Dorset Materials Survey 1992-4, - a pilot project

In 1992 John Lowe, the Historic Buildings Officer for Dorset County Council, obtained funding from English Heritage, the Dorset County Council and the North Dorset and Purbeck District Councils to undertake a pilot study of building materials, following consultation with all the Planning Authorities in the County.

Using the English Heritage format for surveying Buildings at Risk, he commissioned a computer program that would also record the materials – brick, stone, cob etc., and the method of building – plain, chequered, banded etc. The results were to be recorded on individual forms for each building, using letter codes.

John Alford, a building surveyor in the Historic Buildings team, Martin Hammond an expert on brickworks, and Jo Thomas a geologist who had recorded building stone quarries for the Dorset Environmental Records Centre were engaged to conduct the survey.

51 villages were recorded, being visited by Messrs. Alford and Hammond between June and December 1992, and by Mrs. Thomas (stone only) between January and March 1994.

John Lowe compiled a report in March 1994, copies of which were sent to English Heritage and the District Councils.

A further 22 villages were recorded for the Buildings at Risk survey by Mrs. Thomas and the Dorset Buildings Group. The materials were not all recorded.

The original recording forms for nearly 4000 individual buildings have been archived by the Dorset County Council. Martin Hammond’s list of brickworks in Dorset and Jo Thomas’ addition of the geology at those sites have been archived by the Dorset History Centre. A list of all the parishes in Dorset, with the building material used, can be found in Chapter 12 of Dorset Stone, by Jo Thomas, 2008 published by The Dovecote Press. In this list the information about cob and timber frame was taken from a map drawn up by the late Miss Pamela Cunnington, the County Council’s Historic Buildings Officer for many years. This map is now held by the present DCC Historic Environment team.

Jo Thomas 18.3.2019