

IRELAND MIDDLE WEST



With Jerome O'Connell

A town that doesn't leave a tooth in it . . .

TO relieve toothache, a visit to the dentist is the preferred choice. However, a simple kiss may suffice!

In or around 1389 the 4th Earl of Desmond founded the Franciscan Abbey in Askeaton. Here there is a carving of St Francis in one of the cloisters and locals say that if you kiss the statue, you will be relieved of the pain in your tooth.

Apart from that Askeaton, is one of Ireland's oldest towns, steeped in history and tradition.

Built on the banks of

the Deel, Askeaton lies about two miles upstream of the Shannon Estuary, just over 15 miles from Limerick city, seven miles north of Rathkeale and just off the N69 from Limerick to Tralee on the R518.

The town gets its name from the Irish, Eas Geiptine, "eas" being the Irish for waterfall and "Geiptine" or Keating, the name of a tribe that lived on the waterfall on the Deel, as far back as pre-Christian times.

Like many towns throughout the world, Askeaton is centred on a

bridging point over a river.

The town has plenty to offer and has contributed so much down the years. Askeaton even had someone on the Titanic. Twenty-seven-year old Daniel James Moran is recorded as travelling with his sister, Bertha, to Bronx, New York, and boarded the Titanic at Queenstown as a third class passenger, with ticket number 371110.

Daniel Moran died in the disaster.

Much of the history of the town has been captured down the years, but new moves should

ensure even more access to a coloured past.

The local civic trust has acquired a building in the town square, just off the bridge and plans to open a museum, coffee shop and public toilet in the building in the near future, as well as constructing a footbridge across the Deel.

Michael Ryan, known locally as the poet, of Station Road, said that Askeaton was a busy little town.

"Down the years we always had employment of our own," he pointed out.

And the current

environment he attributes to the by-passing of the town in recent years.

"Thanks be to God it came, if it didn't we couldn't walk the streets. Not everyone was in favour at the time but now people can park in the town and I think that all the shops are now thriving", he said.

Although Michael sees the town thriving at present he remembers when times were different and woodbine could be bought for 1p.

The poet also highlighted the towns church and the remains of the belfry. The belfry is of particular note because it is square at ground level and octagonal at the top.

Overall, Askeaton is a town of immense importance and history, a town from which we can learn so much. The features of the town, abbey, castle, churches, have all been incorporated into the landscape of the town effortlessly. The banks of the river are splendidly kept and all amenities have the surrounding environment at heart.

The people of Askeaton are also hugely important to its development. Very strong willed and determined and fiercely proud of their roots—just ask any opponents of their GAA teams from the present to the past, when they were king pins of the county football championship



•Michael and Nellie Ryan, Station Road, Askeaton, enjoying the spring sunshine in the town's square (LL)

