

Understand Dublin

DUBLIN TODAY..... 190

Dublin thrives once more as the winds of social change blow hard.

HISTORY192

Dublin's fortunes were long defined and dictated by its nearest neighbour, but in recent decades it has shed Britain's influence.

LITERARY DUBLIN..... 205

A Unesco World City of Literature, Dublin's literary credentials are renowned and constantly being renewed.

MUSICAL DUBLIN 209

Dublin continues to draw from the deep well of its musical genius, expressed in a variety of styles from traditional to techno.

ARCHITECTURE212

The dominant architectural style is Georgian, and Dublin is one of the world's best cities in which to find it.

Dublin Today

The last few years have been pretty tumultuous for Dublin. It has yo-yoed in and – largely – out of the biggest recession in Irish history, witnessed a landmark shift in social attitudes and still managed to prepare for the mother of all commemorations, the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising. A general election brought a new government but little change, at least in the eyes of Dubliners who've grown increasingly disillusioned with the political process.

Best on Film

The Commitments (Alan Parker, 1994) Roddy Doyle's novel about a soul band in Dublin made into a terrific film by Alan Parker.

What Richard Did (Lenny Abrahamson, 2012) The story of what happens when a privileged youth assaults a romantic rival who dies of his injuries; loosely based on real events that occurred in 2000.

The Dead (John Huston, 1987) Stunning rendition of James Joyce's story from *Dubliners* starring Donal McCann and Angelica Huston.

Best in Print

Dubliners (James Joyce, 1914) Fifteen poignant and powerful tales of Dubliners and the moments that define their lives. Even if you never visit, read this book.

Strumpet City (James Plunkett, 1969) Epic novel set in Dublin between 1907 and 1914, especially the Lockout of 1913.

The Barrytown Trilogy (Roddy Doyle) *The Commitments* (1987), *The Snapper* (1990) and *The Van* (1991) – yes, they've all been made into films, but the books are still better.

Political (R)evolution

In February 2016 the Fine Gael/Labour government was given the heave-ho by an electorate sick of austerity and government insistence that they were doing the very best for the country. Seventy days later, a new government was formed – made up of Fine Gael and a motley collection of independents, while opposition party Fianna Fáil waits in the wings for the collapse that everyone assumes will happen long before the government's term is up.

Water Reaches Boiling Point

The single issue that sent many Dubliners over the edge and destroyed their confidence in the government was water, or rather the government's establishment of a new utility company that would collect water charges for the first time. The argument in favour was that the water utility needed serious upgrading and, anyway, most European countries paid water charges. The argument against was that this was a financial burden too heavy on a country already hit hard by the rigours of austerity, where key social services were slashed or eliminated altogether between 2009 and 2013 and wages fell by an average of 15%.

Protests against water charges got pretty heated: in one incident deputy prime minister Joan Burton was forced to remain in her car for several hours while angry protestors surrounded it. The water charges were implemented in 2014 but a year later nearly 40% of the citizenry had not paid their water bill, forcing the government into a series of embarrassing climbdowns on the issue of how much the charges would be and when they would be collected.