

## Are these the 26 oldest businesses in Ireland?

**Ireland's business community is buzzing with all the startup activity. But what about the country's longest-established businesses? What about the firms that have faced the greatest challenge of them all – survival – with stoicism and lengthy determination?**

ThinkBusiness is on a journey through the Republic of Ireland to find the country's oldest businesses. The list below is open to correction. If you know of a business older than the businesses in each county listed below, we will be happy to include it.

### Leinster

#### **Dublin - Rathborne Candles. Date founded: 1488**

Now located in Blanchardstown, Rathborne Candles has been in business as candle makers in Dublin since 1488 when the Rathborne family arrived from Chester. Rathborne's candles were used to light the city's streets in the 1700s. Today, in the era of electricity, the company produces church candles alongside high-end candles sold through Brown Thomas.

#### **Meath - O'Connell's Pub. Date founded: 1845**

Located in the historic village of Skryne, O'Connell's is best known for its appearance in the famous Guinness Christmas TV advert.

#### **Kildare - Malone Newsagent. Date Founded: 1864**

Located in Kildare town, L. Malone Newsagents has remained in the ownership of the same family since opening in 1864. Thought to be one of the oldest newsagents in the county, it celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2014. The "L" in the name dates back to the original proprietor, Brigid Malone, who decided to call the shop after her daughter Lily.

#### **Carlow - Reddy's. Date founded: 1768**

Reddy's pub and restaurant on Tullow Street in the centre of Carlow town was founded in the 18th century. The business has gone through quite a few transformations over time including a spell as a hotel and, as recently as the 1930s, as a funeral directors.

#### **Kilkenny - The Kyteler's Inn. Date founded: 1324**

Located on St Kieran's Street in the medieval city of Kilkenny, the first owner of Kyteler's Inn is said

to have been Dame Alice Kyteler, who was accused of witchcraft in the early 14th century.

**Laois - Morrissey's Bar. Date founded: 1775**

Like many of the old pubs on this list, Morrissey's in Abbeyleix began life as a grocery store that also served alcohol. To this day, it retains its "traditional" pub feel, containing many kinds of Irish memorabilia from days of yore.

**Longford - Quinn's Supply Store. Date founded: 1875**

Located in Edgeworthstown, Quinn's Supply Store has been serving the community of Edgeworthstown and the surrounding areas for 140 years. The business is currently in the hands of the fifth generation of the family.

**Louth - The Argus. Date founded: 1835**

The Dundalk-based Argus began publication as The Drogheda Argus and Leinster Journal. The weekly newspaper is fourteen years older than its rival in Co. Louth, the Dundalk Democrat, which was established in 1849.

**Offaly - Thrace Synthetic Packaging. Date founded: 1865**

Located in Clara, Thrace Synthetic Packaging was founded in 1865. The company manufactures woven technical fabrics from jute and produced packaging products from jute and cotton. 150 years later, Thrace Synthetic Packaging is still one of the leading producers and suppliers of technical fabrics and industrial packaging products.

**Westmeath - Canton Casey's. Date founded: 1825**

Located in Mullingar, Canton Casey's bar has been at the heart of business in the town since 1825. The business is located adjacent to the statue of local legend Joe Dolan in the town centre.

**Wexford - GH Letts. Date founded: 1810**

Located in Enniscorthy, Lett's is one of the leading drinks wholesale and distribution organisations in the country. Today, seven generations later, the business is still in the hands of the Lett family.

**Wicklow - Avoca. Date founded: 1723**

With headquarters located in Kilmacanogue, Avoca is an Irish family-run business that is one of the world's oldest surviving clothing manufacturing companies. Today Avoca has nearly a dozen stores and cafés across the country.

## Connacht

### **Galway - Thomas Dillon's Claddagh Gold. Date founded: 1750**

Located at the heart of Galway city, Thomas Dillon's Claddagh Gold claims to be the original maker of the Claddagh Ring and the oldest jewellers in Ireland.

### **Leitrim - The Bush Hotel. Date founded: 1793**

Located in Carrick-on-Shannon, The Bush Hotel opened its doors in 1793. Now in its fourth century, the Bush Hotel has maintained the Irish tradition of the Teach Aiochta, the 'house of hospitality'. The Bush Hotel is currently run by the Dolan family.

### **Mayo - Mellett's Emporium. Date founded: 1797**

Currently run by the seventh generation of the Mellett family, this Swinford pub has been operation since 1797. It originally consisted of a grocery store at the front of the premises with a bar at the rear with Mellett's also operating a funeral director service for many years but today only the pub remains.

### **Roscommon - Morahan's Bar. Date founded: 1641**

Located in Ballinagare, the bar has been in the same family since 1641. Currently, Morahan's is run by the eighth generation of the Morahan family. An interesting side note is that each generation of the family has had a Bernard Morahan, with the name being passed on from generation to generation.

### **Sligo - The Sligo Champion. Date founded: 1836**

The Sligo Champion is one of the oldest regional newspapers in the country. It began publication before Daniel O'Connell achieved Catholic Emancipation and survived the Famine, the War of Independence and many a recession to celebrate its 175th anniversary in 2011. It has been part of Independent News & Media since 2008.

## Ulster

### **Donegal - McCullagh Jewellers. Date founded: 1869**

Located in Letterkenny Shopping Centre today, McCullagh Jewellers has been an ever-present fixture in the town since it first opened in 1869.

### **Cavan - Carton Bros. Date founded: 1775**

Located in Shercock, Carton Brothers is the company behind Manor Farm chickens. The business is one of the oldest family companies in the country and dates back to 1775 when it opened in the Dublin markets.

### **Monaghan - Northern Standard. Date founded: 1839**

Located in Monaghan town, The Northern Standard is the longest established newspaper circulating in Co. Monaghan and it has been telling Monaghan's story every week since the first issue was published on 10 January 1839.

## **Munster**

### **Clare - Ennis Cash Company. Date founded: 1880**

Located on O'Connell Street in the town centre, Ennis Cash Company is one of the oldest houses in Ireland selling Irish linens.

### **Cork - The Old Thatch. Date founded: 1667**

Located in Killeagh in East Cork, The Old Thatch is one of the oldest licensed premises in Ireland. The present owners, the Sweeneys, can trace ownership as far back as the mid-1700s.

### **Kerry - Ashes Pub. Date founded: 1849**

Located in Dingle, Ashes was founded by John O'Connor in 1849 as a licensed grocery store. The name was changed to Ashes in 1926, but the family connection has remained since the day of John O'Connor.

### **Limerick - The Locke Bar. Date founded: 1724**

Located on King's Island in the historic centre of Limerick City, The Locke Bar dates all the way back to 1724.

### **Tipperary - Nenagh Guardian. Date founded: 1838**

The first edition of the Nenagh Guardian was published on 21 January 1838. The newspaper was originally titled the Nenagh Guardian or Tipperary (North Riding) and Ormond Advertiser but the bulk of this lengthy title was dropped in 1936.

### **Waterford - Flahavan's Oats. Date founded: 1785**

Flahavan's can trace its history back to 1785 when Thomas Dunn took over a mill in Kilmacthomas

on the banks of the River Mahon. Dunn was the great-great-great-grandfather of John Flahavan, the managing director of the company today. Hot on the heels of Flahavan's is Robert Thompson Funeral Directors in Waterford city which was established a year later in 1786.

## Interesting stories

The search for the longest-established business in each county in the Republic of Ireland has thrown up some absorbing stories.

One of our favourite stories is from Co. Roscommon. Morahan's bar in Ballinagare has been in the same family since 1641. Morahan's is run by the eight generation of the Morahan family, and each generation of the Morahan family has had a son named Bernard Morahan.

While many of Ireland's longest-established businesses are public houses and hotels, there are others that tell their tale about family businesses and the things that have mattered to generations.

The Carton family, owners of Manor Farm chickens in Co. Cavan has been in business since 1775 while Avoca in Co. Wicklow is on the go since 1723.

## The first draft

This is the first draft list of Ireland's oldest businesses. We are happy to stand corrected. If anyone knows of any older businesses in each county, we'd be delighted to hear about them.

While Rathborne Candles (Est. 1488) lays claim to being Ireland's oldest manufacturing company, what about the ancient pubs, the long-lived breweries, the well-read newspapers, the antediluvian boat makers?

If you know of a business in a particular county that is older than the businesses listed below, [contact](#) ThinkBusiness with the details. The only rule is that the firm should be continuous; i.e. from when it was founded until today. For example, many people nominated Sean's Bar in Athlone, which claims to have been a pub since 900 AD. While Sean's Bar may have been the site of an ancient tavern, it wasn't Sean's Bar for that length of time so doesn't qualify, unfortunately.

*Image: CristinaMuraca / Shutterstock.com*