# A Brief History of Dublin

Although Dublin was officially established as a Viking settlement in 998AD, references to the city date back as far as the second century when the Egyptian geographer Ptolemy referred to Eblana. Despite a number a rebellions by the native Irish, Dublin remained in Viking hands until the Norman conquest of Ireland in 1169. Under Viking rule Dublin would become the political and commercial capital of Ireland, replacing the seat of the Irish High Kings at Tara in Co. Meath. Ireland's first parliament was established in 1297 at Dublin's College Green and would remain in session until its dissolution in 1801. The period would also see the construction of two of Dublin's landmark buildings, Christchurch and Saint Patrick's Cathedrals.

## 1300 - 1600

The fourteenth century would prove to be a difficult one for the city of Dublin. It remained a relatively small walled medieval town and was under constant threat of raids from the surrounding native clans. In addition the Scottish King Robert DeBruce made an abortive but extremely destructive effort to capture the city in 1317. In 1348 the Black Death which had ravaged Europe took hold in Dublin killing thousands over the coming decades.



*Robert DeBruce*



*Image of the Bubonic Plague ('Black Death')*

The Tudor conquest of Ireland in the sixteenth century would spell a new era for Dublin with the city enjoying a renewed prominence as the centre of administrative rule on the island. However the Tudors were also determined to make Dublin a protestant city which would be at the expense of the Catholic ruling class. Queen Elizabeth I established Trinity College in 1592 as a Protestant university and also ordered that St. Patrick's and Christchurch be converted from Catholic to Protestant cathedrals.



*St. Patrick's Cathedral*                         *Christchurch Cathedral*

### **1600 - 1800**

The seventeenth and eighteenth century was a remarkable period of growth for the city, with the population increasing from 26,000 to over 130,000 making it the second largest city in the British Empire. The period also saw a major reconstruction of the city making the period a golden age for Dublin's architecture. When the Earl of Kildare - the city's premier nobleman – decided to move his residence from the traditionally more fashionable North of the city to the Southside, a major wave of fine Georgian buildings were constructed as the city's wealthy inhabitants relocated to the South.

*Kildare House (now Leinster House)*　　　*Georgian Architecture at St. Stephen's Green*

Much of these buildings remain today being centred around St Stephen's Green and Fitzwilliam and Merrion Squares. Many of Dublin's most famous buildings were also constructed during this period including, the Four Courts and Customs House. The late eighteenth century also saw the laying of the wide boulevard of Sackville's Street which remains the centrepiece of the city (now known as O'Connell Street).





*O'Connell Street old and new*

 In fact Temple Bar and Grafton Street (both popular tourists attractions for their nightlife and shopping respectively) are the few remaining parts of the city which escaped this Georgian reconstruction and maintained their medieval charm.
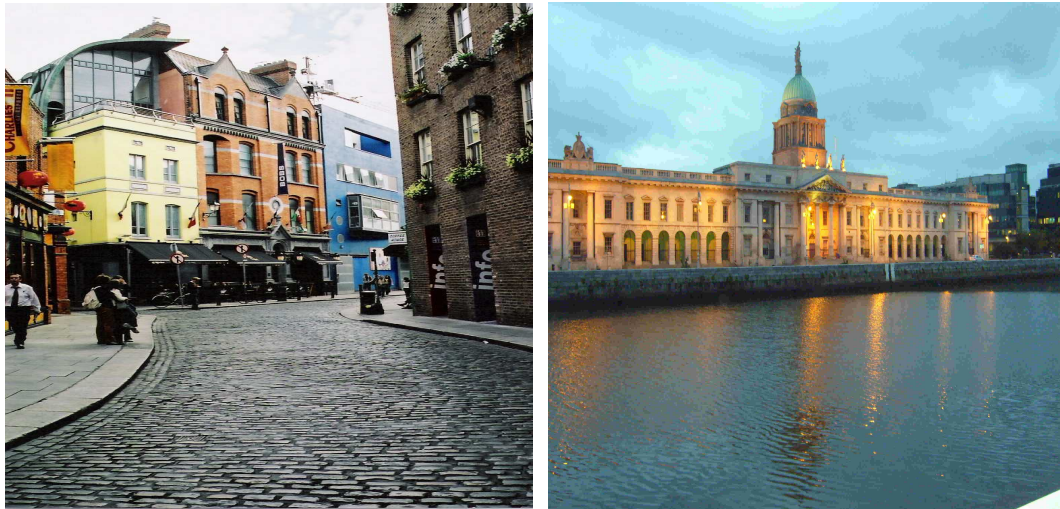
*Medieval Temple Bar and the Georgian Customs House*

### **1800 - 1900**

This period of prosperity however would come to a halt with the outbreak of the 1798 rebellion. Aggrieved by the anti-Catholic 'Penal Laws' and inspired by the American and French Revolutions, revolts broke out in Dublin and throughout the east of the country. Although the rebellion failed, four months of fighting and an attempted invasion by the French had so shocked the English that Ireland's partial independence was brought to an end. In 1801, the Act of Union was passed closing the parliament in Dublin and bringing Ireland under direct rule from London. The dissolution of the Parliament robbed Dublin of much of its economic and political strength. As the upper and middle classes gradually deserted Dublin in favour of London, the city was subjected to a huge influx of starving and destitute people with the onset of the Great Famine in 1845. Unlike Belfast, Dublin had largely missed out on the opportunities of the Industrial Revolution and with the exception of the Guinness Brewery and Jacob's biscuit factory, it was largely devoid of major industry.

# 1900 – 1960

By 1900, Dublin had become the second city of Ireland, with Belfast surpassing it in both in both population and wealth. Dublin's economic viability was further hampered by the 'Lockout' of 1913 which was the most bitter trade dispute ever seen in either Britain or Ireland. Six months of vicious rioting and strikes had left three people dead and the city's economy in ruins.
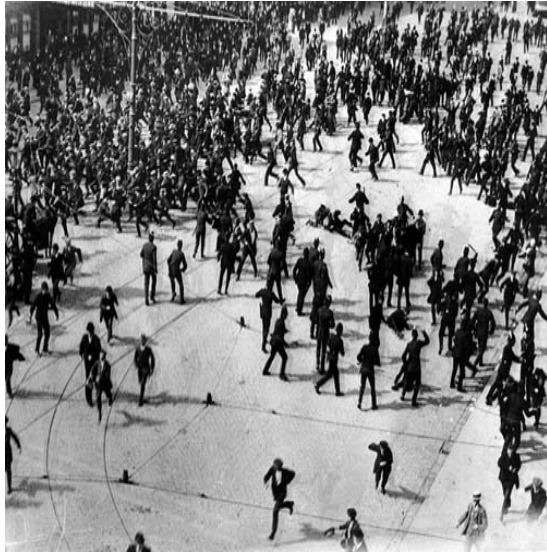


*Riots during the 1913 'Lockout' and the Statue of its leader James Larkin*

Further upheaval would hit the city three years later when almost one and half thousand rebels captured many of the cities key buildings, most notably the General Post Office. Seven days of bitter fighting saw almost four hundred people killed and the destruction of many of the cities most important buildings. The subsequent mass executions of rebels would swing popular support in favour of the revolution.
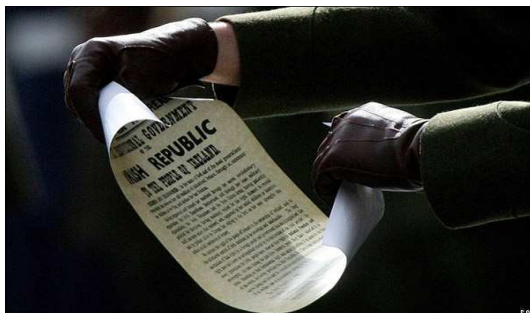


*The 1916 Rising and the shelling of the Four Courts during the Civil War of 1923*

Four years later on the day popularly known as Bloody Sunday, British soldiers stormed the Croke Park sports ground killing 14 spectators and wounding a further 65. Despite this and other atrocities, the rebels managed to win Independence for the 26 of the 32 counties of Ireland in 1921. Dublin however had not seen the last of the fighting, as it would become a major battle ground of the Irish Civil War when in 1923, anti-Treaty soldiers captured and garrisoned the Four Courts for two days.

Although Ireland's neutrality allowed Dublin to remain relatively unscathed by the Second World War, the city was accidentally bombed by the Nazis four times. The most serious of these bombings occurred on 31st May 1941 killing 34 civilians. Dublin did not escape the economic costs of the war either. The city endured heavy rationing during the war which would continue over the following decades.



*The North Strand Bombings of 1941*

## **1960 - present**

The 1960s and 1970s was a period of significant renovation for the city of Dublin during which the tenement housing which had come to dominate the inner-city was torn down. Although efforts to move housing and industry into the suburbs had many positive effects, it did threaten the destruction of much of the city's most beloved architecture. However the foundation of organisations such as the 'Friends of

Medieval Dublin' and the 'Irish Georgian Society' has provided for the preservation and restoration of much of Dublin's trademark buildings.

Dublin would be at the heart the unprecedented economic growth experienced in Ireland between 1990 and 2007. The so-called 'Celtic Tiger', saw huge inward investment into Dublin with multi-national firms such as Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Paypal, Pfizer and Yahoo! all choosing Dublin as the location of their European headquarters. The effects on Dublin would not be purely economic. The period also saw significant immigration to the city from Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa, adding to the cultural diversity of the city.



*Images of a more prosperous Dublin: the IFSC and the LUAS*