

Contents

Synopsis	4
List of Illustrations	5
List of Tables.....	8
Acknowledgements.....	9
1 Introduction	10
2 History	12
3 Craft.....	18
3.1 Diversity of Style.....	18
3.2 Frame Preparation.....	20
3.3 Panel Types.....	22
3.4 Staves.....	23
3.5 Withies and Laths	24
3.6 Daub.....	27
3.7 Decoration	30
4 Material Characteristics	32
4.1 Soils.....	32
4.1.1 Constituents	33
4.1.2 Plasticity	33
4.1.3 Strength.....	37
4.1.4 Field Testing	37
4.1.5 Selection.....	38
4.2 Dung	39
4.2.1 Evaluation of Dung Ingredients	39
4.2.2 Lignin.....	40
4.2.3 Urine.....	41
4.2.4 Microbial Debris.....	41
4.2.5 The Role of Dung	41
4.3 Fibre	41
5 Conservation.....	43
5.1 The Value of Wattle and Daub.....	43
5.2 Defects and Decay	44
5.2.1 Decay of Daub and Plaster.....	44
5.2.2 Decay of Withies, Lath and Staves.....	47
5.2.3 Maintenance	48
5.3 Repair	49
5.3.1 Partial Renewal	55
5.3.2 Removal of Impermeable Paints and Coatings	58
5.4 Replacement	60
5.4.1 Brick Infill	60
5.4.2 Renewal	60
5.5 Building Regulations	68
6 Wattle and Daub in Wiltshire.....	73
6.1 Documentary Evidence.....	73
6.2 Geology and Land Use	76
6.3 Fieldwork	76
6.4 Surveyed Buildings.....	77
6.5 Evaluation.....	82
6.6 Wiltshire Conclusions	85

7 Conclusion	86
Bibliography	88
Appendix 1: The Composition of Cow Dung	94
Appendix 2: Template for the Recording of Wattle and Daub	96
Appendix 3: List of Suppliers	99
Appendix 4: Supplementary Detail from Wiltshire Buildings Survey	102
Appendix 5: Analyses of Wiltshire Daubs	104
Appendix 6: Sieve Mesh Conversion	110

Synopsis

This study examines the nature of wattle and daub in English building and the techniques required for its conservation. The intent was to combine disparate literature sources so to provide a coherent and comprehensive guide on the craft. Additionally, to assist conservation work in parts of the country devoid of wattle and daub research, a study of one such area, Wiltshire, was undertaken.

It was evident from existing research that significant variation in wattle and daub resulted from a complex interaction of multiple factors such as geology, land use, woodland coverage and species. Documented techniques for conservation were found to be sparse and therefore an attempt was made to broaden them, in some instances by adapting methods established for the conservation of other materials.

Conservation principles were applied, thereby illustrating that wattle and daub need not be stripped if decaying or where structural investigations and repairs are required. An examination of the material characteristics helped explain the behaviour and durability of wattle and daub, including the development of a hypothesis that the lignin in dung may explain its role.

It was established that the craft varied enormously in England, the dominating factors being panel shape and local availability of materials. The research of Wiltshire tradition showed a predominance of hazel withy and oak staves, the latter often crudely nailed to the frame where access during construction was restricted. Daubs were of local soils, chiefly calcareous due to the geology of the county, using hay and hair as the fibre in addition to the commonly specified straw. The case study identified new evidence that is directly applicable to the conservation of the county's timber framed buildings.

This study has been successful in so far as creating a platform that conveys all aspects of the wattle and daub craft, yet much continuing research is warranted, especially in the identification, categorisation and geographic mapping of regional variation. This may be accomplished through an increased interest in the subject that, in turn, may hopefully be stimulated by this work.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Iron Age wattle used flat as a track, c.1800 B.C. From Brunning (2001).....	12
Figure 2. The principal method of wattle and daub walling, established by the Iron Age. From Bowyer (1973).....	12
Figure 3. ‘Lopping and topping’ from coppice woods. 15 th Century. From Nicholson and Fawcett (1988).....	15
Figure 4. A 15 th century artisan plasterer completing infill panels after the carpenter had finished his work. From Binding (2001).....	16
Figure 5. Interacting factors affecting the type and style of wattle and daub..	18
Figure 6. Complexity of wattlework in arch-brace panel was avoided here by nailing three laths diagonally onto the staves (top-most lath is missing).	19
Figure 7. A lattice formed by weaving withies diagonally. South Cambridgeshire, c.1700 (Courtesy G. Murfitt).	19
Figure 8. Soffit stave hole types: auger (a); augered mortice (b); chiselled mortice (c); V-groove either as a mortice or continuous (d).	20
Figure 9. Studs with V-grooves, 1531. From Salzman (1952).....	20
Figure 10. Variety in panel shape required different techniques to infill. From Mercer (1975).	21
Figure 11. Configuration of staves and wattle in a braced panel. From Reid (1989).	22
Figure 12. A braced panel wattled by altering the angle of the withies.	22
Figure 13. Decorative panel bracing applied in front of wattle. Adapted from Reid (1989).	22
Figure 14. Method of stave insertion. From Harris (1997).....	24
Figure 15. Wattle fencing in Hampshire, as used by sheep farmers. From Edlin (1949).	26
Figure 16. Halving of withy ends to fit grooves in studs.	27
Figure 17. A 17th century illustration of a lath-maker’s froe. From Holme (1972).	27
Figure 18. Evidence of string used to tie withies. From Rackham (1976).	27
Figure 19. The daub of sheltered internal partitions was often crudely finished, with cracking left unattended.	29
Figure 20. 16 th Century wall painting of a daub panel and surrounding frame. From Weald & Downland Open Air Museum (2002).....	30
Figure 21. Medieval daub decorated with combed pattern, Sussex. From Warren (1999).....	30
Figure 22. Incised pargetting, Suffolk. From Clifton-Taylor (1962).....	30
Figure 23. Raised pargetting. The Ancient house, Clare, Suffolk. From Clifton-Taylor (1962).	30
Figure 24. Shrinkage potential of clay.....	34

Figure 25. Clay moisture content versus volume. From BS 1377-2:1990.....	35
Figure 26. Vane test for soil strength. (Adapted from BS 1377-7:1990).....	36
Figure 27. Shear box soil test. (From BS 1377-7:1990).....	36
Figure 28. Compact packet sieves for field use. (Courtesy of Endecotts Ltd)	37
Figure 29. Temporary support for wattle panel, enabling repair of upper rail. Timber boards are temporarily screwed to frame.	50
Figure 30. Removal of bottom rail for repair by providing temporary vertical support for wattle.....	50
Figure 31. Cross-section showing repair of delaminated daub by tying.....	51
Figure 32. Lead flashing repair may trap water against the frame causing accelerated rot. Adapted from Reid (1989).....	54
Figure 33. A flowchart for the analysis of daub.....	61
Figure 34. Insertion of a stave into a test panel.....	62
Figure 35. Weaving of withies.....	62
Figure 36. Mixing of daub by 'heeling'.....	65
Figure 37. Treading straw into daub.....	65
Figure 38. Knocking up a cat in the hand.....	66
Figure 39. Cats form a homogenous daub.....	66
Figure 40. Consolidating the daub surface and edges of cats using a damped pad.....	66
Figure 41. Using a piece of lath to bring the daub up against the frame edges.	66
Figure 42. Panel upgrade using central sheepwool fibre. Adapted from Reid (1989).	70
Figure 43. Upgrading with rendered woodfibre board and sheepwool insulation. Adapted from Reid (1989).	70
Figure 44. The geology of Wiltshire. From Geddes (2000).	75
Figure 45. Predominant building materials of Wiltshire. From Slocombe (1989).	75
Figure 46. Woodland density shown by circles at 10 times map scale, with Wiltshire and the west mapped by a 10km grid and south eastern districts by county. From Rackham (1976).....	75
Figure 47. Density of coppice woodland, showing Wiltshire rich in underwood. From Rackham (1976).	75
Figure 48. Locations of inspected wattle and daub. Several buildings were surveyed in some locations.....	77
Figure 49. Wattle tensioned in a narrow two-stave panel by entwining pairs of withies.....	78
Figure 50. Sparrow-pricking to an internal panel.....	78
Figure 51. Outer staves nailed against soffit of frame.....	79
Figure 52. Smoke-blackened wattle and daub at apex of cruck.....	80
Figure 53. Cross-section of a stave.....	80

Figure 54. Wattle of whole and split withy (a) and enlargement of sparrow-pricking (b).....	81
Figure 55. Staves attached to soffit of principals, whole withies and smoke-blackened daub, c.1480.....	81
Figure 56. Particle size analyses of daub samples	83
Figure 57. Chestnut may have existed on the southern fringes of Wiltshire since Roman times. From Rackham (1976).....	84
Figure 58. Cross-section dimensions of surveyed riven staves: (a) average; (b) deepest; (c) widest..	84
Figure 59. Withy diameters: minimum, average and maximum..	85
Figure 60. Ruminant digestive system.	94
Figure 61. Composition of cow faeces.	95
Figure 62. Dimensions of withies.	103
Figure 63. Daub particle size distribution graphs.	105
Figure 64. Plots a-g of Figure 63 combined for comparison.	106

All figures by the author unless otherwise stated.

List of Tables

Table 1. Field test for strength of fine soils (from BS 5930:1999)	38
Table 2. Comparison of acid detergent fibre in traditional and modern cattle feeds. Adapted from Stanton (2004).....	40
Table 3. The visual inspection of wattle and daub.	48
Table 4. Example daub mixes shown as ratios of constituents.....	64
Table 5. Details of Wiltshire buildings surveyed.....	102
Table 6. Sieve comparison table.....	110