

## Sunday Independent

# ARCHITECT'S CLINIC

FERGAL MCGIRL

## How do I find out about the history of my house?

**Q** WE would like to know more about the history and development of our period house. What is the best way of approaching this and can you recommend good sources of information?

**A** IF a planning application is being made for works to a protected structure, the application would be supported by a conservation statement which would appraise the significance of the building and the impact of the proposed works. A history of the building would form part of the appraisal and these are some of the sources that we would use when preparing such a report:

■ **Ordnance Survey Historical Mapping** Between 1829 and 1842, Ordnance Survey Ireland completed the first-ever large-scale survey of an entire country. This 6-inch survey is available to view online at [osi.ie](http://osi.ie) as well as the more detailed, later

25-inch 1897-1913 survey. There were other localised surveys carried out at different times. You can book an appointment with the Glucksman Map Library in Trinity College where the full range of historic maps for an area can be viewed for free and copied for a small fee.

■ **Title Deeds/Land Registry** The title deeds for the property may be available from your solicitor or can be sourced from the Registry of Deeds in the King's Inn building, Dublin 1 or possibly online from Land Registry ([landregistry.ie](http://landregistry.ie)). The deeds can offer information on the site lease and stipulations, previous owners and site dimensions.

■ **Libraries/Archives** Local libraries and archives are worth researching. In Dublin, the National Library on Kildare Street and the National Archive of Ireland on Bishop Street may cast some light on your building's past. Dublin City Council recently launched an online Libraries and Archives Digital Repository with records relating to Dublin from different time periods,

including photographs, postcards, letters, maps and other material. Similarly, the National Archives have an online record of the censuses of 1901 and 1911 that are the only complete surviving census records for the pre-Independence period. Outside Dublin, local libraries are often a source of information as well as county archive services.

■ **Physical Evidence** Study your building in a forensic way. Does your house share original features with other similar houses in the area or have they been changed? Changes in window patterns, decoration and mouldings can highlight the period of the house belongs. Often houses were historically altered as the fashions in plasterwork and joinery changed so this can, however, be deceptive!

■ **Other Sources** The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage ([buildingsofireland.ie](http://buildingsofireland.ie)) is a State initiative to identify, record, and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland. The

published surveys are a source of information on the selected structures for relevant planning authorities.

The Royal Irish Academy publishes a series of historic town atlases which outline the development and history of several towns around Ireland.

If your house has been recorded or researched, the Irish Architectural Archive in Merrion Square, Dublin ([iarc.ie](http://iarc.ie)) have an online database, a wealth of archived photographs and drawings as well as a comprehensive library. The staff are very helpful and will assist with any searches.

**!**  
From May 13-19, RIAI-registered architects across the country are offering one-hour consultations for €90, a fraction of the normal cost and every cent will go directly to the Simon Communities in Ireland. Simply log onto [simonopendoor.ie](http://simonopendoor.ie) to book an architect in your area. Architects are giving their time and expertise for free, [riai.ie](http://riai.ie).

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Do you have a architectural dilemma we can help you with? Email your problem to [designclinic@independent.ie](mailto:designclinic@independent.ie). Advice provided is for guidance only and readers are advised to seek professional assistance for any proposed project.