BUILDING MATERIALS AND DETAILS

Walling Materials

Sandstone is the predominant building material in Matlock utilising a local and ready source of the material for building purposes. In association with general walling stonework for house building, sandstone has also been used for architectural dressings such as window and door surrounds, quoins, string-courses, coping stones to gables and chimneystacks. There are a few buildings (or parts of buildings) within the Conservation Area where rubble limestone has been used. There are also some instances of render and brickwork.

Sandstone:

Sandstone has been quarried locally for centuries. Some of those early quarries would have been small and are now lost or overgrown. Sandstone is quarried today on a commercial scale with the main stone types being – ‘Birchover’, ‘Stanton Moor’ and ‘Peakmoor’.

The oldest building within the area is the church tower dating from the 15th century. This is constructed from large sandstone blocks which displays only the masons chisel marks in shaping the (original) blocks to be as flat as possible.

The earliest, datable, residential building in the area is Wheatsheaf House which is dated 1681. The two principal elevations (north & east) to this rectangular building are constructed from coursed squared sandstone. The surface tooling reflects that of the church tower whereby the masons chisel marks can only be seen where the original stone has been tooled to create a flat surface. The south and west elevations of this building are constructed from coursed limestone (see section below).

Coursed squared stonework with surface tooling continued as the predominant house walling material throughout the 18th and into the early 19th century. During the 18th century greater precision was obtained (probably due to mechanical and technological advances in stone cutting and shaping) and stonework was consciously tooled, the favourite type of tooling being quartered and diagonal. This can be seen on a large number of properties and varies in definition – some very precise and expertly tooled and others a little cruder and less well executed.
An example of coursed squared rubble stonework – mid-late 18th century

A further example of coursed squared stonework with irregular surface tooling to 'flatten' the blocks. Random sized quoins.

In the early part of the 19th century there was a progression in stone shaping and tooling to present a more formal appearance. The key characteristics of this type of walling are regularity in stone ‘bed’ heights and the quartered & diagonal surface tooling. This type of walling stonework became prevalent throughout the first half of the 19th century.

Sometime into the second half of the 19th century quartered & diagonal surface tooling was abandoned (not universally) in favour of a ‘pitched’ faced surface finish. The immediate visual difference is that where the quartered & diagonal tooling attempted to present a ‘flat’ surface, the ‘pitched’ stone surface gave a more robust, almost brutal appearance. This type of surface finish became widely used into the early 20th century.

Deanhill House – quartered & diagonal tooling to squared stonework with formal, regular, ashlar quoins and other architectural details.

An example of early 19th century squared coursed stonework with quartered & diagonal surface tooling

An early example of ‘rock’ faced stonework on Knowleston Place – 1850s

A typical example of coursed squared ‘pitched’ faced stonework (without quoins) which became widely used within the settlement from the 1850s onwards
In the inter-war period, and after 1945, the use of ‘pitched’ face stonework is rare. Other types of stonework walling were introduced such as ‘snecked’ stonework which was a conscious effort to resemble rubble stonework of the 17th and 18th centuries.

From the 1980s onwards there has been a return to the use of ‘pitched’ face stonework for house building. A number of examples are to be found in the settlement. This is laid to standard bed heights and random lengths.

Limestone:

Historically, limestone would have been obtained from small, localised areas where it lies close to the surface and could be easily extracted. Today, limestone is quarried commercially (at Longcliffe, near Brassington).

Whilst there is a natural outcrop of limestone within the settlement its use for buildings is limited. The reason for this is that the super-abundancy of sandstone – bring a material far easier to work and shape than limestone – has meant that limestone has only been used on a small number of buildings. In all cases, the type of limestone used is the local carboniferous stone used as coursed rubble.
Two examples of modern (late 20th century) rubble limestone outbuildings

Brickwork:

The use of brickwork is limited within the settlement. The general super-abundance of stone in the area meant that brick was rarely used or required for building purposes. Its earliest use within the settlement is to be found on the side and rear elevations of a row of cottages built in 1902.

Red brickwork to end gable (and rear) of row of cottages – 1902. Other houses of a similar date display red brick to the sides & rear.

The majority of the brickwork used within the settlement relates to houses built after circa. 1950. The following examples date from the 1950s/60s.

A red brick house (one of a pair) built in the 1950s.

A pair of red brick and rendered properties built on Stoney Way in the mid 20th century.

Brick also appears to have been the favoured building material during the later 1960s and 1970s. The following examples depict properties built within this particular period.

Examples of properties built of brick during the 1970s.
Render:

There are a number of instances of render used within the settlement. Some of this is self-coloured (i.e un-painted) and others have a painted finish. Several varieties of render are also used – smooth, lined-out, roughcast and pebbledash. Render is difficult to date unless it relates to a building design whose date is known. The following are a number of examples from within the settlement. The use of render falls into three categories – houses where only a gable end is rendered; houses where the front or back elevation is rendered and houses that are completely rendered.

Three examples where the gable end only has been rendered. This sometimes occurs when a gable elevation was once attached to another building which has been demolished.

Four examples of only the front, or rear, elevations being rendered.

An example of a fully rendered cottage.
Modern ‘decorative’ renders are rare in the area, however, Church Street has an example of such a render. This type of render does not have a historical tradition and forms an anomaly in the streetscene.

Other Walling Materials:

Artificial Stone:
A number of properties within the settlement – constructed in the 1960s and 1970s – were built from artificial stone. This material became widely used during this period as a more economical alternative to natural stone. The material was never truly convincing and properties constructed from artificial stone can be discerned with relative ease.

Timber Cladding:
There is one example of timber cladding within the settlement. This is a new build property constructed in the early 2000s. The use of the material derived from a utilitarian/light industrial genre (replacing a similar type of building on the site).