

Building on our history

ABANDONMENT ISSUES:

Show *Lainey Quinn* an abandoned building and she's in like a flash to document the faded grandeur of years gone by. The 23-year-old Dubliner explains her attraction to the city's derelict landmarks

I STARTED out photographing abandoned buildings for fun and excitement, but the more buildings I have ventured into, the more I have started to appreciate their historical value and, in some cases, their architectural beauty.

Although some are creepy, dark and dangerous, it is important to document them before they are demolished and forgotten.

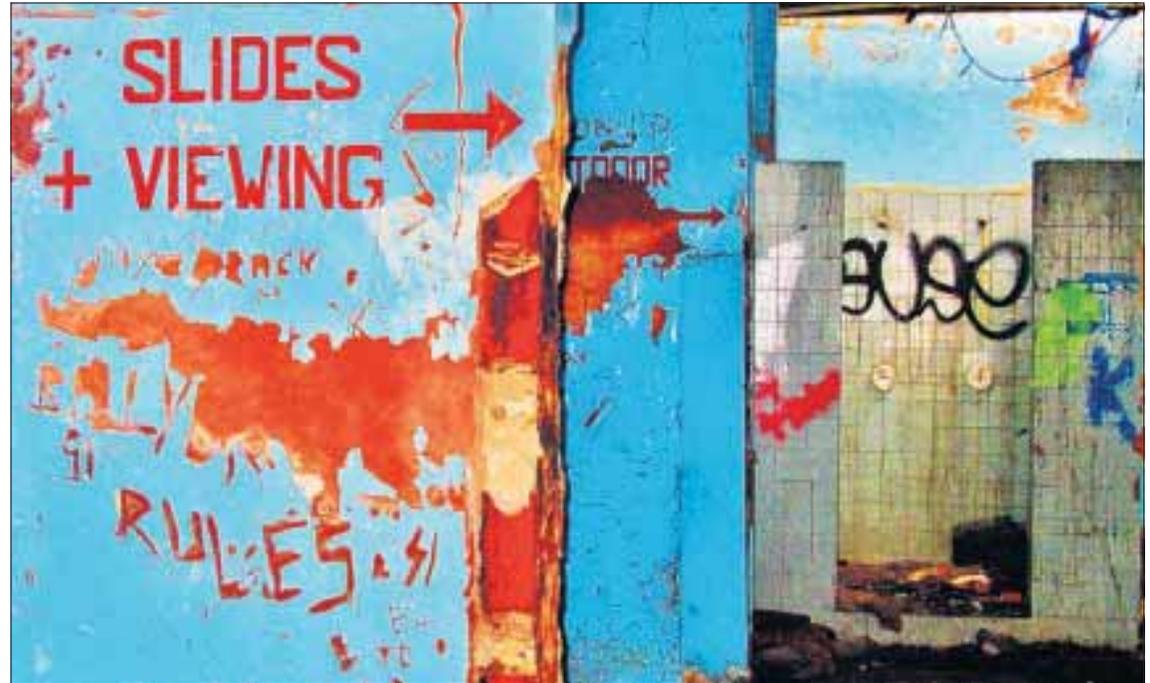
I select the buildings based on their history, location and whether or not there is a way to get in.

Not many of the buildings have had 'No Trespassing' signs. In fact, signs saying 'Danger, Unstable Structures' are more frequent.

Only one building was plastered with signs warning against trespassing but because of the magnitude of its history, I ignored them and skirted around a few CCTV cameras, thankfully without getting caught.

Once I get a new location to explore (after scouring the internet), I set off with my camera, torch and spare batteries, and a map in my head of where I am going.

The first building I photographed was the four-storey Richmond Mental Asylum in Grangegorman, which was opened in 1814. The eerie corridors and endless rooms were in



Out on the tiles: The graffiti-covered derelict Dún Laoghaire baths, which date back 170 years and offered sea and fresh water, hot and cold baths, sulphur and seaweed baths. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council has long been trying to redevelop the premises

ruins. Most of the ceilings had caved in and parts of the floors had collapsed into the basement. In one room, there was a small table on which there were a few belongings such as a lighter, razor, a fork and a glass bottle with a cloth stuffed halfway down the neck. In the corner of the room was an unkempt pile of blankets, a prominent feature in a lot of the rooms.

These findings, suggesting the premises were being occupied, are not unusual in the buildings I visit. Most of them have had signs

of life, one being Aldborough House on Portland Row near the Five Lamps, which has recently been the subject of much publicity thanks to heritage campaigners. After completing the 'find an entry point' stage into the house, which was built in 1798, I came across a doorway with fresh blood spattered on the ground, used syringes lying around and sleeping bags on the floor. I didn't stay long. Apart from unsafe floors and collapsed roofs, the only other danger I have come across is the getting into the building, which

sometimes involves climbing a gate or wall.

To get into the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park I had to climb three sets of gates – the first unstable and topped with barbed wire, the second flimsy with no footholds, not to mention its formidable height, the third requiring a graceless pirouette in order to bypass the jagged spikes on top.

This turned out to be quite an ordeal considering I am afraid of heights and not trained in awkward gate climbing, but after an hour I found myself standing in the Fort.

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Ted and gone: A teddy bear covered in moss lies outside the Richmond Mental Asylum in Grangegorman, which opened in 1814

It was one of the most interesting sites I have photographed and I soon forgot the most terrifying 'find an entry point' stage I had ever completed.

Unable or unwilling to get over the gates of hell again and escape through the sewers not an option, I found myself stuck, forcing my friend outside to ring the Phoenix Park Rangers, who came to my rescue and not only found the situation funny but very kindly said 'fair play for getting over in the first place'.

THE Fort, built in 1735, is owned by the Office of Public Works (OPW), who say the dilapidated site is not considered abandoned but is a protected structure within the Park. OPW spokeswoman Máire Ní Fhaircheallaigh says a full restoration programme is being looked into and 'health and safety issues are being controlled so no further deterioration of the structures occurs'.

I'm not the only one photographing abandoned buildings however. This is a worldwide phenomenon, and Tarquin Blake of *abandonedireland.com* has brought out two volumes of photos of Abandoned Mansions Of Ireland.

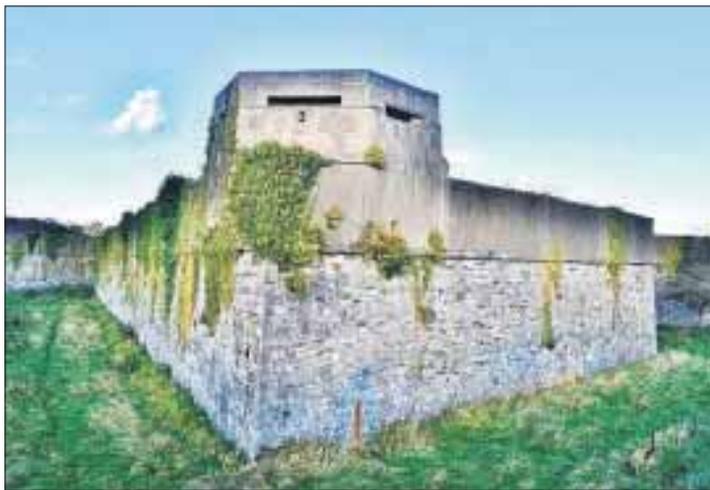
Other buildings I have photographed include an abandoned Tayto factory, the Dún Laoghaire Baths, Boland's Mill on Barrow Street and the Pigeon House power station in Ringsend. I usually go to these places with a friend and have only gone into two alone.

Inside Boland's Mill was extremely dilapidated, with gargantuan holes in the floor which would easily catch you out if a torch wasn't guiding you. There was no evidence of recent settlement by people, but pigeon settlement was a different story. The way into the building required me to drop down on to the floor in the pitch black. I remember thinking how soft the floor felt. And after looking down with a phone light, I saw I was standing in a mountain of pigeon droppings. Not cool!

For more pictures, visit *Lainey's site* laineytessphotography.eu5.org
Twitter: @laineytess



Wheels of time: Machinery used in Boland's Mill when it was up and running. The Mill was built in the 1830s and served as a commercial mill for more than 100 years



Been and gun: The Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park, built in 1735 and raided by the IRA during the 1916 Easter Rising while it was being used to store the Irish Army's guns



Grate history: Chairs and a decaying fireplace in the Richmond Mental Asylum. It was originally built as a large quadrangle but only its southern range remains



Squalor: Fresh blood and drug paraphernalia on the floor at Aldborough House on Portland Row, built in 1798



Crisp underfoot: An old cardboard box covered with smashed glass at a Tayto factory closed in 1968

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