

WALTHAM ABBEY, Essex

Building and ornamental stone.

Report by F.W. Anderson, 22nd. July, 1977.

Reigate Stone was the most commonly used building stone in Essex in Mediaeval times, but was later ^usuperceded by brick. Most appears to have been brought from quarries in the Upper Greensand at Reigate in Surrey. It is a fine-grained, pale grey-green, calcareous sandstone, glauconitic and micaceous. These quarries were owned by the Crown. A patent of Edward III authorised the use of this stone for the building of Windsor Castle. It was also used for the Henry VII chapel and for 11th. Cent. ^{with} in the Chapter House at Westminster Abbey. The Crouchback Tomb (13th. Cent.) is also of Reigate stone.

The stone is fine-grained and uniform in texture and easily worked, but weathers badly being particularly susceptible to frost and damp

At Waltham Abbey this is the dominant building stone, it was seen forming the flat buttresses of the Chapter House wall, in the Cloister arcading base, in an arch in the east Cloister wall, as a crocket, as a pillow from a Saxon coffin (CH/TG), and , together with some Kentish Rag as a grave lining.

Other Reigate stone fragments seen were, - CH+T, CH [△]24, CH/GV, CH [△]56, CH/116, CH [△]179, CH [△]94, CH [△]100, CH [△]22, CH [△]23, CH [△]71, CH [△]41, CH [△]68, CH [△]69, CH [△]25, CH [△]202, CH [△]13, CH [△]1.

Kentish Rag. A calcareous sandstone from the Lower Greensand of the Maidstone area in Kent, harder, darker and coarser than Reigate Stone and often with bands of silica (Chert) which make it a difficult stone to work. It weathers very well and has been much used in the London area particularly by the Romans. In the Tower of London the White Tower is of Kentish Rag (but with Caen Stone quoins). It was used for Rochester Castle and for the foundations of the earlier cathedrals of St. Pauls. At Waltham Abbey Kentish Rag appears to have been used only occasionally in rubble fillings.

Lincolnshire Limestone. A Jurassic oolitic limestone from Northamptonshire. This stone does not appear to have been used as a building stone at Waltham Abbey but only as an ornamental stone and for stone coffins. A carved fragment CH/CG, and four other fragments (CH [△]202) were seen. Stone coffins 1 and 3 were both of Lincolnshire Limestone (Weldon variety) also coffins 2 and 4 (probably Barnack Rag variety)

Chalk. Some blocks of Chalk ashlar were seen at Waltham Abbey but all appeared to be later insertions and not part of the original building.

Caen Limestone. A pale cream, fine-grained limestone from Normandy. Much prized by Norman sculptures but does not weather well when exposed to ~~the weather~~ frost and damp. The two carved fragments seen at Waltham Abbey, CH 16 and CH 54, may be part of a canopied tomb.

Purbeck Marble. From Swanage, Dorset.

Several unweathered architectural fragments (shafts and mouldings) were seen at Waltham Abbey, - CH 132, CH/PE, CH 19, CH 185, CH 39, CH 179, CH 100, CH 160, and a circular moulding from grave 185. Purbeck Marble disintegrates rapidly when exposed to the weather and the excellent preservation of the fragments seen suggests that they came from inside the church, (probably the Chancel). The few fragments of Purbeck Marble in the Chapter House wall have almost completely rotted.

Slate. The small incised disc of slate appears to be of Welsh slate.

Stone fragments

Waltham
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Waltham

Purbeck Marble
2

6

Purbeck Marble

3

Walden - built up with Chalk.

F. A. ...

25 July 1977