

BACKGROUND

HISTORY

More than just about any other city we know, Dublin wears its history on its sleeve. Dubliners themselves are highly passionate scholars of their own history – and we mean their *own* history. Perhaps because it continues to have such a strong bearing on modern life, it's near impossible for any two Irish people to agree on the details of any one historical episode.

The general facts of the city's history are outlined in the timeline that runs at the bottom of these pages, but in order to contribute to the general debate we have included four relatively compact examinations of some facet of Dublin history that has played an important role in shaping the city's identity. On your travels, you will surely hear different spins on the same subjects and bear in mind that *everybody* has a bias – some are just cleverer at hiding it than others. See if you can spot ours.

IRELAND RISING: A GLORIOUS FAILURE

Irishmen and Irishwomen: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

As Pádraig Pearse read out these words on the steps of the General Post Office (GPO; see [p107](#)) on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, the shoppers and passers-by listened with bemusement and then, in typical Dublin fashion, began making snide remarks about what must have appeared a pretty ridiculous scene. What they didn't know, however, was that Pearse and his band of conspirators were in deadly earnest, and that within a week *everyone* in Ireland and England would know it too, as the most important revolt against British rule since the rebellion of 1798 was played out in bloody, dramatic fashion. See the boxed text ([opposite](#)) for more on Pádraig Pearse.

To Fight or Not to Fight

The rebellion was beset by major problems from the outset, not least a substantial debate over the use of physical force. Britain was comprehensively engaged in the Great War, and while a small group of Irish Volunteers (who were also members of the secret and revolutionary Irish Republican Brotherhood, founded in 1867) had adopted the dictum that 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity', the chief-of-staff and founder of the Volunteers, Eoin MacNeill, opposed any rebellion unless Britain imposed conscription on Ireland. Consequently, the organisers, made up of Pearse, Eamonn Ceannt, Joseph Plunkett, Tom Clarke and Seán MacDiarmada, proceeded to plot in secrecy. They were later joined by socialist revolutionary James Connolly, founder of the Irish Citizens' Army (a militia that grew out of the devastating experience of the Great Lockout of 1913), and nationalist poet and playwright Thomas MacDonagh.

The Rising was planned for Easter Sunday 1916, which fell on 23 April. As cover, Pearse arranged for three days of 'parades and manoeuvres' by the Volunteers: the plan was that the

PÁDRAIG PEARSE & THE BLOOD SACRIFICE

It is doubtful that the leaders of the Rising thought they could achieve anything more than a symbolic victory. One of its ringleaders, the poet and passionate patriot Pádraig Pearse, was convinced of the need for 'blood sacrifice'. During his oration at the funeral of another Irish rebel, O'Donovan Rossa, he said, 'Life springs from death, and from the graves of patriotic men and women spring living nations.' Pearse was a visionary with his head in the clouds, not a military man, and the ragtag brigade that turned up for the Rising couldn't have had much of an idea of what he was banging on about. Each of the signatories of the proclamation, however, would have known that by putting their name to that document they were virtually condemning themselves to certain death when the insurrection failed.

true republicans within the organisation would know what was really meant, while others like O'Neill would take it at face value. But O'Neill got wind of the rebels' plans and threatened to do everything to thwart them 'short of phoning Dublin Castle'. He was temporarily mollified when informed that a shipment of German weapons was about to land in Kerry, but when that landing was scuttled O'Neill ordered that all actions be cancelled for Sunday.

Chaos Reigns

It merely put off the rebels for one day, but it drastically reduced the number of men involved – no-one outside the capital would participate, leaving only a force of about 1250. The original plan had been to seize key buildings in Dublin, including Trinity College and Dublin Castle, but the lack of troops was to prove fatal, especially in their failure to take Dublin Castle – Connolly's men made a half-hearted effort, not realising that the castle was poorly defended, but were repulsed. As a result, the various Volunteer brigades were left to occupy other locations around the city but had no way of joining up with each other.

The British reacted slowly at first. Unsure of how many rebels there were, the British commander, Brigadier-General Lowe, had only 1200 men at his disposal. Martial law was established, and they sought to consolidate the castle and isolate the leaders within the GPO. The gunboat *Helga* was used to shell the rebels from the Liffey, but the firing was initially so inaccurate that British troops thought it was the rebels who were shelling them, and so returned fire!

In the meantime, the rebel leaders weren't having such a great time of it. Connolly had been badly injured in the fighting, and was forced to command his troops from a bed in the GPO. The continuous shelling of the GPO made it impossible for the leaders to fight any more than a holding action, whereas other rebels were ensconced within the likes of the Four Courts, Boland's Mills and St Stephen's Green, and were held there under heavy British fire (British numbers by now reinforced by the arrival of 16,000 extra troops). The only real success for the rebels was in the Mount St area around the Grand Canal, where a mere 17 armed volunteers led by Cathal Brugha inflicted heavy losses on troops trying to enter the city over the canal bridge.

Not surprisingly, Dublin was in chaos. Widespread looting was common, as the city's slum population took advantage of the breakdown of law and order to break into the shops on and around O'Connell St. Ever the socialist, Connolly reacted furiously to countermand a volunteer order that the looters be shot.

10,000–8000 BC

Human beings arrive in Ireland during the Mesolithic era, originally crossing a land bridge between Scotland and Ireland and later the sea in hide-covered boats.

AD 431–432

Pope Celestine I sends Bishop Palladius to Ireland to minister to those 'already believing in Christ'; St Patrick arrives the following year to continue the mission.

837

Plundering Vikings take a break from attacking monasteries, raping and pillaging to establish a new settlement at the mouth of the harbour and call it 'Dyfflin', which soon becomes a centre of economic power. They begin making alliances with some Irish kings.

988

High King Mael Seachlainn II leads the initial Irish conquest of Dyfflin, giving the settlement its modern name in Irish – Baile Átha Cliath, meaning 'Town at the Hurdle Ford'.

1169

Henry II's Welsh and Norman barons quickly capture Waterford and Wexford with the help of Dermot MacMurrough (King of Leinster). Although no one knew it at the time, this was the beginning of an 800-year occupation of Ireland by Britain.

1170

Strongbow captures Dublin and then takes Aoife, MacMurrough's daughter, as his wife before being crowned King of Leinster. The marriage is the subject of a famous painting by Daniel Maclise that can be viewed in the National Gallery ([p79](#)).

top picks

BOOKS ON DUBLIN HISTORY

- **A Short History of Dublin** (2000) Pat Boran
- **Dublin – A Celebration** (2000) Pat Liddy
- **Dublin: A Cultural & Literary History** (2005) Siobhán Kilfeather
- **Cities of the Imagination: Dublin** (2007) Siobhán Kilfeather
- **Encyclopaedia of Dublin** (2005) Douglas Bennett

By 29 April the rebels could no longer hold their positions. The leaders had been forced to abandon the GPO, and from their new position on Moore St, Pearse ordered a cessation of all hostilities. In six days, 318 Irish were dead and 2217 wounded, of which 64 were volunteers. The British reported casualties of 116 dead, 368 wounded and nine missing. The Rising was over, and all the rebels had to show for it besides death and the destruction of the city centre was the resultant rage of most of the population.

It got even worse for the rebels. The new British commander, General John Maxwell, was hardly in a conciliatory mood and ordered the arrest of all Sinn Féiners (members of the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, IRA), including 'those who have taken an active part in the movement although not in the present rebellion'. Sinn Féin was neither militant nor republican, and had not taken part in the rebellion, but the British failure to differentiate between the various strands of Irish nationalism was hardly new. It was to seriously backfire this time.

As Britain was engaged in the Great War, the rebels were treated as traitors and a series of court martials resulted in the sentencing to death of 90 men. Although only 15 of them were actually carried out in the grounds of Kilmainham Gaol (p95), they included 18-year-old Willie Pearse, whose main crime was being the brother of Pádraig. James Connolly, the hero of the working man, was severely injured during the Rising and then detained at the military hospital in Dublin Castle. At dawn on 12 May, he was taken by ambulance to Kilmainham Gaol, carried on a stretcher into the prison yard, strapped into a chair and executed by firing squad. More than 3500 others were arrested, and many were deported to internment camps in Britain.

Conscription & Rebellion

Although it is commonly accepted that the cold-blooded execution of the rebels was the thing that turned popular opinion in favour of the rebels, the radicalisation of Irish political aspirations – from a limited form of home rule to total independence from Britain – was brought about largely by the conscription crisis of 1918, whereby the British government forced through conscription despite the total opposition of all Irish parties.

The British had won few Irish friends with the executions and the heavy artillery shelling that had left much of the city centre a smouldering wreck. But the conscription crisis hardened opinion to such a degree that the rebel leaders were now seen as visionaries and martyrs rather than misguided romantics, and returning internees from the British camps were given a hero's welcome. The general election of 14 December 1918 resulted in the obliteration of the moderate Irish Parliamentary Party and their home rule agenda, and the almost total victory

of Sinn Féin, which had been reorganised the previous year as the vanguard of the Irish independence movement.

On 21 January 1919, the newly elected Sinn Féin deputies, who had pointedly refused to take their seats in Westminster, gathered in the Mansion House to form Dáil Éireann and adopt the Declaration of Independence.

Although the Rising was by any stretch a total disaster, not even the leaders could have predicted that their doomed rebellion would be seen as the touch-paper that would ignite the independence movement and inspire the final push towards Irish freedom. British ignorance of and insensitivity towards Irish moods were a longstanding fact of occupation. But the events of 1916–18, which occurred against a backdrop of a war ostensibly in defence of small nations, proved to the Irish once and for all that Britain didn't care about the needs of this small nation, and that the only recourse was for the Irish to strike out on their own.

A MATTER OF FAITH

Although officially the vast majority of Dubliners are Roman Catholic (around 90%), a majority of them could be considered *à la carte* Catholics, with faith for some amounting to having a quiet snooze at the back of the church during their very infrequent attendances at mass.

In 2007, a joint survey by a Catholic and a Protestant organisation revealed that only 52% of young people in the capital knew the names of the four Evangelists...and that only 38% knew that there were four of them (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, just so you know). Only 10% knew that the Immaculate Conception referred to Mary and less than half could name the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (or Ghost) as the three persons of the Trinity.

A sharp decline in religious practice is a Europe-wide phenomenon, particularly among Christians, but Ireland is a special case, for religion is a central feature of Irish history and the centuries-old struggle for identity and independence has been intimately intertwined with the struggle for recognition and supremacy between the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. There are few European countries where religion has played such a key role and continues to exert huge influence – not least in the fact that the island remains roughly divided along religious lines. For many outside observers Ireland is akin to a Christian Middle East, a complex and confusing muddle that lends itself to over-simplified generalisations by those who don't have two lifetimes to figure it all out. Like us, for instance, in this short essay.

Early Days

Dublin's relationship with Christianity began with St Patrick, who founded the See of Dublin sometime in the mid-5th century and went about the business of conversion in present-day Wicklow and Malahide before laying hands on Leoghaire, the King of Ireland, using water from a well next to St Patrick's Cathedral. Or so the story goes. Irrespective of the details, Patrick

WOMEN OF THE REVOLUTION

The 1916 Proclamation was a radical document for its day, and called for equal rights between men and women (Britain only gave women full suffrage in 1928). Two key reasons for this were Countess Markievicz (1868–1927) and Maud Gonne (1865–1953), two English women who inspired a generation of revolutionaries. A committed republican and socialist, Countess Markievicz was a military leader of the 1916 Easter Rising and went on to become a minister in the first government. Before independence she'd been the first woman ever elected to the British Parliament, although as a member of Sinn Féin (who didn't recognise British governance in Ireland), she never took her seat. Maud Gonne, also a staunch republican, is perhaps better known as WB Yeats' gorgeous muse (and desperately unrequited love).

1172

King Henry II of England invades Ireland, using the 1155 Bull Laudabiliter issued to him by Pope Adrian IV to claim sovereignty over the island, and forces the Cambro-Norman warlords and some of the Gaelic Irish kings to accept him as their overlord.

1350–1530

The Anglo-Norman barons establish power bases independent of the English crown. Over the following two centuries, English control gradually recedes to an area around Dublin known as 'the Pale'.

1534

'Silken' Thomas Fitzgerald, son of the reigning earl of Kildare, storms Dublin and its English garrisons. The rebellion is squashed, and Thomas and his followers are subsequently executed.

1592

Trinity College is founded on the grounds of a former monastery just outside the city walls, on the basis of a charter granted by Elizabeth I to 'stop Ireland being infected by popery'.

1640s–1682

Dublin's resurgence begins as the city's population grows from 10,000 in the mid-1640s to nearly 60,000 in 1682.

1680

The architectural style known as Anglo-Dutch results in the construction of notable buildings such as the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham (p96), now the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

and his monk buddies were successful because they managed to fuse the strong tradition of druidism and pagan ritual with the new Christian teaching, which created an exciting hybrid known as Celtic, or Insular Christianity.

Compared to new hotspots like Clonmacnois in County Offaly and Glendalough in County Wicklow, Dublin was a rural backwater and so didn't really figure in the Golden Age, when Irish Christian scholars excelled in the study of Latin and Greek learning and Christian theology. They studied in the monasteries that were, in essence, Europe's most important universities, producing brilliant students, magnificent illuminated books like the Book of Kells (now housed in Trinity College, p69), ornate jewellery and the many carved stone crosses that dot the island 'of saints and scholars'.

The nature of Christianity in Ireland was one of marked independence from Rome, especially in the areas of monastic rule and penitential practice, which emphasised private confession to a priest followed by penances levied by the priest in reparation – which is the spirit and letter of the practice of confession that exists to this day. The Irish were also exporting these teachings abroad, setting up monasteries across Europe, such as the ones in Luxeuil in France and Bobbio in Italy, both founded by St Columbanus (AD 543–615).

Papal Intervention & Protestantism

The Golden Age ended with the invasion of Ireland by Henry II in 1170, for which Henry had the blessing of Pope Adrian IV and his papal laudabiliter, a document that granted the English king dominion over Ireland under the overlordship of the pope. Ireland's monastic independence was unacceptable in the new political climate brought on by the Gregorian reform movement of 1050–80, which sought to consolidate the ultimate authority of the papacy in all ecclesiastical, moral and social matters at the expense of the widespread monastic network.

The long-standing (St) Laurence O'Toole, Archbishop of Dublin, tried his best to hold off the Norman onslaught – going so far as to implore an army of Danes to intercede – but it was to no avail. In 1179, Pope Alexander III softened the blow of Laurence's loss of ecclesiastical freedom by appointing him papal legate in Ireland. The influence of the monasteries began to wane in favour of the Norman archbishops who succeeded Laurence – an unbroken line of 25 English-born archbishops that would last for 400 years. The first couple of these oversaw the construction of the great cathedrals, most notably Dublin's two outstanding churches, St Patrick's (p90) and Christ Church (p94).

The second and more damaging reform of the Irish Church occurred in the middle of the 16th century, and once again an English monarch was at the heart of it. The break with the Roman Catholic Church that followed Henry VIII's inability to secure papal blessing for his divorce of Catherine of Aragon in 1534 saw the establishment in Ireland (as in England) of a new Protestant church, with Henry as its supreme head. In 1536 Henry appointed George Brown to the Dublin see, and he set about breaking the resistance of the city's clergy by gathering up all of their relics, including St Patrick's crozier (known as the 'staff of Jesus'), into a heap and setting them on fire. It wasn't quite enough, however: the Irish resisted the new religion and remained largely loyal to Rome, setting the religious wars that would dominate Irish affairs for the next 200 years and cast a huge shadow over the country that has not quite faded yet. The new religion gained its strongest foothold in Dublin, where the clerical and lay authorities were soon overhauled by newly constituted Protestants.

Dublin's role in the wars of pacification, initiated by Henry but really kicked into high gear by his daughter Elizabeth I, was at odds with the rest of the country. Dublin was the power-base of the English occupation, the heart of the Pale – the area of Ireland completely controlled by the Crown. Beyond it was the wild countryside, full of Irish rebel chieftains who would sooner die than abandon their freedom, which included the all-important right to refer to the pope as God's number one emissary.

Anti-Catholic Laws

The resistance had its most glorious moment in the Nine Years' War (1594–1603), when a combined alliance of Irish chieftains led by Hugh O'Neill fought the English armies to a standstill before eventually surrendering in 1603. The 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607, which saw O'Neill and his allies leave Ireland forever, marked the end of organised Irish rebellion and the full implementation of the policy of Plantation, whereby the confiscated lands of Catholic nobles was redistributed to 'planted' settlers of exclusively Protestant stock. This policy was most effective in Ulster, which was seen by the English as the hotbed of Irish resistance to English rule.

Alongside the policy of Plantation, the English also passed a series of Penal Laws in Ireland, which had the effect of almost totally disenfranchising all Catholics and, later, Presbyterians. The Jacobite Wars of the late 17th century, which pitted the Catholic James II against his son-in-law, the Protestant William of Orange, saw the Irish take sides along strictly religious lines. The disenfranchised Catholic majority – which included the poor of Dublin – supported James while the recently planted Protestant landowning minority lent their considerable support to William. It was William who won the day, and 12 July 1690 – when James was defeated at the Battle of the Boyne – has been celebrated ever since by Ulster Protestants with marches throughout the province.

Until the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, Irish Roman Catholics were almost totally impeded from worshipping freely. Clerics and bishops couldn't preach, with only lay priests allowed to operate, and even then only so long as they were registered with the government. The construction of churches was heavily regulated, and when allowed, they could only be built in barely durable wood. The most effective of the anti-Catholic laws, however, was the Popery Act of 1703, which sought to 'prevent the further growth of Popery' by requiring that all Catholics divide their lands equally among their sons, in effect diminishing Catholic land holdings. When the Emancipation Act was passed, it only granted limited rights to Catholics who owned a set amount of land; the land separation that preceded it ensured that they were few in number.

Influence of the Church

It was hardly surprising then that the Catholic Church was heavily involved in the struggle for Irish freedom, although the traditionally conservative church was careful to only lend its support to lawful means of protest, such as Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Movement and, later, Parnell's Home Rule fight. When Parnell became embroiled in a divorce scandal in 1890, the church condemned him with all its might, thereby ending his career. It also condemned any rebel notion that smacked of illegality or socialism – the Easter Rising was roundly denounced from the pulpit for its bloodletting and its vaguely leftist proclamation.

1695

Penal laws – aka the 'popery code' – prohibit Catholics from owning a horse (a military tactic), marrying outside their religion and, most importantly, from buying or inheriting property; within 100 years Catholics will own only 5% of Irish land.

1757

The Wide Street Commission is set up to design new civic spaces and the framework of a modern city: new parks are laid out, streets widened and new public buildings commissioned, rendering Dublin a magnificent example of Georgian town planning.

1759

Arthur Guinness buys a disused brewery on a plot of land opposite St James' Gate, once part of the city's western defences. Initially he brews only ale, but in the 1770s turns his expertise to a new beer called porter.

1801

The Act of Union unites Ireland politically with Britain. The Irish Parliament votes itself out of existence following an intensive campaign of bribery. Dublin's role as 'second city of the Empire' comes to a swift end.

1845–51

A mould called phytophthora ravages the potato harvest. The Great Famine is the single greatest catastrophe in Irish history, with the deaths of between 500,000 and one million people, and the emigration of up to two million others.

1905

Journalist Arthur Griffiths founds a new movement whose aim is independence under a dual monarchy, similar to that of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Making a case for national self-reliance, he names the movement Sinn Féin, meaning 'ourselves alone'.

If the Roman Catholic Church was shackled for much of the English occupation, it more than made up for it when the Free State came into being in 1922. The church's overwhelmingly conservative influence on the new state was felt everywhere, not least in the state's schools and hospitals and over virtually every aspect of social policy. Divorce, contraception, abortion and all manner of 'scurrilous literature' were obvious no-nos, but the church even managed to say no to a variety of welfare plans that would provide government assistance to young mothers in need, for instance.

The Free State – and the Republic of Ireland that followed it in 1948 – was 96% Catholic.

Although 7.5% of the Free State population in 1922 was Protestant, their numbers had halved by the 1960s, with a disproportionately high rate of emigration among Protestants who felt threatened or unwelcome in the new Catholic state. The Catholic Church compounded the matter by emphasising the 1907 *Ne Temere* decree, which insisted that the children of mixed marriage be raised as Catholic under penalty of excommunication.

The dramatic decline in the influence of the church over the last two decades is primarily the result of global trends and greater prosperity in Ireland. But the terrible revelations of widespread abuse of children by parish priests, and the untidy efforts of the church authorities to sweep the truth under the carpet – including the shuffling of guilty priests from parish to parish – have provoked a seething rage among many Dubliners at the church's gross insensitivity to the care of their flock. Many older believers feel an acute sense of betrayal that has led them to question a lifetime's devotion to their local parishes. A belated apology on the part of church authorities has assuaged some, but is considered far too little, far too late by many others.

One group to buck this trend is the largely Catholic Polish community in Dublin, which has increased dramatically in recent years and continues to keep the faith, as do large numbers of the African community, although they tend to affiliate with smaller Reformist churches like the Baptists.

A CITY OF OUTSIDERS

One of Dublin's most popular contemporary buzzwords is 'multiculturalism', used with pride and, in some quarters, concern to describe the city's new culture, which is being transformed by new arrivals from Africa, Asia and – since the accession of 10 new states into the EU in 2004 – from Eastern Europe. Here's a number for you: Dublin apparently has around 50,000 new arrivals from Poland alone – in a city that barely tops 1.5 million, that's a lot of people. Take a walk around the north city centre and you'll see the multicultural melting pot in all its cosmopolitan glory, where Russians shop for tinned caviar and *prianik* cookies while Nigerian teenagers discuss the merits of hair extensions and Koreans hawk phone cards from their hatches.

PRAISIN' IN HARMONY

Until very recently, Sunday Mass – that regular fixture of so many a Dubliner's week – was seen as something between a duty and a penance, a ritual that many young people endured rather than enjoyed. No wonder Mass attendances have dwindled. What Mass needed, according to St Francis Xavier Church on the north side's Gardiner St, was an injection of song – so enter the [Gardiner Street Gospel Choir](#) (📞 services 7.30pm Sun mid-Sep–Jun), who remind us that a little music in your soul hardly means that the devil has come to stay. Oh, happy day.

Dubliners are, for the most part, tickled pink by the new cultures on display – it lends weight to their assertion to living in a truly international capital. And it makes going out for dinner a hell of a lot more interesting, given the new range of authentic choices.

The Vikings & Strongbow

Labour shortages, a buoyant economy and a relatively generous social welfare system might be enticing this generation of immigrants, but this is hardly the first time that Dublin has opened its doors to accommodate outsiders. Lost in the overwhelming statistics of Ireland as a nation of emigrants is a history of immigration – beginning with the origins of the capital itself.

Raids by marauding Vikings had been a fact of Irish life for quite some time before a group of them decided to take some R-and-R from their hell-raising and built a harbour (or *longphort*) on the banks of the Liffey in 837. Although a Celtic army forced them out some 65 years later, they returned in 917 with a massive fleet, established a stronghold (or *dun*) by the black pool at Wood Quay ([Map pp90–1](#)), just behind Christ Church Cathedral, and dug their heels in. They went back to plundering the countryside but also laid down guidelines on plot sizes and town boundaries for their town of 'Dyflinn', which became the most prominent trading centre in the Viking world. But their good times came to an end in 1014 when an alliance of Irish clans led by Brian Ború decisively whupped them at the Battle of Clontarf, forever breaking the Scandinavian grip on the eastern seaboard. Rather than abandoning the place in defeat, however, the Vikings liked Dublin so much that they decided to stay and integrate.

When the Anglo-Normans arrived in 1169, led by Richard de Clare (better known as Strongbow), they were so taken with the place that they decided to stay. They took Dublin the following year, and essentially kept it for the following 750 years. Strongbow inherited the kingship of Leinster – of which modern Dublin is capital – and made himself at home. The English king, Henry II, soon sent his own army over to keep an eye on Strongbow and his consorts who, he reckoned, were becoming 'more Irish than the Irish themselves'.

The Huguenots

One of the most important immigrant groups to settle in Dublin was the Huguenots, mostly French Calvinist Protestants who began arriving in Dublin from about 1630 onwards. They were fleeing religious persecution in Europe – the worst example was in France, where 20,000 were murdered during the infamous St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572. The trickle of arrivals became a flood after Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which ended the little legal protection they had. Most of the Huguenot immigrants settled in the Coombe, which is part of the Liberties, where they immediately set about adding to the commercial and artistic life of the city with their skills in weaving, textile design and working with gold and silver. They were also involved in sugar baking, setting up no fewer than 30 sugar bakeries in the city.

The Huguenots knew how to make money, and they spent it on a city that was immensely grateful for their presence: Huguenot wealth went a long way towards financing the major urban redesign that was to transform Dublin from medieval misery pit into a Georgian masterpiece. One prominent Huguenot was goldsmith Jeremiah D'Olier, originally from Toulouse, who became a City Sheriff, a founder of the Bank of Ireland and a member of the Wide Streets Commission.

1916

The Easter Rising: dedicated republicans take the GPO in Dublin and announce the formation of an Irish Republic. After less than a week of fighting, the rebels surrender to the superior British forces and are summarily executed.

1919–21

The Irish War of Independence begins in January 1919. Two years (and 1400 casualties) later, the war ends in a truce on 11 July 1921, leading to peace talks.

1921–22

An Irish delegation signs the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 6 December. It gives 26 counties of Ireland independence and six largely Protestant Ulster counties the choice of opting out, with a Boundary Commission to decide on the final frontiers between north and south. The Irish Free State is founded in 1922.

1948

Fine Gael, in coalition with the new republican Clann na Poblachta, wins the 1948 general election and declares the Free State to be a republic at last. Ireland leaves the British Commonwealth (1949), and the south cut its final links to the north.

1969

Marches in Derry by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) are disrupted by Loyalist attacks and heavy-handed police action, culminating in the 'Battle of the Bogside' (August 12–14). It is the beginning of the Troubles.

1972

On Bloody Sunday, 30 January, 13 civilians are killed by British troops in Derry. Westminster suspends the Stormont government and introduces direct rule; a crowd of 20,000 protest outside the British Embassy in Dublin, which is burnt to the ground.

Other prominent Huguenot names include Georgian architects James Gandon and Richard Cassels (see p49); Gothic horror novelists Joseph Sheridan LeFanu and Charles Robert Maturin (authors of, respectively, the lesbian vampire classic *Carmilla* and *Melmoth the Wanderer*); and a certain Monsieur Becquet, who was not famous in his own right but whose descendant was none other than Samuel Beckett. His ancestor's grave is in the small but centrally located Huguenot Cemetery, at the northeastern corner of St Stephen's Green (Map pp66–7). Finally, the Huguenots had another important influence on the city: their extensive international trade links lent credence to the city's Anglo-Irish gentry's cosmopolitan pretensions, altogether necessary if Dublin was indeed to be thought of as the second city of the empire. And who says that history doesn't repeat itself?

The Jews

The other important group to arrive in Dublin as a result of religious persecution were Jews, the first wave arriving here in the mid-18th century from Spain and Portugal. They established a synagogue on Crane Lane, just off Dame St, which has long since disappeared (the most prominent building there now is a gay sauna) along with most of the original settlement, which had dispersed by 1790. Another small group arrived in 1820, opening synagogues in Wolfe Tone St and Mary's Abbey on the northside, but it wasn't until 1880 when Jewish settlers really established a foothold in Dublin. Fleeing the pogroms of Russia, they had intended to make their way to America, but many ended up staying here, settling around the South Circular Rd in an area that by the beginning of the 20th century was known as 'Little Jerusalem'. By the mid-1940s there were about 4000 Jews living in Ireland, but post-war emigration to the US and Israel has diminished their number to around 1500.

Nevertheless, their Dublin legacy is a notable one: two former Lord Mayors of Dublin were Jewish, Robert Briscoe (1956–57) and his son Ben (1988–89). The Jewish Museum on Walworth Rd (p76), in two adjoining houses that once served as the city's most important synagogue, was opened in 1985 by the then President of Israel, Chaim Herzog (1918–97). He grew up just around the corner at 33 Bloomfield Ave and was educated at one of Dublin's top schools, Wesley College. His son Isaac is currently the Israeli Minister for Social Affairs.

And who could forget the most famous Dublin Jew of them all, the man 'who ate with relish the inner organs of beast and fowl', James Joyce's greatest creation, Leopold Bloom? Born and raised at 13 Clanbrassil St, he married Molly and moved to 7 Eccles St, from where he embarked on his famous adventure of one very long day.

NURSE OF THE PEOPLE, CURSE OF THE PEOPLE

A wet, cold and inclement climate, a tendency towards self-reflection and the oppressive presence of a foreign occupier who just won't go away are three pretty good reasons to justify a spot of escapism, and the capital has plenty of experts in 'the cure', as taking a drink to beat the blues is euphemistically known. And as demand will often generate supply, Dublin has a particularly rich history in the twin arts of brewing and distilling – providing, in the words of Arthur Guinness, the 'nurse of the people' (beer) and the 'curse of the people' (whiskey). Arthur's bias notwithstanding, Dublin's drinkers could at least console themselves that they were contributing to the cyclical wealth of the local economy by maintaining brand loyalty, which really meant they were drinking some of the best beer and whiskey in the world.

Wine, Mead & Whiskey

There's been booze in Dublin since Celtic times. The first settlers round these parts weren't especially picky, displaying a love of malt liquor, imported wine (thanks to Roman traders) and other kinds of fermented drinks, including mead. The Vikings were especially partial to mead, a simple enough drink made of boiled honey and water, which was considered the drink of the Gods and the heroes living in Valhalla.

Wine and mead were good enough, but the Irish were looking for something with a little more punch, and by the 12th or 13th century (the early history is unclear – maybe the historians were a little too addled to note these things down?) they had it. And it was all thanks to monks who had picked up a couple of tricks from Middle Eastern perfume-making techniques and Roman texts about the distillation of *aqua vitae* – the 'water of life'. The Irish, who were more inclined to feeling good than smelling well, translated the name directly and called their new potion *uisce beatha* (ish-ke ba-ha); the first word sounds suspiciously like...whiskey. And considering that the Irish and the Scots have been engaged in a longstanding rivalry as to who exactly invented the stuff, we'll point out that the first recorded mention of whiskey in Ireland was in 1405, 91 years before the word (shorn of the 'e') was written down in Scotland. So there.

Until 1608, distilling was largely a clandestine affair, with pot stills all over the country producing whiskey of widely diverging quality. King James I's ministers then recognised the taxable potential of this popular pastime and granted the governor of Ulster, Sir Thomas Phillips, the very first licence to distil *uisce beatha*.

In Dublin, the first commercial distillery was set up in 1757 when Peter Roe bought a small distillery on Thomas St and powered it with the largest smock windmill in Europe of the time – you can still see the blue-capped copper top of St Patrick's Tower in the grounds of the Guinness Brewery (see p88).

Guinness: A Brand was Born

Two years later, another entrepreneur of booze got in on the act. Arthur Guinness, who had learnt the brewer's trade from his father Richard, took out a long-term lease on a small, disused brewery across the street from Roe's distillery and began producing ale. Then, in the mid-1770s, he got wind of a new, dark-coloured ale (due to the roasting of hops), which was the favourite of the porters of Covent Garden and Billingsgate in London. Arthur decided this was the way to go, so he refined and strengthened the dark ale, calling it extra stout porter, which soon became known simply as 'stout'. When he died in 1803 he could hardly have realised that he had laid the foundations for not just one of the world's most famous breweries, but arguably the world's most beloved beer and the single most defining symbol of the city he lived in.

As an employer, the company reached its apogee in the 1930s, when there were more than 5000 people working here, making it the largest employer in the city. For nearly two centuries it was also one of the best places to work, paying 20% more than the market rate and offering a comprehensive package of subsidised housing, health benefits, pension plans, longer holidays and life insurance. In the 19th century, young women of marrying age in Dublin were advised by their mothers to get their hands on a Guinness man, as he'd be worth more than most alive or dead!

1974

A series of simultaneous bombings in Monaghan and Dublin on 17 May leave 33 dead and 300 injured, the biggest loss of life in any single day in the history of the Troubles.

1988

Dublin celebrates its millennium, even though the town was established long before 988.

1990

Barrister and human rights campaigner Mary Robinson becomes Ireland's first female president. She wields considerable informal influence over social policies, shifting away from traditionally conservative attitudes on divorce, abortion and gay rights.

1990s

Thanks to low corporate tax, decades of investment in domestic higher education, transfer payments from the EU and a low-cost labour market, the 'Celtic Tiger' booms, transforming Ireland from one of Europe's poorer countries into one of its wealthiest.

2005

On 28 July the IRA issues a statement formally ending its campaign of violence and orders all of its units to dump arms and to assist 'the development of purely political and democratic programmes through exclusively peaceful means'.

2007

A general election sees Fianna Fail and Taoiseach Bertie Ahern re-elected for a third term, albeit as majority partners in a coalition that includes, for the first time, the Greens.

The Whiskey Trade

The Guinness gang were so successful, so utterly dominant, that no other brewer could really survive in Dublin. Not so with whiskey, and for a time, the capital had a number of important distilleries whose aim, presumably, was to keep as many of the citizenry as possible in a state of sozzle. In 1780, John Jameson bought an interest in a small distillery in Bow St, creating one of the great whiskey dynasties. His son, grandson and great-grandson – all called John – steered the firm of John Jameson & Son towards huge success, eventually replacing the original distillery with a much bigger building in 1880, now a whiskey museum (p106). Nine years later, Jameson's united with Roe's to form the Dublin Distilling Company, although each continued to sell under their own name. Roe's distillery alone covered 17 acres – the largest in Europe – and was producing two million gallons of whiskey annually, with a chunk of it being exported to the US, Canada and Australia.

The whiskey trade might have been immensely popular, but its sale was riddled with problems, largely because all distillers sold their product through bonders – merchants who aged whiskey in a bonded warehouse for at least four years before bottling. Common practice, however, was to mix the good stuff with inferior provincial distillates and sell the lot under the bonder's name. Then along came James Power, whose father James had founded a distillery on the grounds of what is now the National College of Art & Design on Thomas St in 1791.

In an early example of brand awareness, James devised a method whereby whiskey sold through merchant bonders could only carry a special 'John Power & Son' white label that also proclaimed it as a 'Dublin Whiskey'. His innovations earned him a knighthood, an appointment as High Sheriff of Dublin and the friendship of no less than the Liberator himself, Daniel O'Connell. The company continued its groundbreaking tradition in 1866 by making the move towards glass bottles (whiskey was always sold in wooden casks), offsetting the expense by labelling the bottled whiskey as 'Gold Label' and selling it as a really special reserve. Finally, Powers was the first distiller to produce miniature bottles, the famous 'Baby Powers', which required an act of parliament before they were allowed. Airline travel and hotel overnights just wouldn't have been the same.

The city's brewers and distillers were unquestionably an entrepreneurial lot, but their particular business meant that they were directly contributing to the social ills of society – not everyone was content with a snifter of whiskey or a quick half of beer after a hard day at the grindstone. Consequently, some of the major names were quick to engage in acts of munificence, in part inspired by the 19th-century spirit of philanthropy but equally to ensure that they didn't get labelled as purveyors of moral corruption. And what better way to avoid it than, say, to spend the modern-day equivalent of €30 million to fix up the city's most famous cathedral (the Roe's), or build a load of housing for low-income families and sponsor the clean-up of the city's favourite green space (the Guinness family)?

End of an Era

The whiskey industry has long since disappeared in Dublin – nearly all of it is now produced in a purpose-built factory in Middleton, County Cork, but Guinness still rules supreme, for the moment. The once mighty brewery, which had grown even bigger with the 1949 acquisition of the old Roe Distillery (which had folded in 1945), was, as of 2007, examining its long-term options. Sadly this could mean selling up St James's Gate (for a simply astronomical profit, we assume) and relocating to a new and smaller factory outside Dublin. If it does happen – and we pray fervently that it doesn't – it'll mean the end of a long and important tradition that has helped define and shape the city in ways few other enterprises ever could.

ARTS

Dublin has always operated an enormous cultural surplus, filling the world's artistic coffers with far greater wealth than should ever have been expected from so small a city. There's hardly been any let-up in the last couple of centuries and the city is still racing further and further into the black. Even by Ireland's standards, the capital is especially creative these days, with more poetry readings, book launches, live gigs, contemporary dance shows, operas, plays, films, comedy acts and club nights than you could shake a decent listings guide at, while Dubliners continue to regale the world with books, films and albums.

LITERATURE

Dubliners know a thing or two about the written word. No other city of comparable size can claim four Nobel Prize winners for literature, but the city's impact on the English-reading world extends far beyond the fab four of Shaw, Yeats, Beckett and Heaney...one name folks: James Joyce.

Before Dublin was even a glint in a Viking's eye, Ireland was the land of saints and scholars, thanks to the monastic universities that sprung up around the country to foster the spread of Christianity and the education of Europe's privileged elite (the nearest to Dublin was Glendalough). But for our purposes, we need to fast-forward 1000 years to the 18th century and the glory days of Georgian Dublin, when the Irish and English languages began to cross-fertilise. Experimenting with English, using turns of phrase and expressions translated directly from Gaeilge, and combining these with a uniquely Irish perspective on life, Irish writers have dazzled and delighted readers for centuries. British theatre critic Kenneth Tynan summed it up thus: 'The English hoard words like misers: the Irish spend them like sailors.'

Dublin has as many would-be sailors as Hollywood has frustrated waitresses, and it often seems like a bottomless well of creativity. The section given over to Irish writers is often the largest and busiest in any local bookstore, reflecting not only a rich literary tradition and thriving contemporary scene, but also an appreciative, knowledgeable and hungry local audience that attends readings and poetry recitals like rock fans at a gig.

Indeed, Dublin has produced so many writers, and has been written about so much, that you could easily plan a Dublin literary holiday. *A Literary Guide to Dublin*, by Vivien Igoe, includes detailed route maps, a guide to cemeteries and an eight-page section on literary and historical pubs. A Norman Jeffares' *Irish Writers: From Swift to Heaney* also has detailed and accessible summaries of writers and their work.

See p121 for our Literary Dublin walking tour.

Old Literary Dublin

Modern Irish literature begins with Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), the master satirist, social commentator and dean of St Patrick's Cathedral. He was the greatest Dublin writer of the early Georgian period and is most famous for *Gulliver's Travels*, a savage social satire that has morphed into a children's favourite. He was an 'earnest and dedicated champion of liberty', as he insisted on writing in his own epitaph.

He was followed by Oliver Goldsmith (1728–74), author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and Thomas Moore (1779–1852), whose poems formed the repertoire of generations of Irish tenors. Dublin-born Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) is renowned for his legendary wit, immense talent and striking sensitivity (also see Theatre, p41). Bram Stoker (1847–1912) is another well-known literary figure and is most celebrated for his gothic novel *Dracula*, one of the world's most popular books. The name of the count may have come from the Irish *droch fholá* (bad blood).

Playwright and essayist George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), author of *Pygmalion* (which was later turned into *My Fair Lady*), hailed from Sygne St near the Grand Canal, while James Joyce (1882–1941), the city's most famous son and one of the greatest writers of all time, was born not far away in Rathgar.

William Butler (WB) Yeats (1865–1939) is best remembered as a poet, though he also wrote plays and spearheaded the late-19th-century Irish Literary Revival, which culminated in the founding of the Abbey Theatre in 1904. *Sailing to Byzantium* and *Easter 1916* are two of his finest poems – the latter, about the Easter Rising, ends with the famous line 'A terrible beauty is born'. His poetry is mostly tied up with his sense of Irish heroism, esoteric mysticism and the unrequited love he had for Maud Gonne (see p24).

NOT SO TAXING TIMES

Although Dublin is as proud as punch of its literary credentials, and is willing to flaunt its genius at every opportunity, the awkward truth is that most of the city's greatest writers – including Wilde, Beckett and Joyce – got the hell out of the place after suffering censorship or receiving no support. Since the 1970s, to ensure that Ireland doesn't endure this ignominy again and to maintain the creative output, the Irish government has provided tax exemptions for all artists who choose to live in Ireland, from musicians through to authors. Creative folk have flocked to these shores ever since, although of course it's for the people, the kinship and the earthiness of the place that they come, not the tax breaks.

JAMES JOYCE

Uppermost among Dublin writers is James Joyce, author of *Ulysses*, the greatest book of the 20th century – although we've yet to meet five people who've actually finished it. Still, Dubliners are immensely proud of the writer once castigated as a literary pornographer by locals and luminaries alike – even George Bernard Shaw dismissed him as vulgar. Joyce was so unappreciated that he left the city, never to reside in it again, though he continued to live here through his imagination and literature.

Born in Rathgar in 1882, the young Joyce had three short stories published in an Irish farmers' magazine under the pen name Stephen Dedalus in 1904. The same year he fled town with the love of his life, Nora Barnade (when James' father heard her name he commented that she would surely stick to him). He spent most of the next 10 years in Trieste, now part of Italy, where he wrote prolifically but struggled to get published. His career was further hampered by recurrent eye problems and he had 25 operations for glaucoma, cataracts and other conditions.

The first major prose he finally had published was *Dubliners* (1914), a collection of short stories set in the city, including the three stories he had written in Ireland. Publishers began to take notice and his autobiographical *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) followed. In 1918 the US magazine *Little Review* started to publish extracts from *Ulysses* but notoriety was already pursuing his epic work and the censors prevented publication of further episodes after 1920.

Passing through Paris on a rare visit to Dublin, he was persuaded by Ezra Pound to stay a while in the French capital, and later said he 'came to Paris for a week and stayed 20 years'. It was a good move for the struggling writer for, in 1922, he met Sylvia Beach of the Paris bookshop Shakespeare & Co, who finally managed to put *Ulysses* (1922) into print. The publicity of its earlier censorship ensured instant success.

Buoyed by the success of the inventive *Ulysses*, Joyce went for broke with *Finnegans Wake* (1939), 'set' in the dream-escape of a Dublin publican. Perhaps not one to read at the airport, the book is a daunting and often obscure tome about eternal recurrence. It is even more complex than *Ulysses* and took the author 17 years to write.

In 1940 WWII drove the Joyce family back to Zürich, where the author died the following year.

Ulysses

Ulysses is the ultimate chronicle of the city in which, Joyce once said, he intended to 'give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city suddenly one day disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book'. It is set here on 16 June 1904 – the day of Joyce's first date with Nora Barnacle – and follows its characters as their journeys around town parallel the voyage of Homer's *Odyssey*.

The experimental literary style makes it difficult to read, but there's much for even the slightly bemused reader to relish. It ends with Molly Bloom's famous stream of consciousness discourse, a chapter of eight huge, unpunctuated paragraphs. Because of its sexual explicitness, the book was banned in the US and the UK until 1933 and 1937, respectively.

In testament to the book's enduring relevance and extraordinary innovation, it has inspired writers of every generation since. Joyce admirers from around the world descend on Dublin every year on 16 June to celebrate Bloomsday and retrace the steps of its central character, Leopold Bloom. It is a slightly gimmicky and touristy phenomenon that appeals almost exclusively to Joyce fanatics and tourists, but it's plenty of fun and a great way to lay the groundwork for actually reading the book.

Oliver St John Gogarty (1878–1957) is said to have borne a lifelong grudge against his one-time friend James Joyce because of his appearance as Buck Mulligan in the latter's *Ulysses*. He was a character in his own right and his views are presented in his memoirs *As I Was Going Down Sackville Street* (1937). He had a mean streak though, and took exception to a throwaway remark written by Patrick Kavanagh (1904–67) alluding to him having a mistress; he successfully sued the poet, whom he described as 'that Monaghan boy'.

Kavanagh, from farming stock in Monaghan, walked to Dublin (a very long way) in 1934 and made the capital his home. His later poetry explored Ireland's city versus country dynamic. He was fond of the Grand Canal, along the banks of which he is commemorated, with 'just a canal-bank seat for the passer-by', as he had wished.

You can't imagine the brooding Samuel Beckett (1906–89) hanging around in this company and, while his greatest literary contributions were as a dramatist in self-imposed exile (also see Theatre, p41), he did write a collection of short stories in Dublin, *More Pricks Than Kicks* (1934), about an eccentric local character. The book so irked the new Free State government that it was banned, no doubt hastening Beckett's permanent move to Paris.

One-time civil servant Brian O'Nolan (1911–66), also known as Flann O'Brien and Myles na Gopaleen, was a celebrated comic writer and career drinker. He wrote several books, most notably *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) and *The Third Policeman* (1940), but was most fondly remembered for the newspaper columns he penned for nearly three decades before his death.

He was eclipsed – at least in the drinking stakes – by novelist, playwright, journalist and quintessential Dublin hell-raiser, Brendan Behan (1923–64), who led a short and frantic life. In 1953, Behan began work as a columnist with the now-defunct *Irish Press*, and over the next decade wrote about his beloved Dublin, using wonderful, earthy satire and a keen sense of political commentary that set him apart from other journalists. A collection of his newspaper columns was published under the title *Hold Your Hour and Have Another*.

The Contemporary Scene

For close to two decades, Dublin's literary scene has been partly in the shadow of the massive commercial success of Roddy Doyle (1958–), the one-time secondary school teacher who turned his observations of the capital's suburban working classes into literary gold with the Barrytown trilogy – *The Commitments* (1987), *The Snapper* (1990) and *The Van* (1991) – which were all turned into successful movies. He won the prestigious Booker Prize in 1993 for his semi-autobiographical *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, and his output since then has gotten more and more serious. He tackled domestic violence in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (1997), social and political history in *A Star Called Henry* (2000) and nonfiction with *Rory & Ita* (2002) – essentially an interview with his parent. In *Paula Spencer* (2006), we revisit the forlorn alcoholic character first introduced in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, now nine years older, newly sober and facing the challenges of life one day at a time.

The critics' favourite and a genuine contender for top literary heavyweight is the sometimes impenetrable but always brilliant John Banville (1945–), who was shortlisted for the Booker Prize with *The Book of Evidence* (1989), before actually winning it in 2005 with *The Sea*. Our favourite, however, is *The Untouchable* (1998), a superb *roman à clef* based loosely on the secret-agent life of art historian Anthony Blunt. The other big hitter in Irish literary circles was John McGahern (1934–2006), although his appeal is a little more local. Besides his Booker-nominated *Amongst Women* (1990), McGahern has a string of superb books to his credit, including his last book, the non-fiction *Memoir* (2005), published in the US as *All Will be Well*.

A noteworthy name is Colm Tóibín (1955–), born in County Wexford but resident in Dublin (his birthplace is almost part of the capital these days anyway). He took four years to find a publisher for his first novel *The South* (1990) but has gone on to become a hugely successful

DUBLIN'S NOBEL LAUREATES

- George Bernard Shaw (1925)
- William Butler Yeats (1938)
- Samuel Beckett (1969)
- Seamus Heaney (1995; born in Derry but lives in Dublin)

LIVING POET'S SOCIETY

Seamus Heaney (1939–) was born in Derry but now lives mostly in Dublin. He is the bard of all Ireland and evokes the spirit and character of the country in his poetry. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995, and the humble wordsmith compared all the attention to someone mentioning sex in front of their mammy. *Opened Ground – Poems 1966–1996* (1998) is our favourite of his books.

Dubliner Paul Durcan (1944–) is one of the most reliable chroniclers of changing Dublin. He won the prestigious Whitbread Prize for Poetry in 1990 for *Daddy, Daddy* and is a funny, engaging, tender and savage writer. Poet, playwright and Kerryman Brendan Kennelly (1936–) is an immensely popular character around town. He lectures at Trinity College and writes a unique brand of poetry that is marked by its playfulness, as well as historical and intellectual impact. Eavan Boland (1944–) is a prolific and much-admired writer, best known for her poetry, who combines Irish politics with outspoken feminism; *In a Time of Violence* (1995) and *The Lost Land* (1998) are two of her most celebrated collections.

If you're interested in finding out more about poetry in Ireland in general, visit the website of the excellent [Poetry Ireland](http://www.poetryireland.ie) (www.poetryireland.ie), which showcases the work of new and established poets.

RECOMMENDED READING

At Swim-Two-Birds (1939; Flann O'Brien) By the late satirical columnist and regarded by many as the great Dublin novel. It's funny and absurd, and uses inventive wordplay in telling the story within a story of a student novelist.

Dubliners (1914; James Joyce) In our humble opinion, one of the most perfectly written collections of short stories ever; 15 poignant and powerful tales of Dubliners and the moments that define their lives. Even if you never visit, read this book.

Amongst Women (1990; John McGahern) Focuses on a rough old republican whose story is told through his three daughters. It's essentially a study of the faults and comforts of humanity and an exploration of family ties, told by an exceptionally skilled author who combines a gentle tone with an unflinching eye for the human condition.

At Swim, Two Boys (2001; Jamie O'Neill) A beautifully crafted masterpiece that has drawn comparisons to Joyce and Beckett for its language and characterisation. Essentially it's a coming-of-age tale of gay youth set against the backdrop of revolutionary Dublin circa 1916. It's ambitious, absorbing and absolutely brilliant.

The Book of Evidence (1989; John Banville) Written by the former literary editor of the *Irish Times*, this consists of the prison memoir of Freddie Montgomery, on trial for the brutal murder of a female servant. It's a terrific and elaborate piece of literary, philosophical and political fiction.

Death in Summer (1998; William Trevor) Ireland's master of the short story shows his skills with this novel, which is a riveting and sympathetic portrait of the sadness and distress of ordinary people.

The Ginger Man (1955; JP Donleavy) A high-energy foray around Dublin from the perspective of an Irish-American scoundrel. It received the Catholic Church's 'seal of approval' by being banned in Ireland for many years.

The Informer (1925; Liam O'Flaherty) The classic book about the divided sympathies that plagued Ireland during its independence struggle and the ensuing Civil War. Set in the Dublin underworld, this enthralling revolutionary drama was successfully brought to the big screen by the legendary John Ford.

My Left Foot (1954; Christy Brown) The story of the author's life growing up with cerebral palsy, which he overcame to become an accomplished painter and writer. This autobiography was later expanded into the novel *Down all the Days* (1970), which formed the basis of the acclaimed film *My Left Foot*.

New Dubliners (2005; edited by Oona Frawley) The likes of Maeve Binchy, Dermot Bolger, Roddy Doyle, Colum McCann and Joseph O'Connor lend their respective talents to creating short stories about modern-day Dublin.

Paula Spencer (2006; Roddy Doyle) A terrifically well-observed and sensitive novel about the everyday struggles of a suburban alcoholic looking to piece her life back together after finally quitting the booze.

The Journey Home (1990; Dermot Bolger) Depicts the underside of modern Irish society with a pacy, absorbing narrative and beautifully crafted characters and scenarios. The tourist board would probably have it banned if it had its way.

The Speckled People (2003; Hugo Hamilton) A brilliant – and pertinent to today's immigrants – novel-memoir of the author's German-Irish upbringing in 1950s Dublin; a boy tells of a family's homesickness for a culture to call their own.

Tatty (2003; Christine Dwyer Hickey) A beautiful and brutal portrayal of an alcoholic Dublin family and its slow and terrible disintegration as seen through the eyes of a child.

novelist and scholar – his latest work, *The Master* (2004), about Henry James, won the Los Angeles Times' Novel of the Year award.

Joseph O'Connor (1963–), Sinéad's older brother, burst onto the scene with *Cowboys and Indians* (1991) and has delivered a string of popular novels, none better than *The Star of the Sea* (2002), a murder mystery set on board a 19th-century famine ship. Another contemporary notable is Jamie O'Neill (1962–), whose *At Swim, Two Boys* (2001) is the great Irish gay novel (attentive readers will have recognised the pun on Flann O'Brien's book).

Walk into any bookstore in town and you will undoubtedly notice the preponderance of so-called chick lit titles penned by Irish authors. The doyenne of the style is unquestionably Maeve Binchy (1940–) whose mastery of the 'come here and I'll tell you a story' approach has seen her outsell many of the greats of Irish literature, including Beckett and Behan, and her long list of bestsellers includes *Light a Penny Candle* (1982) and *Circle of Friends* (1990); both have been

made into successful films. Following on her heels is Marion Keyes (1963–), who has written 10 incredibly successful novels (*Rachel's Holiday* – 1998 – is our sneaky favourite), and former agony aunt Cathy Kelly, whose latest book, *Lessons in Heartbreak* (2008), can be judged by its cover. Even Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern's daughter Cecilia (1981–) has cashed in on the tack lit phenomenon. Her first book, *P.S., I Love You* (2004), was a huge hit (and is currently being made into a movie with Hilary Swank in the lead role) and we expect nothing less from her equally saccharine follow-up, *Where Rainbows End* (2005).

For more serious fare, Jennifer Johnston's (1930–) latest novel is *Grace and Truth* (2005), while the excellent Anne Enright (1962–) has seen her new novel *The Gathering* (2007) win the 2007 Booker Prize. Another young writer worth keeping an eye on is Claire Kilroy, whose novels *All Summer* (2003) and *Tenderwire* (2006) have been turning more than pages.

MUSIC

Dublin's literary tradition may have the intellectuals nodding sagely, but it's the city's musical credentials that has the rest of us bopping, for it's no cliché to say that music is as intrinsic to the local lifestyle as a good night out. Feelings are all right, Dubs will tell you, but don't you dare express them outside a song. Which goes some way towards explaining the city's love affair with the singer-songwriter, the guy or gal with a guitar who unveils the layers of their heart through the tortured choruses of song. But even if the slovenly sentiment of the miserable minstrel doesn't draw you in, there's plenty else that will: rock gigs, DJ nights and traditional sessions take place in venues throughout the city every night of the week and, if someone isn't actually making the music, you can be sure there's a fancy stereo filling in the background so that you hear something else besides the sound of your own voice. Oh, for an occasional bit of *whist* (silence): does every new bar have to test our eardrums? Even the streets – well, OK, Grafton St – are alive with the sounds of music, and you can hardly get around without stubbing your toe on the next international superstar busking their way to a record contract. One thing's for certain, you'll have the music of Dublin ringing in your ears long after your gig here is done.

Traditional & Folk

Dublin's not the best place in Ireland to savour a traditional session although, thanks to the tourist demand, it's a lot better than it was 10 years ago. There are some lively sessions in pubs throughout the city, and some of them are as good as you'll hear anywhere in the country.

Irish music has retained a vibrancy not found in other traditional European forms, which have lost out to the overbearing influence of pop music. This is probably because, although Irish music has retained many of its traditional aspects, it has itself influenced many forms of music, most notably US country and western – a fusion of Mississippi Delta blues and Irish traditional tunes that, combined with other influences like Gospel, is at the root of

top picks

DUBLIN SONGS

- **Raglan Road** (1972) Luke Kelly & the Dubliners
- **Lay Me Down** (2001) The Frames
- **One** (1990) U2
- **Still in Love With You** (1978) Thin Lizzy
- **I Don't Like Mondays** (1979) Boomtown Rats

THE NUTS & BOLTS OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Despite popular perception, the harp isn't widely used in traditional music (it is the national emblem, but that probably has more to do with the country traditionally being run by people pulling strings). The *bodhrán* (*bow-rawn*) goat-skin drum is much more prevalent, although it makes for a lousy symbol. The uilleann pipes, played by squeezing bellows under the elbow, provide another distinctive sound although you're not likely to see them in a pub. The fiddle isn't unique to Ireland but it is one of the main instruments in the country's indigenous music, along with the flute, tin whistle, accordion and bouzouki (a version of the mandolin). Music fits into five main categories (jigs, reels, hornpipes, polkas and slow airs) while the old style of singing unaccompanied versions of traditional ballads and airs is called *sean-n ós*.

top picks

TRADITIONAL PLAYLIST

- **The Quiet Glen** (1998) Tommy Peoples
- **Paddy Keenan** (1975) Paddy Keenan
- **Compendium: The Best of Patrick Street** (2000) Patrick Street
- **The Chieftains 6: Bonaparte's Retreat** (1976) The Chieftains
- **Old Hag You Have Killed Me** (1976) The Bothy Band

rock and roll. Other reasons for its current success include the willingness of its exponents to update the way it's played (in ensembles rather than the customary *céilidh* – communal dance – bands), the habit of pub sessions (introduced by returning migrants) and the economic good times that encouraged the Irish to celebrate their culture rather than trying to replicate international trends. And then, of course, there's *Riverdance*, which made Irish dancing sexy and became a worldwide phenomenon, despite the fact that most aficionados of traditional music are seriously underwhelmed by its musical worth. Good stage show, crap music.

If you want to hear musical skill that will both tear out your heart and restore your faith in humanity, go no further than the fiddle-playing of Tommy Peoples on *The Quiet Glen* (1998), the beauty of Paddy Keenan's uilleann pipes on his eponymous 1975 album, or the stunning guitar playing of Andy Irvine on albums like *Compendium: The Best of Patrick Street* (2000).

The most famous traditional band – arguably the original 'band' – is The Chieftains, formed in 1963 and still going strong after four decades. The most loved band in the capital, although more folksy than traditional, is the Dubliners, fronted by the distinctive gravel voice and grey beard of Ronnie Drew, whose photograph should appear above the word Dublin whenever it's printed. Luke Kelly (1940–84) was the most talented and beloved member of the band and his solo version of *Scorn Not His Simplicity* is one of the saddest, most beautiful songs ever recorded. Another band whose career has been stitched into the fabric of Dublin life is the Fureys, comprising four brothers originally from the travelling community (no, not like the Wilburys) along with guitarist Davey Arthur. And if it's rousing renditions of Irish rebel songs you're after, you can't go past the Wolfe Tones. Ireland is packed with traditional talent and we strongly recommend that you spend some time in a specialised traditional shop like Claddagh Records (p137).

Since the 1970s, various bands have tried to blend traditional with more progressive genres with mixed success. The first band to pull it off was Moving Hearts, led by Christy Moore, who went on to become the greatest Irish folk musician ever (see the boxed text, below).

While traditional music continues to be popular in its own right both in Ireland and abroad, it also continues to provide the base for successful new genres. Think of ambient music with a slightly mystical tinge and invariably Enya will come to mind, while a wonderful product of contemporary Ireland has been the Afro-Celt Foundation, which fuses African rhythms and electronic beats with traditional Irish sounds to great effect.

CHRISTY MOORE: THE TRADITION MOVES ON *Stuart Cooper*

Kildare-born Christy Moore (1945–) is one of Ireland's best-loved singers in the traditional mode. Combining a ready wit and puckish charm with his undoubted talent, he has produced more than 20 solo albums of breathtaking diversity and scope.

The causes he has championed – travellers, anti-nuclear protests, South Africa, Northern Ireland – might give one the wrong impression: Christy is equally at home singing tender love songs (*Nancy Spain*), haunting ballads (*Ride On*), comic ditties (*Lisdoonvarna*) and bizarre flights of lyrical fancy (*Reel in the Flickering Light*). He was also influential as a member of Planxty and Moving Hearts, as Ireland experimented during the 1970s and 1980s with its traditional musical forms to combine folk, rock and jazz in a heady and vibrant fusion.

Moore's first big break came with *Prosperous*, on which he teamed up with the legendary Donal Lunny, Andy Irvine and Liam O'Flynn. They went on to form Planxty and record three ground-breaking albums.

Among all the phoney Oirishness, Moore stands out as the genuine article: passionate, provocative and distinctive. He has built an international reputation as a writer and interpreter of a living tradition, and sits at the head of the table of Irish traditional music. For tour dates, see www.christymoore.com.

Recommended listening: *The Christy Moore Collection, 81–91*.

TOP U2 MOMENT

Need proof that Bono can still belt them out? Just listen to the live version of *Miss Sarajevo*, recorded in Milan in 2005 and available on the *All Because of You* single. Luciano Pavarotti wasn't around to sing his bit as he did on the studio version (on U2 and Brian Eno's *Passengers* soundtrack album from 1995), so Bono does the honours – in Italian, and with a power and intensity that has reduced us to tears. Grazie, maestro.

breakthrough with *Jailbreak* (1975). Their finest hour, literally, was *Live & Dangerous* (1978), one of the greatest live albums ever recorded. Thin Lizzy's music aged better than its charismatic and hard-living lead singer, whose life and creativity were blighted by drug use and physical deterioration – he died in 1986.

During the punk explosion of the mid-1970s, Bob 'for fuck's sake' Geldof and the Boomtown Rats carried the mantle for Dublin, strutting their way to centre stage with hit singles *Rat Trap* and *I Don't Like Mondays*. By the time the band had begun to wane, Geldof had moved onto more important matters and for the last 20 years he has been mixing moral outrage and annoying condescension in his lecture to the world on the terrible crisis that afflicts Africa. To be fair, without him we would never have had Live Aid, Live Eight or those Make Poverty History wristbands.

Just as the Rats were celebrating the virtues of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll, a young drummer pinned a note on his school notice board looking for fellow pupils who were interested in forming a band. Over the next four years, Larry Mullen and his new-found band learned that they were rubbish at playing covers and so devoted themselves to writing their own songs. The release of their debut, *Boy* (1980), proved that they were absolutely brilliant at it. And so U2 was born.

Bono and the boys went on to produce a string of brilliant albums before becoming the World's Biggest Rock Act in the aftermath of the truly wonderful *The Joshua Tree* (1987). They've remained supernovas in the pop firmament through thick and thicker: their musical creativity may have slowed somewhat, Bono's impressive and diverse range of interests may keep him out of the studio more than ever, but the U2 boys haven't quite draped the shawl of sad rockers around their 40-something shoulders. Their last album, *U218* (2006), was a long-awaited singles collection that barely does justice to their high-quality output and in 2007 they were back in the recording studio working on material for a new album.

U2's success cast a long shadow over the city's musical scene in the 1980s – despite the valiant and wonderful efforts of Sinead O'Connor to bask in her own sunlight and the singular genius of My Bloody Valentine, who were the true pioneers of the shoegazer alt-rock movement of the late 1980s – but their global megastardom and the explosion of dance music in the 1990s lessened their day-to-day relevance to Dublin. U2 became

Popular Music

Dublin may rely on the rest of the country to buck up its traditional rep, but no such help is required with rock music, save maybe the huge and overwhelming influence of London, which has inspired, attracted, rejected and made many a Dublin rock band.

Fuelled by the Pop Explosion and the 1960s London scene, Dublin bands began to believe that they had a future beyond the stages of their local dance hall. The most important of these was Thin Lizzy, formed in 1969 and led by the simply fantastic Phil Lynott (see the boxed text, p182); they finally got their

top picks

DUBLIN ALBUMS

Five albums by Dublin artists to provide a decent soundtrack for your city visit:

- **Loveless** (My Bloody Valentine) Utterly intoxicating indie classic that just piles on the layers of sound and melody.
- **Boy** (U2) Best debut album of all time? We think so.
- **The End of History** (Fionn Regan) Too early to say if it's a classic, but it's bloody good.
- **Live & Dangerous** (Thin Lizzy) Released in 1978, it remains one of the greatest live albums ever recorded.
- **I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got** (Sinead O'Connor) Try listening to the Prince-penned 'Nothing Compares to U' and not feel her pain – or your own!

yet another example of the city producing artistic genius for the world to savour and for Dubliners, in their own, inimitable begrudgery, to shrug their shoulders and give out about Bono being a pretentious arsehole.

The late 1990s saw a thriving economy, and the feel-good vibes of a city anaesthetised by pleasure was hardly a healthy breeding ground for great rock. Enter the too-horrible-for-words phenomenon of the boy band, masterfully manipulated by impresario Louis Walsh, who created Boyzone, Ronan Keating and Westlife, and got very rich in the process. And that's enough type wasted on them.

Infinitely more memorable – although not necessarily for the biggest participants – was the emergence of the dance music scene, a five-year party fuelled by ecstasy, bottled water and the pounding beat of techno. International DJs and producers led the way, but a couple of local names managed to find a place in the starting line-up, none more so than Billy Scurry (see the boxed text, below) whose skills on the decks were a match for any overpaid superstar DJ from across the water.

top picks

DUBLIN DJs

- Billy Scurry** Simply the best techno DJ in the city. Back in the early '90s he set the tone for the e-fuelled revolution in the city's dancing habits and has never looked back. A true Dub, totally unaffected by fame and reputation, he plays his records in a seamless, perfect way, pulling the crowd this way and that for hours on end.
- DJ Mek** The best hip-hop DJ this country has ever produced. A scratch and mix genius, he has the unique ability (in Ireland anyway) not to get lost in his technical prowess (which is virtually infinite) and keep the party going. He once ate a can of beans on stage and then proceeded to scratch like he was farting. Sensational.
- Johnny Moy** Another superb techno DJ. Back in the 1990s he was invited to play the legendary Hacienda Club in Manchester. He started well, got the crowd going and then, halfway through his set, let the track fade out. Silence for nearly 20 seconds as everyone looked around going 'what the hell?' Then came the explosive sound of the Jam's *Going Underground*. The crowd went absolutely mental; a moment of pure genius that took balls of brass (or lots of drugs) to pull off.
- DJ Tu-Ki** Straight out of Mek's inner circle, Tu-Ki was the very first Irish DJ to make it to the finals of the World DMC Championships (2003), the *crème de la crème* for hip-hop DJs throughout the world (Beck's DJ is a former winner). Needless to say, he's a wizard on the wheels of steel.
- DJ Arveene** A freestyle DJ who packs his record bag with techno, house, hip-hop, hardcore rock, punk, soul and pop, which he mixes, scratches and cuts to keep the party going. Great fun, great skill and perfect to dance to.

The Contemporary Scene

Dance music hasn't quite disappeared, but it's got awful quieter in the last few years. Instead, Dublin has witnessed the return of the rock band – although most of them would argue with great irritation that rock never went away. The biggest noise of all is being made by Snow Patrol, whose blend of indie-lite guitar and soaring melody has made them the favourite darlings of the mortgage rock brigade: their 2006 offering, *Eyes Open* (2006), was one of the biggest hits of the year both in Ireland and the UK. Other successful debut albums of recent years include *Future Kings of Spain* by the indie rock band of the same name, and the also-eponymous *Hal*, a feast of cheerful and melodic pop that's guaranteed to put a smile on anyone's face.

Dublin has always had a terrific tradition of singer-songwriters, and the current crop is plentiful, if not always brilliant. The best-known names include Paddy Casey, who followed up his multi-platinum album *Living* (2004) with *Addicted to Company* (2007), and Damien Rice (he followed up his multi-million selling *O* with the disappointing 9). A pair of new arrivals are the supremely talented Fionn Regan (his 2006 debut *The End of History* was pipped at the line for the 2007 Mercury Award) and the Belfast-born Duke Special, whose left-of-centre *Songs from the Deep Forest* (2006) has also earned plenty of critical acclaim. Other performers to look out for are Julie Feeney – her debut, *13 Songs* (2005), scooped the top prize at the 2006 Choice Music Prize, Ireland's answer to Britain's Mercury Award – and soul-folk-rockers The Frames, who have a phenomenally loyal following earned over more than 15 years of releasing albums and touring. Finally, a word about the northside's favourite son, Damien

Dempsey, who wears his street cred very much on his sleeve and has earned himself a lot of fans for his in-your-face style and hard-hitting phrasing, but we thought his lyrics were silly and pedestrian. Judge for yourself with his latest release, *To Hell or Barbados* (2007).

THEATRE

Dubliners have a unique affinity with theatre; it seems to course through their veins. Perhaps this explains why dramatists Oliver Goldsmith, Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw conquered the theatre world in London even before there was such an entity as Irish drama. While Dublin has a long association with the stage – the first theatre was founded here in 1637 – it wasn't until the late-19th-century Celtic Revival Movement and the establishment of the Abbey Theatre that Irish drama really took off.

Perhaps the first renowned Dublin playwright was Oliver Goldsmith (1730–74) who enjoyed much success with *The Good Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) before his early death. Language enthusiasts might like to know that another Dublin-born London favourite, Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816), gave us the word 'malapropism' after the misguided character Mrs Malaprop from his play *The Rivals* (1775).

The infinitely quotable Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) left Dublin for London after studying at Trinity and caused a sensation with his uproarious, challenging plays such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895). However, his most important and vigorous work is *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898), which he wrote while serving a prison sentence for being a progressive homosexual in a backward time. Wilde paid a heavy toll for the harsh prison conditions and the ignorance of Victorian society, dying bankrupt not long after his release.

Fellow Trinity alumnus John Millington Synge (1871–1909) was one of the first to create headlines at Dublin's Abbey Theatre, established in 1904 by WB Yeats and Lady Gregory to stage Irish productions and stimulate the local scene. In stark contrast to Wilde, Synge's plays focused on the Irish peasantry, whose wonderful language, bawdy witticisms and eloquent invective he transposed into his plays. His honest portrayal of the brutality of rural life in his most famous drama, *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), resulted in rioting when it first opened at the Abbey. Sadly for Irish drama, Synge died of Hodgkin's disease within two years, aged just 38.

Sean O'Casey (1880–1964), from the working-class north inner city, didn't even become a full-time writer until his 40s but made up for the slow start with a brilliant burst in which he wrote the powerful trilogy on patriotism and life in Dublin's slums, *Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). The latter also caused riots in the Abbey Theatre when it was first staged and it's a wonder WB Yeats and co could afford the insurance to carry on.

Brendan Behan (1923–64) was another immensely talented Dublin playwright whose creative fire was quenched much too early. A die-hard republican, he shot to prominence with his autobiographical accounts of his time in prison in Dublin and England, in the play *The Quare Fellow* (1954) and the tale *Borstal Boy* (1958). His masterpiece was *The Hothouse* (1958), a devastatingly satirical play about an English soldier being ransomed by the IRA. He struggled to cope with the fame his talent brought, and his alcoholism – and the image of celebrity hell-raiser that he tried to live up to – delivered his early demise.

It hardly seems possible that he could have shared the same era as Dublin-born Samuel Beckett (1906–89). Beckett spent most of his adult life in Paris and wrote much of his work in French, but is still thought of as an Irish playwright, perhaps because it was as much his rejection of Irish culture that drove him as a longing for anything else. His greatest works are associated with the bleakness and self-examination that occurred in continental Europe following WWII, from which he himself spent a good time on the run. Many consider his *Waiting for Godot* (1953) to be the modernist theatrical masterpiece. Beckett got the nod from the Nobel committee in 1969 and literary Dublin got another feather in its well-plumed cap.

The Contemporary Scene

Irish theatre is still sincerely and refreshingly self-absorbed, which means it offers visitors a direct short cut into the heart of Irish culture – at least in theory. After a mid-century descent into the doldrums – when lack of funds and resources, coupled with a tired theatrical vision,

missed an important artistic opportunity to offer an insight into a sick and stagnant society – the theatre bounced back in the early 1990s, thanks largely to a reinvigorated establishment and a host of new companies geed up by the boundless possibilities of the new economy. Inspired by the ground-breaking work being explored in other countries, Irish companies began their own forays into experimentation, creating a buzz of activity not seen on the city's stages since the days of Yeats and Lady Gregory.

Yet a buoyant economy has had a negative effect too: rising property prices and the developers' bottom line has meant that no new stages have opened up in the city centre, forcing companies onto the streets – literally. Open-air performances are an increasing part of the theatrical landscape. So are the purpose-built performance centres in the suburbs, which are themselves a wonderful addition to the local cultural landscape but hardly speak loudly of a city committed to its theatrical identity. Basically, Dublin wants its theatres, but it wants them out of the way of the ongoing development of every inch of centre space.

Under pressure to justify itself as a going concern, Dublin theatres have subconsciously turned more and more towards the fizz bang wallop of spectacle, often at the expense of quality. Some of the most successful plays of recent years seem obsessed with re-creating the high-paced neurotic energy of the action thriller on the stage, as though the audience isn't patient enough to be engrossed by the slow build-up usually associated with theatrical drama. The introduction of more noise, more guns and sharp dialogue out of an American pulp novel might keep the audience laughing on the edge of their seats, but it doesn't make for lasting, quality theatre.

Theatre's tattered flag is still kept flying, however, by the efforts of some excellent writers and companies. Brian Friel and Tom Murphy are the country's leading established playwrights; neither is from Dublin although most of their work premieres here, often in the Gate Theatre. Rough Magic, one of the most successful independent companies of recent years, specialises in bringing new works to Ireland and new Irish writers to the stage, so the future may be very bright indeed for a bunch of new writers like Michael Collins, John Comiskey, Oonagh Kearney, Gina Moxley and Arthur Riordan. The present is also pretty shiny for the likes of Enda Walsh, author of *Disco Pigs* (1996) and *Bedbound* (2000), with the former made into a film starring Cillian Murphy. Mark O'Rowe, who presented an electrifying picture of gangland Dublin in his award-winning *Howie the Rookie* (1999) and followed it with *Made in China* (2001) and *Crestfall* (2003), is one of the very hot names in the contemporary scene, but he too has made the move into film writing, co-scripting the awful *Intermission* (2003); his latest play, *Terminus* (2007), was very well-received. Eugene O'Brien's excellent *Eden* (2001) was followed by the disappointing *Savoy* (2004), which reminded us a bit of *Cinema Paradiso*, only set in a provincial Irish town. O'Brien has since moved on to some questionable TV work.

The really exciting period for Dublin theatre is festival time, usually late September/early October. The main Dublin Theatre Festival attracts some worthy plays, but the superb fringe festival is also worth attending: it runs just before the bigger event and features some of the best work you'll see all year. For more information, see [p185](#).

CINEMA & TV

Cinema

Ireland's film-making tradition is pretty poor, largely because the British cinema industry drained much of its talent and creative energies and the Irish government pleaded poverty anytime a film-maker came looking for some development cash. Then, in 1993, the re-establishment of the Irish Film Board (after an abortive run from 1981) saw the government attempt to revive the dead with a two-pronged plan: inviting international film crews to make their movies here through generous tax incentives, the proceeds of which would hopefully stimulate local production.

Part one worked just fine: international crews came, took the cash and used the landscapes and towns of Ireland as film sets. Among others, the beaches of Wexford doubled as Normandy for *Saving Private Ryan* and Kilmainham Gaol starred as an English prison for *In the Name of the Father*... but part two of the plan has been a little more problematic.

RECOMMENDED VIEWING

About Adam (2000; Gerry Stembridge) Set in contemporary Dublin, a watchable tale that focuses on one man's ability to woo three sisters by appealing to what each woman wants in a man (apparently, sometimes more than a Dublin accent). It features local actor Stuart Townsend and US sensation Kate Hudson.

Adam and Paul (2004; Lenny Abrahamson) Mark O'Halloran and Tom Murphy put in compelling and convincing performances as two junkies from the inner-city projects desperate for a fix. It's funny, pithy and occasionally silly, but a great debut for Abrahamson nonetheless.

Dead Bodies (2003; Robert Quinn) A dark and stylish thriller set in contemporary Dublin against the backdrop of a general election. It's a terrific debut from the first-time director and features serial Irish bad guy Gerard McSorley among a terrific cast.

The Dead (1987; John Huston) Based on a short story from James Joyce's *Dubliners*, *The Dead* focuses on a dinner party in Dublin at the end of the 19th century and specifically the thoughts of one of the party goers. A difficult task for Huston in his last film, and he pulls it off with aplomb.

I Went Down (1997; Paddy Breathnach) A quirky comedy caper with two characters borrowed from Quentin Tarantino's rogues gallery, which works particularly well with the Irish humour and sensibility. It stars one of our favourite actors, Brendan Gleeson, and is Ireland's all-time highest grossing film.

The Snapper (1993; Stephen Frears) A made-for-TV movie about how a Dublin family copes when their daughter gets 'up the pole' and won't tell anyone who the father is. Our choice of the Barrytown trilogy, which also included *The Commitments* and *The Van*. Full of slang, humour and pathos, it is Dublin to the core and absolutely brilliant. Colm Meaney is outstanding as the father.

A Man of No Importance (1994; Suri Krishnamma) Stars the brilliant Albert Finney as a repressed bus conductor trying to come to terms with his own homosexuality in 1960s Dublin while at the same time staging an amateur production of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*. Melancholy and beautiful, it feels like a poem.

Inside I'm Dancing (2004; Damien O'Donnell) One of our favourite Irish films of the last decade is an uplifting yarn about a young man with cerebral palsy (played by Steven Robertson) whose institutionalised life is transformed by the arrival of the fast-talking, rebellious and fatally ill Rory (James McAvoy). Brenda Fricker is excellent as the formidable Eileen, a Nurse Ratchett-type character.

The Magdalene Sisters (2002; Peter Mullan) A confronting and uncompromising film based on the true story of four young 'sinners' who were sent to one of the infamous Magdalene asylums in Dublin in the 1960s, where they suffered abuse by the nuns who ran the place (instances of inhumanity still being investigated by the state). It's as moving as it is bleak.

The General (1998; John Boorman) A portrayal of Ireland's most notorious and enigmatic crime boss who, during the early 1990s when he was the pinnacle of gangland Dublin, was seen as much as a folk hero as a thug. Brendan Gleeson turns in a terrific performance, but the film tries far too hard to be funny.

Michael Collins (1996; Neil Jordan) This biopic of the man who delivered Irish independence and was assassinated during the 1922 civil war is an epic tale and a great film with pride and passion. The only downside is Jordan's shameful revision of history, specifically his portrayal of Eamon de Valera as a weak and pathetic collaborator in Collins' murder.

My Left Foot (1989; Jim Sheridan) The best film made in and about Dublin in modern history. Based on the life story of Christy Brown, an Irish writer/artist with cerebral palsy, this stirring and triumphant film is made by the astonishing performance of Daniel Day-Lewis, who didn't leave his character on set for the duration of the shoot, even forcing crew to carry him around.

When Brendan Met Trudy (2001; Kieron Walsh) A likable, light-hearted romance based in Dublin that apes scenes from old movies (there's a due in the title) to add an extra layer for anyone who feels stifled by the superficiality of a feel-good flick.

Ireland has worked hard to cast off that ridiculous 'Oirland' identity so beloved of Hollywood's plastic paddies – watch *The Quiet Man* (1952) and you'll get the picture – but the local film industry is under huge pressure to come up with the goods, and in film, the 'goods' means a commercial success. Exit the creative space to make really insightful films about a host of Irish subjects, enter the themed film designed to make a commercial splash in Britain and the US.

THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT DUBLIN

That little Oscar statuette that reduces spoiled millionaire actors to floods of tears was actually designed by a Dublin-born art director, Cedric Gibbons, who took up a job as supervising art director for MGM in 1924. Over the next 32 years he worked on 1500 films and was nominated for his own statuette 37 times, winning it on 11 occasions.

Boxer (1997), but he followed up with his tepid and far too 'oirish' *In America* (2002), a semi-autobiographical film that was strictly for plastic paddy consumption. Neil Jordan, however, is unquestionably a major talent, having thrilled us with a diverse selection of films that began with the excellent *Angel* (1982), continued with the weird and wonderful *The Company of Wolves* (1983), the just brilliant *Mona Lisa* (1986) and *The Crying Game* (1992), the blockbuster biopic *Michael Collins* (1996), the already mentioned *Butcher Boy* and, more recently, *The End of the Affair* (1999) and the vastly under-rated *The Good Thief* (2002). In 2007 he brought us the thriller *The Brave One* starring Jodie Foster and was working on a film version of the horror novel *Heart-Shaped Box*.

New directors include the impossibly-young-but-well-connected Kristen Sheridan (born 1977), daughter of Jim and director of *Disco Pigs*. Another bright talent is Damien O'Donnell, who debuted with *East is East* (1999) and went from strength to strength with *Heartlands* (2002) and the outstanding Irish film of 2004, *Inside I'm Dancing*. That same year saw the release of *Adam and Paul*, written by Mark O'Hallorahan and directed by Lenny Abrahamson, a half-decent portrayal of two Dublin junkies and their quixotic quest for a fix. It was a roaring success at the Irish box office.

As far as actors are concerned, Ireland – and Dublin – have been pouring them out for years. Hot on the heels of such luminaries as Liam Neeson (*Schindler's List*, *Star Wars* etc), Gabriel Byrne (*Miller's Crossing*, *The Usual Suspects*), Stephen Rea (*The Crying Game*, *The End of the Affair*) and the Oscar-winning Daniel Day-Lewis and Brenda Fricker (both for *My Left Foot*) are the late-arriving but always excellent Brendan Gleeson, the very handsome Cillian Murphy and the bad boy himself, Colin Farrell, whose lifestyle and bad movie choices has seriously threatened to derail a movie career that once promised so much.

On an up note, director John Carney turned Hollywood heads with the awfully lovely *Once* (2006), starring The Frames front man Glen Hansard (in his first film role since *The Commitments*) and Czech newcomer Markéta Irglová. Set in Dublin, it's a love story between a busker and a young immigrant. The soundtrack, performed by Hansard and Irglová, is excellent.

TV

Irish TV is small fry, it always has been. It lacks the funding and the audience available to behemoths like the BBC. But – and this is a huge but – compared to that of most other European countries it is actually good. Critics lambast it for being parochial and conservative, but most Irish are pretty pleased that their national station hasn't gone down the road of endless variety shows featuring semi-clad wannabe starlets and really crap humour.

Instead, RTE plods along with a homemade drama, a farming programme or a series exploring the importance of faith in the modern world. Ireland is a small country with a culture in flux, and while RTE may not be leading the charge into the world of tomorrow it is careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Hold on a minute, say the critics, what about the Angelus? Turn on the TV at 6pm (or the radio at noon or 6pm) and you will hear Ireland's very own call to prayer, 18 sombre hits of a church bell. The Angelus has been broadcast every day since radio and TV began in Ireland. It is undoubtedly out of step with the fast-paced change overcoming Irish society, but what's so wrong with stopping for a minute to ponder something deeper than the price of petrol or whether the light blue goes well with the off-white?

Favourite themes include Mad 'n' Quirky – *The Butcher Boy* (1997) and *Disco Pigs* (2001); Smart-arse Gangsters – *I Went Down* (1997) and *Intermission* (2003); and Cutsy Formulaic Love Story – *When Brendan Met Trudy* (2001). Never mind the Irish Welles or Fellini, where's the local equivalent of Loach, Leigh or Winterbottom?

The film board may wince and then point us in the direction of Neil Jordan and Jim Sheridan. Jim Sheridan has reeled off a series of well-made hits, including *The Field* (1989), *In the Name of the Father* (1993) and *The*

RTE's strength is in its news and current affairs programming – it's thorough, insightful and often hard-hitting. Programmes like *Today Tonight*, *Questions and Answers* and *Prime Time* are as good as, or better than, anything you'll see elsewhere in the world; the reporting treats the audience like mature responsible adults who don't need issues dumbed down or simplified.

Where RTE falls way short is in drama. Its most popular programme is the long-running soap *Fair City*, which depicts working-class life in Dublin and is known locally as 'Fairly Shitty'. The national broadcaster is also home to the world's longest-running chat show, the *Late Late Show* (Friday 9.30pm), which began in 1962 and is still going meekly along under the terribly wooden guidance of its host Pat Kenny, who replaced the inimitable Gay Byrne in 1999. If you're watching it during your visit to Dublin you've made a mistake in planning your Friday night.

Anyhow, Dublin viewers have seen their viewing choices multiply in recent years; not only have all the major English TV stations turned up on their dials, but the arrival of digital TV in many homes and most hotels has meant that you can watch old reruns of crap 1970s American sitcoms at any time of the day or night.

The following are the four main Irish channels:

RTE 1 Ireland's main station, with a pretty standard mix of programmes, from news, current affairs and sports programmes to variety shows, soap operas and movies.

RTE 2 The second state-controlled channel generally has lighter programmes.

TG4 A mostly Irish-language station (most programmes have English subtitles) that also offers a terrific selection of English-language movies and sport (try watching a Spanish league match with an Irish commentary).

TV3 An independent channel with a strictly lightweight programming philosophy; it does show the odd good film though.

PAINTING & VISUAL ARTS

Although they started off brilliantly – think of the gold and bronze works in the National Museum and the *Book of Kells* – Irish artists never really delivered on their early promise, and in recent decades, the country has been more famous for its art heists than artists. Russborough House in County Wicklow has been robbed four times since 1974, with Vermeer, Goya and Gainsborough all among the targets.

Beyond one impressionist who settled and died in Dublin, Jack B Yeats, and the surrealist Francis Bacon, who wanted nothing to do with the city after he left it aged 16, Dublin has contributed little to the world of art. Or perhaps it just seems little compared to its other artistic endeavours.

But even this apparent cultural fallibility has been revised in recent years with 20th-century Irish art more than tripling in value since 1990. While it was probably underrated beforehand, this revaluation no doubt has more to do with the wealth of Irish collectors, their rediscovery of indigenous art and their hunger for a piece of heritage.

FRANCIS BACON

Dubliners like to tell you that Francis Bacon, the foremost British painter of his generation, was actually Irish, although it's a pretty tenuous claim to call him one of their own.

Born in Dublin – of English parentage – in 1909, Bacon was thrown out of home at the age of 16 when his parents discovered he was actively homosexual. In the great Irish artistic tradition, Bacon split as soon as he could and turned his back on his narrow-minded home town forever, pointedly denying his roots thereafter. He flitted about Berlin and Paris before settling in London in 1928, where he developed his distinctive, distorted, violent and utterly captivating style.

Critics dismissed him as a warped caricaturist, and it is true that his best-known works are distortions of other painters' creations – Velázquez' *Portrait of Innocent X* became Bacon's most celebrated series *The Screaming Popes* (1949–55) – but there is no denying his extraordinary ability to paint isolation, pain and suffering, major themes of post-WWII iconography and of homosexuality in repressed times.

His notoriously debauched lifestyle was nearly as well publicised as his genius. Although remarkably productive, he destroyed many of his canvases and relatively little of his work survives. Precious little is on display in Dublin – no doubt the way he would have wanted it – although the [Hugh Lane Gallery \(p101\)](#) did acquire the contents of the London studio where Bacon worked for three decades until his death in 1992. It has been faithfully reconstructed here in perhaps the most oddly compelling art exhibit in Dublin.

top picks

GALLERIES

- National Gallery (p79)
- Dublin City Gallery – The Hugh Lane (p101)
- RHA Gallagher Gallery (p83)
- Douglas Hyde Gallery (p70)
- Temple Bar Gallery & Studios (p86)

Dutch genius's revolution and matched his vibrant, exuberant and extraordinary strokes. He too was drawn to France, but never returned to his homeland. Dublin-born William Orpen (1878–1931) became well known for his depictions of Irish life – his *Portrait of Gardenia St George with Riding Crop* (1912) once held the distinction of being the most expensive Irish painting ever sold at auction, fetching £1.8 million. That was until 2005, when he was posthumously beaten into second place by *The Bridge at Grez* (1883) by Belfast-born John Lavery (1856–1941), which sold for £2.18 million.

The most original and famous of the Irish painters was Jack B Yeats (1871–1957), the first impressionist painter from the British Isles. Like his big brother, poet WB, Jack was a champion of the Celtic Revival Movement. He mastered a range of painting techniques but is best known for setting down thick and broad strokes of pigment in a bold and gutsy spin on impressionism. This style provided a self-confident art form for the newly independent Ireland, created after the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922. The characters he drew were often strong, isolated and solitary – and every stroke seems to reveal his deep love for all things Irish. The National Gallery has a specific gallery devoted to his work, and a visit here should be one of the highlights of your trip to Dublin. Among our favourites are *The Liffey Swim* (1923), *Returning to the Shore* (1948) and *The Singing Horseman* (1949).

Most modern Irish artists turned their backs on the nationalism that so defined the work of Yeats. The abstract painters Mainie Jellett (1896–1943) and Evie Hone (1894–1955) are considered two of the greatest innovators of modern Irish art. The self-taught Louis le Brocqy (1916–) is one of the foremost Irish painters of the 20th century and, while his works aren't necessarily innovative (they borrow heavily from Picasso, Manet and others), they are unique in their Irishness. He is most famous for his depictions of the travelling community in the 1940s in a series known as the *Tinker Paintings*.

Today Dublin is at the forefront of a new Irish artistic revolution that has seen a fundamental transformation in the infrastructure and culture of visual arts. There is now a thriving network of part-funded and fully commercial galleries in the city, and a buoyant, dynamic local scene. Local artists to look out for include the Corkonian Dorothy Cross, whose work is exhibited in both the Irish Museum of Modern Art (p96) and the Dublin City Gallery (p101); video artist James Coleman; Shane Cullen, who carved the 11,500 words of the 1998 Anglo-Irish Good Friday Agreement in his vast sculptural work *The Agreement* (2002); and Grace Weir, whose multimedia work is both beautiful and challenging.

However, despite the submissions of both Cross and Weir, the biggest commission in recent years has gone to English artist Antony Gormley (of Angel of the North fame), who won a competition for a new piece of art to adorn the Docklands area. At some point in the next couple of years, the Dublin skyline will include a 48m metal frame depicting a standing figure. The sketches suggest a powerful piece in keeping with Gormley's deeply humanistic work; critics have already lambasted the piece as being outrageously out of scale.

The National Gallery (p79) has an extensive Irish School collection, much of it chronicling the personages and pursuits of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. Garrett Murphy (1680–1716) and James Latham (1696–1747) were respected portrait painters of their day. Nathaniel Hone (1831–1917), an important 19th-century landscape artist, was born in Ireland and returned to Dublin after a lengthy stint working in France.

Roderic O'Connor (1861–1940) was the first Irish painter to make a splash. He was dubbed the Irish Van Gogh because he grasped the

contemporary crop includes Dylan Moran and his one-time school classmate Tommy Tiernan, who have both gone on to great international success. Deirdre O'Kane has been making audiences laugh for years, while the recently arrived Maeve Higgins is another in a new brood of comics worth paying the admission price to see. Irish-American Des Bishop, PJ Gallagher and Jason Byrne, who has sold more tickets at the Edinburgh Festival in recent years than any other comedian, are all popular names, but our favourite of all is unquestionably Dara O'Briain, Ireland's very own Jerry Seinfeld and now a mainstay of British TV comedy panel shows like *Have I Got News For You*.

COMEDY

The Irish are renowned for being funny, which is hardly surprising considering that this is a nation that has regularly dealt with its difficulties and crippled emotions with the greatest defence mechanism of them all: humour. Self-deprecating but always brilliantly observed wit is a strong suit of the great Irish comic; crap, I-drank-so-much-last-night-I-complimented-my-mother-in-law jokes are the choice of every other halfwit who thinks being Irish automatically entitles them to a sense of humour. Sadly, there are far too many of the latter.

The former are fewer in number and, mostly, living in England, as Ireland is sadly too small to support their talents. Of the recent greats, our highly subjective list of the capital's comedy talents include the greatest storyteller of them all, Dave Allen, who sadly left us in 2005; the pioneering stand-up of Sean Hughes; and the greatest Irish satirist of the modern age, Dermot Morgan, who followed his brilliant political radio sketch show *Scrap Saturday* with his unforgettable role as *Father Ted*.

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DANCE

There's good and bad news. Yes, *Riverdance* and its various mutations like Lord of the Tight Pants are still going strong, stomping their way around the world, but the *good* news is that you're far less likely to be bombarded with the hand-by-the-sides phenomenon in Dublin than just about anywhere else in the world. Now don't get us wrong. We've got nothing against the sexing up of Irish dancing – there's nowt wrong with a little quick-step pizzazz – but *Riverdance* and its spin-offs are the dancing equivalent of boy bands. Take a bite, have a chew and move on.

Broadway hits and multiple international touring companies are a far cry from the dusty halls of rural Ireland where the tradition of Irish dancing was preserved on life support throughout the last century. Formerly the dancing was only performed at *céilidhs* and accompanied by traditional bands with musicians in green waistcoats. The etiquette was rigidly strict, fun was discouraged, and it seemed like most of the dancers were there under duress rather than to celebrate a tradition that has been around in some form since at least the 16th century. But not any more. Since *Riverdance*, the roots of Irish dancing have been given a good soaking and the tradition is blossoming once again. While still true to the jigs and reels of its past, the dancing has evolved into something more tribal, vital and – we can still hardly believe it – sexy.

Up until fairly recently, Irish dancing was virtually the only dancing in Ireland, although this is no longer the case: Dublin has become a destination for touring companies, while city venues are putting on their own shows and local companies creating their own.

ARCHITECTURE

Dublin raced into the third millennium with most of its finest architecture intact and with a rate of development not seen since the height of its Georgian heyday, when the city was regarded as one of the finest in Europe. Most of the public architecture to rise out of the booming town has generated a wonderful sense of energy and adventure about renaissance Dublin. Of course some mistakes have been made in the mad recent rush to build, but Dubliners have learned from them and are more architecturally savvy these days. They demand higher standards of design for their most deserving city and local authorities haven't let them down.

Although there's been a lull in activity in the last couple of years, it's a good opportunity for planners to take stock and refocus on the old problems, such as housing and transport.

THE LAST SUPPER

One of our favourite works of art is John Byrne's *Last Supper* (2004), on public display along a wall in the Quartier Bloom, by Caffé Cagliostro. This visually striking piece is a re-interpretation of Da Vinci's masterpiece – with a contemporary Irish twist. In an effort to reflect the changing face and growing cultural mix of Irish society, Byrne has cast two women: an East African and, in the role of Jesus, a Sikh studying at Trinity College.

MEDIEVAL DUBLIN

For architectural evidence of the pre-Norman settlers you will have to look further afield than the capital, which has been rebuilt far too many times, often in spite of the wealth of historical residue below ground. Treatment of the remains of Viking Dublin found at Wood Quay during the laying of the foundations for two massive modern buildings for the Dublin Corporation was one of the biggest crimes against culture and heritage perpetrated by the Irish State (see the boxed text, [p50](#)). Dublin's tangled history has left very few survivors, even from Norman days, and what is left is either fragmentary or has been heavily reconstructed. The imposing Dublin Castle ([p74](#)) – or the complex of buildings that are known as Dublin Castle – bears little resemblance to the fortress that was erected by the Anglo-Normans at the beginning of the 13th century and more to the neoclassical style of the 17th century. However, there are some fascinating glimpses of the lower reaches of the original, which you can visit on a tour.

Although the 12th-century cathedrals of Christ Church ([p94](#)) and St Patrick's ([p90](#)) were heavily rebuilt in Victorian times, there are some original features, including the crypt in Christ Church, which has a 12th-century Romanesque door. The older of the two St Audoen's Churches ([p97](#)) dates from 1190 and it too has a few Norman odds and ends, including a late-12th-century doorway.

ANGLO-DUTCH PERIOD

After the restoration of Charles II in 1660, Dublin embarked upon almost a century and a half of unparalleled growth as the city raced to become the second most important in the British empire. The grandest example of 17th-century architecture, and indeed Dublin's first classical building, is the hugely impressive Royal Hospital Kilmainham (1680; [p96](#)), which was designed by William Robinson as a home for invalid soldiers. Comprising a vast, cobbled courtyard in the centre of a quadrangular building with arcades, it was given a stunning makeover in the 1980s and now houses the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA).

Similar in stature – and now also in shape, size and function – the Royal Barracks (Collins Barracks; 1701; [p105](#)) was built by Thomas Burgh as the first purpose-designed military barracks in Europe. The awesome square could accommodate six regiments, and the barracks was the oldest to remain in use until the National Museum commandeered the premises to stock its decorative arts.

Robinson moved from the mammoth to the miniature when he built the enchanting Marsh's Library (1701; [p93](#)), which was the first public library in Ireland and has remained virtually untouched.

GEORGIAN DUBLIN

Dublin's architectural apogee can roughly be placed in the period spanning the rule of the four English Georges, between the accession of George I in 1714 and the death of George IV in 1830. The greatest influence on the shape of modern Dublin throughout this period was the Wide Street Commissioners, appointed in 1757 and responsible for designing civic spaces and the framework of the modern city. Their efforts were complemented by Dublin's Anglo-Irish Protestant gentry who, flush with unprecedented wealth, dedicated themselves wholeheartedly towards improving their city.

Their inspiration was the work of the Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1508–80), who revived the symmetry and harmony of classical architecture. When the Palladian style

reached these shores in the 1720s, the architects of the time tweaked it and introduced a number of, let's call them, 'refinements'. Most obvious were the elegant brick exteriors and decorative touches, such as coloured doors, fanlights and ironwork, which broke the sometimes austere uniformity of the fashion. Consequently, Dublin came to be known for its 'Georgian style'.

The architect credited with the introduction of this style to Dublin's cityscape was Sir Edward Lovett Pearce (1699–1733), who first arrived in Dublin in 1725 and turned heads with the building of Parliament House (Bank of Ireland; 1728–39; [p73](#)). It was the first two-chamber debating house in the world and the main chamber, the House of Commons, is topped by a massive pantheon-style dome.

Pearce also created the blueprint for the city's Georgian town houses, the most distinguishing architectural feature of Dublin. The local version typically consists of four storeys, including the basement, with symmetrically arranged windows and an imposing, often brightly painted front door. Granite steps lead up to the door, which is often further embellished with a delicate leaded fanlight. The most celebrated examples are on the south side of the city, particularly around Merrion and Fitzwilliam Sqs ([Map pp78–9](#)), but the north side also has some magnificent streets, including North Great George's and Henrietta Sts ([Map pp102–3](#)). The latter features two of Pearce's originals (at Nos 9 and 10) and is still Dublin's most unified Georgian street. Mountjoy Sq ([Map pp102–3](#)), the most elegant address in 18th-century Dublin, is currently being renewed after a century of neglect.

German architect Richard Cassels (Richard Castle; 1690–1751) hit town in 1728. While his most impressive country houses are outside Dublin, he did design Nos 85 and 86 St Stephen's Green (1738), which were combined in the 19th century and renamed Newman House ([p73](#)), and No 80 (1736), which was later joined with No 81 to create Iveagh House, now the Department of Foreign Affairs; you can visit the peaceful gardens ([p75](#)) there still. The Rotunda Hospital (1748; [p111](#)), which closes off the top of O'Connell St, is also one of Cassels' works. As splendid as these buildings are, it seems he was only warming up for Leinster House (1745–48; [p82](#)), the magnificent country residence built on what was then the countryside, now the centre of government.

Dublin's boom attracted such notable architects as the Swedish-born Sir William Chambers (1723–96), who designed some of Dublin's most impressive buildings, though he never actually bothered to visit the city. It was the north side of the Liffey that benefited most from Chambers' genius: the chaste and elegant Charlemont House (Hugh Lane Gallery; 1763; [p101](#)) lords over Parnell Sq, while the Casino at Marino (1755–79; [p119](#)) is his most stunning and bewitching work.

Across the river, Chambers designed the Examination Hall (1779–91; [p70](#)) and the Chapel (1798; [p68](#)), which flank the elegant 18th-century quadrangle of Trinity College, known as Parliament Sq. However, Trinity College's most magnificent feature, the old Library Building, with its breathtaking Long Room (1712; [p69](#)), had already been designed by Thomas Burgh.

It was towards the end of the 18th century that Dublin's developers really kicked into gear, when the power and confidence of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy seemed boundless. Of several great architects of the time, James Gandon (1743–1823) stood out, and he built two of Dublin's most enduring and elegant neoclassical landmarks, Custom House (1781–91; [p107](#)) and the Four Courts (1786–1802; [p106](#)). They were both built on the quays to afford plenty of space in which to admire them.

Gandon's greatest rival was Thomas Cooley (1740–84), who died too young to reach his full potential. His greatest building, the Royal Exchange (City Hall; 1779; [p76](#)), was butchered to provide office space in the mid-19th century, but returned to its breathtaking splendour in a stunning 2000 restoration.

DESIGNS ON DUBLIN

There are two terrific websites that enable you to keep an eye on Dublin's development. [Reflecting City](#) (www.reflectingcity.com) offers virtual tours of all the major urban renewal areas, while [Archeire](#) (www.irish-architecture.com) is a comprehensive site covering all things to do with Irish architecture and design. If you want something in book form, look no further than Christine Casey's superb *The Buildings of Ireland: Dublin* (2005; Yale University Press), which goes through the city literally street by street.

GEORGIAN PLASTERERS

The handsome exteriors of Dublin's finest Georgian houses are often matched by superbly crafted plasterwork within. The fine work of Michael Stapleton (1770–1803) can be seen in [Trinity College](#) ([p64](#)), [Ely House](#) ([Map pp78–9](#)) near St Stephen's Green, and [Belvedere House](#) ([p111](#)) in north Dublin. The LaFranchini brothers, Paolo (1693–1770) and Filippo (1702–79), are responsible for the outstanding decoration in Newman House on [St Stephen's Green](#) ([p73](#)). But perhaps Dublin's most famous plastered surfaces are in the chapel at the heart of the [Rotunda Hospital](#) ([p111](#)). Although hospitals are never the most pleasant places to visit, it's worth it for the German stuccodore, Bartholomew Cramillon's fantastic rococo plasterwork.

REGENCY & VICTORIAN

There is precious little 19th-century Dublin architecture, which is a reflection of the city's sharp decline during the period. Francis Johnston (1760–1829) was unfortunate to miss out on the boom, which ended with the Act of Union in 1801. His most famous building is the General Post Office (GPO; 1814; [p107](#)) on O'Connell St, although he's also well known for something he didn't do. When Parliament House was sold in 1803, on the proviso that it could never again be used for political assembly, Johnston was hired to adapt the building and he managed to surreptitiously maintain the architectural integrity of the House of Lords, a piece of history which you can now tour ([p74](#)). Cheers, Frank.

A rare Victorian highlight is the stunning series of curvilinear glasshouses in the National Botanic Gardens ([p119](#)), which were designed mid-century by the Dublin iron-master Richard Turner (1798–1881) and restored in 1995.

After Catholic Emancipation in 1829, there was a wave of church building, and later the two great Protestant cathedrals of Christ Church ([p94](#)) and St Patrick's ([p90](#)) were reconstructed. In a space between two Georgian houses on St Stephen's Green, Cardinal Newman commissioned his professor of fine arts at Newman University, John Hungerford Pollen (1820–1902), to create the splendidly ornate and incongruous Newman University Church (1856; [p73](#)), which was done in a Byzantine style simply because the cardinal was none too keen on the Gothic that was all the rage at the time.

Most public funds from the mid-18th to late 20th century were spent on providing sanitation and housing, and for the most part Dublin's architecture and infrastructure deteriorated. Perhaps a reflection on where priorities lay during this time, one of the best examples of high-Victorian architecture – and the one we've seen most of – is the magnificent Stag's Head pub (1895; [p166](#)) on Dame Ct, which has a dazzling interior of panelling, arcing, mirrors and stained glass.

MODERN ARCHITECTURE

The beginning of the 20th century was more about destroying notable buildings than erecting them; the GPO, Custom House and Four Courts all became collateral damage in Ireland's rocky road to independence.

As an exception, one of Dublin's most majestic constructions, and the last great British building here, the Royal College of Science (1904–22, [p82](#)) was actually completed after independence. It was massively and lavishly refurbished in the late 1980s to become the Government Buildings, and was dubbed 'Taj MaHaughey' after the controversial Taoiseach of the time.

The Dublin Airport terminal (1940; [p228](#)) was built by a consortium of architects and comprises a curved, Art Deco building that embraces incoming passengers. But it wasn't until the bus sta-

SAMPLING SAM STEPHENSON

One of the architects who designed the Electrical Supply Board (ESB) offices that broke up Dublin's 'Georgian Mile' – and a name synonymous with the 'rape of the city' in the 1970s and '80s – was Sam Stephenson. To be fair, he owes much of his notoriety to being in the right place (*in* with the government) at the wrong time (a government that happened to be more than a little dodgy). His two most infamous buildings are the [Central Bank of Ireland](#) (1975; [Map p85](#)) and the [Dublin Corporation Offices](#) (Phase I, 1976; [Map pp90–1](#)) at Wood Quay, neither of which he was allowed to complete for various reasons.

The Central Bank of Ireland is a bold geometric presence towering over today's Temple Bar. Although innovatively designed, its brutal bulkiness was controversially at odds with the low-rise old city it occupied. Furthermore, the building was left incomplete because brazen project managers exceeded the height limit and the roof had to be removed.

Even more vilified were the Dublin Corporation Offices he designed for Wood Quay. His original plan was for four squat towers descending towards the river and linked by a glass atrium but, not long after construction began, the remains of the Viking city were discovered, and so began several years of hurried excavations, court cases and much palaver. The corporation eventually went ahead with its plans – the archaeological treasure was sealed and the bunkers built – but bottled out halfway through and, compounding the damage, only completed half the plan. In the mid-1990s an extension was added to the original building, which proved popular among the public and critics alike. It's certainly easier on the eye, although we think it looks a bit like a camel.

tion, Busáras (1953; [Map pp102–3](#)), that modernity really began to express itself in Dublin – amid howls of protest from a population unimpressed with its expense and stark appearance. It was designed by the influential Michael Scott, and is noteworthy for its pioneering glass façades and wave canopy roof. Locals still love it and loathe it in equal measure, but you have to admire its vigour and personality. A major revamp, mostly internal, was completed in 2004.

The tallest most denigrated structure – for now, at least – is the shamefully shabby Liberty Hall (1965; [Map pp102–3](#)) on the quays; *this* is probably why the city has dragged its heels on skyscrapers. Paul Koralek's bold and brazen Berkeley Library (1967; [p70](#)), in the grounds of Trinity College, is the most interesting construct to come out of 1960s Dublin.

The poorly regulated building boom of succeeding decades paid no attention to the country's architectural heritage and destroyed more than it created. There were no noble causes to blame this time around, just sheer stupidity. The most notorious case of cultural vandalism occurred in 1970 when the state-owned Electricity Supply Board (ESB) demolished 16 Georgian houses on Lower Fitzwilliam St to build its headquarters, breaking a unique, mile-long Georgian streetscape. Adding insult to injury, after just 30-odd years, the company is in the process of selling the building and shifting out to the suburbs.

The 1980s were a miserable time to be in Dublin; the city was in the jaws of a depression and seemed to be disintegrating into 100 shades of grey. The Temple Bar area was being left to waste away and, according to Frank McDonald, environment correspondent of the *Irish Times*, there wasn't a single private apartment available for sale in the centre of Dublin. In 2004 there were some 15,000 apartments and the city is *still* one of the lowest density capitals in Europe, although there is currently a commitment to more high density housing such as sky-rises and larger apartment blocks.

BOOM TOWN

Ireland's explosive growth during the 1990s was mostly focused on its capital, where the tower cranes punched the sky triumphantly. Naturally enough, considering the breakneck speed of the developments, some opportunities were wasted. Near Custom House, the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC; [Map pp102–3](#)), while mostly completed around the turn of the century, was conceived back in the late 1980s when Dublin was still desperate to appear modern. It is huge, sparkles and is remarkably unremarkable. The most interesting feature of the complex known as 'Canary Dwarf' – a cylindrical timber-clad apartment block – is hidden away in the heart of the behemoth.

More successful developments around Dublin include the Waterways Visitor Centre (1994; [p100](#)), which is colloquially known as the 'box in the docks' because the steel-framed, white-panelled structure appears to float. The Millennium Wing (2001; [p79](#)) of the National Gallery is a superb example of civic architecture and has a compelling, sculpted Portland stone façade and a tall, light-filled atrium.

Another terrific civic development is the Boardwalk (2001; [Map p85](#)), a 650m promenade along the Liffey, which complements the new bridges, makes a feature of the river, and provides a pleasant, occasionally even sunny, stroll away from the noise and traffic fumes of the northern quays.

Entire areas have been earmarked for redevelopment, creating different centres around the city. One of the most ambitious is taking place around the previously dilapidated Smithfield market area, which now has a stunning plaza (2000) and an old chimney converted into an observation tower ([p110](#)), offering fabulous views of historic Dublin. Flanking the square are a series of lofty lighting masts topped by gas braziers, which evoke a sense of the area's medieval past.

Another area being given a major makeover is the Grand Canal Docks ([Map pp78–9](#)), where historic warehouses are being restored and massive new residential and recreational development is underway. It is already the site of the striking 16-floor Charlotte Quay Apartments (1998), the tallest residential building in the country. The U2 Tower ([Map pp78–9](#)) – so-called because the band's recording studio will occupy the top two floors – is a wild-looking, 60m, twisted high-rise block that was slated for completion in 2007; planning snafues have meant that the plan is still wrapped up in red tape.

And the Grand Canal Docks is going to get fancier. Although it's still at the design stage, the centrepiece of the whole area will be a 2000-seat Performing Arts Centre designed by the world's hottest architect, Daniel Libeskind. The centre will be complemented by a new five-star

NIAMH KIERNAN, ARCHITECT

The development of Dublin continues at a pace unknown since Georgian times, and not surprisingly the city's future appearance is of major concern to most people, not least the capital's very own architects. Niamh Kiernan understands the concerns of the critics who feel that the developers are exclusively about turning a profit rather than doing what is best for the city's long-term future.

'Development has two major problems. It has been so incredibly fast that transport development has lagged seriously behind land-use development; and large sites in the city are often developed at the expense of the nature and the grain of the traditional urban block.'

But it isn't all development gloom. 'Developers and planners have become increasingly aware of the merits of the traditional European planning model of "living over the shop", using the grain, scale and nature of the urban block to instigate development. Some of the most successful urban development schemes using this model have been Quartier Bloom, Clarion Quay in the IFSC and the apartments along Cowes Lane in Temple Bar, where walking along these "inhabited" pedestrian routes is both interesting and a pleasure.'

We asked Niamh for her top five buildings or spaces in town:

- **Berkeley Library** (p70) I often try to walk through the internal courtyards of Trinity College: in wet weather there is an amazing light that bounces off the cobblestones, and this superb building by Paul Koralek is a timeless piece of architecture. I love the texture of the boarded concrete and the considered attention that the architects have given to detail.
- **George's St Arcade** (p135) They speak for themselves really. These are a collection of beautifully busy, richly decorated market buildings that have retained a wonderful sense of character and liveliness that is hard to equal elsewhere in the city.
- **Utility Building** (off Map pp62–3) This wonderful, award-winning building on Vernon Ave in Clontarf by Tom de Paor stops me in my tracks every time I pass it. The diamond shaped green copper cladding is so eye-catching.
- **Printworks** (Map p85) I love the depth of the building façade of this building in Temple Bar, designed by Group 91/Derek Tynan. It is a lovely element to the building as often we think of façades as two-dimensional elements only.
- **Wooden Building** (Map p85) The materiality of this building by de Blacam and Meaghar is wonderful. It is a very soft and interesting building set among the grey limestones and granites. It looks as though the entire timber façade wants to fold down to the ground.

hotel, the brand new Grand Canal Sq and an array of shops, bars, restaurants and cafés. Work has already been completed on the installation of imaginative streetscape features including lighting, cobbling, seating and trees along the restored quayside at Grand Canal Dock and Sir John Rogerson's Quay.

At last, all of the work on O'Connell St (Map pp102–3) has finally borne some fruit. Although not quite completed – the upper end of the street is still under wraps – the pavements are cleaner and wider, a pedestrianised plaza beneath the Spire (p109) has given Spanish students and junkies a whole new spot to hang out in, and traffic has been severely limited up and down the thoroughfare. Now if they could just get rid of those poxy fast-food joints...

Some of the most impressive works of recent times have been the superb restorations and redevelopments of wonderful buildings, such as the Royal Hospital Kilmainham (p96), Collins Barracks (p105), City Hall (p76) and Dublin Castle (p74).

The Guinness Brewery also commissioned a spectacular refit of its original Fermentation House (1904; p88), reputedly the first steel-framed, multistorey building in the British Isles – an undertaking that some years ago would instead have seen the building torn down but for the prohibitive costs of demolition. It now houses the Guinness Storehouse (visitor centre; 2001), which is designed around a pint-shaped atrium and topped with the circular, glass-panelled Gravity Bar where you have awesome panoramic views of the city (which you can see through the bottom of the glass when you've finished your complimentary pint).

And finally, the long-running debate about high-rises has been won... in favour of those who would build up rather than extend the low-rise urban sprawl that is eating its way into the countryside around the city. Besides the two towers already slated for construction in the Docklands area, permission has been given for a new tower block to go up next to Heuston Station, on the edge of Kilmainham (Map pp90–1). Paradoxically, the city's only older residential high-rises, the notorious 'seven towers' of U2's *Running to Stand Still* (from *The Joshua Tree*)

in the Ballymun neighbourhood of north Dublin, were finally demolished in 2004 and are being replaced by more modern, low-rise blocks of flats.

The slowdown in the growth of the economy has probably come at a good time for Dublin to take a breather, and for Dubliners to have another long, hard look at how their city is shaping up. Architectural integrity is a watchword these days, but only time will tell how well aesthetics and the needs of the burgeoning city are reconciled.

ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING

Though the city doesn't suffer the air pollution that chokes some other European capitals, James Joyce's 'dear, dirty Dublin' does have its fair share of environmental concerns. Chief among these are the woeful traffic congestion and urban sprawl that have emerged in the last decade – in fact, you can combine the two because it's the car-oriented sprawl into the countryside that is concerning planners most these days.

THE LAND

Dublin used to spread conveniently around the arc of Dublin Bay, but these days it's all over the place and the commuter belt has well and truly spilled over into neighbouring counties, poorly equipped to cope. Dubliners have been fleeing the exorbitant house prices and bursting through the former city boundaries. Ireland is one of the most car-dependent societies in the world and the vast majority of these commuters drive in and out of the city daily.

GREEN DUBLIN

The Green Party may be the junior coalition partners in the recently elected government, but the negotiations that brought them to the big table left much of their agenda outside the door. Dublin is becoming more environmentally responsible, but it is hardly leading the European charge – the European Environment Agency has rated the country's carbon footprint as 5.0 global hectares per person, more than double the global average.

The unparalleled construction boom of the last decade has resulted in a city that has sacrificed much of the green space it used to have to make way for myriad new housing developments that now crowd the city's suburban spaces. The resultant stress on the city's inadequate road system has created a major traffic crisis, with most of the city's arteries choked with pollution-emitting cars during most daylight hours.

Recycling is another major issue of concern, but the various local authorities have instituted a waste management plan that aims to achieve 59% recycling by 2010, with the remainder being disposed of by incineration (29%) and landfill (16%). By the end of 2006, there were 321 waste banks around the city – only 58 more than in 2003 – but most of these are small bring banks, still a far cry from the larger bring banks that allow you to dump all of your glassware, for instance, in one go.

One real plus has been the high-tech waste-water treatment centre that opened in 2003 and has already improved the water quality in Dublin Bay. But Dublin residents are still perplexed as to why their tap water, once as drinkable and tasty as any sporting a fancy French label, still tastes like a metallic mixture.

Check out the Sustainable Dublin section (p20) for how green policies and issues affect you; for other city-related waste info, you can go online to www.dublinwaste.ie.

URBAN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

After what seemed like a decade of talking and coming up with excuses, efforts have now been made to alleviate congestion and coax commuters onto public transport. The Luas light-rail system is a major step in the right direction, but plenty more are needed, not least a massive expansion of the system so that far more commuters can take advantage of it. In the meantime, the problems it was supposed to solve have already broadened along with the size of the metropolitan area – it's not uncommon for people to commute up to 80km to and from work these days.

But there are fears that the planners are never going to catch up with the problems. Ireland is far and away the fastest expanding country in the EU and the population grew by a staggering 8% from 1996 to 2002. At this rate, Dublin will be home to 2.2 million and half the country's population by 2020.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

The Irish political system is a parliamentary democracy, and virtually all national political sway rests with a government comprising of a cabinet of 14 all-powerful ministers. Whatever the government decides is approved by the Dáil (Irish parliament), which is dominated by the government. An appointed 'whip' ensures that everyone in the ruling party toes the party line when it comes to voting. The current Taoiseach (prime minister) and Tanaiste (vice prime minister) are Bertie Ahern and Mary Harney, leaders of the ruling Fianna Fáil and junior Progressive Democrats (PDs) parties, respectively.

The Republic's electoral system is proportional representation (PR), where voters mark the candidates in order of preference. Elections must take place at least once every five years. Bertie went to the polls in May 2007 and came away a winner yet again, making him the longest-serving taoiseach in the history of the state, albeit in a coalition.

Irish politics, and society at large, is largely homogenous and voters are mostly influenced by local issues and personalities rather than ideologies or national policies. You can hardly see light between the positions of the major parties and it's not unusual for supposedly left- and right-leaning parties to cosy up together to form government.

The centre-right Fianna Fáil party has a solid base of around 40% of the electorate and has dominated politics for most of the last 75 years. The second-biggest party is Fine Gael. These two parties are direct descendants, respectively, of the anti-Treaty and pro-Treaty sides in the Civil War.

The most important socialist party is centre-left Labour, which didn't fare too well in the smash-and-grab boom of the 1990s. Next up is the staunchly capitalist – further-than-centre-right – Progressive Democrats, who were decimated at the 2007 elections, losing six of eight seats, but still managed to stay in government. Next up is Fianna Fáil's newest coalition partner, the Green Party, which shed its socks-and-sandals image – along with most of its agenda – in an effort to win power. Sinn Féin, the political wing of the now-decommissioned IRA, promotes itself as the party for all the disenfranchised and currently has five TDs (deputies) – each of its TDs donates two-thirds of their parliamentary salary (€96,650) to the party.

The constitutional head of state is the president (An tUachtarán), elected by popular vote for a seven-year term. While this position has little real power, the largely apolitical (at least in an Irish party sense) Mary Robinson wielded considerable informal influence over social policies when she was elected in 1990. She was succeeded by the more low-key, although equally ballsy, Mary McAleese, a Belfast-born Catholic nationalist who was re-elected unopposed in 2004.

At local level, Dublin is mainly governed by two elected bodies: Dublin City Council and Dublin County Council. The city version used to be known as Dublin Corporation (the Corpo), a name synonymous with inefficiency and incompetence, but the new incarnation is a progressive and admired local government. Each year, it elects a Lord Mayor who shifts into the Mansion House, speaks out on matters to do with the city and is lucky if half of Dublin knows his or her name by the time they have to hand back the chains.

IN TERMS OF IRISH POLITICS

An tUachtarán (awn uk-ta-rawn) – president

Dáil (dawl) – Lower House

Oireachtas na Éireann (ow-rowktus na hair-in) – Irish parliament

Tanaiste (taw-nashta) – vice prime minister

Taoiseach (tea-shok) – prime minister

Teachta Dalai (tee-ochta dawl-lee) – deputies, members of parliament; also known as TDs

MEDIA

Five national dailies, six national Sundays, stacks of Irish editions of British publications, hundreds of magazines, more than a dozen radio stations, four terrestrial TV stations and more digital channels than you could shake

the remote control at... No, not New York, we're talking about Dublin, a city with a reach of just 1.5 million people.

The dominant local player is Independent News & Media, owned by Ireland's primo businessman, Tony O'Reilly. Its newspapers – the *Irish Independent*, *Sunday Independent* and *Evening Herald* – are by far the biggest sellers in each market. See [p238](#) for details of Dublin-based newspapers and magazines.

The massive overspill of British media here, particularly in relation to the saturated Sunday market, is the biggest challenge facing the Irish media. Rupert Murdoch's News International recognised the importance of the Irish market early, established an office in Dublin and set about an assault of the newspaper racks with its main titles, the *Irish Sun*, *News of the World* and *Sunday Times*. An Irish edition of its flagship daily, the *Times*, is rumoured to be on the way.

What this means, of course, is that local papers lacking Murdoch's mammoth resources will struggle even more than they already do. The country's best newspaper, the *Irish Times*, nearly went under in 2002 and is constantly worried about circulation.

Magazine publishing has boomed with the economy in recent years and the biggest new development has been the English craving for celebrity rubbing off on the local market.

There are four terrestrial TV channels in Ireland (see [p44](#)). The best thing about the state broadcaster, RTE, is its news programming and its sports coverage, particularly of Gaelic games. Meanwhile, Dublin's gone digital and the two big players are the home-grown NTL – who may not even be in business by the time you read this – and the behemoth that is Sky, which continues to make solid progress in bringing the multichannel revolution into Dublin homes.

The state of local radio is much healthier. There is a huge choice incorporating talk radio, current affairs, pirate stations, progressive music channels and lots of commercial dross. If you want to take the pulse of the city, check out the housewives' favourite, talk-show host Joe Duffy on *Liveline* (RTE 1, from 1.45pm Monday to Friday), the favourite place for Ireland to have a moan. If you like sport, listen no further than *Off the Ball* (Newstalk 106-108, 7pm to 10pm Monday to Friday).

LANGUAGE

Although Gaelige (Irish) is the official language – and all official documents, street signs and official titles are either in Gaelige or bilingual – it's only spoken in isolated pockets of rural Ireland known as Gaeltacht areas.

While all Dubliners must learn it at school, the teaching of Gaelige has traditionally been thoroughly academic and unimaginative, leading most kids to resent it as a waste of time. Ask Dubliners if they can speak Irish and nine out of 10 of them will probably reply, 'ahhh cupla focal' (literally 'a couple of words') and they generally mean it. It's a pity that the treatment of Irish in schools has been so heavy-handed because many adults say they regret not having a greater grasp of it. A new curriculum has been in place for the last few years that aims to redress this shortcoming by cutting the hours devoted to the subject, and making the lessons more fun, practical and celebratory.

top picks

BLOGS

Some of the best and most fearless – not to mention funniest – reporting is done by bloggers, the best of which will reveal what is *really* going on in this city.

- **Blurred Keys** (www.blurredkeys.com) A superb blog that focuses on the media and how it covers current affairs – a watchdog for the watchdogs.
- **Dublin Blog** (www.dublinblog.ie) A great forum for all kinds of debate, from student housing to the weather.
- **Half-Arsed Blog** (www.ricksbreakfastblog.blogspot.com) Radio presenter Rick O'Shea on whatever irks/pleases/interests Rick and his audience on any particular day.
- **Irish Election** (www.irishelection.ie) The best political blog, featuring comprehensive analysis of all the major issues.
- **Sinead Gleeson** (www.sineadgleeson.com) An excellent cultural blog.
- **Twenty Major** (www.twentymajor.net) An award-winning blog regularly considered the best in the country for its in-your-face, hilarious commentary.

Here are a few useful phrases *as Gaeilge* (in Irish) to help you impress the locals:

Fool.	ohm-a-dawn	<i>Amadáin.</i>
Hi.	dee-a gwit	<i>Dia dhuit.</i>
How are you?	kunas aw taw two	<i>Conas a tá tú?</i>
I don't like Big Brother.	knee moh lum	<i>Ní maith liom Big Brother.</i>
I'm good.	thawm gomoh	<i>Táim go maith.</i>
I'm never ever drinking again.	knee ohl-hee mey gu brawkh u-reesh	<i>Ní álfaidh mé go brách arís.</i>
Kiss my arse.	pogue ma hone	<i>Póg ma tháin.</i>
My name is Amanda.	iss misha Amanda	<i>Is mise Amanda.</i>
One hundred thousand welcomes.	kade meela fallcha	<i>Céad míle fáilte.</i>
Shut your mouth.	doon daw klob	<i>Dún do chlab.</i>
Thanks.	gur rev moh agut	<i>Go raibh maith agat.</i>
What is your name?	cawd iss anim dit	<i>Cad is ainm duit?</i>
Your health/Cheers.	slawn-cha	<i>Slainte.</i>

While most Dubliners overlooked Gaeilge, their command of English and their inventive use of vocabulary is second to none. Huge numbers of foreign-language students, particularly from continental Europe, flock to the city for study because the average Dubliner's elocution is so clear. When travelling in Italy or Spain, it's gas (funny) to hear locals speaking English with Dublin accents. Dubliners love the sound of their own voices and they are genuinely interested in the way words sound as much as in their meaning. They're very articulate, generally confident orators, and like nothing more than a good debate (preferably over a pint).

Dublin accents – there are several – have all the traits of the typical Irish brogue, including softened, shortened vowels, hardened consonants and discarded 'h's in the 'th' sound (as in the old 't'irty t'ree and a t'ird' joke). The average, or neutral, Dublin accent is possibly one of the most eloquent and easily understandable in the English-speaking world while the extremes are barely comprehensible at all. The 'real Dublin' accent is clipped, drawn out and slack-jawed. It discards consonants disdainfully, particularly the letter 't' (all right becomes origh) and is peppered with so many instances of 'feck', 'jaysus' and 'yer wha'?' that you think the speaker might be dumbstruck without them.

Yet this Dublin accent is infinitely preferable to the plummy accent of affluent southsiders, who contort and squeeze vowels at will. Formerly known as the Dublin 4 accent, this diction has since come to be known as the 'DART accent' (or 'dort' as its speakers would pronounce it) because it has spread out south along the coastal railway line.

The spread of this pseudo-received accent is so alarming that Frank McNally of the *Irish Times* has suggested the only way to eradicate the DART accent would be to make it compulsory in schools – it damn nearly worked for Gaeilge!

DUBLIN SLANG

Dubliners are like the mad scientists of linguistics, and have an enormous lexicon of slang words from which to choose. For example, there is said to be more than 50 alternative words for 'penis', while it's quite possible they have more words to describe 'drunkenness' than the Eskimos have for 'snow'. Here are just a few doozies:

banjaxed – broken down

chiseller – a young child

couldn't be arsed – couldn't be bothered

fair play/fucks to you – well done

header – mentally unstable person

I will in me bollix – I won't

jax – toilet

make a bags of something – mess it up

me belly tinks me trote's been cut – I'm rather hungry

rag order – bad condition

ride – have sex with

scarlet (*scarleh*) – blushing

shite – rubbish

shorts – spirits

slagging – teasing

trow a wobblor – have a temper tantrum

work away – go ahead, after you

yer man – that guy

yer one – that girl

yer wha'? – excuse me???

yoke – inserted to describe a noun when the actual word has slipped the speaker's mind

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