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## Maintenance, Repair and Restoration

# Ironwork



### The Conservation Value of Traditional Ironwork

Iron is a material local to Bradford and its use became more widespread with the establishment of two large ironworks at Bowling and Low Moor in the late 18th century. However, iron was rarely used decoratively on the outside of houses until after 1850. Iron was most commonly used for railings mounted on low stone boundary walls, balustrades and in the case of some middle class houses, parapets or to crown bay windows, porches or pointed roofs.



Traditional ironwork is often styled to reflect the architecture of the house and is an important unifying feature when used as decoration, balustrades or railings to terraces. By the late 19th century there were catalogues of mass produced cast iron railings and gates.

Unfortunately the majority of the Victorian and early 20th century ironwork in the district was removed during the Second World War. Some ironwork was missed out and some balustrades were left in place, as it would be dangerous if they were removed. The systematic removal of ironwork makes the remaining examples of particular value to conservation areas.

### The Maintenance and Repair of Traditional Ironwork - Best Practice

#### DO...

- 4 Annually inspect the condition of the ironwork and its paint. Blistered or peeling paint will require replacement.
- 4 Protect the iron from corrosion by completely removing layers of paint and rust using scrapers, wire brushes or sandpapers. The iron should then be primed and painted using primer and paint designed for iron.
- 4 Hire reputable cast iron firms to undertake repairs or to reproduce and splice in missing sections or pieces of iron.

#### DO NOT..

- 6 Allow ironwork to corrode. The ironwork can become unstable and dangerous, while the conservation area loses an important traditional detail.
- 6 Paint over rust. Paint should be applied to a smooth, clean surface to prevent moisture getting behind the paint and causing the iron to corrode.
- 6 Remove a rusty or incomplete old iron railing or decoration. The rust can be removed and missing ironwork can be accurately reinstated by a skilled professional.



## The Reinstatement of Traditional Ironwork - Best Practice

Given that many iron railings and decorative ironwork was removed in the 1940s, it may be the case that a house which once had external ironwork now has none at all. If completely missing ironwork is to be replaced, the following guidance should be adhered to:

### DO...

- 4 Use historic photographs of your house and/or the traditional ironwork details of similar houses (either in photos or in situ) as a guide to the size and style of the new ironwork. The Conservation Team is happy to advise if you cannot find historic photos or suitable examples of ironwork.
- 4 Hire specialist firms who can provide local examples of good traditional ironwork they have made and will be able to provide ironwork to your specification.
- 4 Try and co-ordinate iron gates and railings with neighbouring houses, particularly if they are in the same terrace. This will help to unify the appearance of the houses.
- 4 Ensure that new railings are fixed in a way which does no damage the wall below and is discrete so that the modern fixings are not apparent.

### DO NOT...

- 6 Specify ironwork, particularly gates and railings, which are not complementary to the age and character of your house. For example, elaborately styled railings would contrast with the restrained architecture of a Georgian or early Victorian house. An Arts and Crafts style house would not have austere Victorian style railings.
- 6 Simply bolt new railings on to the wall with bare stainless steel fixings. This undermines the traditional appearance of the railings.

