

Rosie Baxter

My Journal - Part 5 – Devon Dirt 2024

Lets get Dirty!

I had recently completed an MA in Arts and Place at Dartington College with my final project on the Templer granite tramway. It was noted that there was plenty of mileage in expanding this project further.

A few weeks later I was introduced to earth pigments at a 2 day workshop at Newlyn School of Art, in addition I was introduced to Kate Lyons-Miller, a ceramicist who works with natural earth pigments for her ceramic glazes. Her studio is at Holwell, Dartmoor near Holwell quarry, the start of the Templer Way.

So I wondered if I could map the Templer Way using pigments sourced along the route as markers? I signed up for some ceramic workshops making clay marker balls with the intention to glaze each with pigments found along the route.

I started to collect soil, rock and clay samples during weekend walks around Dartmoor. In addition I collected sand and mud from Ness beach in Shaldon, the destination of the Templer Way.

In January there was a large cliff landslide down onto the Ness beach. This would be my first port of call to make some work with pigments. The cliffs at the beach are red sandstone and the beaches are red!

Ness Beach







Ness beach landslide - run off from the landslide



Organza dragged through the red mud at the foot of the landslide



Calico dragged along the beach, through the mud landslide and anchored down to let the waves crash over the fabric.



Several layers of sand and mud coat the fabric



Devon Dirt 1: Calico and organza dyes with red sandstone, driftwood

Walks in Dewerstone over Easter resulted in collecting china clay and also a lovely dark red clay – from old iron mines. I also collected ochre from a disused copper mine in Yarner Wood, Dartmoor; peat from Avon Dam and Yes Tor and haematite from Kelly Mine in Lustleigh.

I wasn't sure how to process the soils, but eventually purchased a mortar and pestle, sieves, muslin, funnels plus binders for the pigments.

My original idea was to dye many fabric samples with a variety of pigments and stitch into a patchwork – I think this could be very effective and soon I collected a nice range of pigments, dipped fabric samples in various sizes too.

I also have the dipped and dragged organza fabric in matching shades. I like how these sheer fabrics added a veil/dimension/layers/contrast to the heavy calico. I felt that these worked as pieces in their own right.

Devon Dirt 1 – Red Sandstone, Ness Beach

Devon Dirt 2 – Copper, Yarner Wood

Devon Dirt 3 – Haematite, Kelly Mine

Devon Dirt 4 – Haematite and china clay

Devon Dirt 5 - Iron, Haytor

Yarner Wood

The Templer Way runs through Yarner Wood

I took some calico with me to dip into the pool of yellow water from the run-off from the old copper mine. Source of Ochre.







Devon Dirt 2: Ochre from Yarner Wood.



Devon Dirt 3: Organza coated in haematite from Kelly Mine, Lustleigh



Devon Dirt 4: Black organza dipped in china clay sourced from Dewerstone



Haytor dirt - iron





Devon Dirt 5: Fabric dipped in iron pigments from Haytor and found objects



Plaited organza dipped in various iron pigments from Dartmoor

Dirt Balls

For the clay balls it was a matter of mixing the soils/clay with water to make a glaze. The clay balls were painted with china clay, peat, haematite, copper, rust, iron.

The balls looked great: an excellent way to mark the journey.



Peat and china clay; copper, china clay; black clay with white china clay added; peat with granite dust; peat with china clay and Haytor iron; iron Dewerstone. Prior to firing above



Post firing: All successful apart from the peat which burnt off. I decided to leave the balls rough as more natural and earthy rather than add a shiny glaze.



For the exhibition

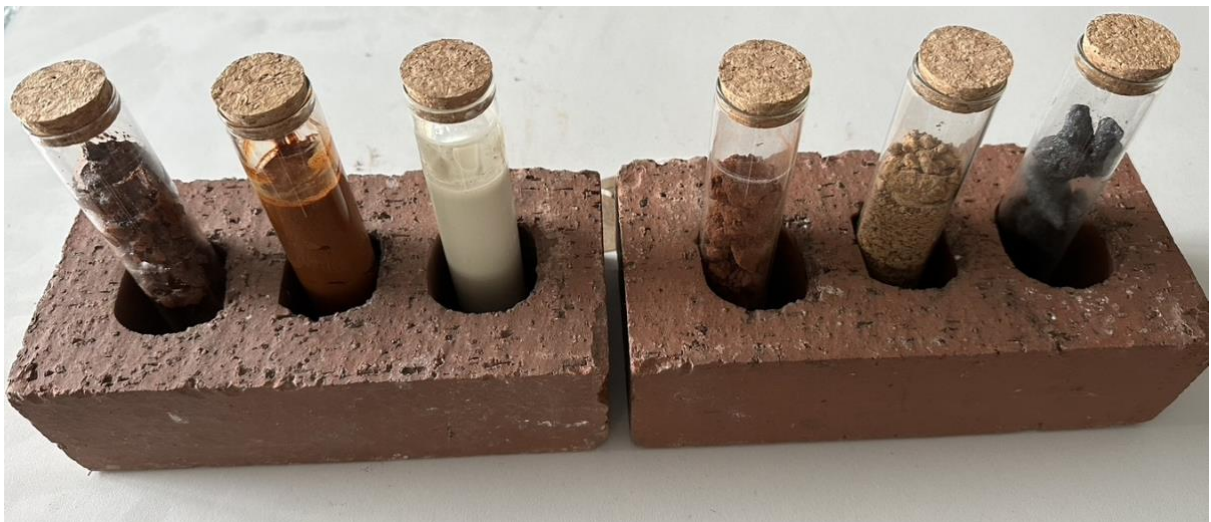


Waiting to be fired: Dewerstone Iron, Haematite and Haytor Iron

By now I had moved from focusing on the Templar Way to just have fun working with the dirt from Devon/Dartmoor in general.

Scientific project

I used test tubes for my water samples so why not keep the formulae and use test tubes for the pigments and to hold the raw soils and clay!



Exhibition at Tremenheere Gallery, Penzance 27 to 30 June 2024

I was thrilled how the curation was undertaken showcasing my work in this stunning gallery.

There is plenty of scope to continue with more Devon Dirt!

























