

# victorian homes

ADRIAN **FLUX**



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# 1

victorian  
gothic  
revival



When it comes to buying a new house, buyers in the UK would prefer an older model.

Only one in four house buyers will choose a home built in the past 10 years, with the majority of purchasers plumping for a 'period property' – in particular, homes built during the reign of Queen Victoria when countless rows of terraced houses sprung up to cope with the massive movement of populations from the countryside to towns and cities.

Victorian houses are a defining feature of the vast majority of British towns and cities and are increasingly sought-after, from back-to-back terraces to two-up two-down cottages, castles to manor houses, townhouses to city mansions.

Astonishingly, a third of the houses in Britain were built before the First World War, most of which are Victorian with the majority of the six million built during Victoria's reign still standing today.

The architecture of the period, which stretches from 1837 to 1901, spans a huge range of influences – classicism, Regency, Italianate, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne and Arts and Crafts – and all boast their own characteristics and features.

It's easy to fall in love with a Victorian property: the patterned bricks, barge

boards, slate roofs, bay or sash windows, beautiful floor tiles, stained glass, fireplaces and high ceilings, and there are plenty of reasons why homeowners can't resist these stylish houses with their high build-quality and period features.

But owning a Victorian house is a responsibility, especially if you plan to restore missing period features or maintain the ones you're lucky enough to have. First of all, you need to know exactly what you're dealing with, have a realistic idea of how much the work you want to do will cost, and decide whether you want to borrow elements of the style of building you're living in, or restore it as authentically as possible.

Our guide to restoring, refurbishing or borrowing style elements from Victorian homes will navigate you through the different styles of architecture from terraced homes to Jacobethan, Gothic Revival to Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau, and offer tips and advice for making the most of your Victorian house.

Whether you're panicking over the plasterwork or paint, fretting over the fireplaces, fabrics or flooring, worrying about wallpaper, bothered about bathrooms or brickwork, we can help steer you in the right direction.

Ready, set, renovate!



—●—

*A third of the houses  
in Britain were built  
before the First World  
War, most of which  
are Victorian*

—●—



# gothic revival

These are the houses from fairytales with their battlements and pinnacles, stained glass and steeply-pitched roofs, spiking gables and ecclesiastical touches such as turrets and gargoyles.

Gothic revival, also referred to as Victorian Gothic, neo-Gothic or even Jigsaw Gothic, generally refers to the period of mock-Gothic architecture which was practiced in the second half of the 19th century.

In truth, however, the Gothic style never really disappeared since the first Gothic buildings enchanted passers-by after the end of the medieval period. Architects were often asked to remodel medieval buildings in a way that blended in with nearby older styles – Christopher Wren, for example, added spectacular Gothic elements to St Michael’s church in Cornhill and St Dunstan-in-the-East church, while Nicholas Hawksmoor remodelled the towers at Westminster Abbey in a sympathetic Gothic style.

With classic design storming British architecture in the late 18th century, there was a school of design that looked to the past and the romantic Gothic architecture – while public buildings

of the period were overwhelmingly classic in design, the Gothic design was favoured by many architects building domestic homes.

The most influential of all was Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, an elaborate and fanciful Gothic cottage which saw a magpie-like Walpole “borrowing” elements of exterior medieval Gothic style and moving them indoors, meaning rooms were adorned with whimsical ornamentation, the façade was fit for a fairytale princess and even the garden boasted a seat that looked like a giant shell.

Strawberry Hill was the first house without any existing medieval fabric to be built from scratch in the Gothic style, based on historic examples, and was, therefore, arguably the starting point of the Gothic Revival. And what a starting point.

While the building began as a small 17th century house built on five acres of land, it quickly became a Gothic castle set in 46 acres boasting plain towers, fan-vaulted towers and battlements.

Work started on Strawberry Hill in 1749 and continued until 1776.



strawberry hill



## the auld kirk

At the dawn of the 19th century, many architects added elements of Gothic style to their designs, in particular the decorative touches that created added luxury – ornate carvings, pointed arches, columns and piers – but it wasn't until 1840, the Victorian era, that Gothic Revival really gathered pace.

Architecture reflected the influential writers of the day, such as A.W. Pugin and John Ruskin, who believed it was essential for architects to return to the craftsmanship and beauty of the past and that only materials that were used in the Middle Ages should be used to achieve this.

While the majority of Gothic Revival buildings in Britain were built on a huge scale or as part of a place of worship or education (much of Oxford and Cambridge universities, for example), the style was also used in 'lesser' buildings of the time such as hotels, schools, railway stations and civic buildings.

It is buildings such as these which often fall into private hands after their primary use comes to a natural end.

Gothic Revival architecture was recently in the headlines when artist Grayson Perry created his Dream House, a two-storey detached house in Wrabness, north-east Essex, which he described as

'an Essex Taj Mahal' and which gave a nod to Gothic Revival with its arched windows and ornate chimneys and tiles.

If you want to buy your own Gothic Revival home, large mansions are often converted into flats, and chapels and churches into private dwellings. In 2015, Achamore House on the historic island of Ghia was on the market for offers in excess of £900,000.

A mansion remodelled on an early 17th century house in 1884 to a design by the Glasgow architect John Honeyman, one of the leading architects of the day, the house boasted 14 bedrooms, eight reception rooms and extensive gardens.

The Auld Kirk in Fife, a five-bedroom home standing on a base of solid rock and converted from a church with an interior lit by tall Gothic arched and stained glass windows and a gable topped by a stone Celtic Cross, was on the market for offers in excess of £395,000.

\* Further reading: *The Gothic Revival: An Essay In The History of Taste*, Kenneth Clark; *The Gothic Revival (World of Art)*, Michael Lewis; *George Frederick Bodley and the Later Gothic Revival in Britain and America*, Michael Hall.

# 8

## ways to get the gothic revival look

with or without  
an original Gothic  
revival house!

Don't mistake Gothic with spooky – your aim isn't to create a haunted house that will only come into its own on Halloween; it's about having a home which harks back to the most beautiful elements of the Victorian Gothic style, with its ornate architectural designs and elegant touches. It's about pattern, elegance and opulence. Even if you live in a bungalow you can borrow from the Gothic Revival style: be bold, be beautiful, be brave!

### ONE

An easy way to add a flavour of Gothic Revival to your home is to decorate rooms in the shades of the era – rich tones of gold, silver, heather, emerald, ruby and peacock blue, or a muted version of one of these bright shades. Certain colour schemes evoke an era and using a historically accurate shade can lift your décor to a whole new level – or back to a whole new period of time. Paint makers Crown offer a selection of Gothic Revival shades that draw on the leading style of the 1830s and 1840s, based on the study of Medieval buildings and decorative objects with rich, vibrant shades taken from the decorative motifs of the time.

Find out more [here](#)

### TWO

Another option for walls is to choose an opulent wallpaper to make a strong style statement (to be accurate, you need to wallpaper all four walls, but if you're

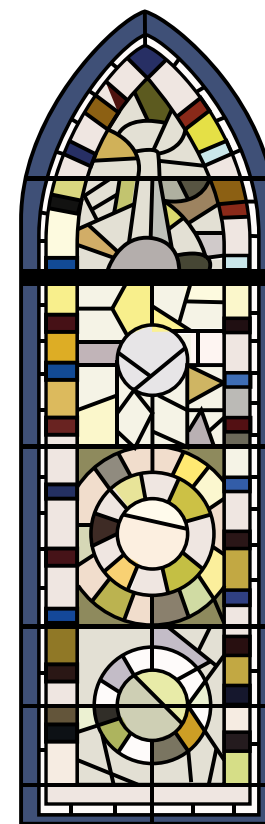
after a hint of Gothic drama, one feature wall will suffice). Look for texture and pattern, flocked paper in rich, jewel shades, dark shades such as pewter or even black and deep natural shades of moss, burgundy and ocean blue. Look for papers inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, in particular the work of William Morris, and embossed papers which add another layer of opulence to your scheme.

### THREE

Gothic Revival schemes aren't well-known for being filled with bright, LED lights. The natural glow of candle and firelight is what you are aiming for, although you can achieve a similar – but more practical – look by introducing wrought iron chandeliers with candle bulbs which can be adjusted using a dimmer switch. Candelabras add another layer of light.

### FOUR

You may not be lucky enough to have lancet windows in your house (tall, narrow, arched windows, often containing stained glass and surrounded by heavy mouldings) but you may be able to add a splash of architectural splendour by using mirrors to represent windows or reclaimed stained glass windows on the walls. If used cleverly, both can add a trompe-l'oeil effect of a lancet window. If you can introduce stained glass to an area where natural light can stream through it, the colour it will bring to your room will take your interior design to a whole new level.





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*Recreate the look  
by rummaging through  
the lots at your local auction,  
looking in antique  
and charity shops and  
searching on eBay for  
items such as old globes,  
old taxidermy, bell jars,  
candelabras, tapestries,  
wall sconces, drinking goblets  
and decorative urns*

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# 5

## well-known examples

of Gothic Revival  
buildings



### **THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER, LONDON**

It's one of the most recognised buildings in the world where some of the biggest decisions about the country are made. The Palace of Westminster owes its stunning Gothic architecture to Sir Charles Barry and Augustus Welby Pugin, who won a competition to design the building after the fire of 1834 which left the two houses of Parliament homeless. They chose the Perpendicular Gothic style, which was used for Henry VII's chapel in Westminster Abbey,

incorporating decorative sculpture and the motif of the portcullis, the symbol of Henry VII's maternal ancestors and the accepted symbol of Parliament. There are 200 sculptures of monarchs, consorts and bishops on the exterior facades in addition to the national symbols of the kingdoms of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The palace's most famous feature is the clock tower housing Big Ben, and the building contains more than 1,000 rooms, including the Chambers of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons.



### LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL, LIVERPOOL

Built on St James's Mount, the seat of the Bishop of Liverpool is based on a design by Giles Gilbert Scott (whose grandfather designed the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park, and his father George was a leading exponent in the Gothic Revival movement) and is the longest cathedral in the world. Construction began in 1904 from red sandstone quarried from nearby Woolton, an Anglican cathedral built by a Roman Catholic. The building's magnificent tower rises 331ft into the air, while the lower part is square, punctuated by the Rankin Porch entrance. The tower tapers to an eight-sided upper stage, topped with a crown of lanterns. There are Gothic arches, a high central tower space and an interior enriched with monuments, glass and furniture.



### TOWER BRIDGE, LONDON

Designed by Sir Horace Jones and built by Sir John Wolfe Barry, Tower Bridge is the instantly-recognisable monument to Gothic Revival that forms the gateway to the world's greatest port and imperial capital, from which trade once flowed out across the world's largest empire. Designed to complement the Palace of Westminster, the bascule bridge spans 800 feet with two Gothic towers, each 213 feet high, built on piers, and a central span of 200 feet split into two equal bascules that can be raised to an angle of 83 degrees to allow passing ships to sail underneath. Construction began in 1886 and it took 432 construction workers eight years to complete. An unnamed Spitfire pilot flew under the bridge during a dog fight in World War Two.



### ST PANCRAS STATION, LONDON

This Grade I listed building in Euston Road, Camden, stands between the British Library, King's Cross station and the Regent's Canal and was opened in 1868 by the Midland Railway. When it opened, the arched Barlow train shed was the largest single-span roof in the world. George Gilbert Scott's masterpiece has been spectacularly refurbished and boasts a sweeping staircase, Scott's original colour schemes and the former ladies' smoking room, which is the most complete of Scott's existing interiors. He used industrial techniques to produce medieval specifications, such as tiles, glass and furniture, and created a fantasy world of mystery, dreams and magic with technical brilliance.



### MANCHESTER TOWN HALL

The home of Manchester City Council, the building faces Albert Square to the north and St Peter's Square to the south and is home to the city's cenotaph. Designed by Alfred Waterhouse, it was completed in 1877 and contains offices and grand ceremonial rooms such as the Great Hall, decorated with Ford Madox Brown's Manchester Murals which tell the story of the city, and the Sculpture Hall which contains busts and statues of influential figures such as Dalton and Joule. The 280ft clock tower houses Great Abel, the clock's bell. The Town Hall is regarded as one of the finest interpretations of Gothic revival architecture in the world.



# victorian jacobethan

A term coined by poet Sir John Betjeman as a catch-all to describe a particular style of architecture popular during the Victorian era, Jacobethan – as the name suggests – drew influence from both the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

He said: “The style in which the Gothic predominates may be called, inaccurately enough, Elizabethan, and the style in which the classical predominates over the Gothic, equally inaccurately, may be called Jacobean. To save the time of those who do not wish to distinguish between these periods of architectural uncertainty, I will henceforth use the term ‘Jacobethan’.”

Just as fashion trends ebb and flow – one year harking back to the 1960s, the next to the 1920s and so forth – so do architectural trends. The Jacobethan trend made Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture available to a larger audience, albeit on a smaller scale to the original buildings of the time that still survive.

As Victorian architects became bored of the Gothic Revival, they turned to another page in the history book, back to the Renaissance and, in particular, the architecture of the Elizabethans and Jacobeans – it was a brave new look which many families planning to build a new home adopted in order to move away from the overly-ornate Gothic style.

In essence, Jacobethan took the most coveted elements of each order and threw

them into a melting pot to create a brand new – yet old – style. It gave a nod towards symmetry and the order found in classical Greek and Roman architecture which originally migrated to Britain through word of mouth.

Buildings might have overhanging gables or decorative chimneys, diamond-shaped casement windows, round arched front entry doors and half-timbering. They could have steep roofs with front-facing gables, have ornate stone or brickwork or pillars supporting porches and parapets.

Jacobethan properties are still available for sale and not all have price tags that would bring you out in a cold sweat – although if you’d fancied beer tycoon Hugo Powell’s Jacobethan manor house on the waterfront in Oakville, Ontario, you’d have needed to shell out £37 million, for which you’d have got just four bedrooms (albeit set in 10.3 acres of land..).

So what actually IS Jacobethan? And how does it apply to the architecture of the Victorian era?

Jacobethan architecture mixed two similar styles - Elizabethan and Jacobean – and gave the Victorians a point of reference when they designed their own buildings, both those on a grand scale and smaller properties.

In order to understand what Jacobethan is, we need to look at its two elements.

# elizabethan architectural style

## ONE

Regarded as the last hurrah of the Tudor period, the Elizabethan style also draws influence from the European Renaissance style, despite Catholic Europe's refusal to accept Queen Elizabeth's right to the throne. The first major building to include French Renaissance style was old Somerset House in London which began construction in 1547.

## TWO

The Elizabethans were very fond of tearing down 'old-fashioned' buildings and replacing them with new builds. Even those on stricter budgets yearned for windows and chimneys. Previously, most people had cooked and eaten in the hall with a fire on the open hearth, but chimneys meant floors could be added.

## THREE

Houses built in the Elizabethan style include Burghley House near Stamford, Longleat in Wiltshire (which boasted more than 300 windows) and Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire (similarly overblown with windows: an old English rhyme said: "Hardwick Hall – more glass than wall"). The key was to exhibit status in a very obvious way and a conspicuous display of wealth.

## FOUR

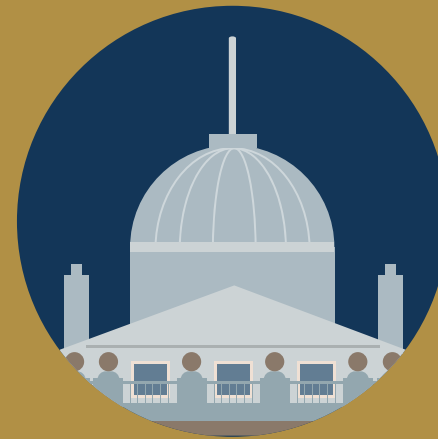
Upper-class houses tended to feature Gothic-styled mullioned windows, were built to an E-shaped late Tudor plan and had elaborate details such as an array of intricately carved chimneys and turrets. Stone and brick were used to create buildings that would stand the test of time and which were in direct contrast to lower-class homes constructed of timber and wattle.

## FIVE

Design was overstated and elaborate with monuments, obelisks, balustrades, parapets, chimneypieces and even spires. Hugely detailed, ornate and formal gardens with fountains, pavilions and terraces also became popular.

## SIX

Symmetry was important to Elizabethan architects who liked to mirror their designs so that there would be centred entryways into large homes with matching gables and chimney.



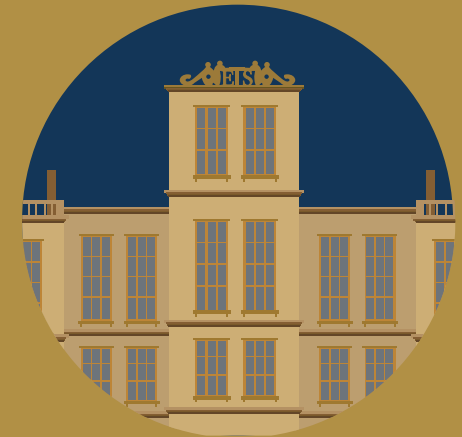
Somerset House



Burghley House



Longleat



Hardwick Hall

## SEVEN

The Great Halls which had been popular in medieval architecture were kept, but new features were added to give the homeowners added comfort: there were broader staircases and long galleries which linked the wings of the house on the upper floors. There were withdrawing rooms and bedrooms that differed in size depending on the rank of those who slept in them.

## EIGHT

Glazing was huge: with the availability of relatively cheap glass, the Elizabethans were overjoyed to be able to create a glittering expanse of windows. The upper and middle classes replaced horn or wooden shutters with glass panes, immediately making their homes lighter and airier. Making glass was a painstaking process that involved blowing a blob of glass into a cylindrical bubble and then cooling it and cutting it in two. These small panes were then joined together with lead in a lattice pattern.

## NINE

Floors were usually wooden. Where once they would have been covered in rushes, herbs and straw, they were now covered in rugs if the budget allowed.

## TEN

Excitingly, it was the Elizabethan era when the first flushing waste disposal system was invented by no less than Sir John Harington, Godson to Elizabeth I. He published a work which explained how “unsaverie places may be made sweet, noisome places made wholesome, filthy places made cleanly”.



# jacobean architectural style

## ONE

Describing the architecture under the reign of James I, Jacobean style is similar – but subtly different to – that of the Elizabethan movement. King James spent a huge amount more on architecture than his predecessor.

## TWO

James was a learned man who wrote, amongst others, a book called *Daemonologie* about witchcraft, which is widely thought to have been Shakespeare's inspiration for *Macbeth*. Craftsmen, working to create sumptuous new state rooms in a medieval tower at Knole, an enormous manor house in Sevenoaks, carved protective witch marks in King James' bedchamber and in the room above it. The marks included scorch marks, carved Vs and Ws to invoke the protection of the Virgin Mary and maze-like marks known as demon traps intended to trap spirits. James' visit never happened, so the witch marks remained untested.

## THREE

There were three main kinds of floor plan in Jacobean homes – either a ring with a courtyard and building

in the middle or an E or H shaped building with facades that boasted many branches, or wings. While the buildings retained the Elizabethan symmetrical look, they were anything but symmetrical inside and rooms were not as ordered. For the Jacobeans it was far more important to have a sense of drama in an imposing silhouette.

## FOUR

Jacobean buildings often had dramatic facades, but these paled into the shadows when compared to the interiors, which were often ornately carved. Ceiling panelling, walls, staircases and fireplaces were often covered in carvings, either Flemish-inspired strapwork or Italian Mannerist-inspired carvings influenced by German carpenter Wendel Dietterlin. He included stunning imagery from the Bible, from the natural world and from the mythological world. Carvings sometimes illustrated dreadful demons and monsters from the Dark Ages.

## FIVE

While Elizabethan craftsmen channelled foreign architectural influences from books, the Jacobeans went straight to source and used craftsmen from Europe directly to create a whole new style of building.

## SIX

It can be argued that it was the Jacobeans who first pioneered the concept of a 'project manager' when it came to architecture. While buildings were still designed by those who actually built them (masons, plasterers, bricklayers, carpenters, joiners etc) there was now a 'master artificer' who would have an overall plan for the building and who were the first architects. Before the time of King James, such architects were not considered to be intellectuals or people who belonged to a higher class because they were still involved in the manual process of building. During James' reign, this began to change.

## SEVEN

The Jacobeans were very fond of columns from classical literature, which was becoming far better known in Britain. Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Composite, columns were used in order in a building, starting with Doric and ending with Composite, and architects stuck to this ordering without deviation.

## EIGHT

The Flemish gable roof was often incorporated into Jacobean architecture, and buildings would often have gable

roofs alongside flat roofs. One type of roof would be used for the central area of the building and another for the wide wings. The flat roofs would be enclosed by fences or low walls called parapets, which were then decorated with ornaments.

## NINE

In 1607 and 1620, England founded her first successful colonies in the Americas – Jamestown, Virginia and Plymouth. The founders built homes that were Jacobean in style – elements of those first houses were echoed across America over the centuries, including the clapboard common to houses in New England and Nova Scotia and which is an echo of architecture back in 17th century north east England.

## TEN

Life in London was becoming ever-more cosmopolitan, and merchants would regularly return from Africa, India and the Far East with trinkets and wares, which would then adorn the homes of the prosperous.



## banqueting house

# indigo jones

## Britain's first architect

A major architect and designer of the Jacobean period, Inigo Jones was also well known for the wonderful stage designs and costumes he made for the entertainers at the court of James I and his successor Charles I.

Nine years younger than Shakespeare and the son of a cloth worker, he was well-versed in what was and was not fashionable. It is believed he travelled widely as a young man – probably thanks to a patron – and he was hugely influenced by the work of the Italian architect Andrea Palladio.

From 1615 he was put in charge of royal buildings, at which point he introduced into England the principles of Classical architecture, having studied them himself in Italy. His most famous work can be seen at the Banqueting House in the Palace of Whitehall and the Queen's House at Greenwich.

Jones also worked on the restoration of St Paul's Cathedral, adding a portico to the west end (the whole cathedral was, sadly, lost in the Great Fire of London). At Covent Garden, he created London's first 'square' in 1630 on land developed by the 4th earl of Bedford. When the English Civil War broke out, his employment came to an end. He died in June 1652.

# 5

## well-known examples

of Jacobethan architecture



### DOWNTON ABBEY

A famous example of a Jacobethan-style house (albeit on a spectacularly large scale) is television's Downton Abbey, which is, in fact, Highclere Castle in Hampshire.

Highclere has around 200 bedrooms and a vast list of other rooms which would have left the 'below stairs' staff run ragged.

While it began its life as a simple square mansion in the Georgian style, it was remodelled to within an inch of its life by architect-of-the-day Sir Charles Barry,

who was also behind another well-known building, the Palace of Westminster.

When it came to giving Highclere a facelift, Barry chose the Jacobethan style, using elements of both Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture.

Highclere is symmetrical and has huge towers (Elizabethan) but also has a series of flat roofs, open parapets and balustrades and is – unbelievably – even more impressive on the inside (Jacobean).



### SANDRINGHAM HOUSE

Sandringham estate in West Norfolk was bought by Queen Victoria for £22,000 in 1863 as a home for her eldest son and heir, Albert Edward, the future King Edward VII, Bertie to his family.

The plain, white, stuccoed house was almost immediately demolished and work began on the Jacobethan-style building which stands on the estate today.

Built in red brick, Bertie shared the house with his wife Princess Alexandra. When it was badly damaged by fire in 1892, it was enlarged.

A Jacobethan front porch and carrstone conservatory were added and the house was reimagined with nods to nearby Blickling. Sandringham has two long symmetrical main facades, gables, bay windows, turrets, onion-shaped roofs and tall, ornamental chimneys.



### HARLAXTON MANOR

The Lincolnshire mansion is the second house to stand on the site – the first was built in the 14th century and used as a hunting lodge. The current house was built between 1837 and 1845 and was key in popularising the Jacobethan trend. William Burn was the architect who designed the house after owner Gregory Gregory had a difference of opinion with his first architect, Anthony Salvin.

In 1838, the Honorable Charles Greville visited the house as it was being built and wrote in his diary: “Today we went to see the house Mr Gregory is building, five miles from here. He is a gentleman who has a fancy to build a magnificent house in the Elizabethan style and he is now in the middle of his work, all the shell being finished except one wing. Nothing can be more perfect than it is, both as to the architecture and the ornaments.”



### SOMERLEYTON HALL

A country house in the village of Somerleyton near Lowestoft in Suffolk, this hall boasts one of the finest yew hedge mazes in the country and a ridge and furrow greenhouse designed by Joseph Paxton, the architect of the Crystal Palace. There has been a manor house on the site since 1240, but the present incarnation was built in the seven years that followed 1843, when the hall was bought by MP Samuel Morton Peto, who was the head of an international construction empire which had built railways in Denmark, Canada, Argentina, Russia and Britain. He also helped to build the Houses of Parliament, Nelson’s Column and Lowestoft harbour. He employed Prince Albert’s architect John Thomas to help realise his dreams for Somerleyton, which saw him replace a great deal of the original Jacobean manor with ornate new structures which gave a nod to Italian, Dutch and French styles.



### OXFORD TOWN HALL

Opened by the then Prince of Wales in 1897, the town hall is on the site of a Guildhall built in 1292. Replaced by the first town hall in 1752, a competition was held to decide a new design for the building in 1891. Local architect Henry Hare won with his Jacobethan design and the old hall was demolished.

With its finely carved cupolas and gables, its ornately crated exterior and timber-roofed assembly room, the hall is a fine example of Jacobethan architecture with its fastidious attention to detail.

# how to

## get the Jacobethan look

While it's extremely unlikely that many of us will be able to afford the likes of Downton Abbey or Sandringham House, it is possible to inject a bit of Jacobethan style into your Victorian home (or, indeed, your new-build).

Just like the architects who created their own style from two different periods, you can do the same in your house, using the materials much loved during the two eras.

In King James I's reign, printed designs from Europe became more widely available and imports from as far away as Asia began to appear in affluent households. There were rich colours, mother-of-pearl inlaid furniture, black lacquered furniture and lots of sea-themed motifs such as furniture decorated with waves, giant shells or mermaids.

Tapestries and textiles were hugely important to both the Elizabethans and Jacobeans and, in turn, to Victorian designers who looked to the past for inspiration. Look to hang tapestries or

rugs in rich, dark colours on walls and use patterned rugs on wood, stone, tile or marble floors to replicate the look. Embroidered cushions were also popular.

For a simple but effective hark to the past, try wallpaper based on Elizabethan designs, such as that offered by Zoffany. Melissa White created the artwork for the Arden collection by using large plastered canvases in her Hastings studio, which were hand-painted and engraved to give the hand-crafted appearance of the originals.

A range of wallpapers and fabrics based on rare historical papers and fabrics from the Elizabethan period can be found at Style Library.

Furniture tended to be oak if it needed to be hardwearing and walnut for finer pieces (walnut furniture from Elizabethan times has not survived due to its fragility). Walnut furniture was sometimes inlaid with mother of pearl or metal.

Dark wood panelling was popular, as were carved wooden panels, carved staircases and patterned plasterwork. Difficult to replicate in modern homes, it is possible to achieve a degree of the look with dark wooden furniture, which can be picked up relatively cheaply. Intricately carved boxes can also echo the look.

Queen Elizabeth I had a red and white marble-topped table in her bedroom and her four-poster bed was 11 foot square and covered in fine linen. Even a super-king-sized bed would look like a dwarf in comparison!

For accessories, think pewter cups and goblets, silverware, gilt and candlesticks: in fact candlelight is one of the easiest ways to inject some Jacobethan style into your interiors (and everyone looks better in candlelight..).





Listed Building

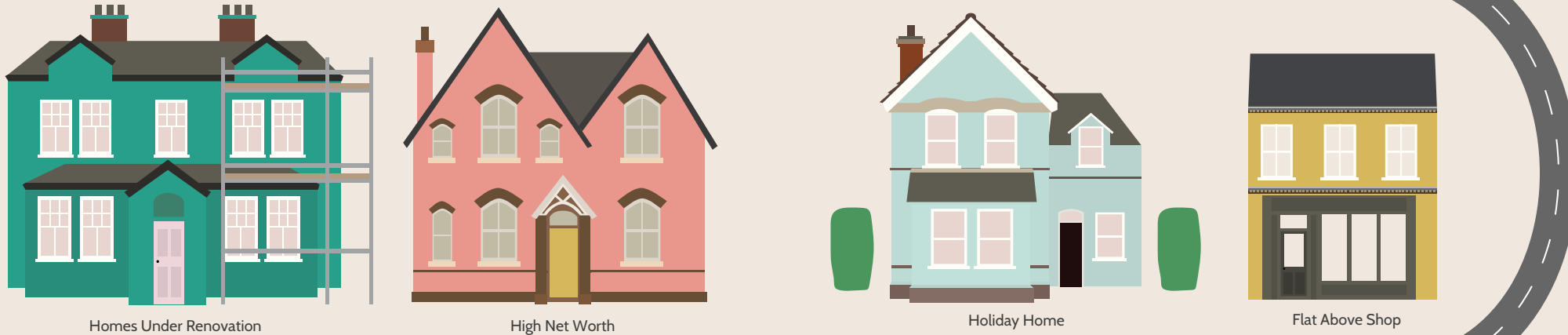
Standard Home

Second Home

Subsidence

Unoccupied

Buy to Let

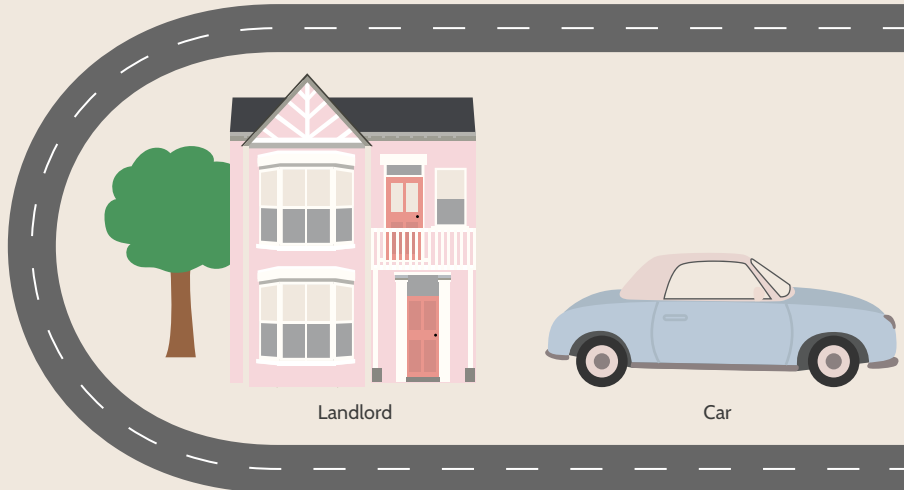


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# 3 art nouveau



Although the incredible 63-year reign of Queen Victoria came to an end in 1901, the Victorian style lived on.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, a new era of the Arts and Crafts movement was born, a so-called free-style design which was led by protagonists such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868 to 1928), Charles Annesley Voysey (1857 to 1941) and Edwin L Lutyens (1869 to 1944).

While Voysey designed houses which looked as if they were part of the environment which they were built and were natural and flowing, Mackintosh thought that every single element of a house should be designed to work in tandem, while Lutyens became well-known for his formal architectural designs for large houses, public buildings and monuments.

Art Nouveau was immensely popular between 1892 and the early 1900s and developed in Paris and on the continent. In the UK, the form was seen most often in glassware and metalwork, where the distinctive floral curving forms became sought-after.

High-end stores were quick to spot the trend and bought in Art Nouveau crafts from artists who were working

in Europe, meaning that the style can be seen in late-Victorian homes which were owned or commissioned by affluent homeowners.

Art Nouveau marked the full-circle of Victorian design, which had started with simplicity of design and classical lines, moved through the flamboyant Gothic, eclectic and highly-ornamented styles and back to the simpler lines which Art Nouveau embraces.

The movement, which literally translates as 'new art', takes its inspiration from the natural world and uses curves from botanical studies and illustrations of deep-sea creatures such as those by Ernst Heinrich Haeckel, a German biologist whose work *Art Forms in Nature* was published in 1899.

Metaphorically speaking, Art Nouveau was a movement away from the structure of tradition and towards a new freedom in design.

The term was first coined in the 1880s in the Belgian publication *L'Art Moderne* to describe the work of an art collective called *Les Vingt*, 20 painters and sculptors who were deeply influenced by the work of William Morris, the Arts and Crafts movement and Japanese art.



*Art Nouveau marked the full-circle of Victorian design, which had started with simplicity of design and classical lines, moved through the flamboyant Gothic, eclectic and highly-ornamented styles and back to the simpler lines which Art Nouveau embraces*




German-born Paris art dealer Siegfried Bing opened a gallery called L'Art Nouveau in 1895, which displayed and sold a range of paintings, furniture, furnishings and ornaments which were decidedly contemporary and 'new'. His gallery is credited with popularising both the movement and the name it took, but Art Nouveau was also distributed across the world through periodicals such as *The Studio*, *The Yellow Book*, *The Savoy*, *La Plume* and *Die Jugend*.

The style was famous for sinuous curves, the whiplash line, stylised flowers, leaves, roots and seed pods, and the female form, and the materials used for production included exotic woods, iridescent glass, silver and precious stones. Colours were from a muted palette, often silvers, greens and purples.

Names associated with the period include Alphonse Mucha, Aubrey Beardsley, Rene Lalique, Emile Galle, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Victor Horta and Louis Comfort Tiffany – all of whom had a huge impact on the era.

As the first rumblings of World War One were heard, Art Nouveau had all but disappeared, but the designs that were born during this short-lived but productive period live on and have been appreciated and loved ever since.





*“Art is the flower. Life is the green leaf. Let every artist strive to make his flower a beautiful living thing, something that will convince the world that there may be, there are, things more precious, more beautiful, more lasting than life itself”*

CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH



**MEET THE ARTIST:  
CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH**

One of Glasgow’s most famous sons, Charles Rennie Mackintosh was born in 1868 and, after school, trained as an architect in a local practice, studying art and design at night classes held at the Glasgow School of Art.

There, Mackintosh met his friend and colleague Herbert MacNair and artist sisters Margaret and Frances Macdonald, and the four collaborated on a range of designs which were used for illustrations, furniture and metalwork.

Their surreal style earned them the nickname ‘the Spook School’ and their work was largely ignored in England due to its continental influence from Art Nouveau.

Most of Mackintosh’s finest work was created with the help of generous patrons between 1896 and 1910 – he designed a new art school building for the establishment where he had attended lessons, a series of Glasgow tearoom interiors for client Kate Cranston, and a large private house for businessmen William Davidson and Walter Blackie.

Mackintosh’s style was hugely appreciated in Europe, particularly in Germany and Austria, but he remained Art Nouveau’s best-known British exponent with his pure, clean geometry and light colour palette. His designs were integrated, with furniture and fittings all working together in harmony.

## MEET THE ARTIST: 1837 TO 1933 LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY

He created a magical world of beautiful designs which brought exotic influences into homes across the world and shed a whole new light on the aesthetic movement.

Born in New York, he was the oldest son of Charles Lewis Tiffany, who had founded Tiffany & Co in 1837. With financial support from his parents, Louis was able to study the fine arts and learned a number of disciplines from painting to metalwork, furniture making to textiles, pottery to enamel-work and, in the 1870s, discovered a world of possibility when he started working with glass.

He was influenced heavily by nature, by history and by art from other countries such as China, Japan, Greece, Italy, India and the Islamic world. Tiffany loved Gothic stained windows, Persian glass and a British technique called English cameo, the idea of imitating natural gemstones in glass.

Keen on creating new processes of his own, he created iridescent finishes, lava glass and Favrite glass, which he produced by exposing molten glass to heat and metallic oxides to infuse it with jewel-like colours and iridescence.

The Tiffany name, when applied to his own glass products, was trademarked in 1894 and he embraced design with the same fervour that drove the 19th century industrialists to build the cities, factories and railroads that changed the landscape.

He hoped his windows, domes and mosaics would bring a degree of beauty to buildings that were industrial in nature – he thought it vital that the people who lived and worked or just visited these buildings were able to see scenes from the natural world such as flowers, lakes, hills and gardens.

Art Nouveau style influenced his work, in particular the shape and design of the pieces he made, but he also maintained the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement and ensured everything that left his studio was of the highest quality.

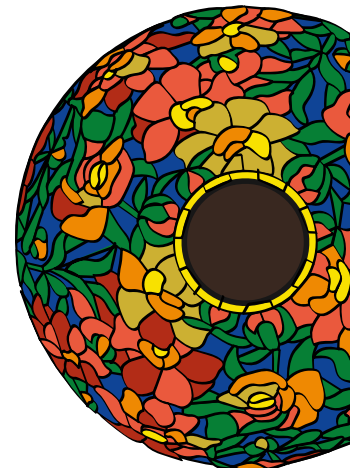
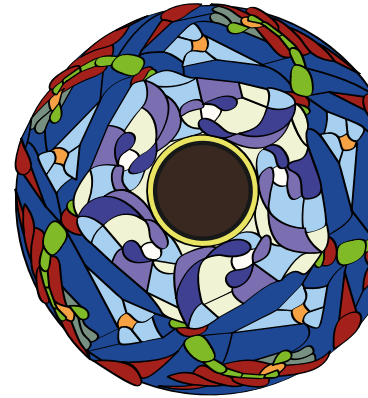
Having started with large-scale decorative windows, based on the stained glass windows he had admired in Europe, he realised that he would be able to create smaller scale designs for domestic interiors with artificial light standing in for sunlight.

The first leaded shades included classic designs such as the Dragonfly, Wisteria and Nautilus and by 1906 there were more than 125 for customers to choose from and more than 5,000 glass shades, meaning Tiffany was able to reproduce the colours of nature.

In addition to his glasswork, Tiffany also created silverware, jewellery, bronzes, clocks and desk accessories and Tiffany & Co remains a byword for quality, although Tiffany Studios closed in 1932.

It is possible to buy Tiffany-style lamps in a range of timeless designs which are reproductions of Louis Tiffany's work. Try The Tiffany Lighting Company or Tiffany Lighting Direct.

Original pieces can be purchased from antique dealers, but at around £5,000 for a basic Tiffany piece and more than £1 million for a superior example of the craftsman's work, an original is likely to be out of most householders' price bracket.



# how to get the look

It was a short-lived style but the look is timeless: it's easy to inject a little bit of Art Nouveau style into your home with a few simple touches.

While it would be lovely to fill your house with original pieces made by renowned craftspeople, most of us don't have a limitless budget and therefore need to rely on replicas or a sense of style achieved through colour and design. It's possible to pick up gorgeous Tiffany-style lamps with art glass shades, mirrors with Art Nouveau frames and prints of Gustav Klimt's work which lend an instant sense of the style to any interior.

Rooms were lighter and brighter than in any other Victorian period, with paler colours and faded oriental carpets in muted, pastel tones. Windows were no longer dressed with heavy, draped curtains but rather framed with fabric over plain poles. If curtains were used, they were hung from cornice boxes and allowed to hang straight to the ground without any tie-backs.

Oak furniture was fashionable in preference to mahogany, and the emphasis was on natural grains rather than heavy varnish. Art Nouveau is possibly the easiest of all the Victorian styles to put in the context of a modern house.

When it was at its height, Art Nouveau generally found its way into British homes as an accent here or there – an item from newly-opened Liberty and Co (Arthur Liberty opened his first shop in London in 1875 selling Arts and Crafts objects for homeowners and opened a second store in Paris in 1890).

## COLOURS

Art Nouveau used a lighter palette than had been seen before during the Victorian period and white was often used in order to provide a background to other shades. Pastel colours were popular: lilac, a muted salmon and leaf green contrasted with white and black. Mackintosh-style furniture was often black and walls were often plain – he was the first to use all-white interiors.

## FLOORS

If money is no object, parquet floors are ideal and should be stained and varnished. If not, wooden floors are preferable – wax or stain boards and then add an accent with an oriental rug. If you have carpets and can't change them, just add the rug accents.

## WALLPAPER

If wallpaper was used, it was often highly-stylised designs which included natural motifs such as flowers (in particular roses, water lilies, wisteria and poppies), branches, leaves, thistles, peacock feathers, birds, dragonflies and vines. Look at Go Wallpaper, for a selection of modern Art Nouveau style wallpaper and Bradbury & Bradbury for a collection of papers designed from old patterns.

## FIREPLACES

A fireplace is a focal feature in a room and it's possible to pick up original fireplaces from the period or replica designs, along with tiles, which will add an instant element of the era. Look on eBay for original fireplaces, fenders, tiles and grates in a range of styles and sizes. Fire baskets and fire kerbs are also available in cast iron or copper. Replicas can be bought easily: try The Antique Fireplace Company, Wisdom Fireplaces, or Twentieth Century Fireplaces. Look for cast iron hoods with typical Art Nouveau designs such as curves of flowers growing from the floor upwards.

## CARVED WOOD

There is a distinctively feminine shapeliness to Art Nouveau furniture, which incorporates sweeping, curved shapes into its design. It was a distinctly modern look in comparison to the intricate carvings which had been so popular. It's possible to pick up replica pieces or antiques which are in Art Nouveau style without spending a fortune.

## LIGHTING

Tiffany lamps are king when it comes to lighting in an Art Nouveau style, but originals cost a fortune. Thankfully, there are plenty of reproduction Tiffany lights available to get the look at a fraction of the price.

## ORIGINAL ACCESSORIES

If money is no object (!) include Emile Galle or Daum Freres glassware (look for a signature or cameo), posters by Alphonse Mucha, JM Cassandre or Jules Cheret and silverware or other objects from Liberty & Co. Replicas are available for considerably less cash.



### **STAINED GLASS**

Art Nouveau glazing is typically seen in front doors of the era and in fan lights and interconnecting doors, cabinets and even fire screens. Doors are easily available, either original or replica, and stained glass craftspeople are able to restore damaged original panels. For inspiration, visit [Coriander Stained Glass](#).



# five inspirational places

where you can see wonderful Art Nouveau buildings

## GLASGOW

The home of Art Nouveau artist Charles Rennie Mackintosh, look out for his Glasgow School of Art and The Hill House in Upper Colquhoun Street.

## BRISTOL

Henry Williams designed the Everard's Printing Works (1901) with its tiled façade in a design by WJ Neatby of Doulton's. It has a triple archway design on the ground floor with two on the first floor and four on the upper floor and above them is a female figure which represents truth and light. The contributions of William Morris and St John the Baptist are reflected in the design.

## NORWICH

The Royal Arcade in Norwich opened in 1899 as a 247-foot covered avenue designed by local architect George Skipper. Built on the site of an old coaching inn, it is two storeys and is tiled throughout in pastel creams and greens. It has a fully-glazed roof and the shops within it are all framed in mahogany or other dark wood and project into the arcade with bowed windows. There are panels of decorative tiles featuring peacocks and flowers

that were made by Doulton and designed by ceramic sculptor WJ Neatby. Look out for the stained glass window at the end of the arcade with its trees and birds and a façade topped with a stunning angel, its wings reaching to the sky.

## LONDON

Harrods Food Hall was decorated in 1902 with WJ Neatby tiles which feature huge peacocks and a range of Art Nouveau designs.

## PARIS

Hector Guimard was a French architect whose Art Nouveau designs can be seen on the Paris Metro – look for the entrance gates, which showcase the organic lines of Guimard's designs with giant stalks drooping under what looks like the weight of giant tropical flowers. The most beautiful are those at the stations at Porte Dauphine, Chatelet and Abbesses.

## ALSO SEE

The Criterion in London, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Casa Batllo in Barcelona, The Old England Building in Brussels, Majolikahaus in Vienna, The Fox and Anchor pub in Islington and Albert Street in Riga.

# 4 victorian arts & craft

Arts and Crafts interior design was all about quality over quantity, moving away from mass-produced furniture and furnishings and towards the craftsmanship which had been left behind by the industrial revolution.

In the late nineteenth century, leading designers began to long for the days when handmade furniture and fittings were commonplace and eschewed the Victorian visual overload in favour of light-filled, serene spaces free from clutter and adornment.

In Britain, William Morris led the pack, restoring traditional methods of creating furniture and furnishings and heralding a movement towards style and function to create spaces that were utilitarian without being sterile.

Gone were the over-the-top wall hangings, paint finishes, factory-made wooden furniture, jewel-coloured rugs and oppressive Gothic elements of design; welcomed in were beautiful hardwood floors, wallpaper that showcased designs from the natural world and furniture that was practical yet beautiful.

The taste for architecture changed, too. In place of classical styles, a new architectural style emerged. From Gothic Revival came Arts and Crafts, which followed many of the principles of its predecessor in that it allowed the function of the building and what happened within it to determine its shape and construction.

Excessive ornamental features rarely featured, the sharp turrets and pointed windows of the Gothic style replaced by curved arches.

Buildings were often made with red brick, local slate and English oak, with lead roofs and marble chimney places. And there began to be a greater concern for equality and fairness, a bid to improve the lives of the occupants of a building: for example, architects such as Charles Voysey ensured that accommodation for servants included spacious rooms and good light.

Arts and Crafts architecture remains popular today – buildings that are practical yet beautiful, solidly made yet built by craftsmen who preferred traditional techniques rather than using machinery that, while time-saving, would have compromised the finish.

As far as Morris and his friends and colleagues, known as The Firm, were concerned, the Arts and Crafts movement was an antidote to the technology that had improved productivity but also heralded longer working hours for the working class, who spent their days completing soulless, repetitive jobs in unpleasant environments.

The architect of the time was Detmar Blow, who had happened to chance upon John Ruskin on a travelling scholarship to France. Ruskin took

him under his wing and helped him to throw off the chains of conventional architecture and create art with his properties instead.

Ruskin had written an essay on The Nature of Gothic in his book, The Stones of Venice, in which he praised the Gothic architecture of Europe while criticising the monotony of factory production and the almost ritual deskilling of workers that was destroying natural creativity. He believed that the solution was to look to the past and revive medieval standards and craftsmanship.

One of Blow's earliest designs was for Happisburgh Manor in North Norfolk, built in 1900 in a butterfly shape of flint, brick and Norfolk reed, with only the glass imported from elsewhere. The key for Arts and Crafts architects was to use local materials, be free from imposed styles and put function, needs and simplicity at the heart of design.

Another distinct difference for architects involved in the movement was that their interest often followed through from exterior design to interior design and decorative art.

This means that in many Arts and Crafts houses you will find personal touches on even the smallest detail, from wallpaper to door furniture, window latches to doorbells and clocks to light fittings.



# 8

## ways to get the arts & craft look

When you're decorating in the style of the Arts and Crafts movement, always keep in mind the wise words of William Morris: "have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful..." This look, which was a reaction to the industrial revolution, saw artists and writers of the time making a stand against mass-produced factory goods and calling for a return to craftsmanship, individuality and personality.

In interior terms, Arts and Craft was symbolised by simple yet beautiful handmade objects often featuring flowers and plants and drawing inspiration from Medieval times. Even if you don't have the exterior to match, you can still steal the Arts and Crafts style.

### **WOOD**

A key element of any Arts and Crafts interior, wood was essential to the movement's aesthetic. Wood was never painted but was stained to showcase rather than mask the grain. Oak, pine, maple and birch were all popular. Floors were often polished or stained floorboards or parquet tiling, all of which would have been finished in a manner to highlight the natural beauty of the wood.

### **WALLPAPER**

William Morris began designing wallpapers in the 1860s that were hand-printed by Jeffrey and Co in London using wood blocks and mineral-based pigments. A master designer, Morris created stunning patterns which had complex rhythms and movement that captured both the random and symmetrical values found in nature. Morris' classic designs are still commercially available, although today they are produced by machine using surface or flexographic rollers and modern inks. Using a replica Morris wallpaper is a quick, efficient and beautiful way to incorporate the Arts and Crafts look in your home.

### **FURNITURE**

Simplicity, durability and craftsmanship were key to Arts and Crafts furniture, a stark contrast to earlier Victorian furniture which had been designed to impress on appearances alone and was often poorly made and wasn't built to last. Often created from solid oak and other lighter woods, Arts and Crafts furniture was built to be passed down through the generations and boasted a high level of quality, comfort and functionality. Look for straight lines, simple arches and curves, rich, solid, natural woods and simple decoration and, in chairs, look for rush or leather seats.

### **TILES**

William De Morgan was one of the most original craftsmen of the Arts and Crafts movement, creating stunning stained glass and ceramics. His tiles and pottery designs became typical features of the interiors of the time and were used in grand houses such as the Arab Hall in Lord Leighton's house in London and in the smoking rooms of P&O liners. The best-known De Morgan design is the Fish Panel, a depiction of swimming fish and water lilies. Many firms offer replica tiles in the style of the Arts and Crafts movement. Topps Tiles has a range which includes the De Morgan fish panel, floral and trellis designs, grape designs and a fruit palm design. All can be used in kitchens or bathrooms, while fireplace surround tiles add a touch of Arts and Crafts charm.

### **COLOUR**

Just as the Arts and Crafts movement was all about the honesty of craftsmanship and the joy of simple design, it also celebrated nature – earthy hues of wood, rock, bark and foliage, lighter shades of ash, sandstone and lilac. The colours were designed to highlight the natural beauty of the unpainted wood. Farrow and Ball fans are advised to try three-tone colour combinations such as Olive, Stone White and White Tie or Lichen, Stone Blue and Straw.



## LIVING ROOMS

Arts and Crafts reformers saw no need for there to be the formal entertaining spaces that the Victorians had favoured, abandoning the concept of the parlour and introducing the living room, which was a much more multi-purpose space furnished with items that were comfortable and practical rather than ornate and formal. The built-in bookcase became a must-have item and furniture began to be placed against the walls to create a larger useable space inside the room.

## STAINED GLASS

Ideally, your house will boast original stained glass art from the period, but if you're living in an older or more modern home, you can inject some stained glass style into your home by using terrariums, stained glass panels hung at windows (occasionally you can find original panels at salvage yards or antique shops) or by commissioning your own panel to be made by an artist.

## FABRIC

Curtains were hung on plain wooden or brass curtain poles and were free from frills and flounces. Fabric designs might include natural prints on linen or cotton patterned with stylised animals or flowers, Persian and Italian renaissance-inspired textiles and handblocked prints. There are still many William Morris fabric designs available and Liberty is also a rich source for fabric inspiration

# 5

## wonderful examples

### of Arts & Crafts Houses

#### THE RED HOUSE

In typical style, William Morris discussed the plans for The Red House on a rowing trip down the Seine in Paris with fellow architects Philip Webb and Charles Faulkner in 1858. Morris wanted a house that reflected a simple, medieval style rather than the houses being built at the time, which were fussy and ornate. He bought a site in Bexleyheath and the house was built, a two-storey, red brick, L-shaped house with a steep roof and tall chimney stacks. Over the door was inscribed the words: "Dominus Custodiet Exitum Tuum et Introitum Tuum" – God preserve your going out and your coming in. Edward Burne-Jones described the house as "the most beautiful place on earth" and particularly loved the garden, with its four fenced-enclosures, each of which specialised in different flowers or kinds of roses. The interior was richly painted with decoration applied directly to the wooden and plaster surfaces, cupboards were painted, there was stained glass by Morris and Burne-Jones, the floor was covered in dark red tiles and the main bedroom was hung with tapestries. Dante Gabriel Rossetti told a friend: "I wish you could see the home which Morris has built for himself in Kent. It is a most noble work in every way and more a poem than a home." The National Trust bought the house in 2003, and it's now open to the public.

#### BLACKWELL

Built by Baille Scott between 1898 and 1900 as a holiday home for Sir Edward Holt, a well-to-do Manchester brewer, Blackwell is close to the town of Bowness-on-Windermere and boasts panoramic views across Lake Windermere and across to Coniston Fells. Today, the Grade 1 listed house retains many of its original features, such as leaf-shaped door handles, unusual window catches, incredible plasterwork, stained glass and carved wooden panelling by Simpsons of Kendal. Rooms are packed with objets d'art by many leading Arts and Crafts designers and studios such as ceramics by Ruskin Pottery, furniture by Morris and Co and metalwork by WAS Benson. The gardens were laid out by designers Thomas Mawson in a series of terraces to achieve the best views from the house over the lake, while there are fireplace inglenooks boasting fine examples of Arts and Crafts designer William de Morgan and rare hessian wall-hangings in the dining room.

### RODMARTON MANOR

Built between 1909 and 1929 by Claud and Margaret Biddulph, the manor house in Gloucestershire was an experiment in communal working practices with people coming every day from the village to work on craft projects such as carpentry and tapestry. Composed of coursed and dressed stone, Rodmarton has a slate roof and many gables, which look out over a grassed courtyard. The interior boasts stunning furniture made from walnut, oak or fruit tree wood and crafted by Ernest Gimson, Peter Waals and the Barnsley Brothers. Outside is one of the most impressive gardens in the Cotswolds, covering eight acres and set out as a series of individual garden rooms, each with its own character. There is a troughery (a garden filled with troughs and stones set around topiary as features), the Winter Garden, the Leisure Garden, a rockery, a kitchen garden and many herbaceous borders.

### VOEWOOD

Topped by numerous twisting chimneys, the house originally known as Home Place, just outside Holt in Norfolk, was built by the architect Edward Schroeder Prior between 1903 and 1905 for the Reverend Percy

Lloyd. Voewood was Prior's take on his Arts and Crafts mentor Richard Norman Shaw's style and incorporates a butterfly-shaped house designed with a central body and wings to let in the sun at every angle. Built from materials quarried from the land where it stands – flint, gravel and stone – the excavated site was then used to create a sunken garden. Built around a medieval-inspired double-height hall with a huge inglenook fireplace, a Country Life article in 1909 described Voewood thus: "everywhere there is sweetness and light".

### HOLY TRINITY, SLOANE STREET

Considered to be the finest example of the Arts and Craft movement's ecclesiastical work, Holy Trinity was described by the poet John Betjeman as "the Cathedral of the Arts and Crafts Movement". Architect John Dando Sedding believed a church should be "wrought and painted over with everything that has life and beauty in frank and fearless naturalism". He commissioned his colleagues in the Art Workers' Guild to produce decorative work and statues in stone and metal and the great east window, designed by Edward Burne-Jones, was the largest ever made by Morris and Company.



Red House, Bexleyheath



Rodmarton Manor

# william morris

“Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful..”

Regarded as one of the greatest designers of the Arts and Crafts movement, design was just one of the strings to Morris’ bow. He was a poet, a philosopher, a political theorist and an artist and was famous for his incredible enthusiasm and prolific output in all the decorative arts.


Born in Walthamstow in London in 1834 into a wealthy middle-class family, Morris was the eldest son of nine children. His parents ran an artistic household, which influenced the young William, taking an unusual amount of care and interest in the way they decorated their home, the food they ate, the clothes they wore and the way they spent their free time. William’s father was a successful broker in London and, when William was 14, the family moved into the Water House in Walthamstow, now The William Morris Gallery, where as a young boy he developed a love of nature (in the mid 1800s, Walthamstow was a rural idyll!).

Brought up to be decent and upstanding, Morris was a believer in equality – when he went to Oxford University to

study theology he met Edward Burne-Jones and the pair became interested in the idea of living and working in an artistic community brought together by a shared purpose. Both men had intended to enter the church as their first career choice and believed that a medieval system, where craftspeople were supported through guilds, would go towards repairing the role of artists, whose work had been diminished by the advent of the industrial revolution.

He dropped out of university and became an architect before taking up painting and joining a self-named group called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which boasted a membership including William Holman-Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Everett Millais. He married wife Jane Burden in 1859 and shortly afterwards began work on designing and building a red brick house in the medieval style where the artistic community would be welcomed.

When the so-called Red House was built, William and Jane Morris were frequently visited by friends such as Burne-Jones and wife Georgiana MacDonald, Rossetti, wife Frances Polidori and muse Lizzie Siddal and Charles Faulkner.



*“Have nothing  
in your houses that  
you do not know to  
be useful or believe  
to be beautiful...”*

WILLIAM MORRIS





They collectively decorated and furnished the house painting huge murals on the walls, one of which depicts William and Jane as the king and queen at their own medieval wedding banquet.

Burne-Jones and architect Philip Webb created a large wardrobe for the couple as a wedding present, depicting scenes from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and furniture bore scenes from literature while stained glass windows cast colourful shadows with their naïve animal and plant designs.

Jane and her sister Bessie embroidered stunning fabric hangings to line some of the walls, their first work a simple daisy design picked out on indigo wool, their next project a dozen hangings designed by Morris showing *Illustrious Women* from the works of Chaucer.

There was a medieval-style walled garden with an informal planting scheme and, by the porch, a bench called 'Pilgrim's Rest' decorated with Burne-Jones and Morris-designed tiles. In 1861, Jane gave birth to her first daughter, Jenny, and a year later baby sister May joined the family.

The couple celebrated another birth in 1861, that of their decorating business, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company whose founding members were Morris, Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown, Rossetti, Webb, engineer and artist Peter Paul Marshall and company book keeper Charles James Faulkner. William Morris provided the majority of the capital for the project, setting up a new studio in Red Lion Square and concentrating on producing stained glass and other arts bound for churches such as metalwork, furniture, embroidery and murals.

The firm was quickly heaped with praise and began to exhibit internationally, which helped to win new business decorating the dining room at what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Armoury and Tapestry Rooms at St James' Palace (the latter boasts the St James design which is printed with highlights of gold and silver).

By the mid 1870s, Morris & Co was working at full throttle, and in 1881 Morris bought land with outbuildings at Merton Abbey Mills in South London and relocated all his workshops to one area close to a water supply – the River Wandle – and a plentiful supply of skilled workers who were offered pay above the national average.

Leaving the operation of the business in the capable hands of John Henry Deale, Morris began to turn his hand to other issues, namely the protection of churches in Britain.

Many heavy-handed renovations were taking place under the Victorians and, alongside Philip Webb, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was founded with the aim of ensuring that renovations were sensitively handled and that beautiful buildings were protected. Although heritage preservation organisations are a recognised part of the cultural landscape today, when Morris and Webb set up SPAB, it was revolutionary.

Morris' ideas about equality and his hatred of the class divide was equally radical – he set up The Socialist League in the 1880s and spoke publically about the issues and published newspapers which gave a voice to the cause.

On October 3, 1896, William Morris died at the age of 62, leaving behind an unrivalled body of incredible work. He was buried in Gloucestershire and in his will gave permission for his business to be sold. Overall control of the company went to WAS Benson, with Frank and Robert Smith, who had been business managers, in deputy roles, but when

Edward Burne-Jones died just two years later, the combined loss of talent saw the fortunes of Morris & Co tumble.

Sold to Henry Currie Marillier in 1905, the company received a Royal Warrant in 1911, but by 1925 was struggling without designers and had to supplement the business by offering services such as carpet cleaning and tapestry repair and, after the death of Dearle in 1932, it was in dire straits. Arthur Sanderson & Sons, which was already managing the company's wallpaper printing, quickly snapped up Morris & Co in 1940 for just £400 when it entered voluntary liquidation.

Today, the company is owned by Walker Greenbank PLC and sales are healthy as the country embraces design and looks back to the arts and crafts movement for inspiration.



## PRODUCED BY MORRIS AND CO

Morris began producing wallpaper designs in 1862, printed using woodblocks hand-cut by Barretts of East London. Designs included Daisy, Fruit and Trellis, all of which drew inspiration from outdoors. Wallpaper company Jeffrey and Co printed the papers (and continued to do so until 1926). During his career, Morris designed 46 wallpapers and four ceiling papers, which was half the designs released by the company as a whole. Early designs that included the colour green were later found to contain toxic arsenic, but colours were quickly modified to remove dangerous chemicals from production.

Tiles designed by William de Morgan, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown and Philip Webb were hand-painted on to plain white tiles by Kate and Lucy Faulkner and Georgiana Burne-Jones. By the 1870s, ceramic tile production was outsourced to Morgan's own pottery.





Furniture was manufactured in Great Ormond Yard in London, and in the 1860s The Firm launched the Sussex Chair, which boasted an ebonised frame and a rush seat, a piece of furniture which became one of the most iconic items in the range. Morris thought furniture should be practical or beautiful – the former was purposeful and simple, the latter often made in solid oak decorated with stamped leather, lacquer or oil paint. The popular ‘Morris’ chair stayed in production until 1913.

William Morris taught himself how to use medieval stitching techniques by unpicking old embroideries. It was initially thought that householders would not want to return to a time when embroideries were hung on walls, but they swiftly became desirable when clients saw the beautiful work being produced by The Firm. Designs were often inspired by medieval patterns and manuscripts, and in later years, Morris sold embroidery designed by his daughter, May, and John Henry Dearle as panels or kits that could be worked on at home. May even completed a tour of America in 1909 lecturing about the art of embroidery.

Morris’ legendary obsession with perfection was evident in his manufacture of fabric – he insisted on being involved in the dyeing process when he was disappointed with commissioned work, and experimented with vegetable and mineral dyes, which

faded naturally. When he bought Merton Abbey Mills, he introduced an old technique, indigo discharge block-printing, and spent days with his arms dyed blue up to his elbows while he learned how to achieve the perfect colour. Morris & Co also produced a range of printed velvets, which were used as upholstery fabrics.

One of the most successful areas for Morris and Co was the production of stained glass – The Firm not only took on domestic commissions from clients, they also replaced church windows all over the country. Morris used members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, including Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti to design glass panels; the company’s first commission was of the legend of St George and the dragon, designed by Rossetti. Glass was painted by experts in the Morris and Co workshop and designs were used or adapted over and over again – for example, an angel might be re-worked as a musician, minus wings!

Keen to reintroduce the art of hand-knotting in the manufacture of carpets, Morris studied Persian rugs and started his carpet making arm on a small scale, making rugs. He started producing rugs on looms operated by six women in 1879. It took a day to create just two inches of carpet.

# 5 making a great first impression





It may be the case that you should never judge a book by its cover, but the same tenet most definitely doesn't apply to houses: kerb appeal is often a house-buyer's deal breaker.

Estate agents will gleefully tell you that it takes eight seconds for most buyers to decide whether or not they like a house and they're unlikely to have even stepped over the threshold before they make their minds up.

Because a front garden is on constant public display, it is important to get the details right: Victorian tiled pathways should be patterned and railings should be as ornate as your garden can take and supported by good quality brick walls that match the bricks of your home.

Gardens should be neat and structured but opulent and playful at the same time, a reflection of the interior of your home.

Even if you're not looking to sell your Victorian property, improving the kerb appeal has been proven to enhance moods after a hard day: in a nutshell, painting your door frame can put you in a better frame of mind!

Bearing in mind you'll never have a second chance to make a first impression, here are some easy ways to add kerb appeal to your Victorian home.

# 10

## ways to improve the look of your home

### ONE

Paint the front door:

Consider the surrounding houses and the brickwork/render/colour that the door will be set into. Red brickwork can take a stronger colour while a paler façade may need a lighter colour. Remember that doors are often in daylight (even in the UK!) so colours can be far bolder than you'd use indoors.

### TWO

Light your way:

Don't ruin the appearance of your Victorian home by adding a modern outdoor light – pick a lantern which echoes the history of your house.

### THREE

Add a little bit of green:

Either in the garden or through paint on your front door – green was the favoured shade of the Victorians.

### FOUR

Make sure your gate is in order:

A cast iron gate makes a grand statement about your home, but keep the scale in context. No stone lions unless you live in a mansion.

### FIVE

Paint the house in a period colour (or have the brickwork re-pointed):

Many Victorian houses have fallen victim to ugly rendering. To have render removed is difficult and costly and may be problematic if your neighbour's house was rendered at the same time. A fresh coat of paint in a neutral shade will, however, freshen up your home and give you a blank canvas to work with.

### SIX

Hide the bins:

Clever camouflage can hide the ugly bins and recycling boxes that blight front gardens - try hiding the bins behind a willow screen, housing them in a timber box, or placing them behind ready-grown hedges in troughs which are available from garden centres.

## SEVEN

Sweep the path or driveway:

Keep your pathways clean and if you're replacing broken tiled paths and can't restore them with original materials, replace with some that at least give a nod to the originals.

## EIGHT

Make sure everyone has your number:

A house number etched into the fanlight above your door is classic, but you can also buy Victorian-style numbers to use on your wall or have a period-style number plate made to make your home unmissable.

## NINE

Buy appropriate door furniture:

Your door furniture should match the style of your door. The lion's head doorknocker of *A Christmas Carol* may be a tad over the top but the Victorians loved their door pushes and pulls, knockers, numbers, handles and letter boxes.

## TEN

Attend to your windows:

Regular painting helps fend off decay and also makes your windows look their very best. Specialist sash brushes are available which have pointed ends to help you achieve a smooth finish.



For the Victorian homeowner, a good first impression wasn't just desirable, it was essential – a statement of affluence and of status, a chance to illustrate superior taste.

While wealthy families would live in stately piles, in the thousands of terrace houses which began to spring up across the UK the same attention to detail was still present and those first impressions still counted.

Even the smallest of gardens would be carefully landscaped, possibly in the form of a miniature knot garden and paths would be tiled with decorative designs in vivid shades of red, white and black. Cast iron gates and railings were ornate and grand as new industrial techniques made them affordable to the masses.

However small your garden, it's possible to add a little bit of ornamentation, Victorian-style. While the owners of stately homes would have astonishing bedding schemes on flat terraces fringed by clipped hedges in the Italian Renaissance style.

Banker Alfred de Rothschild's head gardener famously said that it was possible to calculate a person's fortune from the size of their bedding plant list.

Smaller suburban gardens made use of exotic specimen trees while the owners of two-up-two-down terraces were too busy to garden: today, however, their houses are highly desirable and gardening is a much-loved hobby.



In order to capture the essence of the era, look to add key plants from Victorian times which would have been hugely exotic – Portuguese Laurels, rhododendrons and magnolias were all popular as were lavender and wisteria.

Climbing plants were popular, such as jasmine, and trees were a favourite: if you have the space, consider a monkey puzzle tree, a fig tree or a fan palm.

Ferns, anemones and lilies were often seen in Victorian gardens while antirrhinums, stocks, geraniums, dahlias and petunias were staples in bedding designs.

#### TOP TIPS FOR VICTORIAN FRONT GARDENS:

- Victorians couldn't resist over-egging the pudding with bird baths, fountains, trellises and benches, even in their small front gardens
- Gravel was often used in front gardens, particularly alongside hedging
- Structure was important but minimalism was frowned upon
- Be bold with exotic plants and trees
- Pathways are one of the key ways to recreate an authentic Victorian look

## DID VICTORIAN RAILINGS AND GATES POWER THE SPITFIRE?

Lord Beaverbrook, Winston Churchill's Minister of Supply requisitioned all post-1850 iron gates and railings in 1941 as part of the war effort.

Having identified a need for raw materials for munitions, workmen were sent to remove the ironmongery and bereft homeowners comforted themselves with the rumour that their gates would shortly be taking to the air in the form of Spitfires.

This was, however, unlikely. Aeroplanes in World War Two were made of very little iron and there is evidence that little of the iron taken was actually used at all. Some, it was said, was dumped in the River Thames...

## FRONT DOORS

Victorian doors were an outward sign of a houseowner's wealth – often panelled with stunning stained glass, they were surrounded by a frame with imposing architrave to match the door.

Brass door furniture was elaborate and highly polished meaning that even small houses looked impressive.

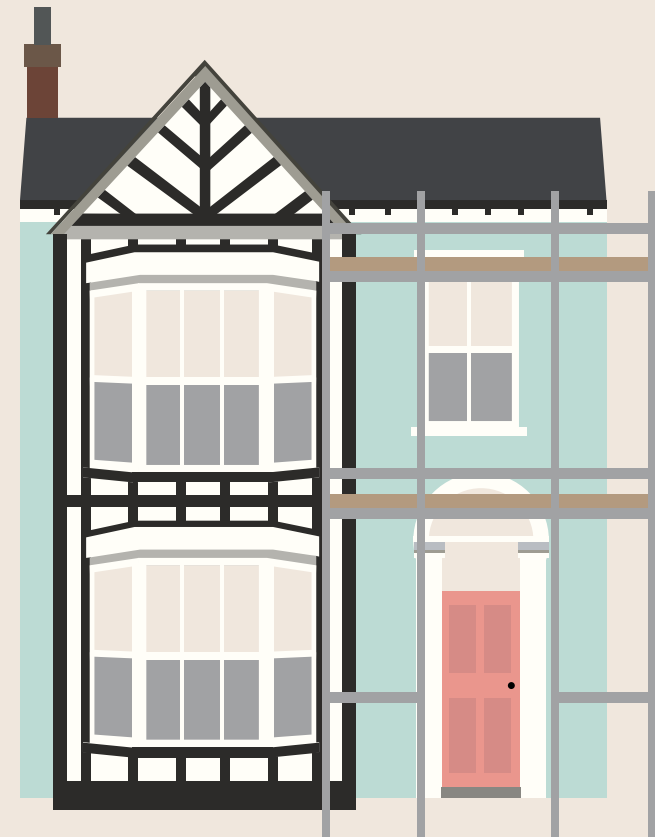
Many doors boasted fanlights, harking back to Georgian times when glass had been harder to source and the fanlight had offered the only source of light in often dark hallways.

The Gothic revival and the Arts and Crafts movement led to a new interest in artisan-produced stained glass and doors were often adorned with designs which gave a nod to those of William Morris and Co with medieval and floral themes.

Towards the end of the period, when Art Nouveau design became popular, stained glass moved towards curved shapes, which were incorporated into doors.

At the beginning of the Victorian era, cast iron was the most popular material for door furniture and designs were elaborate, including dolphins, lions' heads and urns, while brass became more widespread as the century progressed and wealthy households boasted brass finger plates, bell pulls, letter boxes and house numbers. An iron foot scraper beside the door prevented carpets and rugs being damaged by mud.

Ideally, doors were made from oak or mahogany hardwood but in practice, cheaper softwood pine doors were most common. Doors were either waxed, varnished or painted – the first Victorian colours were black, dark green or bright blue which later gave way to bronze green, then dark blue, chocolate brown, deep red or olive green.



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## WINDOWS

They are the eyes of a house and are a vital part of your home's façade – all too often, original Victorian windows have been replaced with plastic double glazed window frames: how can you put the soul back into your glazing?

Finding a house with its original window frames (and glass, if you're lucky) is like finding gold at the end of the rainbow. Often, original windows were ripped out to make way for the 'white gold' of the uPVC era when householders often believed that plastic was fantastic.

While double glazed uPVC windows are often economical to have fitted and can offer great insulation, they are the kiss of death to anyone looking to create an authentic look for their period property.

Original windows were made using traditional techniques which are hard to copy today thanks to modern building regulations that insist windows must be energy efficient. Sash windows have two frames or sashes which have panes of glass held together by wooden glazing bars that slide vertically in grooves and are held open by weights and pulleys concealed in a timber box. The very earliest sash windows were held open by a system of pegs.

The earliest windows – when large pieces of glass were hard to come by – were eight-over-eight or six-over-six configurations which, as glazing techniques improved, became two-over-two or one-over-one.

Bay windows were also hugely popular during the Victorian era.

Thanks to modern wood treatments, timber is far more resilient than ever before and the performance gap between it and man-made products has all but closed.

If you do have original windows, they may still require upgrading if they have warped, rotted or are sticking. If wooden windows are in a reasonable condition they can be repaired and draught-proofed, which improves their function at a fraction of the price of replacement.

It may also be possible to replace individual panes of glass with insulated glass units or to fit secondary double glazing, which offers sound and draught-proofing without ruining the appearance of your window.

Most houses have Permitted Development rights, which mean windows and doors can be replaced without planning permission from the local authority as long as windows are “of a similar appearance” to existing windows.

If you live in a Conservation Area (or in a listed building), planners can be very precise about replacement windows and if there is an Article Four directive you will need to apply for planning permission before you replace any windows.

Any company making and installing new windows must be regulated and registered by industry body FENSA, which ensures windows meet building regulations.

New windows should replicate the same levels of background ventilation as before, windows near floor level must contain safety glass (which is sadly nowhere near as beautiful as Victorian rolled plate glass).



# STOCKISTS

## DOORS

English Salvage:  
[www.englishsalvage.co.uk](http://www.englishsalvage.co.uk)

Cotswood  
[www.cotswood-doors.co.uk](http://www.cotswood-doors.co.uk)

The London Door Company  
[www.londondoor.co.uk](http://www.londondoor.co.uk)

## PERIOD PAINT COLOURS

Farrow and Ball  
[www.farrow-ball.com](http://www.farrow-ball.com)

Little Greene  
[www.littlegreene.com](http://www.littlegreene.com)

## GATES AND RAILINGS

The Victorian Emporium  
[www.thevictorianemporium.com](http://www.thevictorianemporium.com)

Period Gates and Heritage Railings  
[www.periodgates.co.uk](http://www.periodgates.co.uk)

## DOOR FURNITURE

Ironmongery Online  
[www.ironmongeryonline.com](http://www.ironmongeryonline.com)

Priors  
[www.priorsrec.co.uk](http://www.priorsrec.co.uk)

Drummonds  
[www.drummonds-arch.co.uk](http://www.drummonds-arch.co.uk)

British Ironmongery  
[www.britishironmongery.co.uk](http://www.britishironmongery.co.uk)

## LIGHTING

Charles Edwards  
[www.charlesedwards.com](http://www.charlesedwards.com)

Phillips and Wood  
[www.phillipsandwood.co.uk](http://www.phillipsandwood.co.uk)

Broughtons  
[www.broughtons.com](http://www.broughtons.com)

## FAN LIGHTS

The Fanlight Number Company  
[www.fanlightnumbers.co.uk](http://www.fanlightnumbers.co.uk)

## STAINED GLASS

Coriander Stained Glass  
[www.corianderstainedglass.co.uk](http://www.corianderstainedglass.co.uk)

## WHEELIE BIN CAMOUFLAGE

Wayfair  
[www.wayfair.co.uk](http://www.wayfair.co.uk)

Great Little Garden  
[www.greatlittlegarden.co.uk](http://www.greatlittlegarden.co.uk)



# 6 paint





# victorian paint finishes

The Victorian era was filled with magnificent colour as home owners were suddenly able to access a rainbow of shades thanks to industrial and technological advances that brought a spectrum of hues into even the most modest of terraced houses.

Stretching over a huge period, the Victorian style changed and evolved as fashions shifted. Rooms could be a palette of pale shades such as white, pink and cream or a jewellery box of gemstone colours such as emerald, sapphire, garnet, amethyst and ruby. Although colour choices had improved, there was still considerably less choice of paint finish than can be found today.

Victorians were restricted to oil-based paints and water-based distempers, the former used on woodwork and some plaster surfaces while the distemper was saved for ceilings. Varnish was applied to timber or to protect imitation marble or woodgrain effects on walls.

Paint was made with white lead, linseed oil, turpentine and pigment and the level of sheen could be adjusted by changing the ratios of oil and turpentine. Paint colours tended to have varying levels of durability, with pale shades yellowing over time and vivid colours like blue taking on a green tint – this was due to the addition of the linseed oil.

Distemper, made from ground chalk bound with animal-based glue, was tinted with pigment. It was cheaper than paint and was quick to apply on large surfaces, but it was neither washable, durable or suitable for areas that were heavily used: it was most often used on ceilings in a creamy off-white shade (never the brilliant white that is often seen today) and allowed the painted areas to ‘breathe’ without trapping moisture.

While we have come to think of Victorian interiors as dark and gloomy places, in the 1840s colour schemes were surprisingly restrained – pale tints of lilac, buff and salmon were common alongside the stronger shades that echoed colours found in nature, reflecting water, gemstones, heathland and the sky.

Architectural features began to be picked out with colour – wall decoration would be broken up by painting above a dado rail and wallpapering below it to create drama and contrast in a room. Mouldings at the top of rooms were often highlighted in rich shades.

In the 1850s, it was fashionable to have coloured ceilings – even in modest homes – or to have the plasterwork and ceiling roses picked out in colours. Principal rooms often wore shades that offered a suitable backdrop to a gallery of pictures or a collection of objects – rich crimsons or bright reds, lilacs and dark shades – while in bedrooms, drawing rooms and libraries, shades of green were often favoured, particularly sage.





Early Victorian fashion was for dark woodwork, and woodgraining techniques were sometimes employed to imitate the far more expensive exotic woods coveted at the time. The exposed, stripped-back wood, which is often seen in period homes today, would have been considered cheap and unfashionable – in a Victorian house, the only place you could expect to see stripped-back wood would have been on the top of the kitchen dresser or table.

White woodwork appeared alongside the Queen Anne-style of interior décor, which was popular in the 1880s and 1890s and was used to enhance the rich colours of the period and also to best display the advent of electric lighting in homes. Even then, brilliant white wasn't available until after World War Two, so any white shades would have been creamier tones.



# victorian paint

It's incredibly difficult to replicate the appearance of historic paint to include the unevenness of colour and texture and the depth that was once provided by a topcoat glaze and brushes which left their mark on the painted wall.

The pigments used in paint made before 1875 were coarse and distributed throughout the paint by hand. Dry pigments were ground in oil to form a paste, which was then thinned with oil and turpentine to create a liquid ready for application.

It was the oil that created the glossy surface so loved by the Victorians. Brushed on to surfaces with a round brush with a wood handle and boar bristles, the paint would have noticeable brush stroke marks. Painting was an art that required the painter to draw the brush in its final strokes in the direction of the woodgrain.

For the finest finishes, coats were applied in layers with each layer being rubbed down with pumice stone after drying – it wasn't uncommon for up to 10 coats of paint to be used in grand houses to ensure a perfectly glazed finish.



During the early Victorian era, colour-matching was virtually impossible because paint was made by hand by painters using their own recipes.

The first known book of paint formulations was published in 1812 by Hezekiah Reynolds. It offered painters instructions as to the quantities of tinting pigments that should be mixed into bases to form colours.

By the early 19th century, more synthetic pigments were available in shades such as chrome green, chrome yellow and red, and more turpentine was added to paint to thin and flatten them.

Stencils were often used in place of wallpaper and floors could be painted to imitate fine carpets.

Other paint effects were also used, including graining and marbling – plain slate would be painted to look like fine Italian marble and wood trim would be given a grain effect to make it appear like expensive oak or walnut.

After 1875, paint was increasingly made in factories and placed in cans. It boasted finely-ground pigments in an oil base and customers would add further oil to the can to make their paint ready for use.

# ask

## the (victorian) experts

If you're looking to open a window on the past and decorate your home in authentic Victorian style, it pays to do your research.

Guides for homeowners were produced which offered suggestions as to which colour schemes should be used inside one's home: "...the parlour should be 'old blue' with a French floral paper above the picture rail and on the ceiling a paper containing red, green and blue..." "dining rooms should be full-toned and rich", "libraries should be thoughtful and sober".

Dark colours should be used on floors and woodwork with a lighter wall, then above the picture rail a lighter colour and lightest yet, the ceiling. Mahogany wood should be paired with deep blue or yellow tones, never red. Maple looks best with pinks and greys, walnut with golden yellows and oak with purple blues and olives.

The Victorians definitely didn't shy away from bold colour choices – just look at these suggestions from 1895 for colour schemes to suit rooms divided by a dado rail – anyone for apple green and sandy brown?





If you want to know exactly how the Victorians decorated every part of their homes, from floors to friezes, borders to bed hangings, walls to woodwork, cellars to ceilings, authors Gail Caskey Winkler and Roger W Moss have literally got it covered.

The pair co-authored two books: *Victorian Interior Decoration* and *Victorian Exterior Decoration* which are must-haves for anyone hoping to recreate a Victorian vibe in their own home. Both books are written for an American audience but are packed with historical information which has been gleaned from thousands of pages of primary source material to create a unique pair of guides.

While both books are out of print, they are readily available on second-hand book websites and on auction sites.

*Victorian Interior Design* covers every element of the era in 20-year intervals, encompassing every important and popular style and includes engravings and paintings from the period in addition to photographs of accurately decorated homes.

There are colour charts, glossaries, bibliographies for further reading and plenty of inspiration.

Dividing 70 years into four periods, you can discover what was used on the walls, the floors, the windows and the ceilings, about the composition of paint and its effects and how historic wallpapers evolved and how it is possible to recapture Victorian room colours in modern lighting.

There are notes on bygone lifestyles and what modern materials can be used as substitutes when original materials can no longer be sourced.

The accompanying exteriors book takes you by the hand through all the choices that need to be made when painting a house built between 1840 and 1901, starting by questioning whether you should decorate the house as it used to be or how you would like it to look now.

There's a useful colour affinity chart to find out which colours work best together and information about how to paint every aspect of your home from siding to trim, window sashes to stair spindles, rails to gingerbread finishes on exteriors.

Try finding out of print or rare books at Book Finder, Used Book Search, Abe Books, or Waterstones Marketplace.

# what to do

## if you find lead paint in your house



Unless your home was built after 1978, you can assume that it has some lead residue in it as Victorian homes would have been painted from top to bottom with lead-based paint, which can cause problems during renovation work. If the paintwork in your home is quite thick, lead could be locked into the oldest layers – this isn't a problem if it's in good condition and you don't plan to decorate, but if the paintwork is likely to get knocked or chewed, it could release lead dust into your home.

The easiest way of dealing with lead paintwork – as long as it's in good condition – is to seal it with an over-coating of modern paint. However, if it's in bad condition and needs to be removed before you can redecorate, you must use a method of removal that doesn't create dust or fumes.

Try solvent or caustic-based liquid strippers – remember that if you use a hot-air gun, the lead paint will give off fumes.

Wear protective clothing, gloves and a good quality face mask with a filter which conforms to Health and Safety Executive guidelines, shut off the area

in which you are working and don't let anyone into the space, particularly children or pregnant women. If possible, remove furniture and carpets, or cover completely. After taking most of the paint off, moisten the surface and smooth it with a waterproof abrasive paper rather than dust-creating sandpaper.

When you've finished working, place the clothes you have been wearing in a sealed plastic bag, wash your hands and any other bare skin well and then put the paint you've removed and any which has collected on the floor in a plastic bag and put it out with the rubbish.

Clean the room you've been working in and any coverings used with water and detergent, wash the clothes you wore separately to any others and ensure all dust has been removed (hire a special industrial standard vacuum cleaner if you need to).

If you are unsure about removing lead paintwork, call in the experts - contact the Health and Safety Executive.

# stripped tease

Along with the ceiling roses, the sash windows and the chequerboard tiles leading up to the house, stripped pine floors are one of the mainstays of a home buyer's wish list when it comes to purchasing their dream period property.

But did the Victorians favour stripped pine floors which were only embellished with a lick of varnish? In a word, no.

Although plain pine floors were used throughout most Victorian houses – the Arts and Crafts period saw a boom in stone floors and tiles were popular in entrance halls during the Art Nouveau period – if there was the opportunity and cash to use oak, an exotic hardwood or maple, it would be taken.

Floors were of the tongue and groove fixing with face nailing variety and a plain pine floor would usually be covered with rugs with any wood that could be seen stained and polished with beeswax and turpentine to create the effect of a better, more expensive timber.

Borders were sometimes stencilled as an inexpensive alternative to parquetry and in the 1860s it wasn't unusual to see floors painted black, rich red or deep blue.

In Arts and Crafts buildings, the wood of choice was oak and there was a trend for floor and wall panelling to be stained in dark tones if the wood used was inferior.





# first impressions

## with your front door

It's important to make a great first impression and by paying attention to your front door, you can ensure that you can welcome any visitor to your home with style.

Victorian doors were typically solid oak and often featured elaborately stained or etched glass and heavy door furniture – they would always have been painted, never stripped-back and varnished, and would have been in shades of dark blue, brown, dark red or olive-yellow green.

Until the end of the 19th century, decorators mixed their own paint using lead, turpentine and pigments and so there were no standard colours:

the colours in oil-based paints came from mostly natural ingredients.

Early Victorian exterior woodwork was often brown, green or grained wood effect which was then finished with a high-gloss varnish. Today, paint company Farrow and Ball, who produce a huge range of heritage-inspired paint colours, suggest achieving a Victorian look by using a classic and clean shade such as Calke Green, inspired by the Breakfast Room at Calke Abbey in Derbyshire, or London Clay, a warm purple-brown used frequently in Victorian exterior decoration.

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*It's important to  
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with style*

---

When you are choosing the colour for your own front door, bear in mind the surrounding houses and the brickwork that your door is set into: a red door can take a strong colour, a pale coloured house may need a toned-down shade (sage instead of forest green, pale blue instead of navy).

Remember the colour you paint your door will alter in strong sunshine which adds a filter to colour and makes it appear a shade or two lighter – always go two shades darker than you'd like your front door to appear.

Full gloss works well when you are using strong, dark colours but for paler shades, an eggshell finish often works better. Ensure you paint the door frame the same shade as the door to avoid a jigsaw-effect.

A stylish front door sends a big message to everyone that approaches your home – and the best news of all is that it's a job you can easily tackle in just one (dry!) weekend.





calke green  
by farrow and ball

# how to

## paint your front door



### ONE

Choose a day when you don't need to go out so that when you have applied each coat of paint, the door can be left open, and try to plan the job so that you are painting early in the day so the paint can dry before you go to bed. Don't paint the door on a very hot, very cold or wet day. Ideally, the weather should be between 10C and 25C with no rain forecast for at least 24 hours.

### TWO

If possible, remove any fixtures or door furniture including the letter box and door knocker. If these are the original Victorian features, they can be polished and restored, if not, now is the time to change them to replica fixtures or old furniture sourced at an antique shop or online. Traditionally, Victorian door furniture was black or brass.

### THREE

Be careful if you are removing paint which predates the early 1970s as it could contain lead. Consider having your door chemically stripped by professionals or use a paint remover product which is specifically designed for old paintwork. Peel-away strippers are also great at taking paint off carving or panelling.

### FOUR

Once stripped of old paint, sand your door lightly to remove any paint traces and stripping product and then fill in any holes or knocks with a filler which matches the wood of your door.

Don't fill big holes in one attempt, build up layers of filler and ensure they dry before moving on to the next stage. Sand again so that the door is smooth.

### FIVE

A wood preservative can prolong the life of your door if applied before undercoat or primer. Be aware that solvent-based preservatives can take several days to dry thoroughly – the solvents must evaporate fully before you paint, so ensure you stick to the recommended drying time.

### SIX

Use a coat of exterior wood primer and an undercoat product and prime the whole door, one section at a time. If you have a panelled door, paint the corner beadings of the panels first and then return to paint each flat panel. Once the panels are complete, paint the rails (the horizontal parts of the frame) and lastly the stiles, the vertical parts of the frame. Allow at least four hours for the undercoat

to dry, keeping the door open.

### SEVEN

Choose a weatherproof paint with a flexible finish and use a two inch synthetic paint brush with a three inch short-pile polyester roller to paint any flat panels. Roll with the grain of the wood and work from the top to the bottom.

### EIGHT

Window boxes should be the same colour as your front door – for added interest, use a different paint finish such as gloss on the door and eggshell on the boxes.

### NINE


Look for replica or original Victorian door furniture at Willow & Stone, The Period Ironmonger, English Salvage, The Victorian Emporium, or Mongers of Hingham.

### TEN

For heritage-inspired paint colours, try Farrow and Ball, Little Greene, Dulux Trade Paint Expert, Crown Trade, or Craig & Rose.

# 7 joinery & mouldings





If you're lucky, and an architectural butcher didn't attack your period home with cladding and swirly Artex, your Victorian house may well still boast the glorious mouldings our ancestors loved. Many Victorian homes were typified by mouldings and joinery with plaster coving, ceiling roses, dado and picture rails, deep skirting boards and even panelling forming important elements of design.

Often removed during renovation work during the 1970s and 1980s (heresy!), mouldings can be replaced thanks to a wealth of companies that offer a host of options for the owners of Victorian houses.



# mouldings

In addition to joinery, Victorians also displayed their wealth with a range of decorative plaster mouldings which adorned ceilings, arches and other architectural detail in a house.

As with other ostentatious displays of wealth, the mouldings would typically be found in the rooms where most guests would be received, such as porches, reception rooms, dining rooms and parlours. Moulded architraves are fixtures that accentuate doors, windows and arches and they are fitted to add an extra touch of opulence and decadence.

In 1851, new moulds were displayed at The Great Exhibition which encouraged builders to become even more adventurous with design. The Gelatine moulds were swiftly followed by a new plaster in 1856 made of hessian and lathes which was lighter and stronger than solid plaster. Together, the innovations made it possible for a large piece of decorative cornice-work to be made off-site and safely transported to its new home.

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Plaster mouldings are vulnerable to damp, dry rot, sagging and cracking because of age or structural fault. Over-painting can also damage the delicate plasterwork – when Victorian homes were lit by gas and oil lamps, the ceilings were victim to smoke and smut which was easily covered with layer upon layer of paint. Over the years, the paint build-up would blur the detail of the plasterwork and clog up crevices.

Most Victorian plasterwork is supported by a framework which is made up of narrow strips of oak or softwood nailed to the ceiling joists. Some Victorian plasterwork is made of gypsum plaster reinforced with timber while a stronger plaster, strengthened with hessian, became more common after 1856. Just to confuse the issue, other plasterers didn't use plaster at all, rather a form of papier-mâché made to look like plaster.

Bear in mind what your plaster is made of when it comes to cleaning it. Plasterwork can be a dust trap and should be regularly cleaned – use a duster, a soft brush on a vacuum cleaner and, once you've established that your plasterwork isn't papier-mâché (which dissolves if washed), gently clean it twice a year with a sponge and water.

Mouldings are often painted in a colour lighter than the walls to help them stand out as an architectural feature – since Victorian times, the colour of mouldings has become lighter and lighter each decade.



# ceiling rose

Originally designed to catch the soot from gas lamps before it had a chance to cover the ceiling, roses were essential by the Victorian age, having first appeared around 1625 in Baroque-style homes with ornate plaster ceilings.

Even modest houses were likely to boast a ceiling rose coupled with plain cornicing and with more elaborate embellishments in grander rooms and entrance halls.

Victorian decorators liked to position ceiling roses so they lined up with chimney breasts which meant that central light fittings would be reflected in the obligatory mirror placed over the mantelpiece.

A room's centre point can be found by snapping two chalk lines from corner to corner – where they cross is the exact centre. Set up a platform to work from and, with the help of another pair of hands, put the ceiling rose into position and draw round it on to the ceiling. Look for timber joists by using a joist detector and then drill a series of holes within the pencil marks before replicating the same holes in the ceiling rose.



Traditionally, roses were secured to the ceiling using plaster and then a few nails, but today it is easier to use a fit-for-purpose adhesive. Pull the light flex through the rose, push into position and fix two anodised screws into place to help hold the rose while the adhesive cures. Using a wet sponge, remove excess plaster or adhesive and then fill in the screw holes.





To test how sizes of a ceiling rose may look, cut out different sized circles of paper and use a paper tape to place them on the ceiling to see how each looks. Assess the right size from the corner of the room and remember that the real rose will be around 3cm deep so will make a far bigger impact than a piece of paper. Equally, the bigger your eventual light fitting, the bigger your replacement rose should be (and if you have an original ceiling rose, don't dwarf it with an overly-large light fitting).



If you are keen to hang a heavy light piece, such as a chandelier, it may be advisable to lift a board or two in the room above and screw in a wooden noggin between the two central joists to act as extra support.

Some homeowners are lucky enough to have the original ceiling roses in place but many have been covered with layer after layer of paint to hide decades of soot and grime. Stripping paint from an original plaster rose takes time and patience but the rewards can be great if you're careful.

Remember that Victorian painters may have used lead-based paints, which are toxic, on the rose and there may well be up to 50 layers on your ceiling if it really is an original piece. So many layers can often blur the original designs. Firstly, remove your light fitting and ensure that any electrical cables are out of the way. Using a paint brush, remove any dirt and dust – you will find that loose paint will come away at the same time.

There are paint removing products that can be used – consult an expert at a specialist DIY store, using the wrong product could damage your ceiling rose beyond repair. Use wooden toothpicks to get to any stubborn remaining paint.

Alternatively, seek out a professional to undertake the job for you: many beautiful mouldings have been lost to over-enthusiastic DIY fans!

# cornicing

The moulding which runs around the top corner of an internal or external wall is called cornicing (or coving if it is a simple concave decoration used internally). Originally, baton strips were nailed to walls and mouldings were built up through many plaster layers.

Used as an architectural device to cover structural joints between the walls and ceilings, cornices became art forms during the Victorian era as builders sought to make homes more opulent. They were installed using a running mould and then embellished with plaster 'enrichments' to enhance the overall effect.

In 1856, when the French patented a form of fibrous plaster which incorporated hessian to add strength, it was possible to cast entire lengths of cornice in one prefabricated piece rather than building up a cornice by hand. When combined with the new flexible gelatine moulds that had first been seen at the Great Exhibition of 1851, it became possible for even humble homes to boast impressive cornicing thanks to a sudden drop in prices for mass-produced items.

The egg and dart (egg-shaped objects alternating with an element shaped like an arrow, anchor or dart) and fleur-de-lys (stylised lily) patterns are synonymous with the Victorian era. Reproduction cornicing is readily available from DIY shops and suppliers.





# 8

victorian  
bedrooms



Bedroom etiquette in Victorian times was very different to how it is today – in practically every way.

In *He Knew He Was Right*, by Anthony Trollope, the Victorian idea of only using a room for its intended purpose is made clear when his narrator, Louis Trevelyan, speaks about his younger wife, Emily.

He says of her: “It was one of the theories of her life that different rooms should be used only for the purposes for which they were intended.

“She never allowed pens and ink up into the bedrooms and had she ever heard that any guest in her house was reading in bed, she would have made an instant personal attack upon that guest.”

Bedrooms in wealthier households were seen as places where children were divided from parents, servants from employers and, in many cases, wives from husbands.

If there wasn't sufficient room for a husband to have his own room, it was common for him to keep his own dressing room where he could escape from the trying business of being the head of the household.

The old fashion of bedrooms being used almost as sitting rooms began to

disappear, and advice began to emerge for homeowners looking to create a contemporary room which reflected their status.


Rooms should, guides offered, in addition to a bed, have a good carpet, a central table, a wardrobe, a toilet table, chairs, a bookcase, a washstand, a pier glass, a cupboard and, if enough room, a chaise longue.

Furniture that had outgrown its purpose downstairs could often be found upstairs in the bedrooms, where it was given a new lease of life.


Carpets that had been in drawing rooms and dining rooms were cut down for bedrooms and then recycled once again for servants' rooms, before ending their life as fire rugs in kitchens.

Before the advent of bathrooms – and many houses, even upper class houses, didn't boast a separate bathroom until the end of the 1800s – a bedroom would have also served as the place where those who could afford it would bathe and conduct their daily ablutions.

Whether you want to hark back to the Victorian era and recreate a bedroom that reflects your home's age or just want to borrow a bit of history from a stylish period, there are plenty of ways to bring a Victorian vibe to your bedroom.



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Wealthy ladies could expect to spend a great deal of time confined to their bedroom for a variety of reasons laziness being but one.

Medical advice was quick to suggest that ladies who could afford to retire from everyday life did so on the merest hint of illness or fatigue – headaches, pregnancy, childbirth, ague, rheumatism, mental illness, all were regularly treated with bed rest. It stood to reason, therefore, that the business of nightwear was big.

For sleeping, women would wear a nightgown, a nightcap and a night jacket – the more lace and frills involved, the wealthier the woman and the angrier the washer woman tasked with cleaning said garments.

The wealthy would boast garments made of different materials to suit different weather, with pieces made from linen, cotton, flannel or silk.

If a lady was so ill that she could only greet visitors in her bed chamber, she would slip an elaborate bed jacket over her day wear, possibly made of silk, lace or velvet.

She might also sleep in silk or wool stockings and drawers and, if well enough to wander around the house, would slip into sheepskin, velvet or cloth slippers and a dressing gown, often ornately designed.

Men, meanwhile, weren't left out. Their nightcaps were long and pointed to the extent that the ends could be drawn down and used as a scarf in cold weather – and they say men can't multi-task.

# the princess

## the pea and the horsehair mattress

While authenticity is important to many people keen to recreate the Victorian look in their house, it is unlikely that many homeowners would look to recreate the mattresses that were used at the time in their own bedrooms.

Hygiene was a big issue in Victorian bedrooms and most mattresses were made of organic material, which was prone to attack from all kinds of unpleasant visitors, including insects and vermin.

If bedbugs were found, beds were dismantled and their parts soaked in chloride of lime and water, the room had to be entirely disinfected, all cracks in walls and floors had to be repaired and sealed and if the bed was infested, it had to be put in an empty room where sulphur could be burned.

The best option was to have a horsehair mattress – because they wore well – while next on the list were cow's

hair and further down still were wool mattresses. A palliasse, or straw mattress, was often placed under a hair mattress to protect it from the iron bedstead.

Chain-spring mattresses became available in the second half of the 1800s, but they still required a hair mattress to cover them and prevent users being impaled on stray springs. A brown Holland square would then be placed between the chains and the hair mattress to prevent the latter being chewed up by the metal, and then the hair mattress had to be protected once again with another sheet, which stopped it becoming clogged with dirt and soot.

One Victorian household manual suggested that the ideal bed arrangement consisted of an iron bedstead, a thick sheet to cover the springs, a horsehair mattress, a feather mattress, an under blanket, an under sheet, a bottom sheet, a top sheet, three or four blankets, an

eiderdown, pillows and pillow covers. It also suggested that for the best night's sleep, the mattresses should be turned every morning and the pillowcases should be changed twice A DAY! In the daytime, plain pillowcases should be used, while at night they should be swapped for more elaborate pillowcases. Such elaborate bed routines were only really appropriate for households with servants, although it wouldn't be until the 1970s and the advent of the 'continental quilt' that liberation came to those responsible for making beds.

Talking of modern beds, the concept of a king-sized bed was a long way off in Victorian times when beds were available in two sizes: twin or full. It was believed in the mid 19th century that each person should have their own bed to sleep in and that smaller beds meant more space in a bedroom, which was considered desirable.



Pillow

Sheet to protect mattress

Horse hair mattress

Chain-spring mattress

# victorian advice

## ten must haves for an authentic bedroom



### ONE

Soft feather mattresses can lead to people becoming too warm and getting ill – better to have horsehair and straw.

### TWO

Marseilles quilts are far too heavy, whatever the French say.

### THREE

Cover your bedroom furniture in chintz or dimity – they collect less dust than other fabrics and are less liable to hide vermin than wool or damask.

### FOUR

Do not place your carpet under your bed – debris can gather there and create a nice hot bed for fleas.

### FIVE

A three-ply carpet is best for bedrooms.

### SIX

Rugs are fashionable, wholesome and tidy – they should be darker in tone than the furniture in your room.

### SEVEN

Carpets should be in lighter shades and with bright field-flower patterns. Avoid anything dark and sombre for the sleeping room.

### EIGHT

The appointments for a bedroom should include a low couch, a large rocking chair, a small sewing chair, a workbasket, footstools, a toilet table draped with muslin, a dressing case, brackets for vases, flowerpots, a few pictures, a small table, hanging shelves for books, and the bed.

### NINE

A screen is a very desirable item to own, as is a storage ottoman for dresses, a chest for shoes, and a mirror.

### TEN

On the dressing table should be a set consisting of a tray, a ring-stand, candleholders and pots for homemade toilet water and hand cream. There should also be an embroidered bag for disposing of hair-combings.

# sleep like a victorian

it is fair to say that the victorians had to learn to live with odour – but the richer they were, the harder they fought it.

## how to

make your own victorian bedroom lavender air freshener

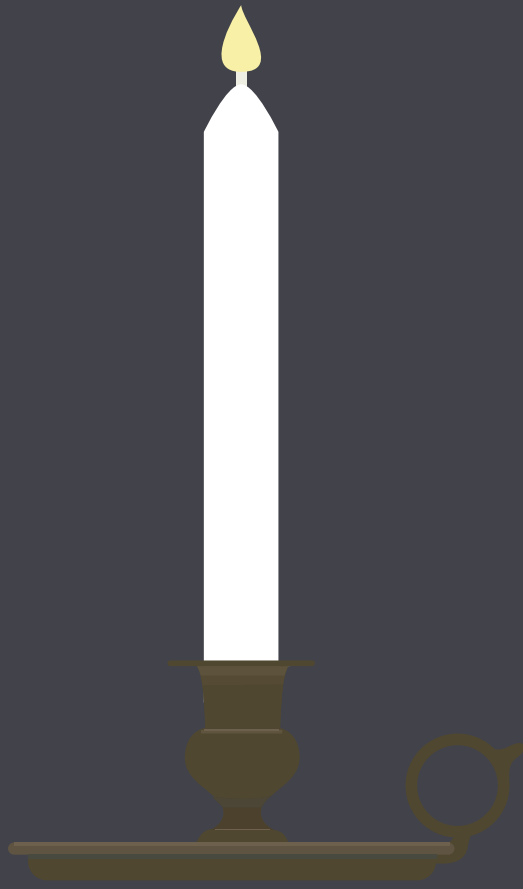
*You will need:*



*How to make:*

Combine all ingredients apart from the camphor oil and let the mixture stand in an unsealed, but covered, jar in a moderately warm place until the alcohol evaporates (around 10 days). Strain through muslin and add the oil, following the directions on the camphor packaging carefully.

*Place this mixture on cotton balls or cloth to keep drawers, wardrobes and rooms smelling sweet.*



# how to get the look

what (well-to-do) victorians  
kept in their bedrooms

## **CARPET**

Often one which had seen previous use in a sitting room or parlour and which was reused and areas of wear covered with larger pieces of furniture such as beds or chests of drawers.

## **WARDROBE**

### **DRESSING TABLE**

Complete with glass dressing table set.

## **WASHSTAND**

## **SMALL BOOKCASE**

### **SMALL COUCH OR CHAISE LONGUE**

Again, often from a downstairs room which had received an upgrade. Avoid anything dark and sombre for the sleeping room.

### **FREESTANDING TOWEL RAIL OR CLOTHES HANGER**

## **BED**

A four-poster with curtains for grandeur and warmth if possible, although by the end of the era most beds had dispensed with the posts and curtains and were the smaller size they are today.

## **HIP BATH**

To be filled with hot water by servants.

## **CANDLES & CANDLEHOLDERS**

Rather than gas lighting, which was thought to use too much oxygen and lead to asphyxiation.

## **MATCH HOLDER**

Which was easy to find in the dark to light candles – ideally, a box was nailed to the wall and details on it picked out in luminous paint so that it could easily be located at all times.

## **BED POCKET**

Before bedside tables became popular, Victorians might have a bed pocket

# victorian glasswear

An easy way to spend a small amount on making a big difference to the Victorian vibe in your house is to hunt for pressed glass that harks back to the era.

From cake stands to fruit bowls, cream jugs to drinking glasses, Victorian pressed glass can be picked up in charity shops and car boot sales for a matter of pence and can be used in a host of ways to bring some period charm to your home.

Before the 1820s, glass was incredibly expensive and was only used by the upper classes – glass vessels had to be blown while pressed glass could be mass-produced and therefore was far more affordable.

Cut glass was also hugely popular during the Victorian era and saw the improvements in technology and industry married with the skilled artistry of craftsmen to create some of the most beautiful and collectable glass ever made. There was the cameo glass of Webbs, Stevens and Williams or Richardsons, ornate and elaborate lustres, engraved and etched decanters, drinking glasses and jugs and coloured glass from Nailsea and Bristol.



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Glass is a simple way to add a quick injection of Victoriana into your bedroom, whether you choose vases, cake stands for decorative purposes, candlesticks, decanters or dressing room sets (the latter are still very cheaply available in a variety of colours, from uranium glass green to pink, blue, amber and clear).

While pressed glass doesn't have the same sparkle as its cut glass cousin, it is far more 'useable' on an everyday basis, and items can be used for a multitude of purposes: the trays from dressing table sets, for example, look stunning when filled with miniature succulent plants in pots.

Stained glass panels from the Victorian era can also be purchased for great prices from auctions, auction websites and antique dealers. Placed in a bedroom window, they can throw colourful light through the room and add a touch of Victorian magic.



# 10

## ways to use a

### victorian glass cake stand in your bedroom

#### ONE

As an unusual jewellery stand where you can display your necklaces, rings and earrings in one place and use them as decoration for your room as well as yourself.

#### TWO

To create a floral display: either small vases on the stand filled with flowers of different heights or create a display which uses moss, oasis foam and flowers for a dramatic display.

#### THREE

As an oversized candle stand – group candles together on the stand, ‘glued’ to the base with a little candle wax. Alternatively, you can group tea light candles on the stand to create a glittering display.

#### FOUR

As storage for your prettiest cosmetics, lotions and potions. If you store bath bombs on a stand, it has the added bonus of scenting the room, too.

#### FIVE

With the addition of a glass cloche, you can use the stand to display a beautiful heirloom or oddity – like a bell jar on stilts!

#### SIX

As a plant stand.

#### SEVEN

As a display for perfume bottles (although be sure to keep the stand and the bottles away from a direct heat or light source – if you’re worried about affecting your fragrance, display old bottles and antique bottles instead).

#### EIGHT

As a place to keep all your bits and pieces on your bedside table – jewellery, contact lens case or glasses, moisturiser – a catch-all for everything!

#### NINE

As a base for a collections display of small items – pretty stones you’ve found on the beach, trinkets – or for several beautifully-bound vintage books.

#### TEN

Or think big – collect the most beautiful pressed glass cake stands you can find and display them on shelves in your bedroom where they can catch the light!

# victorian bedroom colours



Bedrooms tended to be painted or wallpapered in lighter shades than colours used in the rest of the home, although the schemes used would still often seem quite flamboyant in today's terms. Printed wallpaper and heavily patterned fabrics were favoured with a strict proportion guide as to how they should be used: 60 per cent pattern, 30 per cent plain and 10 per cent painted mouldings (all would be different colours or shades).

Despite huge leaps forward in the manufacture of chemical dyes during the latter half of the 19th century, paint colours remained similar to those used during the Georgian era, although there was far more use of more complex colour schemes which embraced both light and shade.

By the 1840s, the most popular shades used in bedrooms were those such as salmon, lilac and buff, with architectural features often picked out in strong shades. The area below the dado rail was often decorated in deep shades such as aubergine or moss green – which broke up the contrast between the carpet and the lighter coloured wall above the rail – while mouldings would typically be picked out in colours that were richer than those used on the walls, although not as dark as the colour used beneath the dado rail. Ceilings were painted in creamy, rather than brilliant white, shades and by the 1850s it wasn't unusual to see coloured ceilings.

Light Brunswick green and sage green were commonly found on bedroom walls, with woodwork picked out in shades such as bronze green or purple brown. Stripped-back pine was never seen in a Victorian decorating scheme as it was considered to look cheap and undesirable.

The addition of white woodwork emerged in the late 1880s when it became all the rage to decorate in the 'Queen Anne' style, which offered a stark contrast to the shades that were painted on walls. Skirting boards, doors, windows and stairs were painted white, an effect which was further enhanced by the introduction of electric lighting.

# how to

## keep young and beautiful

The Victorian bedroom would have been where the lady of the house carried out her daily routines to ensure that she looked as beautiful as possible.

In this era, the most coveted complexion was a pale complexion, which was seen as a sign that the owner was upper class and never did anything as crass as venturing out in sunlight.

Women tried everything to make their skin appear paler, even to the point where they would poison themselves in pursuit of perfection.

Lead-based paints were used on the face as were poisonous creams – other women went a stage further and ate poison such as chalk, slate, tea grounds and arsenic, even though beauty writers at the time counselled against it. Instead, they suggested sitting in well-ventilated rooms, getting up to eight hours sleep a night and eating a good diet (does this sound familiar?).

Just as today, the Victorians were obsessed with spots and their removal. Blackheads were thought by some to be ‘fleshworms’ because they looked like living creatures when they were extracted. “On the skin being pressed, the bits of coagulated lymph will come from it in a vermicular form. They are vulgarly called ‘flesh worms’, many ignorant persons supposing them to be living creatures,” it was noted in the 1841 Handbook of the Toilette.

Steam cleaning the face with sulphur was considered the best remedy for acne and blackheads.

Make-up (“the devil’s trickery”) was seen as deplorable, but in practice, many women used it to improve their appearance: cold cream, rouge, transparent powder, all were used to enhance natural beauty.

Belladonna was dropped into eyes to achieve a doe-eyed look – the only negative being that it also caused blindness. Lemon juice was slightly less dangerous but no less painful.

Victorian mascara involved beeswax and soot, eyebrow enhancement involved mixing pitch (now used to make road tar), resin and frankincense to colour and shape the brows and homemade hair tonics tended to include delights such as lard and beef marrow. Eyeshadows were often made with antimony sulfide, lipsticks with mercuric sulfide but blusher could be as wholesome and simple as beetroot juice.

The Victorian remedy for wrinkles was, however, very appealing. In her 1840 book *Female Beauty As Preserved and Improved by Regimen, Cleanliness and Dress*, Mrs Walker noted that wrinkles arose from “leanness” and that the answer is “to endeavour to acquire plumpness”.

If you’d rather stay slim, try the Victorian potion that makes a paste from the whites of four eggs boiled in rose water, half an ounce of alum and half an ounce of oil of sweet almonds. Apply it to a silk or muslin mask and wear at night (do not try this at home – alum is toxic!).



# how to

## make a refreshing face tonic

*You will need:*



*A wine glass full of  
fresh lemon juice*



*A pint of  
rain water*



*Five drops of  
rosewater*

*To make and use:*

Mix the ingredients together and place in a corked bottle. Use on cotton pads swept over the face to refresh the skin.

# how to get the look

The Victorian look isn't about minimalism: if anything, it's about maximalism!

Oriental rugs offer a touch of Victorian-inspired opulence to a room if your budget doesn't stretch to a parquet or hardwood floor (and let's face it, not many of us can afford such luxury). Victorians would often make do with floorcloths, handpainted canvas rugs that could withstand moisture and wear.

Make room for a wall hanging behind your bed – a tapestry is ideal, but you can buy ready-made tapestry-style material which can be easily attached to the wall. Use the same fabric to make a bedspread to match.

Wallpaper makes a big statement and there are plenty of companies that produce Victorian-era replicas so that you can make a big impact.

Get the colour right – research the shades that were popular in the era and use them in your bedroom – remember, the Victorians used three shades in each room. Find upholstery fabric for chairs and ottomans that can be cheaply recovered and given a new lease of life.

Curtains should be in a soft, solid shade if you've chosen patterned wallpaper (unless you want a headache at bedtime).

Beds should be dark wood – oak, mahogany or walnut are great – or choose an iron bedstead or a highly-polished brass bed with a footboard and headboard.

Look for appropriate prints in antique shops, auctions or car boot sales or find reproduction prints to hang. Botanical prints look particularly good on a wall.

If you have original ornate plasterwork in your bedroom, find out how to care for it and keep it in the best condition. If you don't, you can reinvent the look by adding mouldings to the ceiling to create interest at a reasonable price.

Add some original features of your own: you can pick up bargains such as wooden towel horses, brass inlaid jewellery boxes, footstools, mirrors, Victorian fireplaces, nursing chairs, table clothes, chests of drawers, washstands, scent bottles and dressing table mirrors.





## don't want to go the whole hog?

Some people want to reference the period their house was built in without going overboard and sticking to period detail.

Having a house that suits your needs is as important as having one that suits your particular tastes, so it's perfectly possible to preserve the character of your home without the need for a horsehair mattress or a chamber pot under the bed.

Add period detail with great reproductions, such as radiators, tiles or floor coverings, choose a Victorian-style bed to sit in the middle of your modern bedroom, add a pressed glass dressing table set to your bedside table for a little nod to the past or place an ottoman or trunk at the bottom of your bed for some extra storage, Victorian-style.

And if you have the space and the inclination, bring a chaise longue into your life – you'll never regret more time spent lounging (grapes and Champagne optional).

# 9 victorian bathrooms



While elements of Victorian style are much sought-after in modern day homes, it's fair to say that not many of us would like to go back to the days when personal hygiene meant not much more than a cursory wipe with a cloth.

Today we think of Victorian bathrooms as boasting luxurious claw-footed roll-top baths, beautifully decorated sanitary ware, high-level cisterns with ornate chain pulls and cradle bath and shower mixers in fine metals and porcelain style.

But for most of us the reality of living in Victorian times would have been distinctly less sanitary.

For the majority of the Victorian working class, there was no such thing as a bathroom – houses in London, in particular, were over-crowded, close together and deeply unsanitary in the early days of Victoria's reign.

While those who lived in cities might have access to bath houses – if they had the cash to use them – most others had to rely on a tin bath placed in front of the fire, usually in the kitchen. Baths were a rarity and bath water was used


in order of importance: the head of the house would use it first, followed in strict hierarchical order according first to gender and then to age.

This is the origin of the famous expression about not throwing the baby out with the bath water – by the time the youngest member of the family found their way to water, the bath was so filthy that it would have been easy to lose someone in it!


After the bathing had been done, the water would then be used to wash clothes – no wonder people rarely wore white.

Even the upper and middle classes used copper or tin baths that were filled with heated water – the poor collected water from a street pump which was then heated on the fire while the rich had a pumped supply of water that was carried from the kitchen by servants.

By the late 1880s, indoor plumbing with water tanks and gas water heaters became more widely available and houses began to be built with indoor bathrooms and cast iron, full-length baths.



*Very few people  
would seek to create  
a period perfect  
Victorian bathroom*



Until baths became part of the furniture, washing for the genteel classes generally involved a wash stand which would have been in the bedroom and involved a piece of wooden furniture with a hole in it to take a heavily decorated bowl. Other stands had marble tops and it wasn't until the late 1800s and early 1900s that the jug and bowl was replaced by a sink and taps.

The introduction of running water saw the wash stand plumbed in and set in a floor-standing cabinet or a shallow box on legs.

Open sewers and drains carried human waste, dead animals and rubbish to the Thames leading to mass outbreaks of cholera and "the Great Stink of London" in 1858. A new sewerage system was commissioned that took waste off the streets and away from the Thames thanks to the pioneering work of Joseph Bazalgette, who designed a network of sewers which diverted the foul water to treatment works.

But it wasn't until the early 1900s that most houses were connected to the sewer system and piped water. Until then, it was doing one's business as

normal in privies which were often shared by entire streets. It wasn't unusual for more than 100 houses to share one toilet in a shared yard.


Forget ornate ironwork and delicately painted sanitary ware, the majority of Victorian toilets were little more than a wooden bench with a hole in it over a brick built ash pit.

The waste would be emptied into communal cesspools, which were built to be porous so that the liquid waste would seep away into the ground, leaving a residue of solid matter which was removed by the wonderfully-named night soil men (who often supplemented their income by spending a few hours every night doing what must have been one of the worst jobs in Victorian times). The night soil men would climb into the cesspool, shovel out the muck and place it into a basket and then a cart. At the start of the 19th century, the waste was then sold to farmers for their fields.


Although flushing toilets had been invented in 1596, most houses could only dream of having a running water supply to power them. And just as a

lack of elementary domestic comforts – lighting, furniture, heating, cleanliness – led to a culture where people would gather together in ale houses, the addition of running water to houses changed lives beyond compare, particularly for women. It's fair to say that very few people

would seek to create a period perfect Victorian bathroom (unless you're keen on a trip to the bottom of the garden every time you need the loo), but one can still create a bathroom that fits the architecture of a Victorian house and work for a modern-day family.



*Forget ornate ironwork and delicately painted sanitary ware, the majority of Victorian toilets were little more than a wooden bench with a hole in it over a brick built ash pit*



# how to get the look

The earliest Victorian bathrooms were designed to look like regular rooms and therefore fixtures were often fitted into wooden shells so they looked like furniture.

Rooms were decorated in exactly the same way as a bedroom or parlour would be decorated with rugs, paintings, wallpaper and tables, with only the addition of a bath, a sink and a toilet.

When it was discovered that wood isn't particularly practical in bathrooms, rooms began to be tiled (or floors covered in linoleum if a family wasn't wealthy) and fixtures were made of easily cleaned porcelain.

Today, industrial-strength varnish means that an element of wood can be maintained in a bathroom without the fear of damp or warping.

Showers were rarer than baths and were often just tanks suspended over the bath which were operated by pull chains – the so-called “rib cage” showers were hugely expensive. Today, it is best to look for a faux-Victorian style shower and make it blend into the room by using appropriate tiling and styling – look for exposed chrome piping and an overhead rain shower head and use as much glass as possible in doors so that the shower doesn't reduce the visual size of the room.

Once the main players have been installed in your bathroom, add some accessories to anchor your theme securely in the Victorian era: think over-the-bath racks, glass shelves with chrome fittings, freestanding or wall-mounted soap dish holders, medicine cabinets, chrome and wooden toilet roll holders, hooks, towel rails and mirrors.





# bath

If you are looking to create the Victorian feel in your bathroom (by which I mean an upper class Victorian feel rather than open latrines and tin baths) a freestanding bath should be top of any wishlist.

If possible, it would have claw feet and be cast iron, but there are many considerations to take into account before you can fit such a piece of kit: firstly, can your floor withstand the weight of a cast iron bath?

A builder will need to check your floor joists before you choose a heavy bath and you will also have to ensure that you have the right plumbing – freestanding baths sometimes need floor-standing taps (which can be as expensive, if not more expensive, than the bath itself!).

If your floor joists simply cannot take the weight of a heavy bath, there are other options available such as resin baths or baths made of a lighter metal, such as copper, which are remarkably light.

There are no shortage of companies, both high street and artisan, that can offer you a bath which will help your bathroom make a real splash.

While the ultimate in luxury would be to have your freestanding bath tub in the middle of a room large enough to accommodate it, freestanding baths can look just as effective at the edge of a room or in a corner. Even better, many freestanding baths can be painted to match your colour scheme.

# floor

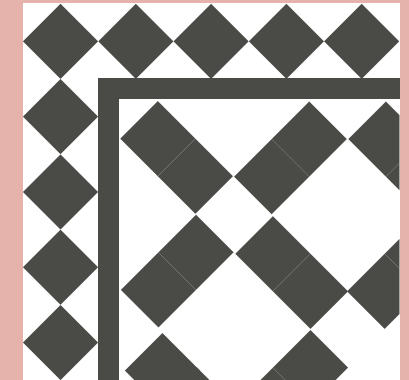
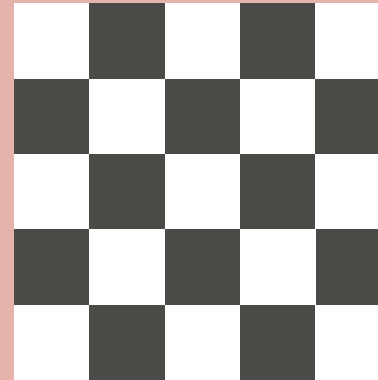
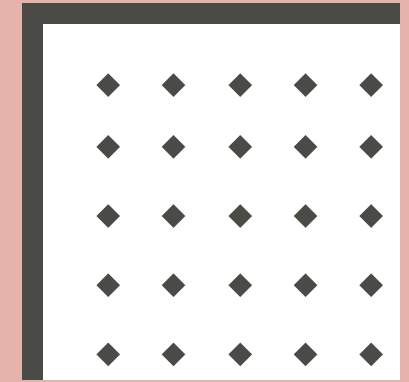
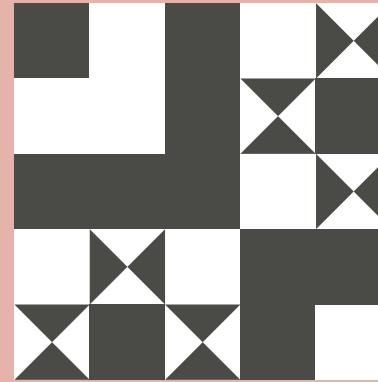
The most important aspect of a bathroom floor is that it is practical – but that doesn't mean it has to be boring or overtly modern looking.

If you are creating a bathroom with a Victorian feel, aim for a classic floor covering which will withstand heavy traffic and water.

Black and white tiles are a classic option, particularly if you plump for an arrangement of black and white square tiles, which will always complement any colour scheme. A huge range of more decorative tiles is also available, although it's worth bearing in mind that choosing a colour will limit your choice of wall coverings in years to come.

Another option is to have a wooden floor – reclaimed or original boards look fantastic if they are either varnished or painted and then varnished to help repel water – but you must remember that if you do use boards and your bathroom is upstairs, you must be careful that water doesn't pool which could cause leaks below.

The use of ornate oriental rugs in bathrooms that are large enough and can take an injection of colour is also an option, although ensure they are secure so that there are no slips when you get out of the bath or shower.



## traditional floor tile patterns

# wall coverings

The Victorians favoured tiles, after their initial love of wooden paneling, and were keen to have a clean, germ-free environment in which to perform their daily ablutions.

Tiles were used on floors and also on walls as wainscots up to five feet from the floor – floor-to-ceiling tiles were rarely seen in Victorian bathrooms – with the most common colour used being white or ivory.

Metro tiles definitely didn't arrive until the Edwardian era but if anyone complains about authenticity, point them to the bottom of the garden where you've installed a bucket and newspaper squares for toilet roll in the shed for die-hard Victorian wannabes.

Boarding was also common, particularly if cost was a concern. In a modern bathroom, tongue and groove can be used and, if you incorporate a ledge, can offer extra storage for decorative items or bathing essentials.

Paint finishes were often satin sheen and gloss for woodwork.

Walls above the wainscot were normally painted and possibly varnished or waxed to repel water.

Colours, as in the rest of the home, were heavily influenced by shades found in nature and included deep reds and blues, earthy browns and forest greens. Deep, rich colours were thought to enhance the importance of a room and give it gravitas.

Even small bathrooms can take a deep, dark colour – while homeowners often think that painting a small space in a light colour will make it look bigger and brighter, it often creates a cold, featureless room. Bold colours, particularly in bathrooms, offer the chance to create a unique space which is both intimate and dramatic.

Do not be afraid to hang art in bathrooms in the same way that Victorians would have, although do consider the effect that condensation will have on anything you use in a room.

# sinks

Victorian sinks evolved from washstands which used to be placed in bedrooms and offered people a chance to wash using a china bowl suspended inside a piece of wooden furniture with an appropriately-shaped hole to hold it.

These washstands would offer not only a sink (albeit one without running water or a plug) but also storage for household items and towels.

When running water became available, vanity units, which looked like pieces of furniture but which included hot and cold taps and a sink with a plug, were introduced into bathrooms. The storage facility remained and many such stands included marble or tiled tops to protect the wood.



More popular today – although at the expense of storage – are pedestal sinks which are often paired with a mirror for a true Victorian arrangement.

Such sinks came into fashion towards the end of the Victorian era as homeowners began to move away from wooden finishes and towards cleaner, more efficient finishes and surfaces that were easier to clean.

Some sinks were on a single pedestal, others were mounted on ornate cast iron brackets.

# toilets

Toilets in wealthy households were often highly-decorated with hand-painted designs to further show off a device which could only be afforded by a handful of people. Tanks were generally made of tin-lined wood, cast iron and china.

Although high-level toilets fell out of fashion as water pressure improved, they have enjoyed a renaissance in recent years and are now readily available from high street bathroom outlets. Vintage pieces can be picked up at antique and salvage firms, although make sure they can be used with modern plumbing systems before you buy.

Traditionally, toilet seats should be polished dark wood.



# heating

When radiators became readily available, they were seen as the “must have” accessory of the day by Victorians who had previously had to rely on fires in the bathroom to stave off chills.

While fireplaces and fires remained in many larger bathrooms, cast iron radiators became hugely popular as both sources of heat and as towel warmers. The fashion of the day was reflected in radiator designs which included scrolled details in the casting.

Traditional and original cast iron radiators can be extremely heavy, so again, ensure your floor can withstand the weight of an original radiator. There are a huge number of high street stores offering replica Victorian-style towel rails and radiators which offer a similar look with modern efficiency.

If you have a fireplace and have the possibility of having an open fire – after your chimney is checked by a professional – little more would be as decadent as enjoying a winter bath in a fire-lit room.

# victorian bathroom checklist:

## ONE

When you plan your bathroom, factor the bath in first – it's the most important element of the room and will dictate where everything else is placed.

## TWO

If you are planning to have freestanding furniture, check all your dimensions and plumbing requirements so there aren't any nasty surprises when work begins.

## THREE

Remember that freestanding baths are heavy so have a builder check that your bathroom floor is strong enough – and don't forget to factor in the weight of the water and the bather!

## FOUR

Before you pick up a set of vintage taps, check they are fit to be used in a modern bathroom. They may seem to be a bargain, but if you need to have them refurbished, they are likely to cost you hundreds of pounds before you can use them. Also, check old fittings can be used in the existing holes in your bath or sink.

## FIVE

Equally, look for cracks on old sanitary ware. Crazeing on the varnish of china is OK but cracks aren't.

## SIX

If you are using original fittings, make sure your plumber knows how they work or is used to working with vintage kit.

## SEVEN

Never use acidic or citrus-based cleaning products on sanitary ware with an enamel finish.

## EIGHT

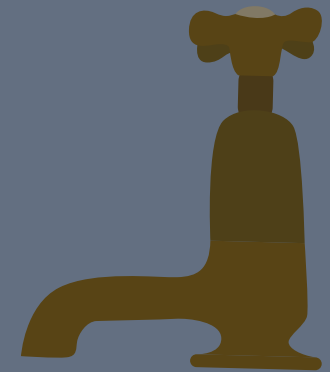
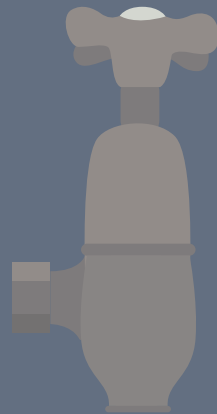
If you can't afford tiles, incorporate cheaper wall panelling in your bathroom and consider varnished floorboards.

## NINE

Mismatched furniture can look great in a Victorian-style bathroom, although try to stick to the same shade of dark wood. A chair, a mirror, a table – all can look great if you have enough space to house them.

## TEN

Victorians didn't have mixer taps. It's separate cold and hot water taps all the way.



# thomas crapper

Born in Yorkshire in 1836, Thomas Crapper is said to have walked the 165 miles to London in order to find himself an apprenticeship with a master plumber in Chelsea.

By 1861 he had his own business, which became Thos Crapper & Co, and championed the water-waste preventing cistern siphon and the disconnecting trap, which became an essential underground drain fitting and helped to prevent disease.

He also invented a somewhat less successful spring-loaded toilet seat which, as the user rose, would automatically flush the cistern. Problems with the design led to several well-to-do clients being struck on the rear by an over-enthusiastic toilet seat!

Crapper and Co supplied the Prince of Wales at Sandringham and later Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace and Westminster Abbey.

He effectively invented the concept of the modern bathroom showroom,

bringing sanitary ware to a sceptical public who actually thought it was dirty to have a toilet inside the house. Salesmen would visit homes with a range of miniature models of bathrooms to look at and then created a show bathroom at his shop in Marlborough Road in London.

It is said that some ladies fainted at the sight of a toilet through the plate glass window!

Crapper died in 1910 and was buried in Elmers End Cemetery. And as for the idea that his surname came to be used as slang for, well, you know what, apparently it's a load of... nonsense. "Crap" was an old word for rubbish that had fallen out of use by the end of the 16th century but had been taken to America with the settlers and been used continuously as a vulgar word.

When American servicemen stationed in London in the First World War saw the name "Crapper" emblazoned on cisterns and toilet bowls, the name took on a whole new meaning and became a slang word once again.

# the great stink

It was a summer to remember for all the wrong reasons: July and August 1858 were unseasonably hot, meaning that London's aroma was unreasonably vile.

Charles Dickens wrote to a friend: "I can certify that the offensive smells, even in that short whiff, have been of a most head-and-stomach distending nature."

While journalist George Godwin observed that the sewer deposits on the shores of the Thames were up to six feet deep.

Business in Parliament was affected by the stench and curtains on the river side of the building were soaked in lime chloride to overcome the smell. Men were employed to spread lime on the banks of the Thames.

The ageing sewerage system, which had been built in the 17th century, saw waste tipped directly into the River Thames, having first made its route through the city in open drains.

After several outbreaks of cholera (which claimed almost 32,000 lives from 1831 to 1854) and a belief that illness was caused by the miasma from the effluent, the Government's hand was forced and it accepted a proposal from civil engineer Joseph Bazalgette to move the effluent along sewers that led the foul water beyond the city limits.

Work began on the new system in 1859 and entered its final stages in 1875. To aid drainage, pumping stations were created to lift the sewage from lower levels into higher pipes – three embankments were created, the Victoria, Albert and Chelsea into which the sewage ran.

Historian John Doxat said that Bazalgette "probably did more good and saved more lives than any single Victorian official".

# 7

## ways to bathe like a victorian

### ONE

A sponge or hand-bath are the simplest forms and should be taken in a moderately warm room. As a rule, the more rapidly the bath is taken the better and it should always be followed by friction with the hand or with a not too rough towel.

### TWO

All full baths should be taken four hours after a full meal when the food is well-digested.

### THREE

If the body is not comfortably warm, some exercise should be taken before bathing. If not able to take the exercise and you are feeling chilly and cool, the water must only be lukewarm; if hot at first, it will excite action too suddenly.

### FOUR

No baths should be taken when exhausted by fatigue or from any other cause.

### FIVE

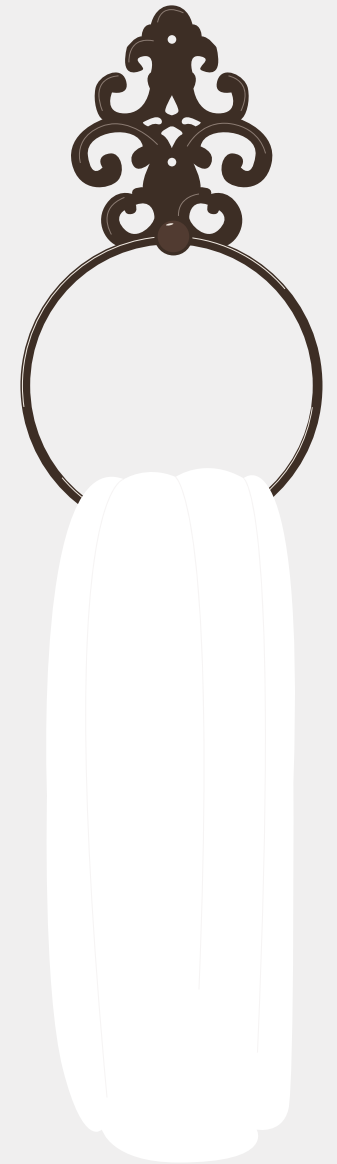
The vigorous and strong may bathe early in the morning or on an empty stomach. The young and those who are weak had better bathe three hours after a meal.

### SIX

Many people neglect to wash their feet more often than once a week. Cleanliness, as well as healthfulness, requires one bath a day for the feet and when they perspire freely, they should be bathed freely twice a day in soap and warm water.

### SEVEN

Don't believe you can get rid of wrinkles by filling in the crevices with powder. Instead, give your face a Russian bath every night; that is bathe it with water so hot that you will wonder how you can stand it and then, a minute after, with cold water that will make it glow with warmth; dry it with a soft towel and go to bed and you ought to sleep like a baby, while your skin is growing firmer and coming from out of the wrinkles.



# source book

Salvo is a gateway to the world of architectural salvage and lists dealers, yard shops and showrooms where you can buy antique, reclaimed and salvage items.

[www.salvo.co.uk](http://www.salvo.co.uk)

The Cornish Bed Company is one of the last foundries to hand cast traditional iron, brass and nickel beds and day beds. You can even buy your faithful friend his or her own Victorian cast iron dog bed!

[www.cornishbeds.co.uk](http://www.cornishbeds.co.uk)

Handmade in Norfolk, The Wrought Iron and Brass Bed Company has a large selection of iron, brass and nickel beds to choose from and can create bespoke beds to fit the space you have. In a move that would please the Victorians, the company also offers wool bedding which is hypoallergenic, helping to keep dust mites, fungus and other allergens at bay.

[www.wroughtironandbrassbed.co.uk](http://www.wroughtironandbrassbed.co.uk)

Cox's Architectural can offer Victorian plumbing fittings, taps, vintage radiators and the Burlington range of Victorian styled bathroom sanitary ware.

[www.coxsarchitectural.co.uk](http://www.coxsarchitectural.co.uk)

Look for genuine Victorian furniture at [www.thakehamfurniture.co.uk](http://www.thakehamfurniture.co.uk) and at [www.sellingantiques.co.uk](http://www.sellingantiques.co.uk). Bargains can be found at [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk).

Farrow and Ball boasts an edited palette of 132 paints and handcrafted artisanal wallpapers and can offer advice about Victorian shades, such as crisp blue Parma Gray, rich green Saxon Green and iridescent whites such as Great White.

[www.farrow-ball.com](http://www.farrow-ball.com)

The Victorian Emporium sells historic printed wallpaper that can be traced back to periods within and around the Victorian era. It also sells relief Anaglypta wallpaper, a decorative Victorian tool used to cover often uneven and unsightly walls to disguise imperfections. The shop also stocks a fantastic supply of curtain fabrics and upholstery fabrics for the Victorian home, from stunning silks to flowered patterns and luxurious damasks, period-style lighting, fireplaces and radiators and far more.

[www.thevictorianemporium.com](http://www.thevictorianemporium.com)

Stiffkey Antique Bathrooms are specialist dealers in English and French antique baths and bathroom furniture and also offer a range of matching reproduction bathroom accessories created from Victorian designs.

[www.stiffkeybathrooms.com](http://www.stiffkeybathrooms.com)

Antique Bathrooms of Ivybridge and Marlborough not only has a huge selection of original reclaimed cast iron baths but also a range of reproduction baths and accessories for your own original bath. The firm also supplies basins, cisterns, toilet pans and seats, lighting, showers, taps, towel warmers and radiators.

[www.antiquebaths.com](http://www.antiquebaths.com)

Mongers of Hingham has a vast selection of period bathrooms and sanitary fittings from the 1890s to the 1950s, including roll-edged baths, wash stands, patterned cisterns, high-level cisterns, basin and mixer taps and sinks. The firm also has a fine range of reclaimed radiators in a variety of colours.

[www.mongersofhingham.co.uk](http://www.mongersofhingham.co.uk)

Fired Earth has traditional fittings such as baths, bowls and basins, showers, taps and mixers and towel rails in addition to wall and floor tiles which all fit into a Victorian theme.

[www.firedearth.com](http://www.firedearth.com)

Tynemouth Architectural Salvage has a selection of original sanitary ware including baths, cisterns, taps, basins, toilets and toilet roll holders.

[www.tynemoutharchitecturalsalvage.com](http://www.tynemoutharchitecturalsalvage.com)

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[www.farrow-ball.com](http://www.farrow-ball.com)

# 10 victorian parlours



Think intricate mouldings and cast iron fireplaces inset with patterned tiles, walls in rich shades of emerald, ruby, sapphire and amethyst, buttonback armchairs and stained glass windows – if there's one thing the Victorian interior designers could never be accused of, it was subtlety.

Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901 was so long that style changed considerably while she was on the throne, making it difficult to pin down precisely how one defines Victorian style – but what the Victorians did embrace, wholeheartedly, was a new passion for combining styles to create something entirely new.

So it is possible to channel the enthusiasm of our Victorian forebears in the same way, combining the old with the new. Using rich, dark colours and bold prints is a style statement which translates easily into a modern home as do the "Grand Tour" elements of design which incorporate the exotic into everyday life.

Mass production meant that Victorian homeowners could afford to copy the style of those with bigger budgets and the era saw the rise of the middle class homeowners whose style was a reflection of the upper class who could afford craftsmen and women to furnish their homes.

By the end of Victoria's reign, homeowners were regularly poring over interior decoration magazines in the same way as we do today and they would also flock to large-scale exhibitions to see recreations of rooms which they could draw inspiration from.

The key to creating a perfect parlour in Victorian times was to have a room which illustrated your family's wealth and good taste and also had enough seats for all of one's guests – it was considered the height of bad manners for a gentleman to offer his seat to a lady in case the cushion retained residual warmth from his posterior.

Victorian style is not one to recreate if you favour Scandinavian-style light and airy homes or minimalism. But if you like Gothic and rococo, medieval and oriental, a more-is-more attitude to your living space and you're prepared to commit to a whole new dusting programme, travel back in time to an age of grandeur, glamour and gregarious over-indulgence.



# 10

## easy ways to inject

victorian style  
into your front  
room



### ONE

It's easy to add a touch of Victorian flair with ornaments which can be cheaply picked up at charity or antique shops and internet auction sites. Look for bell jars, taxidermy, needlepoint pictures and cushion covers, glass vases, mirrors, clocks and art that reflects the period. Victorians were enthusiastic collectors and would often have entire shelves crammed with curiosities.

## TWO

Rich paint and wallpaper colours were standard: think ruby red, forest green, midnight blue and brown. If you don't feel brave enough to have an entire room in a dark shade, choose one feature wall to accentuate.

## THREE

While the Victorians' decoration watchword was "excess", it's easy to incorporate elements of opulence without succumbing to the crowded interiors that were favoured in the era – think daybeds or velvet curtains, a button-back chair in a bathroom or a Victorian chandelier as a feature light fitting in a modern room.

## FOUR

Look for Victorian candlesticks (glass ones that were once part of a dressing table set are particularly easy to find and cheap to buy) and illuminate your room by candle and firelight in the evenings.

## FIVE

Make yourself a Victorian needlepoint cushion – one of the most popular designs of the era was of Queen Victoria's dog, a black and tan spaniel. There are free patterns available on [Victoriana.com](http://Victoriana.com)





## SIX

Fireplaces were key to the Victorians as they not only heated rooms, but were a focal point and an area which could house collections on mantelpieces. If you have an old fireplace which is in need of restoration, there are plenty of online guides to follow to ensure that you don't damage the iron, marble or tiles. Many fireplaces were boarded up in the 1960s when electric fires became available, so it's worth checking whether one is hidden behind a board. Visit Salvo for reclaimed fireplaces and surrounds.

## SEVEN

Add a Persian-style rug in rich shades, leaving a border of dark floorboards (often, Victorians would only paint the part of the floor that would be seen, and the removal of the rug would reveal the less-fashionable, lighter floorboards).

## EIGHT

The Victorians were huge fans of using lots of different textures: try layering cushions with lace, velvet and brocade covers, trimming curtains or blinds with lace, adding sumptuous window treatments or festoon blinds and using lace or delicately crocheted table and tray cloths.

## NINE

If you have original features such as ceiling roses and mouldings, accentuate them. If they have been removed, consider reinstating them. While replacements are relatively cheap, they are often difficult to fit properly and you may need the help of an expert.

## TEN

If you're in a house with a high ceiling, consider painting it the same shade as your walls – it may seem extreme, but it can make a large room look opulent and dramatic.



# brown furniture

## and how it can work for you

Fashion is a fickle thing, but if you're looking to recreate Victorian style on a budget, for once it might work in your favour.

For many years, so-called "brown furniture" was out of fashion with buyers, meaning there were bargains aplenty available for those who appreciated a wonderful piece of furniture made by craftspeople for less of an outlay than a new piece from a high street store.

It's well made, has stood the test of time and is environmentally friendly – and all the furniture that was made for a purpose in the Victorian era can be used for the same purpose today, or adapted to suit modern needs.

While we may not sit down with an inkwell and a sheaf of vellum at our bureau, we can still store our important and treasured documents in one and no one can resist searching for secret drawers which are often incorporated into such a piece.

Chests of drawers, dressers, cabinets, book cases, dressing tables, tables – all can be found for a song if you know where to look, offering you the perfect

opportunity to bid farewell to flatpack and the chance to welcome back traditional wood.

While one-off original items filled with character still attract large price tags, less flashy more everyday items can be picked up at antique shops, on internet auction sites or even charity shops and, joyfully, when you bring your purchase home you don't need to assemble it with an Allen key or a screwdriver.

Even if you don't want to embrace Victoriana entirely, one or two signature pieces – an impressive armoire, an inlaid chest – can still look stunning in a modern home. Indeed very few people will choose to decorate a home slavishly to suit its age, and the trend for mix-and-match interiors is one which is becoming increasingly popular.

Victorian furniture looks great when juxtaposed with modern items – a mahogany dresser standing against a wall of modern wallpaper, a cherry wood bench in a busy hallway, a sofa reupholstered in modern fabric – and is a lovely way to reflect your home's age without over-theming or being twee.





# weird

## wallpaper facts

### ONE

The most expensive wallpaper available is called Les Guerres D'Independence and in January 2006 was priced at £24,896 for a set of 32 panels, making the price per metre £432.83. The military scene created from 19th century woodblock prints takes a year to make and is most popular in America.

### TWO

Oscar Wilde died in a second-rate French hotel. His last words were: "Either this wallpaper goes, or I do". The wallpaper remained.

### THREE

In the 1850s, it became fashionable to have green wallpaper. Unfortunately, the wallpaper's hue was due to arsenic, which duly poisoned many of those who spent too long in air-tight, wallpapered rooms. It then featured as a murder weapon in many crime novels.

### FOUR

Play-Doh was originally invented to clean soot from wallpaper. In 1954, it was discovered that by removing the detergent from the "wallpaper dough" and adding scent and colouring, the dough could be made into modelling clay for children.

### FIVE

A West Midlands pub, Somerset House, has an unusual claim to fame: one can hang a full pint of ale unaided on the wallpapered walls for up to two days. The scientific theory is that a combination of wallpaper type, glue, tobacco smoke and grime is behind the trick although locals, aware that the pub was once a manufacturing site for coffins, believe a more magical explanation is in order.

### SIX

In 2012, a London communications firm wallpapered its lift with 1,300 Jaffa Cake flavoured stickers to lift the spirits of its workers. After each sticker was licked a lift attendant would remove and replace it.

### SIX

Bubble wrap was intended to be used as 3D wallpaper when it was invented in 1957. It didn't catch on.

### SEVEN

Renegade wallpaper designer Jon Sherman's Flavor Paper brand, based in New York, produces seven colour, scratch-and-sniff tutti-frutti wallpaper, black light and glow-in-the-dark wallpaper. A tutti-frutti roll costs \$550.

*Play-Doh was  
originally invented  
to clean soot from  
wallpaper*

# the victorian paint palette

## **IT'S NOT ALL-WHITE**

The Victorians didn't have brilliant white paint at their disposal and nor did they favour pastel shades. The lightest shades they used were off-white, cream and lighter shades of the dark, earthy colours that they favoured.

## **CO-ORDINATE**

A common Victorian trick was to use the same colour in one room, albeit in different tones. The darkest shade was used below the dado rail, a slightly lighter tone was used above it and woodwork was lighter still.

## **PAINT OR WALLPAPER? OR BOTH?**

Texture was important to the Victorians who embraced embossed wallpaper such as Anaglypta and Lincrusta when they were developed in the late 1800s and would often paint them to add

a deeper tone. Such wallpapers were hugely popular because they were not only wipe-clean, but also offered homeowners the chance to effectively hide rough and uneven walls.

## **PAINT THE FLOOR**

If Victorians couldn't afford carpet, they preferred wood that was on show to be dark oak. But oak was expensive, so less costly cuts of wood were regularly stained or painted in darker shades to replicate either ebony or oak. Rugs would add a splash of colour and comfort.

## **BE BRAVE**

Victorian rooms can take really dramatic shades due to their grand proportions – if you have an original Victorian home, don't be afraid to be brave with colour.

# 11

victorian  
kitchens



It's one thing to restore a Victorian fireplace or floor tiles in your home, but few modern homeowners are so wedded to the past that they'd relish cooking in an authentic Victorian kitchen.

Victorian kitchens were places for work, not leisure or pleasure. They were not a place for families to catch up on news or to relax, there were no seats for those that weren't working and fitted cabinets were an addition that wouldn't be seen in kitchens for decades.

But it's possible to renovate the kitchen in your Victorian home with a sympathetic nod to the past without sacrificing any of the modern conveniences which make today's kitchens a pleasure to be in.

The biggest changes in Victorian houses have happened in the kitchen – today the wood-burning stove has been replaced with a modern oven, the scullery with washing machines and dishwashers.

Of course purists will insist on a kitchen which is as close to a Victorian design as possible (one homeowner described it thus: "When I walk from a restored parlour or dining room into a modern kitchen, I see the front seat of a Honda stuck in the passenger compartment of a Packard"). And it can be done.



*Victorian kitchens  
were places for work,  
not leisure or pleasure*



# 10

## easy ways

to incorporate the Victorian look in your modern kitchen.

### ONE

Use heritage colours – either be brave and paint your kitchen one of the darker shades of green or red which Victorians loved or use a darker colour as an accent on one wall or with tiles.

### TWO

We may think that metro tiles are a modern trend, but they hark back to the dawn of the London Underground and so instantly add a touch of vintage style to your kitchen.

### THREE

Don't overlook fixtures such as taps – try a pull-down tap for timeless appeal, Victorian-style taps or hunt down original, reconditioned taps from a salvage expert.

### FOUR

Look for period items in second hand shops and antique markets which can add a touch of authentic Victorian charm to your kitchen. It's still possible to find good condition glass-fronted cupboards which can be wall-mounted for extra storage space.

### FIVE

Install a Belfast sink – they were popular with Victorians because they were practical and held a great deal of washing up while also providing a convenient place to wash vegetables and fruit.

### SIX

Try to include some panelling in your kitchen design – it's cheap and cheerful but immediately transports you back to the Victorian era. Tongue and groove panelling on a wall is a great addition.

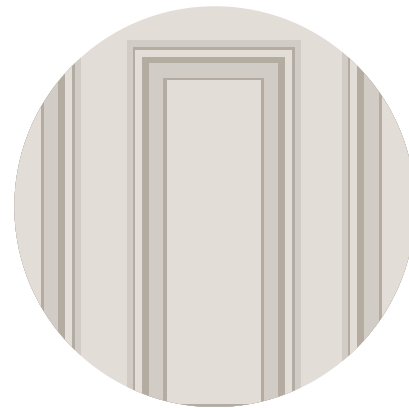
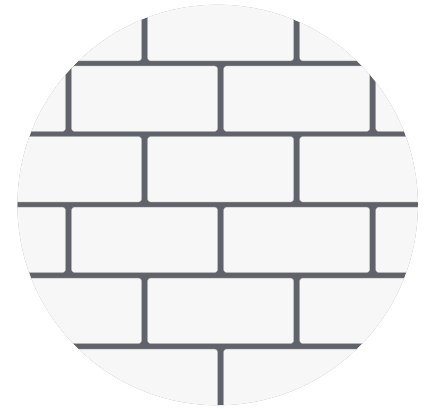
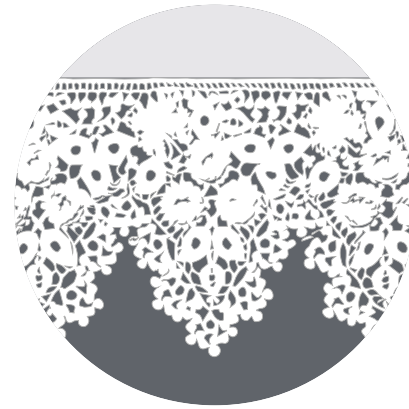
### SEVEN

If your house is originally Victorian, try to make the most of the original features you have. If the ceilings are high, think about having cabinets that reach from floor to ceiling to make the most of the space.

### EIGHT

Accessorise with linen – it's relatively easy to pick up old linen or to buy tablecloths, runners and napkins which reflect the Victorian style. William Morris designs such as the Strawberry Thief are timeless.





### NINE

Consider a half blind at the window, preferably made of stiffened white lace or linen to give an authentic look – although the Victorians loved heavy drapes in other rooms, they needed as much light as possible flooding into their kitchens.

### TEN

Add a touch of grandeur to your kitchen by hiding the extractor fan above your cooker or range with a false chimney breast. Tile the recess and you immediately have a vintage look for an old-fashioned price.

# what

## a victorian kitchen was like

A kitchen today is the heart of the home, but in Victorian times it had one purpose only: for the preparation of food.

While we might use our kitchens as a place to cook, wash our clothes, eat and socialise, our forebears had a very different idea about the room's role: even the washing-up was removed from the kitchen and dealt with in the scullery.

Kitchens were built to be practical, with high windows to help ventilate spaces which often became unbearably hot and unglazed tiles on the floor to prevent slips.

Walls were plastered and then white-washed or given a slight blue tint with laundry blue, which it was believed helped to repel flies.

The lower half of walls were often covered in boards coated in tiles or gloss paint to offer a hard-working, wipeable surface.

Victorians generally used solid fuel range ovens although the first gas-fired ranges were exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and a portable gas oven was available from 1868. They became more commonplace in the 1890s when people's fears of fumes escaping were laid to rest.





## cleaning up

### **CLEANING THE OVEN**

Baking soda was used to remove grease. Ovens were sprayed with water and then coated with a layer of soda before being covered with more water. Overnight, the soda would absorb the grease which was then scrubbed off with soap.

### **WASHING UP**

Dirty pots and pans were often left to soak in a solution of lemon juice and crushed eggshells. A mixture of baking soda and soft soap was also used.

### **KNIVES AND IRON UTENSILS**

Strong abrasives such as bath brick and emery powder (used today on nail files) was used for cleaning knives.

### **WINDOWS**

White vinegar and water was used before windows were buffed with newspaper. Cold, weak tea which has been left for several days also makes a good window cleaner.

### **FLOORS**

Many floors in poorer homes were covered in oilcloth which could be swept with a brush. Before sweeping, it was common practice to sprinkle damp tea leaves on the floor to “lay the dust”.

### **RUGS**

Tea leaves were squeezed until almost dry and then sprinkled on rugs before they were beaten with a carpet brush. In good weather, rugs were hung out on washing lines and beaten and in winter they would be dragged across the snow quickly to remove the top layer of dirt.

### **STAINED CARPETS**

Here's one you might not fancy replicating: the Victorians used stale urine to remove stubborn grease marks.

### **BED BUG REMOVAL**

An easy recipe for bed bug poison involved beating four egg whites with an ounce of quicksilver and applying to the mattress with a brush.

### **REMOVING ANTS**

The Victorians favoured leaving strips of cucumber around the area where the ants were seen – and then removing the ant-covered cucumber.

### **FLY REPELLANT**

A plate of pepper, sugar and cream was left in the worst-affected room (usually the kitchen) to attract flies. While water that leaks had soaked in for 24-hours was used as a repellent on furniture.

*Early Victorians  
didn't have the  
luxury of turning  
on a tap and having  
instant access  
to fresh water in  
their kitchen*

# kitchen layout

Today we like large, open-plan kitchens filled with light and space. Worktops are arranged along the edges of the room and the home cook moves from each work area as efficiently as possible.

In Victorian times, this was reversed: the worktop was in the centre of the room while the edges were where you would find the stove, the sink and storage.

This layout, with wide aisles around a central working area, meant that several people could work in the kitchen at the same time without getting underfoot.

It was important to have a space that worked: it took an average of 44 hours a week to prepare, serve and clean after meals in comparison to the average of four hours it takes today.

Only a handful of Victorians had hired cooks – even among the middle-class it was relatively rare.

Whereas today the majority of kitchens have fitted cabinetry, Victorian kitchens were furnished rather than fitted and had moveable, free-standing cabinets with separate work surfaces and storage areas.

# sinking feeling

Early Victorians didn't have the luxury of turning on a tap and having instant access to fresh water in their kitchen – water used would have to be fetched from a well or pump.

Rich home owners were able to install a pump in their kitchens but most urban dwellers had to rely on a communal well. The practice of filling communal tanks or elevated reservoirs started in England soon after 1800.

The first tap that used a screw mechanism and washers was invented by a brass foundry in Rotherham, Guest and Chrimes, and kitchen sinks were normally made of wood or stone and lined with copper, lead or an alloy of copper, tin and nickel.

Iron sinks became fashionable after the 1870s and glazed ceramic sinks followed towards the end of the Victorian period.

# a list

for 'The Modern Householder'  
looking to kit out a kitchen in 1872



- Open range, fender, fire irons
- One pine deal table (a table that could be stored against the wall)
- A deal bracket to be fastened to wall and let down when wanted
- A wooden chair
- Floor canvas
- A coarse canvas to lay before the fire when cooking
- A wooden tub for washing glass and china
- A large earthenware pan for washing plates
- A small zinc basin for washing hands
- Two washing-tubs
- A clothes line
- A clothes horse
- A yellow stoneware bowl for mixing dough
- A wooden salt box to hang up
- A small coffee mill
- A plate rack
- A knife board
- A large brown earthenware pan for making bread
- A small wooden flour kit
- Three flat irons
- An Italian iron and iron stand
- An old blanket for ironing on
- Two tin candlesticks
- Candle snuffers and extinguishers
- Two blacking brushes
- A scrubbing brush
- A carpet broom
- A short-handled broom
- A cinder sifter
- A dustpan
- A sieve
- A bucket
- A patent digester
- A tea kettle
- A toasting fork
- A bread grater
- A bottle jack (a spit for roasting meat)
- A set of skewers
- A meat chopper
- A block-tin butter saucepan
- A colander
- Three iron saucepans
- An iron boiling pot
- A fish kettle
- A flour dredger
- A frying pan
- A hanging gridiron
- A rolling pin and pasteboard
- Twelve patty pans
- One larger tin pan
- A set of scales
- A baking dish

# 10

## bizarre victorian dishes

### ONE

Soused pig's face: Take one pig's head, boil it in a pot with calves' feet and then rub with salt before brining. Serve with mustard. If you really want to treat your guests, remove the face from the bone, cover with jelly and serve as a delicacy. Don't have nightmares.

### TWO

Spinach ice-cream: Served as a sweet rather than a savoury course.

### THREE

Broxy: The name given to meat from sheep who had dropped dead of illness – like mutton, but more horrible.

### FOUR

Beef and lark pie: Stuff your larks (you'll need 36 for every six guests) with a mixture of breadcrumbs, mushrooms, suet and herbs bound together with egg yolk and then sauté 3lb of beef in a pan. Add stock, cover with puff pastry and bake. Do not invite ornithologists to dinner.

### FIVE

Sheep trotters: Skinned and parboiled, these were a forerunner of kebabs – but in place of salad, there might be grass still embedded in the sheep's foot.

### SIX

Calf ear fritters: The Victorians were offally keen on offal. Nothing went to waste: a calf's head was boiled, the brains was made into a sauce and the ears were shaved and then deep-fried. Because no one wants to find a hair in their calf's ear.

### SEVEN

Brain balls: Exactly as it sounds. Pick your favourite flavoured brain.

### EIGHT

Slink: The unborn calves or lambs of slaughtered animals were offered to customers as slink lamb or veal, useful protein for those that couldn't afford better cuts of meat.

### NINE

Jellied eels: A dish that has survived the fact that it looks so unappetising, jellied eels are as Cockney as it gets and are a favourite of any self-regarding Pearly King or Queen. Boiled eel in cold, fish-flavoured jelly: what's not to like?

### TEN

Foie gras ice-cream: Cayenne pepper ice-cream lined a duck-shaped mould which was then filled with foie gras. Heston Blumenthal eat your heart out.

## FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

The Victorian era was a time of great change – suddenly, people, ideas, objects and even food could travel great distances quickly, changing the face of the country and the dinner on the plate.

New cooking technologies meant that cooks could be more ambitious and the relative ease of finding ingredients – for richer households, at least – meant diets were transformed.

Publishing also played a part in informing the Victorian cook with

books such as *The French Cook: or the art of cookery developed in all its branches*, written by French chef Ude in 1813 and Eliza Acton's *Modern Cookery for Private Families* from 1845 offering tips and advice to home chefs.

It was, however, Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household Management*, from 1861, which revolutionised dining in households across the UK. Mrs Beeton brought, amongst many other things, the exotic flavour of curry into many dining rooms with her curried eggs.

## THE FIRST CELEBRITY CHEF

Unsurprisingly, the first celebrity chef to cause ripples in the culinary world was French-born Alexis Benoist Soyer, the son of a grocer who served an apprenticeship in Paris before becoming the second chef to the French Prime Minister in 1830.

Soyer later moved to Britain and became a favourite of the rich and famous, cooking for – amongst others - the Duke of Sutherland and the Marquess of Waterford.

During the Irish Famine, he established a soup kitchen in Dublin and served thousands of people for free before returning to London to start a similar project for the destitute silk weavers of the East End.

Soyer became famous for innovation – he used a “magic stove” which was a tabletop cooker that allowed him to create moveable feasts, gave the army advice about how to avoid malnutrition in action during the Crimean War and pioneered the use of refrigerators cooled by cold water.



# how to

## cook like a victorian

(perhaps without colouring your food with copper, zinc, iron, lead or arsenic, though)

### CHICKEN BROTH

#### Ingredients



1  
chicken



1 1/2 pints  
of water



1 dstspn of  
pearl barley



1/4 dstspn of  
peppercorns



Salt

#### Method

Joint the chicken and place in a saucepan with the cold water, barley, peppercorns and salt. Bring to the boil and skim, simmer slowly for two hours and then sieve and serve. To add flavour, include finely chopped, cooked mixed vegetables.

### PLUM CAKE

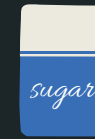
#### Ingredients



340g  
butter



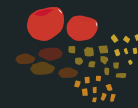
340g  
flour



225g  
sugar



1 small glass  
of brandy



115g each of candied cherries,  
raisins, sultanas, chopped  
almonds and mixed candied  
orange and lemon peel



grated rind  
of 1 lemon



grated rind  
of 1 orange



1/2 tsp of  
mixed spice



a dusting  
of salt

#### Method

Beat the sugar and butter into a cream and add the beaten eggs alternately with the sifted flour. Add the brandy and beat for 10 minutes. Chop the raisins, cherries and peel and add to the cake mix. Pour into a cake tin lined with greased paper and bake in a moderate oven for three to three and a half hours.

# how to

## incorporate the Victorian look into your modern kitchen

### APPLIANCES

One of the biggest problems that faces the modern homeowner who is keen to add a touch of Victorian style to their kitchen is the appliances that have become essential to everyday living but which simply didn't exist during Victoria's reign.

Is it possible to create a space which is sympathetic to the age of the property but also meets modern requirements?

If your kitchen has a chimney breast – where the original wood stove would have been sited – this could be the ideal place to have a range which will add atmosphere and warmth to the kitchen.

Other appliances can be hidden in cupboards or even behind curtains – the Victorians often added a curtained area underneath their sink.

### DRESSER

Victorian kitchens didn't have fitted cabinetry, they had freestanding storage units, of which the dresser was one of the most important. There were no upper, eye-level cupboards, instead items were on open shelving so that items could be accessed immediately. Use your dresser to store beautiful glassware or crockery.

### TABLE

The Victorians didn't have cupboards topped with work surfaces, instead they used a table in the centre of the kitchen as their main work area using the same principle as today's work islands.

### WALL FINISHES

Just as now, wall finishes in Victorian kitchens had to be durable and easily cleaned. Often, tongue and groove boards were painted or tiled to create a splashback.





## FLOORING

Although ceramic tiles were popular, they were – as now – expensive. Many Victorian kitchens had wooden floors which also had the benefit of being quieter than tiles. Some had both – tiles around the edges of the room and a central area of wooden flooring where the main work table was sat.

## DECORATION

Copper cooking ware looks stunning on open shelves, dressers or on walls and can be picked up relatively cheaply in secondhand stores. A display of copper jelly moulds placed together on a wall can be striking and give a nod to modern and Victorian design.

## LAYOUT

It's possible to have a modern kitchen based on Victorian principles: use central workspaces, plain cupboards at base level and open shelves at eye-level. Install a butler sink and use subway tiles to echo the functionality of the era (finding original Victorian kitchen tiles can be tricky). An open plate rack above the sink gives a nod to the kitchen that would have graced your property when it was built.

# 12

how to find  
great  
victorian  
wares



## victorian aladdin's cave

It's a treasure chest for historical bounty hunters, where gigantic bellows rub shoulders with a Victorian church spire, row upon row of enamel roll top baths stand guard next to ornate iron radiators and armies of taps wait patiently for water.

Mongers Architectural Salvage of Hingham in Norfolk is a veritable Aladdin's cave for fans of the unusual, beautiful and quirky. Keen to have a bathroom that envious onlookers can't copy? Create a patchwork of pastel art deco separates to make your own indoor rainbow.

Owner Sam Coster arrived in Hingham via the Royal Opera House in London, where he worked as a theatrical designer and scenic artist painting back-drops. Sam and his late wife Trudie started a reclamation business in Kilburn in the mid 1990s, relocated to Camden Town and then moved to the historic Georgian market square of Hingham in 1997, seduced by the spacious yard, shop space and the 15th century timber-framed cottage next door, which they set about restoring. Slowly.

The cottage had been home to chickens since 1900 and was in a state of sad dereliction when the Costers bought it, boasting a sloping kitchen fit only for those of restricted, medieval stature (at its height, it was 5ft 4in), wattle and daub walls and requiring rewiring, re-plastering, re-flooring – the list goes on. Restoring a home when you own a salvage business next-door does, however, have its advantages.

In the shop are countless sets of ornate taps, painted sanitary ware, fireplaces and door furniture. Outside, baths of all shades crowd together, garden ornaments take their place next to a pond built by Sam and, in the newly-expanded showroom, stunning refurbished enamel baths and bathroom suites in standard white and an array of pastel art deco shades are on display.

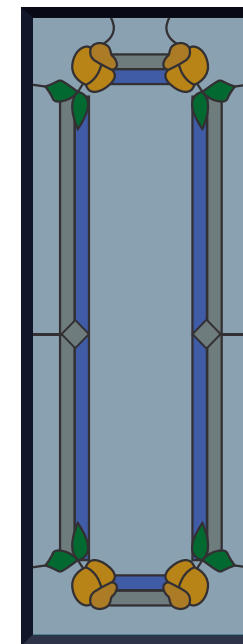
Restoring sanitary ware to its former glory is a large part of the business and led the producers of Channel 4's Grand Designs to Hingham, where the firm supplied a selection of coloured 1930s bathroom fittings to a couple building an eco-house in London.

"It was great fun to take part and of course a business like ours really is as green as they get. Finding these pieces that have been cast out from one home or business a new home means they have a new lease of life," said Sam.

"Everything we sell has its own story and sometimes those stories are quite fantastic: I had a summerhouse once in which it was said that Nik Cohn wrote Saturday Night Fever and we had a toilet used by Betty Grable at the Palace Theatre in London. I can get just as excited when I find a fire surround with a name scribbled on the back in pencil, though - it's like a message from the past."

Sam explained that the nature of the salvage business was changing as more people clamoured for reclaimed items in their homes and businesses.

"Salvage has been fairly big since the 1970s, but it's no longer as easy – or as cheap - to get hold of the things which there used to be an abundance of. It used to be the cheap option to use salvage to refurbish your house, but now you may need deeper pockets," he said.



“At one point, you’d find things in skips, but now people are more savvy and know the value of what they have and there’s less about due to supply and demand. Original floorboards used to be easy to come by - now they’re like gold dust.

“Health and safety laws have meant lots of items that would have once been saved are now victim to demolition because it would cost too much or take too much time to remove them safely from where they are – for example, roof lights and chimneys.

“What I would love to see is that when an old building is being demolished, there has to be a survey of the building to determine whether or not there is anything that can be – or should be – salvaged, items that need preserving. Amazingly, beautiful Victorian and Georgian properties are still being demolished – it’s wicked.”

While Sam appreciates every object that he purchases for the business, there remain a few ‘Holy grail’ items that he would love to own. One is a “sunflower” garden bench designed by Thomas Jeckyll (1827 to 1881) and made by Barnard, Bishop and Barnard of Norwich.

The son of a Norwich clergyman, Jeckyll began his career in his native city before moving to London, but in 1859 began

an 18-year association with the Norwich iron founders, Barnards.

He designed the ceremonial gates for the firm’s exhibits at a series of international exhibitions in 1862 and a Japanese pavilion for the 1876 Philadelphia Exhibition, which was later taken to Paris.

He spent the last years of his life in a Norwich mental asylum.

“If I found one, I’d keep it. It wouldn’t come near the shop!” Sam laughed.

\* Mongers of Hingham is at 15, Market Place, Hingham, NR9 4AF, call 01953 851868.

The shop is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9.30am to 5.30pm and on Saturdays from 9am to 4pm.



# why

## the Victorian's 'brown furniture' is back in fashion with modern homeowners

It's the furniture that your grandmother may have treasured, dark brown classic statement pieces from the late 19th and early 20th century that the country fell out of love with in favour of mass-produced Scandinavian flat-pack pieces and lighter-toned pine.

For decades, perfectly serviceable pieces of Victorian, Edwardian and early 20th-century "brown" furniture often found themselves chopped into firewood or thrown ingloriously into a skip to end their days in a landfill site.

But brown furniture is back and enjoying somewhat of a renaissance.

Whether it's upcycled, painted or used as a signature piece in all its brown glory, the trend for vintage pieces and eclectic interior styling is saving furniture from an ignoble demise and giving it new purpose.

Few collectables were worse hit by the recession than antique furniture, particularly large pieces of brown

furniture that once graced the finest town houses and country retreats but which have been out of favour with most homeowners for decades.

Pieces that used to cost in excess of £1,500 can now be found at antique dealers for less than £500 and even well-made Victorian chests of drawers can be picked up for the same price as a flat-pack set at Ikea.

Whereas a classic Victorian mahogany bureau would command a £2,500 price tag in an antique shop in the 1980s and 1990s, today it could be found for just £350 to £500 thanks to its fall from fashionable glory.

Young buyers no longer hold the traditional pieces of brown furniture in the same esteem as their parents and grandparents did and the more imposing pieces struggle to find a place in modern homes with their beech flooring and contemporary interiors.

Mid-century modern furniture continues to sell well, often because of, rather than despite its, resolute "brownness". Buyers will pay high prices for authentic pieces by designers like Charles and Ray Eames, Eero Saarinen, Arne Jacobsen, Miles van der Rohe and Herman Miller.

But there are definite green shoots of recovery surrounding brown furniture. High-end handbag designer Anya Hindmarch recently furnished her New York city store with a mash-up of Georgian and Victorian furniture, saying: "Brown furniture as decorators derisively refer to it, is ripe for reconsideration: the best of the old stuff is beautifully-made and shockingly well-priced. It made me wonder if 'proper' antique furniture could once again become fashionable."

And Christie's expert Philip Duckworth has pointed to a recent rise in buyers who are buying a small selection of signature pieces rather than filling the house with antiques of all shapes and sizes and that people now have the confidence to mix

and match antique and modern styles. Classics Direct, which sells French-style period furniture, credited ITV's *Downton Abbey* for the comeback of brown furniture.

Giles Hume has followed in his father Frank and late grandfather George's footsteps and joined the family furniture restoration company, Old Painted Furniture, which literally does what it says on the (paint) tin.

With more than 90 years of experience in the restoration of furniture and sale of English antique furniture, the family has watched the rise and fall of so-called brown furniture and has adapted to modern tastes by taking unfashionable pieces and repurposing them for a modern market.

"It's incredibly cheap to pick up brown furniture at auction these days," said Giles, who sells painted furniture from the Old Stables at Bayfield Hall, near Holt.

“It doesn’t bother us if something is a bit bashed up because we can sort problems like that out. We know that it will be well-made and sturdy and that any work that does need to be done will probably be cosmetic.

“We really love the history of furniture and will always include a little bit about what the piece is on the price tag, its age, the wood, that kind of thing. In many ways, it’s a real shame that more people don’t like the furniture as it is, but we find that most prefer it to be painted to suit a more modern house.

“Our colour schemes are all Farrow and Ball-style colours, muted shades that will sit alongside most decoration schemes. When we paint furniture, we obviously don’t know what colour a room is going to be, so we go for colours like soft blues and greens and biscuit and putty shades.” Giles said the nature of his family business had changed over the decades, from restoring furniture to its original glory to upcycling it with paint.

“Around 50 years ago, my granddad was repairing veneer. Today, we will just use filler and paint over the veneer – in many ways it’s a shame to lose that original finish, but we just can’t sell the original pieces,” he added, saying that the biggest sellers for the company are wardrobes and dressers.

“I’ve always gone to work with my dad and when I was young I always loved the idea of getting my hands on a bit of wood and knocking some nails into it. I spent some time as a musician but came back to the family business to work with dad and it was just like it had always been.

“We’re still using the same techniques to restore furniture that my granddad showed my dad and I’m still using my Granddad’s pin hammer.

“By painting furniture and giving it a new lease of life it means that beautiful pieces will end up in people’s houses again. Sometimes I wonder if in 20 or 30 years time I’ll be stripping off the paint that I put on: things have a habit of coming back into fashion eventually.”



Listed Building

Standard Home

Unoccupied



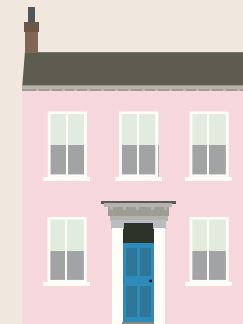
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# 7

## ways to bag a victorian bargain

### **KEEP A LIST**

Measure windows, spaces where furniture could fit, walls and floor space and keep the list with you at all times. You never know when you might spot a bargain and if you're looking in charity shops or antique stores, you can't guarantee that the item you see today will still be there tomorrow. Forewarned is forearmed.

### **DECIDE WHAT YOU NEED AND THE STYLE YOU WANT**

If you have friends who are great at finding bargains at auctions and in shops, tell them what you're looking for and ask them to keep an eye out for you. If they spot something, they can snap a quick photograph and send it to you so you can see if they've found junk or treasure.

### **A GOOD BUY WILL PAY FOR ITSELF**

While it may be tempting to spend less cash and buy a replica or mass-produced item, if you buy the real thing, you're likely to be investing in quality and pieces that will last forever and, more importantly, that you will want to keep forever.

### **ALWAYS LOOK IN THE DUSTY CORNERS**

If a price ticket is faded, you will get a better deal because the item in question is likely to have been hanging around for quite some time. Equally, don't just look in the polished cabinets for treasure, look on the floor and on the top of cabinets for items which others may have missed.

### **VICTORIAN IS STILL AFFORDABLE**

Victorian furniture has lost around two-thirds of its value since 2003, meaning there are some incredible bargains to be had. The current trend is for early and mid-century furniture and so-called brown furniture doesn't fit the design aesthetic of the current times. As people embrace the minimalist Scandi style, those who yearn for a Victorian look can snap up furniture to create a really unique home.

### **IF YOU'RE GOING TO AN ANTIQUES FAIR, TURN LEFT ONCE YOU'VE GONE THROUGH THE ENTRANCE**

Most visitors will turn right and will have either run out of cash or steam by the time they get to the stalls that you're going to visit first.

### **GET TO KNOW YOUR DEALERS**

If you regularly visit certain shops and fairs, let dealers know what you're looking for and give them an email address so they can get in touch you if the perfect item turns up.



# how to

## incorporate the Victorian design into your home

Victorian furniture which easily fits into a modern home:

### WASHSTANDS

Marble topped washstands can be easily adapted to fit modern plumbing and can make a big statement in a small space, while a cheaper alternative is to find a pine stand with a tiled top. They can be used in bathrooms or bedrooms as a statement piece.

### FIRESCREENS

By which we mean the guards which are placed in front of a fire rather than fans, which were used by wealthy, elegant ladies in Victorian times to stop their make-up from melting in the heat of a fire! It is possible to pick up reasonably priced guards at auctions, antique shops and even charity shops. Look for tapestry screens set in mahogany, arts and crafts mirror glass fire screens with etched glass or metal screens.

### HALLSTAND

If you have enough space in your hall, a hallstand isn't only a beautiful piece of furniture, it's also highly practical as a place to hang coats, leave shoes and umbrellas and check your reflection before and after leaving the house. Stands can be found for as little as £10.

### PICTURES AND FRAMES

This is an easy way to make a big splash in your Victorian home – whether you choose an embroidery or a photograph

### CHINA

There's a huge amount of Victorian china to be picked up relatively cheaply which will make a statement without bothering your bank statement. China jelly moulds look fantastic grouped together in kitchens or dining rooms, while Staffordshire dogs were the fireplace decoration of choice in the Victorian period and were often modelled on Cavalier King Charles spaniels, Queen Victoria's favourite dog.

### MIRRORS

Lots of Victorian mirrors of all sizes are available, but ones to look out for include those on hallstands, mantel mirrors and etched mirrors for bathrooms.

### BOOKCASES

Incredibly well-made Victorian bookcases are relatively cheap to buy and will last a homeowner forever – there are many styles to look out for, including the famous, designed to showcase ornaments and trinkets, to pigeon holes or storage units from shops or offices. Particularly beautiful are the Victorian demi-glazed bookcases which offer a chance to display items and store books.

### DRESSERS

An easy way to add instant Victorian style is to source a dresser (still available relatively cheaply). Dressers work well in a multitude of areas – use them in the kitchen, in the dining room or even in the bedroom. Equally, wardrobes can

be repurposed and used in different parts of the house – just add shelving and you have a bookcase with doors or a linen cupboard.

### DINING TABLES

One of the more expensive items of Victorian furniture, a dining table is an investment. Whether pine or mahogany, rustic or formal, a Victorian dining table makes a huge statement. Look in antique shops or at auctions for the best deals.

### FIREPLACES

Cast iron fireplaces can be found at reclamation yards as can fireplace tiles. Try to ascertain the historical style of the fireplace that would have been in your property – at the beginning of the Victorian period, fireplaces would have been in the Regency and Georgian style (some larger houses took their fireplaces from the chateaux which were ravaged during the French revolution). Arts and Crafts fireplaces often included tiles with floral motifs.

# 13

victorian  
gardens



It was a time when the rich showcased their wealth by gathering plants from all four corners of the globe, when arboretums came to the fore and walled kitchen gardens produced an ever-increasing range of fruit and vegetables.

Advances in glass house technology enabled gardeners to cultivate plants that would otherwise have perished in Britain and, as travel became more commonplace, upper class Victorian families replicated what they had seen abroad in elaborate rockeries and wild meadow gardens.

While the Victorians themselves may have had stiff upper lips, their gardens were abundant drifts of colour, texture and exotic blooms. More formal gardens may have

employed carefully-manicured lawns and floral borders; bohemian gardens, however, were a direct contrast to the industrial revolution, swapping hard lines and symmetry for a more natural look.

Exotic plants were hugely popular, reflecting colonisation, and gardeners were called to grow ever more unusual species under glass.

Another common element of a Victorian garden was a fern collection: during the late 19th century, Fern fever gripped Britain as the fronds invaded not only glasshouses and gardens, but art, fabric and literature.

Possessing one's own collection was a status symbol and there was



a plethora of nurseries, suppliers and vendors who were keen to fan the flames of an addiction that lasted decades. Tree ferns, grown from spores in the UK, were hugely coveted and even Charles Dickens succumbed to Fern fever, cultivating a collection at Gad's Hill Place, his home in Kent – at the Prince of Wales Theatre in London, a fernery was put in the orchestra pit (the orchestra was removed first!) in 1869.

The fascination with gardening peaked in the 19th century thanks to improved technology, increased travel, a more diverse plant stock, the rise of the middle class and the amount of leisure time wealthy homeowners had to devote to planning and enjoying a garden.

Grand houses and halls had extravagant bedding schemes based around flat terraces with parterres of low-clipped hedges that gave a nod to the Italian Renaissance style.

The head gardener of the banker Alfred de Rothschild's once claimed you could estimate a person's fortune from the size of their bedding plant list: 10,000 for a squire, 20,000 for a baronet, 30,000 for an earl and 40,000 for a duke (Rothschild had 41,000).

Those on less grandiose budgets created a feeling of opulence and wealth with exotic specimen trees planted alongside rare plants next to the lawn – modern gardeners can inject a little 19th century charm into their garden in a number of easy-to-achieve ways.

# how to

## incorporate Victorian elements into your garden.

### ONE

Use Victorian flower varieties such as Acacia, Ageratum, Amaranthus, Aster, Tuberous Begonia, Bluebell, Caladium, Calendula, Campanula, Chrysanthemum, Coleus, Dianthus, Dusty Miller, Ferns, Fuschia, Geraniums (including scented varieties), Heliotrope, Hydrangea, Impatiens, Lobelia, Marigold, Morning Glory, Nasturtium, Periwinkle, Peonies, Petunia, Primroses, Roses (especially miniature roses), Snapdragon, Sweet Alyssum, Mignonette, Verbena and Zinnias.

### TWO

Use vines to create shaded areas for privacy and to create a sense of drama in corners or on walls. Try using Wisteria or Clematis, Passionflower or Jasmine to create a floral bower. Vines can also hide ugly fencing.

### THREE

Fruit trees were hugely popular – the fig tree was considered to be the absolute height of fashion.

### FOUR

Victorians loved to use large urns filled with flowers or small shrubs next to front or back doors and to grow borders of flowers along pathways. Window boxes were also used. Popular shrubs to use included Vibernums, Spirea, Forsythia, Quince and Boxwood.

### FIVE

If you have room for garden ornaments, think about fitting a small pool or fountain to suggest elegance and adding a birdbath, sundial or obelisk. Think about adding a bench, either made of stone or of wrought iron, in a place where you can sit and observe the whole garden.

### SIX

Fencing should be, if possible, cast iron which is both ornamental and decorative.

### SEVEN

Mini glass houses are available and lend an instant air of Victoriana to your garden, as would original or reproduction Victorian tiles placed round the edge of flower beds (terracotta tiles would suffice). Old Victorian chimney pieces can be used as planters for an original feature.

### EIGHT

If you would like a more formal look to your garden – this works particularly well in the front gardens of Victorian terraced housing – create a framework of squares bordered with low clipped hedges of box and then fill each square with flowers such as lavender or annuals appropriate to the era.

### NINE

Victorians loved herbs and created entire herb gardens in large walled gardens which were heavily used by the kitchen staff. Herbs were favoured for the fragrance they would offer to a garden. Herbs were used to clean, dye, flavour food and heal and Victorians gave herbs to express their feelings, each having its own symbolic meaning.





# popular

## victorian herbs

### **ANISE HYSOP**

The tiny lavender blue flowers and the leaves of anise hyssop both smell and taste of anise but in actual fact this plant hails from the mint family and has leaves similar to catnip. The Victorians used the herb in sweet syrups to flavour cakes, while the dried leaves can be used in tea. Crumble the flowers over fruit salads for a subtle flavour and a touch of floral sophistication. Easily grown from seed indoors, anise hyssop is easy to care for and will thrive in well drained soil in full sun.

### **BEE BALM**

With its striking flowers in shades of either red, purple or pink, bee balm is edible and medicinal and was often used by the Victorians as an antiseptic, a diuretic and as a treatment for colds, headaches and to reduce insomnia. Steam inhalation of the plant can be used for sore throats. Also known as wild bergamot, the plant is a fragrant addition to any herb garden and its flowers can be used in salads. Easily grown in ordinary garden soil, bee balm particularly thrives in heavy clay soils and needs a shady spot that has occasional sunshine.

## CATMINT

This plant is catnip's showier sister, with stunning grey-green foliage and spikes of purple-blue, pink and white flowers. It can grow up to three to four feet in height meaning that catmint forms a beautiful border or edging for a garden. All catmints are great for attracting butterflies and bees (and cats!). Victorians used catmint as a tea to help them sleep and it was also used to ease colic in babies. A herbal guide adds: "The young tops, made into a conserve, have been found serviceable for a nightmare." Catmint should be sown or planted out in spring and thinned to at least a foot apart. It also thrives in containers which serve a dual-purpose – taming a plant that can often be an aggressive grower. The plant is a natural insect deterrent for aphids.

## CHAMOMILE

Chamomile, with its soothing properties and cheerful white daisy-like flowers with their yellow centres is much-loved when used in tea – even Mrs Rabbit used to give it to her son Peter to try to calm the woodland tearaway. It has anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties, can be used in baths (dried flowers in a muslin bag hung over taps) and in herb pillows to help relax and ease stress. Chamomile can be grown from seed or plant and likes cool conditions

and to grow in part-shade, although it can tolerate full sun. Once established, it needs very little care or attention.

## DILL

A tangy addition to pickles, salad dressings and – of course – fish dishes, fresh dill is a green herb with thread-like leaves that grow in clusters. It boasts a strong taste which combines flavours such as celery, anise and fennel with warm, slightly bitter undertones. In cooking, only the leaves and not the thick stems are used. In addition to using dill in their kitchens, the Victorians also revered it for its ability to boost digestive health and relieve ailments such as insomnia, hiccups, menstrual disorders and flatulence. They also believed it relieved arthritis. Dill plants need a little attention – the soil they are planted in must not be allowed to dry out and plants should be supported with garden canes or sticks to stop them toppling over in strong winds. Do not grow dill next to fennel – the two can cross-breed and produce undesirable seedlings with poor flavour.

## FENNEL

The Victorians associated fennel with strength and vigour and, given as a gift, it meant "worthy of all praise". The thread-fine leaves are minced for use in salads and to add flavour to sauces, imparting an anise flavour. In ancient times it was believed that fennel was an

aphrodisiac and could help women grow larger breasts. Fennel likes moist soil and sunshine. Sow in open soil in late May and space well.

## FEVERFEW

Used by Victorians to treat headaches, arthritis and – as the name suggests – fever, this plant was also known as bachelor's buttons and has small, white daisy-like flowers with bright yellow centres. The leaves have a subtle, citrus smell. Feverfew can easily be grown from seed and needs to be grown in a sunny spot, ideally in loamy soil. They can quickly overtake other plants, so be judicious with pruning. A perennial, the herb blooms between July and October.

## LAMB'S EARS

It's easy to see how this hardy perennial got its name, what with its thick, white woolly foliage that grows into a spreading bedding plant with pink-purple flower spikes during summer. It was used by Victorians for insect stings and as a field dressing and poultice to make an effective bandage when clean fabric was unavailable. Grow in full sun and well-drained soil, spacing plants between one and three feet apart. Cut back flowering stems close to ground level after they have finished blooming and they will sprout healthy new stems and leaves.

## LAVENDER

Lavender is a herb that has been used for more than 2000 years and was one of the hardest-working plants in a Victorian garden, providing beautiful colour in addition to a useful herb. Lavender cleanses the skin and was used by Victorians as a treatment for spot-prone skin and to combat headaches and depression. It was also used as a nerve tonic, a compress for chest congestions and was an ingredient in the smelling salts used to revive swooning ladies. In the kitchen, cooks used it to make fragrant fruit jellies and vinegars and housekeepers would use lavender water to scent bed linen to aid sleep. Lavender needs sunshine and well-drained soil. When the flowers have been picked or have faded, clip them and cut back the stems by a few inches.





### LEMON BALM

Lemon balm is a member of the mint family but doesn't smell or taste minty – it tends to ramble and can grow up to five feet tall, so keep it in check with regular haircuts. Lemon balm was used by Victorians to make a facial cleanser for people suffering from acne and was also used to stop the growth of bacteria and viruses. Used in tea, it is said to have a mildly sedative effect and ladies would put leaves into their handkerchiefs to sniff to repel odours.

### LOVAGE

Its leaves are a delicious addition to salads, stews, soups and potato dishes, while its blanched shoots and roots can be eaten as a vegetable. The stalks can be candied like angelica, the leaves can be used for tea and it was used in love potions, cordials, as a breath freshener and a facial cleanser. Plant in rich, deep, moist soil in sun or partial shade. A prolific self-seeder, make sure you weed well to prevent it from smothering other nearby plants.

### MINT

A sweet-smelling addition to any Victorian garden, mint was used for insect bites and to revive people who had fainted. It was also used to

strengthen gums, to help gout, to “clean foul ulcers” and to treat whooping cough. Commonly used for cases of sickness and stomach problems, mint is at its best in full sun in moist soil. It spreads vigorously and is easier to control in containers or you can plant mint in containers in the ground and leave about two inches of the pot rim above the soil to prevent spreading.

### ROSEMARY

The Victorians adored rosemary, “the dew of the sea”, which was used in cooking and as a remedy for ailments such as eczema and arthritis. It was also used to heal wounds, as a hair rinse for dandruff, as an air freshener, a rodent repellent and applied externally as an oil to help relieve pain from indigestion or stomach cramps. Easy to grow, it thrives in containers as long as it receives the sunlight and well-drained soil that it needs.

### SAGE

Hugely popular in the 19th century, sage was used to treat sore throats on the basis that it contains a natural astringent and antiseptic tannins. It was also used to treat dandruff and for “womanly issues”, in particular the menopause, and as an antibiotic, a diuretic and a culinary

herb to flavour meats. It is a forgiving herb – the larger the leaves grow the more the flavour intensifies and, unlike many herbs, sage leaves are still delicious after the plant flowers. The plant grows well in well-drained soil and is great for container gardening.

### SWEET WOODRUFF

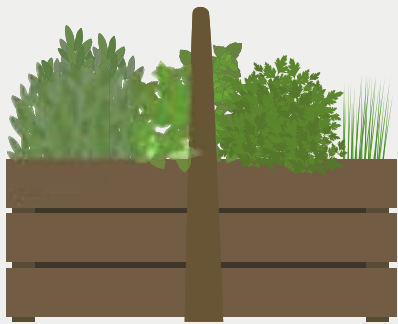
A popular Victorian odour eater used by housekeepers, sweet woodruff was also used in perfumes. It grows in any moist but well-drained soil in partial shade – strong sunlight will scorch the leaves. Can be invasive, so keep trimmed.

### THYME

A hugely versatile herb in the kitchen used to flavour eggs and meat and to repel insects, thyme is a perennial herb that doesn't need a huge amount of care in order to enjoy it year after year. Check that the thyme you plan to plant is culinary (French, lemon or caraway being the most common varieties) rather than ornamental. It thrives in sunlight and can be planted in the soil or in a container. It grows well next to rosemary and will live happily next to strawberries, cabbages, tomatoes and broccoli.

# things to consider

## when planting a herb garden



### ONE

You don't need a huge amount of space – most herbs can be grown in containers or put together in a small bed.

### TWO

Good container herbs include lavender, mint, sorrel, basil, coriander, parsley, rosemary, thyme, sage, chives, chervil, lovage, dill, tarragon, lemon verbena, blackcurrant sage, winter savory, lemongrass and oregano.

### THREE

If growing in containers, use the best potting soil you can find and feed regularly – the larger your plants grow, the more nutrients in the soil they are using. Feed with liquid seaweed while they are growing.

### FOUR

Check the life-span of your herbs and plant accordingly: herbs are either annuals (such as basil, coriander and dill), perennials (garlic, saffron, sage, thyme) biennials (parsley, fennel), shrubs or trees.

### FIVE

The majority of herbs need sunshine to thrive – around six hours a day in summer if possible.

### SIX

Herbs to grow together in containers: Basil, dill and summer savory; purple basil, chives and mint; sage, curly parsley and lemon thyme; lemon verbena, lemon balm, lemon mint, lemon thyme; basil, parsley, marjoram and thyme; rosemary, chervil, dill and catnip.

### SEVEN

Plant the tallest herb in the middle of the pot, a low-trailing plant near the edge and a mound-forming herb to one side of the tall herb (the groupings above are in the following order: tallest, mounding, trailing).

### EIGHT

When you pick your container herbs, make sure you don't pick stems from the base of the plant but rather pick off the tips of each stem (around the top inch or so), just above a pair of leaves. Two new shoots will grow from each stem, creating a bigger, fuller plant.

### NINE

Always avoid mixing herbs that like plenty of water, such as coriander, mint and chives, with those that prefer well-drained soil such as sage, bay, oregano and thyme. Look to grow herbs in pots that are at least five litres in size – anything smaller will dry out quickly.

# dream pillow

The Victorians believed that using herbs at night-time was a route to a blissful night's sleep. They would sew sachets which would then be filled with blends of herbs which were traditionally used to soothe or to cure insomnia. These sachets were also popular gifts to take to a loved one who had fallen ill.

Make your own dream pillow by sewing a simple sachet from material and filling with a mix of dried herbs. You can either sew the sachet shut or use a ribbon to tightly enclose the herbs which can then be refreshed or swapped at a later date.

Try a blend of equal amounts of rose petals, dried lavender or dried lemon verbena or one of calendula flowers (thought by the Victorians to foretell the future) and chamomile (which the Victorians believed chased away nightmares). Another good trio is mint, lemon verbena and sweet marjoram, while deep sleep is often aided by a blend of lavender, peppermint, hops and chamomile.

# how to

## make an all-purpose household cleaner from lavender

*You will need:*



120ml white vinegar



100g dried lavender



Water

In a sealable glass jar, mix the vinegar and lavender. Seal shut and place on a sunny windowsill for 10 days.

Strain the liquid and dispose of the lavender, keeping the infused vinegar.

In a spray bottle, mix one part lavender vinegar to two parts water and then use like a conventional spray cleaner in your kitchen and bathroom.

This cleaner is particularly effective on windows and mirrors.

Do not use on granite or marble.

# herbs

## the language of love in a wedding bouquet

Victorian brides chose their wedding flowers with care to create a combination of herbs that expressed their love and hopes for a happy marriage.

The language of flowers was a way to communicate without words and send a coded message – many floral dictionaries were published in the 19th century which could help decipher what was being said with herbs and flowers.

Modern brides can look back to the Victorian era by incorporating herbs into their own bouquet, creating a special message for their partner using the guide with this handy illustrated guide:

APPLE BLOSSOM



*Good fortune,  
peace, fertility*

ASPHODEL



*My regrets follow  
you to the grave*

BABY'S BREATH



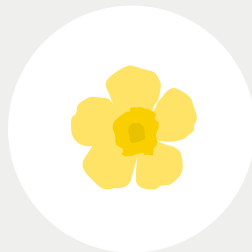
*Innocence*

BEGONIA



*Beware*

BUTTERCUP



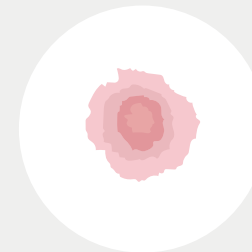
*Childishness*

CALENDULA



*Overcomes trouble,  
grief & jealousy*

CARNATION



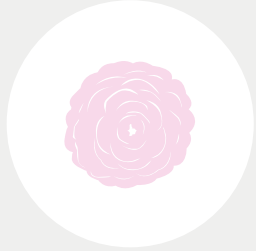
*Pure love*

STRIPED CARNATION



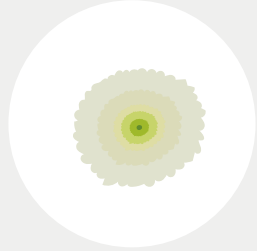
*Refusal,  
I can't be with you*

CAMELLIA



*Loveliness, perfection*

CHRYSANTHEMUM



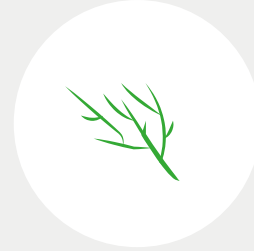
*Slighted love*

DAFFODIL



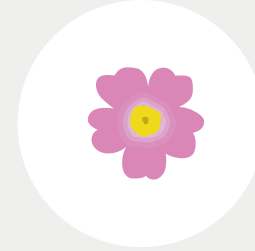
*Unrequited love*

DILL



*Lust*

DOG ROSE



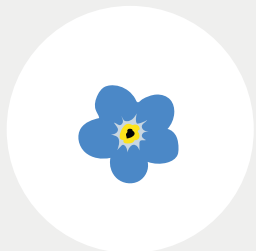
*Pleasure & pain*

FERN



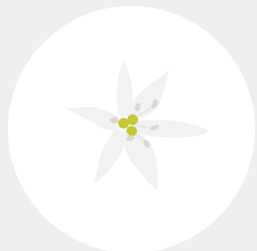
*Fascination, sincerity*

FORGET-ME-NOT



*True love*

GARLIC



*Warding off evil*

GERBERA



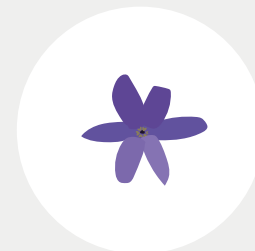
*Innocence*

HEATHER



*Solitude*

HYACINTH



*Please forgive me*

IVY



*Fidelity*

LAMB'S EAR



*Support*

LAVENDER



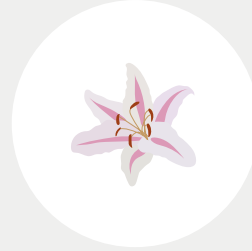
*Devotion*

LEMON VERBENA



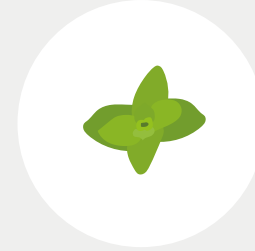
*Attracts love & fidelity*

LILY



*Purity of heart*

MARJORAM



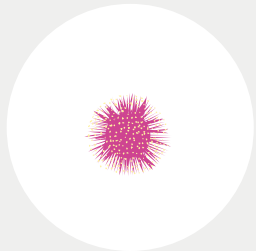
*Joy*

MINT



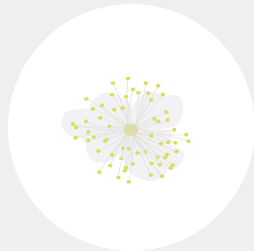
*Warmth of feeling*

MIMOSA



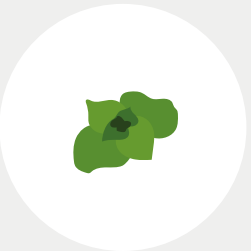
*Secret love*

MYRTLE



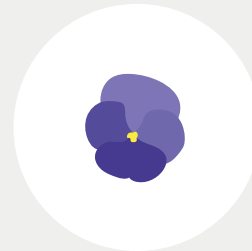
*Love & partnership*

OREGANO



*Happiness*

PANSY



*You occupy my thoughts*

PARSLEY



*Festivity*

PEONY



*Happy marriage*

PUSSY WILLOW



*Motherhood*

ROSE (RED)



*I love you*

ROSE (WHITE)



*Secrecy*

ROSEMARY



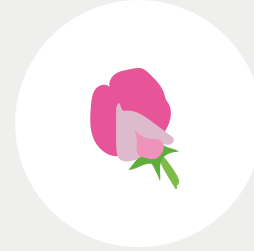
*Remembrance*

SAGE



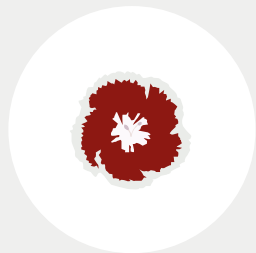
*Wisdom*

SWEETPEA



*Thank you*

SWEET WILLIAM



*Gallantry,  
grant me one smile*

THYME



*Courage*

VERBENA



*Pray for me*

WORMWOOD



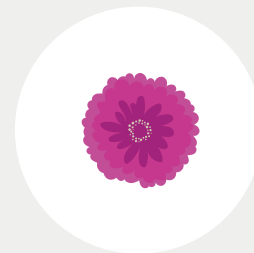
*Absence*

YARROW



*Healing*

ZINNIA



*Thinking of an  
absent friend*

# 14

victorian  
values





SO...

## should I buy a Victorian house?

In truth, the decision to buy an old house is generally one which is made from the heart rather than the head: you're either the kind of person who sees draughty windows as an issue to work around because they're beautiful, or who sees them as an old-fashioned inconvenience, the kind of person who loves wonky walls and ceiling roses or who prefers clean lines.

But if you need a pros and cons list, a summing up of what makes a Victorian house (for the purposes of ease we have amalgamated ALL Victorian houses together to create a typical home from the era) desirable and what makes it less so, here is one we have put together. Only you will know if you can balance Victorian style and 21st century living.

## THE BEST BITS OF VICTORIAN ARCHITECTURE:

- Beautiful architecture with inspiration drawn from a variety of styles.
- High ceilings: in comparison to modern houses, many Victorian properties feel as if they were designed for giants.
- Sash windows: if you're lucky enough to find a house with its original sash windows, treasure them.
- Original features: cornicing, ceiling roses, balustrades, radiators, ornamentation inside and out...the list is endless.
- You might get a cellar...which either means lots of lovely wine or a chance to create a whole new room below decks.
- Thick walls: a Godsend if you live next door to students or newborns.
- Tons of character: you just don't get the kind of character that a Victorian home has from a new-build, where your home is identical to the one across the road from you.
- Grand hallways and landings and rooms which are distinct: unless there has been considerable remodelling, there will be none of that 'open plan living' nonsense with the Victorians.
- Big room sizes and good proportions.
- Encaustic tiles in the hallway (if you've hit the Victorian jackpot).
- Original floorboards: strip them, stain them, cover them in rugs – whatever you do to your floorboards, your room will look great. Although the Victorians, of course, would never have stripped their floorboards like commoners.
- Houses are often on handsome-looking streets close to transport links or city centres. New-build estates need facades to make homes stand out, a Victorian home has the real thing.
- Victorian houses are a dream to style, whether you're a minimalist or a maximalist.
- Quality: the fact that your house is still standing means that it was built to last by people who knew the home they were building would stand for generations. These are handbuilt houses, not assembly-line products.
- A wise investment: properties in historic districts are worth more and will grow in value.
- You'll feel a connection to something far bigger: wherever you look, there are echoes of the past in your home, isn't it lovely to be part of its story?





## THE WORST BITS OF VICTORIAN ARCHITECTURE:

- The two-roomed 'back to backs' where poorly paid industrial workers would live in cramped conditions which would see 250 houses per hectare at a time when families typically had six children.
- Uncomfortable draughts: air quality in homes was important to the Victorians but meant that chimneys and loosely-fitted windows were designed to let in air at all times before the invention of trickle ventilators.
- If you're a wallpaper fan, lining up wallpaper can be a challenge on Victorian walls, which are less precisely structured than more modern houses.
- Sash windows: as lovely as they are, if they're original they are often inefficient at keeping the elements out and if you need to have them replaced or repaired, you may face issues with permission from your local council.
- Those high ceilings and original windows may make it difficult to heat your home.
- You're less likely to have a sun-soaked garden because buildings are often taller than modern houses.
- DIY and upkeep of a Victorian house is more difficult – and costly – than a new home because when they were built, utilities were delivered in an entirely different way. Every DIY job is likely to reveal another problem.
- Unless you're buying a mansion, the likelihood is you'll be fighting for parking with everyone else on your street.

# how to

## plan the renovation of your Victorian house

If you've got a big job ahead of you when it comes to renovating your Victorian house, it's daunting to know what to do first. But as with all things in life, there's a right way and a wrong way of doing things – and although you may have set your heart on decorating, firstly you need to make sure that your home is ready for its finery.

In a nutshell, here is a plan of the renovation stages which you can look at before you start major work – just choose the stage you're at as your starting point:

### ONE

It's all in the planning: whether you make a rough drawing on the back of an envelope or employ an architect, you need to know exactly what you want for your home and whether it is technically and financially possible. Work out what you can do and what you'll need to employ professionals to do and do not overestimate your DIY prowess. Apply for any planning permissions you may need.

### TWO

Sweat the big stuff: start with the biggest jobs of all which will protect the rest of your house. Start with the roof, look at the foundations and check there are no big structural problems and then secure areas where there are leakages or other issues. These large – expensive – projects will have an impact on everything that you do, but ignoring big problems will cause, well, big problems.

### THREE

Break it down: if there are areas of the house which will be replaced or removed, do it now. Rent a large container for waste and remove large items such as baths or kitchens before you tackle the rest of the house.

### FOUR

Wood you believe it: carpentry is important to sort out early, especially if your project involves putting in new sash windows (which often involve the removal of bricks and plaster), putting in or replacing walls, adding beams to support greater weights upstairs, adding new (or old!) doors and so forth.





## **FIVE**

Utilities: while you have walls, floors and ceilings being worked on, this is the time to look at having your central heating looked at and for major electrical work to be done.

## **SIX**

Wood you believe it II: if you're planning to replace ceiling roses or moulding, trims or add in built-in bookshelves and so forth, now is the time to do it before decoration takes place.

## **SEVEN**

Surface finishing: At last! Something truly exciting: at this stage, you can paint, hang wallpaper, stain floorboards and make all the surface finishes which were the first thing you thought of when you saw the house.

## **EIGHT**

Add the floor: flooring is far more expensive than wallpaper or paint, so scuffing your walls is less of a big deal than doing the same to your floor.

## **NINE**

Exterior work: while you may think this is the safest job to do first, it's actually not, especially if you are having work done on your windows, doors, guttering or other areas of the house that lead outside.

## **TEN**

Go green: when all else is finished, head to the garden, front and back.

# reflecting the past

## fit for the future

The existence of so many Victorian houses today stands as testament to the fact that firstly, these were homes that were built to last and, secondly, that style never goes out of fashion.

With their high ceilings, ornate fireplaces, stunning detailing, bay and sash windows, stained glass and thoughtful layout, it is no surprise that today's house-buyers are happy to hand over up to 15 per cent more for a Victorian house than for a modern home.

There remains high demand for all forms of Victorian housing - from terrace to detached - with buyers falling in love with not only the interiors of homes from the era (the more period features remaining the better) but also their exteriors which were often marked by Victorian architects with ornamentation or distinctive detailing.

With the huge steps forward in building techniques during the Victorian era, even the middle classes were able to fill their homes with the kind of beautiful features which were, before this time,

only available to those with huge incomes and limitless budgets.

This careful, mindful building was carried out at a time when the population in the UK was exploding thanks to better living conditions and advances in medical know-how: between 1831 to 1901, the population in England and Wales shot up from 13.89 million to 32.51 million, a rise of 134 per cent.

Generously proportioned buildings mean that modern-day renovations and improvements are far easier than with more recently built houses: attics are large and can be adapted into further bedrooms, office space or bathrooms, passageways or back gardens can be extended into to create open-plan kitchens and leisure space.

And then there is the positioning of Victorian homes, which is often hugely desirable: either in the middle of or on the edges of cities and towns or close to the same transport links and infrastructures we use today.





But the love of Victorian homes has not always been so prevalent.

In the early 20th century, popularity for terraced housing dropped as people began to associate the tightly-knit terraced communities with slum-living and over-crowding, leading many to seek a better life away from the inner city and towards a modern town and a semi-detached home.

Tower blocks replaced many slum terraces following the war, when housing had to be built quickly to accommodate a large number of people without taking up too much land or falling into old habits of crowded housing with a lack of facilities – a huge number of terraced houses in cities were demolished to make way for this new, more efficient (as it was thought) style of housing. And there was worse to come: in the 1960s and 1970s, homeowners craved ‘mod-cons’ and were keen to move away from the old-fashioned homes their grandparents and parents had lived in.

What the Luftwaffe and the government left behind, many builders and homeowners wreaked havoc on during several decades of destruction. In the best cases of architectural vandalism, the damage was only (plaster) skim-deep: hardboard was tacked over panelled doors and ceiling roses and

cornicing were torn down, fireplaces and original tiles were left on skips as the 20th century set about destroying masterpieces from the 19th century.

It was not until the end of the 1970s that Victorian housing began to be popular once again – in part due to a move away from the new housing, such as tower blocks and pre-fabricated buildings, which had once been welcomed so optimistically, as estates began to suffer from a range of problems which brought with them an echo of the slum housing they had replaced.

In 2016, then Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the government would be spending £140 million to kickstart the demolition or refurbishment of almost 100 estates in the UK and rehousing their displaced residents.

The idea of “environmental determinism” – the idea that physical environment shapes individual behaviour and social and economic conditions, has led to a similar situation to that which faced old Victorian terraces which were bulldozed to make room for the estates which are failing today.

Today, those terraced homes are being refurbished and renovated and given new life for a new generation: in 2015, the Turner Prize was won by architects

working with residents who campaigned against the demolition of old terraced houses in Toxteth's 'Granby Four Streets' area of Liverpool.

Residents stood arm in arm on the streets in 2011 to form a human blockade to prevent large 19th century Victorian properties from removal by developer Lovells, Liverpool City Council and social landlord Plus Dane and, after some losses, the streets were saved.

While the tower blocks that were built to house hundreds of people lasted barely a tenth of the time of the terraced houses they replaced, the Victorian homes which had survived demolition were ready to rise once again, to stand for countless more decades, homes for a whole raft of families.

Our guide has sought to offer the Victorian homeowner a chance to look at the kind of house they live in and its potential moving into the future – we've looked at what houses would have been like, how to recreate that look and how, by using a combination of contemporary artefacts, reclaimed material, antiques or modern reproductions, a home can be created which reflects the past but looks to the future.

Some of these grand old ladies have stood sentry on our streets for almost 200 years, but yet to many of today's homebuyers, their appeal is timeless.





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