

WEXFORD, the capital town of the county of the same name in Ireland, is situate upon the south-western shore of Wexford Harbour, at the embouchure of the river Slaney. It lies at the northern extremity of the barony of Forth, near the boundary of that of Shelmalier (West), in about $52^{\circ} 20'$ N. lat. and about $6^{\circ} 27'$ W. long. from Greenwich, about 74 miles south of Dublin (by road), and rather more than 30 miles east by north-east from Waterford. The general direction of the town is from north-west to south east, in which direction, including the suburb of Faithe (a corruption of Feagh, from St. Michael of Feagh, the name of the parish), to the south, is about a mile; but it does not

extend more than about a third of a mile in a south-western direction from the harbour. There are six parishes in the town, the aggregate area of which, according to the Ordnance Survey, is 68 acres, 1 rood, 27 poles. The population of the entire town and borough, in 1831, was 10,673, and the number of houses about 1820. The town is generally well built; but the streets are narrow, partially and but indifferently paved; supplied with water partly by pipes, partly by wells, and partly by a public conduit in the corn-market. Until recently it was not lighted. Spacious quays extend along the harbour the whole length of the town, towards the centre of which the otherwise nearly straight line is broken by the Crescent Quay, which is indented in a semicircular form. Nearly opposite to the Crescent, at some distance from the quay-line, is a kind of breakwater, called the ballast quay or bank, formed by the ballast deposited there by ships which frequent the port. The haven contracts abruptly opposite to the northern end of the town; and at the narrowest point a timber bridge, constructed entirely of American oak, at a cost of 17,000*l.*, by Emanuel Cox, an engineer from the United States, who erected several other extensive bridges in Ireland, was built in 1794-95. The width of the opening crossed is about 1571 feet, and the original bridge was of that length; but as it had fallen much into decay, it was some years since repaired, or rather reconstructed, at an expense of 6000*l.* In its present state it consists of two causeways, projecting 650 feet and 188 feet from the north-eastern and south-western banks respectively, united by a timber bridge of 733 feet, supported by 23 piers of the same material, and having a drawbridge for the passage of masted vessels into the inner haven, which expands considerably a little above the bridge. The tolls of Wexford Bridge let, in 1832, for about 700*l.* per annum. This port is considered a good nursery for seamen, and has many apprentices in the merchant-service. It possessed, on the 25th of March, 1842, 69 registered vessels of upwards of 50 tons, their aggregate tonnage being 7114 tons; and the customs duties taken in the port in 1840 amounted to 9357*l.* 1*s.* 11*d.*: in the previous year they were 8433*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.* The export trade was estimated, according to the returns published by the Irish Railway Commissioners, to amount, in 1835, to 312,136*l.*, and the imports in the same year to 621,417*l.* More than one-half (in value) of the exports consisted of corn, meal, and flour: butter was estimated at 54,000*l.*; oxen at 36,000*l.*; sheep at 15,000*l.*; and swine at 12,000*l.* Of the imports, 120,000*l.* is set down for woollen manufactures; 29,535*l.* for sugar (exclusive of 6300*l.* for British refined sugar); 26,100*l.* for coal, culm, and cinders; 19,800*l.* for cast-iron: and 19,000*l.* for wrought-iron and hardwares: the remaining items comprised chiefly manufactured goods, and various articles of domestic consumption. Steam-vessels form the medium of regular communication with Liverpool and other places, and the Slaney affords navigable communication with Enniscorthy and the interior of the county. The shipping interests of Wexford have been promoted by the formation, within a few years, of a ship-building establishment; the vessels of this port having previously been built either at Milford or at Liverpool. The fisheries of the neighbourhood have declined, though those of herrings and oysters are of some importance during the winter. Malt is manufactured to a considerable extent in the town, and much is sent to Dublin. There are also a distillery, breweries, rope-yards, and tan-yards in the suburbs. The coasting trade has diminished since Wexford was made a bonding-port, but that to Great Britain has increased in proportion. The chief market is on Saturday; but there is also one for poultry, butter, and eggs every Wednesday. Fairs are held eight times in the year.

The town of Wexford is inclosed towards the land by a wall, which was thoroughly repaired in 1804, at the expense of the corporation. Wexford forms, with several adjoining parishes, an ecclesiastical union. There are now but two churches within the town, although it appears to have contained twenty in the year 1615. There are several places of worship for Roman Catholics, Wesleyan Methodists, and other denominations of Protestant dissenters. The relative numbers of Protestants and Catholics in 1834 were about as 1 to 6. The diocesan school for the see of Ferns is situated to the north of the town; it was built in 1800, at the expense of the county. There is also a large parochial school for boys and girls, supported partly

by endowment and partly by voluntary contributions. St. Peter's College, at Summer Hill, west of the town, is a large educational establishment in connection with the Roman Catholic Church, where the course of studies ranges from the mere rudiments of knowledge to the highest departments. Students for the priesthood are educated there; and the establishment is not confined to Catholics, Protestant children also being admitted, and educated without interference with their religious principles. The Wexford poor-school, founded in 1809 by Mr. W. Doran, gives instruction to about 300 boys; and there is an infant-school, founded in 1830. At Wexford are the county infirmary, with a dispensary attached; the county fever-hospital; the county gaol and house of correction; a court-house; a house of industry and a lunatic asylum, both in the old gaol; and the Redmond female orphan-house, erected in 1829, chiefly from funds bequeathed by a gentleman of the name of Redmond, by which it is supported. It is situated upon part of the lands of St. Peter's College, and is under the superintendence of the Roman Catholic bishop and five other trustees. Among the other public buildings are spacious barracks; assembly-rooms, where balls are held on public occasions; a building belonging to the Wexford Union Club; a small theatre, which, not proving profitable, was converted into a sale-room; branches of the Bank of Ireland and of the Provincial Bank, &c. There are also reading-rooms, and a Chamber of Commerce, established in 1831. There is a savings' bank, in which, at the date of the last return, in November, 1842, there were 1202 depositors.

The town of Wexford was a maritime settlement of the Danes, and is supposed to have derived its name, formerly written Weisford, from the term Waesford (Washford), which implies a bay overflowed by the tide, but left dry, or nearly so, at low-water. It was besieged for three days by Fitz-Stephen, soon after he landed at Baginbun, and then surrendered on condition of recognising the sovereignty of Dermot MacMurrough, king of Leinster. The town partook of the changes and disturbances mentioned in the history of the county (see the preceding article); and during the contention between the houses of York and Lancaster it was seized by Sir John Butler, brother to the earl of Ormond, who had just been beheaded by the partisans of the duke of York. He was soon afterwards defeated by the earl of Desmond, who, in the following year, held a parliament in the town. Wexford was one of the first places which fell into the hands of the insurgents in 1641, and formed the port from which they received their principal supplies from other countries. In 1649, on the approach of Cromwell, the inhabitants reluctantly consented to receive a detachment of royal troops from Ormond for the defence of the town; but they were of no avail: Cromwell obtained possession of the place, and gave it up to military execution. After the battle of the Boyne the town took part with William III., and was garrisoned by his troops. In 1793 a collision took place between the military and a body of peasantry assembled for the rescue of some Whiteboy prisoners, on which occasion Captain Valloton was killed. A monumental obelisk on the Windmill Hill commemorates this event. During the insurrection of 1798 the town was evacuated by the garrison, in a panic occasioned by the defeat of a detachment of royal troops marching to their assistance, and the rebels immediately made it their head-quarters. They retained possession from the 30th of May to the 21st of June, during which time they beheaded ninety-one prisoners on the bridge; but after the defeat of the insurgents at Vinegar-hill, the rebels fled precipitately from the town.

The first charter granted to Wexford, as far as records show, was that of Adomar de Valence, in 1318. It was confirmed and extended by Henry IV. and Elizabeth. Another charter, under which, until the recent alterations, the town was governed, was granted by James I. in 1608. James II. gave one at a later period, but it was annulled after the Revolution. Wexford is one of the towns whose corporations were dissolved by the act of the 3rd and 4th of Victoria. The town sent two members to the Irish parliament, and now sends one to that of Great Britain. The number of registered voters in 1839-40 was 405.

(*Ordnance Survey of Wexford*; *Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*; *Parliamentary Papers*; &c.)