HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE SERIES

AN ACTION OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL'S TRADITIONAL BUILDING SKILLS INITIATIVE AND SPAB IRELAND

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

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE SERIES

AN ACTION OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL'S TRADITIONAL BUILDING SKILLS INITIATIVE AND SPAB IRELAND

INTRODUCTION

The maintenance series is a collection of five sheets providing the owners of older homes (i.e. built before World War II) with basic guidance on essential maintenance.

1 Wood and ironwork

2 Render and mortar

3 Roofs

4 Vegetation

5 Rainwater goods

Each maintenance sheet is complemented by a short explanatory video. The videos are available to view on the YouTube channels of both the Heritage Council and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings Ireland (SPAB).
www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIKz_D-MJSUkEcOQp2zhltlS885a1Tfy1

WHY MAINTAIN YOUR OLD BUILDING?

Well-maintained buildings improve the quality of life of their occupants and the community in general. Beyond preserving the intrinsic heritage value of these buildings, carrying out regular maintenance to your building has strong economic benefits:

1. Conducting regular maintenance costs significantly less than waiting for problems to grow and resolving later. Over time, as building problems worsen, the cost of repair tends to grow not at a constant pace but at an ever-increasing rate.
2. Maintenance will extend the life of your building and thereby support the preservation of its resale value.
3. Communities that maintain their buildings, improve the property values of all.

FURTHER READING

An excellent document to read on building maintenance is *Maintenance: a guide to the care of older buildings* (Donnelly, 2007).
www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/Maintenance-A-Guide-to-the-Care-of-Older-Buildings-2007.pdf

A full resource webpage on the repair and maintence of historic buildings has been created by the Heritage Council.
www.heritagecouncil.ie/news/news-features/how-historic-buildings-can-be-repaired-and-maintained

There is also advice on maintenance and building repair available on SPAB's website and by contacting their Technical Advice Line:
www.spab.org.uk/advice

USEFUL CONTACTS

Almost every local authority has either a Heritage Officer or Architectural Conservation Officer, many have both. They can provide you with very helpful advice on caring for your historic building.

To find your local Architectural Conservation Officer visit: ***www.buildingsofireland.ie/app/uploads/2020/07/Architectural-Conservation-Officers-01.07.2020.pdf***

To find your local Heritage Officer visit:
www.heritagecouncil.ie/our-work-with-others/county-heritage-officers

SPAB IRELAND

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

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE SERIES

AN ACTION OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL'S TRADITIONAL BUILDING SKILLS INITIATIVE AND SPAB IRELAND

WOOD AND IRONWORK

WHY?

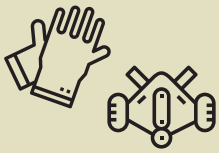
Any wood or metal on the outside of your building needs to be protected from the weather to stop rot and corrosion. Outdoor wood and metal should be repainted at least every five years. Nonetheless, you should check for signs of cracking or peeling paint every year.

Lack of paint, particularly at the base of doors and windows allows timber to become saturated and degraded.

Regularly painting your railings is the most cost-effective way of protecting wrought and cast ironwork. They will continue to last generations.

HOW?

1. When repainting wood and metal, it is a good idea to give the surface a thorough sanding first, especially if it has been painted many times before. This prevents paint from hiding any nice detailing.
2. When preparing metal to be painted make sure to remove all rust with a wire brush or rust remover before applying your primer. Otherwise, the metal can continue to corrode under the rust.



SAFETY FIRST! DON'T FORGET TO WEAR A MASK AND GLOVES.

Use a primer as well as a topcoat when painting. This will ensure new paintwork will last for many years.

For video on maintaining wood and ironwork scan the QR code or visit:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKFbjhc8T50&list=PLIKz_D-MJSUkEcOQp2zhltlS885a1Tfy1&index=2&t=0s

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

SPAB IRELAND

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE SERIES

AN ACTION OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL'S TRADITIONAL BUILDING SKILLS INITIATIVE AND SPAB IRELAND

RENDER AND MORTAR

WHY?

Mortar is a building material used to bond bricks or stone. Traditionally, mortar was made by mixing lime or sometimes clay with sand and water. Render refers to a wall covered (i.e. plastered) in mortar.

Mortar between bricks/stone on the face of buildings (i.e. pointing) is a sacrificial part of the wall. Its role is to protect the stone and brick underneath and to help keep the building dry. Over time, it will erode and crumble away. It should be replaced when it starts to fail. This will stop moisture from entering the building and vegetation from growing. Repoint joints using lime mortar, flush with the wall when this happens.

Similarly, external render is a sacrificial layer which should be repaired/replaced as required with an appropriate lime-based mix. The use of cement as a mortar only became common in the last 100 years or so and it is not compatible with solid stone wall buildings. It is harder than lime mortar and will damage the softer traditional building materials like bricks and stone if used for redering or pointing. Cement is also highly likely to eventually crack and allow moisture into the building.

Inappropriate, and now cracking cement mortar being used on a stone wall will ultimately make a bad problem worse.

Although this image is of an early 20th century building, the hard cement pointing and render has forced the moisture in the wall to go through the softer brick rather than the supposedly sacrificial mortar and render.

HOW?

1. Old buildings weren't generally built with synthetic materials, so beware of using ready-mixed/bagged mortars or renders, especially if they promise waterproof qualities. Unless you are replacing cement pointing or render, the mortar/render should be like-for-like, matching the original material. Failing cement pointing or render should be replaced with an appropriate lime-based mortar.
2. If you notice a new crack in render it is a good idea to monitor it over a number of months, especially if it is wider than 5mm. Simply put a thin piece of masking tape neatly across the crack. If a tear appears, it is a sign that the crack is growing and you may need to contact an engineer to address the problem. If there is no tear and no movement, the crack should be sealed with an appropriate mortar to keep moisture out and prevent future damage.

For video on managing mortar and render scan the QR code or visit: ***www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekzgQ6C5SLg&list=PLIKz_D-MJSUkEcOQp2zhltlS885a1Tfy1&index=5&t=0s***

TOP TIP!

Unless originally built using cement, never ever use cement in an old building. Instead, use traditional mortar such as lime mortar, hot lime mix or clay mortar. There are many short courses available which will equip you with the basic skills needed to repoint masonry and mix suitable mortars on a small scale.

SPAB IRELAND
www.spab.org.uk/about-us/spab-ireland
www.heritagecouncil.ie
An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE SERIES

AN ACTION OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL'S TRADITIONAL BUILDING SKILLS INITIATIVE AND SPAB IRELAND

ROOFS

WHY?

Never underestimate the impact of loose lead flashing, blocked gutters and damaged or missing slates and tiles. Cracked render and missing mortar on chimneys may also cause issues concerning water ingress. Leaks from the roof can spread through the building rapidly, affecting ceilings, internal plaster and joinery.

If roof defects are spotted, they should be addressed urgently to avoid a large repair bill elsewhere in the building.

The missing and broken slates are causing water to run directly into building.

The missing slates, lack of adequate flashing around the chimney and loss of mortar between ridge tiles were causing several leaks in this roof.

HOW?

1. Valley gutters are often ignored. Nonetheless, debris can build up there quickly. Cut back any overhanging branches as these will drop leaves and promote the growth of moss over the roof.
2. Slate is a natural stone cladding material which is generally very durable though eventually it may need to be replaced. In the case of missing or broken slates or tiles, these should be replaced immediately using tingles (i.e. slate straps) on a like-by-like basis to match the original material, size, colour and thickness.
3. Loose or cracked ridge tiles should be refitted/replaced as required. Missing mortar should also be replaced.
4. Securely fix any loose flashings. Gaps should be filled with soft lime-based mortar. Replace any damaged flashing with matching.

SAFETY FIRST! GETTING ACCESS TO ROOFS CAN BE DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS, SO ONLY SUITABLY SKILLED AND INSURED CONTRACTORS SHOULD ACCESS THE ROOF AND CHIMNEY.

REMEMBER!
DUE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF NESTING BIRDS ONLY CUT BACK ANY OVERHANGING BRANCHES FROM SEPTEMBER TO FEBRUARY

Have you poked around in your attic lately? It is a good idea to check your roof space a few times a year for leaks, especially during or after heavy rain.

For video on maintaining roofs scan the QR code or visit:

www.youtube.comwatch?v=KvmKduluuFg&list=PLIKz_D-MJSUkEcOQp2zhltlS885a1Tfy1&index=4&t=0s

SPAB IRELAND
www.spab.org.uk/about-us/spab-ireland www.heritagecouncil.ie
An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE SERIES

AN ACTION OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL'S TRADITIONAL BUILDING SKILLS INITIATIVE AND SPAB IRELAND

VEGETATION

WHY?

Although often attractive, the presence of vegetation on a building usually either causes problems or provides a warning to perhaps unseen damage. In particular, plants with woody roots such as ivy, buddleia and sycamore can open up wide cracks that lets water into the structure.

The Valerian is opening up masonry joints, allowing water ingress and creating a localised bulge.

Toadflax and small ferns do not damage walls. Toadflax in particular merely needs to be kept from growing to an extent where it clogs gutters or obscures possible problems.

HOW?

1. One way to remove vines and other large plants is to cut them off at the roots. However, you should take special care with ivy since its reaction is to attach to the wall to survive and this causes new growth and roots perpendicular to you wall. In this case, you should start peeling away gently from the top.
2. To kill the roots, use a "cut-and-paint" technique: where the plant is cut and the cut surface is then painted with a herbicide. Moss and lower order plants can be effectively removed with an appropriate biocide and a soft bristle brush.
3. Once the vegetation is removed, the wall surface should be checked for any repairs needed. Often masonry will require repointing, and wooden elements may need repair.

All plants that grow on historic structures attach themselves to the building in some way. In many cases, the chemical action softens the underlying wall material and provides a pathway for the plant to insert itself into the joints as an anchor and these may even provide a pathway for water to run into the building.

FRIENDLY PLANTS:

Roses, Clematis, Honeysuckle, Wisteria, Toadflax, Virginia creeper

NOT THAT FRIENDLY:

Ivy, Buddleia, Valerian, Elder, Japanese Knotweed, any tree but especially Ash and Sycamore

REMEMBER!

IF YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE JAPANESE KNOTWEED, DO NOT CUT. YOU WILL ONLY MAKE THE PROBLEM WORSE. INSTEAD, CONTACT A SUITABLY QUALIFIED CONTRACTOR.

REMEMBER!

DUE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF NESTING BIRDS, ONLY CUT BACK BRANCHES FROM SEPTEMBER TO FEBRUARY.

For video on managing vegetation scan the QR code or visit:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkQKHG0eS3k&list=PLIKz_D-MJSUkEcOQp2zhltlS885a1Tfy1&index=5

SPAB IRELAND
www.spab.org.uk/about-us/spab-ireland www.heritagecouncil.ie
An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE SERIES

AN ACTION OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL'S TRADITIONAL BUILDING SKILLS INITIATIVE AND SPAB IRELAND

RAINWATER GOODS

WHY?

Love your gutters, they work hard. Check your gutters a few times in the year and make sure to clean them at least once a year. This will stop moss, leaves and twigs from building up and allow water to flow away from your building. Inspect your gutters every six months for cracks or leaks.

When water is continually running down the face of a wall, over time it can cause serious problems such as mortar erosion, increased plant growth, interior damp, as well as full on leaks into your building.

During heavy rain is a good time to inspect your gutters. It will be obvious if there are any cracks, blockages or leaks.

Clogged with vegetation at one end and with a clear gap at the other, this gutter is bringing water back into the building.

Water from this downpipe is being directed against a wall, causing it to be saturated.

HOW?

1. Make sure that gutters are sloping the correct way towards the downpipe, and not overflowing at the ends. Otherwise, this will wet the wall below and soften the ground around its base. Ensure that gutters and downpipes are adequately fixed and that gutters do not sag between brackets, particularly when full of water.
2. Downpipe outlets should be fitted so as to direct water away from the building and not against the wall.
3. If you have parapet gutters, take care when clearing as they are usually lined with soft materials such as lead.

TOP TIP!

If using a ladder to clean your gutters make sure someone is there with you to hold the bottom. Gutters can be messy. A good pair of kitchen or garden gloves might be a good idea.

For video on rainwater goods scan the QR code or visit: *www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCuU41VsNmg&list=PLIKz_D-MJSUkEcOQp2zhltlS885a1Tfy1&index=2*

SPAB IRELAND
www.spab.org.uk/about-us/spab-ireland www.heritagecouncil.ie
An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

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

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council