

TRADITIONAL CHIMNEYS

Design Guide



Together with dormer windows, chimneys are one of the most important features of traditional Cotswold buildings. These typical examples of local craftsmanship enliven roofscapes and still provide a practical means of disposing of flue gases. This is a guide to their conservation, and to the design and detailing of new chimneys in the traditional style.



Cotswold District Council

February 1999

CARING FOR THE COTSWOLDS

History

The earliest Cotswold chimneys date from the medieval period and are quite different to chimneys of later times. They were generally octagonal in plan and carved out of a single piece of stone, with a pointed top. A good example can still be seen on The Pigeon House in Bibury.

Since the sixteenth century a 'standard' type of Cotswold chimney emerged. It was made of large pieces of ashlar stone (stone sawn on all six sides and joined with very narrow mortar joints). Such chimneys were rectangular in plan, with a moulded cap on the top and a projecting skirt at the base. The skirt is intended to protect the junction with the roof slope.

Chimneys of this design continued to be used over a long period, although the detailing - particularly the cap moulding - became simplified to a chamfer by the nineteenth century.

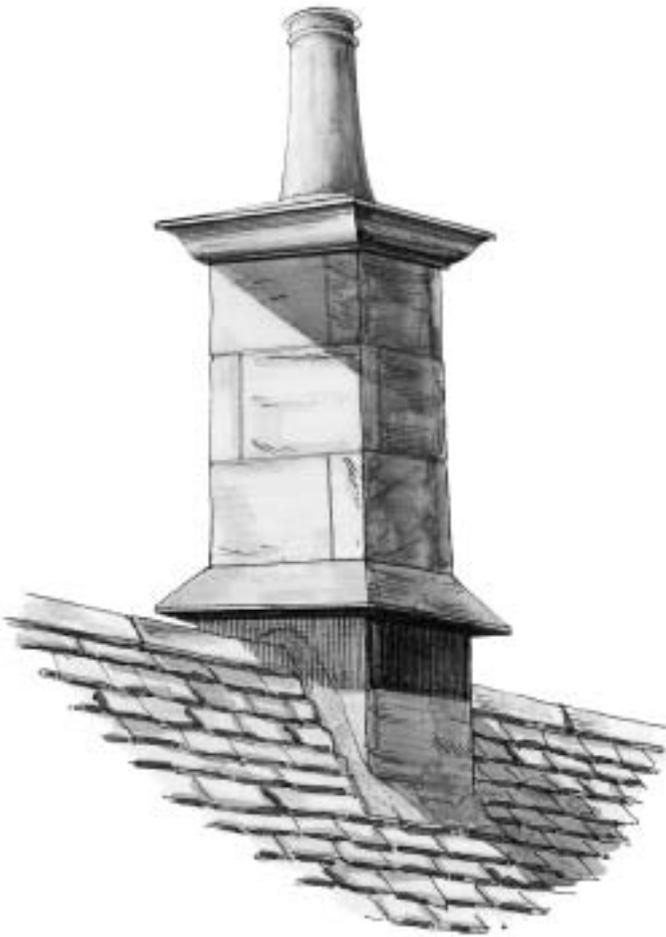
There are variations in chimney design across the District. Towards the north west, especially in the villages at the foot of the Cotswold escarpment, chimneys are commonly very elaborate, the stacks often set at 45°. Sometimes, where several stacks of this type are grouped together, the caps join at the corners, examples being found in large numbers in the Weston-sub-Edge, Willersey and Chipping Campden area.

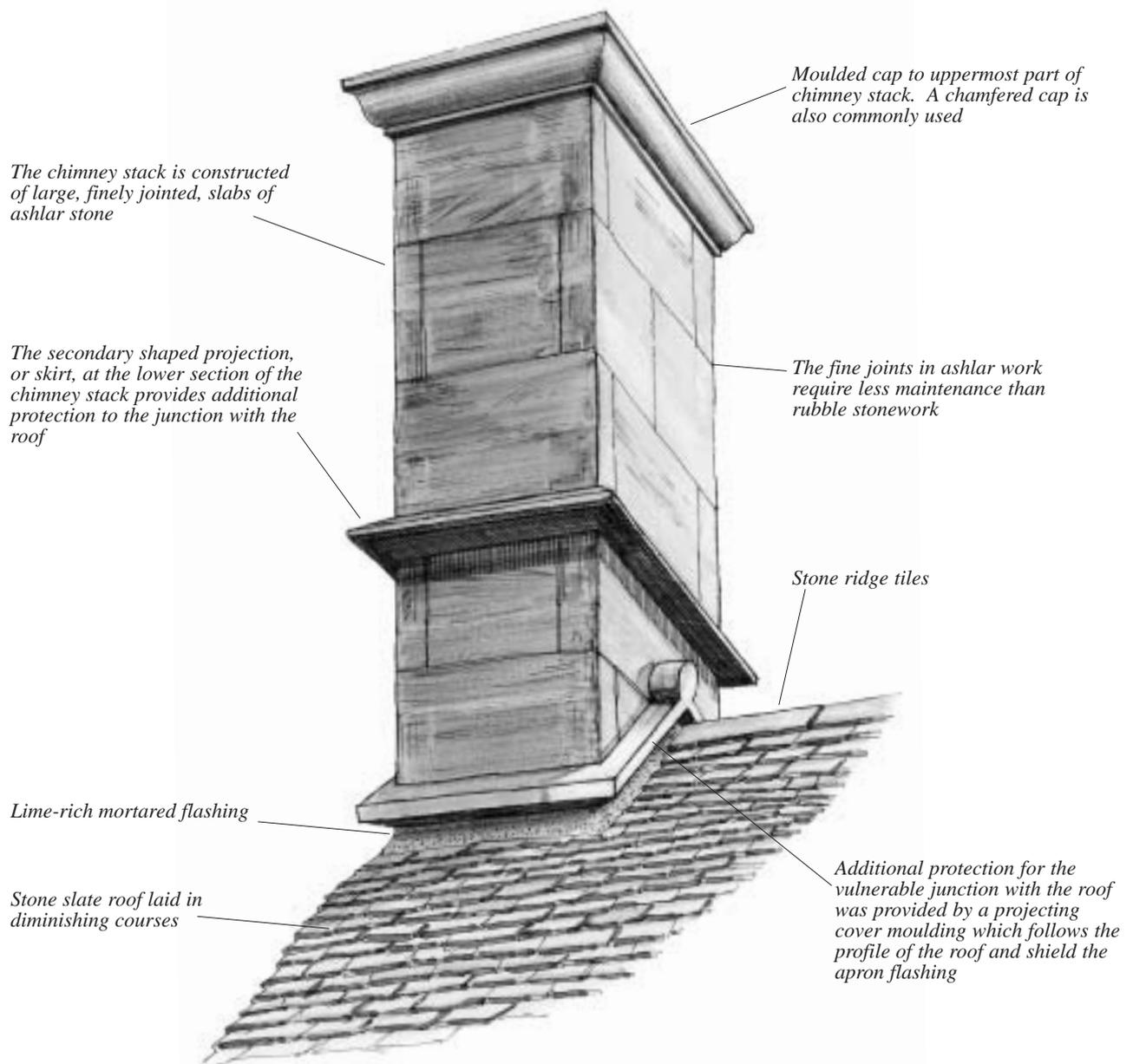
In other parts of the Cotswolds, where quarries did not produce ashlar stone, chimneys were made of rubble (small rough stonework), with the cap and skirts made from built in pieces of stone slate. These are the most common type of chimney towards the south Cotswolds and near the Thames valley.

This type of chimney, elaborated a little in its geometry, was a favourite of the Cotswold Arts and Crafts groups of designers, and a fine set can be seen at Rodmarton Manor.

Brick gradually replaced stone as the most common material in the late nineteenth century, many new buildings of that date having brick chimneys from the beginning. As a result, most villages and towns now have large numbers of brick chimneys, and in some places these can be quite individual in appearance. Estates, such as the St Aldwyn Estate, had most of their cottage chimneys rebuilt quite elaborately in brick giving the village of Coln St Aldwyn a distinctive feature.

With the advent of coal fires, chimney pots were added. These may be of a simple tapered variety, but often they can be highly elaborate. More recently metal boiler flues have started to appear, but these usually detract from the character of the chimney. If a boiler flue is to be taken up through a chimney, a better alternative to a metal cowl is an earthenware cowed pot.





The chimney stack is constructed of large, finely jointed, slabs of ashlar stone

The secondary shaped projection, or skirt, at the lower section of the chimney stack provides additional protection to the junction with the roof

Moulded cap to uppermost part of chimney stack. A chamfered cap is also commonly used

The fine joints in ashlar work require less maintenance than rubble stonework

Stone ridge tiles

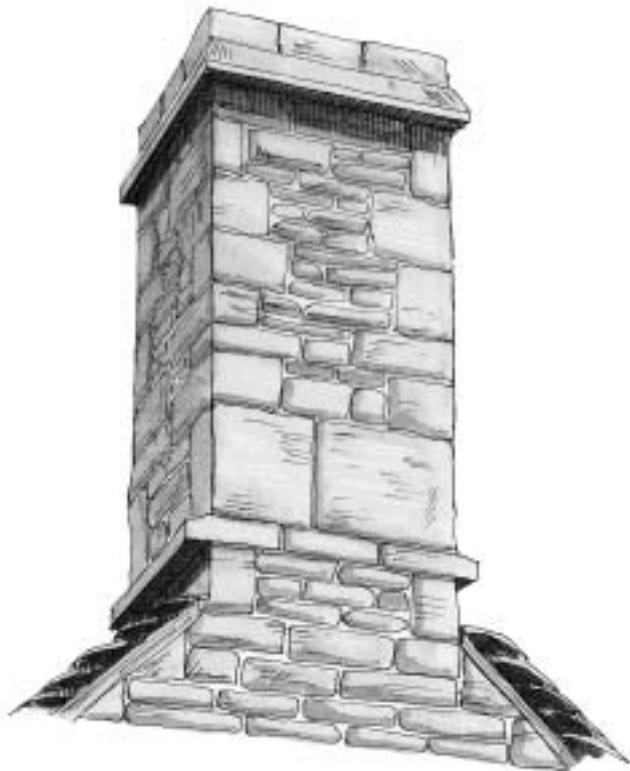
Lime-rich mortared flashing

Stone slate roof laid in diminishing courses

Additional protection for the vulnerable junction with the roof was provided by a projecting cover moulding which follows the profile of the roof and shield the apron flashing



There are a wide variety of **chimney pots** and **cowls** available for different purposes. From left to right we have illustrated a **boiler cowl**, an **octagonal chimney pot** of Victorian design, a **standard cylindrical chimney pot** and a **crested cowl**. It should be noted that certain pot designs may not be appropriate in all circumstances. Occasionally, the addition of a pot may not be an acceptable alteration, especially if the building is listed and where the special qualities of the building would be spoilt by such an addition.



Details

At first, all Cotswold chimneys seem to be very similar. Unfortunately, inadvertent changes to the design and detailing often occur when they are repaired or rebuilt unless they are carefully measured and photographed. Of particular importance are any mouldings, especially that to the cap, and the course heights of the chimney shaft. Historically, in ashlar chimneys, it was the intention to use the largest stones available in the chimney, cutting down the number of mortar joints and therefore reducing the need for repointing.

The other detail to understand is the weather moulding intended to protect the junction with the roof. This was generally fairly tight to the roof tiles or slates, with just enough space for a soft mortar fillet which it protected—a gap of about 100mm (4").

Conservation

Original, or old, chimneys should be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible. However, often the stonework (or brickwork) may have perished to the point where total replacement is the only option. In such cases it is essential that, after the erection of the scaffolding, photographs and detailed measurements are taken to guide the preparation of replacement masonry. Where the detailing is so eroded that it gives little clue of its original profile, adjacent or similar chimneys may give a better idea of what has been lost.

Generally, the removal of chimneys, even where these currently serve no purpose, is to be discouraged. Traditional roofscapes are invariably enlivened by chimneys and their disappearance results in a very bland effect (such as is found on the many modern housing estates where chimneys are not provided). This is especially important in conservation areas.

Listed Buildings

Most changes to chimneys on listed buildings, especially where total replacement is proposed, will require listed building consent. It is important to contact the Conservation and Design Section for advice prior to any work on listed buildings, and before an application is made.

Where prior permission is required, it is a criminal offence to carry out unauthorized works to a listed building.

For further advice and information contact:

**The Conservation and Design Section
Directorate of Development and Heritage
Cotswold District Council
Trinity Road
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 1PX**

Tel: 01285 643643 Fax: 01285 644561

