

Stone and other building materials in the Hanneys



Hanney History Group - November 2011

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This survey aims to provide an overview of the materials used in the buildings in East and West Hanney, with emphasis on the use of local stone or slate. It offers this general summary prior to the November 2011 meeting of the Hanney History Group which focuses on 'The Building Stones of Oxfordshire'. It is based on a walkabout of the village and some desk research, supported by some current photographs of street scenes and also details of the listed buildings in both villages. Visits have also been made to a number of redundant quarries in the district. It does not set out to be comprehensive and may form the basis of a further more detailed examination of Hanney buildings and the sources of their materials.

The village landscape has been somewhat diminished by much of its modern housing in the period following World War 2 but the two villages contain over 50 listed buildings. Of these 70%, 17 in West Hanney and 16 in East Hanney, have a significant stone element. This ranges from dressed stone blocks to rubble infill in timber framing. Many brick and wooden buildings have a stone plinth. There was however a significant shift to brick as the material of choice in the Georgian period and afterwards, based both on building fashion and brick availability at a reasonable cost, although this advantage did not perhaps become pronounced until the early 19th century. This is partly due to the local availability of both rough and cut stone in reasonable quantities and at presumably an acceptable price. The most recent listings took place around 20 years ago. Some quite significant buildings, such as Lower Mill and the current Fontana restaurant were overlooked in the process, which has been criticised for a lack of rigour in its execution and perhaps needs to be revisited.

There is no common style of architecture such as that found in some Cotswold villages. The buildings around Church Green in West Hanney offer a characteristic illustration of this diversity with the rough stone and ashlar of St James Church facing the early 18th century brick of Hanney House, the Stonesfield slate roof of the old post office, the blue and red bricks of the Victorian vicarage, the limestone of the 17th century farms and the thatched and timbered village inn. These are linked by stone flagged causeways and partly surrounded by roughcast limestone stone walls.



Fig1 St James the Great Church from circa 1150



Fig 2 Hanney House 1727



Fig 3 The Old Vicarage – early 19th century



Fig 4 Old Post Office – 16th century and after



Fig 5 Manor Farm



Fig 6 The Plough Inn

Immediately to the east of the green lies the Church Farm complex of a farmhouse and stone barns [see listed buildings appendix] This area, including the church, Castleacre and the two farms, is the most significant area of pure stone use in the two villages. Indeed out of a total stock of about 550 buildings only around 25 could claim to be stone buildings.

The walkabout element of the survey progressed from west to east and this is the broad layout of this report, starting in West Hanney. The aim was not to cover all buildings but to establish an overall picture and concentrate on those where stone, slate and early brick play a major part. Several thatched buildings still remain in both villages, mostly timber framed, and offer a welcome contrast to the sometimes bland roofscapes of the newer buildings. Appendices summarise the approximate ages of the building stock on an area or street basis and also include the verbatim details of the listed buildings from the English Heritage descriptions.

West Hanney

West Hanney is focused around an oval of two streets, Main Street and Church St, which link at the main green, Church Green, where the stone village cross stands. Almost all of the listed buildings are within this area or are immediately adjacent to it. Two other older established streets, Winter Lane and North Green link into this area but are mostly modern development and contain just a few listed and stone buildings such as Castleacre shown in Fig 7 below, which has a good Stonesfield roof, with later dormers, and dates from the 1600's. All other streets only contain brick built houses and bungalows from the 1950's onwards. These are the Meads, Monks Close, Rectory Farm Close

and The Croft. The houses along School Road/Causeway, which links the two Hanneys, were largely built by developers and the council after the war with the exception of one listed building, Lamb Cottage, which dates from the 16th century [Figure 8], and has been re-roofed with modern tiles. This was part of a group of older buildings, including the earlier Lamb Inn, which were burnt down in the 1930's. Nearby stands the much restored mediaeval stone village cross, illustrated in the appendix.



Fig7 Castleacre



Fig 8 Lamb Cottage

Old photographs show many stone and timber frame buildings in Main Street and Church Street which have been almost all replaced by bungalows and houses during post war redevelopment. The views of Main Street below, taken over a century apart show that half the original cottages have disappeared, one has been tidied with rendering, the great elm has succumbed to disease and wires have proliferated. Of all the major streets in the two villages, Main Street is perhaps the most damaged by undistinguished development. This was largely at the initiative of the local builders, Barrett's, in the 1920's to 1950's, who had an ambition of improving the housing stock seemingly with little account of local style. Much was similarly lost across the Vale as a whole over this period. Main Street, which was until relatively recently not the main street, which was in fact Church St., does still retain several good cottages and forms part of a conservation area at its eastern end. Carters Close is its only listed building in which two or three previous dwellings have been joined to form an excellent restoration [illustrated in Appendix 2]. The construction appears to be timber and brick in the main but the building is supported by at least one robust stone wall that also divided the earlier semi-detached elements.



Fig 9 Henry Taunt view of Main St in around 1890 and the same view in 2011.

There is no dominant style of building in the Hanneys today and it would appear that this has been the case from at least the 18th century. The surviving domestic buildings that are over 200 years old in the village tend to be of four main types:

1. Timber frame construction with brick, rubble or plaster walling material. Brick is the most frequent infilling. Most houses of this type have apparently been thatched at some stage but several now have tiled roofs. Around 6 thatched roofs remain in West Hanney. A great many similar cottages have been demolished in the last 75 years.
2. Irregular stone construction, often with plastered finish, some with original thatch but others now tiled.
3. Cottages which use stone for the gable end walls or for mid-way structural walls [such as Carter's Close - see illustration in Appendix2]. These usually have brick fronts and backs, often red and black patterned, and most are 19th century in origin.
4. Larger stone buildings with more regular courses. Several farmhouses and their barns follow this pattern. The use of stone in this more formal way seems an indicator of affluence and perhaps more skilled builders.

Hanney House forms an exception in using brick for the creation of a substantial residential rectory, incorporating an earlier building at the rear. Many earlier houses have such a composite history. Brick had been used since at least Tudor times in prominent local buildings such as Shaw House at Newbury, in part reflecting the availability of local clay. Several Early Georgian large brick buildings can be found in nearby Stanford in the Vale. Oxford in contrast appears to have continued to use stone for major university and city buildings until Keble College was built in the mid 19th century. This again reflects both affluence and good local stone availability, albeit of variable quality.



Fig10 East Hanney Chapel



Fig 11 St James the Less East Hanney [now a house]

The majority of buildings constructed in both villages since Georgian times have been in brick with the exception of the school, St James the Less church in East Hanney and Hanney Chapel. Many also use blue and red patterned brickwork.



Fig 12 & 13 Use of stone in gable end walls in West and East Hanney, both also using blue and red brick construction

Hanney Church – St James the Great

The fine village church offers a rich selection of stone and also a range of masonic skill. It has also been much restored and has as complex a construction history as most mediaeval village churches. The oldest artefacts are two possibly Saxon stone coffins in the porch which lie beneath a Norman doorway dated around 1160. They are well carved from an oolitic [?] limestone. The stone of the building itself clearly comes from a variety of sources. The north wall changes from a harder golden limestone, which appears to have some iron content, to a greyer rock at about the three feet level. The walls are mostly of rubble construction with clear changes of stone supplier and builder throughout. Other areas, particularly doorways and cornerstones, have a more regular course based construction with better finished stones being used. The ashlar that form the corner blocks of the tower and nave are clearly cut freestones. A porch to the rear uses five large slabs to form a cowl roof, or 'pentice', above the south door, with the lower stones being cut to simulate a slate effect. None of the articles written concerning the church attempt to identify the stone used. The finer stones seem to be oolitic limestone whereas the rubble walls are apparently more Corallian in origin.

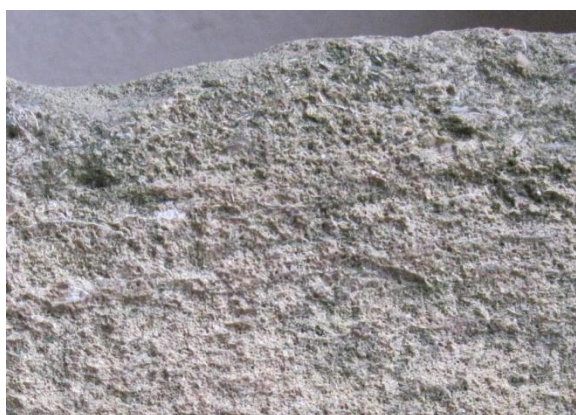


Fig 14 Side of Saxon coffin [view approx 6" length]



Figure 15 Corner block on tower [approx 6"]

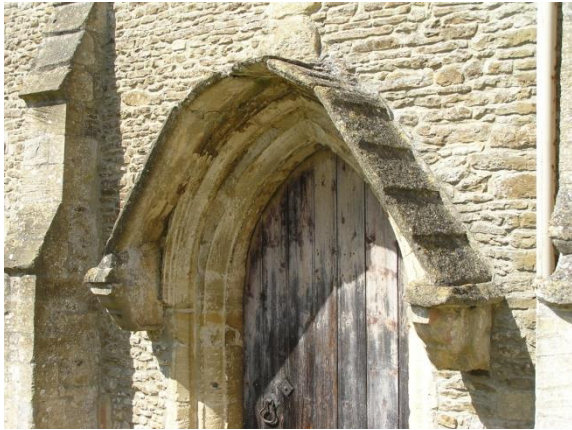


Fig 16 Slabs forming South Door pentice



Fig 17 Rough browner stone on the West wall



Fig 18 Change of stone in north wall



Fig 19 Northern aspect of the church



Figs 20 and 21 Ashlars on church tower - the detail on the right shows approx 10" of stone

Paths and Causeways

The local tendency for streams to flood the largely flat landscape caused the Hanneys to be built on slightly higher ground caused by gravel deposits. A causeway links the two villages. Both also contain a network of paths and raised pavements [see W.H. listed monuments]. These are still partly made of large limestone blocks, which have worn into a marbled finish in some areas. These large blocks also form the foundation for some of today's asphalted paths too. There are also the remains of a paved path along part of the Hanney brook.



Fig 22 Stone path North Green



Fig 23 Pavement foundation - Main St. W.H.



Fig 24 Stone path Hanney Brook



Fig 25 Causeway path West Hanney

Hanney Walls

The streets and gardens of Hanney have a large number of limestone walls. In some cases these form the boundaries of major properties such as Hanney House but others line village footpaths and form garden walls. Often these mark the boundaries of old farmsteads or orchards. There are no dry stone walls: most are built with a mortar mix and are capped by a massive row of rough-cut blocks about 40 cm high [see Figs 26 and 27 below]. Some of the blocks are distinctly brown and may include some sandstone from the local pits at Hatford and Shellingford? Virtually all the large walls in the West Hanney are stone apart from that at Hanney House which is a mixture of brick and stone [Fig 28]. Another brick wall surrounds Philberds Manor in East Hanney. {Fig 29}. In terms of overall stone usage, the walls are one of the most consistent features throughout both villages. Stone is often blended with brick or occurs in an unlikely place as a reminder of an earlier use of the plot it marks today. In this sense the walls of Hanney are a critical element of the street scene.



Figs 26 and 27 Walls forming boundary between Hanney House and Church St. Footpath



Fig 28 Hanney House walls



Figure 29 Philberds Manor brick wall

It is difficult to date these walls but those that are listed are assumed to be early 18th century, presumably contemporary with Hanney House. Most show evidence of later repair and are often a blend of different grades of stone.



Fig 30 Large bivalve shell in garden wall



Fig 31 Roughcast stone garden wall

The use of finished stone is relatively rare in Hanney walls and buildings. Most walls are roughcast stone and topped with large blocks. In some cases the walls have been raised by the addition of brick courses. An example from East Hanney is shown below. As time progressed the more affluent used iron as an upper course and East Hanney is fortunate in having two listed sets of early Victorian railings. [See also Robey House in the E.H. appendix section]



Fig 32. Rough stone garden wall with brick upper course

Fig 33. Listed early Victorian ironwork

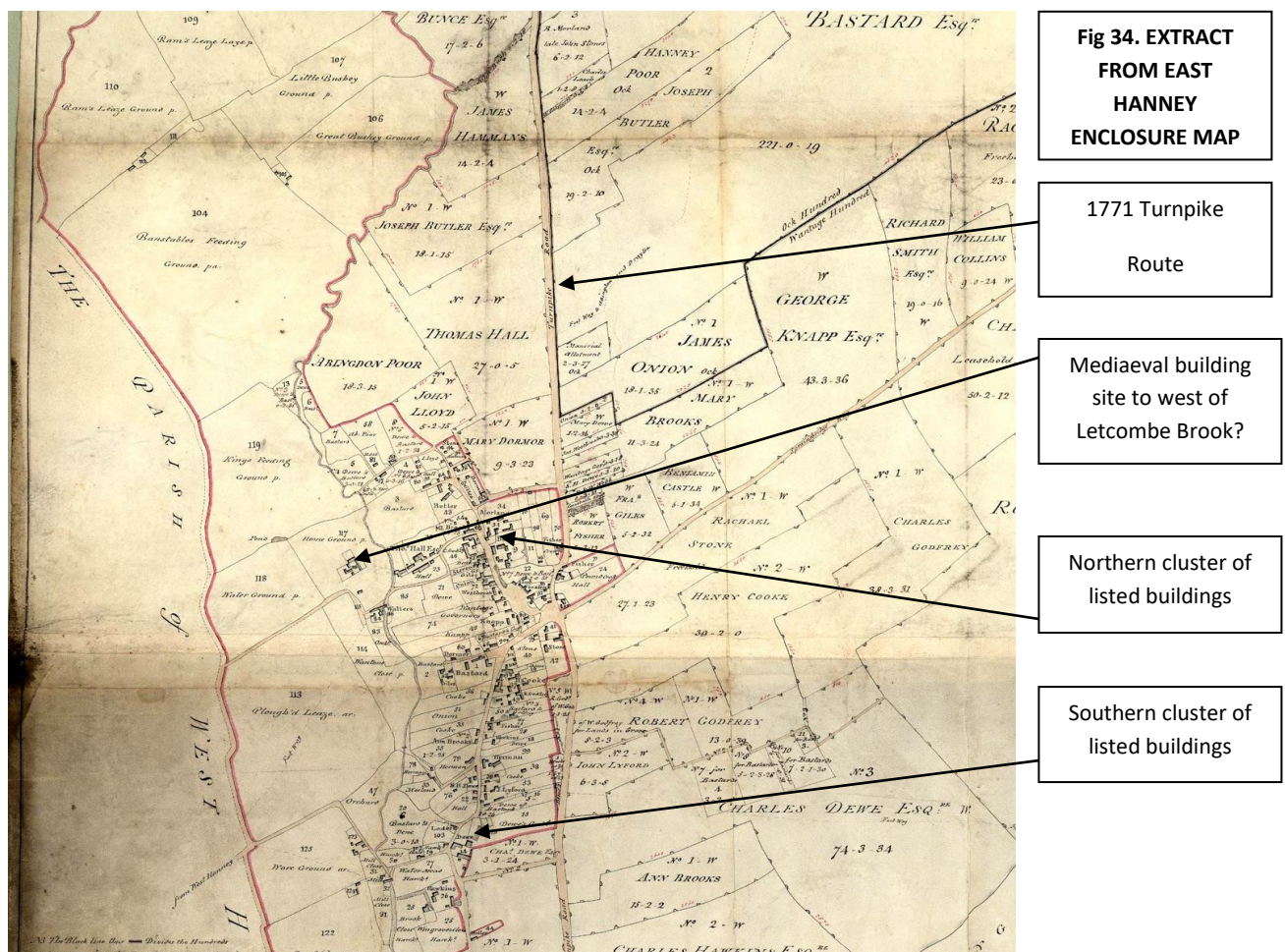
Both in East Hanney northern crossroads area



East Hanney

The old core of East Hanney lies mostly on the east bank of the Letcombe Brook apart from the farm and mill buildings in Mill Orchard, and a few recent houses and the school on the Causeway. There is however evidence of more mediaeval building on the west bank of the brook that may have included a chapel. As shown in Fig 24 the path along the brook still has several massive slabs and these presumably formed the main element of the path in the past. The causeways at nearby Steventon have a more complete stone structure and may represent how the Hanney paths were in the past.

The village was by-passed by the 1771 Wantage to Oxford turnpike which took a straighter and possibly firmer route from the Elm Farm fork outside Wantage and passes a few hundred yards to the east. A few buildings cluster where the old village street meets this road but the majority of the village follows the old line of the earlier road which may be based around a previous Roman route. This has ensured a more peaceful life for the inhabitants and may have partly protected the village from the development that has marred West Hanney's main street. There is much post war building in East Hanney but it is generally less intrusive.



The southern group of listed buildings runs from Dandridge's Mill to a cluster around the Black Horse pub, a fine blue and red brick unlisted building which forms a focus here. Sadly it was whitewashed recently by a deranged landlord. Again diversity is the key. There are several 17th century cottages, many with thatched roofs and two fine brick villas, one Georgian and one Victorian. Finally there is the grey stone chapel. Apart from a few gable ends, garden walls and the chapel, brick is the dominant material.



Fig35 The Mulberries NB earlier stone gable end



Fig 36 Robey House with composite wall



Fig 37 Hale Cottage



Fig 38 Lilac Cottage

The second group is spread along Green Lane, and is a mix of cottages and farmhouses, with several again retaining their thatch. Most are illustrated in the listed buildings appendix. In some areas little has changed in a century apart from the decline of the elm and the growth of a chestnut. This area has a cruciform street plan that indicates an almost separate earlier village cluster here.



Fig 39 The Green – 2011 and circa 1900?

East Hanney has a final cluster of listed buildings around Halls Lane and Philberds Manor. This entire group use brick as the dominant material, both for dwellings and surrounding walls. Stone is however used for plinths and foundation work and for contrast and support in some walls. It includes one of East Hanney's two 19th century mills, Lower Mill. Both mills are substantial brick structures although the other, Dandridge's Mill in Mill Orchard, was developed as a spinning mill initially. Both use brick exclusively in their construction.

As In West Hanney much has been lost throughout the village. Two larger manor houses, Herles Court and the Manor of Southbury, were dismantled and no doubt provided stone for wider use.



Fig 40. Dandridge's Mill [left]

Built in 1805 as a silk mill on the site of an earlier mill.

Fig 41 Lower Mill – previously West's Mill – built around 1870 [right]



As in West Hanney the new building has seldom added a positive contribution. Many of the new executive dwellings seem more like exercises in architectural damage limitation. The council and housing association stock of recent years seems equally poor and has no stone content. Fortunately the gardening club's activities seem to have encouraged some useful camouflage in many areas and the more recent developments seem to have shown a slight improvement in design and an awareness of the local styles, as well as a decline in bungalows [written as bungalow dweller!]. The lack of any consistent village style does perhaps tax the planners' and architects' imaginations and of course makes it easier to evade the need to blend in.

The Sources of Stone in the Hanneys?

The sites of number of redundant small quarries occur along the Corallian ridge four miles to the north of Hanney. Hanney does not apparently have any old quarry in the parish or any dominant source of stone or other materials, which contributes to the variety of its vernacular architecture. The nearest stone was perhaps the quarry at Lyford, which is mentioned in the Victoria County History as in Ock Field and is identified as a stone pit of 1 acre 1 rood and 37 perches in both the History and on the Lyford enclosure map. The pit appears to have been disused for many years and is overgrown. There is evidence however of previous stone extraction on both north and south sides of Lyford Bridge although it is difficult to judge the quality of the stone previously produced from the fragment visible today. There are some sarsens which may have come from the local sandpits which can be found just south of the Corallian ridge. Several of these still operate, at Shellingford, Hatford and Appleton.

Similar small quarries existed at regular intervals along the ridge from Shellingford to Gimbro at Pusey. Others were in operation at Stanford in the Vale, Garford, Tubney and Marcham in the early 20th century. They were clearly capable of producing most of the rougher walling and building stone used in the Hanneys. It is unclear how much their better quality strata were suited to cut stone work from the present available records and physical evidence. Many also appear to have been dug to a limited depth at which extraction was relatively easy. They may then have reached a point where more technology was required or drainage became an issue.



Fig 42 Lyford Stone pit today



Fig 43 Overgrown workings S. of Lyford Bridge



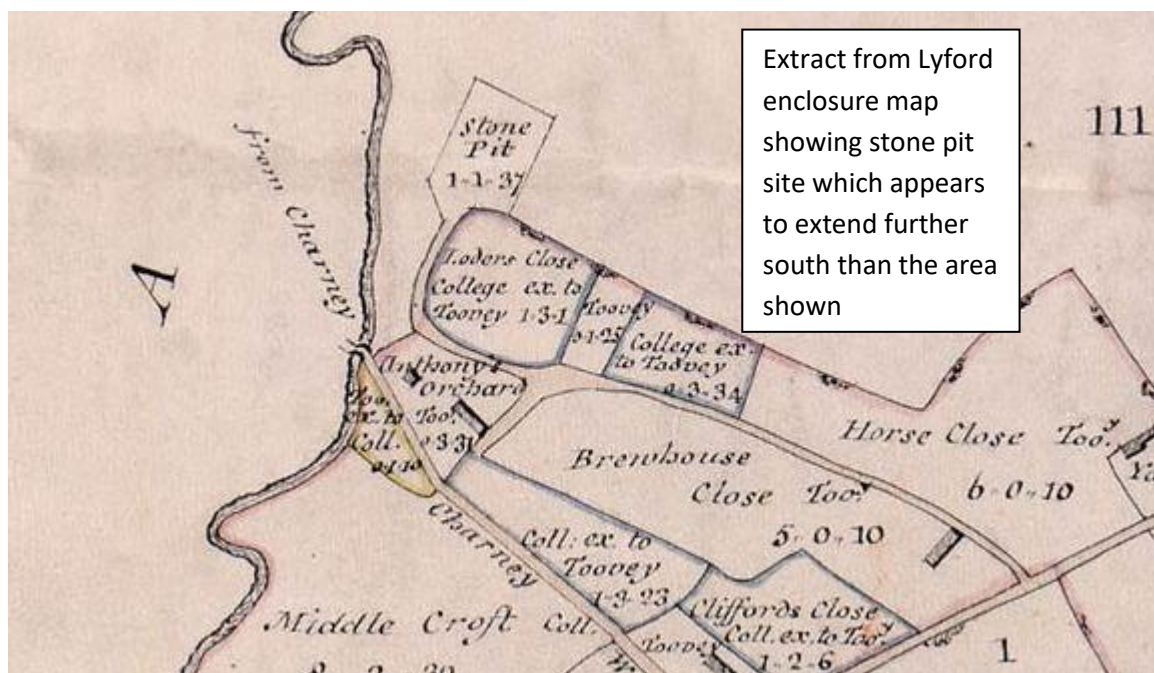
Fig 44 Shellingford Quarry cross section



Fig 45 Stone capping on Lyford Bridge- built in 1837



Fig's 46 and 47 Satellite image and enclosure map for Lyford Pit area



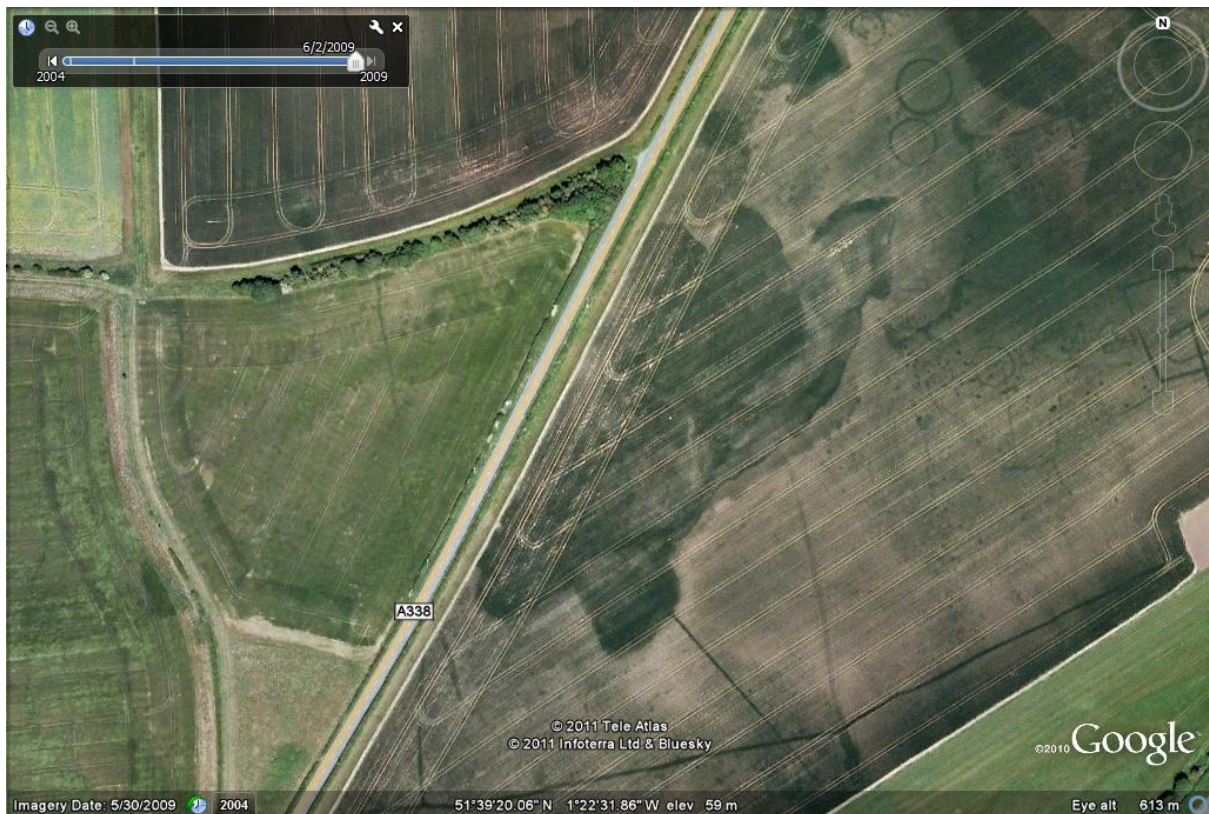


Fig 48 Area of Garford/Venn Mill quarry

There was a quarry immediately north of Venn Mill on the Wantage to Oxford road and its extent can clearly be seen above. There is currently a depression about a metre deep visible from the roadside after infilling. This is just less than two miles from Hanney.

There is a record in the Hanney History Group's oral history transcripts of a fatal accident in the quarry caused by a worker 'undermining.' This presumably implies a much deeper pit than is evident today. The description is difficult to date but possibly relates to a period between 1895 and 1920. The interviewee was born in 1877. He refers again to the quarry as a stone pit.

The buildings and walls of Hanney offer a rich variety of stone, ranging from rubble to finely dressed blocks. It clearly mostly comes from the ridge to the north although there do seem to be ironstones and sandstones in the mixture. There is no apparent use of chalk or flint in any quantity. Re-use in repair, and apparent multiple sourcing when building less aesthetically critical structures such as walls [and a lot of the church!] has led to a rich mixture. This needs a very experienced local geologist to be able to resolve their diverse nature and sources. This survey did not attempt that depth of an enquiry. It could form the basis of a very interesting summer evening guided walk?

Roofing materials

Around half a dozen houses in West Hanney and a few more in East use split stone slates. These are presumably from Stonesfield despite the distance of just over 20 miles. This would appear to be at least double the normal maximum distance from the stone sources more regularly used by the village and this perhaps explains its use only on higher value dwellings.

There is a limited use of Welsh or other blue slate, probably associated with the arrival of rail transport, but earlier buildings used thatch or tiles and sometimes both. Virtually all 20th century buildings have tiled roofs. 11 buildings in East and 6 in West Hanney still have thatched roofs.

Summary

On approaching either of the Hanneys from most directions, stone is not a dominant feature in their initial impression. Apart from its use in renovation, little is used in the Hanneys today. Brick, timber cladding and tiles dominate the new buildings. Recent developments have made a greater attempt to match the several styles of the village than some of the developers and council architects achieved in the late 20th century. The results are mostly happier if sometimes crowded in their plots. These are seldom in stone apart from one new executive dwelling in the new estate in North Green, West Hanney. The majority of the quarries that supplied reasonably priced stone for domestic purposes have long closed and most buyers appear content with brick, tile and concrete. Reclaimed stone is the main source for most repair work, as has no doubt been the case in the past too.

Appendix 1 lists the building materials used for all structures on a street by street basis. It can be seen that only 23 out of 565 structures use stone as the dominant material- about 4%. Another 12 mix it with brick, often as a gable end. In 507 others [89%], brick forms the main structural element. However in at least 15 out of 24 streets there are significant and sometimes massive stone walls.

Although there are relatively few stone buildings in relation to the total housing stock, stone is an important part of the street scene in both the Hanneys. This may only be as an echo of the former paths alongside the Brook, the random jigsaws of many walls or the evening glow of a Stonesfield roof but it still forms a main element of some key buildings. Few materials locally match the continuity and durability of these Corallian rocks that are rarely dominant in the scene but are seldom out of sight. There are few great buildings in the two villages: Pevsner allows us but three mentions in the Buildings of England including the obligatory and lesser St James in East Hanney and Hanney House and St James the Great; only two of these are of stone. The villages do however offer a strong and diverse mix of English vernacular architecture, and despite a few buildings in need of a benevolent demolition man, the street scene offers a rich variety and relies considerably on its stones and slates to achieve this. They may not be the dominant elements in the two villages but they form a critical part of the mix.

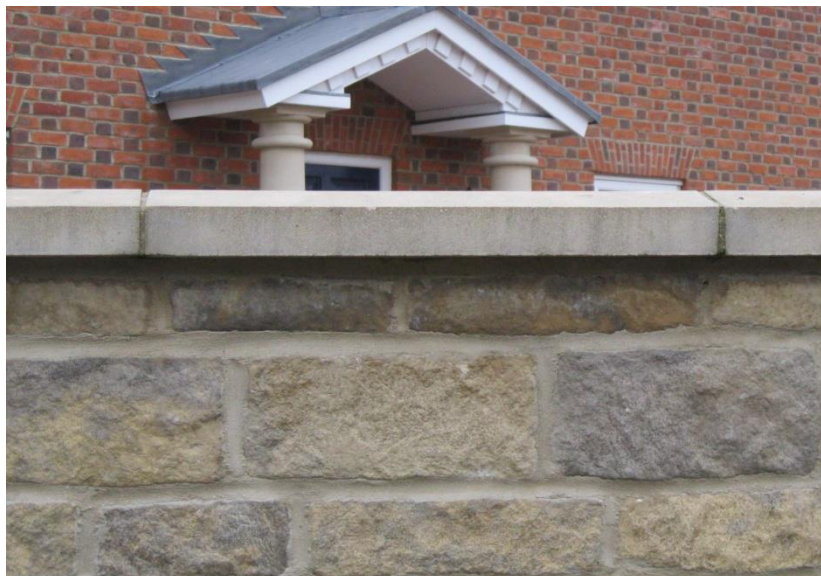
With thanks for the help of Paul Sayers, my walking companion, Ann Fewins and other members of the Hanney History Group. These notes are intended as an initial summary. Any additional material or corrections to the above text will be most welcome.

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Post script

Stone, at least it looks like stone even if a little tidy in its construction, is still arriving in the Hanneys. A new house in North Green West Hanney is shown below, built in around 2008. There are some stone walls too and a little red and black brickwork. It is all a little angular but an improvement on some earlier infilling in the Hanneys. The stone is difficult to identify – did it come from China like that in Cornmarket?



Appendix 1: Summary of main constructional features of all domestic, spiritual and industrial buildings in East and West Hanney [provisional]

Street	Total No.	Age range	No. Listed	Stone	Stone /brick	Timb /St.*	Timb/Br.*	Brick	Stonesfield	Thatch	Stone walls	Village
<i>Botney Lane</i>	7	20-21C	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	None	W.H.
<i>The Meads</i>	22	20-21C	0	0	0	0	0	22	0	0	None	W.H.
<i>Main St.</i>	35	16C -20C	1	4	2	0	3	26	0	3	Several	W.H.
<i>Church St.+ Monks Cl.</i>	56	16-21C	13	3	1	0	4	48	3	3	Several	W.H.
<i>The Green</i>	3 Inc cross	18C	5 Inc.wall	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	Major Feature	W.H.
<i>North Green</i>	28	16-21C	4	1	0	1	1	25	0	0	Several	W.H.
<i>Winter Lane</i>	28	20C + 1 16C	1	1	0	0	0	27	1	0	Several	W.H.
<i>Rectory Farm Cl.</i>	7	Post WW2	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	Some Gardens	W.H.
<i>The Croft</i>	16	Post WW2	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	None	W.H.
<i>School Road</i>	17	Post WW2	1	0	0	0	1	16	0	0	Few	W.H.
W.Hanney Total	219		25	11	3	1	9	195	4	6		

*Decorative only use of timber or cladding not included

Street	Total No.	Age range	No. listed	Stone	Stone /brick	Timb /St.	Timb/Br.	Brick	Stonesfield	Thatch	Stone walls	Village
Causeway	22	20-21C	0	1	0	0	0	21	0	0	Limited - Base of Causeway?	E.H
Brookside and B. Close	45	16-20C	1	0	0	0	0	45	0	0	None	E.H
Mill Orchard	17	16C -20C	4	1	1	0	1	14	1	1	Several	E.H
Summertown	11	16-21C	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	None	E.H
Main Street	46	18C	4	3	1	0	6	36	0	4	Several	E.H
Berry Lane /Orchard Close	26	16-21C	1	0	0	0	1	25	0	1	Several	E.H
Blenheim Orch/ Bramley Close.	38	20C	0	0	0	0	0	38	0	0	None	E.H
The Paddocks	4	20-21C	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	?	E.H
Snuggs Lane/ St James View	30	19-20C	1	1	2	0	1	26	0	0	Several	E.H
The Green + Morlands	30	16C-20C	8	4	2	0	0	24	1	4	Several	E.H
Halls Lane	7	16C -20C	4	0	1	0	0	6	1	1	Some - mostly brick	E.H
Ebbs Lane	25	17C-20C	1	2	1	0	2	20	0	1	Several with brick	E.H
Ashfield Lane & Close	18	19C-20C	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	None	E.H
Oxford Rd & Steventon Rd	27	16C -21C	3 inc. 2 milestones	0	1	0	2	24	0	0	Several	E.H
E. Hanney Totals	346		27	12	9	0	13	312	3	12		
E&W HanneyTot.	565		52	23	12	1	22	507	7	18		