

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 108/90

A NOTE ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE
STONE USED FOR A SIXTEENTH CENTURY
CHIMNEY PIECE AT OLD WARDOUR
CASTLE, WILTSHIRE.

D F Williams PhD FSA

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Summary

Petrological identification of Cataclews stone being
used for an ornamental chimney piece built by Matthew
Arundell in the 1570's.

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SIXTEENTH CENTURY CHIMNEY PIECE AT OLD WARDOUR CASTLE,
WILTSHIRE

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(HBMC Ceramic Petrology Project)

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A sample of the stone chimney piece, carved and polished on one side, rough on the reverse, was submitted for examination [marked 4]. The stone is dark grey, compact and fairly fine-grained, with sparkling flecks of black mica. When viewed under the polarizing microscope in thin section, the most conspicuous inclusions to be seen are large grains of dark brown hornblende and strongly pleochroic biotite. Also present are grains of serpentized olivine, decomposed felspar and a little augite and iron ore.

The mineral composition and texture of this stone are very distinctive, and a comparison with examples from the stone collection held by the Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton, has allowed it to be identified with considerable confidence. It is in fact Cataclews (or Catacleuse) stone, quarried from Cataclews Point on Harlyn Bay, near Padstow, north Cornwall. This stone has a reputation for durability and being easy to

carve, and was used in the Mediaeval and later periods for such things as fonts, decorative panels, mouldings, sarcophagi and columns. In the present context it is worth noting that Carraclouse stone is mentioned by the historian Richard Carew in his *Survey of Cornwall* (c. A.D. 1602).