



IHBC SOUTHWEST

BULLETIN SPRING 2024

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1. Heritage News

Historic England's Everyday Heritage Grant

The untold stories of a bacon factory in Wiltshire is among 56 new projects that Historic England will be funding across the next 2 years to celebrate working class histories through its Everyday Heritage Grant Programme.

Historic England received over 380 applications and has chosen to fund 56 community-led projects that will explore diverse stories of people and places at the heart of English history. The total amount of funding awarded by Historic England will be £875,000, ranging from £6,800 to £25,000 per individual project. Historic England's Everyday Heritage Grant programme aims to shine a light on the diversity of our heritage and is part of Historic England's commitment to ensuring that a wider range of people are able to connect with, enjoy and benefit from the historic environment.

Wherever people live, they are surrounded by historic buildings, landscapes and streets, industrial or coastal heritage. Everyday Heritage Grant projects allow people of all ages to explore these valued local places and celebrate their 'everyday' shared heritage. The new projects will reveal and celebrate fascinating, untold stories across England, from exploring and documenting the untold histories of St Agnes Place in Kennington (a street central to the Rastafari community and since the 1980s locally known as House of Dread) to creating an interactive walking trail marking the 70 year history of the Leicester Caribbean Cricket and Social Club, and looking at the working class history of drag in the "Pink Triangle", also known as the Gay Village area of Newcastle. Encouraging people to engage with their local heritage, these projects will support them to tell their own stories, in their own way, and to connect with others in their local communities.

C&T Harris Bacon Factory Calne Wiltshire

Revealing the stories of those who worked at the C&T Harris Bacon Factory, this project will work with former employees to create an archive of oral history exploring these factory workers' work, life and friendships. Operating for over 200 years, the C&T Harris Bacon Factory opened in the 1770s and was demolished in the 1980s. The project will be led by Yesterday's Story, supported by the volunteers of Calne Heritage Centre and archived at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.



Volunteers will collect oral histories from the former workers and present them to the local community in an accessible way. Despite the factory no longer existing, it was a massive part of Calne's identity and is still renowned today. Yesterday's Story wants to capture the history of those who worked at the factory before their stories are lost forever.

2. Swindon's - Mechanic Institute

The Mechanics Institute, which has never been owned by the Council, was once a hive of activity during the height of the Railway Works.

But, following the closure of the town's railway works, it has sat empty and decaying since 1986 and is currently classed as 'at risk' by the Theatres Trust.

Due to the condition of the building, it will take tens of millions of pounds and a number of years to bring it back into use. However, a new plan, which has been shaped using expert advice from Historic England, was recently presented to the Council's Cabinet and sets out some key steps to begin the process.

This includes:

- Securing a viable and sustainable new use for the building
- Identifying how to fund the building
- Addressing the ownership of the building

The plan also asks for £110,000 in potential funding to progress the project. The Council will also work with local partners on the future of the building including the Swindon Heritage Preservation Trust and Historic England



3. SW IHBC Cob Conference Exeter

The SW IHBC Cob and Earth Day held at Reed Hall Exeter University on Thursday 21st March was a well attended event on the day and I hope virtually too!

An excellent mix of speakers provided a comprehensive background, looking at the technology, its historical and vernacular use, its repair and the potential future for cob and earth mortars.

The day started with an historic overview from Jonathan Taylor Editor of the Building Conservation Directory.

This was followed by a Dan Maskell Senior Lecturer in Architecture and Engineering at Bath University. His was an entertaining, hands on practical demonstration and exploration of the physical properties of earth materials. It concluded with an evidence of the compressive strength of earth as a building material, with a little twist in classic Blue Peter style of one he made earlier.



Dan Maskell from Bath University on the properties of Cob/Earth

Following the morning break we explored the potential future for earth building with a presentation of Cobuage Project by Professor Steve Goodhew a hybrid presentation with live feed from the Plymouth University Laboratory to see the ongoing project work.

The project is nearing completion but has achieved a cob and hemp fibre combination wall that at 600 mm thick can achieve a u value 0.3 w/m²K that complies with current Building Regulations (although this is understood to be changing to a more stringent u value).



Professor Steve Goodhew presented research on 'Cobauge'

It was also interesting to hear that traditional cob at 600 mm can achieve a u value of 0.9 w/m²k and with its ability to retain and convect heat, its healthy breathable building attributes and with such a low carbon credential it must be questioned whether over a lifetime of use and its ability to be recycled as a fully circular material that cob performs as well if not better than modern materials and without the side effects/emissions.

It is surely the Building Regulations narrow u value measurement approach that is the problem and not the solution. Surely what is needed is a more flexible and more sophisticated Building Regulations code that considers the life cycle and low carbon credential of natural materials like cob and thatch to be balanced through their lifecycle,...that's needs to catch up..?

This was followed by a presentation from Tobias Carleton-Pragnell Senior Consultant for Historic Earthen Architecture Conservation and Course Leader at West Dean Conservation Master class in Plaster and Renders. He provided an understanding of the significance of cob and earth mortars as a vernacular building material and on the principle of construction with earth generally and sourcing appropriate sub soils.

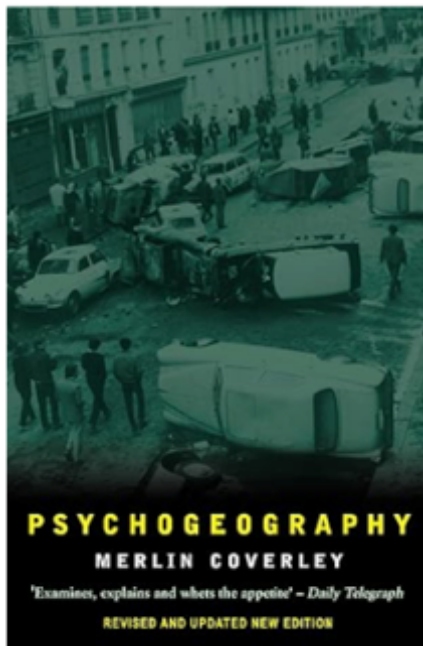
In to the afternoon after some lively lunchtime discussions Barry Honeysett a Devon Based Structural Engineer provided an interesting discourse on cob repairs including the use of heli bars developed ion a response to repair cracking within cob.

This led to some feedback on Barry's approach by the following presenter Leslie Cornell Senior a Cornish based Cob Builder and Cob Block Maker.

The afternoon concluded with a though provoking report from Alison Henry Historic England Head of Building Conservation and Designed landscape and Co-author of English Heritage advice on Mortars Renders and Plasters.

My take away from the day was that cob and earth has an important and valuable future but needs a more informed and intelligent Building Regulations code is needed less reliant on u values as a thermal performance and more able to balance the importance of low (minimal) carbon life cycle of materials in construction materials.

4. Books - Psychogeography Merlin Coverley



Psychogeography increasingly this term is used to describe a bewildering array of ideas from the occult and urban walking to avant-garde experimentation and political radicalism. But where does it come from and what exactly does it mean?

Merlin Coverley examines the origins of psychogeography in the Paris of the 1950's discussing the theoretical background and political significance of the ideas of early practitioners such as Guy Debord.

Elsewhere, psychogeographic ideas continue to find retrospective validation in much earlier transitions from the visionary writing of William Blake and Thomas De Quincey to the rise of the flaneur on the streets of 19th century Paris and on through the avant garde practices of the surrealist. Today these ideas hold greater currency than ever through the popularity of writers and filmmakers such as Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd, Stewart Home, Will Self and Patrick Keiller.

From the urban wanderer to the armchair traveller from the *derive* to *detournement* psychogeography provides us with new ways of apprehending our surroundings, transforming the familiar streets of our everyday experience into something new and unexpected - A Characterization Study? - This book conducts the reader through this process, offering both an explanation and definition of the terms involved and analysis of the key figures and their work.

Bulletin Editors Comment

This is the quarterly Bulletin for the IHBC SW Branch. It looks to highlight relevant news and best practice in the South West and things of interest from elsewhere.

I would welcome contributions from members in the South West as the best way to make this Bulletin relevant and worthwhile. I look forward to receive contributions on any topic, be it buildings, people or anything else members feel might be relevant and of interest. Please attach relevant photographs with contribution as these help make the Bulletin of visual interest and saves a lot of words!

Please note that Bulletin is made up from a variety of Contributor's and the Editor holds no responsibility for the viewpoints expressed or information provided.

