



Windows of Roscommon



Roscommon has a rich heritage of buildings, which are an important part of the character and identity of the county. From large houses, such as Strokestown House; to the typical two or three story buildings lining the streets and terraces of our towns; to the modest farmhouses and cottages; plastered facades, natural slate roofs and timber sash windows are common defining features.

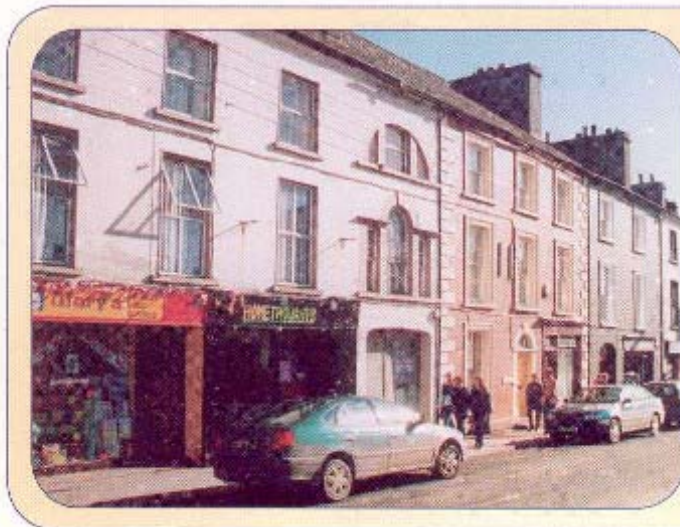
No feature does more to contribute to the character of a building than its windows and it is this feature that often draws our attention.

The shape, size and spacing of window openings are essential elements of older buildings and bestow uniformity to streetscapes. The detail and quality of sash windows, both in terms of their frame and glass can be ruined by one careless act of modernisation.

IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONAL SASH WINDOWS - Knockvicar -



Most older buildings are designed with sliding timber sash windows, which are an important part of their architectural character.



CONTRIBUTION OF TIMBER WINDOWS TO ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER - Roscommon -

The detailing of sash windows on an individual building, village or town streetscape contributes an important part to architectural character.

Windows of Roscommon

Sash Windows

Sash windows generally consist of a box frame containing two sashes, which can be opened by sliding them in a channel composed of two linings, a sash stile and a central parting bead. The sash is attached to cords running over wooden or metal pulley wheels. On the ends of the cords are lead weights, which balance the weight of the sash itself. Sashes are divided up into panes with glazing bars. The panes in the window typically number from two to sixteen.

Pre-industrial era window sashes have an irreplaceable handcrafted and textured quality. In the past glass was a valuable commodity, so small pieces were used. Two types of glass are common; crown glass was cut from a blown disc of glass, while cylinder glass was blown in the form of a cylinder, which was then slit and opened out.

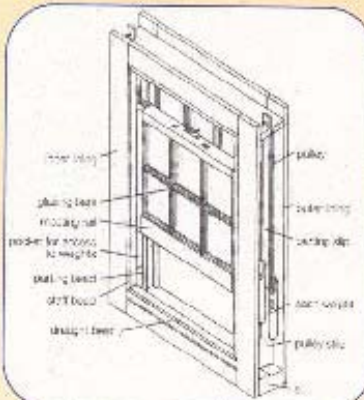
Old glass panes display subtleties of texture, colour and pleasing imperfections, which make them a joy to look at and look through. Wherever possible, it is important to save old glass in windows, either by leaving the panes in situ, or by reusing them.

SIX-OVER-SIX PANE WINDOWS - Cootehall -



This classic proportion of window size and glazing sub-division was widely used during the 18th and through most of the 19th century.

Six-over-Six Pane Sash



Line drawing detail of a six-over-six sash window.



EARLY 19th CENTURY SASHES - Castlereagh -

The windows over the shopfront are of the classic tripartite or Wyatt design.

Windows of Roscommon

Repairs rather than Replacement

It is unfortunate that there has been so much unnecessary replacement of old sash windows. However, a major advantage of these windows is their ability to be repaired. Evaluation of the repair options, before replacement is crucial.

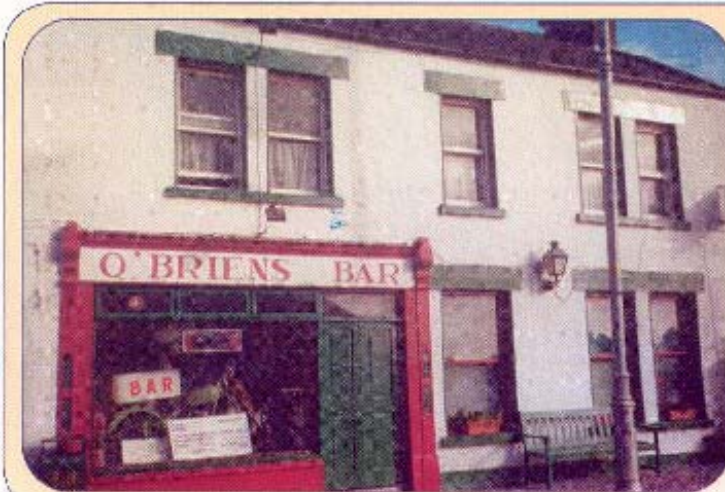
One of the most common problems with sash windows is over painting, which traps moisture and inhibits movement of sashes. Timber decay often affects only 5% of the window, the lower corners and bottom rail being the main problem areas and easily corrected. Other problems, such as broken sash cords and re-hanging of sash weights are simply solved in the right hands. Problems with draughts and noise can be substantially overcome by re-fixing parting beads and using a simple system of draught strips between the sash and frame.

Property owners, builders and advisors proposing refurbishment schemes should consider maintenance of original windows as first option. Where unsuitable modern windows are being removed on an older building, research should be carried out to establish original design. Unco-ordinated window replacement, with sashes giving way to different hinged designs and the use of uPVC and other materials has an adverse affect on the quality of buildings across Co. Roscommon.

DEVELOPMENT OF TWO-OVER-TWO PANE - Roscommon -



This proportion and arrangement was developed in the mid 19th century, and continued widely in use until the mid 20th century.



USE OF SINGLE PANE SASHES - Knockcroghery -

These were used from the mid 19th century to mid 20th century. Many earlier buildings such as this were altered to suit this fashion.

Windows of Roscommon

The Local Government Planning and Development Act 1999

This act gives protection to our architectural heritage. From 1st January 2000 buildings listed in the existing County Development Plan have been redefined to form a statutory Record of Protected Structures. The alteration and removal of windows from these buildings is subject to planning control and enforcement. Through the combination of legislation and financial support through the Conservation Grant Scheme, Roscommon County Council seeks to ensure the protection and enhancement of Roscommon's architectural heritage. It will be the intention of the County Council to seek maintenance and restoration of appropriate window design types.

IRREPLACEABLE QUALITY OF OLD SASH WINDOWS - Roscommon -



The character of many groups of buildings has been damaged by window replacement in uPVC with different opening designs.

REPAIR AS FIRST OPTION - Strokestown -



In maintenance and renewal of older buildings, the prime objective should be to maintain original sash windows with their old handmade glass, along with render and natural slate.

DO...

- concentrate on repair instead of replacement.
- find, and remedy, the root cause of any problem.
- avoid rust forming on metal windows.
- remember that shutters can be used for insulation.
- keep usable details as patterns for present or future work.
- research prior to restoration.

DON'T...

- dip historic timber windows in caustic mix.
- burn off paint.
- scrape off paint unless it is interfering with the function of the window.
- ignore condensation. It is a danger sign.

Roscommon County Council is sponsoring the *Windows of Roscommon* leaflet and exhibition. This leaflet was produced by the Heritage Officer, Roscommon County Council in collaboration with An Taisce and the Dublin Civic Trust.

For further information, please contact:
Heritage Officer,
Roscommon County Council,
Telephone: 0903 57100
E-mail: nmckeon@roscommoncoco.ie