

RE-UNITING THE STONES OF HYDE ABBEY

Hyde Abbey stone – where did it come from and how did it get to Hyde?

Bath stone – an oolitic limestone



Bath stone fragment from the Norman period



Magnified image of Bath stone

Bath stone, an oolitic limestone, is made up of tiny egg like nodules known as ooliths. In the case of Bath stone these ooliths are relatively large, compared to, for example, Portland stone. The sample was found during the 1995-99 Hyde Abbey Excavation, run as part of the Winchester Museums Service Community Archaeology Programme. It was recovered from the east end of the Abbey Church (although this was not necessarily its original location). The axe marks are typical of tool marks seen on the majority of stonework from the Norman period. A stone axe was used to shape the stone and to create a finished surface. Deeper and less tidy tool marks are visible on the bed joints of the stone, where they wouldn't be seen but would act as a key for the lime mortar. The fragment was once part of a Norman shaft or column from Hyde Abbey.

Caen stone – a fine grained limestone



Caen stone with clawed tooling



Magnified image of Caen stone

Caen stone is a soft and tight grained limestone with very few imperfections. This makes it an ideal stone for carving and intricate mouldings. It can sometimes be difficult to identify stones that are so pure because they lack many of the distinguishing features of coarser stones. However, under magnification Caen Stone has characteristic black flecks as well as a yellowish marbling. Broadly speaking, it has been used in England since the Norman conquest. This piece appears to be part of a decorative cluster shaft. It was probably an internal feature as the clawed tooling on its surface is so well preserved. The stone was probably worked during the mid-medieval period. It was found during the 1995-99 Hyde Abbey Excavation and again, is from the east end of the Abbey Church.

Quarr stone – a coarse grained shelley limestone



Quarr stone with clawed finish



Magnified image of Quarr stone

Quarr stone comes from the Isle of Wight. It has a very characteristic open and porous texture made up from compacted and fossilised shells. Quarr stone was used extensively, we believe, in the building of New Minster, but was substantially worked out by the mid-12th century. The example here from may have been reused from New Minster. This Ashlar fragment is from a denser bed, where the fossilised shells are smaller and more tightly packed. It has been finished with a claw, suggesting it was worked later in the medieval period. It was found during excavations by Winchester Museums Archaeology Section at the Evans Halshaw Garage (now Silchester Place, Hyde Street) in 2000. This is slightly to the South of the church but still probably within the precinct of the abbey, so the stone is potentially from ancillary buildings.

Tournai marble



Tournai marble spiral twist columns



Magnified image of Tournai marble

This piece of Tournai marble was almost certainly part of a set of spiral twist columns from Hyde Abbey. Larger sections of three such columns were also found and are on display at Winchester Museum. Tournai marble comes from a town of the same name in Belgium. The stone is difficult to carve and has poor weathering properties. They are therefore likely to have been used in the interior of a building in the Hyde Abbey complex, most probably the Abbey church. It was found during the 1972 excavation of the Abbey.

Malmstone – a limestone



Malmstone with clawed tooling



Magnified image of Malmstone

Malmstone is an Upper Greensand and is a grey, lime-rich, fine-grained, silty sandstone with few fossils. Apart from many samples found from Hyde Abbey, its use appears to be confined to church and vernacular buildings in the immediate area to which it occurs. Its use at Hyde Abbey is likely to be in reconstruction or for new buildings in the late medieval period, in structures like ovens - it's not really good enough for grand architecture, but strong enough to fill in the gaps. This may account for the many of the fragments showing signs of burning. The clawed tooling on one face of the ashlar, indicates it may have been worked later in the medieval period, so post Norman. This is another fragment found during excavations at the Evans Halshaw Garage. It was located to the south of the church but still probably within the precinct of the abbey- so the stone is potentially from ancillary buildings.

Purbeck marble



Purbeck marble - part of stiff leaf decorative stonework



Magnified image of Purbeck marble

This is an attractively worked fragment of a 'stiff leaf' piece of stonework. It would have been part of a stylized three-lobed carved foliage, usually an enrichment of bosses and capitals. It evolved from crocketed capital designs, mostly English. It was found in a spoil heap in 1999 during the Hyde Abbey Excavation programme.

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