



History of the Mansion House

Welcome to the Mansion House – the official residence of Dublin’s first citizen, the Lord Mayor, and one of our cities finest and most loved buildings. Elegantly crafted and beautifully decorated, it tells a powerful story of history and tradition, of respect and honour, of courage and affection.



Mansion House 1910



Mansion House Today

A Masterpiece in the Making

The Mansion House has been at the heart of city government since 1715. Construction started in 1705 and it was intended as a townhouse for Joshua Dawson, the developer of Dawson Street and Nassau Street. Joshua Dawson seldom lived in the house. Ten years later and still partly unfinished, it was sold to Dublin Corporation for £3,500 (€4,444), in addition to an annual rent of 40 shillings and an agreement to provide a loaf of double refined sugar, weighing six pounds at Christmas. The Mansion House is remarkable for many reasons:

- It is the only mayoral residence in Ireland which is still used for its original purpose
- It is the oldest Mayoral residence in Ireland and in Britain (Dublin preceded London by 15 years in providing an official house for its mayor)
- It is the oldest free-standing house in Dublin
- The first Dáil met in the Mansion House Round Room in 1919 and cabinet meetings of that Dáil were held in the Dining Room

Joshua Dawson

Joshua Dawson was a member of the Guild of Merchants and was admitted to the freedom of Dublin in Christmas 1702. His family came from Co. Derry and he later helped develop the village of Castledawson, Co. Derry. He was a civil servant and was based in Dublin Castle as a secretary to the Lord Justices of Ireland. He realised Dublin had the potential to expand eastwards on its medieval core and in 1705 he purchased a tract of land east of Grafton Street described at the time as “a piece of marshy land without even a lane crossing it”. Within two years he had drained the ground and laid out Dawson Street. He gifted a site on Dawson Street to St. Ann’s Parish to erect a church and vicarage. This church still exists today and has close ties with the Lord Mayor of Dublin.

From the Outside In

Boasting many fine features and rooms that have rightly allowed it to be compared with other renowned Dublin attractions, such as Trinity College, the National Art gallery and City Hall, the Mansion House started its life faced in brick but was later plastered and had the city coat-of-arms

added to its pediment. The metal portico at the front entrance was erected in advance of Queen Victoria's visit in 1900 to ensure the elderly Queen was sufficiently protected from the elements. Similarly, the Round Room beside the house had been built in 1821 for a visit by King George IV. The house would originally have been set in its own wooded grounds but now only a small garden remains.



*Lord Mayor's
Garden*

The Oak Room

The Oak Room was built as part of the purchase agreement with Joshua Dawson. It is, as the name suggests, is panelled entirely of oak, with most of the original panelling still in place. Designed almost 300 years ago for civic receptions, it is still used for this purpose today. The room contains a number of fine portraits including that of Charles Stewart Parnell, founder of the Home Rule Party. Also on show here are individual coat-of-arms of Dublin's Lord Mayors, each of whom adds his or her own at the end of their term of office.



Oak Room



The Bar Area

The main feature of the Bar area is the photographs of the past twenty-five Lord Mayors of Dublin. The current Lord Mayor's photograph is in colour and separate to the other photos. Once a Lord Mayor leaves office a black & white version of their photograph is hung on the wall.

The Dining Room

The Dining Room is used for formal lunches, small receptions and meetings. It was originally two rooms but was converted into one large room in the 1760s.

The room has an interesting black marble chimneypiece, in Egyptian style, which dates from around 1830. The brass fender and black marble mantel clock are Victorian, as are the golden oak-framed brass circular dinner gong and beater. The pier mirror over the mantelpiece is late Georgian and is a pair to the mirror in the entrance hall. Finally, the mahogany extending dining table is also Victorian, while the accompanying chairs and carvers are Edwardian.

The portraits on the wall are of Lord Lieutenants of Ireland and former Lord Mayors. One interesting portrait is to be found above the door into the hallway – it is of Mrs. Michael Staunton (nee Anne Overend) and is the only portrait of a Lady Mayoress in the Mansion House. Her husband's portrait is above the other door in the Dining Room. The Staunton's emigrated to Australia after he was Lord Mayor but their ancestors brought the two portraits back to the Mansion House a hundred years later.



Dining Room

Hall & Staircase

The stained glass window located on the main staircase was made in anticipation of Home Rule. Made in 1900 by the Dublin firm of Joshua Clarke and Sons, it features the official Lord Mayor's coat-of-arms, surrounded in turn by the coat-of-arms of the four provinces of Ireland. Joshua Clarke's was the father of Harry Clarke who became a world famous Stained Glass artist.

The portrait on the wall above the stairs is of George V. He presented it to the people of Dublin to mark his state visit to Ireland in 1821.

The staircase is noteworthy for the balusters which are three to a step and are admired for their fine spiral turning, known as 'barley sugar'.



Section of Stain Glass Window



Staircase

Drawing Room

The Drawing Room was created by combining a number of smaller rooms together. It is used for informal receptions.

Most of the fittings and furnishings here are Victorian including the chimney piece, chandeliers and panelled doors. The portraits on the walls are of Lord Lieutenants of Ireland. The grand piano is 20th century and is reputed to have an association with the world-famous tenor, John Count McCormack.

Drawing Room



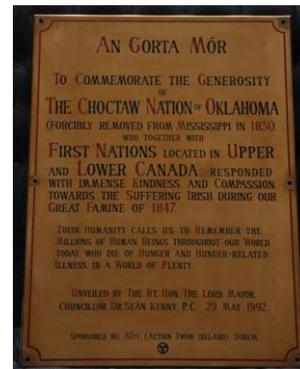
Lady Mayoress's Parlour

Lady Mayoress's Parlour

Also known as the 'Blue Room' this room is original to the Mansion House as constructed by Joshua Dawson. The gilded plaster decoration on the ceiling was done by stuccodore Charles Thorp who was Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1800. This plasterwork is echoed in the modern carpet which was handmade by JD McMurray in Co. Galway to mark the Dublin millennium celebrations in 1988.

The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress may select pictures from Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane in Parnell Square to decorate the parlour.

Hallway of the Mansion House



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Plaque

Entrance Hall

The entrance hall is one of the original rooms of the Mansion House and the panelling dates from 1715. Over the chimney-piece of black Kilkenny marble is a portrait of Daniel O'Connell who was Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1841. He was the first catholic to hold office since 1690 and the first to be elected by democratic franchise. Around this portrait are three tipstaves which were carried by the Lord Mayor's Battle-Axe Guard in front of the Lord Mayor to show his high office.

The mahogany bookcase originally stood in the Irish House of Lords in the old Parliament House on College Green (now Bank of Ireland). It was presented to members of the Home Rule League who donated it to the Mansion House.

The brass plaques on the wall commemorate the involvement of former Lord Mayors in famine relief during the 19th century. One plaque marks the contribution of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in the United States who gave generously from their meagre resources to assist the Irish people during the Great Famine in 1847.