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Sash Window Refurbishment - Some Things To Consider

These windows have one or more 'sashes' (panels) acting as frames to hold panes of glass. The panels slide vertically, although they may also slide horizontally. They function by virtue of a lead or iron weight that is attached to a cord and passed over a pulley to counterbalance the panel. There are some older specimens that have quite complicated counterbalancing systems. This type of window is high maintenance. Some frequently encountered problems include rattling as a result of shrinkage and sticking due to poor application of paint. Distortion and/or swelling of the woodwork may occur, as also rot. Timely sash window refurbishment can eliminate the need to replace them altogether.

Windows may be reconditioned by an external contractor or you can do it yourself. Among the items that need attention are fitting with new cords, lubrication of pulleys, and removing accumulated paint from the outer casing. Windows may be rebalanced by adding or removing counterweight. Brush pile draught proofing system may be fitted with new brush pile, parting beads and staff beads. Windows may be fitted with sash lifts and Brighton fasteners. These may be brass, chrome or other materials.

The English scientist and inventor, Robert Hooke (1635-1703) is believed to have been responsible for designing the sash window. Hooke also invented the compound microscope, coined the term, 'cell' as a biological unit of anatomical structure and served as the Royal Society's Curator of Experiments.

Robert Hooke is also believed to have invented the hydrometer, wheel barometer and anemometer. He worked with Christopher Wren as an architect and surveyor following the Fire of London in 1666 and helped Robert Boyle by constructing his air pump.

Examples of some of the first sash windows may be seen near Richmond, London, near the Thames, in Ham House, which was built for Sir Thomas Vavasour in 1610. Declared by the National Trust to be 'unique in Europe', the house is reportedly haunted by the ghosts of the Duchess of Lauderdale and her dog, whose growl inspired a young couple to take a photograph that allegedly captured the two apparitions. The house is largely the work of Lady Elizabeth Murray, who was the Countess of Dysart.

The classical pattern of panes is two rows of three in each panel. Other arrangements are possible, as in 'The Milkmaid', a painting by Vermeer. The painting is of a kitchen in which a robust young woman is pouring milk into a kettle called a 'dutch oven' to make what appears to be a bread pudding.

Sash window refurbishment can greatly expand the lifespan of your windows and preserve the historical integrity of your building. Draughts and rattles are eliminated and external noise levels are reduced. Reconditioning existing windows is more cost efficient than replacing them entirely.

Other benefits to reconditioning your windows include less dirt and dust, improved security and reduced external noise. Improved insulation means lower bills for heating your home and it is more environmentally friendly than simply throwing them away. Extra glazing may be added, further improving their insulating capability and reducing ambient noise levels.

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