, but it was hugely overcrowded during the famine years. Most of the building was demolished in the early 1930s and replaced by the Ballina District Hospital, however the dispensary building still remains.

The Dolmen of the Four Maols is situated on Primrose Hill, to the rear of Ballina Railway Station. The dolmen dates from about 2,000 B.C., and known locally as the 'Table of the Giants'.

According to folklore, it is the burial place of the Four Maols. They were believed to have murdered Ceallach, a 7th century Bishop of Kilmoremoy (Ballina) and the rightful heir to the kingship of Connaught. They were brought to trial and hanged in the town at Ardnaree (*Ard na Riagh*), also known as the Hill of the Executions.

Street Names were changed following the Irish War of Independence in 1922. The new names honoured local and national patriots who had fought for our nation's freedom. Here are examples of some:

Pearse Street, its original name was Knox Street.

The Knox's and Knox-Gores were the major landlords in the area during the last century.

Walsh Street, originally named Charles Street, now called after Patrick Walsh who was executed on this street by English troops on the eve of the French Rebellion.

O'Rahilly Street, once known as King Street.

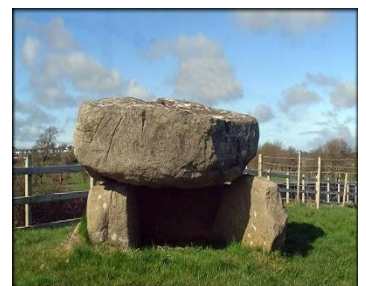
McDermott Street, previously called Upper Garden Street.

Bohernasup - This street's description holds a different meaning and its explanation is taken from the Schools' Collection which was gathered during the 1930s:

"There is a street in Ballina called Bothar na Sop. Long ago during the penal days the Catholics had to pay tithes to the protestant clergy. They were too poor to pay in coin so they gave some of their crops. In Ballina these crops were collected in a big field on the Killala Road. The people used to bring straw and oats and they had to go by Bothar na Sop. The road was always full of wisps and it was called "the road of the wisps" or Bothar na Sop."

References

www.ballina.ie
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Dolmen of the Four Maols
(image: megalithicireland.com)