

# Building with Stone

The ‘smartness’ of a stone-fronted building reflects not only the quality of the stone, but the way it was quarried, cut and used. In Burford stone is laid in various ways, reflecting the status of the building and the owner’s means. The extremes are semi-drystone walling (used between plots and roads), and the finely dressed ashlar (smoothed and square-cut blocks) which front some better-quality houses. In between are at least five clearly recognisable variants. Not all stone was meant to be seen, however. Keying marks and flecks of coloured lime show that the cruder stones in many buildings were covered with render and limewash, particularly in the 18th century when polite taste required constructional details to be

obscured. Sometimes (as at 49-51 Witney Street) the render or buttered mortar was scored with a wooden tool, creating the illusion that the house was of best quality ashlar. Much of Burford’s remaining render was removed in the 20th century, reflecting our modern penchant for bare stonework.

Another technique was to use roughly squared stones, taken perhaps where stone could be easily cut to shape with a hand-axe. Examples can be seen at 28 High Street and 2 Lawrence Lane. We do not know whether this was meant to be seen and taken for ‘poor man’s ashlar’, or whether it was rendered to cover up the imperfections.



A *Semi-drystone walling (Priory Lane): deep joints with no visible mortar, and a mud and clay mix holding the inner stones together.*



B *Uncoursed (randomly arranged) rubble with random-sized stones. (Witney Street)*



C *Coursed rubble with random-sized stones at 33 Witney Street: care has been taken to select similar-size stones and lay them in horizontal lines or courses.*



D *Coursed and squared rubble with courses of varying heights. This resembles C, but the stones have been squared up and laid in regular courses. (Swan Lane)*



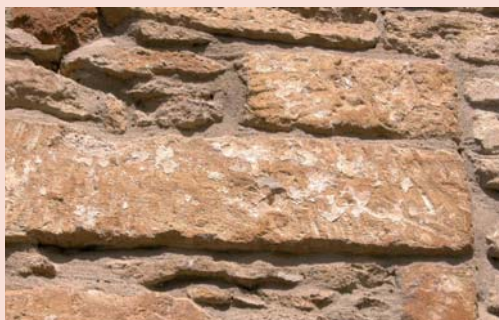
E Coursed, squared and dressed rubble with courses of varying heights; resembling D, but with tool-marks and squared stones in evidence. (Witney Street)



F Coursed and dressed stone of ashlar quality with courses of varying heights; resembling E but with sawn stones in evidence. Pointing may be crude. (Church Lane)



G Coursed and dressed ashlar with fine pointing. This stone is usually only a thin facing on the street front, with rubble behind and in the gable walls.



H Crude rubble walling marked by keying marks and traces of render or limewash. As with many Burford buildings, this stonework was not meant to be seen.



I Scoring in render at 53 Witney Street, creating the illusion of squared ashlar stone.



J Varied stonework along Witney Street.