



The Thatch Advice Centre

In association with **CGA Protect**

The thatch advice centre shares their vision to satisfy all things thatch, setting the bar high for thatch safety

The Thatch Advice Centre website came about 15 years ago when the founders, a husband and wife team decided that it was time for a place where free, up to date information was available to everyone. A Master Thatcher, traditionally trained in all three main thatching materials used in the UK, and his wife, an IT Consultant (before children). They had been running a successful thatching business for years, were passionate about and had expertise in many things to do with thatch, thatching and thatched properties. It was time to clarify ambiguity and inaccuracies which abounded, stop people buying products not fit for purpose, making mistakes with listed buildings and to help with thatch related concerns. Their multitude of contacts within the trade and beyond, were there to call on for additional knowledge.

A go-to 'All Things Thatch' resource was born. A place for education where visitors could make informed decisions and even ask questions. The aim was, and is, to work together with everyone for the good of thatch. The ungoverned and unregulated thatching trade is

currently quite fragmented but the Thatch Advice Centre remains neutral and speaks to everyone, truthfully and fairly for the good of thatching.

The website evolved into the responsive design resource it is now, along with its new associated Thatch Directory. The latter brings in a bit of financial and time saving help in dealing with the large number of enquires now received.



What the Thatch Advice Centre does Helps people with their thatch queries by offering a website full of information.

- Answers questions by phone or email.
- Develops good relationships with other organisations involved with thatch, from thatchers to material producers, insurers, Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland, CADW, Councils, Conservationists, Fire Services, HETAS, OFTEC, and many more.

- Importantly, has brought together a group of thatchers with concerns over thatching standards. They are now working to create a sustainable, government funded Apprenticeship Scheme. It is hoped this will be a good start in pulling together an unregulated trade and build confidence in thatching abilities.
- Lobbies organisations where change and improvements are required; progress has already been made.
- Regularly writes articles for their website (maintenance, pests, news, updates or events) and also writes articles for magazines on request.
- Sends out a free bi-annual Newsletter – keeps everyone up to date in the world of thatch.
- Regularly updates Social Media accounts.
- Gives talks on thatch, thatch fire safety etc. to a variety of groups (e.g. homeowners, chimney sweeps, film set designers or surveyors).
- Runs the Thatch Directory - Thatch specialist associates to help with thatched properties.

The CGA are a well-established thatched property insurer. As one of our Thatch Advice Centre Directory Associates, we are pleased to be able to work together with them.

Thatch Fire Safety

Thatch Fires were of considerable interest to the Thatch Advice Centre, who were pleased to be involved in the struggle to understand their true major causes. Previous statements being made were of concern to many and thatch fire numbers were not reducing.

An important point to note is that thatched roofs are not more likely to catch fire; It is just that they are harder to extinguish if they do. The Home Office statistics used regarding thatch fires in the past have been queried, as they were entitled 'Fires in Thatched Properties'. Confirmation that they included tumble drier fires etc means that not all of the fires listed actually involved thatch.

Some excellent work by Burgoynes, Forensic Investigators, into the causes of real thatch fires, led to The Fire Protection Association being commissioned to carry out major

research into thatch chimneys and woodburners. The results (copy available on the Thatch Advice Centre website) were pivotal in proving embers from chimneys cause thatch fires. Heat transfer, as a cause of thatch fires (through solid brickwork by conduction), was also shown as 'unrepresentative of reality'. The Thatch Advice Centre Fire Safety leaflet was updated to include this and approved by those commissioning the research.

Remember, for the sake of thatch properties and your insurance, it's not just having the box ticked on a form or meeting building regulations; use your common sense too. What and how you burn is important and make sure you sweep your chimney regularly. Check for birds' nests if a chimney has not been used in a while or fit a bird guard.

Make sure your electrical installations are checked and safe. Download and read the free Thatch Fire Safety leaflet.

Please, understand the risks of your individual thatch (thatch properties tend to be unique), reduce those risks and make sure you have the correct insurance. Then enjoy your lovely thatch with peace of mind.