Identifying clay-construction buildings in a Norfolk market town

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Framlingham Crown Hotel (1553): Wattle and daub in situ

A long history of wattle and daub in East Anglia

Two examples from Halesworth:
Circa 1350  1480/1500
Clay lump buildings in East Anglia: Mount Street, Diss.

Early history of unfired clay blocks

• Mesopotamia 3000 BC
• Pié known to the Romans
• Mexico – Adobe
• Gorffon’s 1772 treatise on pié
• 1784 Scots build pié at Tsarkoe Selo, Russia
• 1793 Nicolai L’vov designing pié peasant dwellings at Nickolskoe, Torzhok
Clay Lump in East Anglia

- Joseph Austin’s Cottage, Gt. Shelford, Cambridgeshire in 1791 (McCann).
- Term first used 1821 by John Denson.
- Only became widespread in parts of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1830s-1840s (McCann).
- Therefore, origins in Cambridgeshire.
- Brick Tax: 1784, 1794 & 1803. Abolished 1850.
- Correlation between Brick Tax & Clay lump?

Observing and collecting the data

- Teams of two sent into the field to observe and record data for clay-construction in Diss.
- Comprised three chartered surveyors, a chartered architect, an earth builder and a clay products builders’ merchant.
- No formal training.
- No briefing or de-briefing.
- Data entered on record sheets in the field.
The data observed

- Date and names of the data collectors.
- Address.
- Clay lump or wattle and daub.
- Attachment.
- Age.
- Roof details.
- External wall covering.
- Plinth details.
- Window and door details.

Recording the data

- IT consultant – digital data-base.
- Definitive plan (1:300) on A1 sheets for property identification.
- Errors on the plan.
- Checking of each property recorded by an expert.
Disseminating the knowledge

- Planned conference for built environment professionals did not take place.
- Smaller numbers of built environment professionals attended EARTHA lectures.
- New build sub-committee.
- New EARTHA leaflets and pamphlets.
- Updated & improved website.
- Equipping the builders.

Conclusions

- Local Authority now has gazetteer & definitive map of Diss Clay lump, and wattle & daub.
- Such buildings to be flagged up.
- Builders with technical skills.
- Need to date the buildings in Diss:-
  - Prove or disprove McCann’s hypothesis.
  - Or if a correlation between Brick Tax & Clay lump
- Hone survey techniques – address validity.
- Clay lump surveys elsewhere.
Any questions?