THE OLD ROAD TO RATHMINES

There are no accurate maps of the route of the Old Road to Rathmines, because it was replaced by the new, straight road in 1800, many years before the first accurate map was published by the Ordnance Survey in 1837. This essay uses new research to suggest the route that the Old Road followed.



Taylor's 1816 Map

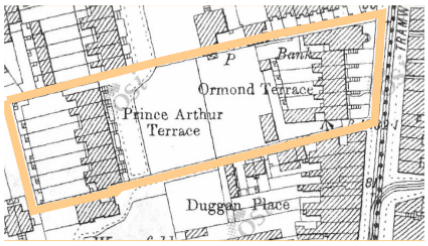
It is described in historic sources as running along the top of an embankment or ridge rising from the left bank of the Swan, and that embankment can still be read in the slope of the ground west of Lr. Rathmines Rd rising upwards towards St. Louis Primary School and Williams Park.

Taylor's map of 1816 shows roughly the extent of the ridge on the west side of the river, (shown green here).

The houses in Prince Arthur Terrace were built in 1853 on the site of a previous house called Rockville, built around 1769.



Rockville, 1837



Prince Arthur Terrace

Their title deeds include one describing the original site for Rockville as having its eastern boundary at "the new road to Rathmines" and its western boundary at "the old road to Rathmines".



Rockville to South, 1837

The western boundary of Rockville forms a continuous straight line with the part of Charleville Road where it connects with Rathgar Road and indeed the 1837 OS map shows a lane at that point, (A), strongly indicating that this is where the old road entered Rathmines.



Rockville to North, 1837
(different scale)

The 1837 map also shows a continuous property line running northwards from Rockville as far the rear of Williams Park, (B), roughly parallel with the ridge shown in Taylor's 1816 map, a strong suggestion of the pre-existence of an important physical linear feature such as a road.



Lissenfield, 1837



Meath Estate, 1810

Proceeding northwards, the 1837 map shows that Point B lies at the Southeast corner of the Cavalry Barracks, built between 1810 and 1815, and it shows a number of fine houses orientated towards the new road which was laid out in the year 1800.

However, a map of land to be leased to Major Alexander Taylor (him of the maps), dated 1810, shows none of these fine houses, nor the access road to the barracks. It does show a fragment of the Old Road, (C), heading towards La Touche Bridge, (E), and an aligned feature in between, (D), which looks like it could have been a wall or property boundary.

The old road probably crossed that land from B to C, parallel to the ridge shown on his map of 1816, before Major Taylor bought it. The barracks was built parallel to the new road between 1810 and 1815, so that there would have been two awkward triangular parcels of land left between the barracks and the new road. It makes sense that these two triangles would have been consolidated into one rectangular parcel when the opportunity arose; thus the old road would have been eliminated to make way for the layout shown on the 1837 map.



The Old Road to Rathmines?

Taking all of these factors into account, it is highly likely that the Old Road to Rathmines followed the route shown here.

It would have traced a line from La Touche Bridge veering away from the modern road towards the rear of Williams Park, then correcting its course towards the rear of Leinster Square and Prince Arthur Terrace, arriving at the village at the modern junction with Charleville Road.

Is it any wonder the authorities decided to replace it with a straight road in the year 1800?

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