

Its medieval wattle revealing remarkably well preserved sticks, possibly 600 years old. I also found 'treasure' in the form of historic fabric.

Lime bast as a binder

I had read about the use of Lime bast, and only this year had started to harvest Elm bast. However, I'd never seen Lime bast before, and certainly not dating back as far as this did. This was my 'treasure'. What is bast? It's the layer just below the bark of the tree.

Elm bast

Earlier in the year I had harvested Elm bast for a craft project. I took a draw knife and removed the bark, then with a Stanley knife scored the bast with parallel cuts about 1cm apart along the trunk of the previously felled tree. Bast is 2mm thick and when the sap is rising will peel beautifully. It looks like leather.

Demolition time

Having broken up the old panels and removed the sticks and bast (and the occasional errant lumps of concrete and hard render) I was left with the most beautiful daub complete with 600 year old straw. I dumped it down and set to installing new wattle.

Creating the infrastructure

There is an art to getting the horizontal spar to stay in place with minimal intervention from modern fixings. It involves an upper hole both sides and a chiselled groove from above one of the holes, not easy when the spacing between studs is only 30cm.

Stick management

In order to get a good fit the spar is cut over-size, inserted into the hole without the groove and then 'encouraged' down the groove with a maul. It was necessary to cut six sticks to length (or slightly longer than needed) and aim to wedge them into



Wattle sticks



Recycling old daub



Wedge mud and sticks