A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COTTAGE ORNÉ

Since its beginnings in 1833, Cottage Orné has evolved from a simple thatched entrance lodge for Dublin Zoo into one of the Zoo's most treasured historic landmarks.

Discover some key moments in the building's history:

1833

The charming thatched entrance lodge, classified by architectural historians as a *cottage orné*, was completed in early summer 1833. Designed by architect and Zoo council member William Deane Butler, it was intended to be simple and and inexpensive, costing less than £30.

1830s

Renowned architect Decimus Burton created the Zoo's original master plan. He designed the Zoo with the lake as the focal point and positioned the entrance on the south side for easy access from the city. The main entrance to the Zoo remains on this side of the site today.

1860s

As crowds increased, the entrance evolved from a simple lodge into a busy gateway. Turnstiles, exit gates and early crowd control measures appeared, while planting, walls and hedges gradually shaped the landscape around the entrance.

1870

By 1870 the little lodge was showing its age. Rather than replace it, the Zoo patched it up while waiting for funds that never quite materialised.

1876

The Cottage Orné caught fire in 1876 but was repaired once again. Over the following decades, it was repeatedly criticised as shabby, inconvenient and deteriorating, yet it survived through constant repairs and repeated thatching.

Late 1800s

The members' entrance relied largely on honesty, which occasionally produced amusing results. One official complained that four men had shared a single membership by adopting the same surname, while an entire school of 37 girls once entered as the 'daughters' of one subscriber.

1939 - 1945

During World War II, visitor numbers surged, placing huge pressure on the tiny entrance lodge. An extension was added for members, who still signed themselves in using the long-standing honesty system.

Mid-20th Century

Outside the gates, a woman sold peanuts "for the monkeys." Children eagerly fed the animals through the wire fencing, sometimes risking nipped fingers from sharp monkey teeth.

1968

To cope with growing numbers, a new prefabricated entrance building replaced the old working entrance. The original Cottage Orné, however, was preserved because of its historical charm and significance.

1990s

By the 1990s the prefabricated entrance had deteriorated and plans began for the construction of a new modern entrance worthy of the Zoo's future.

2026

In 2026, the historic Cottage Orné entrance lodge was carefully restored to its former glory through substantial funding from the Office of Public Works and Dublin City Council, and the work of expert conservation restorers. Traditional craftsmanship and historically accurate materials helped preserve Dublin Zoo's oldest surviving structure for future generations.

DUBLIN ZOO