

INFORMATION SHEET 5 – PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PLASTERING METHODS

We have a flexible approach to our business, and can offer any combination of services. We are highly skilled in a range of plastering methods, using contemporary or traditional materials.

Lime Plastering

Lime has been used as a building material for centuries. It has many unique properties that make it as relevant and beautiful a material as it ever was. Ornate Interiors are highly skilled in this ancient technique, and can apply lime plaster either directly onto brick or masonry ('on the hard') or onto wooden laths.

The Wooden laths, 1¼ wide x ¼" thick (usually oak, chestnut or Scots pine) can be either sawn or riven (i.e. traditionally hand made) and are thoroughly dampened before plastering. If mortar is applied to dry laths they are likely to swell, causing them to bow either inwards or outwards.

Plaster is applied in three coats, starting with a 'scratch coat' that is a coarse combination of products mixed with animal hair. The rough surface is keyed to create good adhesion for the subsequent layer. Then a 'straightening coat' is applied to even out the surface, building up to the 'finishing coat', producing a fine smooth finish.

There are many colloquial and historical names for the different layers of three coat lime plastering just as there are many different recipes for the plastering material itself. It is a long process demanding dedicated craftsmen with exceptional skills, and the time taken is affected by the weather, the environment and the materials. It is a complex technique but the results are superb.

Rendering and Harling

Rendering and harling are used on large exterior areas in both old and new properties.

Harling (also known as 'wet dash') is a mixture of lime and other aggregates mixed to a wet, slurry-like texture. It is applied directly onto a prepared masonry surface with a large trowel called a 'harl', (providing the name for this process) and allowed to dry.

Rendering often starts with a slurry coat to even out very rough surfaces that is then allowed to dry before the application of 3 coats of plaster finish. When using traditional materials the process is the same as lime plastering sharing additional complications due to weather and atmospheric conditions on drying times, cracking and carbonation. Lime render is best applied in warm, moist weather, which allows it to dry slowly, with minimal shrinkage, and allowing the lime to absorb sufficient carbon dioxide from the air to ensure it sets, or 'stiffens' successfully. Every situation is different and allowances must be made for the unique requirements of this method. See our Case Studies where these techniques were employed on a new build chapel and an old house in Hartlepool.

Lime rendering and harling are traditional external treatments, often painted in lime wash for a coloured finish. However, self-coloured render is also available and may be matched to existing surface treatments or to any other specification.

If you would like advice on lime rendering or harling, [Contact us](#).

Running in-situ

Both running in-situ and ashlar are technically demanding, labour intensive and now rarely seen methods of decorating internal and external surfaces. Both require enormous experience and an ability to adapt to changing situations or unexpected obstacles. We offer these services thanks to the expertise and traditional skills of our time-served team.

Running in-situ requires great skill and patience. A hand-made mould of the profile is pulled between guiding batons over wet plaster or cement to create the decorative feature directly onto the building. The use of wet material applied to a vertical surface at height combined with the intricacy of the design, the engineering required and the factors of drying times, weather, environment and materials makes this a rare process. The alternative is to have the decorative feature pre-cast off site and fixed in place as a solid piece.

Ashlar is an ancient art form which replicates the appearance of polished stone blocks by creating small grooves on the surface with a metal comb. The size of blocks can be regular or reducing with height and the process demands an exceptional attention to detail and mathematical precision to be convincing.

Many reject ashlar as simply too difficult to achieve so we are proud to offer this rare service to our clients.

Spray Plastering

Spray plastering is perfect for very large areas or where there are intricate angles and difficult to reach places. Providing as superb a finish as skimming, spray plastering is a time saving and effective way to apply plaster to any substrate. In addition to quickly covering large areas with pre-coloured plaster, saving time and money, contemporary structures, benefit from the free form, organic shapes that are possible with this technology.

Many offer this service but can rarely match our skills in the application of spray plaster on awkward angled areas, such as vaulted ceilings, between beams or joists or arches. Our team offers a precision and attention to detail that most could only achieve with a trowel.

If you are interested in spray plastering solutions, see our Case Study, The Haymarket Hub.

Solid Plastering

Application of solid plaster to brick, block and cement substrates or to solid plasterboard is within our skills base. We use contemporary or traditional plastering materials, giving extra attention to angles, reveals and openings for a superb finish. Solid plastering on exteriors is common, as a form of rendering or on building facades. Coloured render can be used to reduce decorating costs. We are proud that our quality is second to none.

Plasterboarding & Skimming

In addition to our traditional plastering techniques, we offer a full range of standard options, including, installation and skimming of plasterboards, or 'dot and dab,' using the latest methods and materials. This is an excellent method for quickly and cost effectively achieving a high quality finish over a large area.