



ULSTER
ARCHITECTURAL
HERITAGE

NORTHERN IRELAND
HANDS-ON
HERITAGE

05

HOW TO?

Harness
Heritage Skills

From establishing how best to conserve and appropriately restore your historic building, to sourcing and hiring a qualified and skilled professional to carry out remedial or restoration works, harnessing heritage skills can be a complex task.

Supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Hands-On Heritage Project NI is a project that combines traditional heritage engagement and outreach with the introduction of a range of new digital engagement technologies, better connecting people and communities with built heritage.



This is one of ten Heritage: How To? Guides, covering a broad spectrum of ideas in relation to Northern Ireland's historic environment.

Following basic conservation principles, the main aim is to carry out works which will preserve the special interest of the historic building or place.

Traditional building skills are often the skills required to properly conserve and restore a historic building's special interest and character, using appropriate construction methods and materials. An inherent link to our past, traditional building skills are passed down through generations, amalgamating the experience and knowledge of the many individuals who have cared for historic buildings and monuments. Traditional skills also showcase the beauty, rigour and capabilities of handcraftsmanship, and are potentially more environmentally sustainable than employing modern methods.

To ensure the maintenance and repairs to a historic building are appropriate, it is best to gain a knowledge of the building itself, and of traditional skills and construction methods. This will assist in an understanding of what is required, and the appointment of an appropriate professional or tradesperson. The inappropriate repair, maintenance and use of incompatible materials can harm a historic building and result in sometimes irreversible damage to its character and built fabric.

Throughout our Heritage: How To? Guides we refer to heritage assets as buildings and monuments.

Thank you to David Bunting @ImagesNI for providing a selection of images for this guide.



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1. | Specialisms

A variety of specialisms is required when undertaking a heritage project, interlocking to complement and offset one another.

ARCHITECTS



ENGINEERS



ARCHAEOLOGISTS



HISTORIC INTERIOR RESTORERS



JOINERS



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS



LIME PRACTITIONERS & CONSULTANTS



STONE MASONS



THATCHERS



QUANTITY SURVEYORS



BUILDING SURVEYORS



SUPPLIERS



STONE CONSERVATORS



IRONMONGERS



GLAZIERS



GILDERS



LEAD WORKERS



PLASTERERS



BELL FOUNDERS



CLOCK MAKERS



FURNITURE RESTORERS



MOSAIC RESTORERS

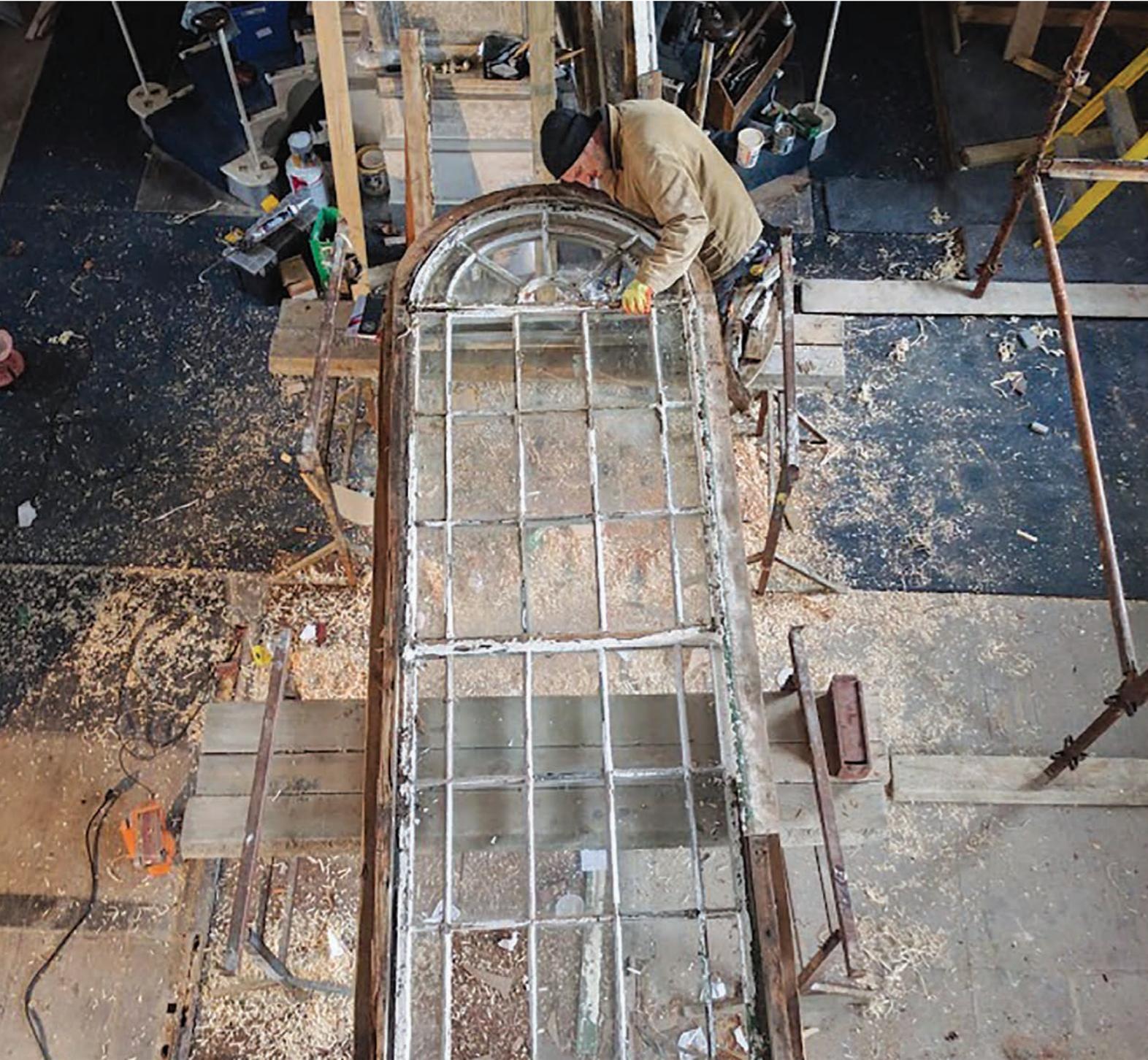


BRICK RESTORATION SPECIALISTS



SPECIALIST ROOFERS





2 | How can you Harness Heritage Skills in your historic building?

Get to know the building or monument yourself. This will involve undertaking your own recording, research and assessment of the building to physically identify any areas of concern. To find out how to **Read, Record and Research** visit our **Heritage How To? Guides**.

As an owner, you should know your building better than anyone, including previous building works that have been undertaken, areas of concern and continued maintenance.

Things to consider are:

There are several things to consider before harnessing heritage skills.

These are as follows:

1. Condition Assessment**When: Prior to commencing works**

Prior to commencing a programme of works, it is important to carry out a condition assessment of your historic building or monument, taking into account its cultural significance (which includes aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value).

The assessment ideally should take into account:

- Cultural significance;
- Heritage asset's age;
- Construction;
- Historic fabric;
- Modern interventions;
- Areas of concern.

The assessment will help you to understand what is special about the building, and ensure that works undertaken do not undermine its heritage value. It will also determine the scale of works necessary to properly conserve and maintain the historic asset in question, enabling you to decipher and/or prioritise what works are required immediately and in what order. It is advised, at this stage of the process to make initial enquiries with specialists where necessary e.g. surveyors, architects, engineers or craftspeople. With regards to hazardous materials, some professionals may not wish to undertake the works necessary due to the safety of their staff members and the safe and responsible disposal of hazardous materials. This may require further specialist guidance and intervention.

2. Project Management**When: Beginning, middle and end of a project**

Once a scope of works has been compiled and finalised, the project management phase of harnessing heritage skills can begin. This phase may require the recruitment of a project manager, which should be factored into any budget expenditure.

A project manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring project timeline and targets are met;
- Planning and execution of a project;
- Adhering to the project budget;
- Managing a team of contractors and sub-contractors associated with the project;
- Approving all work that is carried out on site;
- Sourcing contractors/sub-contractors;
- Accessing, judging and handling project delays;
- Contingency of time.

3. Planning Approval**When: before commencement of work on site****APPROPRIATE PLANNING PERMISSIONS MUST BE GRANTED BEFORE CARRYING OUT ANY WORK ON SITE.**

When making changes to a historic building, whether it be a designated heritage asset or a non-designated heritage asset, the planning process can be time consuming. Planning permission and listed building consent is required for changes to Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These permissions are put in place to prevent the incremental and devastating loss of historic fabric.

**REMEMBER:
THIS PROCESS
CAN BE TIME
CONSUMING**

When applying for works, it is advised that you consult with your Local Planning Authority for pre application advice. Planning applications can also be costly. It is important to consider this before applying/making any changes to your scheme that may require a subsequent application. It is likely that at this stage you will need to employ an architect who can provide detailed drawings and specifications of the works in question.

4. Sourcing the right people

When: Beginning, middle and end of a project

When starting a heritage project, it is crucial that you engage with people who understand the ethos of what you are trying to achieve.

Do they fully understand your vision?

Are they passionate about their profession?

Know what you want from a contractor/sub-contractor and stand your ground.

If you don't know what it is that you want or need, seek professional advice and choose those who you feel comfortable working with. When choosing a contractor/sub-contractor it is important to engage with them. Ask to view a portfolio of work, meet them in person and attend a site visit with material samples to see how they understand what you are trying to achieve. Ensure they provide a quotation and a breakdown of the work that they plan to carry out for this fee.

When finalising contracts, it is crucial that an agreement is made and signed in writing, detailing the cost of the work, the forecasted time that it will take and any mitigating factors.

Accreditation:

Accreditation is also an important factor to consider when sourcing a contractor/sub-contractor. Officially recognised by a specialist body, whether it be in architecture, lime mortaring or historic building conservation, it displays that the person is qualified, to a specific level or standard, to carry out their chosen practise. Some awarding bodies require regular continued professional development, training courses and testing to ensure their

standards of accreditation are met. It is important to note, however, that not all specialist trades seek accreditation. This does not mean that their standard of work is poor, however it makes it even more important for you to seek testimonials and see examples of their work to ensure you will receive good quality workmanship.

Accredited bodies include*:

Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)

Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA)

Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI)

The Institute of Conservation (ICON)

**List is not exhaustive*

5. Ask for a guarantee

When: before entering into a contract

When commissioning work, it is always important to ask your supplier/sub-contractor for a guarantee. This will give you assurance that their products or services are reliable and will give the supplier/sub-contractor accountability.

3. | Aspects of traditional building skills

Used as a blanket term, traditional skills cover a wide remit of specialisms that are used within the promotion, protection and conservation of Northern Ireland's historic environment. For more information on traditional skill specialisms and practitioners please visit our Traditional Skills Directory.

1. ROOFING

Thatch



Thatch is known as the traditional roofing material of Ireland. With the introduction of slate and tin roofs, the use of thatch as a roofing material declined. Now somewhat romanticised, thatch is characteristically known for its visual and dense appearance, characteristically blending within a landscape. Materials used for thatch roofing include straw, flax, rye and fresh water reed, offering regional variations across the nine counties of Ulster. There are also many regional variations in terms of method and aesthetics.

- Water resistant
- Good insulation properties
- Can be more environmentally sustainable than other roofing materials

Slate



A tradition passed down through families, slate roofs vary in style across the region. Slate tiles were marked out using a marking stick, with measurements unique to the family or craftsman; thus resulting in personalised slate tiles of varied size and shape depending on marking stick measurements. The widespread use of Welsh Slate superseded the use of traditional slate.

- Variations in size, shape and colour

2. JOINERY



Joinery in a historic building is characteristically representative of the architectural style and time period in which it was built. Windows, doors, fittings and embellishments cumulatively add distinctive and memorable character to a building.

Unique in size and scale, historic building openings have a tendency to distort and move over time due to material movement and stress. Requiring bespoke craftsmanship, standardised 'off the peg' fixtures and fittings are not appropriate in historic buildings. Key areas of joinery include doors and windows, with wood being the most common joinery material.

NOTE: uPVC is not an appropriate material in historic buildings and is generally against permission where designation applies.

DOORS

Access
Security
Variety of styles (half-doors, sheeted, panelled)
Ventilation
Focal point

WINDOWS

Eyes of the building
Ventilation
Proportion
Variety of styles (sash, casement)

3. LIME PLASTER WORK AND RENDERS



Lime is the predominant material used in historic buildings. Hair and/or vegetable fibres were traditionally added to lime-based renders to increase their strength. Applied directly onto a surface, 'on the hard', or onto horizontal laths, 'lath and plaster' these traditional methods can still be used today. Internal plasterwork also includes decorative features such as coricing and ceiling roses. Externally, lime-based renders were traditionally used to waterproof a building, creating a barrier between internal and external elements. Lime-based renders have the ability to convincingly mimic stonework and stucco patterns. Sand or aggregate can also be added to create coloured and textured surface finishes.

- Finishing material
- Breathable
- Flexible (supporting movement)

4. MASONRY



Stone and brick are two predominant materials used in the construction of historic buildings. Stone was used for grand houses, churches and public buildings due to its dominant and opposing appearance; but also used for vernacular structures, where stone was readily available in the region. Stone work requires skilled stonemasons to understand material properties and characteristics when carrying out tasks. Stonework can range from dry stone walling, carving, to redressing.

Brick was commonly used in urban environments and is particularly synonymous with terraced housing. Bricks were often irregular in shape and size due to imperial sizing and attributes relating to the hand making process. Bricks can be laid in decorative patterns and bonds, visually impactful to the streetscape. Factory made brick superseded the use of imperial and handmade bricks, for more uniform and consistent sizing.

Mortar is used to 'glue' brick and stone together. As important as the masonry itself, pointing contributes significantly to a building's overall character and appearance. Lime mortar is favoured due to its breathability, capillary action and flexibility.

4 | Best practice for harnessing heritage skills

REMEMBER TO:

- Respect the historic fabric;
- Use appropriate materials;
- Understand the value and significance of what you are working with;
- Employ the correct individuals;
- Understand what is required;
- Document any historic fabric which requires removal.

How to get involved in traditional building skills:

- Attend a traditional skills event (online and in person);
- Commence a heritage project;
- Enrol on a traditional skills training course or workshop*;
- Network;
- Become an apprentice*;
- Volunteer*;
- Work experience*;
- Read around the subject matter;
- Ask questions;
- Become a member of an accredited body.

**Grants and bursaries may be available for study or participation in heritage skills related courses.*



Continued Professional Development (CPD) is encouraged within the historic environment and heritage sector. Undertaking refresher courses and training programmes aid the expansion of knowledge and allow you to remain up to date with relevant practices and policies.

The following organisations offer a range of courses; educational events (some of which require booking fees); funded projects; bursaries; membership and publications in relation to traditional building skills*:

- Ulster Architectural Heritage (UAH)
- The Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
- Irish Georgian Society (IGS)
- The Building Limes Forum (BLF)
- Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)

**List is not exhaustive*



5 | Organisations

Please note that this list is not exhaustive. We want to provide you with some examples of the wide variety of heritage related organisations that engage in harnessing heritage skills.

Ulster Architectural Heritage (UAH)

www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk

Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland (CITBNI)

www.citbni.org.uk

The Building Limes Forum of Ireland (BLF)

www.buildinglimesforumireland.com

Department for Communities: Historic Environment Division (DfC:HED)

www.communities-ni.gov.uk

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)

www.spab.org.uk/about-us/spab-ireland

National Heritage Training Group (NHTG)

www.the-nhtg.org.uk

Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)

www.ihbc.org.uk

The National Trust

www.nationaltrust.org.uk



For more information on How To?
Harness Heritage Skills visit the
Hands-On Heritage website
www.handsonheritage-ni.org.uk
where you can access related
Heritage: How To? Guides.

Promotion – Protection – Conservation – **Regeneration**

Ulster Architectural Heritage (UAH) works to promote the historic built environment, its protection, conservation and heritage-led regeneration, through advice and support, advocacy, publications, events, and projects delivery. Since its formation in 1967, the UAH has established itself as the lead independent voice for the historic built environment across the nine counties of Ulster, a fearless campaigner for historic buildings, a generous resource of information on local architecture and a source of advice on conservation.

UAH has had much success in influencing public opinion in favour of conservation of our historic built environment. UAH carries out reports, assessments, monitoring of the historic built environment and makes representations relating to planning and policy. UAH educates, engages and informs on built heritage through a wide range of events, publications and projects.



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