

MOLLY MALONE



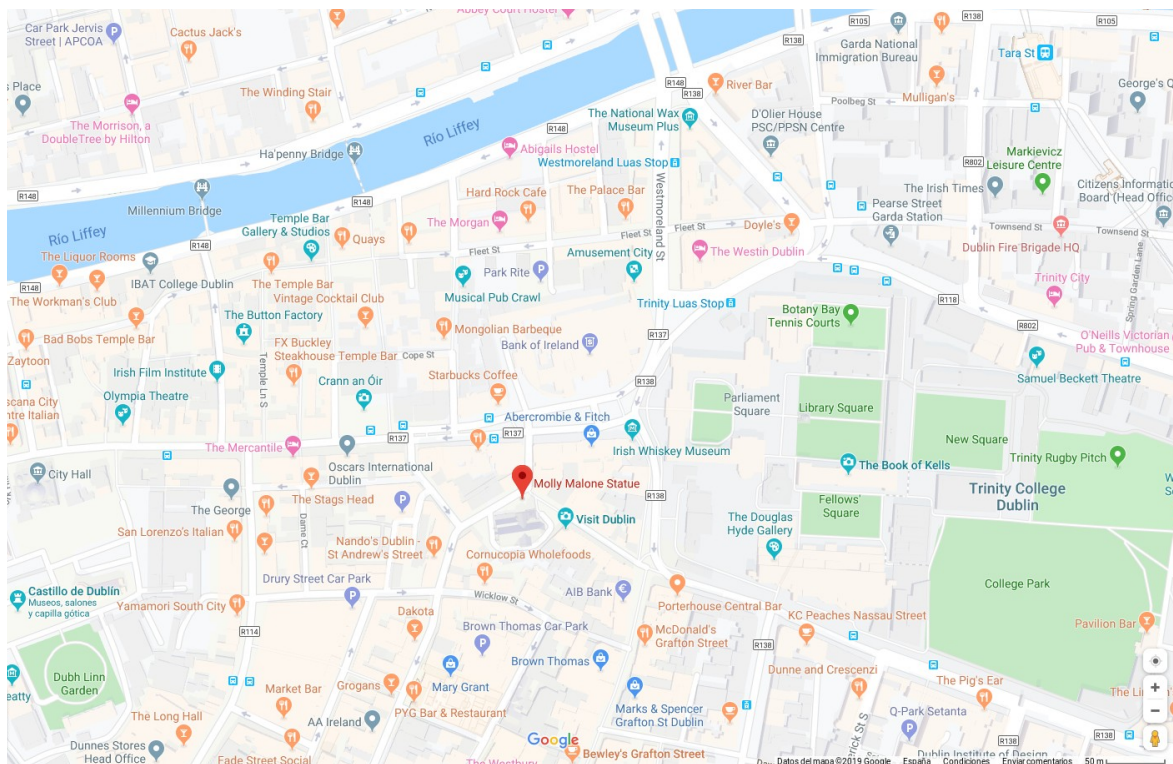
Molly Malone is the enigmatic heroine of the famous song of the same name, widely recognised as Dublin's unofficial anthem. Immortalised in bronze during the 1988 Dublin Millennium celebrations, her statue takes pride of place in the heart of Dublin's historic Georgian Quarter. Though regularly upheld as a traditional Irish ballad, it is not known for certain where the song originated, or if Molly Malone ever actually existed.

According to the lyrics of the undeniably catchy tune - also known as 'Cockles and Mussels' - Molly was a young and beautiful fishmonger who sold her yield from a cart on the streets of Dublin. The song's final verse states that after dying of a fever she went on to haunt the city.

Although set in Ireland's capital and beloved by many of its citizens, the song was originally published in the USA in 1883 and is attributed to the Scottish composer James Yorkston. While it is possible this version could be based on an older Irish folk ballad, cultural academics have argued that the melody and tragicomic lyrics are more akin to the music hall style that was popular in Britain during the Victorian era.

To complicate matters further, in 2010 an earlier mention of Molly Malone was found in an 18th-century book of songs called Apollo's Medley printed in England in 1790. This more risqué version describes Molly as living in Howth, the north-Dublin fishing village. It recounts the singer's yearning to share her bed, contributing to widespread speculation that the song's leading lady worked as both a street vendor and a prostitute.

In spite of her international fame Molly Malone remains something of a mystery. A popular figure in Irish lore, she made the transition to urban legend towards the end of the 20th century, when claims that she was a real person who lived in the 17th century became popularised. After a Mary Malone (the name Molly derives from Mary or Margaret) was discovered to have died in Dublin on June 13th, 1699, the day was joyously named Molly Malone Day by the Dublin Millennium Commission, and in 1988 the statue of her was unveiled.



THE LEGEND OF LEPRECHAUNS



Leprechauns are a large piece of Irish folklore. Exactly where their name came from is a matter of some debate, but the one of the popular conclusions is that it comes from an Irish word that means pygmy. This word alone points to the leprechaun's small size. The tales of this creature point to a fairy that is intelligent and sometimes devious. There is nothing indicating that they are either good or evil. In current times, they are seen as small, old men dressed in green with a jaunty hat perched on their heads.

In earlier times, however, they were said to wear red. Depending on what part of Ireland the leprechaun was found in, the dress may be different style, but it was usually a variation of the same general outfit. Red pants buckled at the knee with a matching coat and shoes with buckles on the tops. In recent times, they are always portrayed dressed in green, but the same type of clothes. Another part of the Leprechaun legend includes their pots of gold. Some stories say that this gold is what they have saved from their shoemaking, but other sources say that the tiny folk found the gold.

According to this story, the Danes invaded Ireland and left gold scattered all over Ireland. The leprechauns found it and have guarded it ever since. Regardless of which story is told, they all say that whoever catches one is a very lucky person. Catching them is difficult, but holding on to them is even trickier. Keeping them long enough to make sure that they follow through on their promise to deliver the gold or three wishes is the key to getting the reward. Leprechauns are certainly a fascinating piece of Irish legend.