



# Rathdown Heritage Site

## Rathdown Through the Ages

Welcome to the historic townland of Rathdown where people have lived and worked since the late Stone Age. These lands contain the remains of a Bronze Age settlement, an ancient fortification, an 11<sup>th</sup> century castle, a medieval village, a 14<sup>th</sup> century church and cemetery, and a 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse. Through the ages, Rathdown has witnessed invasion, settlement, development, prosperity, war, destruction, neglect, and now a renewed interest and respect. This rich history lives on - above and below the soil.



## Earliest Settlements

Rathdown has been occupied since the late Stone Age with flint implements and Bronze Age tools discovered in the area. These objects include a javelin, axes, chisels and a grinding stone which have been dated as far back as 4000 BC. During the construction of Redford Park, evidence of a large Beaker settlement was found. The site is likely to have been raided, and even occupied by the Vikings between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century as evidenced by large stones known as the Rathdown Slabs which were found within the Barony.



2500-4000 BC Neolithic tools worked from flint and stone

500-2500 BC Bronze Age instruments forged

2800-1800 BC Beaker Settlement

1699 BC Fort and rath constructed by King Erimon

900s Rathdown slabs constructed  
Anglo-saxon coin hoard minted

1100s Lands owned by Domnall Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmóic

1200 Rathdown Castle built

1308 Lands conveyed to Nigel le Brun

1530 Richard Fitzgerald given Barony of Rathdown

1530 St. Crispin's Cell constructed

1534 Records of castle, 20 plots, watermill, and crykka

1536 Lands given to Pierce Talbot

1607 Rathdown coin hoard minted



1623 Records of a castle and 10 cottages

1657 Rathdown Castle in ruins (Down Survey)

1666 Lands owned by Richard Edwards

1710 Farmhouses constructed

1771 Lands purchased by Captain Tarrant

1818 Alice Leonard inherits lands from Captain Tarrant

1852 Lands purchased by Peter la Touche

1854 Railway to Greystones opens

1888 Railway relocated - Gap Bridge constructed

1907 The Grove cottages built

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1917 Railway relocated - Mile Long tunnel constructed

1991 Friends of Historic Rathdown established

## Rathdown Castle and Medieval Village

Rathdown Castle was built on the site of an earlier fort and rath which dates back to 1699BC. The original rath, constructed by King Erimonn, was an earthen embankment that was built to the north of a ravine though which the Water of Rathdown flows. Rathdown became the stronghold of Domnall Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmóg who took sides with the Normans at the Battle of Dublin in 1171. As a reward, King Henry II granted the Manor of Rathdown to the Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmógs and Rathdown Castle was later constructed in 1200.



Throughout the castle's history, the village of Rathdown developed to the north. This village was the centre of the Barony of Rathdown which stretched from south Dublin to north Wicklow. In 1308, the castle and lands were conveyed to Nigel le Brun by Domnall's descendants. They were eventually passed on to Richard Fitzgerald who held the Barony of Rathdown in 1530. In 1536, King Henry VIII's government transferred the castle and lands to Pierce Talbot. Several coins have been discovered in the vicinity of the castle include an Anglo-Saxon hoard and a much larger collection dating to 1607. This collection included 79 shillings and 321 sixpence, and represents the second largest coin hoard found in Ireland. Included in the hoard are two Spanish Reales - an indication that the site was an important overseas trading post. The castle suffered greatly during the Cromwellian wars and by 1657 it was recorded as being in ruins.

## Saint Crispin's Cell

This single-celled church dates prior to 1530 and is named after the patron saint of shoe makers. The west wall is built on the visible remains of an older structure thought to be an earlier, larger church. The arched doorway, carved from granite, is of an older architectural style to the rest of the church, suggesting that this feature was incorporated from the remains of the earlier church or Rathdown Castle. An associated graveyard is believed to have been relocated in the late 1700s and is reported to have last been used when an early 19<sup>th</sup> century sailor was washed ashore.



## Captain Tarrant's Farm

Captain Tarrant's Farmhouse is a two storey building which was built in 1710. It is believed that several of the granite slabs that were used to construct the farmhouse were taken from the 11<sup>th</sup> century Rathdown Castle. Charles Tarrant was involved in many important infrastructural projects including the building of the Grand Canal and Barrow navigation system. He also acted as a voluntary advisor to the Wide Streets Commission during the redesign of Dublin's streetscape. Tarrant became a Colonel and died a wealthy man in 1818.



- 1 - Site of Rathdown Castle
- 2 - Earthen enclosure (possible moat)
- 3 - Site of Gap Bridge
- 4 - Evidence of pre-Norman village
- 5 - Site of well
- 6 - Line of mill race
- 7 - Possible site of mill
- 8 - Water of Rathdown
- 9 - St. Crispin's Cell
- 10 - Site of medieval cemetery
- 11 - Possible site of medieval church
- 12 - Captain Tarrant's farmhouse
- 13 - Possible location of lime kiln
- 14 - Early Christian ring fort
- 15 - Site of Beaker settlement