

10.03 *The Bungalow*

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Indian prototypes

Bungalow is a term with such a range of meanings that it can be a source of great confusion, but it is almost impossible to consider the question of the Australian verandah without making some reference to it. To put it in the simplest terms, the bungalow is seen as a characteristic type of colonial house in India. It may have derived from a traditional form of Bengali hut with a surrounding verandah and a curved thatched roof,¹ and in 1828 Bishop Heber referred to the surrounding verandah as a normal adjunct of a bungalow.²

Other evidence, however, suggests that a verandah was not normal in the indigenous building. In 1803 a British officer, 'Henry Roberdeau', referred to thatched bungalows as being more or less equivalent to cottages, roofed with straw, and not, so far as one can tell, having any verandah. Roberdeau had two of them, one to sleep and dress in, and the other for living and eating.³ On this interpretation the verandah was added by the Europeans who, according to F Buchanan, writing in 1814, had also modified the indigenous design by introducing windows, cloth ceilings and internal subdivisions.⁴ In practice many European bungalows in India appear to have little more than a porch, and only a minority have verandahs extending much beyond one side.⁵

It is true that there were ex-Indian officers and traders in Australia, that there were houses built by them and by others which were described at some time as bungalows, or which showed recognisable Indian influence, and that these in most cases possessed verandahs. Therefore it has been, until the work of Broadbent, *prima facie* reasonable to suppose that

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- 1 Janet Pott, *Old Bungalows in Bangalore* (London 1977), pp 5, 14. This is consistent with Bishop Heber's account of the word as a corruption of Bengalee, the local cottage type with a high thatched roof surrounded by a verandah, of which only the south side was open, while the others enclosed bathrooms and dressing rooms. James Broadbent, 'Aspects of Domestic Architecture in New South Wales 1788-1843' [3 vols, PhD, Australian National University 1985], I, p 11, quoting Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* [London 1828], I, p 29.
 - 2 Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (2 vols, London 1828), I, p 29, quoted in **** Philip Drew, *Veranda* (), p 7.
 - 3 *Bengal Past and Present*, vol xxix (January-June 1925), quoted in Drew, *Veranda*, p 7.
 - 4 F Buchanan, *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of East India* (3 vols, London 1838 [from journals of 1814]), quoted by A D King, *The Bungalow* (London 1984), pp 24-6.
 - 5 Pott, *Old Bungalows in Bangalore*, passim.

the verandah is itself an importation from India in emulation of the Indian bungalow. It is now clear, however, that the first verandahs in Sydney were if anything more connected with America than with India, and that the appearance of a supposedly bungalow form occurs later than had been supposed. On the other hand, India has also played a part which has not been generally recognised in some other aspects of climatic design in Australia, such as the systems of cooling and ventilation which are discussed below.

definitions

The word bungalow even today does not necessarily imply a verandah. The English are generally unaccustomed to single storey dwellings, and they describe as bungalows seaside houses, backyard sleepouts, and temporary dwellings of various sorts, provided only that they are single storeyed, and regardless of whether or not they possess verandahs or whether they have any specifically Indian characteristics. In Australia, where single storey dwellings were predominant from the outset, this is not the important issue.

James Broadbent believes that a bungalow is generally the principal house on a country estate, and the residence of a successful pastoralist. He regards it as being distinguishable in appearance by 'its encompassing roof form, integrating encircling or partly encircling verandahs, and by its long, low proportions',⁶ and defines the bungalow in early colonial New South Wales as:⁷

a single-storey cottage, usually low to the ground, with a symmetrical dominant hipped roof fully encompassing the house and encircling verandahs which may be open or partially enclosed to form minor rooms, particularly at the sides and back.

This seems a rash definition, given that it would exclude most English buildings in India termed bungalows, and given that essentially the same form had already appeared in America, and had been recognised in England as an American type. Contrary to common belief, the surrounding verandah did not become common in Australia until the 1820s, and its sources are probably quite mixed. We will achieve greater precision by adhering more closely to the actual usage of the day. The word 'bungalow' was used where there was thought to be a specifically Indian connection, perhaps regardless of whether there was a verandah or not. Certainly it was not used indiscriminately of all homesteads, of all buildings which had verandahs, or even of all single-storeyed verandahed buildings.

Irving distinguishes four main categories of what he calls the Australian bungalow - that is, the single storeyed house incorporating verandahs.⁸ The first has the verandah under the

6 Broadbent, 'Domestic Architecture in New South Wales', II, p 460.

7 Broadbent, 'Domestic Architecture in New South Wales', I, p 12.

8 **** Irving, op cit, p 63. Irving cites James Broadbent, 'Early Sydney Houses. Examples of Pattern Book Architecture', in *Art Association of Australia Papers 1976* [1978]; Herman, *Early Australian Architects*; Cox & Lucas, *Australian Colonial Architecture*; *Heritage of Australia*; M B Eldershaw, *The Life and Times of Captain John Piper* [1973].

house roof, often on one side only, with end bays either enclosed or treated as pavilions. The second type again has the verandah under the main roof, but without pavilions, and sometimes extending round more than one side. The third type has the verandah continuing from the main roof, but at a lesser slope. The fourth type has the verandah roof pitched from a level below the main eaves. It is not possible to adduce separate origins for these various categories. On the contrary, while some examples in categories 1 and 2 are unequivocally linked with India, category 4 is the one more specifically related to the form of the European Indian bungalow, which tends to have attic windows in the main wall surface *above* the verandah roof, so as to let out hot air.⁹

Of these four types, the last is seen in two examples at Commercial Bay, Auckland, as illustrated by Edward Ashworth in 1843,¹⁰ and a third in Ashworth's illustration of Kororareka in 1844.¹¹ In these the main roof is fairly steep, and William Toomath has identified the buildings as French. This New Zealand connection is also interesting because at least two of the buildings in the Kororareka illustration have hipped roofs, dormer windows and front verandahs, the same combination as occurs in prefabricated houses sent from New Zealand to Melbourne in about 1852-3.

Australian examples

Irving credits Robert Campbell's house in Sydney, built by 1802, as being the first 'to have its verandahs incorporated under the main roof rather than being added later', and hence as the first example of the Indian bungalow type.¹² This is disputed by Broadbent, who argues that this verandah was originally on one side of the house only, and was not extended around the corner until at least 1815. Only then did the building acquire the supposed bungalow appearance. However, Campbell's connection with India was real enough, and what his house did introduce was the change of roof slope over the verandah - the broken-backed profile later to be so characteristic of the colonial homestead. Broadbent identifies the first bungalows, as defined by him, as being the Lieutenant-Governor's new barrack and the main guard house illustrated in about 1809 in a pen drawing attributed to John Eyre.¹³

However the earliest local example of Irving's first type, with the verandah under the house roof but the ends enclosed, must surely be Government House, Newcastle, of 1804, previously referred to. This was immediately followed by the new court house in Sydney, of 1805, specified to have 'A Varando in front, with a small room at each end'.¹⁴ Those

9 Pott, *Old Bungalows in Bangalore*, p 14.

10 Auckland Art Gallery, reproduced in William Toomath, *Built in New Zealand* (Auckland 1996), p 23.

11 Auckland Art Gallery, reproduced in Toomath, *Built in New Zealand*, pp 20-21.

12 Irving, 'Georgian Australia', p 46.

13 Broadbent, 'Domestic Architecture in New South Wales', I, p 11, citing John Eyre [attrib], 'View from the East side of the Cove', c 1809 [National Library of Australia NK1100/1].

14 *Sydney Gazette*, 3 February 1805, quoted in Peter Bridges, *Historic Court Houses of New South Wales* (Sydney 1986), p 20.

which Irving cites are Dr Charles Throsby's 'Glenfield Farm' at Casula of 1817,¹⁵ and, as the best-known instance of the type, George Weston's 'Horsley' at Horsley Park.

Irving's second type, with the verandah under the main roof, but its ends not closed, is found in such examples as 'Denbigh', Narellan, and 'Epping Forest', Minto. His third type has the verandah continuing from the roof in a broken-backed profile is found at 'The Cottage' at Mulgoa, New South Wales, of about 1820, and 'Somercotes' at Ross, Tasmania, of about 1840. Robert Campbell's house in Sydney was of course an earlier example than either of these, and to Irving's examples can usefully be added Alexander Riley's 'Burwood Villa' on the Parramatta Road, illustrated by Joseph Lycett in about 1822.¹⁶ The fourth type, with the separately articulated verandah roof, is found at 'Entally House', Hadspen, Tasmania, of 1821, and 'Yarra Cottage', Melbourne, by Robert Russell in 1839.

Indian connections

Some of these houses had genuine Indian connections. 'Denbigh' was built in 1817 by Charles Hooke, a former Calcutta merchant; 'Epping Forest' was built before 1832 by an ex-East India officer; and 'Horsley' was built for Lieutenant George Weston of the East India Company in about 1832. J S Hassall, whose father acquired Denbigh in 1826, described it as 'similar to an Indian bungalow, having two large rooms in front, with a spacious verandah'.¹⁷ Epping Forest is not explicitly Indian in appearance, but Horsley is, as Broadbent says 'wholly Indian in its design', and he surmises that the design was prepared in India. The entrance opens into a large central hall which originally contained a punkah. According to Broadbent,¹⁸

The high-waisted 'French' doors and casements are purely Indian, unlike any others in colonial New South Wales, folding in four leaves, multi-paned with sturdy glazing bars and protected by pairs of shutters, 'jhimils', with adjustable broad louvres. ... This joinery is largely constructed of teak (although the internal joinery is mostly cedar) which, apart from its design, suggests that it was brought, ready-made, from India, and, according to family tradition, its brass hardware was also of Indian manufacture. ... they lived, while the house was being built, 'in a large Indian tent and waited on by Indian servants'.

Whilst Broadbent does not confine his definition of a bungalow to these houses with genuine Indian connections or references, he seems to accept the word as referring only a house

15 Rachel Roxburgh, *Early Colonial Architecture in New South Wales* (Sydney 1974), pp 108-115. The date is uncertain, but possibly 1817 and certainly before 1822: Roxburgh, p 115, cites an article by Dr Herbert Throsby giving the date of 1817, but unsubstantiated, and a sketch by Edward Mason in 1822, in his sketchbook, 'Views in NSW in 1822', Mitchell Library.

16 Published in *Lycett's Views in Australia*, and reproduced in Tim McCormick [ed] *First Views of Australia 1788-1825* (Chippendale [NSW] 1987), p 264.

17 J S Hassall, *In Old Australia: Records and Reminiscences from 1794* [Brisbane 1902], p 3.

18 Broadbent, 'Domestic Architecture in New South Wales', II, pp 475-6.

with a verandah conceived as an original part of the construction.¹⁹ However, the examples he lists as being in existence by 1823 include some which had evolved only over time to bungalow form.²⁰ One of these, Colonel George Johnston's house 'Annandale' probably acquired bungalow form after 1813, and had a balustrade detailed in what Broadbent sees as an Indian manner, even though Johnston's relevant experience was in North America and the East Indies.²¹

In Western Australia there were substantial Indian connections. Land at Port Leschenault was bought in 1838 on behalf of the Calcutta lawyer C R Prinsep, who ten years earlier had bought land at Norfolk Plains, Tasmania, and who was now a member of the Australian Association of Bengal. This was a group of thirty-three Calcutta investors interested in Australia,²² amongst whom was Major Alexander Davidson, who later settled in Melbourne and created quite a stir in South Yarra with his Indian servants and camels. Subsequently land near Prinsep's was acquired by the Western Australian Company, which was London-based but called its settlement 'Australind' in an attempt to appeal to Calcutta investors. The architectural relevance of the Indian connection is suggested by the ubiquity of surrounding verandahs amongst early houses in the area which, although known only from much later photographs, appear in most cases to be original to the 1840s.²³

Genuinely Indian-made or Indian influenced houses appeared repeatedly throughout the rest of the century, many of them with verandahs, though the precise form of these is not especially significant at later dates. 'Palmerston', near Gostwyck in New South Wales, is said to have begun as 'a bungalow in the Indian style' in the 1840s.²⁴ There was at least one such example in New Zealand, 'Clifton' at Hawkes Bay, brought out by J G Gordon when he left India in 1857, extended in 1880, but destroyed by fire in 1899.²⁵ Charles Allen reported staying in a house in Queensland which had been designed by an Anglo-Indian lady 'somewhat after the model of those in India', with the front half of the house as a single large room, with glass doors at either end so that a draft of air could always be obtained.²⁶

Indian influence of another sort is found in some early examples of flat roofing, especially at 'Dalwood' as discussed below, and in the architectural parameters laid down in T W Maslen's *Friend of Australia*. William Walker's house 'Rajpootana', built in 1867 in the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda, was another explicitly Indian house, and had an extensive flat roof (which will be mentioned below).

19 Broadbent, 'Domestic Architecture in New South Wales' II, p 446.

20 Broadbent, 'Domestic Architecture in New South Wales', II, p 449: 'Annandale', 'Homebush', 'Burwood', 'Clarendon', 'The Retreat', 'Denbigh', 'Birling', 'Campbellfield', 'Elizabeth Farm', 'Hambleton', 'Camden' and 'Fernhills'.

21 Broadbent, 'Domestic Architecture in New South Wales', II, pp 449-450.

22 A C Staples, *They Made their Destiny* (Harvey [WA] 1979), pp 47-9.

23 Staples, *They Made their Destiny*, plates following p 96.

24 G N Griffiths, *Some Northern Homes of N.S.W.* (Sydney 1954), pp 101-2.

25 Michael Fowler & Robert Van De Voort, *The New Zealand House* (Auckland 1983), pp 61, 66, 88.

26 Charles Allen, *A Visit to Queensland and her Goldfields* (London 1870), p 163, quoted by John Archer, *Building a Nation* (Sydney 1987), pp 106-7.

Neither Walker's house nor any of the others so far mentioned is known to have been called a 'bungalow' when it was built, for the term was not fashionable until the later part of the century. An exceptional example is a house in East Melbourne, reported in 1856 to have 'The Bungalow' written on one of the entrance gates.²⁷ This was probably due to some genuine Indian connection. In 1867, on the other hand, William Jack gave the name 'bungalow' to the German prefabricated house which he occupied at Hunter's Hill, Sydney (now known as 'The Chalet').²⁸

looser relationships

In many other cases the form of a house is perceived as being Indian and/or bungalowoid even when there is no explicit Indian connection. In a design for a model farm house of 1862, the living quarters consist of three main rooms and a closet, more or less in a row or enfilade, while the kitchen, dairy, &c extend backwards from them like the stem of a T. There is no surrounding verandah, though a small porch is set into the front. It seems to be the lack of an internal passage, and the fact that rooms open directly off the drawing room, which are seen to make it bungalowoid.²⁹ Very different criteria give rise to the description of the Rev Edward Millett's house at York, Western Australia, in the 1860s, as 'built somewhat upon the model of an Indian bungalow, being low and long and thickly thatched, and surrounded on all four sides by a verandah, formed by a continuation of the roof itself, until its eaves came to within seven feet [2.1 m] of the ground.'³⁰ Janet Millett's painting agrees with her description, but shows that the roof was steeply pitched and very high, unlike most of Indian antecedents.³¹

The verandah was certainly one defining characteristic. A house in the Melbourne suburb of South Yarra, built towards 1866, had a 'covered balcony, introduced after the customs and manners of the rich "baboo" of the East,' measuring 13.5 by 3.6 metres.³² The Residency at Roebourne, Western Australia, constructed by the government but embellished by the Resident, Augustus Roe, was³³

replete with every surrounding and luxury that can serve to mitigate the fierce noonday heat. In the design of his handsome and spacious villa he followed a style of semi-Indian architecture, and by means of broad verandahs, thick blinds, stone walls, and punkahs, set an example of adapting a building to the latitude in which it is erected.

27 James Sinclair, 'The Beauties of Victoria in 1856' (?Melbourne 1856 [a compilation of typescript articles held by the State Library of Victoria, unpaginated).

28 Robert Irving & John Kinstler, *Fine Houses of Sydney* (Sydney 1982), p 49.

29 *Farmer's Journal and Gardeners' Chronicle*, 26 July 1862, p 393, courtesy of Deborah Kemp.

30 Janet ['Mrs E'] Millett, *An Australian Parsonage* (London 1872), p 55.

31 'Holy Trinity Church, York, by Mrs Edward Millett', c 1869, reproduced on the dustjacket of Millett, *An Australian Parsonage*.

32 *Argus*, 21 July 1866, p 2.

33 W B Kimberly, *History of Western Australia* (Melbourne 1897), biographical section, p 79, quoted in Ray & John Oldham, *George Temple-Poole* (Nedlands [WA] 1980), p 14.

Cassell's *Picturesque Australasia* of 1889 refers to the prevailing style of Brisbane house as being 'with modifications, that of the Indian bungalow - a single, sometimes double, storeyed cottage, generally of wood, with pyramidal roof, and surrounded by broad verandahs, upon which open many french doors or low windows.'³⁴ Archibald Forbes writes more eloquently of the Brisbane River that:³⁵

Its banks have a semi-tropical aspect; one might, without much stretch of fancy, imagine oneself in the James and Mary reach of the Hoogly, or the Mahamuddie off Beramopore. The Bamboo sends up its clusters of tall shoots, with the feathery foliage, and every elevation is crowned by a snug, deep-verandahed bungalow, of true oriental pattern.

John Archer claims that 'To Kalon', a sugar planter's house at Ingham, Queensland, was copied from colonial bungalows of the Raj, due to the 'Indian connections of many of the planters'.³⁶ However, he does not substantiate these connections, and the form of the building - more a giant thatched gable roof than a house - seems more likely to have been influenced by Fiji, which was the source of the station labour, than by India.

In other cases the word bungalow implies no more than single storey height and/or a subsidiary function. The 'Bungalow' at the Governor's house, Mount Macedon, was the earlier single storey house on the site, now used largely as quarters for visiting bachelors. A house built at Bendigo by G W B Vibert, probably in the 1870s, was known as 'The Bungalow', though it is unclear whether it had any specifically bungalowoid characteristics apart from being single-storeyed. The name was changed after additions were made to it in 1888.³⁷ Another house offered for sale in rural Victoria in 1880 was said to be 'built after the style of the Oriental bungalow'.³⁸

the generic bungalow

In the 1890s the West Australian premier, John Forrest, lived in a house at the centre of town, in Hay Street, known as 'The Bungalow'. In 1890 the *Building and Engineering Journal* referred to 'The Grange', Mount Victoria, New South Wales, which had been built in 1876, as the 'Piddington Bungalow', and as a 'Bungalow Residence'.³⁹ By 1891 when Richard Speight designed 'The Bungalow' at Mildura,⁴⁰ and 1892, when Alan Walker designed another 'bungalow' in Hobart, there would have been no more than a vestigial

34 *Australia's First Century* (Hornsby [NSW] 1980) [repaginated facsimile extracts from E E Morris [ed], *Cassell's Picturesque Australasia* (4 vols **** 1889)], p 708.

35 Archibald Forbes, in the *Brisbane Telegraph*, 28 May 1883, quoted in Helen Gregory, 'Lifestyle', in Rod Fisher & Brian Crozier [eds], *The Queensland House* (Brisbane 1994), p 2.

36 Archer, *Building a Nation*, p 105.

37 Mike Butcher & Gill Flanders, *Bendigo Historic Buildings* (Bendigo [Victoria] 1987), pp 87-8.

38 The late Dr Arthur H Dawson's house at Mooroopna: *Argus*, 27 November 1880, p 2.

39 *Building and Engineering Journal*, 13 December 1890, quoted in King, *The Bungalow*, pp 274-5.

40 *Age*, 2 December 1995, p B1.

Indian Connection - it had become the term to describe an informal single storey dwelling,⁴¹ and this was how it was to be used in the twentieth century.

41 *Building and Engineering Journal*, 24 December 1892, pp 260-1, quoted in R & M Morris-Nunn, 'Pure Air and a Lovely Aspect: Tasmania', in Trevor Howells [ed], *Towards the Dawn* (Sydney 1989), p 99.