



History of McHugh's

McHugh's Bar is of historic and architectural significance as the earliest known building in Belfast.

The original gable exhibits several early construction techniques that are rare in the context of Northern Ireland, including brick noggin walling and early handmade brick; timbers are also of an early date and offer valuable evidence of early construction techniques. Evidence of historic changes in the Victorian era is also visible. The Victorian rendering of the front of the property contributed to the concealment of the bars true age until 1997.

The History of the Bar

An archaeological survey of McHugh's Bar in 1997 by FW Hammond, found the site to be **'by far the oldest building to have survived in Belfast...Built between 1710 and 1715'** no 29-31/33 Queens Square were constructed at this time as part of the **Hanover Quay** development undertaken by **Isaac McCartney** between 1710 and 1720 and given that 'not even one standing wall of pre 1769 was previously known to have survived anywhere in Belfast, it is particularly fortunate to find that this building is not only essentially intact, but also represents such an important part of the early town' (NIEA HB File HB26/51/274)

Law States that the Hanover Quay area was renamed **Queens Square** in 1849, in honour of Queen Victoria. At this time No 31/33 was operating as a public house under the management of **Ann Quinn**. In addition to the Public house, Quinn also operated the Queens Square coffee house (no 29) **The**

Hendron family then came into possession of no 31-33 Queens Square in 1935. McHugh's was known as **Hendrons Bar** and was managed for 25 years by the father of Dr Joe Hendron (former west Belfast MP)

In 1987 **Pat McHugh** and **Dennis Hunter** bought the bar, calling it **'@The Bridge Bar'**. Pat McHugh bought his partner out two years later and gave the bar its current name.

29-31 was sold to James Mooney of **Botanic Inns LTD**. On recognition of McHugh's historical significance the public house was closed for a year while work commenced on a £1 million renovation project. **The current McHugh's reopened in 1998.**

Significant History of the Area

At the time McHugh's was built, the River Farset ran the whole way down High Street from the site of the original Belfast Castle (now the Bank Buildings; the castle having burnt down in 1708) to what is

now Queen's Square, where it entered the Lagan estuary. The River Farset was covered over in stages from 1770 onwards, though it still flows underneath High Street and Queen's Square today.

In 1865 the foundations were laid for the **Albert clock**, which was built as a memorial to the late Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria. Created from sandstone in a blend of French and Italian Gothic styles, the clock stands 113 feet tall and houses a two tonne bell. The clock marks the site of the exact spot where the royal party landed in Belfast in 1849. Unfortunately building this magnificent landmark on land reclaimed from the river might not have proved the best idea; the Albert clock now leans four feet from its original upright position and has been referred to as **'Belfast's Own Leaning Tower of Pisa'**.

The Du-Barry's building itself is thought to have been established around 1820 and first became a licensed premises in 1860. It was a popular haunt for Edwardian ship-owners and their mistresses and sometime later it was also a favourite of North American service men during the Second World War looking for women of dubious reputation. **The bar was aptly named after the famous French courtesan Madame Du-Barry**, the favourite mistress of Louis XV.

Originally the commercial centre of the city, the area around McHugh's has been the scene of many historical events. It **marked the landing point for the royal visit in 1849** and played stage to the rise of the

labour movement with the historic Dockers' Strike of 1907 when **Jim Larkin** addressed **crowds of up to 20,000 in the Square** from the steps of the Custom House. These steps became known as **'Speaker's Corner'** and a statue there commemorates the orator and his cause.

McHugh's has silently witnessed the rise, decline and recent renaissance of the great city of Belfast. From mass emigration to more recent immigration; the tremendous speed of Belfast's industrial and dock growth, the destruction of many of the neighbouring buildings in the blitz of 1941, the sad decline of the Lagan, the docks and many industries after World War II and four decades of trouble through to the peaceful present day.

Now a grade 'A' listed building, the old McHugh's Bar has been sympathetically restored using historically correct materials and techniques. The renovation revealed that the interior had undergone many transformations through its life and the restoration to its original conditions took eighteen months.

McHugh's Today
Bought over by the Downys Bar Group in 2013.

Today the main bar at McHugh's offers a homely feel with open fires and local music throughout the week. Around each corner of McHugh's there is another item of historic significance to see, **from pictures of the Harland & Wolff board during the building of the Titanic**, to more recent local

newspaper reports on the paramilitary ceasefires.

The successful refurbishment of McHugh's is a classic example of a building, preserved as a functional landmark of Belfast's heritage, which can be enjoyed for many years to come. **With entertainment, art, culture and history**, McHugh's is a traditional bar with a difference.

Today, McHugh's offer the best in local entertainment, food, drink and craic across three floors. With a 100-seater restaurant, we offer traditional Irish cooking with a modern twist, with dishes to suit all palates.

Whenever possible, we endeavour to source our products from **local suppliers to highlight the best in seasonal local produce.** Our Lord Lucan Room offers intimate private dining for up to 30 people, set well away from the busy crowds below. Our below sea-level basement bar presents the best of local bands throughout the week and we offer private hire and our own themed nights in our alternative club each Saturday.

McHugh's: the old & the new, since 1711. So come and see McHugh's for yourself. **We look forward to welcoming you soon!**

Bar Food Served
Mon to Sat: 12pm-6pm
An A la Carte Restaurant
Every evening from 5pm

McHugh's Timeline

