

THE VICTORIAN HOUSE BOOK

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PREFACE

Sets out where the book stands on the issue of authenticity versus modern requirements and explains how the contents are arranged.

As closely as possible the chapters follow the order of the jobs you will want to do: getting to know your house in Chapter 1, structural and building work in Chapter 2, interior architectural detailing in Chapter 3, followed by decoration of the public and private rooms in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 7 takes you out into the garden, and Chapter 8 provides technical advice if you want to do restoration work yourself or talk to architects, surveyors and builders on something like equal terms.

CHAPTER 1 – THE VICTORIAN INSPIRATION

Introduction

Takes you through the architectural fashions of the Victorian period, from late Regency and Gothic to the Art and Crafts, Queen Anne Revival and Edwardian classicism.

Standard House Types

A house-style recognition chart showing the typical façades: early Victorian semi-detached, flat-fronted terrace, detached Italianate villa, detached brick villa, New York brownstone, mansion flat, Carpenter's Gothic, middle-class terraced housing, Arts and Crafts cottage, 19th-century American town house.

CHAPTER 2 – EXTERIOR FEATURES

Introduction

The Victorians caught the tail-end of a centuries-old tradition of craftsmanship that ensured a certain solidarity of construction and generosity of joinery and finishes. By mastering the idioms of style and materials that prevailed at the time, you can improve both the look and value of the house.

Standard Methods of Construction

Cut-away diagrams showing the structure of a detached villa, a terraced house and a balloon-frame house.

The Front Entrance

Railings and gates, paths, tiles and ornaments, porches, front doors, door numbers, types of entrances and boundaries.

External Walls

Brick, stone, decorative tile work, pointing, stucco, terracotta and timber.

Roofs and Gables

Types of roofs and roof decoration, including roof shapes, structures, tiles and tiling patterns, slates, thatch, ridges, roof finials, chimneys, chimney pots, skylights, lantern lights, dormer windows, gutters, hopper heads, parapetted gables, bargeboards and gable ornaments gargoyles, downpipes, cornices, corbels and ornamental brackets.

Exterior Paintwork

Colour schemes traditional and modern, external frescoes, murals and painted decorations, railings.

Decorative Ironwork

Balconies and balustrades, window guards, cresting, finials, staircases, verandah columns and brackets, door hoods, brackets, rosettes and wreaths, ornaments, front-door furniture, letter plates, door knockers and knobs, mud scrapers, grilles, air bricks and gratings, coal-hole covers.

Windows

Types of windows, fixed, circular, casement, double-hung sash, sliding, bay, oriel and bow, sash-window detailing, window ironmongery, common glazing-bar arrangements from early- to late-19th century, window surrounds and architraves, bay details, head and arch details, awnings, blind boxes and valances.

CHAPTER 3 – FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Introduction

‘Somewhat against myself,’ says the decorator Robin Guild, ‘I always argue that the major part of the cost should be spent on the architectural fabric, and that includes the internal architectural detailing. Decoration is secondary.’ Follow his rubric, and even the simplest decorative scheme will succeed.

Planning Ahead

Deciding which fixtures and fittings to restore or reinstate, what structural alterations to carry out and what changes to make to heat, light, power and plumbing.

Interior Design Plan

Creating a floor plan and furniture layout.

Alterations

Knocking through, changing the positions of doors, adding bathrooms.

The Styling of Through Rooms

Double doors, arched openings, plaster corbels, pilasters, columns and decorative capitals, shelving and decorative schemes.

Services

Plumbing, central heating and wiring plans, cast-iron radiators, gas lights.

Wiring

How to work out a wiring plan from the interior design plan and furniture layout.

Heating

Best positions for radiators, types of radiators, radiator screens, separate heating circuits.

Halls, Stairs and Landings

Lobbies and vestibules, staircase types, timber, stone and metal staircase details, balusters, newel posts, balustrades, fretwork, hand rails, encaustic tiles, stained glass, wallpapers, doormats, furnishings and decorative schemes.

Interior Walls, Ceilings and their Dressings

Divisions of a wall, from skirting board dado rail, picture rail and cornice, motifs used in plasterwork, ceiling panelling, ceiling roses and other plaster ornaments.

Joinery

Panelling and wainscoting, skirting mouldings, panel mouldings, decorative dado rails, oak doors, softwood doors, door types including four-panelled, Gothic, jibbed, ledged and braced, semi-glazed, double ‘Tudor’ and semi-glazed with sidelights, doorway linings and details, window/shutter-box details, architraves, beads and other mouldings.

Bookshelves and Cupboards

Shelf and cupboard designs for reception rooms and halls, libraries and bedrooms, window seats, radiator covers, kitchen dressers, china closets, plate racks and hatches, cabinet fittings, dovetails and joints, brackets and studs.

Fireplaces

Types of fireplaces and accessories, arrangement of chimney flues, sections through a fireplace and a kitchen range, grate designs, chimneypieces, stoves, fenders, fire irons, coal scuttles.

Floors and Floor Finishes

Floor-boards, oak and softwood flooring, parquet, sanding, bleaching and varnishing a floor.

Tiles

Tile designs, decorative uses of tiles, encaustic floor tiles and geometrics, glazed wall tiles.

Decorative Glass

Etched glass, obscured glass, stained glass, coloured glass.

Lighting

Candlesticks and candelabra, oil lamps, the duplex burner, gas lighting, electric lighting, switches, wiring conduits, light bulbs, echoing Victorian styles of lighting.

Brassware, Ironmongery and Porcelain Fittings

Rim locks, mortice locks, arrangement of ironmongery on a door, types of bolts, types of hinges, door knobs, handles and latches, finger plates, escutcheons, bell pulls, portière rods and door closers.

CHAPTER 4 – DECORATING IN VICTORIAN STYLE

Introduction

Introduces the changing fashions in interior design, from late Regency to Arts and Crafts, with ideas for modern adaptations.

Quick Guide to Main Styles

Late Regency, High Victorian, Aesthetic, Arts and Crafts, End of the Era.

Colour and Paint Effects

Making a decorating plan, treating distemper on walls, stripping oil paint, Victorian colour schemes, texturing walls and ceilings, staining wood, graining, marbling, incorporating white emulsion into Victorian décor.

Wallpapers

Flat-pattern design, pictorialism, hand-printed wallpapers, wallpaper schemes, Anaglypta papers, Lyncrusta and Tynecastle tapestry, embossed papers, frieze papers, hanging wallpaper.

Carpets and Floor Coverings

Oil cloth, matting, rugs, drugget, pile and flat-woven carpets fitted carpets.

Curtains and Blinds

Curtain styles, curtain material, festoon blinds, practical uses of curtains and blinds, bay windows.

Furniture and Upholstery

Main styles of upholstery, stuffing upholstery, upholstery coverings, Regency, Gothic and Arts and Crafts furniture, different styles of chairs and tables, bookcases, drawing-room chiffoniers.

Drawing Rooms

Planning a decorative scheme, decorative trimmings, colour schemes and textures, cornices, ceilings, dadoes, wallpaper.

Dining Rooms

Location, layout, colour schemes, wallpaper, panelling, sideboards.

Studies, Libraries and Billiard Rooms

Planning the layout of a study, planning a billiard room, billiard tables, picture galleries, panelling, built-in and free-standing bookcases, cupboards, sound-proofing.

CHAPTER 5 – KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS

Introduction

Victorian kitchens had a purely functional design. Staff spent the most time in the kitchen, so lavish fixtures and fittings were not considered necessary. Likewise, the Victorian water closet would not meet up to the standards of a modern day bathroom. Robin Guild explains how you can give your kitchen and bathroom a Victorian feel, whilst at the same time creating modern spaces that are efficient, convenient and comfortable.

Kitchens

Kitchen layout, colour schemes, ranges, cookers, tables, work tops, placing appliances, dressers, sinks and surrounds, taps, tiles, cabinets, cupboards and shelves, surfaces and lighting.

Bathrooms

Bathroom layout, types of water-closets, lavatories, types of baths, types of showers, types of wash-basins, types of taps, bathroom accessories, vanity units, tiles, wallpaper, floor materials, lighting, .

CHAPTER 6 – THE PRIVATE ROOMS

Introduction

Robin Guild suggests how a Victorian bedroom, the most simply furnished room in the house, would have been decorated and recommends ways to create an attractive and, more importantly, a safe nursery in traditional Victorian style.

Bedrooms and Nurseries

History of bedrooms and nurseries, types of beds, types of wardrobes, types of wash-stands and commodes, dressing tables, bedside tables, screens, wallpapers, cupboards, flooring, rugs, child-proofing.

CHAPTER 7 – GARDENS

The increase in popularity of gardening as a pastime in the 1800's led to the importation of plants and flowers from abroad and a rise in number of gardening magazines. Robin Guild explores the escalated interest in gardens, the ways gardens were furnished and the different garden design layouts used during the Victorian period.

Railings and Garden Walls

Entrances, borders, brick work, fencing, hedges.

Arbours, Gazebos and Summer Houses

Garden buildings, pergolas, garden sheds, lean-to's, roofs, floors, windows, doors, woodwork colour schemes.

Conservatories

History of conservatories, conservatory floors, conservatory furniture, greenhouses, glass, timber, Perspex, plastic, plants.

Furnishing the Garden

Gates, garden statues, ornaments, terrace furniture, iron furniture, arches, outside lighting.

CHAPTER 8 – KEEPING FAITH WITH THE PAST

Introduction

When renovating your Victorian house, you have to decide between matching the original materials and finding cheaper substitutes. These surveys give advice on how to assess the condition of your house and how to restore it in a way which is sympathetic to the original Victorian design.

The Basic Survey

Establishing faults in your house, including roofs and chimney stacks, re-roofing, roof timbers, external walls, cement-lie mortar, damp proof courses, subsidence and bulging walls, drainage, gutters, damp walls, rot, external woodwork.

The External Survey

Slates and tiles, ridge tiles, moss, delaminated or painted slates, mortar fillet to a party wall, hollows that collect water, patches and signs of temporary repair, leaning chimney stack, old flashing, wall plates, bulging walls, cracks in brickwork and arches, lintels out of alignment, damp walls, damp-proof course, blocked air bricks or vents, bad pointing, painted walls, cut bricks, extensions, damp patches beneath guttering, uneven or sagging guttering, damp patches behind downpipes, absence of water seal in rain-water gulley, bad-smelling main drain, disorganized pipe work, uneven surface on window-sills and bottom rails of sashes, flaking paintwork, replacement doors and windows.

The Internal Survey

Plumbing, gas, electricity, plaster, ceilings, staircases, wood rot, treatment of dry rot, woodworm.

Structural Alterations

Planning permissions, building regulations, professional advice, knocking through a wall, creating an opening between rooms.

Conversions

Basement conversions, loft conversions, external considerations, internal considerations, creating new rooms, services, converting into flats.

Extensions

Building out over an existing extension, extending over a garage, new back extensions, conservatories.

Heating and Insulation

Types of central heating, including gas-fired, oil-fired, pipe runs and radiators.

Energy Conservation

Loft insulation, wall insulation, floor insulation, double glazing, secondary glazing, preventing draughts.

Adapting Fixtures and Fittings

Doors, original windows, restoring light fittings, brass fittings, china fittings, fireplaces, mantelpieces, plasterwork.

Care and Maintenance

Plaster mouldings, sash windows, broken sash cords, rotten windows security, internal woodwork.

Suppliers of Goods and Services

Companies to contact for original and reproduction Victorian fixtures for kitchens and bathrooms. Contact information about doors and windows, fireplaces, stoves and radiators, flooring and tiles, floor and wall coverings, gardens, gates and railings, glass, ironmongery and brassware, lighting, plasterwork. Contact details for museums.