



Limewashing

Limewashing
North Gable



Limewash is the preferred finish on traditional buildings as it allows the structure to “breathe,” allowing any damp present to evaporate away rather than be trapped in the wall. It has a matt finish and helps consolidate and improve the surface of both old and new plaster physically and visually. It can be obtained in a wide range of colours as well as white. Because limewashes are porous paints they shade in depth of colour to reflect the dampness of the background material.

Other breathable paints may be used on to traditional buildings but it is vital to select a paint that is sufficiently vapour permeable. Paints such as distemper, casein, natural emulsions and clay paints can all be used internally and silicate masonry paints may be used both internally and externally. Modern plastic paints are not suitable and should never be considered. They have the potential

to cause considerable problems such as condensation and rot.

Generally limewash should be applied thinly and be allowed to dry out slowly. The best limewash is prepared from the finest quality lime putty slaked from Buxton quicklime. It will develop a fine finish over several coats, it is recommend that a minimum of four (five coats if natural white is used externally) on new render and plaster. Historically, many ingredients were added to limewashes to modify their performance such as common salt, casein, tallow and linseed oil. These can be added in very small quantities to help reduce “dusting” and improve external water shedding.

PREPARATION

The surface to be limewashed should be brushed and washed free of any loose particles, dust, dirt, lichen etc. If there is mould growth the surface should be treated with a fungicide (e.g. a weak bleach

solution) which should be rinsed off before limewashing. Old coats of limewash can be cleaned with a solution of citric acid crystals

DAMPING

It is very important to damp dry surfaces but may not be necessary if limewashing new lime render or lime plaster which has yet to totally dry out. Spray the area before limewashing with water as this prevents the water in the limewash from being sucked out too quickly on application. The water must be allowed to suck into the substrate or the limewash may fail after a week or so due to lack of surface tension.

FIRST COAT

Whisk the limewash thoroughly before use as the putty will settle out. Using a large emulsion brush or paint pad apply the limewash onto the dampened area. Work it well into any cracks or joints but



don't let it build up too thickly as it can craze on drying out. Remember it's a wash and will look transparent on application but will dry opaque. Coloured limewashes dry to a much lighter shade than the wet limewash.

SUBSEQUENT COATS

Four or five coats are recommended on new external lime render, three coats on new internal lime plaster but may only need a couple of coats if overpainting. Ideally leave each coat to cure for a minimum of a day. For each further coat, follow the same procedure of misting well before limewashing and allowing to dry out slowly, with light spraying if necessary. Protect external limewash from the weather if necessary. A thin coat curing slowly in the presence of moisture will form a more crystalline, hardwearing surface compared to a chalky finish if a thick coat dries out too quickly. After the initial carbonation and curing limewash will continue to strengthen for several weeks.

FROST

As limewash is a water-based paint, it shouldn't be applied in low temperatures of less than 5°C or if there's a risk of frost.

QUANTITIES

A litre of limewash will cover 3 - 6 square metres for one coat, depending on the smoothness and porosity of the surface being limewashed.

SAFETY:

Limes are caustic. Always wear eye protection and protective gloves and clothing and follow the safety instructions on the labels. Our advice and information are given in good faith. It's important that users satisfy themselves that they've chosen an appropriate product and have a suitably skilled workforce.

CONTACT DETAILS

Mike Wye & Associates
 Natural Building & Decorating Products
 Tel: 01409 281 644
 www.mikewye.co.uk



Above:
 Two images from the lime course

Middle:
 Lime wash display

Bottom:
 Sunlight limewash

