Repointing

When repointing work is carried out to boundary walls the underlining principles are the same as for repointing stable or ashlar masonry on any other stone building. Every effort should be made to copy the original finish and appearance. Whilst this may include texturing the pointing over the wallface and striking a thin mock horizontal joint line in the wet mortar before it sets on walls of rubble build, the same approach should not be adopted for ashlar walls. An appropriate lime mortar mix is preferred for this work against the more common use of cement mortar as cement causes considerable damage to the stonework and the remaining lime mortar.

Wall foot damage

Another area where boundary walls are vulnerable to decay is in the vicinity of the wall footings - especially where there is a risk of salt being laid on adjacent roads and pavements during winter months. In these circumstances, salt can be regularly splashed onto the stonework and this can lead to a significant breakdown of the mortar and the stone. In recognising that it is difficult to avoid circumstances where walls are adjacent to surfaces that are routinely treated with winter salt, repairs should be carried out to both stone and joint work whenever signs of degradation are noted. This can avoid the salt contamination continuing to decay the masonry to such an extent that it can undermine the structural stability of the wall, leading to its eventual collapse. In some cases this may involve replacing badly eroded stones to stop the process getting worse.

Adjusting boundary walls

It is now a common occurrence to partially demolish parts of existing boundary walls to create access downstems for garages or car parking spaces, especially where on-street parking restrictions have been introduced in urban areas. Being relatively slender in thickness, the walls can be demolished quickly. Care should be taken to avoid moving the original stone masons tooling so that the character of the wall can be re-created when the broken profiles are rebuilt.

The modern technique for adjusting boundary walls frequently involves using a mechanical saw to reduce the length of some cope stones. This can have an unattractive finish and the technique also involves physically breaking the stone along the weakened lines of the mechanical saw cuts. Where cope stones require to be shortened the cut end of the stone should be carefully hand worked to match the original masons tooling.
Introduction

In both rural and urban locations the domestic stone masonry boundary wall delineates the extent of personal or private property. Constructed to be 300 mm to 2 metres, at half the height of structural masonry walls used to create buildings, the boundary wall in its own right is a standing structural device. Heights can vary from not much more than two courses of masonry above ground level to walls standing over two metres, or more, high.

The lowest masonry walls were generally constructed by iron railings, many of which were removed during the Second World War as part of the war effort leaving only the fixing holes, some removed during the Second World War as part of some materials used in the construction of the walls, and ready made to hand. The stone masonry boundary wall in its own right is a standing structural device. Heights can vary from not much more than two courses of masonry above ground level to walls standing over two metres, or more, high.

Materials

In the 18th century, stone was the predominant material used in the construction of the walls. Although, in the latter part of the century, the use of brick also became commonplace in some cases.

Different types of building technique were used depending upon circumstances. For low walls, and those otherwise housing the property or creating the boundary with principal streets in urban areas, ashlar masonry construction was the norm. In rural areas, and in sector walls in urban locations, rubble construction was more common. Both forms of masonry were built in distinct courses, usually with later mortar. The ashlar build would be more finely ground than walls built of rubble construction. Rubble tended to be “rusticated” or “stugged” finish, and may or may not have a roughened band along the bottom edge. Where they terminate in a vertical face, the rusticated coping may extend across that face true for.

By the early 20th century it was uncommon for masonry coping to be set, and avoided meals, too.

The spread and growth of ivy, and other creepers, can also present considerable problems. As far as possible the stones which have been removed should be replaced in their original position taking care to align with the original building courses. Growth characteristics of ivy, and some bushes and trees, can also create problems by pressing against boundary walls causing them to fracture and become unstable, especially where the walls also act as a retaining wall.

In situations where the growth has been left unattended for many years the root penetrations can be so severe as to fracture and become unstable, especially where the walls also act as a retaining wall. Here, early treatment should focus on cutting through the stems near the ground and allowing the upper growth sufficient time to die back before damage is in the wall surface. Care must be exercised when doing this as new root work may have been formed by the growth, and becomes loose, risking a fall. The severed roots should be trimmed back from the wall surface to prevent this from occurring.

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To accommodate changes in the ground level between properties, coping stone may be carefully detailed to have their moulded surface, angled or returned in vertical steps to maintain the wall height above ground level. Occasionally, coping stones may also be used to create a level outline on the wall surface. The difference in level of approach thereby produced has to be anticipated.

The wall should be retained as they are protecting the core from being weathered. Features on their edge and bound into the stonework to provide the wall-top protection. Brick walls may also be protected by a half round coped face. Where they terminate in a vertical face, the pointing below the coping may not have a smoother band along the bottom edge, may not have a smoother finish, and may or may not have a roughly worked “stugged” finish. may or may not have a roughly worked “stugged” finish.

Coping stones

Due to the slenderness of the wall, the extent of their continuing stability lies in the provision of adequately dimensioned coping. Coping for the purpose is in different profiles, including half-round, angular, chamfered and chamfered, the coping stone bridged the thickness of the wall surface over the wall face, especially if the coping had a slight overhang. The need was to direct the water further away from the wall so that it would do most damage. In cases where boundary walls have been mistakenly filled in or in the process of partial collapse, this is generally because the coping stones have become detached. Have open joints, or re-cutting, thereby allowing water to penetrate into the structure and disintegrate the wall.

Hand-trained round-headed coping stones usually have a roughly worked “stugged” finish, and may or may not have a roughly worked “stugged” finish.