

Georgian and Regency properties and their common problems

Property problem information sheets

This is one article in a series of articles covering different property eras and their typical problems. We have looked at:

Traditional timber frame – Tudor

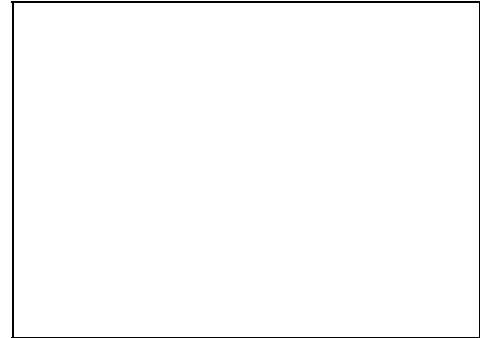
Georgian and Regency

Victorian and Edwardian

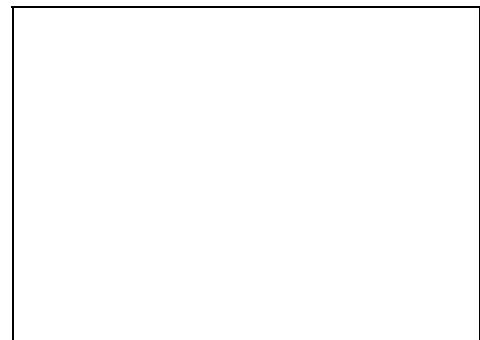
Post-War years

Modern timber frame

In this article we are looking at Georgian and Regency properties and their associated problems.



Could you draw what a
Georgian property looks like



Could you draw what a
Regency property looks like

We would advise that the property problems can be very specific to the area and location of the property, or even the direction it is facing, i.e. north, south, east or west elevations can each have their individual problems. The defects and problems also relate to the mixture of building materials used, this can range from small repairs to where alterations and extensions have been carried out, and, of course, the age and general standard of the original construction and any additional maintenance that has taken place on taken place on the property. Having said all of that we have given you a general indication of the typical problems that Georgian and Regency properties have, which we hope will be a useful free guide.

This series of free property problems articles unfortunately cannot be conclusive, as there are whole books, thesis', Phd's, Doctorate studies have been written on smaller subjects! If we could refer you to some we would recommend:

General books on the era, or period, of property:

Georgian Style

Georgian House Style: An Architectural and Interior Design Source Book
by Ingrid Cranfield

Publisher: David & Charles, Devon

Georgian Architectural Designs and Details: The Classic 1757 Style
Book by Abraham Swan

Georgian Architecture by James Stevens Curl

The Georgian Group Book of the Georgian House by Steven Parissien

Regency Style

Regency Style by Steven Parissien

(which actually looks at Regency style and Adams style).

Publisher: Phaidon Press Limited, London

The Regency County House: From the Archives of "Country Life"

By John Martin Robinson

Regency Redux by Emily Eerdmans

Building surveying from the top down

In this series of problem property articles we have looked at the properties from the top down, much as a chartered surveyor would when carrying out a building survey, or, as it is commonly known, a full structural survey, or an engineers report. You will find different property problems and defects, everything from dampness in the walls to condensation (very difficult to tell the difference between the very different costs in putting right), to articles on cracking, foundations and drains, in the quick link section of the www.1stAssociated.co.uk website.

Georgian and Regency properties

The Georgian era began in around the mid 1700's until early 1800's; the Regency period then ran until the mid-1800's. We think it is much more accurate not to be accurate with regard to the Georgian and Regency era, as unlike the reigning monarchies in question, the style of construction didn't instantly stop on their death or abdication.

Key features on the style of Georgian and Regency properties

They tended to be a squarer built building, with large sliding sash windows, with 6 x 6 or 3 x 3 panes. The panes of glass used to be relatively small, as we were unable to make them large. The roof was often hidden, as were the gutters, by parapet walls and was very much a front of the building, with everything else being hidden to the rear. This was both to the working class cottage style Georgian property and also to the larger Georgian style property.

They tended to be built of a softer red brick, some with rendering to the first floor level and stucco. This was to imitate stone. The wealthy property owners, of course, had stone. Also, there were often features around the windows, around the parapet wall level. There tended to be larger rooms to the first floor, which is where the occupants lived and spent most of their time, with small balconettes.

The Georgian door was usually a six panel door with a light above, this was often a fan light to give light into the hallway.

The Regency era tended to develop on from the Georgian era, using decorative ironwork to the entrance porches and balconettes.

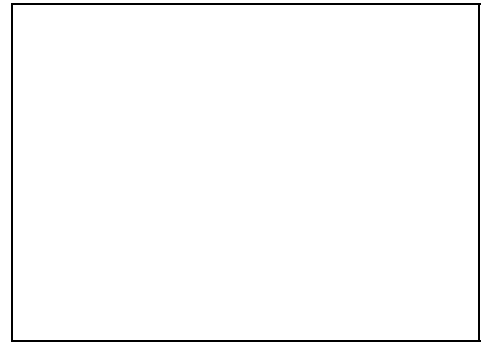
Typical problems at high level to the chimneys, flashings, roof verges and roof ridges

High level problems

High level problems mean that scaffolding is likely to be required or some form of access platform, be it from a cherry picker or hoist. This can often be where the main costs are when carrying out a project, as health and safety on a building project is of the utmost importance.

Chimney problems

Weathering of the pointing to the chimneys and ridge tiles and to the perimeter.



Draw an example of weather pointing to a chimney

Flashing problems

Flashings often replaced with a cement wedge, or a tile on edge. We would always recommend returning this to a lead flashing with a soaker. Again, unless it has the original lead.



Sketch a flashing with a soaker

Roof problems

Tiled roofs

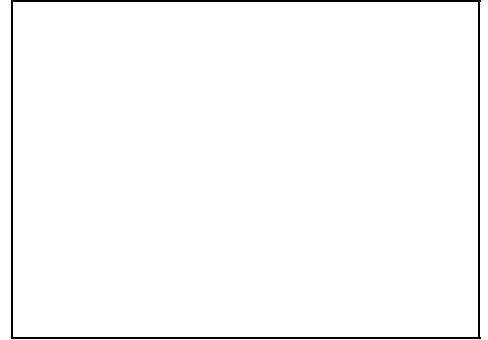
Many of the original roofs were tiled; this would have tended to be a peg tile, with the pegs being formed in oak. Over the years deterioration has taken place and various ad hoc repairs have occurred, such as using nail rather than the wood pegs. We have seen this work quite successfully, apart from when the nails are not galvanised and start to rust.

Thatched roofs

Thatched roofs do need regular maintenance, it depends upon the type of thatch. Please see our article on thatched roofs.

Roof junction and valley gutter problems

Over the many years Georgian and Regency properties tend to have been extended and altered and where the junctions occur there can be problems in the form of valley gutters.



Sketch a valley gutter

Bay window roof problems

One of the biggest problems in Georgian properties is a rotting lintel adjacent to a bay window roof. These can be caused by the leaking of the roof and can cause severe structural problems.

Main roof structure problems

To the roofs cut timber was used, which were designed insitue (on site, specifically for the property) and based on the knowledge and experience of the people working on the property before chartered engineers existed!

Fascias and soffits and box gutter problems

Generally Georgian and Regency properties don't have fascias and soffits boards, but they do nearly always have rendered parapet walls, which can cause problems with blocked box gutters.

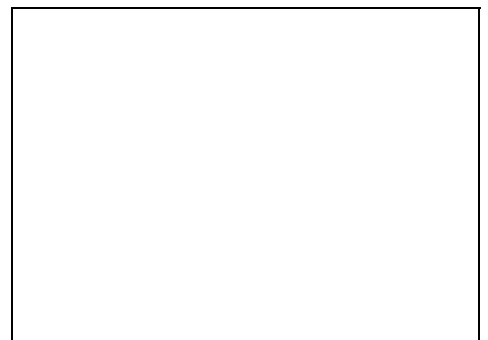


Draw a box gutter

The walls of Georgian and Regency properties

Georgian and Regency wall problems

Often a soft red brick was used. Soft red bricks are not as hard as a modern brick and are susceptible to damage and deterioration from the weather, such as frost attack, particularly if it is repointed in a cement mortar. Also, you will notice at low level many walls deteriorate badly, due to the rain hitting hard surfaces and bouncing back up and literally washing away the mortar.



Draw a spalling brickwork, which has been repointed with a cement mortar

Georgian and Regency bay problems

Movement to the bays of the property often indicates there is little, or no, foundations under these.

Re-painting and re-pointing problems

Re-painting and re-pointing work may have caused the walls to stop being able to breathe and this can lead to the spalling of the brickwork and the stonework.

Damp proof course

From the 1770's onwards damp proof courses officially had to be added. In some areas this was taking place before and some areas this wasn't taking place until much later. Interestingly enough, we are still not certain, although it is only in recent history that damp proof courses were added. There has been much speculation that they were added to stop the sewerage rising up the walls, as the people of the 1770's, when damp proof courses first started to be added, were literally throwing their sewerage into the street.

Georgian and Regency properties, things to look out for (and things we have found many times over the years)

Timber lintel problems

These properties would have used timber lintels originally. Whilst many have been replaced and repaired, large bay windows are susceptible to rot in the lintels, which can cause structural problems.

Window problems

Rot to sliding sash windows or replacement with a plastic non-structural window that can lead to movement in the property, leaking glazing beads, rot to the sill of the window, not to mention poor fitting sliding sash windows, badly balanced windows where the wrong weight of glass has been used, where they act more like a guillotine!



Draw a 6 x 6 pane window

Floors, foundations and underground

Foundation problems

Little or no foundations are often the case with Georgian and Regency properties, which can become a problem if there are, for example, leaking pipes in the area, or the Georgian and Regency property sits on a clay soil.

Drainage problems

Originally, very minimal drainage is likely to have been present. This has been added after. In the older drainage installations you can get problems with leaks to the drains, also, often where extensions have been added, as they inevitably are in older properties, awkward bends can lead to blockages in pipes.

Internal

Lath and plaster ceiling problems

Predominantly lath and plaster will have been originally used, there may be some boarding. Today, most modern refurbished sections will have been replaced with plasterboard. The use of these different materials can lead to cracking, though of course it can be much worse if it structural cracking. This needs to be correctly diagnosed.

Regency and/or Georgian, plus some other styles, such as Victorian often seen

Whilst the property may predominantly be one style, usually extensions and alterations have occurred over the years in different styles. This combination of different properties is where the real skill of building surveying comes in, to establish whether they work well together, or, it is probably more correct to say, if they work acceptably together. Many times with older properties we find the original construction is good and sound, assuming it has been well maintained, it is the additions that have been added over the years that are the problem and no doubt we are still making mistakes on properties today.

Georgian and Regency towns we know and love

Name some Georgian and Regency cities and towns that you know.