

## The Oldest Pub in Ireland



*Grace Neill's*  
Ireland's Oldest Pub Est. 1611



[The Brazen Head in Dublin](#) has long proclaimed to be "the oldest" pub in Ireland, as well as [Grace Neill's in Donaghadee](#), Co. Down, and [Sean's Bar](#) in Athlone, located in the very heart of Ireland, on the banks of the River Shannon at its intersection with the Esker Riada.

The debate went before popular RTE 2 radio host Gerry Ryan in which the owners of Sean's Bar and the owners of The Brazen Head came face to face for the title. The result - The Brazen Head owner admitted, given archeological evidence, that Sean's Bar precedes The Brazen head by 200 years. Further enquiry actually reveals that the Brazen Head took its date from a building in the area which was known as the Brazen Lady or sed Haired Lady dated to 1200A.D. The official Guinness Book of Records dating for the Brazen Head is around 1600A.D. In fact, according to the folks at Guinness, Sean's Bar is the oldest pub in Europe.

Athlone, translated into Irish is Atha Luain, meaning "the Ford of Luain." Luain was an innkeeper who guided people across the treacherous waters of the ancient ford. The crossing point and the pub date back to the year 900AD. Later, a settlement was established around the Crossing Point and King Turlough O' Connor built the first wooden castle in 1129.

Sean's Bar has a detailed and documented history right back to 900AD. During renovations in 1970, the walls of the bar were found to be made of "wattle and wicker" dating back to the ninth century. Old coins which were minted by various landlords for barter with their customers were also found and dated to this period. The walls and the coins are on display in the National Museum. One section remains on display in the pub.

Sean's Bar, as it is known today, is a building of great antiquity which over the years has built up a world-wide reputation for its atmosphere, old bar, open fireplace and walls - which are covered with many ancient artifacts. Sean's is full of great character and an international clientele come to hear the best of traditional Irish music and song, or just relax in the beer garden that overlooks the Ford of Luain.