

WONDER WANDER EYRE SQUARE



NATIONAL INVENTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe Galway City Council

INSTRUCTIONS

TAKE A 'WONDER WANDER' THROUGH EYRE SQUARE:

- Wander the square, find the picture clues and delve into the stories that our city tells through its rich architectural heritage.
- Take ten minutes to spot the features in our architectural scavenger hunt, or simply relax and enjoy our carefully curated self-guided tour of Eyre Square.
- Always remember to glance up, peer down, and never cease to WONDER!



Download more FREE WALKING TRAILS

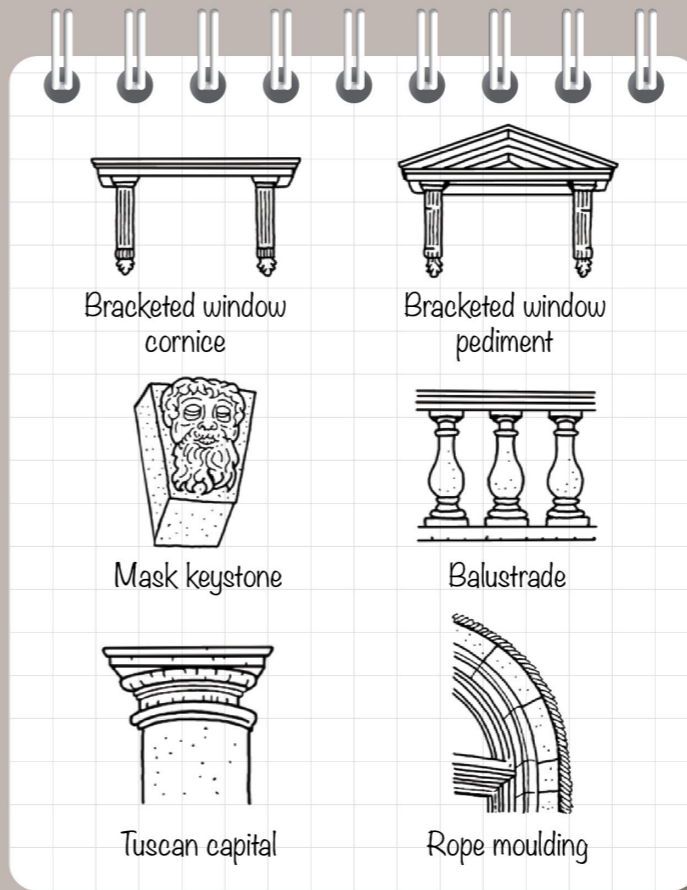


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SCAVENGER HUNT

HOW MANY OF THESE FEATURES CAN YOU SPOT ON THE FORMER NATIONAL BANK OF IRELAND?



THE STORY OF EYRE SQUARE

Originally known as "The Green", the square was once an area of open grassland, beyond the medieval walls, where cattle were traded, troops assembled and public hangings took place.

In the early 18th century, a formal park was laid out that was later enclosed by iron railings. Forming a link between the old town and the modern city, Eyre Square attracted the growing professional and merchant classes who built grand townhouses and established businesses along its lengths. By the 19th century, the square was bustling with regular fair days, shop retailers, banks, hotels and an exclusive gentlemen's club.

Chosen as the terminus for the Midland Great Western Railway, the square served as a key point of arrival and departure for the city, which already boasted numerous stage coaching offices. By the late 19th century a tramline had been established linking it with the

seaside resort of Salthill, catering for the increasing number of tourists drawn to the region. Today the square continues to serve as a key hub of civic life and social interaction for the city.

In recognition of the special character of Eyre Square, Galway City Council has designated an Architectural Conservation Area. Together with the diligent efforts of the local community, this designation helps in the management and enhancement of its unique social history and wealth of architectural treasures. It is hoped that this much loved part of the city will continue to be valued, cherished and enjoyed by future generations.

Want to learn more about Eyre Square Architectural Conservation Area and other Architectural Conservation Areas in the city? Contact Galway City Council's Architectural Conservation Officer.



TICK THE BOX AS YOU WONDER

1. BROWNE DOORWAY

This 17th century doorway had previously formed part of the Browne Mansion on Abbeygate Street. The doorway was relocated to Eyre Square in 1905 where it was reused as a formal entrance to the park, which at the time was enclosed by railings. Can you spot the three lions among its many carvings?

The name of the laneway suggests handball was once played here. Originally a 'one-wall' game, the towering bastion provided a ready-made surface on which to play. Ironically, the first record of handball in the city dates to 1527, when the local by-laws forbade the playing of ball games against...you've guessed it... the city walls!



A statue of Lord Dunkellin was erected within the square in 1873. Viewed by some as a symbol of colonial power it was dragged from its pedestal in 1922 and thrown into the River Corrib. Two cast-iron cannons captured during the Crimean War also stood here. Each weighing two tonnes, the cannons were a popular attraction for children, who often climbed on them to fire at imaginary targets.



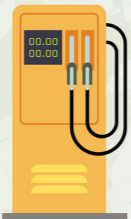
2. BALLALLEY LANE

Peer down Ballalley Lane and note a curious kink in the laneway. This follows the line of one of the 17th century bastions that were built as an extension of the medieval city wall. Part of the bastion is now incorporated into surrounding properties. A further larger section of bastion is visible within the nearby shopping centre.

3. FORMER MOTOR WORKS

James J. Ward first set up on Eyre Square as a motor cycle dealer in 1905, before opening a motor car garage on this site some years later. The large semi-circular window, known as a Diocletian window, provided high-level natural light for the mechanics working on vehicles. By the mid-20th century Wards had built a new car showroom, with modernist clean lines and large windows, where Dunnes Stores is now located.

The open area to the north of the square once hosted regular fair days where farmers from the surrounding countryside gathered to sell livestock, produce and goods. The hiring fair was also held here, where people were hired for seasonal farm labour, often enduring poor conditions.



4. BANK OF IRELAND

The Bank of Ireland was built by the Galway architect, James Cussack, in the early 1830s. It is said that the limestone arches, framing the windows and doorways, were salvaged from the old tholsel, which once stood near St Nicholas' Church, though this is now widely recognised as myth.

The building originally included accommodation for the manager, as well as a rear yard with stabling for horses. A stone archway that once gave access to the yard was relocated to Newtownsmith, where it now forms part of a memorial dedicated to those who gave their lives for peace.



5. HIBERNIAN HOUSE

Formerly the clubhouse for the Galway County Club, this imposing limestone facade is not all that it would seem. The entrance porch and everything to its right was built in the 1840s to designs by Henry Clements, who had been appointed surveyor for the city. The part to the left of the porch was added in the 1980s when the club moved premises and the site was redeveloped.



Gentlemen's clubs were common during the 19th century as a social venue for the professional and social elite.

Across the way is the statue of Liam Ó Maoiliosa (Liam Mellows), a Galway leader of the 1916 Rising. Erected in 1957, it was sculpted by Albert Power, who also created the statues of Patrick Pearse and James Connolly in Dublin.

6. FORMER TSB BANK

The carved limestone panels depicting the Galway City coat of arms and the Trustee Savings Bank logo date to the 1980s, when the TSB launched a new branding campaign. The four hexagons represent honeycomb from a beehive, to symbolise the efforts of small depositors to build savings.



7. FIBBER MAGEES

Around Fibber Magees you can see a change in the scale and character of the buildings. Much of this side of the square was redeveloped in the late 20th century but several historic buildings, like this one, survive. While it now has exposed stone walls, the building was originally finished in a traditional render that provided further protection from the elements.



As you walk past Odeon House look above the canopy, can you spot the limestone carving of a dove resting on a shield? This plaque was once mounted on Bailey's Hotel, a well-known family business, which previously stood on the site.



8. O'CONNELL'S PUB

Trading under the same name since 1862, O'Connell's is a landmark on the east side of the square. Originally a combined grocery shop and bar, it remained in family hands until 1998, when Maureen O'Connell, the last of the line, passed away. Maureen bequeathed the premises to St Vincent de Paul, and the charity used the monies from its sale to assist thousands of people in the Galway area.

Recognise O'Connell's? It featured in the music video for Ed Sheeran's Galway Girl. Why not sing a few lines while you're here!



9. CEANNT STATION

Built in 1851 as the terminus for the Midland Great Western Railway, the completed line established a direct route from Galway to Dublin. Above the platforms rose a dramatic 80-foot-wide roof of wrought-iron and glass, designed by Richard Turner, famed for his glass houses at the Botanic Gardens in Dublin and Belfast and Kew Gardens in London. Though Turner's roof was removed in the 1950s, the current roof echoes the scale and spirit of his original design. Have you noticed the colossal brackets that support the canopy over the station's main entrance? These are typical of the decorative cast-ironwork produced in 19th century foundries.

10. FORMER RAILWAY HOTEL

Occupying almost the entire southern side of the square, the Railway Hotel opened in 1852. Purpose-built to designs by John Skipton Mulvany, he was also architect for the adjoining station. Guests could once step directly from the station platform into the hotel, to enjoy luxurious surroundings and modern conveniences such as gas lighting and hot and cold running baths. Over the years notable patrons have included W. B. Yeats, Walt Disney and Paul McCartney.



11. GEORGIAN TOWNHOUSES

This handsome couple offer a glimpse of what residential Eyre Square looked like in the early 1800s. Unlike the Dublin and Limerick red brick townhouses from the period, this pair were constructed entirely of limestone. Can you spot the construction date carved into the plaque on No.16?

As you turn the corner, look down Victoria Place towards the Methodist Church, built in 1839. Views such as these make an important contribution to the area's historic character.

12. FORMER NATIONAL BANK OF IRELAND

Designed by William Calbeck, architect to the National Bank of Ireland, the decorative carved stone is typical of the late 19th century. Look closely at the bands on the columns and the keystones over the ground floor windows to see vermiculation, a term taken from the Latin word 'vermis' meaning worm! Can you think why?



Have you noticed that the balustrade next to the footpath is actually made from cast-iron? Before moving on why not take ten minutes to complete our Scavenger Hunt.

13. SKEFFINGTON ARMS HOTEL

Offering a place to lay your head since 1850, the Skeffington Arms, like many of the square's 19th century hotels opened in a former townhouse. A number of the neighbouring buildings on the terrace share near identical facades. The carefully placed window openings and distinctive 'scooped' doorways lend an overall rhythm to this side of the square.

Before leaving the square take a moment to explore the sculpture and statues. Eamon O' Doherty's Galway Hooker is an iconic focal point, representing the sails of the Claddagh fishing fleet. The statue of Pádraic Ó Conaire celebrates the legacy of one of the city's greatest Irish language writers and the John F. Kennedy Memorial commemorates the visit of the US president, who addressed a crowd of thousands here in 1963.



EYRE SQUARE

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA

WALKING TRAIL

AN FHAICHE MHÓR

WANDER THE ROUTE USING THE PICTURE CLUES OR BREAK IT UP AND WONDER...



AN FHAICHE MHÓR EYRE SQUARE

Where do places get their name?

Called An Fhaiche Mhór in Irish, meaning 'The big green', the name reflects its earliest form as an area of open grassland beyond the city walls. In English, the square was named after Edward Eyre, Lord Mayor, who is said to have presented the land to the city in 1710. In the 1960s it was officially renamed John F. Kennedy Memorial Park, following J. F. K's visit in 1963 - but Galwegians have never really stopped referring to it as Eyre Square!

MAP LEGEND

- Architectural Conservation Area
- Walking Route, 0.85km
- Trail Number
- Picture Clue Number
- TFI Bikes
- Scenic View

