

ADAM WEISMANN & KATY BRYCE

Building with Cob: A Step-by-Step Guide



Adam Weismann was born in Iowa, USA and came to England in 1999 to complete his studies in documentary film-making. Here he met and married his wife and business partner, Katy. It was during a trip together to the West Coast of America that they discovered and embraced the wonderful art of cob building.

Adam loves working outdoors and using his hands to create, which he has been doing since he was a young lad: early ventures included the construction of backyard neighbourhood skateboard ramps, and he later progressed to working with stone. All this was great preparation for a life of making houses and structures out of mud.

Katy Bryce was born in Welwyn Garden City, and her formative days were spent roaming around in green spaces and being fascinated with what came out of the earth. A degree in human geography with a focus on the notions of shelter, especially in poverty-stricken areas, meant that her introduction to cob excitingly brought together two areas that she felt very passionate about. Her desire to create beautiful, functional and sustainable shelter out of the earth began.

Adam and Katy undertook an apprenticeship in natural building with the Cob Cottage Company, Oregon, USA. They then returned to the UK and started their company Cob in Cornwall, based in Manaccan, on the Lizard Peninsula. It is a small company specializing in the new build and restoration of earthen structures known as 'cob' in the South-West of England.

They approach all of their projects with an ecological ethos, and are active in the restoration of many ancient cob buildings—repairing walls using pre-dried cob blocks, and applying appropriate 'breathable' finishes in lime. They also build new cob structures including two-storey houses, small studios and garden rooms, outside courtyards and fireplaces, and earth ovens. They feel it is exciting to be using an ancient and simple technology in a contemporary setting.

In 2005, Katy and Adam have been building a house for themselves out of their favourite materials—stone, mud, wood and grass. A new commission starting in 2006 will be work on a school in Newquay, where they will be building the walls out of cob and doing all the finishes on the building in lime plaster, render and pigmented limewashes.

When not working, they enjoy hiking in the outdoors, swimming in the sea and growing vegetables.

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