



SNECKED STONEMASONRY

by Bobby Watt



This method of bonding stonework is so prevalent in Scotland and Ireland it has been referred to in some journals as 'Celtic Bond'. Amongst the French speakers in Canada it is known as '*travail ecosaïs*'.

Whatever it's called, this is a method of building an incredibly strong masonry wall with differently sized, (and even very loosely squared), stones, in either ashlar or rubble work, with a pattern that is both handsome and, at the higher levels of workmanship, artistic.

The principal characteristic of snecked work is the keying together of parallel courses of stone. This is achieved by interrupting the level height of a horizontal course by placing a taller stone that reaches up into the next course. This vertical interlacing gives a wall a tensile strength that enhances its compressive strength.

When I served my apprenticeship we were never provided with a set of instructions to build snecked work; it was picked up directly on the job. When I started teaching stonemasonry to brick and blocklayers at Durham College in Ontario, I learned the value of putting the basic tenets on paper for the students to take with them.

SNECKED MASONRY involves three kinds of stones:

RISERS—Or **JUMPERS**, these are the stones extend up through the horizontal beds. They can be square, or almost square, or up to three times as long as they are high.

LEVELLERS—These form the bulk of the wall. They are usually at least twice as long and up to five times as long as they are high.

SNECKS—These are the smaller pieces that enable the mason to make up the differential in height between the top surfaces of the levelers and the risers.

The easiest way to build snecked masonry is to work with uniform material such as that provided by free-stone suppliers, like Indiana Limestone, who saw the stone into standard bed heights that enable us to conveniently build snecked work with a minimum of bother. The visible faces of such stones are usually pitched. *But beware; some suppliers, either ignorant or unprincipled, provide stone in this category that is face-bedded, that is to say with the bedding plane of the stone running vertical, parallel to the surface plane of the wall. For shame! This stone will, in time, defoliate.*