The Archaeology of Urbanism

Dublin
an archaeological
“biography of place”
Chronology

Dublin’s name comes from the Gaelic dubh linn meaning “black pool”; the pool was formed where the River Poddle and Liffey met and scoured a deep pool adjacent to Dublin Castle’s southern wall (Kerr et al. 2010b:275). The city’s modern Gaelic name - Baile Áth Cliath – means the “town of the ford of the hurdles”. Ireland’s four principal roads converged at a ford which allowed the tidal Liffey to be crossed at low-tide. Modern Dublin spans both sides of the Liffey but it originally it was constrained within defensive walls to the south of the river. Its history and culture was dominated by foreign influence - initially as a Viking stronghold and trading settlement, followed by Anglo-Norman invaders, a plantation of Protestant settlers and Huguenots fleeing religious persecution in mainland Europe.

Classification of time-periods [left] varies greatly but Carroll (2003:8) feels that subdivisions of Medieval and Modern is generally accepted.

Historical events [right], with a specific date, are more widely accepted (Carroll 2003:8, Bardon 2011) and are typically determined from historical sources.
Early Medieval

Rescue excavations in Dublin have revealed evidence of settlements, agriculture and industry pre-dating the first Scandinavian raids. The Black Pool [dubh linn] is associated with an ecclesiastical centre and the annals record abbots there in the seventh and eighth centuries (Clarke 2000 cited in Kerr et al. 2010b:275) – although archaeological excavation has not corroborated this.

Vikings raid were first recorded at the monastery on Lambay Island, just north of Dublin, in 797 (Killeen 2011:19). The raids intensified and by 841 a longphort [defensible enclosure for shipping (Gibbons 2004:20)] was established. Kerr et al. (2010b:277-278) has studied burial remains at the church of St Michael le Pole to propose that natives and newcomers coexisted and buried their dead side-by-side for a period of time and McKeown (2005:75) has suggested that this was with the cooperation or through the total submission of local kings. This significantly deviates from the historical accounts of bloodshed at monastic sites although McKeown confirms that monastic sites, within Uí Néill and at Clonmacnoise, were plundered by the Dublin Vikings.

This proto-town developed into a settlement focused on trade and commerce within the Norse trading network, including Cork, Limerick, Wexford, Waterford and Chester, and this evolving settlement marks Dublin’s foundation (see Figure 3.1). Dublin focused on trade with a fleet of over 200 ships and craft-working (Clarke et al. 2002:12,27) within the Norse trading network, including Cork, Limerick, Wexford, Waterford and Chester (Killeen 2011:19,22-25). Dublin’s early history was turbulent; it was captured in 902 by a native king and recaptured by 917 – but its trading success continued. The inhabitants are referred to as Hiberno-Norse and their urban settlement at Dublin was Ireland’s first recognisable town with a settled artisan community. By the end of the Early Medieval period, c.1170, Dublin had a street pattern, city walls, a cathedral (Christ Church, established 1038), churches and monastic houses and a population of 4,500.

Over the last thirty years Dublin has been extensively excavated and researched (see Figure 3.2). For example it has been established that during the foundation of the town, through Archaeozooloical studies, that numerous marine species were consumed and artefacts included lead line-weights, net-floats and sinkers. Small animal pens, for pigs or goats, were often associated with individual houses but cattle bones revealed mainly mature cattle suggesting that they were not raised in Dublin but were acquired from rural sources (Kerr et al. 2010a:103-104). Archaeobotanical analysis has identified that different types of cereals, wild fruits and berries were commonly consumed. Overall research has established that Dublin’s inhabitants had a varied diet provided by external sources (cattle), local gathering (fishing and local fruit) and domestic rearing (pigs and goats).
Early Medieval, continued

Kerr et al. (2010a:34-35) explains that excavations in Dublin between 1961 and 1982 have helped understanding of Norse housing in Dublin as well as other towns within Ireland and internationally. Five principal classes of housing, based on their house form or plan, have been identified (plus two others from excavations in Cork and Waterford). Dublin’s most common form is a long thin-rectangular building which had doorways at both of the narrow ends that was street-facing with rounded corners. Houses were constructed of low post-and-wattle walls and internally the houses were divided into three aisles with a central stone-lined hearth.

Vikings in 9th century built a Number of non-defensive banks to the north of Dublin and Kerr et al. (2010b:251) to protect the town from River Liffey’s high tides. However the Vikings in 10th century Dublin needed defences to protect their town both from natives and other Vikings; they built earthen bank topped with a palisade. The banks were constructed from clay, river mud and organic refuse – in places the bank was reinforced with post-and-wattle or wooden planking (Goven 2004:13). Tracing the banks’ route, which maximised the available high-ground, has revealed the size/location of the 10th century town (Goven 2004:3-4). One part of the bank, which was stone clad, was found under Powder Tower. By the end of the 11th century Dublin had been captured by the Irish king Muirchertach Ua Briain – who build a massive stone wall which tripled the enclosed area and which included a castellum in the south-east corner on the site where Dublin Castle stands today. 93-meters of the wall has survived including a gate known as St. Audoen’s Arch (see Slide 9).

After significant public protests the development of new Dublin City Council building was delayed to allow the extensive excavation, 1974-1981, at Wood Quay (see Figure 4.1). This revealed the remains of 10th century Viking housing as well as 2 million artifacts relating to the daily lives of its inhabitants (Wallace 1987:26-27). The Dublin Excavation Publication Project Team was established and funded by the Department of An Taoiseach [Prime Minister] to research and publish their results on ‘Old Dublin’ and the National Museum and the Royal Irish Academy combined to publish the results of the excavations.

Irish and European Legislation
Since the excavations at Wood Quay there has been a greater awareness of archaeology, and its importance, in Dublin and Ireland. Irish archaeological sites have been protected in law since 1930 by the National Monuments Legislation; Dublin sites have benefited from this protection and one of the positive results is a corpus of archaeological reports and information – and most of it is online (Excavation 2012). The Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act 1999 (Office of the Attorney General 2012) defines what a monument is and the National Monuments Amendment Act 2004 resulted in a national Record of Monuments and Places for Ireland (RMP) - there are currently 120,000 recorded monuments are these are protected by the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 2000. Ireland, a member of the European Union since 1973, has ratified a Number of European conventions including the Granada Convention on Architectural Heritage and the Valletta Convention 1992 on the protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Goven 2004:22).
Norman mercenaries led by Strongbow [Richard fitzGilbert de Clare] captured Dublin in 1170 (see Figure 5.1) and a period of Anglo-Norman control began. Henry II, to control Strongbow, granted Dublin to the freemen of Bristol by Royal Charter making it a dependence of the English crown (Killeen 2011:31-32,35). Henry II founded an Augustine Abbey, dedicated to Thomas Becket, called St. Thomas’s Abbey.

Dublin was now a city (Killeen 2010:18) but it was still a “colonial state” rather that a national capital. A further charter issued by King John and In 1229 its first mayor and council was elected. The council met in a new purpose building called the Tholsel [toll hall]. The Tholsel was rebuilt in 1676 and demolished in 1791 and replaced by a grand Georgian building which became the Dublin Civic Museum when the council finally took over the Royal Exchange in 1852. Many of mayors and councillors were members of one of Dublin’s 25 Guilds (Library Ireland 2011).

Dublin defences, having been overcome by Strongbow, were strengthened at the end of the 12th century and at the beginning of the 13th century King John ordered Dublin Castle to be constructed in the south-east corner of the walled town (Goven 2004:5). The Liffey’s bank was gradually reclaimed from marsh-like banks into quays which allowed access by larger merchant ships (Killeen 2011:36). The City Walls went through their final stage of development and were extended onto the reclaimed land (see Figure 5.2) – the Anglo-Norman wall and gates, such as St. Audoen’s Arch, were retained (Trehy 2007:31). Clarke (2003:7) suggests that the street layout used a loose grid which is an example of town-planning. Dublin’s first stone bridge was built in 1215, to replace the ford, giving access to Dublin developing suburbs and St. Mary’s Abbey on the North-side of the Liffey.

During the early 13th century Dublin’s economy boomed; the population grew rapidly to 35,000 people and the city expanded with more than 50% of Dubliners living outside of the city walls in stout cage-work [half timbered] houses (Killeen 2011:36,47).

Most suburban areas were clustered within Liberties which were owned by religious foundations such as the Liberties of St. Thomas, to the south-west, or the Liberties of St. Patrick to the south-east of Dublin’s walls.

Dublin’s growth was brought to an abrupt end – initially by fire, when the suburbs were torched as Robert the Bruce’s army approached, The Black Death followed and de-populated the city so that only 10,000 residents remained (Killeen 2011:47).
Early Modern

Henry VIII dissolved Dublin’s monasteries and granted much of the properties to Hiberno-Norman nobles and All Hallows to the City as compensation for the damage caused during the Silken Thomas revolt (Killeen 2011:53,56). All Hallows, after being used as a pest house during the 1570s plague outbreak, became Trinity College (still one of Ireland’s foremost Universities). Neither the monasteries nor the original College have survived. The English Civil War and Cromwell’s arrival didn’t significantly impact Dublin but the Restoration initiated a golden-age. The city grew into the modern city, including public parks such as St. Stephen’s Green, and Protestant Huguenots brought valuable skills and trades to the city (see Figure 6.1) and established a cemetery off of Stephen’s Green (see Figure 6.2). Dublin was still primarily a trading city and extensive quays, on both the north and south sides of the Liffey, including customs and port buildings were built.

During the late 17th and 18th century a number of estates were laid out by clearing the existing buildings (see Figure 6.4). The Wide Street Commission, established in 1757, cleared many of the old houses to create modern and wide roads. This town planning made significant changes to Dublin’s design and this enlightened layout has helped to create routes for canals and also made the modern city accessible for mass transit systems (Killeen 2011:87-89,113). By the end of the 18th century riots and the United Irishmen revolt in 1798 resulted in the Irish Parliament effectively abolishing itself in 1801. Irish affairs were controlled from London and the golden-age, and investment in Dublin’s buildings and future, was dramatically curtailed and the city declined.
Modern

The 19th century, although not a period of great growth or change, did see improvement to public health and transportation. The establishment of a public water supply, supplied from a reservoir 22 miles away, was a huge improvement (Killeen 2011:125-136). This was followed by a sewerage system in the early 20th century. The Great Famine prompted everyone one who could leave to leave the inner-city - resulting in the development of a number of new townships, such as Blackrock, Kilmainham and Donnybrook, in Dublin’s suburbs. Those who couldn’t leave squeezed into the most impoverished and unhealthy inner-city areas. Donnybrook, for example, had been a medieval village but by the 1850s was merged into the extended-city with a profusion of middle class Victorian dwellings which were linked to the inner-city by an expanding network of Trams and Railway (see Figure 7.1).

Irish independence, during the 20th century, resulted after a period of unrest. During 1916 a number of the cities prestigious buildings were destroyed (see Figure 7.2) including the Public Records Office which held irreplaceable manuscripts and historic records (Killeen 2011:142).

An economic boom during the 1960s gave rise to a surge in residential and commercial building which replaced many of the cities remaining older areas and which resulted in a new influx of residents and an “urban sprawl” (Killeen 2001:156).

The ‘Celtic Tiger’, a period of expansive economic boom, grew Dublin hugely and remodeled much of the city to include motorways and the LUAS [Dublin Light Rail System], see Figure 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5.

The ‘Celtic Tiger’ boom ended suddenly and Dublin has struggled with partially finished building-work, business failures and conflict for state funding.
Maps of Dublin

Clarke et al. (2002:44) wrote that “Maps and plans ... help modern historians to reconstruct the past”. This statement is equally true for archaeologists. Dublin’s maps, even if they are inaccurate, show change-over-time to the city and can reveal sites which have since disappeared or changed significantly.

The earliest surviving map of Dublin was made by John Speed, for James I, and dates to 1610 (see Figure 8.1). It coincided with the protestant plantation in Ireland and showed a Dublin which was predominantly unchanged since the 13th century - except the dissolution and reuse of religion institutions c.1540 (Clarke et al. 2002:46). Figure 8.2 was produced 63-years later, for military use, and shows the city mainly unchanged but with some expansion in the residential areas and public parks.

The first truly accurate map dates to 1756, see Figure 8.3. It includes individual houses, including their site layout and a Georgian restructuring resulting from urban planning. Most of the property boundaries, created by the city walls and monasteries, were retained but all of the medieval churches had been completely rebuilt (Clarke et al. 2002:50-51).

Later maps show boom-and-bust city development within Dublin and its suburbs. This includes, for example, the removal of city walls, modernisation of Dublin Castle, the coming of canals and railways and the demolition of slum dwellings.

Figure 8.1: Speed, 1610 (Dublin City Libraries 2006)
Figure 8.2: de Gomme, 1673 (Clarke et al. 2002:47)
Figure 8.3: Rocque, 1756 (Print of original)
Figure 8.4: Dublin City, 1826 (Hayes 2011)
Figure 8.5: Ordinance Survey, 1906-9 (OSI 2012)
Figure 8.6: Ordinance Survey, today (OSI 2012)
Protecting the past for the future

Many Dubliners take their heritage seriously and the ‘Celtic Tiger’, which resulted in the redevelopment of many parts of the City and its suburbs to meet the need of booming business and transportation, facilitated and financed a large number of excavations, for archaeological investigation, publishing reports and preserving and displaying artefacts.

Unfortunately, Dublin over the previous centuries and especially since the Wide Street Commission, was less interested in ‘old Dublin’ and much of the pre-Georgian city was demolished. Today most of ‘Old Dublin’ only exists as underground archaeological remains.

Ireland’s economy changed from boom-to-bust when the ‘Celtic Tiger’ died.

It will be difficult to fund archaeology with so many other demands on public spending and it is likely that maintenance of the past for the future will be compromised through lack of resources - both people and money - and difficult political decisions may be surrender the past to provide jobs and growth today and for the future.

Key to Figure 9.4
1 – Isolde’s Tower
2 – Powder Tower
3 – Record Tower
4 – Cork Tower
5 – Bermingham Tower
6 – Stanhurst’s Tower
7 – Pool Gate
8 – Genevel’s Tower
9 – Fagan’s Tower
10 – St Audoen’s Arch

Figure 9.1: St Audoen’s Arch Medieval Walls along Cook Street (Goven 2004:4)
Figure 9.2: Ancient Walls (red) preserved within a more recent wall (Goven 2004:44)
Figure 9.3: Preserved route of a Medieval Street (Goven 2004:20)
Figure 9.4: Surviving Medieval Walls highlighted in Red (Dublin City Council 2011)
St. Audoen’s Church and St. Audoen’s Arch

St. Audoen’s site has two churches; one Church of Ireland (Protestant) dating from 1170 with a nave, in the Romanesque style, and one a Roman Catholic church dating to 1530. They are linked together by a 15th-century Chapel (see Figure 10.1).

The church was founded by ‘men of Bristol’ (Crawford 1996:36) and it is possible that a church already existed on this site. Its early history is known through Royal records such as Henry V granting a patent to create St. Anne’s Chapel and guild records acquiring an inn which became St. Audoen’s College. The church tower was partially destroyed in the Great Explosion of 1597 (see Slide 13) and by 1630 the church was in a poor state of repair. Shortly after the tombs had to be removed to “preserve the living from being injured by the dead who were shallowly buried” (Gilbert 1854:282). By the 1860’s the Chapel was derelict and used for drying laundry. In 1880 it was handed to Dublin’s Board of Works to be preserved. Also in 1880 the Open Spaces Committee purchased the graveyard and adjacent land to build a park (UCD 2011). Excavations in 1992 revealed some of its history including the cobbled lanes which linked the church to St. Audoen’s Arch – the only surviving medieval gate which passed through the original city wall created by 1170 by the Anglo-Normans - which was made redundant when a new city wall was built c.1270 (see Figure 5.2).

Gilbert (1854:285) wrote that the St. Audoen’s parish suffered economic reverses and the wealthy inhabitants abandoned the area from the later 18th century. The sketches of the houses at St. Audoen’s Arch show dilapidated houses - its neighbours supported with wooden beams (see Figure 10.2 and 10.3). In 1821 Number 2 St. Audoen’s Arch was a Widows and Aged Women’s Asylum with 20 residents. Number 3 was a Parochial School with 50 boys and 50 girls who were educated and clothed because they were destitute (Begadon 2009:267). By the 1840s Number 2 and 3 were still used for the same purpose and Number 4 had an annual rateable value of £5 (ancestry.co.uk 2011). By 1862 the Irish Almanac recorded the house as a tenement (Library Ireland 2011) and its annual rateable value had fallen to 14 shillings which, even for this decaying area, was exceptionally low. The 1911 Census (NAI 2011) described Number 1, 2 and 3 St. Audoen’s Arch as ‘ruins’ but Number 4 had 14 residents from three families - each family lived in a single room. The resident’s occupations included an Army Pensions (who was a Labourer in 1901), a Shell Fish Dealer, a Charwoman and a Tobacco Factory Worker.

By the 1930s Dublin’s tenements, once fine Georgian houses such as the houses in Figure 10.3, were “the worst slums in Europe” (Kearns 2003:1-2). In 1938 6,307 tenements housed 110,000 residents. Over the following 20-years they were demolished (few were restored to their former glory).

St. Audoen’s Church and Arch are over 800 years old. They have passed through many stages in their ‘lives’ and they parallel Dublin’s economic environment. Today the Protestant church has been given to the Polish community in Dublin and it incudes a museum focused its past and purpose.
Dublin Castle

In 1204 King John ordered the current castle to be built and during the next two decades it was constructed on the same site as an Anglo-Norse castellum (Lynch and Manning 1990:65). It was only attacked once, in 1534 (Manning and Condit 2001) and its purpose was mainly as a treasury and administrative centre for the King’s Deputy in Ireland. In 1684 (see Figure 11.1) it was described it as “the worst castle in the worst situation in Christendom” (Maguire 1985:15).

Since the 17th century and it has been restructured a number of times, mainly because of fire (such as 1684 and 1941). Figure 11.2 shows the castle being renovated after the 1684 fire. The moat had been in-filled for commercial buildings; in 1801 the state purchased and demolished them for security reasons. 1960s excavations (see Figure 11.3) revealed the footprints/sewers of these buildings which gave an “insight into eighteenth-century Dublin” (Manning and Condit 2001:6).

The Castle has evolved from its original purpose - a symbol of English Royal authority, fortress and treasury - into a historic building focused on a variety of uses including state functions, conferences facilities, gardens, visitor centre and the Chester Beatty Library and Museum (see Figure 11.4, for a comparison of the old/new buildings, and 11.5 for the modern layout).
Tenements and Slums

An unexpected result of the 1801 Act of Union was the accelerated migration of Dublin’s aristocracy from the prestigious residences and the influx of poorer occupants (Kearns 2003:7-8). This cycle of poorer-and-poorer residents resulted in the Dublin’s centre becoming more and more decrepit until houses were beyond repair and only the poorest people would live in them.

In 1791 a Georgian residence sold for £8,000, by 1801 its value had dropped to £2,500 and by 1849 it had plummeted to £500. The Great Famine was one of the factors which resulted people competing for housing that was affordable to the very poor – and a direct result was more and more people squeezing into shared accommodation (i.e. a tenement) and the creation of slums within the city walls.

With the confined living conditions came a range of dire human issues. Overcrowding, poor sanitation and diet and buildings with open hearths and little maintenance resulted in Dublin being the least healthy city in the United Kingdom (Kearns 2003:12-14). Within the slums the mortality rate was two-times, and five-times for infants, higher than non-slum neighbourhoods.

Dublin’s slums were a real issue and helped to damage its economic viability. By 1913 the Dublin Housing Inquiry reported that many of the tenements were owned by councillors and aldermen and that in effect the Dublin Corporation was the one of the biggest, if not the biggest, slum landlord with little interest in enforcing improvements (Kearns 2003:11,21).

In 1932, after 250 years of decay, the Housing Act resulted in systematic slum clearance. By the end of the 1950s slums were predominantly eradicated. Inevitably the slum dwellings were often beyond repair and the majority of Dublin’s older housing, such as those surrounding St. Audoen’s Church, was demolished and the residents relocated to new purpose-built council housing. Some areas of Georgian housing were preserved and these are now a valued part of Dublin’s architectural heritage.
Archaeological Sources and Museums

Dublin’s archaeological sites are protected by law and have an extensive network of state and private sources record and display the results of archaeological excavations – as well as historic sources. The following are the primary sources and museums and most are defined by Carroll (2003:20-23) and Clark (2006:31-33).

### Museums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Castle</td>
<td>State Apartments, Chapel Royal and remains (underground) of original City Walls and Towers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dublinia</td>
<td>Viking and Medieval Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Heritage Museum</td>
<td>Museum recognising sites, monuments and items of machinery with industrial heritage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Museum of Dublin</td>
<td>Museum displaying Dublin’s 20th century social, cultural and political history</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Museum of Ireland (NMI)</td>
<td>Repository for all artefacts acquired by the NMI since 1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Audoen’s Church</td>
<td>Exhibition on the Medieval Church and Chapels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary’s Abbey</td>
<td>Museum of the Cistercian Abbey founded in 1139</td>
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### Archaeological Sources

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<tr>
<td>Archaeological Society</td>
<td>Societies hosted by University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chester Beatty Library</td>
<td>Collections of manuscripts and rare books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City Council</td>
<td>City Archives, incl. material related to the development of the city &amp; maps and Architectural records &amp; site histories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dublin Civic Trust</td>
<td>Publications on streets in Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dúchas [Heritage Service]</td>
<td>Archive Unit - Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), Environmental Impact Statements, Artefact Records, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENFO</td>
<td>Wide-ranging and authoritative information on the Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geological Survey of Ireland</td>
<td>Geological information and aerial photos</td>
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<td>Irish Architectural Archive</td>
<td>Architectural Archive collection consists of photographs, drawings, books and maps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kings Inns</td>
<td>Registry of Deeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marsh’s Library</td>
<td>Library holding historic manuscripts and books dating from the 16th century</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Archives</td>
<td>City information through its public and private records</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Library of Ireland</td>
<td>Collection of various printed information and manuscripts</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Photographic Archives</td>
<td>Historic Photograph collections</td>
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<td>Old Dublin Society</td>
<td>Journal of Dublin Historical Record</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ordnance Survey Ireland Office</td>
<td>Current and historic maps of Dublin and Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious Archives</td>
<td>Religions orders archives; for example the Jesuit Archives, Franciscan Library, Dublin Diocesan Archives</td>
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<td>Royal Irish Academy</td>
<td>Society for ‘promoting the study of science, polite literature and antiquities’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal Society of Antiquaries</td>
<td>Monuments and memorials of the arts, people, language, literature and history of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity College Library Map Library</td>
<td>Large collection of Dublin maps</td>
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Biography

ancestry.co.uk. 2011. *Ireland, Griffith’s Valuation, 1848-1864; St. Audoen’s Arch*. www.ancestry.co.uk/ireland (accessed 31-Dec-2011).


Biography, continued