

Modern Homes 1903 - Present



The 20th century in many spheres is characterised as the age of mass production. In architecture, combined with new materials and technological advances, the effect of this can be seen in the design of offices, industrial buildings and housing. The handling of space in a fluid and continuous way is the essence of modern architecture. The influence of the Modern Movement dictated that buildings should be simple and that they should have a form to match their function. Decoration was considered to be unnecessary. This desire for simple and uncluttered design stems from the Arts and Crafts movement of the mid 19th century. At **'Dallas'** on the **Malone Road in Belfast**, the architect, Voysey, bridges the gap between Victorian decoration and functional planning. The first acclaimed modern house in Ulster was built at **Moyallan, Co.Armagh** in 1934. It was white in colour and cubic in shape, with horizontal lines, a flat roof and corner windows supporting the idea that all facades are of equal importance.



Above, Dallas, Belfast



Above, Merville Garden Village, Newtownabbey

Following the Second World War, the great scarcity of materials led to restrictions on building. New housing and flats provided badly needed accommodation, but the appearance of the houses and layout of the estates generally left a lot to be desired. The Northern Ireland Housing Trust was set up by the state in 1945 to help resolve the housing shortage after the war. The Trust engaged architects, engineers and other experts and laid out development for local authorities.

One of the earliest developments, **Cregagh Housing Estate** (1945-1950) designed by T.F.O. Rippingham, developed the theme of two storey brick terraced housing in a spacious layout. The recessed entrances, bay windows, decorative brick detailing and the alternating flush and projecting eaves gave an added visual interest. **Merville Garden Village** at **Newtownabbey in Co.Antrim**, built to provide high quality accommodation for rent, is an almost intact example of the architecture of the early 1950s, and has been designated as a conservation area.

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Tower blocks of flats have been considered social and architectural disasters, but a case can be made for them if they are sited in wooded parkland and are strongly modelled as at **Seymour Hill, Dunmurry**. **Aldervale Flats at Craigavon in Co.Armagh**, designed in 1967 by a consortium of leading designers, are distinctive three storey functional buildings.

At **Cargan, Co.Antrim** (1976) the Housing Executive infused their housing design with a touch of local tradition. The house types were standard but each was given an individual personality by small variations in window pattern and roof pitch. At **Springfarm** and **Bushmills, Co.Antrim** houses were grouped around small courtyards provided with parking space and play areas.

While much needed accommodation was being supplied in the public sector, private development continued. A house at **Brocklamont, Ballymena**, one of a series of fifties and sixties designs by Noel Campbell, brought panache and opulence to domestic architecture. Flat roofs, glass walls and natural materials such as random rubble walling and timber boarding were used. Another house in this manner is **Little Rock, Portstewart** completed in 1961.

There is a school of thought that the development of modern architecture has been at the expense of Ulster's traditional buildings, and this led to the formation of groups like the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society. Thousands of vernacular dwellings have been, and continue to be, demolished throughout the countryside as a result of replacement schemes. Today there is a growing interest in conservation and sustainable development, with more architects concerning themselves with the re-use of existing buildings, and the incorporation of energy saving features.



Above, Converted mill near Crossgar

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