

TLC helps save Britain's heritage from crumbling

Submitted by: Nicky Godding Communications

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A Gloucestershire company is helping the building and conservation industry to repair hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of damage done by enthusiastic but misinformed property owners and builders in the 1960s and 70s, which has put at risk a large number of important but unsung properties across the UK.

The Traditional Lime Company (TLC), based at Cheltenham, supplies large quantities of advice and traditional lime products, in equal amounts, to its customers who are repairing old properties which were renovated using inappropriate modern products and techniques.

If a house is more than 150 years old, it is likely to have been built using traditional lime-based products, allowing the structure to breathe and flex. Problems arise when modern materials are used rather than lime mortar, plaster, renders and washes.

The Traditional Lime Company's Malcolm Wakeman, says: "The mistake that many people make is to mix old with new. Cement might be a fabulously versatile and cost-effective building material for many building projects, but it can suffocate a traditionally built house, often making it run with damp or causing other, potentially more serious problems. A house is a living thing and using lime allows it to 'breathe' and adapt to seasonal changes. Once this principle is understood, it is possible to save many old buildings from crumbling by replacing modern materials and renovating with traditional lime.

Over the last ten years The Traditional Lime Company has been involved in many building projects across the UK and abroad, including projects managed by English Heritage, The National Trust, CADDW and Historic Scotland as well as private clients. It is currently working with a leading conservation building company, E W Beard, at The Corinium Museum in Cirencester, supplying products for the £5 million renovation and extension to one of the UK's most celebrated small museums.

Museum curator, John Paddock, said: "One of the reasons we are using traditional materials is that the museum is a Grade II listed curtilage building (the whole site is listed), as well as being a historic building in its own right. We are quite rightly bound by regulations to use traditional materials so that the building is maintained as close to its original as is practical, but I would do so anyway because it helps to lessen the impact of new building within an old environment. This is especially relevant in our case where the rear elevation of the museum is being limewashed where it isn't strictly necessary to do so, but it helps the building blend into its surroundings more successfully."

Malcolm points out that whilst many high profile projects, such as The Corinium Museum, benefit from proper building advice and support, it's Britain's privately-owned houses which are most at risk through a lack of knowledge from both house owners and builders.

"Ignorance isn't bliss," he says. "It could mean the fabric of a beautiful building suffering further through ill-advised and executed renovation work. Fortunately conservation officers, architects and specialist builders are now realising the adverse effects that some modern materials have on old buildings.

Editors Notes

The Traditional Lime Company is based in Cheltenham. It supplies a range of high quality traditional lime products, laths, hair and fibre for the conservation and preservation of old buildings and offers a technical advisory service on all products and systems.

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