



CITY HALL HISTORY

City Hall is an outstanding example of the Georgian architecture for which Dublin is world-renowned. It was built between 1769 and 1779 by the Guild of Merchants as the Royal Exchange, at a cost of £58,000, mostly raised by public lotteries.

The architect was Thomas Cooley, winner of a competition to design the building, with his more illustrious contemporary James Gandon in second place. The Royal Exchange belonged to the first rank of European architecture and marked the introduction to Ireland of the neo-classical style fashionable in Continental Europe. The circular entrance hall, or Rotunda, with its spacious dome, supported by twelve columns, is surrounded by an ambulatory, where the merchants strolled and discussed business.

The sheer size and sumptuous fittings of the Royal Exchange, with carved capitals by Simon Vierpyl and plasterwork by the leading stuccodore Charles Thorp, reflect the standing and prestige of Dublin in the 18th century.

The Act of Union, passed in 1800, had an adverse effect on the economy of Dublin and forty years later the Royal Exchange lay virtually idle. The building was rescued by Dublin Corporation, which purchased it in 1851 and converted it for civic administration, introducing much-needed office space. The changes included partitions around the ambulatory, the construction of a new staircase leading from the Rotunda to the upper floors and the sub-division of the vaults for storage. On 30 September 1852, the Royal Exchange was re-named City Hall, at the first meeting held there of Dublin City Council.

City Hall played its part in the development of Irish nationalism. The funerals of leading patriots, Charles Stewart Parnell and Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, were held there and the building was garrisoned by the insurgents during the Easter Rising of 1916, an event which is commemorated by a plaque at the front gates. In 1922, City Hall became the temporary headquarters of the Irish Provisional Government under its chairman, Michael Collins. The funerals of Collins, and of his colleague Arthur Griffith, took place from City Hall in the same year.



TODAY

City Hall was the hub of Dublin's civic administration until 1995, when Dublin Corporation moved its headquarters to Civic Offices at Wood Quay. City Hall is still the focal point for the elected members of Dublin City Council. The Council meets on the first Monday of every month in the historic Council Chamber, originally the coffee-room of the Royal Exchange. The Lord Mayor of Dublin presides at meetings of the City Council.

In the vaults now lies the "Story of the Capital" Exhibition. This tells the story of Dublin's evolution through a mix of video and newsreel footage, display of a number of important artifacts, interactive software and interpretative text.

DUBLIN'S CITY HALL

The Story *of the* Capital

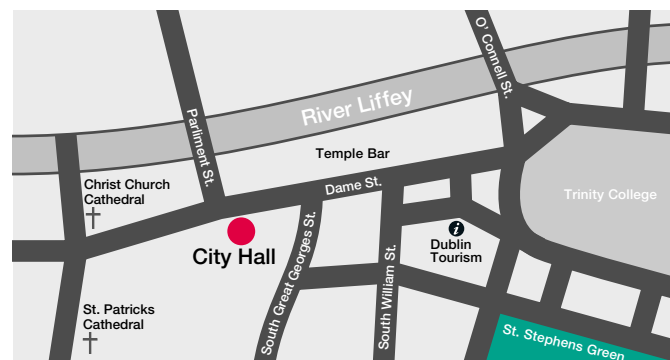
837 THE VIKINGS INVADE

Medieval Period 1170
The Anglo-Norman invasion

1711 Georgian Dublin
Dublin's First Fire Brigade

1916 Unrest in Dublin
The Easter Rising

Modern Day Dublin
2000



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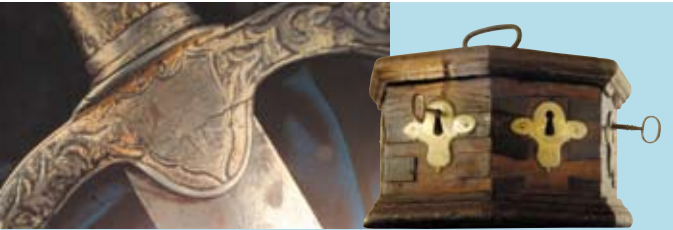
THE STORY OF THE CAPITAL EXHIBITION

The story of the Capital takes just one hour and tells the story of Dublin from its foundation in Viking and Norman times, through prosperity and oppression into the vibrant city of today. Unique and ever changing, Dublin has had a colourful past. Learn all about it at City Hall’s exhibition, located in the atmospheric vaults on the lower ground floor.

FOUNDATION OF THE CITY

The Vikings arrived in Dublin in 837, with a fleet of 65 ships arriving at Dubh Linn. Dublin was effectively founded twice by the Vikings- first as a trading base, then as a defended town or Dún in 917. These Viking invaders, over the generations became more Irish, even practiced as Catholics and participated in the famous battle of Clontarf.

Viking Dublin collapsed when the Viking king Asculf fled after Diarmait Mac Murchada and the Norman Strongbow captured Dublin.



THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

King Henry II visited Dublin in 1171 with 4,000 knights to ensure his control of the city and the granting of the 1172 City Charter (on display) marked the beginning of civic administration. Dublin became the administrative capital of an English feudal lordship, rather than a semi-independent Kingdom.

King John granted further rights and freedoms to the Citizens of Dublin, and the City began acquiring a position comparable to that of London.

In 1229 the city was granted the right to elect a mayor, with Richard Multon the first to be elected. 1230 sees first mention of the City Assembly, and the City Seal (on display), which shows a castle on the front and a merchant ship on the back.

Dublin was a traditional medieval city, enclosed in stone walls, which expanded with the city and protected the Tradesman and Freemen flourishing within.

From 1403 the Mayor was allowed to have a gilded sword carried before him in procession, and this sword, first carried by Pers Cruys, is believed to have been donated by the King himself.

Dublin had obtained a number of political and economic privileges from successive English Monarchs and the rulers of the city were given a large measure of independence, but in the 1500’s English efforts to conquer Ireland began to change this, leading to years of war and conquest.

English control of Ireland became more direct, and with this came greater pomp and ceremony for the role of Mayor. In 1668 King

Charles I decreed that Mayors had the right to wear a chain of office and Daniel Bellingham, the City’s first Lord Mayor provided a great mace of office (on display). The Lord Mayor’s Great Chain, with the royal effigy on the medal, was authorised by William III in 1698.

GEORGIAN DUBLIN



The Georgian period saw huge development and building in Dublin. The Wide Streets Commission was established and had a profound impact, attempting to improve the city by the rational application of scientific and aesthetic principles.

The notion that the 18th Century was a golden age for Dublin disguises a more complex reality however. While this newly remodelled Dublin was visually impressive, it hid poverty and overcrowding. In 1796 a city critic labelled Dublin “this gorgeous mask of Ireland’s distress”.

This period saw Dublin as a place where political dissent was nurtured and hatched, with the century ending in political upheaval and the Act of Union in 1800. This was followed by many years of great poverty and overcrowding in the city.

Dublin’s status declined in the 19th Century, and famines and epidemics had catastrophic effects.



MODERN DUBLIN

Throughout the 19th Century the British government and its representatives at Dublin Castle increased its role in Irish administrative life.

The Easter Rising in 1916 was mounted by Irish republicans with the aims of ending British rule in Ireland and establishing an Irish Republic. Much of the city was destroyed during the rising and was reconstructed.

The Century progressed with the establishment of theatres, libraries and Fire Brigades. Political struggle continued, and 20,000 people attended the proclamation of the Irish Republic in 1949 outside the GPO in O’Connell Street.

The city’s fortunes varied during the 20th Century, into the 21st, with times of poverty balanced by times of economic strength.

THE FUTURE?

What will the next chapter in Dublin’s history bring?

The Story of the Capital

837	1170	1229	1230	1403	1665	1676	1711	1779	1841	1852	1890’s	1916	2000
The Vikings arrive in Dublin	The Anglo-Norman invasion	Early Dublin Government	Freedom of the City	The Great Sword	The Great Mace	A New Bridge for Dublin	Dublin’s First Fire Brigade	The New Royal Exchange	Daniel O’Connell	City Hall	Celtic Revival	Unrest	Millennium