

Photography of buildings prior to closure

- Recording buildings before closure is very important.
- Many must retain fixtures and fittings that should be captured along with interior spaces and the general external appearance.
- Doing this with a cooperative occupier in situ is always much easier than trying to gain access to vacant properties.
- Insurance companies often take photos of buildings for their own purposes and you can ask them to share copies with you.
- If the property is for sale the estate agent's photographs can be made available to the Congregation. Often they can be saved straight from their website.
- You can do the survey yourselves and it is suggested that the archivist does this even if a professional photographer is also recording the buildings.
- It is better to get some photographs before the rooms are cleared out.
- Also, if the archivist is taking photos with a member of the community, interesting pieces can be pointed out and stories told. For example, in one building there was a large bell at the top of the staircase which was used to wake the Community in the morning. Photographs of the bell were taken but the archivist also got a few stories to go along with it!
- In one congregation building in Belfast sandblasted window designs including the Congregation Crest were on internal windows. Items like these might not seem important to a photographer who is not familiar with the Congregation.
- The Community Leader can also point out where alterations or additions were made to the buildings or changes made in the grounds.
- In general photographers charge by the hour, so costs will vary depending on the location and size of the building in question. As an indication, one professional photographer recorded a former Mental Hospital in Dublin. The survey includes c.120 images, and the cost was close to €500.
- The Irish Architectural Archives has a very small annual budget for recording buildings so as a first step you could put people in contact with them and they can see if recording their particular building fits in their programme and budget.
- If they can do it, they will.
- If they can't, and the people have some money themselves, they can supply a list of good and reliable photographers from which they could pick.
- If they have no budget either, they could always do the survey themselves. A series of images taken with a phone is still better than no images at all, and given how good phones are now as cameras, the results can be excellent.
- Please ensure any images taken are sent to your archives for posterity.
- The Irish Architectural Archives would be happy to chat with anyone to provide guidance on what they should be recording.
- Where someone pays for a survey, or does the survey themselves, questions of copyright, preservation and the provision of access to images come into play.
- The Irish Architectural Archives would certainly be more than happy to acquire copies of surveys of this nature (assuming we are unable to do them ourselves), and to undertake to preserve the digital files, and provide access to the images.
- Photographs have additional value in terms of insurance valuations, another point to remember.

Contact Details:

Any member of the Shared Archives Committee or feel free to contact the Irish Architectural Archives, 45 Merrion Square E., Dublin 2. D02 VY60.

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