

Promoting traditional building skills

✘ Earlier today we went along to St Andrew Square which was echoing to the sound of chisels and other tools used by traditional craftsmen.

This is an event which will be coming back later in the summer when the Edinburgh Traditional Building Festival comes to St Andrew Square with a further stonemasonry demonstration, lime mortars demonstration and marbling and graining techniques in sign writing skills (to name but a few!). The summer event runs from 23 August 2016.

The Edinburgh Reporter met Emily Tracey who is a building stone conservation specialist with British Geological Survey and also Vice-Convenor of the Edinburgh branch of [Scottish Traditional Building Forum](#). The forum is made up of people from all disciplines who work together to raise the profile of traditional building skills.

She explained: “We are trying to promote the use of traditional materials and traditional skills. Edinburgh is built of many different types of stone, particularly sandstone, and usually this material is readily available from numerous quarries around the country. Today we have gone from thousands of quarries to about a dozen. This is something that we are trying to promote and raise awareness of so that we can use the traditional materials not just for repairs and maintenance but also for construction which is in keeping with the environment of a World Heritage Site.

“This is something that we need to be aware of.

“There are no traditional quarries left in Edinburgh. We had the famous Craigleith Quarry which is now where Sainsbury’s

is, but there are stones currently available which are a good match, meaning that they have a similar mineralogical composition and aesthetic.”

John McKinney of Edinburgh Traditional Building Forum explained: “The idea is to get young people from Edinburgh to consider the various different skills that are required to repair and maintain Edinburgh’s built heritage as a potential career for them going forward.

The group is organising the fifth [Edinburgh Traditional Building Festival](#) in August as part of the Festival Fringe to celebrate Edinburgh’s traditional buildings.

John continued: “All the presenters give up their time free of charge, venues free of charge and all the organisation is done free of charge. We get a small amount of sponsorship to cover the costs of registering with the Festival Fringe and to cover catering costs.

“We are also working on a mini-golf course using traditional building skills and materials which will be hosted in George Street during the whole of the Festival Fringe.

“This is an example of collaboration across the whole of the traditional building sector to promote careers and appropriate repairs and maintenance all done for the benefit of the whole industry.”