Georgian Homes 1714-1837 AD

The 18th century was an age of improvement, a time for new ideas for industrial and agricultural development and growth. The years between 1724, when George I became King, and 1830 when George IV died, became known as the Georgian Era. English and Irish architecture became more sophisticated and was greatly influenced both by the Classical architecture of ancient Rome and the Italian Renaissance. Andrea Palladio was one of the most admired Italian architects. Sons of major families travelled to Europe and brought back a knowledge of art and culture in what was dubbed 'the Grand Tour'.

A fascinating mix of Palladian and 'Gothic' architecture can be found at **Castle Ward** - the result possibly of the differing tastes of Lord and Lady Bangor. **Hillsborough**, laid out by the Hill Family between 1730 and 1790, has an exceptionally fine Georgian square with an excellent row of brick houses on the north built in 1799. At **Castlewellan** the Annesley family laid out a new town with two squares, one with bowed sides and the other as a half octagon. The city of **Armagh** provides a prime example of improvement planning with its tree-lined mall laid out by Richard Robinson soon after he became Archbishop of Armagh in 1767.

Above, Castle Ward front elevation

Above, Castle Ward rear elevation

The growth of the merchants and their increasing wealth resulted in more houses built of stone and of a new material - brick - as local brickworks were established. They were usually three stories high. Sash windows, which moved up and down, replaced the timber casements and were set flush with the outer face of the brickwork. They had solid frames and were divided into small panes with heavy moulded glazing bars. Window proportions tended to be tall and narrow. The terraces of Georgian houses around **Armagh Mall** are particularly good examples of late Georgian Classicism. Their windows are much bigger and the detail is somewhat finer than previously.

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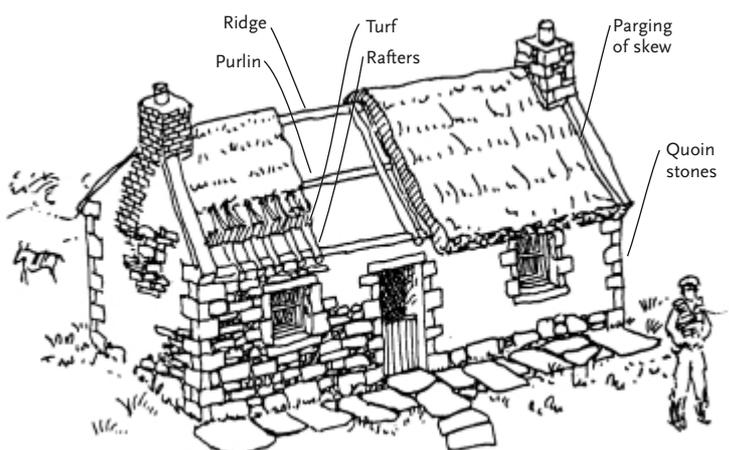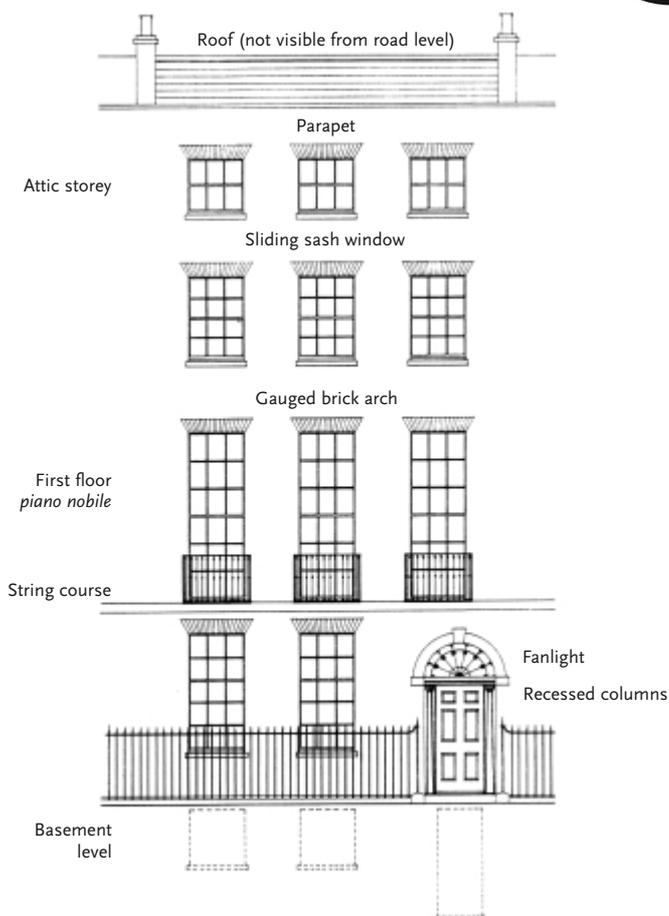
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Above, A simple terrace in Armagh
Right, Front elevation of Georgian style house

Early doors were plain with stone surrounds and simple fanlights set in flat or segmented arched openings. Classical doors with columns were fashionable in the mid 18th century. Wider doorways permitted sidelights. Fanlights became more ornate with spider's web and pearl drop patterns and lit the narrow entrance hallway.

Roof (not visible from road level)

Parapet

Attic storey

Sliding sash window

Gauged brick arch

First floor *piano nobile*

String course

Fanlight
Recessed columns

Basement level

Ridge
Purlin
Turf
Rafters
Parging of skew
Quoin stones

There is no typical traditional Ulster house, but this shows a type that might be found in **Co. Antrim** and elsewhere. It has been altered over the years in a number of respects. The chimney on the left for instance has been rebuilt in brick - originally it would have had an open flue without a chimney pot, and indeed it may not originally have been at the gable at all but rising from a more central partition between a bedroom on the left and a central living room. The roof is fairly traditional, being thatch held in position by sallies on turf scraws laid over timber rafters. The rafters span from the top of the wall to a ridge pole, probably a stout tree trunk, and are also supported by purlins.

The floor inside was possibly mud originally, but probably now has clay 'quarry tiles' laid over it. The half door is an unusual survival now, but is still to be found occasionally. Often the lintels over the tops of doors and windows are timber rather than stone, and sometimes the walls of part of a house are mud rather than stone or brick. The stone slabs along the front of the house carry water from the roof away from the walls in order to keep the house dry. Notice how small the windows are compared with modern houses, and how the roof wraps over the house so that the building looks very compact and low.

Georgian Homes 1714-1837 AD

Above, Clady Cottage, Dunadry, Co.Antrim

Smaller houses in rural Ireland and in country towns tended to use less sophisticated materials than those in the cities. These were commonly built from local stone. For economy, walls were left in the form of rubble masonry and finished on the outside with rough cast of lime plaster. The simple rhythms and proportions of the Classical influence were reflected in the architecture of smaller dwellings in both town and countryside, as architects became increasingly involved with such buildings. The 'gentleman's vernacular' dwelling above at **Dunadry, Co.Antrim** is a prime example of this marriage.

Between 1695 and 1850 a tax was levied on windows which encouraged people to have as few windows as they could, but made it more important to get as much light as possible through them. The typical 18th century window is known as a double hung window with six pane sashes: this means quite simply that two frames or 'sashes' of six panes each were hung one above another inside the window opening in such a way that they could be raised or lowered past one another. When both sashes are at the top, air gets in the bottom; with both sashes at the bottom, air gets in the top; and there are infinite variations between.
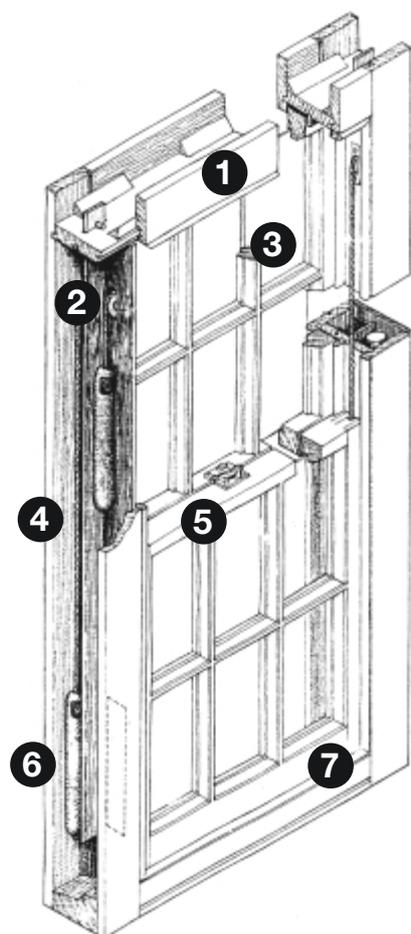
Sash windows are still made, and are considered by many authorities to be the most efficient type of window, but they have changed over the years. In very early examples the sashes had to be wedged open, but the idea of the counterweight was soon developed. In many old houses the frame is quite wide because the ropes and weights counterbalancing the sashes have to be contained within the frame. Later windows took full advantage of the opening in the wall and recessed the frame in its depth so that we see only a narrow frame round the sashes. As it became easier to make large areas of glass the sizes of panes changed and you will see a great variety of types now.

1. Top rail
2. Pulley wheel
3. Glazing bar
4. Sash cord
5. Meeting rail
6. Counterweight
7. Bottom rail

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