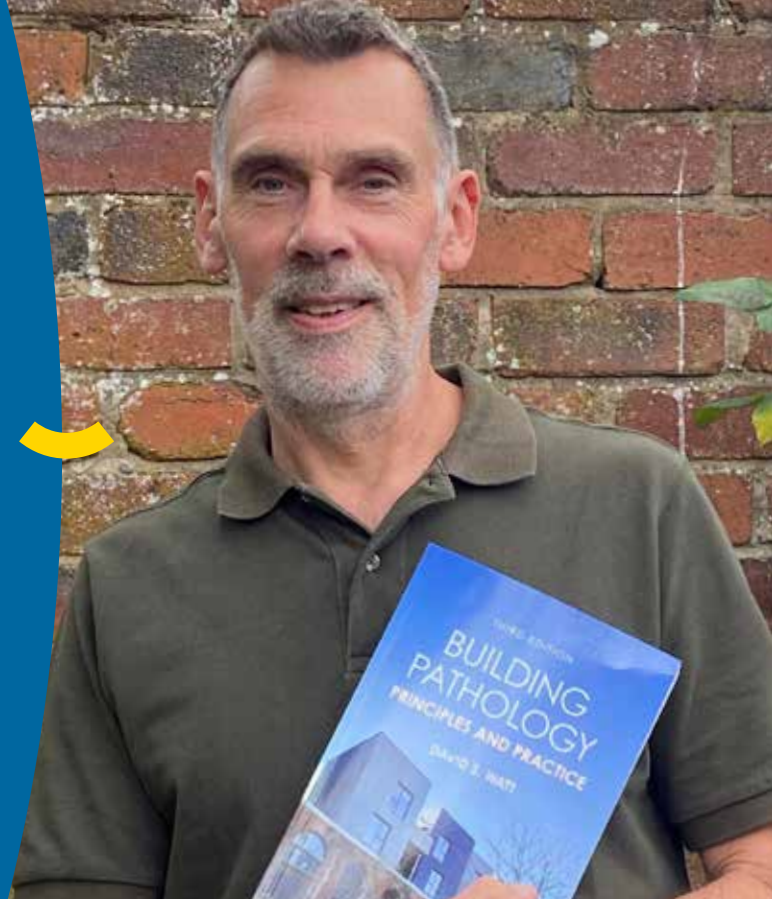


Q&A with David Watt

Author of Building Pathology: Principles and Practice (3rd Edition)

We interviewed Dr David Watt, Hutton + Rostron SOCOTEC Associate Director Building Pathology and Surveying, about his latest book.



David, congratulations on the third edition. What's changed in this version - and why now?

Thanks very much. This edition comes at a time when the industry is facing new challenges - Building safety, climate resilience, retrofit and the increasing complexity of heritage assets in active use. I've updated and expanded the case studies to reflect that, with a stronger focus on applying principles in varied, real-world contexts. It's about giving professionals the confidence to diagnose and act, not just observe.

You talk a lot about understanding how buildings perform and why defects occur. Why is that so important in practice?

We can't fix what we don't understand. Too often, there's a rush to treat the symptom without diagnosing the cause. True Building Pathology is about looking closely, and understanding the interplay of materials, environment, and use. When we do that, the remediation is far more robust, sustainable and cost-effective. It also means we protect the building's long-term value.

How does this thinking link with the way we work at SOCOTEC and particularly with the H+R heritage team?

It's very aligned. At SOCOTEC, we focus on practical outcomes - but those outcomes are always based on evidence, research and careful inspection. Whether we're dealing with a listed building suffering damp and decay, or a modern

façade with movement issues, we approach it methodically. The H+R team brings that depth of knowledge on traditional materials and historic fabric that's absolutely critical in heritage work - and we're applying the same rigour across the board.

What do you hope professionals and students on built environment courses get out of this book?

I'd like them to feel more confident in their judgement. Whether they're early in their career or experienced but facing unfamiliar issues, the aim is to equip them with the mindset and process to ask the right questions, and to know what good evidence looks like. It's not about having all the answers - it's about knowing how to get to them.

Finally, if you had to sum up Building Pathology in one sentence?

It's about listening to buildings - carefully, patiently and with purpose - so we can help provide a more engaging, sustainable and healthy built environment.