

MORTARS WORKSHOP FOR GLAS GRANTEES 2020

Earth and Lime mortars: why?

All our vernacular buildings were built with local materials, local hands and with inherent knowledge of the materials and skills needed to house the people, animals, feed and fuel.

The earth beneath the sod and lime from local lime kilns were our only binders to keep stone on stone, produce plasters and white wash and rammed earthen floors. These structures were flexible and breathable thus strong and healthy to live in as walls could breathe and repairs were inexpensive.

These mortars are soft mortars as opposed to modern cement which is rigid and non-porous, a total opposite to what is needed to keep a vernacular building upright, breathable and true to the hands that built and maintained them.

Luckily the cycle of repair and use still exists and with your farm building or house repair the responsibility and privilege to do so can be easy, inexpensive and an inspiration to others in future who may work on your structure. Time and patience are required in the main and an understanding of matching the methods and materials is important yet easily understood with some experimentation, failures and the odd eureka moment.

“ Time and patience solve most problems in these repairs”, I say it twice as they are free and available . Never be afraid to seek advice and discuss failures, Anna Meenan can direct you to good practitioners with proven track records or email me at tphandcrafts@hotmail.com

If using earth, dig plenty of test holes and never rely on top soil. The earth/clay you require is below the top soil and will be a yellow clay from well drained areas or a grey Marl from boggy ground, both easily sourced and the yellow that bit easier to use than the grey Marl.

Today we will discuss sourcing, sampling and deciding on what works best for your structure and most importantly what matches the existing mortar. The existing mortar will inform you on what your mix will most likely be.

If using lime mortars, we will discuss types like Hot Lime mixes which were the most popular and the modern NHL type mortars and their use and interaction with the earth mortars.

Health and Safety

When using any of these mortars the use of goggles is of the most importance. When cleaning and preparing your structure, goggles and a good quality dust mask is also very important.

When preparing mortars in their dry state also wear both goggles and dust mask and when handling tools and materials be sure to wear good well-fitting gloves. With any mortar mixing please protect your eyes.

Resources for lime products

www.thelimestone.ie (Dublin)

www.traditionallimecompany.com (Carlow)

www.stonewarestudios.com (Cork)

www.roundtowerlime.com (Cork)

For hot lime (best known as ‘kibble’) in small quantities, contact Stoneware Studios, Pilmore, Youghal, Co Cork. In large quantities, your local farm store (Glanbia are main stockists) will sell 375kg bags of grow lime, which is the same product.

Building Limes Forum Ireland are holding a two day workshop at Shankill Castle in the Gowran/Paulstown area of Kilkenny on May 8th and 9th, this workshop will be focused on wall repairs and will offer an opportunity for attendees to gain practical experience in preparing damaged areas for work, formulating and making correct traditional mortars and the application of these mortars. See www.buildinglimesforumireland.com

I hope today has been of help and answered all your questions and helps you prep for your project. If you have any queries, please drop me an email at tphandcrafts@hotmail.com and I will reply as soon as possible.