



Newsletter

November 2023

BLF Manager, Tyler Lott Johnston, expresses her gratitude to everyone who made this year's conference and gathering a huge success.



2023 has been a dynamic year for the forum and this year's gathering was no exception. The BLF welcomed more than 170 delegates and guests from across the world to the beautiful medieval city of Lincoln for our first full-scale annual Conference and Gathering since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the course of the event, delegates found themselves captivated by our speakers with topics ranging from material sciences and their applications, case studies passing on the knowledge of practical application and lessons learned, to the role of lime in a carbon negative future. Speakers were carefully selected for their expertise to represent a wide variety of backgrounds to ensure a healthy balance between theory, research, and practice, which made for truly well-rounded and engaging sessions. We even had our very first live lime plaster dissection by endoscope projected onto a big screen, which was a fascinating treat.

Afternoons were spent enjoying the rich lime heritage in Lincoln through curated site visits. The choices ranged from active conservation projects happening at Lincoln Cathedral and Greyfriars Lincoln, special and behind-the-scenes tours of Lincoln Castle, Lincoln Medieval Bishop's Palace, and the quarries and lime kilns of Singleton Birch. For those looking to get more hands-on, practical demonstrations of lime slaking, lime stucco modelling, and stone carving were offered at the Castle's Heritage Skills Centre. With so many choices, it's no wonder the queue for the sign-up sheets was out of the door! Each experience was truly remarkable, and I would like to thank our partners and supporters for helping us to arrange such visits.

Introduction continued...



However, this year was unlike years prior as we felt the loss of so many and as such took a moment to remember those who are no longer with us. Whilst we struggle to come to terms with those empty spaces, we would be remiss not to honour their contributions to the world as well as the world of lime. As a very special celebration of one dear friend we recently lost, we had the immense honour of hosting a very special screening of *No Ordinary Passion: the life of Rory Young*, courtesy of Marianne Suhr. During the film, I cherished the opportunity to occasionally glance around the room and what I saw warmed my heart. I saw eyes welling up with tears whilst simultaneously smiling some of the biggest smiles I've seen in a long time. I think it was in that moment that I truly felt the beauty of the BLF and I was so grateful to bear witness to such a beautiful memorial.

Throughout the event, many compliments were received, therefore I want to take this time to not only acknowledge those kind words from sponsors, partners, and delegates, but also to offer my sincerest and utmost gratitude to the planning committee who relieved me of my duties as I took time out to give birth of my first child in the spring. It was their dedication, hard work, and infallible commitment which made this year's event not only happen but a resounding success.

I ask you to join me in congratulating the following individuals: Alison Henry, Maria-Elena Calderón, Philip Gaches, Nigel Copsey, and Ian Prince. I would also like to extend a very special thanks to Alison and Maria, who put in countless extra hours of hard work and to whom I and the BLF owe a great deal of thanks. In addition, assistance from many others including, but not limited to Damian Williams, Marianne Suhr, and Jane Cowan was instrumental in the early stages of planning. I also thank everyone who contributed, assisted, and participated in the weekend including sponsors, those who led visits and tours, volunteers, bursary delegates and donors.

On a personal note, this event was made even more special for me at the BLF AGM where my new born son Jack was made an honorary member. At five months, he might be our youngest member yet!

Job vacancies (bookkeeper and membership administrator.)

After more than 25 wonderful years as BLF Administrator, Rosemary Mann is set to make her transition into a well-deserved retirement at the end of this fiscal year. In preparation, the BLF are recruiting for two roles, a bookkeeper and a membership administrator. Both positions will be part time, remote roles suitable for individuals with experience in the respective fields.

If you, or someone you know might be interested in the roles, please send an email.

info@buildinglimesforum.org.uk .

Deadline to lodge interest is by end of day on the 20th January 2024.

Event: Site visit and tour

Lime Green Products- Site Visit and Tour

Tickets: £35.00 per person (includes the tour of the production site and a buffet lunch.)

Option of two sessions: 10.30am until 12.30pm or 1.30pm until 3.30pm

Date: Saturday, 25 November 2023

Location: Coates Kiln, Stretton Road, Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6DG



About Lime Green Products

Simon and his brother started out slaking quicklime into lime putty in small batches (like many of us have done) but the realisation of getting building limes out to the mainstream market has only been achieved by careful planning and investment (of both time and money) in unique plant and equipment.

This means that Lime Green can produce both large and small runs of pre-mixed dry bagged mortars to a level of accuracy to be admired. Lime Green want to be able to appeal not only to the new build market but for the refurbishment of solid walled buildings to improve their technical performance by making lime mortar easy to use and convenient.

Programme for the day

Lime Green Products has organised two sessions for you to sign up to, either morning (10.30am until 12.30pm) or afternoon (1.30pm to 3.30pm) with a buffet lunch thrown in. You will be able to see how the production of ready mixed mortars happens, visit their quality control laboratory and see a brand new machine that can mix fibres through lime mortar without them clumping!

The visit involves climbing up stairs (metal open stairs) to a height around 17m, so a good head for heights is necessary as are sturdy shoes and warm clothes (the tour is presented under covered but unheated space).

Book online: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/thebuildinglimesforum/1048519>

(Tickets close Tuesday 21st November 2023 noon.)



Guest Feature

Gemma Crook (Plaster Lass) talks about her first experience of BLF gathering.

This year, we ventured to the beautiful cathedral city of Lincoln for the Building Limes Forum conference. As a first-time attendee and bursary delegate, I entered an experience full of laughter, inspiration, and profound new insights into lime.

The weekend left my mind reeling with discombobulating questions. Should I use less water when slaking? Should I source coarse sand that is 3mm or less? And what even happened during the Lime Revival in the 1980s?

With incredibly interesting lectures and fascinating research and insights from speakers. To mention details from just a few: rediscovered Roman trowels left in-situ in Serbia, reimagined slaking with steam, suspended fibrous ceilings, hogsheads as water-tubs, and a game of "Who Are You?" Dry Slake, Wet Slake, Hot, Cold — that left us all dumbfounded.

Friday evening brought a screening of the documentary "No Ordinary Passion – the life of Rory Young." From the point of view of an art graduate and a relatively novice plasterer of three years, this was an incredibly inspiring film. I think the sentiment within the documentary resonated with my values and those of people in the room; the endless curiosity we all share. It celebrated the relentless obsessive nature we have working within conservation and lime, on the tools or not. A legacy within his house and works.



After navigating the winding streets of Lincoln in the scorching sun, we finally arrived at a demonstration nestled within the castle walls.

It was brilliant seeing Rebecca Gilling showing us gypsum and lime putty decorative work, and Rachael Wragg carving into some Lincolnshire limestone.

Nigel Copsey's demonstration and seminar followed. My key takeaways included: Only ever slake at a minimum of 100 degrees, the significance of using more hair and dry slaking, as well as a newfound appreciation for cricket loam.

Guest Feature

Later that evening, Philip Gaches (Gaches Traditional Plasterers Ltd) delivered a heartfelt speech, sharing memories of his years attending BLF conferences. He spoke of his initial experiences, his deep affection for the event, and his other passions, including Guinness. Hearing someone speak candidly about the significance of the BLF forum, especially as a first-time attendee, served as a poignant reminder that I was stepping into a rich tradition of camaraderie and shared passion.

Then the evening took a delightful turn during the auction segment of the evening. With generously donated items for auction, a copy of "The Limestones of Scotland" was fiercely bid from my grasp. Lime marmalade (yes, please), a SPAB working weekend, a trip to Dunkeld, and a Robert Adam book were among the items for auction. All the proceeds raised funds for next year's conference and future bursary attendees.

Throughout the conference, I encountered many a lime guru, feeling like I was in the presence of demigods and lime experts in their natural habitat. For someone like me, who has predominantly worked in solitude as a plasterer, this event provided a sense of connection to something greater.

It speaks volumes to the inclusivity of the BLF forum that a newcomer like me can show up, having never attended before, and feel connected and welcomed. From my gauge of the attendees and speakers, everyone was so genuine and generous with their knowledge.

The final night brought spirited debate, and even in a delirious state, we couldn't resist engaging in animated conversations about lime. It was a night filled with laughter and the forging of friendships.

If you're not sharing lime facts with someone at 4 am. over loud bass, with niche tidbits like: "You know, Wallace & Gromit's clay has lime in it..." can you truly say you attended the BLF?

Driving back to Glasgow, I took a detour and dropped in at York to visit York Minster for the first time to see Rory Young's meticulous work. A fitting conclusion to a brilliant experience at the BLF, a reminder of the enduring legacy of lime and the passion that fuels the attendees.

Share your images and experiences of the BLF Conference & Gathering

We would love to gather your thoughts and photographs of this year's event in Lincoln. Please send over your images together with a short paragraph to Beth Meades.

Please email
beth@limeflowerpr.co.uk



BLF Member Spotlight

Stephen Pickering PDD (Building Cons) Traditional Building Services Ltd.

Tell us a bit about your professional background and why you set up your business?

I'm the fourth of five generations involved with the building / stone trades so it seemed inevitable. My son is now in the business, lets hope we keep progressing. 40+ years in the building trades and 26 of those years into lime and running my own business.

What lime building services do you offer?

I specialise in lime builds, fat lime plaster and lime repointing.

Do you think more education is needed amongst builders about appropriate repairs for historic buildings?

I think the lime educators need some form of regulating. I have travelled the country over the last 25 plus years listening and learning from the likes of John Ashurst, Rory Young etc, to assimilate knowledge and adapt my technique to my specific region. My late father used to tell me things that worked back in the 40s which I never thought we would ever use but you can only re-invent the wheel once or twice. Hot mixed mortars being the case now, but it still has to be adapted to the individual application and not seen as a silver bullet.

Which has been your most memorable building limes project ?

There has been a few over the years that stand out. The first one is building 13ft of circular battered brickwork on top of Muston Windmill all in NHL2 mortars - images below



BLF Member Spotlight

Howsham Mill restoration, is another stand out project. This involved all new brickwork and stonework built in hot mixed mortars with Metastar. Before and after images below.



Working four feet below river level and building stonework with NHL mortars was also another unforgettable moment in my career. Most recently we have built a large stone *cottage ornée* on a private estate which is a great project, but due to privacy reasons we cannot talk too much about it at this stage

What was involved in the restoration of a lime kiln in the village of Cawton

The Cawton Lime Kiln involved the repairs to the exterior stonework and some internal brickwork repairs too. Some 18-19 years ago I was involved with English Heritage Soft and Hard Cappings Project along with Oxford University and it was pleasing to be able to hard cap the kiln with exposed core work and then soft cap with turf sod.

How long have you been a member of the BLF, what would you say are the main benefits?

I think I've been a member since 1999 ish. In that time I have been to two annual gatherings, those being Charlestown and Lancaster. I guess the benefits of being a BLF member is reading other people's experiences be it success or failure.

Would you like to feature in our next member spotlight?

We are looking for our next Member Spotlight feature. This is a great way to tell others about your business and your projects. Or do you have a case study you would like to share with other BLF members? Please email beth@limeflowerpr.co.uk

New BLF committee member elected

The BLF committee welcomes Jamie Wallace Director of Saxum Stonemasons in Sussex which is a small team of enthusiastic craftsmen and women who are specifically trained in repairing old houses, bridges, boundary walls, ruins and churches using lime mortar and plasters. As a science graduate Jamie is an enthusiastic researcher of lime mortars and provides training courses for home owners and trades in working with lime.

We will be announcing the full BLF committee for 2024 in a futher ud pate.



Sharing Knowledge

Teach Yourself Pargeting

After 23 years working as a pargeter, Anna Kettle has created a series of 'Teach Yourself Pargeting' films to pass on her expertise of this dying trade.

www.youtube.com/@AnnaPargeter

The Story of Mortar

Neeta Das shares her report on the research carried on the 'Historical Background of Mortars in India' as part of the 'Craft Documentation of Traditional Mortars in the Indian Sub-Continent'. This research report was generously funded by Gerda Henkel Foundation, Germany.

www.neetadas.com/downloads

New Members

Corporate:

Karen Gwilliams, English Heritage, Somerset
James Grenney, C J Home Maintenance Ltd, Bristol
Conor Meehan, Triskele Conservation, London
Kari Eshleman, Lancaster Lime Works, Pennsylvania, USA

Individual / Concession

Stewart Wright, Ammanford, Carmarthenshire
Matthew Seed, Swindon
Kim Lydon, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire
Dominic Lockett, Northallerton, North Yorkshire
Jo Hibbert, Chard, Somerset
Robin Halford, Comberton, Cambridgeshire
Daahir Mohamed, Bristol
Barrie Randall, Lillingstone Dayrell, Buckingham
Judit Pusztaszeri, Lewes, East Sussex
Craig Beattie, Ontario, Canada
Dr Gwynn Jenkins, Battersea, London
Chris Haxton, Wookey, Somerset
Simon Steele, St Helens, Merseyside
Abigail Lloyd, Oxford
Hector Martin, Crieff, Perthshire
Mario Machnicki, Chicago, Illinois, USA
Almudena Fernandez Rebollar, Dalkeith, Midlothian
Sophie Drew, Clapham, London