The Georgian period is not easily qualified but it is centred on the reigns of George I to George IV, a span of some 116 years starting from 1714.

In construction terms this period is noted for the mass migration of people into towns and cities, the start of formalised planning legislation and the increased use of Engineers and Architects for Civil works.

It is a period known for understated elegance, symmetry and uniformity in buildings but also a huge variance in living standards at either end of the economic scale. The brick and window tax had some influence on the choice of materials and designs at the lower end of the market.

All of these factors link in different ways across the country to influence construction through the period. An overview is therefore a useful navigational tool across the surveying disciplines.

• **Some useful observations for when you're surveying a Georgian property**

- Are you in a Georgian property? Often older buildings sit behind Georgian facades and the Georgian styles are commonly replicated
- Closely observe floor plans and changes in floor levels as these are good indicators of alterations. Poor alterations to walls and roofs can have serious load path consequences.
- Be careful when costing works as listed buildings and unexpected service installations can make projects go over budget.
- Take a balanced view on what could reasonably be expected of a property of this age.
- Be aware that services can be particularly difficult to improve or replace.
- Try to observe areas that have difficult working access problems.
- Solid walls need to breathe and older properties take time to go back into equilibrium.
- Be very careful if you assume that because it has not moved for 200 years that it won't.

• **Georgian architecture**

The styles to be aware of are Palladian (Classicism), Neo-Classical, Gothic (mainly civic) and Picturesque. Knowledge of the classic architectural orders is useful as many of the styles of the time referred heavily to it.

Significantly in domestic architecture it was the first floor that grew to have the greater prominence in town houses.

Terraces, squares and Crescents (circuses) are also of significance as vernacular construction is swept away in an exercise of unified, symmetrical, and deliberately detailed developments.

It has to be remembered that this unified front was not arrived at as a result of strict legislation or planning control. It was mainly a commercially driven response to meet the expectations of the day. Indeed it is quite usual to find completely different units constructed speculatively behind a single panoramic facade.

Outside large cities like London, Edinburgh, York, Bristol and spa towns it is sometimes difficult to identify Georgian roots because styles of the time may have been adapted locally.
• Signature clues

There is however some useful signature clues to look for. Chimneys had moved onto the quite substantial party walls or gable ends and a popular footprint in market towns was to afford four rooms on the ground floor and four above rather than having to follow or adapt a long narrow medieval footprint.

The buildings were almost all masonry or stone but again some false facades were attached to older timber constructions.

Roofs got bigger as plots got longer or wider and so butterfly roofing and trussed roofing (Queen or King post patterns) became an increasing understood method of construction.

The terrace became the most popular building pattern for mass builds in industrialised cities. A timeline chart helps to link all the significant factors for the surveyor and help to assemble a general picture into which all the evidence can be related. This helps identify if any piece of evidence indicates an earlier or later period.

• Typical features

- Cast iron railings, balcony rails and fan lights (wrought iron early - cast approx 1760)
- Stucco render (fake or abstracted stonework effect which went in and out of favour)
- Exposed, fine pointed brickwork
- Ashlar stonework (be careful this is not exclusive to the period)
- Coade stone (artificial stone used to make decorative panels and features approx 1770)
- 6 over 6 pane or 4 x 3 Dutch-influenced sash windows set back from the face of the building having flat lintels and in unified alignment and proportion
- Unified facades

• Problems that could arise as a result of the methods of construction used at the time.

- Decaying joists. Mainly caused by poor cross ventilation in narrow long terraces.
- Unbonded party walls to front walls.
- Failure in roof trusses.
- Rotten or stuck sash windows.
- Decaying course timbers buried in walls.
- Leaning chimneys / over tall stacks / damp penetration via stacks.
- Perforated lead work or splitting caused by over beating.
- Missing or badly altered load bearing timber partitions.
- Defective internal gutters.
- Damp basements (not always a defect).
- Use of lead paint.
- Water paths through parapets and balconies.
- Corroded cast iron railings bursting stonework.
- Poorly applied or painted stucco limiting water evaporation from walls.
- Down pipes decanting onto lower roofs from roofs above causing temporary flooding in heavy rainfall.
• Problems arising from the use and adaptation of buildings over time.

- Age
Georgian buildings are typically 250 years old and potentially listed. This fact is often underestimated when trying to adapt them to the modern expectations of living. Defects are perceived when issues are compared against modern expectations. Such situations happen when basements are converted. Great care is needed when adapting and surveying properties of this age and in particular an understanding of how solid walls deal with water and the effect of renders is critical when assessing apparent water ingress.

- Adaptations to modern life and trends
Problems arise when alterations are made by a succession of owners without contemplation of the effect previous alterations have had or by relying (wrongly) on the quality of previous installations.

Typical scenarios are: installation of power showers, extractor hoods, additional sockets, additional bathrooms, attic conversions, fire escape routes and conversion from multi occupancy to single occupancy.

Modern services such as air conditioning plant can be poorly sited and cause more damage to roofs than would have ever been contemplated when the building was first constructed. Successive installations of electrical cabling and water pipes can create a system with very little logic to it at all.

With stringent Electrical regulations adding to the economic burden in the domestic market the economics of electrical alterations need to be carefully explained and in the commercial market IT system infrastructure can absorb vast amounts of space.

Similarly in plumbing installations, tortuous bends and unsupported pipes can lead to noisy systems, poorly operating traps and mystery leaks. Dead legs and redundant tanks can also give rise to legionella traps.

A good initial indicator of the extent of change in a particular room is to observe the skirting boards. These are often left as a last minute thought and can provide many clues as to what may have happened in the buildings life time. The same is true to some extent to covings.

- Repairs and maintenance
Consistent preventative maintenance can be a rare thing. Reactive maintenance is more usual and in domestic situations can be woefully temporary in nature.

Modern sealants and chemical water repellents can be applied easily and make for quick solutions. However over application of varieties of products is a problem if a defect persists with the inevitable result that the ultimate solution has become more expensive.

Assessing the likely robustness of a suspect repair can be difficult so the surveyor should be mindful of observing areas where access is difficult such as parapets, hidden valleys, chimney stacks and hopper heads as these harbour such anomalies.