

Traditional Homes & Interiors

Trade Secrets

Introducing light from above isn't a new concept. During the 18th century rooflights, in their most primitive form, were used to bring light into agricultural buildings. 300 years on, and today's rooflights are still providing an architectural design solution to many traditional homes.

Rooflights do exactly what they say; they bring light in from the roof area but in a discreet fashion. Placed up high, they effectively deliver an even distribution of light to large low-level structures. Such is their positioning rooflights can even illuminate dark areas in a room that a window would never be able to reach.

Over the last few years the popularity of rooflights has increased. With homeowners still exercising a degree of caution as a result of the global recession, many are reluctant to move house and are instead exploring ways in which to utilise their redundant spaces by converting them into living areas – for example, loft conversions.

The renovation of redundant churches, farm buildings and service buildings into residential properties is also now becoming more popular than ever. Most of these conversions rely heavily on opening up the roof space and introducing light from above.

Adapting these traditional buildings or converting a loft space can be a sensitive issue, especially if the building is historic. Any alterations must be in keeping with the original architecture, which could present a problem when introducing natural light into a building that was never intended for domestic purposes. It is advisable to contact your Local Conservation Officer or the Building Control Department to find out what is acceptable before going ahead with any conservation as it will need to be overseen if the building is of heritage status.

Sympathetic detailing is likely to be an important consideration and may be a crucial condition of consent, especially if the building is listed or situated in a conservation area. As a rule, new openings should generally be kept to a minimum and should be of a

simple form that respects the building's character. If rooflights are needed, the Local Planning Authority will normally require a flush-fitting type.

There are specialist rooflights that are manufactured for the traditional homes and heritage property market. Conservation rooflights are easily recognised by their low profile, which means they sit flush and remain unobtrusive to the building's original architecture. Another characteristic is their slender appearance as conservation requirements stipulate that a minimal amount of framework should be visible, particularly if rooflights are placed next to each other.

Manufactured in the UK, the Lumen Rooflight range has been especially made to replicate a traditional Victorian design, with the additional benefit of a high specification of glazing incorporating Pilkington Activ - the world's first self cleaning glass. Everything from its slender lines of steel right down to its manufacturing tag, demonstrate that its authenticity has been carefully crafted.

Lumen has a history of working with metal stretching back to 1893. During the 1914 - 1918 War Lumen were contractors to HM Government supplying horseshoes, nails and brackets for the gun carriages and other horse drawn vehicular items. In the 21 years of peace between the wars the company expanded into a specialist manufacturer of builders' ironwork, taking out patents for many of the products that they produced. When hostilities commenced again in 1939, the company reverted to the role of supplier to the War Department, providing components for tanks, bailey bridges, ladders etc. In 1945 Lumen expanded rapidly into structural steelwork whilst continuing the original business in the building industry.

Today, Lumen continues this tradition of quality workmanship, and is one of the UK's leading manufacturers and suppliers of conservation style rooflights. An excellent example of how the Lumen rooflight works beautifully with its surroundings is demonstrated in a recent conversion of an 18th century stable block project. The client ordered ten bespoke rooflights to allow light into the stable, which was being converted into three maisonettes. Both English Heritage and the Local Conservation Officer were involved in overseeing this project. It was important that the external appearance of the conservation was dealt with sensitively to protect the historic architectural character of

the stable block and its setting. Although the rooflights were necessary to let in daylight they couldn't overlook the manor house and grounds.

Bespoke conservation rooflights were chosen as they met the structural constraints of this listed building. Their long and narrow appearance meant they could be positioned high up the roof slope. This option also allowed the architect to specify a mix of both opening and fixed casements.

From a design aspect, conservation rooflights have been and will continue to be invaluable to the many heritage building renovation projects due to their unobtrusive appearance, which mirrors traditional Victorian design. However, their low profile design and fine lines of steel also have infinite possibilities with modern day architecture. The choice of contemporary and traditional mechanisms adds to their design flexibility.

Although manufactured using traditional materials, modern technology plays a part in ensuring that they meet and often exceed the latest building regulations and energy efficiency requirements.

With the shift towards energy efficient sustainable buildings the demand for natural light can only increase. Therefore, the conservation rooflight will have an even more important part to play in the future of historic buildings.

For more information please contact Lumen Rooflights,

Telephone: 0845 050 8746

Fax: 0845 345 0215

Email: info@lumenrooflight.co.uk

www.lumenrooflight.co.uk