

Front Verandah Restoration & Replacement

Front verandahs on Victorian and Edwardian houses are important elements of those buildings. They provide practical shelter from sun and rain and important visual clues on the status and period of the dwelling.

Over time, many original verandahs have been modified or removed. Today it is common to restore or completely rebuild verandahs in order to better present the house involved.

This Fact Sheet aims to provide practical advice on restoring or reconstructing a verandah to match your house.

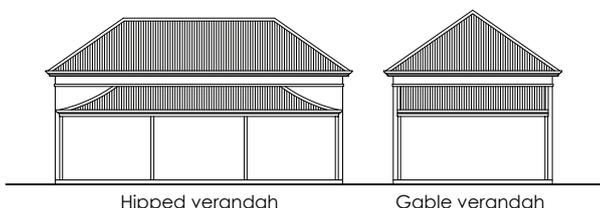
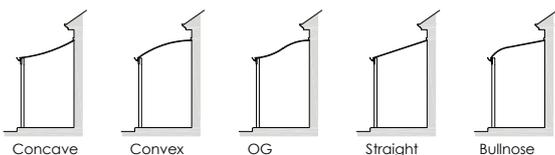
Verandah Styles

The first step is to recognise and understand the period and style of your house. The dominant periods and styles in Norwood and St Peters are Victorian and Edwardian. The long Victorian era can be subdivided into Victorian (1840-1860), Mid-Victorian (1860-1880) and Late-Victorian (1880-1900). Edwardian (called Federation in the eastern states) was broadly 1900-1915. There is a wealth of information available online and in libraries about house styles and periods in Australia.

Once the style or period of a house is known, then an existing verandah can be assessed to see if there is any original fabric left. If there is no current verandah, or one that is to be replaced, then the correct verandah style can be properly identified. The purpose of understanding the style is to ensure that any new verandah or verandah work can appropriately reflect the period of the building and thus ensure that the historic character of the building and its locality can be reinforced.

Roof Form

The most common verandah roof designs are either hipped or gable roofs. Both of these come in a range of roof profiles, including bull-nose, eyelash, curved, ogee and straight, as illustrated by the sketches below. The early simple pioneer cottages tended to have very simple verandahs, typically gable, while Mid-Late Victorian houses usually had more complex hipped verandahs.



Roofing

Corrugated steel is the material used for verandah roofs. This can be either natural galvanized steel, left natural or painted, or Colorbond-type steel. New heavier gauge and larger flute corrugated steel is now available which more closely resembles the original thicker hand curved corrugated iron.

Roof Finishes & Colours

Verandah roofs can be left as natural galvanized steel or coloured to link in with the external colour scheme of the house.

The latter was the most common approach, even if the main roof was left as natural. Colouring the verandah roof can be done via either Colorbond colours or by painting with roof paint. Both monochrome roof colours and striped roof colours were common.

Gutter and Downpipes

Typical verandah gutters are Ogee profile. Reduced size Ogee gutters were often used on verandahs, reflecting their smaller scale roofs. The usual way to achieve this today is to refold the gutter so it has a shorter base. Timber scotias were always used under gutters.

Downpipes should be round metal downpipes, either Colorbond or painted galvanised, fixed via traditional metal straps. PVC downpipes and rectangular downpipes are modern downpipes and should not be used, as they do not reinforce the historic character of a Victorian or Edwardian house.

Verandah Roof Flashings & Cappings

The tops of verandah roof sheets originally butted up under the protruding brick string course commonly seen on Victorian and Edwardian houses. The brick overhang constituted the 'flashing'. The angled part of hipped roofs was similarly just butted up to the wall, resulting in a small gap between the edge of roofing and the wall. This approach usually still works quite well today.

If a top flashing must be used, then a small lead flashing located into a horizontal brickwork joint can be used. Such a flashing however should not be cut into either brickwork or stonework, as this unnecessarily damages the masonry. Modern folded flashings should not be used here at all, as these are much bigger in size and thus out of scale with the verandah roof. These are generally intended to be cut into masonry, which should be avoided for the reasons above.

Hips were typically capped with small lead cappings, moulded to fit the iron. Acrylic covered lead is the usual material used today.



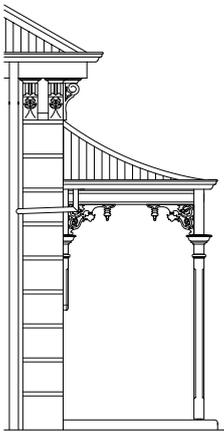
A detailed verandah with end screen.

Verandah Decoration

The extent of decoration on verandahs will reflect the style and opulence of the house. Decoration can be seen in both the timberwork and the metal work.

Cast iron decorative brackets are often used at the junction of post and fascia, or as a decorative valance panel below the fascia. Carved or shaped decorative brackets are also used at the junction of post and fascia, but were more popular in Edwardian houses.

Verandah posts may be plain - but more commonly stop-chamfered. Timber posts may also have decorative capital mouldings and horizontal rebates. Cast iron metal posts can be very ornate.



A typical verandah end elevation showing a concave roof, OG gutter, timber posts with capital mouldings, cast iron lace corner details and a small downpipe joined to the main roof downpipe.



Elaborate tessellated tiled verandah.

Verandah Pavement

Traditional verandah floors ranged from simple render/concrete with no decoration, through to slate edged and tiled verandahs with intricate tile patterns. In restoring the verandah paving thought needs to be given to the style, size and design of the house for the appropriate new design.

The most basic verandah floor is just concrete, with a rounded front edge. Stronger concrete and more reinforcing should be used to alleviate the need for tooled control joints which are not traditional.

The next step up is concrete with a cant brick edging. Better again is to have a slate edging, but still with plain concrete. The most elaborate floor for the more prestigious houses is a slate edging with tessellated tiles. The patterns then also show the level of importance of the house, and the era it was built in. Simple octagon and dot patterns are quite common, while the more complicated patterns were only seen on larger houses in the Victorian era.

Further Reading

- *Heritage SA – Early Roofing and Roof Materials in South Australia* (available online)
- *How to Restore the Old Aussie House: Ian Stapleton*