

# Floorplan



## **The Ashe Memorial Hall**

The building is named after Thomas Ashe, a Kerryman who was a member of the Irish Volunteers and who died on hunger strike while imprisoned in Mountjoy in 1917. The Ashe Hall was designed by Thomas J. Cullen and built with local sandstone. It was completed in 1928, and, for more than half a century it was the administrative headquarters of Kerry County Council and Tralee Urban District Council. In the 1980s both local authorities moved to new offices and the building was transformed into Kerry County Museum, opening its doors to the public in 1991.



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KERRY  
COUNTY

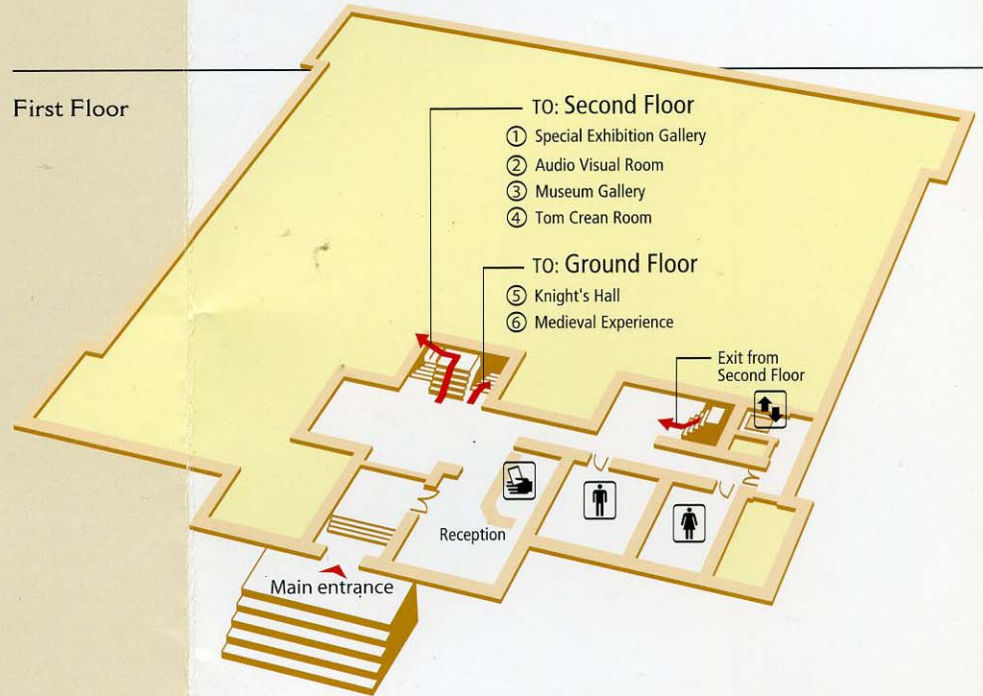
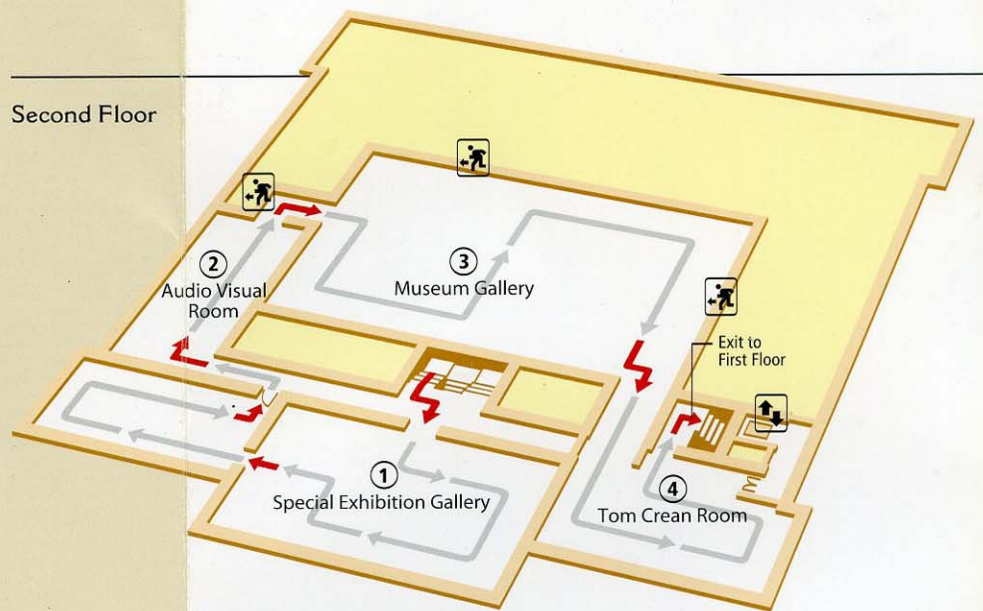
museum



Six rooms, numbered one to six, to explore. Start by taking the stairs to the Second Floor and follow this plan. Enjoy!

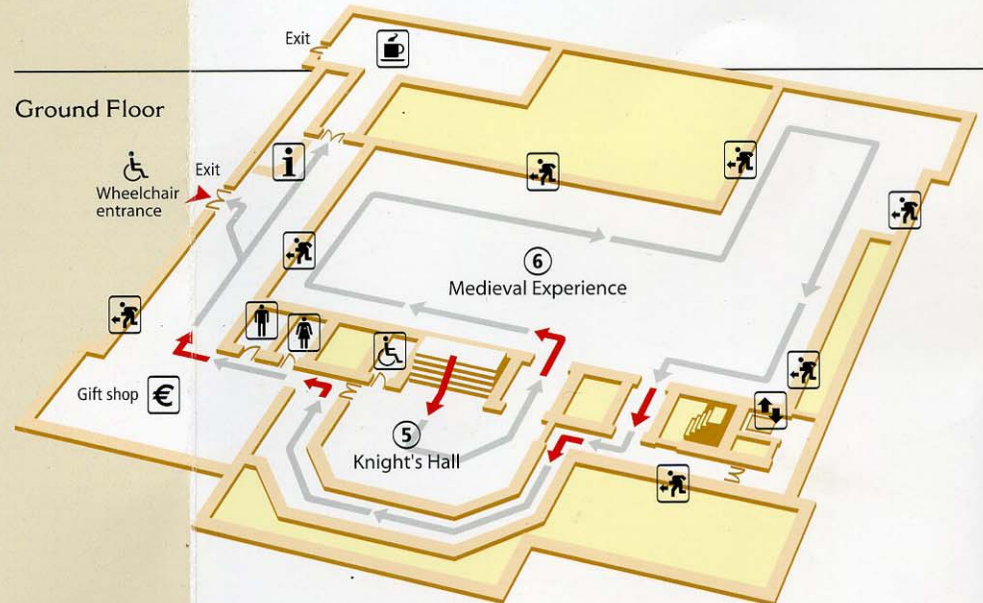
## Second Floor

- 1 SPECIAL EXHIBITION GALLERY**  
Kerry County Museum runs a programme of temporary exhibitions that are of local, national and international importance.
- 2 AUDIO VISUAL ROOM**  
A ten minute visual tour that introduces you to the landscape and people of the county through a mosaic of images. Accompanied by specially commissioned music it runs throughout the day.
- 3 MUSEUM GALLERY**  
A collection of artifacts and displays which illustrate the archaeology and history of the county from the Stone Age to the 20th century. From a sunflower pin worn by the fashion-conscious in the Bronze Age to the duelling pistols used by Daniel O'Connell in the 19th century each object has its own fascinating story to tell.
- 4 TOM CREAN ROOM**  
Tom Crean, a native of Annascaul, served on three Antarctic expeditions in the early 1900s, and risked his life repeatedly in the most desolate place on Earth. Our award winning exhibition reveals how he, and his fellow Polar explorers, survived terrible dangers and endured shocking hardships.



## Ground Floor

- 5 KNIGHT'S HALL**  
Throughout the medieval period most of Kerry was under the influence of the powerful Norman family, the Fitzgeralds. This display outlines how they arrived in Kerry in the early 13th century, established their power base and eventually became the Earls of Desmond.
- 6 MEDIEVAL EXPERIENCE**  
A life-size recreation of part of Tralee in 1450 AD. Stroll through the streets and experience the sights, sounds and smells of a bustling medieval community. Find out what people wore, what they ate and where they lived.



# Medieval Tralee

Medieval Tralee is the main town of the powerful Geraldine family. They rule much of Southern Ireland and are descended from a Norman Knight, Gerald de Windsor, from whom they take their surname, Fitzgerald.

In the course of almost 300 years they have intermarried with the native Irish, adopting Gaelic customs and language. They remain loyal to the crown of England but have become "more Irish than the Irish themselves".

Although their plotting will eventually lead to the destruction of Medieval Tralee, at present the Geraldines are at the height of their power and their 'Coat of Arms' hangs above the town gates. For safety, the gates are kept locked between sunset and sunrise, so travellers arriving late or local farmers arriving early for market have to wait outside the town until the sun has risen.

## **Gates Keeper**

Medieval Tralee is the most important trading centre and market town in this region. Anyone bringing in items for sale must pay taxes, known as tolls, based on the value of goods. Although the gatekeeper is a form of security guard and customs officer, the most important part of his job is to collect the tolls on behalf of the Fitzgeralds, the Earls of Desmond.

## **The Butcher**

The meat sold by the butcher is slaughtered at the rear of his shop. Beef mutton, pork, lamb and fowl are all for sale, but for many of the townspeople, meat is a luxury item eaten only on special occasions. Every part of the animal is utilized. The butcher sells the animal hides to the leather-worker, who uses them to make shoes, gloves, bags, cloaks and belts.

## **Main Street**

You now have a vantage point of Tralee's main thoroughfare 'Burgess

Street'. This is the market street to which local farmers bring food and produce for sale. The houses of Tralee are built of different materials. The wealthy live in stone houses, like the one on the left which is protected with battlements overhead. Others live in the half-timbered buildings which have wattle walls plastered with mud to keep out the wind and rain. The Curious odour comes from one of Tralee's open sewers.

## **Houses & Shops**

The ground floors of the houses facing onto medieval Tralee's main street are mostly used as shops and workspaces, much like any modern high street. The shopkeepers or craftsmen live with their families on the floors above. If they have an apprentice, however, he probably sleeps down here under the workbench or the counter. Items 'bought' in these shops are not usually purchased with money, because banknotes do not exist and coins are rare. Even

the smallest coin is the equivalent of a huge amount of money, since they are made from silver and gold. Most day-to-day transactions involve the customer exchanging something valuable of theirs for the item that they want, a process known as bartering.

## **Market Cross**

The Market Cross is at the centre of the town and it is here that official proclamations are read out and news announced. This is also the place where criminals are punished by being placed in the stocks, or if their crimes warrant it by hanging. Remember this town is controlled by the Geraldines - so be careful not to anger them for it, it's they who make the laws and administer the justice. The Geraldines influence over Tralee extends back to its very foundation, since the town was originally laid out by John Fitzthomas Fitzgerald, and later, in 1286 its walls were planned by Maurice Fitzgerald.

### **The Inn**

The Inns are popular as alehouses and places of Entertainment, as well as being somewhere for visiting merchants and pilgrims to stay. Visitors are a common sight in Medieval Tralee, since it is a busy port and trading centre. Merchants come here to arrange commercial deals and many pilgrims pass through on their way to places such as Santiago De Compostela. These travellers inevitably attract the attentions of criminals and it was here that Henry Peveril of Bristol was recently robbed of goods worth 100 marks. The O'Sheas and the O'Connors, are performing here today. They are famous for their singing and harp playing and are often invited to entertain the Earl of Desmond himself who is well known as a patron of poetry and music.

### **The Port of Tralee**

We are now entering a warehouse overlooking the quayside. Here goods are stored for export abroad or before being transported inland. Tralee trades with Bristol in England and also with France and Spain. Its main imports consist of wine, salt and iron ore. Its exports are hides, wool, timber and fish. The port of Tralee is quite small due to silting, but vessels of up to 30 tons can still dock near the town by coming up a narrow channel. Larger ships anchor in the bay and unload their cargoes into smaller boats. Tralee, like Dingle, has a small fishing fleet. We catch cod,

ling, herring, hake and haddock. Shellfish such as crab, cockles, mussels and oyster are also plentiful. The fish are landed at the quay and preserved by means of salting. What there is to eat depends largely upon the season. Many fruits and vegetables are only available in the summer months, which is also when the great shoals of herring appear off the coast. Food can quickly become scarce, especially during the winter or if the weather is bad, so it is vitally important to preserve it when it is in plentiful supply. Medieval methods of preserving food are salting, pickling, drying and smoking above a fire. Religion also dictates what can be eaten and when. The church plays a major part in everyday life and strictly enforces rules such as those forbidding the eating of meat on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays as well as during lent.

### **Religion**

The Geraldines are great patrons of the church and Tralee, like most Anglo-Norman towns, has both a parish church and a monastery. The Abbey of Tralee is a favourite burial place of the Munster Geraldines and the founder of Tralee are buried here.

### **The Destruction**

In 1580, the Earl of Desmond burned down the town of Tralee together with the Great Castle that was begun

by his ancestor, John Fitzthomas, in 1216. The destruction of Tralee was part of a deliberate 'scorched earth' policy in his power struggle with the English crown. During the conflict both sides burned and looted everything of value to their enemy. After the Desmond Rebellion and as part of the Munster Plantation, the town and castle were granted to Edward Denny and rebuilt. Less than twenty years later, during the late 1590's, the town and castle were attacked and destroyed once again. In 1613 a charter from James 1 brought Tralee the status of a borough, a weekly market and an annual fair. Although the town grew in prosperity, further destruction followed during the rebellion of 1641-4. and by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century very little of Medieval Tralee survived.