



Irish
Georgian
Society



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



NATIONAL INVENTORY
of ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Appreciating & Minding Our Vernacular Architecture

City Assembly House & Online | 27 June 2023 | 10am - 5pm



Appreciating & Minding Our Vernacular Architecture

The study day will present research and insights into the history and conservation of Ireland's built vernacular heritage. Presentations will examine the materials and methods used to both build and repair Ireland's vernacular architecture with best practice conservation showcased. Issues relating to understanding our vernacular architecture in the context of our intangible heritage will be addressed; and consideration will be given to the traditional furniture found in these buildings.

The study day is presented by the Irish Georgian Society in partnership with the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The study day is an action of the IGS Conservation Education Programme and is supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and The Heritage Council through its Heritage Capacity Fund 2023.



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An Chomhairle Oidhreacht
The Heritage Council

Attendance is recognised as formal Continuing Professional Development by the Construction Industry Federation, Engineers Ireland, the Register of Heritage Contractors and the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland.



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CPD APPROVED EVENT 2023



RIAI CPD LINKS
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Programme Timeline

10:00 am Welcome & Opening Address

Donough Cahill, IGS Executive Director

Malcolm Noonan, TD, Minister of State for Heritage

Session 1 Context & Appreciation

Rose Ryall (Chair), Architectural Conservation Officer, Waterford Co. Council

10:15 am The State's Approach to our Built Vernacular Heritage

Dr Barry O'Reilly (Keynote Speaker), Architectural Advisor, National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

10:40 am Understanding Ireland's Built Vernacular Heritage in the Context of Folk Tradition & Intangible Heritage

Dr Bairbre Ní Fhloinn, Associate Professor of Irish Folklore and Ethnology, UCD

11:00 am Question & Answer

11:10 am Tea/Coffee

Timeline

Session 2 Materials

Dr Joe Gallagher (Chair), Heritage Officer, Donegal Co. Council

11:40 am Ireland's Earthen Vernacular Buildings: Characteristics, Materials & Repair

Tom Pollard, Conservation Stone Practitioner

Noon Stone Roofs of Ireland's Vernacular Buildings: Characteristics & Conservation

Sarah Jane Halpin, Architectural Conservation Advisor, National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

12:20 pm Thatched Buildings of Ireland: Understanding Regional Materials & Styles

Dr Fidelma Mullane, vernacular architecture consultant

12:50 pm Question & Answer

1:00 pm Lunch

Session 3 Best Conservation Practice & Case Studies

Helena Bergin (Chair), Sen. Exec. Architectural Conservation Officer, Fingal Co. Council

2:00 pm An Overview of Best Practice Approaches to the Gentle Rehabilitation of Vernacular Buildings

Duncan McLaren, Director of Dedalus Architecture, Grade I RIAI Conservation Accredited

2:25 pm Retrofitting Vernacular Buildings: Methods, Materials & Scottish Case Studies

Dr Moses Jenkins, Senior Technical Officer, Historic Environment Scotland

2:50 pm Case studies of the Conservation of Traditional Farm Buildings Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine

Anna Meenan, Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme Project Manager, Heritage Council

3:10 pm Question & Answer

3:20 pm Comfort Break

Session 4 Best Conservation Practice, Case Studies & Furniture

Emmeline Henderson (Chair), Assistant Director & Conservation Manger, IGS

3:30 pm Case Study of Re-thatching of a Vernacular Farmhouse in Jamestown, Co. Laois

Richard McLoughlin, Director of Lotts Architecture and Urbanism, Grade I RIAI Conservation Accredited

3:50 pm Traditional Architecture in Offaly

Rachel McKenna, Senior Architect, Architectural Conservation Officer, Offaly Co. Council

4:10 pm Documenting & Working with Vernacular Furniture in its Original Context

Tony Donoghue, filmmaker and rural interiors consultant

4:40 pm Question & Answer

The State's Approach to our Built Vernacular Heritage

Dr Barry O'Reilly

This talk looks at the State's recently published strategy for built vernacular heritage, *A Living Tradition* (2021). The strategy aims to deal with many of the problems facing this critically important part of our cultural heritage, through dealing with urgent issues and building up the infrastructure for ensuring its continued survival. Understanding, Minding and Handing-on are the broad themes, emphasizing knowledge, appreciation, protection, viability and that vernacular approaches, methods, crafts and materials should be part of our future as well as our past and present: a living tradition.

Understanding Ireland's Built Vernacular Heritage in the Context of Folk Tradition and Intangible Heritage

Dr Bairbre Ní Fhloinn

This talk will argue that an appreciation of the intangible aspects of our built vernacular heritage is essential to an understanding of the whole. Unlike most forms of architecture, vernacular buildings are the collective expression of a given community based on shared traditions, values and experience. As such, vernacular buildings provide us with a unique insight which goes beyond the tangible into aspects of intangible culture such as social organisation, spiritual beliefs and traditional worldviews. This inherent richness can present its own challenge in terms of conservation, however.



Ireland's Earthen Vernacular Buildings: Characteristics, Materials & Repair *Tom Pollard*

This presentation maintains that many of Irish people's ancestors lived in homes primarily built using earthen elements. Many Irish people continue to live in these structures today and their correct repair relies on knowing what lies beneath render and roof. The benefits of earthen materials are proven by time alone. Decay is only due to neglect, while well-maintained structures continue to provide warm and dry homes. Earth is the essential material, providing blocks, mortars, renders, floors, fired tiles and ridges, daub and pigment.

After a period in the latter half of the 20th century, when practitioners moved away from earthen mortars and renders, recently they are once more engaging with these materials mindful of their inherent sustainability and the benefits that earthen products can bring to both traditional and modern building projects.

Stone Roofs of Ireland's Vernacular Buildings: Characteristics & Conservation *Sarah Jane Halpin*

This talk will provide an overview of the location, geology and rich variety of vernacular stone roofs in Ireland. Sarah will also discuss some general principles of conservation and repair.

Thatch Roofs in Ireland: Understanding Regional Materials & Styles *Dr Fidelma Mullane*

This talk will discuss Irish vernacular architecture as reflected in the regional styles created by the use of materials and the thatching methods throughout the Irish countryside. She will highlight the importance of vernacular architecture. She will also address the current crisis in the conservation of thatch roof structures.





An Overview of Best Practice Approaches to the Gentle Rehabilitation of Vernacular Buildings

Duncan McLaren

This talk will consider ways of approaching the repair and rehabilitation of vernacular buildings that preserves their special architectural character whilst also ensuring that they are brought back into, or continue in daily use. Some worked examples will show practical compromises that may need to be made in undertaking repairs, introducing new services or modern facilities. Ways of using analogous modern materials will also be considered which avoid diminishing the authenticity of historic built fabric or the spaces accommodated.

Retrofitting Vernacular Buildings: Methods, Materials and Scottish Case Studies

Moses Jenkins

This talk will draw upon the Historic Environment Scotland technical research programme into retrofitting traditional buildings. Methods and materials used to retrofit traditional buildings will be discussed, as will the principles which underpin this work in terms of moisture movement, condensation, and appreciation of vernacular heritage. Two case studies showing the retrofit of Scottish vernacular buildings will also be included.

Case Studies of the Conservation of Traditional Farm Buildings Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Anna Meenan

Presenting The Heritage Council's engagement with 'transmission of traditional buildings skills' mainly through a grant scheme to repair historic farm buildings. The presentation is made in the framework of ideas from The Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage. It will describe how effort invested in communication between key parties makes vernacular skills transmission possible, and a positive values-changing process.



Case Study: Re-thatching a Vernacular Farmhouse at Jamestown, County Laois *Richard McLoughlin*

The house at Jamestown Cross has a roof structure of unrefined timber boughs, and probably dates to the second half of the eighteenth century. Richard will show the process of rethatching it in 2012 using specially grown oaten straw, how it was harvested using a traditional reaper binder and threshing machine, and the roof thatched by a local farmer-thatcher using hazel scollops from nearby hedges.

Traditional Architecture in Offaly *Rachel McKenna*

Author of *Traditional Architecture in Offaly: History, Materials and Furniture 1800 to Present Day* (Offaly County Council, 2022). Her talk will cover the recent publication and seek to illustrate the development of traditional architecture in Offaly, highlighting the craftsmanship involved in both the houses and their fittings. It will consider the setting of dwellings in the landscape, plan types and materials used in their construction. Each of the three main rooms: kitchen, parlour and bedroom, will be studied along with their fixtures and fittings.

Documenting and Working with Vernacular Furniture in its Original Context *Tony Donoghue*

This talk will look at the vernacular furniture of one Tipperary parish. Of 53 properties where vernacular furniture was found, 32 dressers were identified and of those only 7 were in daily domestic use. One question this threw up was if some of the dressers and indeed other items of furniture could be returned back to working and welcome items in the owner's home. In the course of making the film we achieved that with 16 furniture items.

Helena Bergin, BA (TCD), MSc Conservation (University of York), MSc Spatial Planning, (TU Dublin) is the Senior Executive Architectural Conservation Officer with Fingal County Council and current Chair of the Association of Architectural Conservation Officers. She has worked for Fingal County Council for two decades and has sought in that time to develop policy that encourages the retention and re-use of the vernacular building stock of the county. She also established Fingal's "Stitch in Time Grant" to provide assistance to owners for routine maintenance and small repairs to historic buildings. Each year under this scheme applications are received and approved for funding towards the costs of bluestoning and patch repair of thatch roofs.

Tony Donoghue was a biologist and curator at London's Natural History Museum before moving to the study of material culture. In 2003 he documented the vernacular furniture of one Tipperary parish. Out of that research came two animated documentaries: *A Film From My Parish, 6 Farms* (2008) and *Irish Folk Furniture* (2012). He is currently making the third in the trilogy, *Rural Rituals* (working title).

Dr Joseph Gallagher is Heritage Officer with Donegal County Council and holds an M.A. in Geography from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA and a PhD in Geography from University College London. He has worked in historic preservation in the United States and was Senior Lecturer in Geography at University College Chichester where he lectured in several courses dealing with the built environment and vernacular architecture. He is co-author of the *Traditional Cottages of County Donegal* (2012), curator of the *In Search of the Donegal Vernacular Cottage* (2017) and co-designer of Donegal County Council's Thatch Repair Grant Scheme that won the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Award in the 'Heritage & Built Environment' category in 2020. He has also co-managed award-winning Historic Towns Initiatives in Letterkenny, Ramelton and Ballyshannon.

Sarah Jane Halpin joined the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage in January this year and is involved in the roll out of the national vernacular strategy. Prior to that she worked as an archaeologist and built heritage consultant in Ireland and Australia before going on to work as an Architectural Conservation Officer for Clare County Council (2006) and then Dublin City Council (2007-2022). She has a BA in Celtic Studies and a Masters in Urban and Building Conservation from UCD. She has a strong interest in traditional building skills informed by her work managing conservation grant schemes in Dublin City Council and an ongoing interest in Ireland's vernacular heritage, stone roofs in particular. She has undertaken research and survey work on stone roofs in Clare, Donegal, Mayo and elsewhere in Ireland.

Emmeline Henderson MA, MUBC (UCD), Post Grad Dip Architectural Inventory & Recording (TU Dublin) is the Assistant Director and Conservation Manager of the Irish Georgian Society. She manages the IGS Conservation Education Programme to include the Society's annual Traditional Building & Conservation Skills in Action Exhibition, its Conserving Your Period House course, its online conservation skills and academic registers, as well as other seminars, conferences and study days relating to the conservation and promotion of Ireland's architecture and decorative arts.

Dr Moses Jenkins is Senior Technical Officer at Historic Environment Scotland. He has worked in the traditional built environment for 18 years and has written widely on many related subjects. This includes the Historic Environment Scotland Guide to Energy Retrofit of Traditional Buildings, and the books Survey and Assessment of Traditional Brickwork, and Scotland's Tall Chimneys.

Rachel McKenna is the Senior Executive Architect with Offaly Co. Council and an RIAI Grade 1 Conservation Architect. Author of *Geashill: The Evolution of its Architecture: Flights of Fancy* (2012). *Follies, Families and Demesnes in Offaly* (2017) and *Traditional Architecture in Offaly: History, Materials and Furniture 1800 to Present Day* (Offaly County Council, 2022).


Duncan McLaren is a Grade 1 accredited Conservation Architect and principal of Dedalus Architecture, established in Inishowen, County Donegal in 2001. The practice undertakes work countrywide and is involved with the Conservation and Repair of buildings dating from the Iron Age to the 20th Century, with a particular interest in vernacular building. Work by the practice also includes heritage research and heritage-led urban regeneration projects; in 2022 Dedalus Architecture were a finalist in the SPAB UK and Ireland awards for Sustainable Design, highly commended in the RIAI awards for sustainability, and winners of the RIAI Urban Design award.

Duncan is conservation adviser to the Heritage Council and Irish Landmark Trust and has undertaken heritage projects for community groups, commercial and statutory bodies including: Allied Irish Banks PLC, Donegal County Council, Galway City Council, Sligo County Council, NI Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and the National Trust. Duncan is a member of the national Built Vernacular Heritage Steering Group and author of the introductory section to the forthcoming Handbook for Conservation, Repair & Maintenance of Vernacular Buildings.

Richard McLoughlin graduated in architecture at UCD in 1987 and spent his early career in Germany, where he studied building conservation at the Technical University of Berlin. He is co-founder and director of Lotts Architecture and has overseen conservation works to many historic buildings and sites across Ireland. In 2022 the practice received the IGS Conservation Award for the restoration of Riverstown House in Co Kildare. He has a special interest in vernacular heritage and is the owner of a thatched house in Co Laois.

Anna Meenan joined The Heritage Council in 2008 as their Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme Project Manager. Prior to this she worked as a Conservation Officer for Dún Laoghaire Rathdown and Waterford County Councils. She also worked as Project Manager of the Mourne Homesteads Scheme in Co. Down and as an Architectural Recorder with Dublin Civic Trust. Anna is a graduate of Art and Architectural History at Trinity College Dublin, and also holds post-graduate qualifications in Architectural Inventory & Recording (TU Dublin) and Applied Building Repair and Conservation (TCD).





Dr Fidelma Mullane holds an MA on the topic of vernacular architecture following which she trained as a planner in Paris. She went on to complete a doctoral thesis on the topic of vernacular architecture. She now works in private practice and divides her time between research and advising on the conservation of vernacular architecture. Fidelma has particular expertise in the conservation of historic thatch. She is President of ICOMOS Ireland and convenor of the National Scientific Committee on Vernacular Heritage of ICOMOS - The International Council on Monuments and Sites.

Dr Bairbre Ní Fhloinn is Associate Professor of Irish Folklore and Ethnology in University College Dublin, and Director of the recently established MA in that subject. She has written widely on many aspects of Irish Folklore and Ethnology, including occupational lore, traditional belief and associated narratives, and environmental Folkloristics. She has been involved with the Mayglass Farmstead project since its inception, and she co-edited the book *Traditional Architecture in Ireland and its Role in Rural Development and Tourism*. In conjunction with the Office of Public Works, she conducted a survey of the vernacular architecture of North Sligo and North Leitrim, the results of which are displayed as part of an ongoing exhibition in Parkes Castle, Co. Leitrim, and which also appear in the publication, *Traditional Buildings: Survey and Survival*.

Dr Barry O'Reilly studied archaeology and folklore/folklife in UCD and has been enthusing about our built vernacular heritage and allied topics ever since. He has spoken and lectured widely on these matters throughout Ireland and abroad and published two books, *Living under Thatch* (2004) and *Ballyknockan: a Wicklow stone-cutters village* (1997), numerous articles for academic journals, and is editor for Europe for the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*. Barry works for the NIAH. He has a particular interest in vernacular settlements/hamlets which was the basis of his PhD thesis at Oxford Brookes. He compiled *A Living Tradition: A Strategy to Enhance the Understanding, Minding and Handing on of Our Built Vernacular Heritage* (2021).

Tom Pollard originally trained in drystone walling under Pat McAfee at Drimnagh Castle. His stonewall wall repair work helped with the transition into working with traditional vernacular mortared structures. To reuse and replicate these mortars has become his trade. The success of his work is due to the sustainability, incredible strength, flexibility and porosity of soft mortars. It's these materials he relies on to help repair Ireland's built vernacular.

Rose Ryall BA (UCC), Master in Urban and Building Conservation (UCD) is the Architectural Conservation Officer for Waterford City and County Council. Rose has worked with Waterford Council since 2005; a county with over 160 thatched houses. Rose's work includes the administration of the Built Heritage Investment Scheme with many of those grants awarded to vernacular buildings within the county. Rose is the Association of Architectural Conservation Officers representative for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's Thatch Steering Group.

Image credits in order of appearance:

- Cover:** Vernacular house near Banteer, Co. Cork (NIAH)
2. Top Banner: Stone and Mortar Wall Detail (Tom Pollard)
3. Wren Boys, Athea, Co. Limerick, 1947 (Kevin Danaher, National Folklore Collection, UCD)
4. Sheaves of oaten straw formed into stacks for Jamestown Cross, Co. Laois (Richard McLoughlin)
5. Traditional Farmhouse, Co. Monaghan (NIAH)
6. Interior sketch of a house near Belmont, Co. Offaly (Rachel McKenna)
7. The cup rack at Carrigeen, Co. Offaly with Pat Egan (Rachel McKenna)
8. Farmer carpenter Sean Gleeson at his workshop with a donkey cart he has just built and a dresser he is repairing (Tony Donoghue)
9. Internal Plaster (Moses Jenkins, Historic Environment Scotland)
10. Outbuildings/houses with schist roof near Dunfanaghy, Co. Donegal (Sarah Jane Halpin, NIAH)



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