

Glossary of Architectural and Building terms

(Dates given, for instance, as C19 = 'nineteenth century')

A

Arcade - a row of **arches** supported by **columns**.

Arch - a section above a door or opening window with the structural function of dispersing the weight from above around the opening. Also referred to as a **head** above a door or window. The shape will determine its name; most common are **segmental** (semi-circular), **lancet** (pointed) and **gauged** (composed of shaped bricks).

Architrave - in **Classical** architecture, the lower part of a moulded **cornice**. Commonly used term for the moulded surround of a door or window.

Arts and Crafts - derived from an artistic movement of the late C19, based on the ideas of William Morris, which promoted traditional forms of design and the use of craft techniques in construction. Its architectural expression is seen in the use of traditional materials and restrained **vernacular** decoration.

Art Nouveau - an artistic movement of the turn of the century characterised by stylised forms of flowers and animals, prevalent in Edwardian buildings.

Ashlar - smoothed, even blocks of stone masonry.

B

Baluster - the upright in a staircase or **balustrade** that supports the horizontal top rail or **coping**.

Balustrade - the upstanding part of a stair or balcony that supports a rail or **coping**. The individual uprights (**balusters**) may be decorated or ornate, for example in the shape of bottles, in which case it is termed a **bottle balustrade**.

Bargeboard - a timber piece fitted to the outer edge of a **gable**, sometimes carved for decorative effect.

Baroque - a style associated with late **Classical** architecture, that evolved during the C17 and C18 and is characterised by exuberant decoration overlaid on classical architectural details.

Battered - a feature, such as a chimney, with sloping faces or sides making it narrower at the top than at the bottom.

Battlement - the top part of a castle wall, often used to detail a **parapet**; also known as **crenellation**.

Bay - an extension to the main building line, termed **canted** or **splayed** when angled back at the sides, and squared when perpendicular (see also **Window**).

Bottle balustrade - a **balustrade** made up of bottle-shaped **balusters**.

Bow window - a curved **window** extending from the front of a building.

Bull nose - the rounded end of a brick or tile.

Burr - a rough, poor quality brick used as infill.

C

Canted - angled at the sides, as in a **bay** window.

Cap - a stone piece on top of a pier to protect it from weathering.

Cape - extension to the footpath to narrow the road width.

Capital - the ornate top of a **column**, usually decorated with carvings of leaves and flowers.

Cartouche - a carved panel of stone or plaster.

Casement window - a **window** opening on side or top hinges.

Chamfered - an object with the edges of the front face angled back to give a sense of depth; e.g. on a door **stile**.

Channelled - **stucco** or render grooved to look like stone masonry.

Chinoiserie - a decorative style, inspired by oriental art and design.

Classical - an architectural style based on Greek and Roman antiquities, characterised by the arrangement of the elements of a building according to a set of rules (i.e. Orders).

Clerestorey - a row of windows at high level lighting the ground or principal floor; very common in churches where they are positioned over the aisles.

Colonnette - a small, slim **column**, usually arranged in groups.

Column - a structural or decorative vertical element, usually circular, supporting or framing the upper parts of a building.

Coping - a sloping or curved, overhanging section of stone on top of a wall or **parapet** designed to protect the masonry from rain water.

Corbel - a projecting piece of timber, stone or brick supporting an overhanging structure, such as an **arch** or balcony.

Corinthian - an ornate type of **column** with exuberant decoration of the **capital**.

Cornice - a decorative mould applied to **parapets** and **pediments**.

Crenellation(s) - a **parapet** that has been built in the form of castle **battlement**.

Crow-stepped gable - a **gable** with stepped sides like a stair case.

Cupola - a domed structure on the roof.

Curtilage - the area within the boundaries of a property surrounding the main building.

D

Dentil - a square block, often used as a detail in a **cornice**, where it is alternated with a gap.

Doorcase - the surrounding frame of a door, usually timber.

Doric - a plain **column** with little decoration.

Dormer window - a **window** projecting from a roof.

Dressings - the decorative elements of building elevations used to define windows, doors, etc., and usually of a material contrasting with the main one; for instance, stone window surrounds on a brick facade.

Dutch gable - a **gable** with tiered and curved sides as evolved in the Low Countries.

E

Eaves - the lower, overhanging section of a pitched roof, intended to throw rain water away from the wall below.

Egg and Dart - a moulding pattern of alternating egg-shaped and arrow-head shaped pieces.

Engineering brick - an extremely hard brick used mainly in engineering structures such as bridges.

Entablature - the top part of a **column** or **pediment** comprising a number of elements; i.e. **architrave**, **cornice**, **modillion**, **capital**, etc.

F

Faience - a glazed clay tile or block.

Fenestration - the pattern of **windows**.

Fielded - a flat, undecorated but raised part of a door panel.

Fin - a simple projection at right angles to the face of the building, repeated to give some relief to flat modernist facades.

Finial - a decorative device to finish off a building element with a flourish, most commonly seen on railings.

Fleche - a pointed spike or **finial**, common on church roofs.

Frieze - a band or decorative motif running along the upper part of the wall, sometimes carved (e.g. on Wandsworth Town Hall)

Fluted - carved with long vertical depressions, as in many columns.

G

Gable - a decorative finish to the upper part of a wall designed to obscure the roof structure. Termed **Dutch** if replicating the style common in Holland; **crow-stepped** if rising in stages like a staircase.

Gardenesque - of a style associated with the C18 English Romantic garden designs; naturalistic rather than formal.

Gauged - bricks shaped to fit together closely, as in an **arch** or **head**.

Gault brick - a light cream/yellow brick commonly made in East Anglia (hence Suffolk gaults).

Gothic(k) - term applied to Medieval architecture characterised by pointed arches and windows, fine decorative carving, **tracery**, etc. Revived in the later C19 by ecclesiastical architects who looked back to the Medieval cathedrals and churches for their main inspiration.

H

Ha ha - a linear hollow or ditch defining a property or field boundary and primarily used to exclude livestock from the grounds of a house while maintaining a view of the landscape.

Head - the common term for the **arch** over an opening.

Herringbone pattern - a pattern created by laying rectangular blocks of wood or stone in an interlocking arrangement; e.g. some door panels and paving.

Hipped roof - a roof sloping at the ends as well as the sides.

Hood - a projecting moulded section over a door or window.

I

International - a modern architectural style that eschews decoration and is based on designing buildings in simple cubist forms with no reference to local styles or materials. Characterised by modern building materials, such as concrete, steel and plate glass.

Ionic - a type of **column**.

Italianate - built in a style derived from Italy.

J

Jettied - extended out over the floor below, usually on timber joists.

K

Knapped flint - flint stones that have had one side broken off and flattened to present a smooth face.

L

Lancet - a **window** or **arch** coming to a narrow point and much used in **Gothic** architecture.

Leaded light - a window pane subdivided into small squares or diamonds by lead strips (known as **comes**).

Lesene - a **pilaster** without a base or capital.

Light - a window with fixed glazing.

Lintel - a structural beam above an opening, such as a window or door, which may be expressed externally as an architectural feature.

Loggia - an open gallery, often in the form of an **arcade**.

M

Mansard roof - a roof set back from the building frontage, usually behind a **parapet**, and rising in two pitches to form an attic space.

Modillion - part of a **cornice** comprising a series of small brackets.

Morphology - the study of the shape and layout of an area as defined by natural and man-made features; e.g. valleys, rivers, roads, boundaries.

Mullion - a vertical piece of stone or timber dividing a window into sections.

N

Nailhead - a style of moulding in the form of a small pyramid shaped projection, which when laid horizontally in a band form a **string course**.

O

Ogee - a moulding shaped with a double curve.

Oriel - a **window** which is suspended from the face of the building.

Ovolar (or Ovolo) - a moulding section of a quarter circle.

P

Panel tracery - a late Medieval form of **tracery** characterised by sub-division of the window by strong vertical and horizontal members.

Pantile - a clay roofing tile with an 'S'-shaped profile.

Parapet - the upper part of a wall, often used to hide roofs and decorated for architectural effect; e.g. **crenellated** or **battlemented** in the form of a castle wall.

Party-line - the dividing wall between properties.

Paviors - small brick-like paving units.

Pediment - a triangular feature of classical buildings surmounting a **portico**, but often used on a smaller scale over doors and windows, which are then referred to as pedimented. When the upper sloping sides are curved it is called **segmental**. It may termed be **broken** or **open** when either the bottom horizontal or angled upper sides do not meet.

Pilaster - a flattened **column** used to frame door and window cases and shopfronts.

Planter - a container for holding plants.

Plat - a **string course** without mouldings.

Plinth - the base of a **column** or wall.

Portico - a grand entrance extending in front of the building line, usually defined by **columns** and surmounted by a **pediment**.

Q

Queen Anne Style - an architectural style of the late C19 century, related to the **Arts & Crafts** movement, and reviving Dutch style buildings of the reign of William and Mary (late C17).

Quoin - a corner of a building defined by contrasting or exaggerated materials.

R

Range - a line of buildings, often grouped around a courtyard.

Reveal - the area of masonry or frame visible between the outer face of a wall and a door or window which is set back from it.

Roughcast - a type of render of plaster or concrete with a rough surface finish.

Rubble stone - stonework left rough and unworked.

Rustication - **stucco** or stone blocks with large angled joints.

S

Salt glaze - a method of glazing brick or clay to give a glassy finish.

Sash window - a **window** that slides vertically on a system of cords and balanced weights.

Scorria block - a hard, durable engineering brick, looking like granite; used in paving, especially in gutters.

Scroll(work) - a circular or spiral decorative piece, representing a curved leaf, such as a bracket or the top of a **column**. If included in a decorative panel, it would be referred to as a scroll leaf panel.

Segmental - a section of a circle and the term applied to a curved element, e.g. above an **arch** or **pediment**.

Sett - a small block of hard stone, such as granite, used for paving.

Soldier band - a **string course** made up of bricks set with the long side vertical.

Soffit - the underside of **eaves** or other projection.

Spandrel - a blank area between **arch** supports or below a **window**.

Splayed - a **bay window** with angled sides.

Stable block - small square stone or clay pavior traditionally used as flooring in stables and similar buildings.

Stack - the part of the chimney breast visible above the roof.

Stile - the vertical sections of a door or window.

Stippled - the effect created by carving small depressions in the face of stone.

Stock brick - a traditional clay brick commonly used in house construction; often called London stocks because of the frequency of use locally. May be yellow or red in colour.

String course - a horizontal band in a wall, usually raised and often moulded.

Stucco - a lime based render applied to the exterior of a building. Often scored to imitate courses of masonry, then called **channelled**, and sometimes more deeply incised to give the appearance of roughly hewn stone, in which case it is **rusticated**.

Swag - a decorative carving representing a suspended cloth or curtain.

T

Tented - a roof structure shaped to look like a tent.

Tessellated tiles - small clay tiles or mosaics, geometrically shaped, and fitted together to make intricate formal designs; commonly used for front paths to houses.

Tetrastyle - a **portico** with four **columns**.

Toothed - a brick detail like a **dentil** in which bricks are alternately recessed and projected.

Tourelle - a small tower-like structure suspended from the corner of a building (also called a turret).

Sprocket - a small supporting piece of stone or timber carrying a larger item such as a bracket.

Tracery - delicately carved stonework usually seen in the windows of **Gothic** churches and cathedrals; various forms exist, including **panel** type.

Transom - a horizontal glazing bar in a **window**.

Trefoil - literally "three leaves", thus relating to any decorative element with the appearance of a clover leaf.

Tuscan - a plain, unadorned **column**.

Tympanum - the space between a **lintel** and an **arch** above a door.

V

Venetian - a window composed of three openings or **lights** within the frame, the central light **arched**, the two flanking with flat **heads**.

Vernacular - based on local and traditional construction methods, materials and decorative styles.

Voussoir - the shaped bricks or stones over a window forming a **head** or **arch**.

W

Weatherboarding - overlapping timber boards cladding the outside of a building.

casements, which are side hinged and open inwards or outwards. Those with a side light are said to have **margins**. A window may be projected from the building frontage, and termed a **bay** or **bow** (if curved), or **oriel** if suspended above ground. The top is usually defined by an **arch**. A **dormer** is one set into the roof slope.

Window - an opening to allow light and air into a building which has developed into a significant element of architectural design; collectively referred to as **fenestration**. The form of opening determines the type of window; most common are **sashes**, which slide vertically, and