Newsletter

BUILDING LIMES FORUM IRELAND

Comments or articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the board or editor.

Building Limes Forum Ireland is a community of lime practitioners, specifiers, suppliers and producers of lime. The Forum exists to encourage expertise and understanding in the appropriate use of building limes, and education in the standards of production, preparation, application and aftercare. Building Limes Forum Ireland is connected and affiliated to the Building Limes Forums across the world. Please go to www.buildinglimesforumireland.com

Venetian Plaster

Paul Griffin
Griffin Plastering

Venetian Plaster
The term Venetian Plaster is a marketing term coined in the United States to cover a number of plaster finishes. Three of these finishes are Scagliola, Marmorino and Stucco Veneziano. All three share a marble like appearance but each is created using different materials and techniques.

Scagliola
Scagliola is considered to be one of the most striking craft techniques used in decoration. It's born from the hands of a skilled craftsperson who with plaster, glue and pigments can create an infinite number of colours and patterns.

History of Scagliola
Scagliola was described by Vitruvius in the first century BC, and its revival was a later achievement of the Renaissance when the scagliola technique came into fashion in Tuscany. Thereafter, its use can be seen in many of the great palaces around Europe. Scagliola was first used to imitate expensive marbles which due to its versatility allowed slabs and columns to be made in any size and shape. Historically, large flat slabs as well as large columns were commonly made in scagliola. Scagliola was often used because of its reduced weight and loading — it is common for a structural column to be encased within a 12mm layer of Scagliola. With rich decorative qualities, such as an infinite range of colours, veining, and patterns scagliola soon became very desirable amongst the elite in society with a great many important historic and artistic pieces created.

Scagliola is now more expensive to create than it is to procure most marbles but, in my opinion, the two should never be compared. Marble is a natural stone and scagliola is a man-made creation. Notwithstanding this, these are sometimes difficult to tell apart. Often the only way to distinguish one from the other is by placing your hand on it, if it stays cold, it is marble and if it gets warm it is scagliola. Another give away is of course the lack of joints in a scagliola piece.

Scagliola
There are two types of scagliola. Marezzo scagliola is mainly used in the US and is made using pigmented batches of plaster in a liquid state. This largely relies on the use of Keene's cement and it

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Trial sample panels Paul is currently working on to reflect the Irish tricolour using a variety of patterns and veining.

Letter from the Chair

Dear Members,

As I write this letter there is a real feeling of Spring in the air and with it a sense of hope. The vaccine is being rolled out and with it the expectation that things will get back to some level of normality later this year. Our primary concern remains the safety and well-being of our members, friends, and the conservation community. We have adapted our programme of events to suit the situation in which we find ourselves. Listed below are the proposed events planned for this year. These are also on the website, so keep in touch for further updates.

We had our first online event in February. Although I missed meeting everyone face to face in the RSAI, the 'online' Lime Slam was very successful, and I would like to thank again all of our speakers for their presentations. These have been recorded and are available to anyone who missed the event for the modest charge of €10.

We applied to the Heritage Council under the Heritage Sector Support Fund and I am delighted to say that we have been successful in our application. This will enable us to go ahead with our training events this year. The first training event will be the production of a series of training videos on best practice in the use of lime. This will start when the sites reopen. The videos will be uploaded onto the website when complete.

The other major training event (postponed from last year) is planned for later this year, hopefully September, and will held in Shankill, Co. Kilkenny. It will be a joint event with SPAB Ireland. Nigel Copsey and Alex Gibbons will be our guest trainers, either travelling from the UK or contributing remotely, along with some of our own trainers including Eoin Madigan, Tom Pollard and others.

Our AGM will be held online this year. I hope you will join us on 13th May for this event. I am delighted to announce that this year's speaker is Louise Price. Louise is a heritage activist, a dry stone wall builder, amongst other things, and is based in Donegal. Her talk will focus on vernacular heritage in the north west, and I think it will be of huge interest to all of us. You can check out her blog on limewindow.blog.

The annual BLF conference was due to be held in Exeter 27th to 30th August. Despite the recent announcement by the UK Government that the country will be open by end June, the conference will still go ahead as a virtual event. The theme is '*Looking Forward, looking Back'* so there will be plenty of discussion on new build and the upgrading existing buildings along with the focus on more traditional aspects. We will keep you posted on developments. Looking forward to next year's annual conference, we are still planning to host the gathering in Queens University Belfast in early Sept 2020.

We are always looking for people to join the board or be more involved in the BLFI. We meet bi-monthly. One of the positive outcomes of Covid-19 and the lockdown is that we are all more familiar with Zoom and other platforms allowing for virtual meetings. While we look forward to meeting again in the City Assembly House, those who cannot travel can join us virtually.

Our current board is: Úna Ní Mhearáin, Chair; Grellan Rourke, Company Secretary; Oiseen Kelly, Treasurer; Shane Nolan, Membership Secretary; Lisa Edden, Training; Kevin Blackwood, Bursaries; Henry Thompson; John Beattie; Eoin Madigan; and Dermot MacRandal. Eszter Nadas is our administrator.

The strength of the BLFI is in our members and the diverse range of expertise within that membership. We are an open group and our aim is to disseminate the correct information on the use of lime in building. Sharing knowledge is key. If anyone would like to become more involved without joining the board, there are many ways you can help; Take part in the BLFI stand at the Traditional building Skills event held by the IGS every year; Let us know about a project that you are working on. Could we visit it? Site visits are very useful and informative. Do you have a yard that could be used for training or demonstrations? Could you write an article for the Newsletter or journal? Do not forget, the BLFI is non-judgmental, the aim is to help and learn from each other and to share knowledge and good practice.

We have also started a database of hot lime mortar mixes, (as previously reported). However, the it needs someone to drive it so if you think that is something of interest to you and you think you could help out, please contact myself or Eszter.

Please ensure you have paid up for 2021 and encourage colleagues or people who might benefit from membership. We have a new and much improved payment system called *Swoofee.* Check it out on our website.

Best Wishes,

Una Ni Mhearain

Chair BLFI

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is typically used without the addition of glues. The more historically appropriate technique is Bavarian scagliola, sometimes referred to as Traditional scagliola. I trained in this medium and this is the scagliola that is historically found here in Ireland and across Europe. This scagliola is made from mixing casting plaster (plaster of Paris), lime putty, pigment and glue to form a dough. The plaster or dough is then cut into approximately 12mm slices with a knife before applying this to the receiving substrate. You then rasp the surface down to the desired shape before sanding. A coat of wax is applied to give the finish.

The first time I began to appreciate and understand the complexities of Scagliola was during my training in Italy. I was very intrigued by the finish, the process etc and knew then I had to go back to learn how to do it. After my return from Italy, I was surprised at the great many historic examples of scagliola here in Ireland. The ionic columns lining the entrance hall at Fota House, Cork and the rich interior of the former Belfast Bank on College Green, Dublin, now The Bank bar (one of my favourite pubs in Dublin, with a beautiful ceiling too) are to name but a few.

Exquisite scagliola columns flanking the entrance hall at Fota House, Cork.

Scagliola is a very versatile and a satisfying medium to sculpt. Its use is not merely confined to historic houses or Victorian public buildings. One of my recent scagliola wall sculptures is waiting to be displayed by The National Museum of Ireland (it would have been displayed months ago only for Covid). Though granted, it is uncommon to find scagliola sculpted into 3D forms, such as the example illustrated here, the recent lockdowns have offered me a bit more time to experiment on what I can and cannot do with the technique.

3-D sculpture by Paul executed using scagliola technique to dramatic affect.

Inlays to furniture and other items can also be added in Scagliola forming exquisite decorative pieces. A table in the collection of The National Gallery of Ireland by Peitro Belloni and dated to c. 1746-1750 demonstrates what is possible. Like columns, tabletops and other suchlike were commissioned by the wealthy and the royal families of Europe and still can be seen in many of the great palaces.

Scagliola Tabletop attributed to Pietro Belloni, c.1746-1750 (Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Ireland).

Marmorino and Stucco Veneziano

Marmoino and stucco veneziano are made using lime putty and marble dust. They are both made in a similar way but marmorino typically has a thicker finish (marmoino 3mm approximately vs stucco veneziano 0.5mm to 1mm) and is stronger and less glossy than stucco veneziano. Like scagliola, marmorino and stucco veneziano also date back to Roman times but the marmorino and stucco veneziano as we know today, date to 15th Century Venice.

Given the poor foundations upon which Venice is built, large slabs of marble were not ideal and the architects and artisans of the city used lime, pigments and marble dust to create what we know today as marmorino and stucco veneziano. The marmorino and stucco veneziano from this date was mostly white to imitate Istrian stone, which was so often used in Venetian construction. Marmorino and stucco veneziano replicated the appearance of marble but at a fraction of the weight and cost. Being breathable, elegant and with natural characteristics it was a perfect fit for the venetian lagoons.

Stucco veneziano carries a beautiful, polished finish but it does have its limitations. This was historically applied in six or seven very thin coats and was best suited for internal use, where used externally this would have to be recoated every year. Marmorino is more durable and can be used internally or externally either over lime to provide a compatible breathable finish or over sand and cement or indeed plasterboard as part of new build construction. Marmorino can even be used in bathroom and shower areas as an alternative to tiling.

Marmorino finish applied to a contemporary bathroom interior demonstrating the diversity of the medium.

Marmorino and stucco veneziano were popular right through to the late 1800's when interest started to fade. There was a renewed awareness of the techniques during the 1950's when Italian Architect Carlo Scarpa collaborated with the artisan Eugenio De Luig creating new finishes like stucco lustro (similar to stucco veneziano). Since then, these finishes have become popular on the continent and in North American and have now spread across the globe.

I first worked with marmorino and stucco veneziano in San Francisco some 20 years ago and have been keeping an eye out for it in historic buildings ever since. Unlike scagliola, where historic examples are found in Ireland I have yet to come across marmorino and stucco veneziano in a historic building here. I am aware that it was commonly used historically in Italy and other parts of Europe and given it is similar to some of the internal finishes found in Ireland (lime putty substituting marble dust for fine sand) I would be very surprised if it was not used here though most likely these walls have long since been painted over.

In addition to the traditional lime putty finishes like marmorino and stucco veneziano there are an infinite number of finishes and colours that can be created using different techniques and different mixes of lime putty, marble dust, pigment and other ingredients for both historic and contemporary applications.

Corduroy. Just one of the many finishes and colours that can be achieved.

For more on any of the above you can contact Paul on paul@griffinplastering.ie or visit www.griffinplastering.ie

Paul Griffin
Griffin Plastering

Hot Mixed Lime Experiments

You say Potato, I say Potato,
Tomato Tomato,
CI 90 , Hotlime.
Air lime, Kibble.
Pure lime, Lump lime.
So the conversation goes…..

So many terms for this beloved material with such diverse applications. Will we ever box it in with one title? I doubt it personally, and why worry.

It challenges us practitioners. It likes to mingle with so many elements, it loves a good experiment, it teaches us that time is important and crucial to learning. If you want to rush you better get ready for disappointment but if you have time you will learn, succeed and never lose interest. You will be accused of being a bore at worst or an anorak at best. A pandemic and ensuing lockdown is a ripe opportunity for us anoraks.

In April 2020 faced with an uncertain year ahead what else could be done but try some regional material experiments. Flesh out those hunches about the pozzolana that may work, the one, the lasting and defiant mix for my windy Tipperary region where guaranteed rain and winds speed down from the Galtee mountains in all seasons. The jury is still out so no conclusive ending to this story. When lab results return the technical report will be coming. It's about the journey.

Locally we have fantastic yellow clay with fine sand embedded and marl which is pure and in deep, smooth seams. Versatile and important materials in every county of Ireland and the bones of every vernacular home and farm building. Burnt marl at a high temperature can produce a pozzolan like metakaolin but 900 deg C can be hard to attain and heavy on fuel. Yellow clay mixed with a byproduct from local coal mining in the Slieveardagh hills behind my home is the simpler step to a seemingly terrific pozzolan.

Unburnt culum.

Culm, a dust from the coal mining and washing process is a very fine anthracite dust. Jet black with an electric blue hue in direct sunlight, (it has to have that blue hue to be of benefit). To condense the importance of Culm in Tipperary, Carlow and Kilkenny into a paragraph is impossible. It was the cheapest fuel, more reliable than turf from the nearby bog and the heat ferocious, special wrought grates were needed in the hearth to contain its power and when forging wrought iron local blacksmiths trusted the heat of culm to get the job done. Mixed 1:7 culm to yellow clay that one part culm will fire all the clay like a soft brick, vitrifying all sands and illumina and if hunches are right will provide a well performing pozzolan.

Powered culum.

Once burnt these handmade spheres or blocks of burnt culm will powder down very easily in my small mill, so much faster than brick and producing an exceptionally fine talc like result. It is the most local of materials for a south Tipperary mortar. I have dug and used clay from our smallholding over the years, with a small addition of slaked lime the mortars are excellent. To use a pozzolan from burnt culm the signs are also excellent and maybe the pink hue to bedding mortars locally is now evident.

I took on repointing the rear gable of my house in various experimental mixes during April 2020 and with powdered limestone straight from the quarry at Littleton 8kms away, crushed red brick from Kilkenny next door, the crushed culm and finally a basalt dust from Antrim (based on its make up being 45% to 52% silica and 14% plus of alumina). In my mind an element with 65%silica and alumina in a mix must be worth a try. I was repointing sandstone. All joint raking was carried out to equal depth and all mixes of the same proportions. Using a hot mix mortar with a sharp sand and inclusions not greater than 5mm I added fifteen percent of my

lime dust, brick dust, culm and basalt to the one hundred percent of my lime and hydrating as little as possible and relying on the forced action mixer we use to beat all materials together. I'm a fifteen percent brickdust fan and being in experiment mode I thought go with what may prove worthy. Some practitioner quirks may be missing from this recipe.

A chat with Scottish materials chemist and mortars detective Mr Bill Revie in the months before lockdown had him curious also. It was Bill who suggested basalt might be a very good addition "IF" the silica and alumina were active, of this I had no idea so with the offer of help from Bill Revie I sent him samples of unburnt and burnt culm, as well as the basalt dust I had purchased. Finally, an experiment I could not only physically observe day to day if needed I would have some scientific backup and laboratory findings. An anoraks dream!

Mortar samples in situ.

One year on and all mortars have cured well over time, curing times did differ, no shrinkage issues occurred and through the winter weather all held up well, the culm mix definitely shows evidence of being the dryer when all are tested with the moisture meter. In using, it had an airer consistency and was amongst the first to cure and suitable for beating back, it seems to have positives. Positives I can see in situ is heartening. Now it's the wait for results from Scotland that really matter to me. Laboratories are closed and staff furloughed still. Bill Revies samples are in prism form and have been aging awaiting measurement for strength and a paste will be made for XRD to determine if any hydraulic components are detectable.

Both Bill and I share the idea that slow carbonation of hot mix mortars is still frowned upon in preference to an NHL over a relatively short time. Lime mortars carbonate slowly, in our climate it can take years and in thick walls it may never fully carbonate but will dry, stiffen, and perform structurally. We need to discuss carbonation times in hot mixed mortars more and give this process more credence as when not trusted some unnecessary costly work can be undertaken when masonry work is condemned due to natural and slow carbonation.

I hope to have Bill Revies findings to share in tandem with mine in the near future. Other cross water and border experiments have grown from the lockdown state of mind and with luck more positive stories of earth and lime mortars will get to be told.

Dancing the Culm by Michael J. Conry is self-published. An educational book with 400 years of social Irish history to impart, well-illustrated and containing many photos. ISBN 0 9535876 2 6

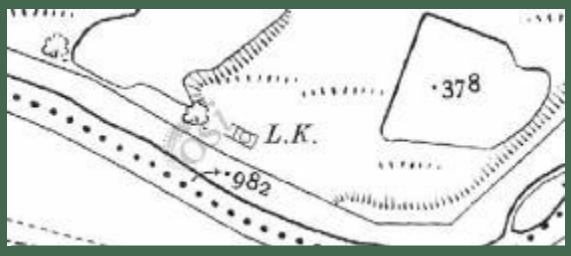
Tom Pollard
Conservation Stonemason

Dodder Lime Kiln

This past year we have all become more familiar with our local 5km radios. For me this has meant walks along the Dodder as this passes through Rathfarnham, Rathgar and Milltown. On one such walk I came across the old lime kiln at Orwell Park which, although in some disrepair, remains an important relic of our industrial heritage.

The kiln which dates to the later half of the 19th century is built into the bank of dyke which had long protected an adjacent drying green from flooding.

John Beattie
BLFI Board Member



1888-1913 O.S map a with lime kiln marked 'L.K'.

Butter Coat

Have you ever wondered about how to avoid an inconsistent finish in a wet dash in terms of texture and colour? Well, as wet dash finishes go, inconsistencies can be quite normal and often represent nothing more than the evaporation of moisture as the render coat breathes. One can reduce these inconsistencies by applying a lime wash however, it is entirely possible to produce a good consistent wet dash finish and to achieve this without lime washing.

When I was learning my trade, now some 33 years ago, the standard binder for wet dash mixes was one of cement gauged with lime (of course today we are now all too aware of the failings of cement binders when used on traditional buildings). At the time we used to apply a thin coat of render over the scratch coat about an hour before dashing, this coat was known as a 'buttercoat' and served three purposes. Firstly, it helped prevent pin holes on and between the dash and the scratch coat. For anyone who works in the wet trades you will know that pin holes are as a result of a wet dash being thrown onto a dry background, these then allow moisture to seep in behind the final dash coat causing a shady patchy finish. Secondly, the application of a 'buttercoat' would enable the dash to spread more evenly providing a more uniform texture. Thirdly, the 'buttercoat' holds the pebbles better as these sink into the buttercoat when you throw the dash.

A lot has changed since my training, not least of all the resurgence in the use of lime as the most appropriate material for use in heritage and traditional construction. I've been working with hydraulic limes now for 15 years and today exclusively use nothing but hydraulic lime and hot lime mixes on all my projects. Thinking back over the years I find it somewhat surprising that I

'Plastering, Plain and Decorative' by William Miller published 1927.

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A lot has changed since my training, not least of all the resurgence in the use of lime as the most appropriate material for use in heritage and traditional construction. I've been working with hydraulic limes now for 15 years and today exclusively use nothing but hydraulic lime and hot lime mixes on all my projects. Thinking back over the years I find it somewhat surprising that I haven't heard of a 'buttercoat' mentioned nor to my knowledge has it appeared in any specification so far. I had always suspected a 'buttercoat' had formed part of wet dashes from olden days and that this knowledge had been carried forward to when they started using sand and cement. William Millers book of 1927 entitled 'Plastering, Plain and Decorative' makes reference to the use of a 'buttercoat' indicating that it was in use at that time .

I am not suggesting that the 'buttercoat' should be introduced as a fourth coat but that there should be a change in the way the third and final coat is applied so that this includes for the application of the 'buttercoat' about an hour or so before dashing. If mixed at the same ratio as the finish coat, this will cure the very same and will become part of the finish coat itself.

I have applied 'buttercoats' on my previous three wet dash projects to stunning result. The specification I have used is as follows and has been designed for wet dash/harling using NHL limes etc.

Scud – 1½ sand : 1 lime
Scratch – 2 sand : 1 lime
Buttercoat – 2½ sand : 1 lime (1mm sand)
Dash – 2½ sand: 1 lime & ½ pebble

Or where rounding this up to use in a mixer (avoiding the use of half buckets)

Scud – 9 sand : 6 lime
Scratch – 10 sand : 5 lime
Buttercoat – 10 sand : 4 lime (1mm sand)
Dash – 10 sand : 4 lime & 2 pebble

Note this specification is indicative only and should be amended for individual projects as necessary. This has been devised for use with Wexford beach pebble aggregate as it is a known volume. If one wants to use local aggregates (as is good conservation practice), then a void ratio test should be carried out and the spec amended as needed.

I believe further investigation is required into the historic use of 'buttercoats' but from what I have witnessed I consider that their use ensures a consistent finish in terms of colour and uniform spread meaning that plasterers would not be racing against the clock to beat drying in.

Damien Condon
Calx Restoration

Dublin City Wall at Wood Quay Venue

The medieval town walls, known as the *city wall*, were built c.1100 as part of the Hiberno-Norse defences and although only a limited number of sections survive today, these serve as a reminder of Dublin's extraordinary history. Many efforts are being made to conserve and maintain what remains of the monument, including an up-standing c.24m section located within the basement of Dublin Civic Offices. The space is currently in use as a conference facility called the 'Wood Quay Venue'. Most of the c.24m section now presents within the interior of the venue, with one small portion forming part of an external courtyard. The dual internal/ external conditions add complexity to the analytical approaches required in this exciting conservation project, which straddles both archaeology and the built heritage.

Recent History

Over 100m of the northern town wall defences were uncovered during the Wood Quay excavations of the 1970s. The archaeological excavations took place to facilitate the construction of Sam Stephenson's Civic Offices. Despite the walls having been declared a National Monument in 1978, consent was granted for their removal. A c.24m section of the wall was incorporated within the basement of one of the original two office blocks. The remainder of the wall was numbered, taken down and stored within the basement.

In 2004 Dublin City Council, supported by the Heritage Council, commissioned a Conservation Plan for Dublin City Walls and Defences. The conservation plan, carried out by the Integrated Conservation Group, was published in 2005 and this remains the principal guidance document used by Dublin City Council in managing the medieval walled circuit, both above and below ground.

Dublin City Wall at the Wood Quay Venue.

Monitoring

In 2007, Dublin City Council commissioned a condition survey of the upstanding wall within the basement of Civic Offices prior to refurbishment of the space as the Wood Quay Venue. As part of the works, the loose stone from the deconstructed sections of wall, stored there since the 1970s, were catalogued and placed in metal gabions, before being removed to a secure Dublin City Council storage facility. The survey of the upstanding wall found that the northern face was showing significant loss of mortar, with approximately 50% of the wall observed to have open joints.

A further survey commissioned in 2018 by Dr Ruth Johnson, the City Archaeologist, showed that the situation had deteriorated over the convening years, by then recording 90% open joints to the north elevation. The southern part of the wall, which had displayed significantly fewer open joints and retains traces of historic render was found to have remained largely stable between the two survey periods.

On foot of the 2018 inspection, a limited program of stabilisation works were carried out under the supervision of Carrig Conservation International to include the reseating of several pinning stones. Despite these works the survey concluded that it would be necessary to carry out a judicious programme of repointing to the north elevation to secure the monument for the foreseeable future. Further recommendations included monitoring of the environmental conditions to include an analysis of temperature, relative humidity, and dew point. Fluctuating levels of relative humidity compounded by legacy issues arising from historic water ingress were identified as contributing factors in the deterioration of the mortar. This led to several targeted actions to include identifying and eliminating sources of water ingress close to the wall. Dublin City Council will continue to monitor the monument into the future to ensure that potential threats are identified and addressed in a timely fashion.

Mortar Analysis

In 2018, five mortar samples taken from the wall were analysed in a geology laboratory. The analysis found that each sample was broadly similar in terms of aggregate and binder. The aggregate comprises a very coarse sand containing quartz and feldspar, most likely derived from the terraces or bed of the River Liffey. The binder was found to be lime-based. The mortar can be replicated using sand screened to less than 2mm and burnt lime at a ratio of binder to aggregate of approximately 5:1.

Repointing Trials

Following consultation with the relevant statutory authorities, Ministerial Consent was granted for stabilisation and repointing works subject to further monitoring over 2018-19. The works were commissioned in 2020 by Dublin City Council as a project of the City Archaeologist. The design team for the project is guided by a steering group comprising key conservation and archaeological professionals along with facilities management. Carrig Conservation were retained as Conservation Consultant and Summit were engaged as the heritage contractor.

Monitoring of temperature and relative humidity at Dublin City Wall, Wood Quay Venue.

In-situ sample mortar trials at Wood Quay Venue.

The works were planned in three phases ensuring sufficient time to monitor samples, to consult with external stakeholders and to make well-informed decisions.

Phase 1 - Conservation trials to a pre-determined section of Dublin City Wall – Completed Summer 2020.

Phase 2 - Main conservation works to the internal section of the northern elevation – 2021 currently on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Phase 3 – Main conservation works to the external section of northern elevation – 2021 on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The first phase of works comprised site trials to a pre-determined section of the monument - this was carried out in the summer of 2020. The works included the raking out of failed mortar joints in agreed locations, the retention (and sieving) of the raked-out material for reuse in the replacement mortar mix, and the repointing/ trailing of finishes to include insertion of pinning stones. Note that suitable pinning stones were sourced from the salvaged stone which had been placed in a secure Dublin City Council storage facility.

The design team, guided by the project steering group, proposed a range of mortars which were initially trialled on mixing boards in the external courtyard adjacent to the site. The steering group then selected a short list of four samples for in-situ trials to aid the final selection.

These were:

Sample 1: Shiel sand 3:1 Hot Lime
Sample 2: 5 ml 3:1 Hot Lime
Sample 3: Shiel sand 3:½:½ Hot Lime/NHL 3.5
Sample 4: Galway Black sand 3:1 Hot Lime

Once the four samples were carried out, it was agreed that a larger sample area should be trialled using the design team's preferred hybrid mortar mix of Shiel sand 3: ½: ½ Hot Lime/NHL 3.5. Good workability was a significant factor in selection of this mortar, in addition to providing a close colour match and finish with areas of sound historic pointing. The historic aggregate and finds material from the raked-out joints were incorporated within the new mortar mix, to ensure maximum retention of historic fabric. Note that all areas of sound mortar shall be retained, and a record of works shall form part of the project archive. An online stakeholder webinar was held to engage with the wider conservation and archaeological community ahead of the proposed works – this was attended by representatives from the BLFI. While the main works phase has unfortunately been placed on hold during the 2020/2021 lockdowns, it is hoped that the repointing will be carried out as soon as restrictions lift.

Aneta Nerguti
Carrig Conservation International Ltd.

Slaister Pointing

On doing a bit of casual research into the use of the very flush, half-render, pointing that one comes across in Scotland and even more so in Scandinavia as well as France where such pointing is very common (depending on the geology), I wondered as to why it was not found in Ireland.

It is the sort that creates an even vertical surface of combined exposed stone surface and mortar so that the rainwater can run off and not concentrate anywhere on the surface of the wall. It makes sense, particularly with non-porous irregular glacial till as it simply evens-up the wall surface saving mortar, which would have been an expensive item in times past. Glacial till, or field stones, are commonly used in mediaeval buildings in Ireland.

On enquiry, Craig Frew, a former member of the HLM Project, advised that the technique was called *Slaister* in Scots Gaelic or *Fully Flush Pointing*. The name *Slaister* also turns up in North of England dialect. In Scots Gaelic it is a noun meaning 'sloppy' or 'messy', and in building it means 'working in a sloppy way'. In North of England dialect, it is used to describe one 'eating or working in a sloppy manner'. The nearest that I could get to it in Irish Gaeilge was *Slapaire*, used to describe a person that 'does sloppy careless work'!

There are a couple of recent examples of *Slaister* or *Fully Flush Pointing* in the Case Studies in Craig's Historic Environmental Scotland Technical Paper 29, these include Drum Castle Tower, Drumoark, Aberdeenshire, and St Andrew's Church (shown below).

It seems such finishes, (which I will only refer to as *Slaister* pointing from now on as *Fully Flush* gives the impression that I am referring to the loo), apart from their efficiency in keeping out the rain, were a response to intractable stone that was less easily dressed for tight-fitting. The technique seems to have become popular in Scotland in the latter part of the 19th century although far earlier on mainland Europe. A hot-mix mortar would have been very suitable because of its stickiness/adhesion qualities and as being thin, would carbonate and 'dry out' quickly. Whitewash appears to have been an optional finish. Other than the type of stone, its porosity or otherwise, its use possibly depended on the status of the building or owner.

As already mentioned, *Slaister* pointing was used quite extensively on the continent and it transpires that the Normans, inveterate castle builders that they were, were one of its great exponents. An example of this can be found in Ireland where the probable founder of Clonmel was a Norman Knight adventurer of some distinction, Otto de Grandson (1238-1328 circa) of Savoy who was appointed Sheriff of County Tipperary in 1265. Otto de Grandson was a builder of many castles, constructing Chateau de Chillon on Lake Geneva (former Savoy) in 1268. This was *Slaister* pointed, a preferred pointing technique of his Master Mason, a fellow Savoyard, Jacques de St George who also built many castles in Wales.

It is thus probable, and there is nothing to suggest otherwise, that the early defences of Clonmel may also have been finished with *Slaister* pointing. Otto de Grandson also founded a Franciscan friary at Clonmel in 1269 and another at Grandson in 1289. So, he was into building with a strong Tipperary-Savoy connection.

Up till now it has been common practice in Ireland when examining an exposed stone wall of a ruin, to assume because of the residue of render that can sometimes be found in the more sheltered areas, that it had been rendered in the 'conventional' manner. However, on closer examination, where presented with a mortar residue of smooth surface and thinness, one may suspect that the building was originally rendered using this flush *Slaister* pointing technique. The technique has often been overlooked in the past due to ignorance of its existence.

So, the next time you are let out and about and you come across a ruin built with glacial till, see if you can find any residue of the original 'render' and examine it to see if it is, in fact, *Slaister* pointing.

My thanks to Craig Frew, Nigel Copsey and Tim Robinson for their consultative contributions to this article. However, opinions expressed are only those of the author.

Link to Historic Environment Technical Paper 29: Review of Hot-Mix External Lime Coatings in Scotland 1997-2016 © Historic Environment Scotland 2018.
https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationid=b1545f04-f35a-42bb-8fee-a8e0008b2f50

Ivor McElveen
Conservation Engineer

St Andrew's Church, Aviemore, Highlands (Image courtesy of Historic Environment Scotland & Craig Frew).

Cork in Cavan

Cavan is no stranger to historic buildings, and you only have to take a walk in any of the numerous towns and villages scattered across the county to see that. One such area, is the quiet lakeside town of Bailieborough nestled in the southeast of the county.

Exterior of Baileborough Courthouse, Co. Cavan.

Bailieborough Courthouse, originally built in 1817 with the flat-roofed entrance porch added in 1927, had remained idle for a number of years before the decision was made to give it a new lease of life. The building retained much of its earlier fabric and made a valuable contribution to the historic character of the town, therefore the need for a sensitive restoration was critical. The aim of this redevelopment, carried out by Cooney Architects, was to provide a cultural and tourism hub for Bailieborough which would serve as a space for local artists to display their work along with catering for youth activities and events.

Following consultation with the Technical Support team at Ecological Building Systems, it was recommended to apply Diasen Diathonite Deumix + internally on the walls in areas which were affected by damp. This cork lime insulating plaster is ideally suited for masonry walls where there are high levels of residual moisture, or where salt deposits are present. After the source of damp had been identified and remedied; primarily trapped gullies, poor drainage, and leaking flashings the Diasen Diathonite Evolution, a capillary active cork and lime breathable insulating plaster, was applied to increase the thermal performance of the building. This was then finished with Diasen's Argacem HP breathable lime finishing plaster. It was also recommended to apply a natural clay, lime or emulsion paint from the Auro range of breathable natural paints.

The application of just 50mm Diasen Diathonite Evolution reduced the U value from 2.00 W/m^{2}K to just 0.60 W/ m^{2}K, a reduction in heat loss by over 300%. The application of a thermal plaster with this level of performance significantly reduces energy costs and improves comfort levels, while at the same time allowing the wall to breath and retain its character.

The use of this sequence of thermal plasters catered for the continual drying out of residual moisture while at the same time ensured that the breathability of the walls was not compromised. Indeed, with the growing awareness of sustainable building practices 'breathability' in buildings is something which many now desire. The problem that often occurs is that not as much consideration is given to what happens after the plaster has dried. There is no point in going to great lengths to ensure the walls are breathable if they are going to be covered in a synthetic impervious paint. The application of Auro natural paint, a VOC free breathable paint made from natural ingredients and minerals, provided maximum compatibility. This ensures that moisture will not become trapped within the wall, a problem often observed with plastic/ synthetic paints.

In summary, using breathable natural materials, Ecological Building Systems together with Cooney Architects were able to sympathetically bring this dilapidated structure back to life and give what will be a beautiful multi-functional and multi-use centre back to the community, retaining its character and many of the ornate architectural features for future generations.

Terry Gargan
Ecological Building Systems

Interior image of staircase following conservation & refurbishment works.

Lime Slam 2021

For many years now the BLFI events calendar has kicked off with Lime Slam, usually held in early February in a central Dublin location, most recently in the RSAI on Merrion Square, always a wonderful venue. I have been involved in the organisation of this event since 2015 and in terms of event management, it's tried and tested but it is fair to say Lime Slam 2021 brought us all out of our comfort zones. We were very lucky last February to have been able to hold Lime Slam as normal but little did we all know it would be our first and last non-virtual event of 2020. Fast forward to February 2021 where virtual events are commonplace having become the mainstay of how we now interact with each other, fortunately and unfortunately. On the plus side we had a record attendance at this year's event, a full house with a few disappointed members who missed out as the 100 tickets sold out quite quickly. It was heartening to see so many attendees from all over the country, north and south and indeed a representative of the BLF on the Isle of Man. One of the main advantages of holding virtual events is the ease with which a member can now attend from the comfort of their own home or office. Often attending or accessing events is a luxury due to logistics of travel or lack of time or finances so to be able to bring this event to more people this year was an unexpected bonus for the BLFI. Holding a virtual event also allowed us to record the presentations for issue to speakers and those members who missed out on attendance. We look forward to a return to face-to-face events later in the year but based on this years' experience will endeavour to maximise online participation too.

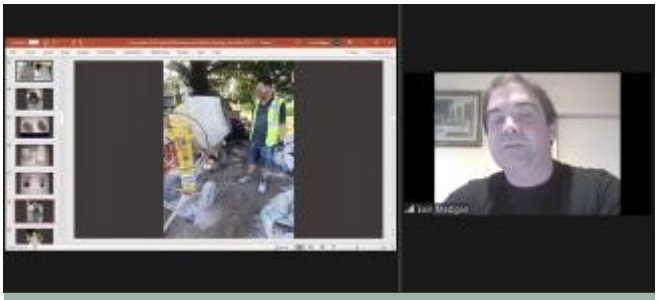
This year's event was split over two morning sessions to counteract 'Zoom' fatigue (!) but otherwise the format was the same as usual. We had 8 presentations in total, 4 each day covering everything from ruin stabilisation to post-fire disaster management and decorative plasterwork.

After an update from Úna Ni Mhearáin, BLFI Chair, Lisa Edden was first up with a summary of repairs at St. Doulagh's Church in Malahide, the oldest stone roofed church still in use in Ireland. Lisa described masonry repairs to the steep roof slopes of this important structure, part funded by conservation grants in 2018 and 2019. While structural interventions were not necessary, as noted by Lisa completing repairs to masonry on the steep slopes was structural by its very nature.

Henry Thompson then followed up with a presentation on two recent projects, repair of an Ice House on an 18th century estate in Tipperary and an upgrade of a derelict cottage in Kerry. The Ice House, constructed of stone and brick, had undergone some revision over the years but research and careful investigation guided the reinstatement of it in its original form. A most interesting simple structure. Henry's second project was the repair and extension of a cottage in a remote location in Kerry, designed by Urban Architects. The original earthen walls had been cement rendered externally and plastered internally so were completely sodden when the modern cement finishes were removed. Contemporary interventions at either gable allowed the original traditional cottage form to be remade. The rural setting more than made up for the extreme weather conditions the masons had to contend with and the project worked out really well.

Neil Crimmins recommenced proceedings after the break summarising vital lessons learned during the design and installation of an insulated lime-crete floor in a historic basement. Always a topic that generates great interest, as reflected in the many questions asked.

Feargal Ó Súileabhain finished up on day one by introducing a recent project completed for South Dublin County Council at Grange Castle, presented by David Maher, Structural Engineer & James Oliver Hearty & Sons, the main contractor. This was a major project for the local authority as it addressed a so-called problem building for them through the conservation of a derelict tower house. By creating a public park around the tower house its' setting was greatly enhanced and together these two elements will aid the much-needed regeneration of a previously forgotten area. As an architect it was lovely to see drawing skills put to great use during the research stage of this project, vital in establishing the historic development of a structure to inform its repair and for recording intervention.



Eoin Madigan kicked off the Wednesday session of the 2021 Lime Slam.

On Wednesday morning Eoin Madigan started the second session with a presentation on a most interesting project in Kildare, conservation of Maudlins Pyramids (mausolea) in Naas for the Follies Trust. Among many interesting aspects described by Eoin on this project a take-home lesson was dealing with vegetation in masonry structures. From not facilitating growth in the first place, the use of appropriate mortars and the importance of proper packing and joint detailing was noted. In worst-case scenarios the careful two stage removal of established growth was also highlighted. All in all, a most unique project to have worked on.

Damien Condon was up next, he described extensive external rendering of an early Palladian style house in Tipperary dating from 1760. Using different lime renders in different areas for a variety of reasons Damien demonstrated slaking lime on site through to lime washing on completion to help create a homogenous aesthetic.

After the break Dermot Mac Randal showed us the devastating impact of fire on a historic building in the heart of Belfast, the Primark owned department store on Castle Place (Castle Junction). As noted by Dermot himself this was but a brief description of an interim early stage of what is a large and complex project. Assessment alone post-fire in August 2018 was in itself a dangerous and delicate exercise. The early hybrid timber-metal technologies exposed during this early-stage assessment, hitherto unknown at this building, were a revelation. This is definitely a project worthy of a longer presentation which hopefully we will be able to bring to members at a later date.

Last speaker of the day was Paul Griffin, this was a great presentation to end our event with. As always decorative plasterwork reminds us of the endless potential of traditional materials and skills in both conservation and new build. Paul, a third-generation plasterer showed us some of his conservation work in public buildings including the National Gallery, the Shelbourne Hotel and the Goethe Institute, alongside some private commissions in contemporary settings. The fragility of some of Dublin's fine plasterwork ceilings was also touched upon as was the great skill involved in delicate free hand in-situ repairs.

As usual at Lime Slam all presentations were most engaging with a high level of audience participation. I must note that although great efforts were made during breaktimes by those members who turned on their videos and mics for a bit of a chat, the one-on-one networking that happens during the morning coffee and over lunch at a 'normal' Lime Slam was sorely missed. For an organisation like ours this is such an important part of any event and hopefully we will all be able to get together to enjoy this social time again, sooner rather than later.

Lime Slam is a great event to share your project work with like-minded members. Regardless of project type, complexity or size, whether you have an interesting project to showcase or valuable lesson or experience to share, please bear this in mind. As we hopefully get back out on site in the near future remember to take a few photographs as you go, before you know it you will have the makings of a great presentation. If need be, we can also give you a hand putting it together in the end. The call out for presentations usually closes in mid-January, contact info@blfi.net if you like to take part in the next one.

Oiseen Kelly
Board Member BLFI

Image of Castle Place Belfast from Dermot Mac Randal's talk on Bank Buildings.

Letter to the Editor

Disappearance

Dear Sir,

It is noticeably clear over the last number of years that investment in training in the wet trades has declined at an alarming pace. We all have a lot to answer for in terms of the demise of the trade in this field. The traditional roles have now been split into to so many different areas that training in wet trades is almost non-existent. I am calling for the input and support of those that are specifying the use of traditional materials to back our wet trades as one of the binding mediums in the conservation of our built heritage.

Paddy Byrne
Conservation Manager

Repairing Traditional Walls

Including Hot-mixed Lime & Earth mortars

Workshop by Building Limes Forum Ireland; SPAB Ireland & The Heritage Council

Shankill Castle Stable Yard, Paulstown, Co. Kilkenny

September 2021

SPAB IRELAND
An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

Roman cement repairs, wig pointing and stuccowork

PMac has spent almost 30 years building up experience in the field of masonry cleaning, restoration, and conservation. When it comes to lime work PMac always engage the services of a very skilled and passionate Lime Master, Brian Tobin, who specialises in traditional plaster work from the vernacular to decorative Georgian townhouses. Brian learned his skills the traditional way under the watchful eye of senior crafts and trades people, his father Gabrial, a bricklayer and Paddy Byrne, a traditional plasterer. Extremely passionate about his trade Brian strongly believes the best training comes from the old ways under the apprenticeship model. "*We are all too aware skilled traditional skills are on the decline only to be replaced by semi-skilled workers. This mindset cannot be the answer for the longevity of historic buildings*".

In the face of the challenges thrust upon the world over the last year, PMac in collaboration with Brian Tobin have, despite lockdowns, successfully completed several lime-related projects of which a number are featured below.

Tracey Cassidy,
PMac Conservation Contractors

Restoration and conservation of polychromatic façade in the heart of Dublin City Centre.

Interestingly this late 19th century building which stands on the corner of Trinity Street and St. Andrew's Street is not a protected structure, however despite this the client called for the full restoration of the façade including the repair and reinstatement of the beautiful decorative plaster cornice at parapet level. The scope included conserving as many of the one hundred and sixty decorative Roman cement embellishments as possible as well as the overall preservation of the cornice and recessed soldier course below.

This was a challenging but very exciting and rewarding project. The upper portion of the cornice was completely lost. The first challenge was to find the best examples of the Roman cement embellishments and establish which ones could be saved and repaired. Unfortunately, some were beyond repair and had to be recast and re-built as a last resort. The best examples were repaired in situ and were used to create moulds for the replacements. The upper section of the cornice was repaired using free hand to match existing. From this a horse was constructed and a new 15m section was run in situ. The setting up of the runners for the horse was tricky as the building facade had bellied out over time. This was also a consideration when rebuilding the parapet wall above. Once the upper section was run, the repair and reinstatement of the embellishments was undertaken. These were designed to interlock between the upper and lower detail of the cornice. The repair between the new and old was blended in by free hand. Once complete, the entire section was coated with a traditional lime wash.

Horse for running cornice repairs.

Prompt and lime mortars, along with ochre pigments were used for the restoration of the parapet wall. All lime mortar was mixed on site. Once the parapet wall was complete the entire façade was repointed in lime mortar with a flush finish.

Repair works to cornice at Trinity Street and St. Andrew's Street, Dublin.

Restoration of a Georgian townhouse on Dublin's Richmond Street.

The façade of this early 19th century property had fallen into disrepair, accelerated by over painting of the substrate. The initial task was to clean the façade using the DOFF system to reveal the substrate and identify the extent of repairs. Detailed mortar investigations were carried out where traces of original Irish wig pointing was found. This was analysed to determine the lime mix and to specify a new replica mortar. The failed joints were carefully raked out using hand tools and repointed using the replica lime mortar mix in the traditional Irish wigging technique.

In addition to failed mortar joints the historic Roman cement door surround was found to be in very poor condition due to the presence of ferrous metal reinforcements, which had expanded over the years, as well as a lack of maintenance and previous inappropriate repairs. Templates and profiles of the door reveal and architrave were taken before works commenced.

As part of the works the corroding ferrous reinforcements were removed and replaced with stainless steel. In the reinstatement of the surround a metal profile and horse were made on site. Set-up and timing are crucial when working with lime mortars, to this end Brian has a mobile workshop in the van so all repairs can be carried out on site. The arched surround was run in-situ according to traditional methods by building up layers of haired mortar, allowing the shape to be formed using the horse. Works also extended to the caulking of cracks to the granite window cills, using lime mortar, and the repair of feathered reveals to window opes as per the existing.

Metal profiling of door surround at Richmond Street, Dublin.

Country Manor Portlaoise, limestone wall and gated entrance

Here the main challenge was to rectify work carried out by two different contractors where the heights were all off and the stucco render had failed. Most contractors would have shied away from this project. However, at PMac we love a challenge, and we were confident we had the team, the knowledge, experience, and the skills to rectify the situation and to deliver the high-quality finish desired by the client.

Brian had initially trained as a bricklayer and stone layer, so these skills really came in useful on this project. The poorly built entrance wall could not be altered again so our task was to disguise the previous poor workmanship. The render was removed, and Brian set about with his laser and tape while the team were busy screening sand by hand and preparing the mortar. The weather was extremely wet for the duration of the project, so a protected shelter was erected on site offering a controlled workspace. A new pigmented 'ruled-and-lined' stucco was applied to the walls. Due to the unevenness of the wall the lines were skillfully adjusted to create the impression of a uniform ashlar coursing. In addition, a new pigmented stucco was applied to two piers and a moulded surround provided to the pedestrian entrance gate. The result was very satisfying, and a valuable lesson was learned by the client, who by this stage had paid three times for the job!

Unfortunately, some conservation projects now seem to be driven by cost and timescales under large design teams with heavy administrative requirements. This leaves little margin or enthusiasm for skilled craftsmanship and training. We strongly believe that getting back to basics is key to preserving our built heritage. Too much focus and pressure is placed on our youth to go on to third level education. There are lots of passionate teenagers out there with a natural aptitude to work with their hands and who would relish the opportunity to learn a creative and valuable skill set.

We strongly believe these skills will become more and more in demand as focus is placed on conservation and sustainable design with an emphasis on quality and traditional building skills.

Complete screen entrance wall at Portlaoise.

Tracey Cassidy,
PMac Conservation Contractors

Mason's Stories as related by Jim Fahy of Cork

Masons, and stone masons in particular, were said to be awkward men to get on with. They were master tradesmen in their own opinion and god help anyone who said or thought otherwise. you see, the handiwork of carpenters or joiners might never be seen in public, it stays inside the house. But the work of the stonemason was on view for all to see, all of the time. The master stonemason was fiercely proud of his work and his trade. Like the old-time thatcher's, they did not appreciate even constructive criticism. What you must remember is that in olden days the mason designed and built all those wonderful stone castles, big houses and churches before there were architects to do it.

These are some of the tales and true accounts of masons (being great story tellers the Irish were never one of letting facts get in the way of a good story!).

Jim Fahy.

Whisky Talk

There was a mason working in a townland of Bartlemy. He was in great demand because he was a traditional mason who had his craft passed to him by his father, and his father before him. His skills were such that it is said he could make the stone talk. Good and all as he was, very few could tend him because he was sure to find fault with all, be it the quality of the stone or that of the lime mortar. That said, if a copious glass of whiskey were to find its way into his hand the mood would soon change and before long he would be singing and whistling as the work rose from the foundation. One morning the mason arrived in a foul humour and in time honoured fashion the glass of whisky was produced. On this occasion he took it in his hand, lifted the glass and peered through it. The client commented, "what's wrong with it that you're not drinking today, that's the best of fourteen-year -old whiskey". "Faith if it is". came the reply, "tis damn small for its age".

The Masons Curse

There is a curse associated with the masons which was placed on them by St Patrick. You see, the masons had their own secret ways, a secret language called *bear lager na soar* and secret handshakes and signs - this went against all that St Patrick believed in. And so it goes that when St Patrick fell out with a mason over the building of a church (the mason would not change his design, feeling that it was perfect) he placed a curse on the masons knowing that the journeymen masons travelled the length and breadth of Ireland in search of work:

'May you be always ragged and merry.
May you have long roads to walk in bad boots'.

The Horse

Back in the 1930s the main form of transport was the horse and cart for delivering building materials to a job. When you worked on sites in those days, nick names were commonplace. You had to be careful in what you did or say because you would get a nick name as fast as anything and some of them were not very nice.

This is about how one mason got his nick name, he being Dan Jones, he was 6 foot 6 inches and was built as wide as he was tall. He was known for being a gentle giant who would not offend anyone and had a great sense of humour. In those days the apprentice on the job was given the billy-cans from the masons to go to the local pub to fill them with stout, and when he would return he would hide them in various spots around the site. This was for the cure after the weekend. But while Dan had gone for his billy-can for a sup, someone went up on to the scaffolding to where he had been working and had gathered a load of straw and horse droppings, after the horse and cart, and started dropping the straw and dung along the length of the scaffolding. When Dan returned and went back up on to the scaffolding and when he saw the droppings, he exclaimed, "Jesus, how did a horse get up here!" From that day on he became known as the 'Horse Jones' and his two sons Dan and Billy became known as the 'Pony' and the 'Piebald'.

Comments or articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the board or editor. The consumption of alcohol or placing donkeys on scaffolding is not supported by the BLFI.

Farmers Bet

This tale tells of a hedge schoolmaster who travelled the highways and byways of Ireland teaching the locals in their native Irish language, prohibited at the time by the British authorities. These men taught in secret, at the side of the road, in ditches or under hedges hence the title 'hedge schoolmaster'. Their travels brought them into contact with journeymen masons, tinsmiths, sieve makers, bagpipers, story tellers, knife grinders and many other classes who wandered the country in search of work. This particular hedge schoolmaster was known as Owen O' Sullivan the Red. During his many travels and wanderings, he had learned of the traveller's language (*shelter*) and the mason's language (*bear lager na soar*) and after some time was able to converse with these groups in their own tongue. As he journeyed, he also took up causal labour to keep himself in food and drink.

One day he happened upon the farm of an Irish gentleman and managed to gain employment there. When passing through the house and dinning room, to restock the firewood, O' Sullivan noticed the farmer's children busy at study. They had before them a paper which had them perplexed. One of the children called to their father exclaiming that they could not understand what was before them. It transpired that the farmer, when on a trip to a friend in England and after some bottles of port had been consumed, had entered into a bet as to which family's children were the better educated. The Englishman had his children pen questions in several languages for his Irish friend to bring back for his children to decipher and duly respond. O'Sullivan, the schoolmaster, was curious as to what had the children stumped and on passing back through the dinning room and upon seeing that no one was around had picked up the paper to read it. But one of the daughters had spotted him and told her mother that she thought O'Sullivan could understand what was on the paper. When hearing this the farmer called O'Sullivan in and asked if he could indeed read what was before him. The schoolmaster replied that he could. So the farmer explained what had happened regarding the bet with his old friend the Englishman and asked O'Sullivan if he could respond to all of the questions to save his children's blushes. In return O'Sullivan would be offered food and lodging for as long as he wished. The schoolmaster agreed and the paper was returned to the English friend with all of the questions answered and with several more added in as many languages as O'Sullivan knew, including the *bear lager na soar* (the mason's language). The English children were able to understand all except the *bear lager na soar* and so the Irish farmer won the bet.

John's Court

This tale is about a place called John's Court, a long low ruin with one hundred windows and which had never roofed. It got its name due to the fact that the owner would only employ masons by the name of John. In those days the mortar was mixed with blood being left for a time in clay pits – once hard it could not be picked. The blood this day ran out and on asking the owner for more, the masons were told there was none because there were no more cattle left to bleed. The masons replied that they could not continue without the blood. The owner was having none of that, so he brutally suggested to kill some peasants and use their blood instead. Incensed by this, the Masons killed the owner and the building was never finished.

Note: The one about The Horse was told to Jim's father by 'Pony', the 'Horse Jones' son, Dan. The story about the Curse, John's Court and the Farmer's Bet are from an article by A.T. Sinclare, a folklorist from America who wrote about the Irish Masons and their language.

The above tales have been transcribed by Ivor McElveen, Conservation Engineer. There was once a rich oral tradition of masons stories on building sites which is now at risk of being lost If you have any additional masons stories we would like to hear from you so that these can be documented.

Please contact the BLFI at info@BLFI.net.

Comments or articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the board or editor.

Calendar of Events

Virtual AGM
13th May 2021 at 6.00 pm

Shankill Castle
Paulstown, County Kilkenny, Ireland

Repairing Traditional Walls Workshop
September 2021

Training & Education

- Traditional Lime Company, Rath, Shillelagh Road, Tullow, Co Carlow **ph:**059 9151750 **fax:**059 9152113 **email:**info@traditionallime.com. Visit www.traditionallime.com/
- Stoneware Studios Ltd. Pillmore, Youghal, Co. Cork, **ph:**024 90117 · **email:**mail@stonewarestudios.com

  Visit www.stonewarestudios.com/
- The Lime Store, Unit B1 Ballymount Drive, Walkinstown, D12 **ph:01 450 8624 email:info@thelimestore.ie**

  Visit www.thelimestore.ie/

What is Building Limes Forum Ireland?

The Building Limes Forum encourages expertise and understanding in the use of building limes. It aims to achieve this goal by:

- exchanging, collating and disseminating information, through publication of a regular journal and by holding meetings and conferences;
- encouraging practical research and development through field studies, trials, monitoring and analysis;
- encouraging development of appropriate industrial and craft skills and techniques;
- educating building professionals, builders, conservators, craftsmen and women, and property owners in the appropriate use of lime in building through demonstrations, publications and courses;
- developing contacts with institutions and individuals outside the forum and in other countries that have relevant experience or knowledge.

Communicating With Your Forum

If you would like to respond to any of the topics on this or future newsletters or if you would like to get involved please contact us by post or by email on **info@blfi.net**

Membership

The BLFI is currently looking for new members. Membership of the Building Limes Forum offers:

- the opportunity to participate in conferences, courses, workshops, demonstrations and visits organised by the Forum;
- an informal network of contacts that is prepared to share information and to discuss matters of general interest to members;
- a means of supporting the stated aims.

An application form for membership of the BLFI can be downloaded on **www.buildinglimesforumireland.com**