Origins of the Belfield Campus and UCD's Period Houses
Map and Guide

Introduction

Belfield Campus has its origins in the 12th century, when much of today's campus was associated with Roebuck, or *'Rabo'* lands as they were once called.
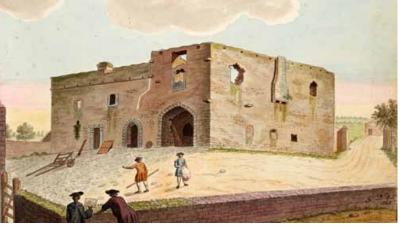
This guide highlights how the lands have been passed down over the centuries, and how they have been distributed across a number of smaller estates, which now make up UCD's modern campus. These include Ardmore, Belfield, Belgrove, Merville, Newstead, Roebuck Grove, Roebuck House, Rosemount, Richview and Woodview, which are described in this guide.

In 1838, the area around Roebuck was described by Samuel Lewis in his Topographical Dictionary of Ireland as *"a district chiefly occupied by handsome villas situated in tastefully disposed grounds, many of which command magnificent views of the bay and city of Dublin, the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, and the beautiful adjacent country"*.

The Belfield Campus is known for its parkland setting and mature landscape, much of which was influenced by the 19th century estates. This is still evident through archaeological features, woodland boundaries, tree avenues and walled gardens. Since the 1930s, the Belfield Campus has evolved through the purchase of some of Dublin's finest period houses and estates. The modern campus takes pride in its links to the past and provides an important amenity to students, staff and the local community.

Extracts from a map of Belfield and Belview entitled "The property of Thomas Wallace Esquire", c. 1840

Roebuck Castle by Gabriel Beranger c. 1768, courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Roebuck Castle(7)

Roebuck became a residence soon after the Anglo-Norman Conquest. By 1261, it was owned by Fromund le Brun, the Chancellor of Ireland. Generations later, in 1466, his descendent Elizabeth le Brun married Robert Barnewall, 1st Baron of Trimlestown. Almost 200 years later, the Civil Survey of 1654-56 noted that the lands of *'Rabuck'* extended to some 500 acres. Roebuck remained in the ownership of the Barnewall family until the early 19th century when various parcels of land were sold.

Roebuck Castle was first built in the 13th century. It was an important residence, but it was severely damaged during the rebellion of 1641. Circa 1800, the castle was sold by Nicholas, 13th Baron of Trimlestown, to James Crofton, an official of the Irish Treasury and a commissioner for the construction of Kingstown Harbour. Shortly afterwards, in the 1851 Griffith Valuation, Roebuck Castle is recorded as having *"67 acres, 3 rood and 7 perches"* with a *"land value of £280"*.

The gothic revival appearance of Roebuck Castle, visible today, was developed by the Westby family who acquired the estate in 1856. From 1943 until 1985, it was owned by the Little Sisters of the Poor before it became part of the UCD campus.

A number of fine gatehouses remain on the former Roebuck Castle estate, including Glebe House(9) which was constructed in the same general neo-Gothic style as the late 19th century castle. The nearby Crannóg(8) is a plainer cottage or lodge, which probably dates to earlier in the 19th century.

Ardmore House(3)
(formerly known as Belview)

The Ardmore estate first appears on a Taney parish map dated 1866. It was previously known as Belview and was visible on the periphery of the Belfield and Belgrove estates.

Built circa 1800, Belview was a typical example of a 19th century country villa. Extensions built in the late 1800s included a balustraded Corinthian porch and bow ends, which can be seen on the building that is today known as Ardmore House.

In 1948, the government Department for Post and Telegraphs acquired the Ardmore estate, with 20 acres, to develop a new broadcasting house. Around the same time, UCD bought the former Montrose estate on 23 acres. In 1957, UCD swapped the Montrose estate for Ardmore House and lands. Recent renovations of the ground floor reception rooms has enabled their use for meetings and small functions.

Merville House(2)

Merville House is the oldest surviving estate house on campus. It was built circa 1750 for Anthony Foster, Chief Baron of the Irish Exchequer, as a Georgian style two-storey country villa. The estate passed to his son in 1778, and became one of many houses owned by Sir John Foster, who later became the last Speaker of the Irish House of Commons.

In 1790, Merville became the property of Sir Thomas Lighton, who after a profitable career in India, returned to his native land and obtained a seat in Parliament. He was succeeded by the Right Hon. W. Baron Downes, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, who purchased the property in 1805.

Merville House

In 1825, the *Gardener's Magazine* described Merville as *"...the delightful villa... is unquestionably one of the best kept places in the empire. The garden is not of great extent, but it contains an excellent collection of fruit trees, which are kept in perfect order."* A closer look at the remains of the original high garden walls suggests that the south facing wall was built in brick to better hold heat for plants. It is thought that the semi-circular water feature served the *"best private collection of bog plants in the vicinity of Dublin"*.

The Freemans Journal, in 1826, references Merville House being sold: *"it is a most desirable residence for any Nobleman or Gentleman whose occupation or taste renders the vicinity of the metropolis necessary or agreeable".* Owned by the Hume-Dudgeon family from 1890, a riding school was in operation from 1938 until the 1950s when the estate was acquired by UCD.

In recent years the sensitive restoration of Merville House involved the painstaking repair of original features including plasterwork, vaulted ceilings and the retention of original granite arches within the stables. Today it is the home of NovaUCD, the university's Innovation and Technology Transfer Centre.

Belfield House(1)

Belfield House was built in 1801 by Ambrose Moore and subsequently occupied by the Digges la Touche, Wallace and Lynch families. The house overlooks Dublin Bay, with trees lining what was a former terraced walk above a sunken garden. During the 1830s it was extended to create a mix of Georgian and Victorian features.

The 1851 Griffith Valuation refers to Belfield House with *"44 acres, 1 rood and 25 perches"* and *"land value of £190"*. The size of the estate also facilitated some farming and newspaper notices from the mid 19th century mention hay sales: in July 1868 *"100 large field cocks of the primest upland herbage hay"* were advertised for auction. Similar sales of hay, potatoes, cows, and sundry surplus farming implements were recorded for the nearby Merville estate.

A former well in the grounds was surrounded by twelve large trees, known as the *"Twelve Apostles"*. It was reputed to be a holy place of pilgrimage, with water described as *"a magic draught to cure all ailments"*. The well disappeared in the late 1970s following the development of the Stillorgan dual carriageway.

Early maps also show that most, if not all, of the surrounding estate houses were accompanied by formal gardens. A section of Belfield House's walled garden can still be visited today through the original gates.

In 1933, the Belfield estate was purchased by UCD to provide playing fields. The house reception includeds an impressive entrance hall and the oval room exhibits fine neoclassical plaster work in the Adams style.

University Lodge(6)
(formerly known as Roebuck Grove and Whiteoaks)

The 13th Baron of Trimleston sold lands in the area of Roebuck Grove, to Solomon Richards in 1812. In the early 19th century, different members of the Richards family owned a substantial part of the campus lands across the various estates, including Roebuck Grove, Roebuck House, Belfield House, Belgrove House and Richview.

Roebuck Grove has an elegant Greek façade, which is thought to have been added to an earlier, more modest Georgian villa, or even farmhouse. Between the 19th and 20th centuries, the house passed through the hands of various families and, notably, it was the birth place of celebrated artist and craftswoman Evie Hone (1894-1955), whose work can be viewed in Irish Government Buildings and the London Tate Gallery.

Roebuck Grove first became known as Whiteoaks when in the possession of Thomas Ottiwell Graham, from 1937 to 1949, and later became known as University Lodge (residence of the University President) when acquired by UCD.

University Lodge

Woodview House(4)

Woodview originally formed part of the Earl of Pembroke's Estate, in the Priesthouse townland. Appearing as 'Wood View' on the 1943 Ordnance Survey map, the house was built in 1820. Although no longer in existence around the house, the estate lands once possessed a gatelodge, waterstreams, footbridge and hexagonal walled gardens.

Richview House(5)

In 1799, the 13th Baron of Trimleston leased lands to Charles Haskins. By 1816, this appeared on maps as 'Rich View'. Richview changed owners several times until 1885, when it was bought by the Freemasons of Ireland and developed into a Masonic Boys' School.

Memorial Hall was built in 1930, as *"an infirmary and hall"*, in memory of the pupils of the school who fought and died in the First World War. The estate was purchased by UCD in 1980.

Magnetic Observatory(10)

The Magnetic Observatory is not an original feature of the Belfield campus, as it was first built in the 1830s in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity College Dublin. To facilitate the construction of Trinity's new Arts and Social Science Building, the Magnetic Observatory was gifted to UCD in the 1970s, where it was re-built stone-by-stone.

It was designed by architect Frederick Darley (1764-1841), who was once described as *"among the most eminent architects of the kingdom"*. The building is in the form of a classical Grecian Doric temple.

Houses no longer standing

The university is fortunate to have seven remaining period houses on campus. These add a sense of history, place and heritage amidst the modern buildings. In the late 1990s, UCD established a Programme for the Preservation of Period Houses, which has, to-date, seen the complete restoration of Belfield House, Merville House and University Lodge, in addition to Newman House in St Stephen's Green and Ligouri House on the Blackrock campus.

Four other houses of note (Rosemount, Roebuck, Belgrove and Newstead) once stood on the Belfield Campus and while these period houses have not survived, evidence of their existance can be seen through the surrounding landscape.

View of Belfield House gardens seen through original gates

Newstead House

In similar circumstances to nearby Richview, the 13th Baron of Trimleston leased Newstead lands to Charles Haskins in 1799. This earliest reference to Newstead House is in The Freemans Journal of 1862, citing an auction of household furniture. While the house is long gone, there are sections of the former garden walls still visible.

Former occupants include Irish physician Dorothy Stopford Price, who was associated with St Ultan's Hospital for Infants, and Hugh Kennedy, first Chief Justice of the Irish Free State. Philips manufacturing company developed operations at Newstead between 1955 and 2003, before it became part of the UCD campus.
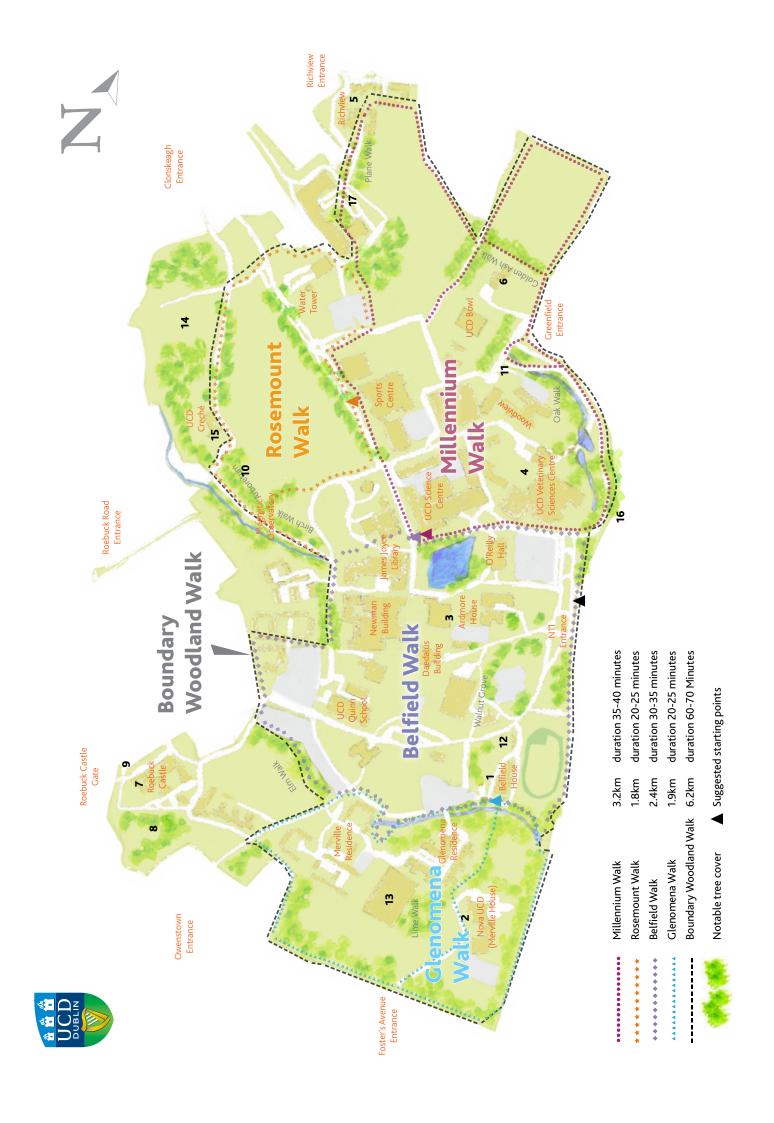
Front page image: Belfield House

Rosemount House

Rosemount was the seat of the Corballis family and their descendents for almost 150 years. Records indicate that John Corballis leased Rosemount and nearby Roebuck House lands in 1780, which became home to his sons Richard (Rosemount House) and James (Roebuck House).

UCD acquired the property from Hubert Woulfe Flanagan, a descendent of the Corballis family, in the 1980s. The house was in such poor condition that it was demolished soon after. A walled courtyard still remains, however, with centuries of repairs evident in its appearance.

Roebuck House

It is not unusual that several houses in a particular area would hold the same name at one time or another. While the first Roebuck Grove (today known as University Lodge) can be traced back to the 1850s, the nearby estate originally named Roebuck House became known as Roebuck Grove by the 1900s.

The house was approached by a sweeping carriage drive and it is believed to have been built in the 1790s by the architect Vincent Waldré. The gardens included water features, fed by a stream which still meanders along the campus woodland walkways today. The house was demolished in 1980.

Former occupants of Roebuck House include Sir John Power, who was a supporter of Daniel O'Connell, and later the Rt Hon. Abraham Brewster (1796-1874), the Lord Chancellor of Ireland in 1867.

Belgrove House

Belgrove House was a 'mock tudor' manor associated with the Priesthouse townland, which first appeared on a map in 1756. It was demolished in 1973 as part of the Stillorgan dual carriageway development.

Contributors

You can find additional information on the many walks, and flora and fauna around campus in our Woodland Walks Map and Guide. Information on key artworks on campus is available in the UCD Sculpture Trail Guide. Both publications can be downloaded from **www.ucd.ie/campusdevelopment**

Houses

1	Belfield House	built c.1801
2	Merville House	built c.1750
3	Ardmore House	built c.1800; incorporates former Belview House
4	Woodview House	built c.1820
5	Richview House	original house c.1820
6	University Lodge	built c.1850
7	Roebuck Castle	current house built 1878

Gate lodges

8	Crannóg	19th century cottage associated with Roebuck Castle estate
9	Glebe	19th century gate lodge associated with Roebuck Castle estate

Other Areas of Interest

10	Magnetic observatory	Built c.1835 In Trinity College Dublin; re-erected in UCD in 1975/76. Now home to the UCD O'Kane Centre for Film Studies
11.	Stone bridge over water near Woodview	Reputed to be a Bianconi bridge, which formed part of the coach route established by Charles Bianconi from 1815 onwards
12.	Walled Garden	Section of Belfield House Walled Garden
13.	Former Walled Garden	Former Walled Garden associated with Merville House
14.	Site of Rosemount House	
15.	Site of Roebuck House	
16.	Site of Belgrove House	
17.	Site of Newstead House	

Indicative Original Estate Boundaries

A. Merville	G. Woodview
B. Roebuck Castle	H. Rosemount
C. Belfield	I. Newstead
D. Ardmore	J. Richview
E. Roebuck Grove	K. University Lodge, formerly Roebuck Grove
F. Belgrove	

On your walk

For the safety and comfort of all, please remember the following on your walk:

- Keep to the path in wooded areas
- Keep your dog on a leash at all times and clean up after it
- In an emergency call UCD First Response Room on 01 7167999
- Take time to visit new and interesting parts of the campus and watch out for artwork and sculptures along the way
- Enjoy a cup of coffee from numerous locations on campus

Learn more about the Programme for Preservation of Period Houses at UCD (www.ucd.ie/campusdevelopment)