

# **Method Statement for the Stone Flags**

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Project: Stone Flags Conservation Works

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## 1. Introduction

This method statement outlines the procedures and best practices to be followed for the careful removal, assessment, repair, storage, and reinstatement of existing stone flags. The aim is to ensure the preservation and maximum reuse of original materials in keeping with the historic character of the building, while maintaining safety and quality standards throughout the process.

## 2. Scope of Works

The works covered under this method statement include:

- Careful lifting and removal of all visible existing stone flags.
- Assessment of each flag for structural integrity and reusability.
- Repair, recutting, or dressing of damaged but reclaimable flags.
- Safe handling, labeling, and storage of reclaimed materials.
- Reinstallation of the repaired and reclaimed stone flags as part of the final works.

## 3. Materials Involved

- Existing stone flags (original to site)
- Sandstone and limestone components (for adjacent works and matching repairs)
- Hydraulic lime mortar (for bedding and repointing as appropriate)
- Replacement reclaimed stone flags, where additional material is required

## 4. Responsibilities

- Site Supervisor / Conservation Lead: Responsible for overseeing all stone flag operations, ensuring compliance with heritage and safety requirements.
- Stonemasons / Operatives: Carry out lifting, repair, and relaying under supervision.
- Health & Safety Officer: Monitors site conditions and ensures safe manual handling practices.
- Architect / Conservation Officer: Approves materials, repair methodology, and final finishes.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Preparation

- Identify and photograph all areas containing existing stone flags prior to removal.
- Prepare a plan indicating the position and numbering of each flag for accurate reinstatement.
- Establish a designated clean and secure storage area on site, protected from weather and contamination.

### 5.2 Removal

- Carefully lift each flag manually or using appropriate lifting equipment to prevent cracking or chipping.
- Avoid levering directly under edges; instead, use lifting straps or cushioned supports.
- Number and tag each stone flag corresponding to its original location (using non-permanent, removable labels).
- Stack reclaimed stones horizontally on timber bearers with spacers between layers to prevent surface damage.

### 5.3 Inspection and Assessment

- Inspect each flag for structural integrity, delamination, and surface erosion.
- Sort materials into categories: reclaimable for reuse without repair; reclaimable with repair or recutting; or unusable / to be replaced.
- Document the condition of each flag, including photographic records.

### 5.4 Repair and Recutting

- Carefully clean all reclaimable flags using soft brushes and clean water (no chemical cleaners).
- Minor cracks or edge damage to be repaired using compatible lime-based repair mortars.
- Where necessary, flags will be recut or redressed to ensure level bedding during reinstatement.
- Replacement flags (where required) shall match the original in material, colour, thickness, and texture.

### 5.5 Storage

- Store all flags on level ground with timber battens between layers.
- Protect stacks with breathable covers (e.g., hessian sheeting) to allow airflow while shielding from rain and frost.
- Keep sandstone, limestone, and other materials separated by type to prevent cross-contamination or staining.

### 5.6 Reuse and Reinstallation

- Reuse as many original flags as possible, following the original layout pattern.
- Bed reused and new stone flags on hydraulic lime mortar for compatibility and breathability.
- Ensure joints are tight, level, and aligned with adjacent historic fabric.
- Repoint joints using matching lime mortar, ensuring a flush finish consistent with the surrounding material.

## **6. Health & Safety Considerations**

- Manual handling assessments to be completed before work begins.
- PPE to include gloves, safety boots, high-visibility clothing, and eye protection.
- Lifting aids or small mechanical hoists to be used where flags exceed safe manual handling weight.
- Storage areas to be cordoned off and clearly marked.
- Dust suppression measures to be implemented if mechanical cutting or dressing is undertaken.

## **7. Quality Assurance**

- All works will be carried out in accordance with Historic England and SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) conservation principles.
- The Conservation Officer or Architect will inspect works at key stages: after removal and storage; post-repair / pre-reinstallation; and upon completion of relaying.
- Any deviations from this methodology must be approved by the Architect or Conservation Lead before implementation.

## **8. Environmental Considerations**

- Maximize reuse of existing materials to reduce waste and environmental impact.
- Dispose of any non-reusable materials in compliance with local regulations.
- Prevent contamination of surrounding soil and drainage systems during cleaning and mortar mixing.

## **9. Completion**

- Upon completion, all stone flags will be relaid, cleaned, and presented in keeping with the original aesthetic.
- A final photographic record will be taken, and a materials reuse log submitted to the project team for inclusion in the conservation record.