

A brief guide to galleting in the S. E. of England

The word gallet is borrowed from the French language and has been adapted to refer to the insertion of small pieces of stone into the mortar joints of masonry. It is usually used where the local stone is not freestone (freestone is easy to work) and hence it is difficult to form flat surfaces on the stone.

Galleting is quite common in Sevenoaks and good examples can be found at Sevenoaks School, Knole House and Ightham Mote whereas it is not used in Tonbridge only 5 miles away where there is a plentiful supply of good sandstone. It is likely that the practice of galleting started at least 800 years ago.



The picture on the left illustrates two forms of ragstone galleting in one building, being part random stonework of the late 18th century and part later squared and coursed work. In the centre are quoin blocks that are block bonded into the random stonework to form a corner. Galleted Kentish ragstone masonry can be found in a narrow band from Deal in the east, crossing Kent to Maidstone and Sevenoaks and heading west to Surrey.



Flint galleting can be found in north Kent but is more common along the south coast of Kent and Sussex. The wall illustrated here is located in Chichester. Alec Clifton-Taylor and A S Ireson commented that “There are, we believe, no other instances of ornamental galleting carried out with such lavish profusion.”* The use of flint is also common in East Anglia, along the north coast of Norfolk and in Norwich. An early example is the old town wall in Great Yarmouth construction of which commenced in 1285.

* English Stone Building (1983)



A much less usual form of construction is walls and galleting of ironstone but this can be found in the area around Borough Green near Sevenoaks. The stones are very dark brown as can be seen in the photograph on the left.



To the west side of Norfolk is a similar stone to the ironstone of Kent. This is known as carstone and can be seen in its natural state in the cliff face at Hunstanton.

There are a number of buildings in Downham Market having walls of this material, sometimes random work as pictured and sometimes in thin stones laid to courses.



There are other forms of galleting and regional names such as garneting as it is known in West Surrey.

This illustration demonstrates how different garneting can appear when compared with the previous examples. It seems very delicate and has been described as having the look of little necklaces.



More unusual is its use in brickwork which in this case dates from the 17th century.

If you would like to know more about this fascinating topic or would like to discuss a particular property please do not hesitate to contact me.

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