

Skills For the Future: Heritage Blacksmiths Bursary

Programme Overview

By the National Heritage Ironwork Group
May 2011

FUNDED BY:



The Ironmongers' Co



York CCC

THIS PROGRAMME IS ALSO SUPPORTED BY:



The vision behind this programme is to bring together the skills of excellent blacksmithing practice and professional conservation practice to provide unique and specialist training. This is driven by the fact that only by building a system of training and accreditation can the future of our rich heritage of wrought ironwork be secured.

The background to this is that within the United Kingdom we have a precious heritage of blacksmith-made architectural ironwork displaying a mastery of design and superb craftsmanship with, for example, the Tijou Screen at Hampton Court Palace being accepted as a work of art of national importance. Many items are listed, often at the highest grades, yet currently heritage ironwork is under-represented in both education and standards. Surprisingly it is the one area of conservation where no codes of practice exist. As a result work on listed ironwork is currently carried out according to no established guidelines, and frequently by unskilled workers, often resulting in irrevocable damage.

The seriousness of faulty or poor quality work within the craft sector as a whole initiated the formation of the National Heritage Training Group (NHTG). In 2008 they carried out two 'Skills Needs Analysis of the UK Built Heritage Sector' which highlighted the extensive knowledge and skills gaps among many of those who undertake this type of work. Their then Chairman, Mike Moody, said 'This will have a detrimental effect on preserving our traditional building stock and with a lack of suitably knowledgeable younger recruits to replace experienced professionals when they retire these gaps are set to widen. The low numbers of professionals seeking accreditation in the building conservation also needs to be addressed, as professional disciplines need to operate within a framework of common principles designed to protect and conserve the historic built environment.'

The main barrier to entering a career in heritage ironwork is that once the specialist skills, which require hard work and dedication, are attained the smith has no advantage in the commercial sector as there is no formal recognition of these skills. As a result their skills are excluded through the tender procedure which works on price as opposed to ability. In other conservation disciplines practitioners are expected to prove themselves by achieving some kind of accreditation. The field of heritage ironwork deserves no less.

The Heritage Blacksmiths Bursary has been designed to tackle this need by ensuring that not only is there a body of suitably skilled craftsmen but that the skills they obtain are of merit and recognised. The programme is not able to provide a one stop solution but instead what it can do is provide development work which will help towards addressing the situation. As such this scheme is the first step in the process of building a training route with outcomes which are linked to a system of certification for heritage blacksmiths as only by doing this can we hope to secure the future of our rich heritage of wrought ironwork. In addition it is designed in such a way as it has the potential for long lasting impact for the sector by being suitable for future funding and alignment with nationally recognised qualifications.

The Heritage Lottery Fund 'Skills for the Future' grants programme has provided the opportunity to turn the vision of the Heritage Blacksmith Bursary into a reality as it fits in with the programmes aims which are to:

- Fund high quality work-based training opportunities to equip people with the skills to pursue a career in heritage
- Enhance the capacity of the heritage sector to deliver sustainable training and share good practice
- Demonstrate the value of heritage skills to modern life

The Heritage Blacksmith Bursary is an advanced training program that broadens the skills and experience of blacksmiths involved in historic ironwork repairs by bringing together the best of blacksmithing craft practise and the philosophy and ethics of conservation. It has been put in place to provide the beginnings of a skilled and experienced cohort of practitioners able to not only work on sensitive ironwork artefacts but also work effectively with fellow professionals in the field.

The course caters for eight students per year, with a total number of sixteen, over the two year programme. To provide real and relevant training it is made up of a series of practical skill based and conservation based work placements separated by five college attendance blocks.

The program will be hard work as it is full time commitment involving one year of intensive training and requires a lot of travel, however, the unique experience also promises to be an exciting and challenging opportunity for the successful students.

2011:12 Timetable:

W/C	2011														2012																								
	MAY			JUN	JUL	AUG			SEP		OCT		DEC		JAN	FEB		APRIL			MAY	JUL																	
	16	23	30	27	4	15	22	29	5	12	24	31	19	26	2	20	27	2	9	16	21	9																	
DESCRIPTION	21 & 22 NHIG Course Induction			Hereford College of Technology		workshop placement		Hereford College of Technology		workshop placement		Summer Holiday			Hereford College of Technology		Workshop placement		Hereford College of Technology		Workshop placement		Christmas Holiday		Workshop placement		Hereford College of Technology		Workshop placement		Easter Holiday			Workshop placement		Course Completion		Awards Ceremony	

2012:13 Provisional Timetable:

W/C	2012											2013																												
	MAY		JUN		AUG		SEP		OCT		DEC		JAN	FEB		APRIL		MAY		JUN	JUL																			
	28	4	11	20	27	3	10	22	29	24	31	7	18	25	1	8	13	20	27	17	8																			
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Students will need to submit an application form supported by portfolio following which candidates will be shortlisted for interview. The interviews will take place over the duration of one day and will give applicants the opportunity to get an understanding of the course, ask questions and demonstrate their existing knowledge and skills. The interview panel will use a scoring system as the basis for discussing the merits of each applicant prior to selection.

Each successful student will receive a bursary totalling £15,000 which will be paid in a series of monthly instalments. This will ensure that students are able to manage financially and cope with the necessary moves to different work venues as they progress through the course. The bursary is intended to give all age groups and those with low income the ability to apply, including mature people who have taken a career change who might otherwise have been unable to access other training provisions.

A lack of formal qualifications will not bar entry to the programme but applicants must be at least 19 years old and entitled to carry out work based training in the UK. It is important however to note that as an advanced course there is a mandatory requirement for students to already have experience in both forge work and welding techniques.

The course syllabus as shown here is not exhaustive but provides a feel for content;

Course introduction: The course structure, roles and responsibilities.

Professional Practice: Research, recording, reporting, working relationships and regulations.

History of Ironwork: Style, makers and heritage representative organisations.

Conservation Principles and practise: Philosophy and ethics, approach and procedure.

Environmental Issues: Working on heritage sites, protection of work and environment.

Design and Drawing: Artistic, technical, historical and recording.

Working to Specification: Identifying and assessing requirements, approach and procedure.

Health & Safety: Legal requirements, safe working, roles and responsibilities.

Materials: Consumables, metals, historical and modern.

Tooling: Use, production and maintenance.

Forging: Processes and repoussé.

Joining: Processes and assembly

Fixing: Methods and on site evaluation and surveying.

Dismantling/transport/storage: Methods and processes, labelling and recording.

Clean, prepare and protect: Methods and processes, corrosion and maintenance.

The Hereford College of Technology syllabus has been developed to compliment the work based learning in order that the student receives a holistic education programme with a timetable divided between practical skills based subjects and essential underpinning knowledge. To enhance the limited tutorial time at the end of each college block students will receive a homework assignment to be completed prior to their return.

Work placement training will be delivered by industry heritage specialists in the field of conservation and blacksmithing. It is critical to the success of the programme that students learn directly from these professionals and it is intended that they will provide students with the broad range of practical experience they need in order to complete the course syllabus. Although placement lengths will vary it is expected that students will work at a maximum of eight within the year.

As the previous experience of all students will be different, each will be given a personalised set of assessment targets focused on what they need to achieve from each placement they visit. These targets will be used to track learning progress and to match available placements in accordance with the needs of students. The appropriateness of any placement will be determined by discussion and agreement between NHIG and the provider.

Once a match has been found, but before any student is placed, workshops will also be assessed for general suitability in line with the current NVQ placement process. Successful host workshops will then receive an induction to the programme following which the onus will be on the placement provider to ensure that the student receives the appropriate and agreed experience.

In general students will move between placements at predicted times in the programme but this timetable will in reality be adaptable enough to respond to the changing needs of both the students and providers. The flexibility of the timing and length of placement will allow workshops undertaking suitable projects to register their interest in hosting at any time throughout the course. However, given the variable nature of workshop projects providers on the register will not be obligated to host a student and

like wise, given the needs of students, NHIG will not be obligated to place one with each registered provider.

It is anticipated that workshops on the register will be those who are passionate about their craft and who already have a strong ethos towards training. Their participation in the programme will demonstrate commitment to the future of the craft through the sharing of their skills and knowledge. As the bursary will provide for the students financial needs and given that the students will be semi-skilled it is expected that the exchange of labour for experience will be beneficial to both parties.

The monitoring and assessment of student's progress will be on going throughout the programme to allow evaluation and reflective practices to be brought into play by the management and facilitate comprehensive coverage of the syllabus. Students work will be assessed against the requirements of the programme by trained assessors working to a standard system which is mapped against NVQ procedure and offers objectivity to the process.

All students will have a full induction to the assessment process and 'Candidate Work Evidence Pack' to ensure they fully understand what will be expected and the targets that will be set for them. In addition, in order to prevent dropout and assure receipt of quality training, they will all have access to a mentor.

The work and college based assessment process will measure and track student targets against training progress. Assessment will be largely based on training delivered in the workplace with the bursary recipient being responsible for building a portfolio of evidence against which assessments will be made. These assessments will be carried out against the units identified as appropriate to the work and training undertaken. In this way the progress of the student can be monitored and assessed for the ability they have gained. The results of each student's assessment will then be mapped directly for competence against the units and standards within the course award.

The NHIG Award for Blacksmithing Conservation is a competency work based award covering specialist units in forgework conservation which formally offers students the opportunity to demonstrate the skills gained during the course. The award standards are derived from Construction Skills National Occupation Standards for Heritage skills level 3 blacksmithing option route with an assessment process that reflects the accepted NVQ Level 3 model. This is aimed at ensuring long lasting value and recognition of the qualification gained and the possibility of linkage to any future courses that are developed from this programme after it has ended.

The award standards form a part of the 'Candidate Work Evidence Pack' with each unit of learning distinctly tied to the National Occupational Standards unit numbers of the same number. As such the award includes these standards as a suite of units which are linked to the course syllabus. Given the one year timetable this is an unreservedly ambitious target as it is estimated that the full set of units make up the syllabus for the delivery of 14 block release College weeks over a two year period. Nevertheless it is agreed that our course target of one year will be sufficient for the award standards to be achieved due to the student entry requirements that have been set. However, to accommodate the different abilities of students and placement opportunities, in light of the limited delivery timetable, the units have been split into mandatory and optional which can be evidenced and assessed as appropriate.

MANDATORY

- Confirm to General Workplace Safety
- Confirm Work Activities and Resources for the work
- Develop and Maintain Good Working Relationships
- Confirm the Occupational Method of Work
- Working on Conservation and Restoration Projects
- Repair, Restore, Conserve, Replace or Maintain Forged Heritage Metalwork

- Clean, Prepare and Protect Heritage Metalwork

OPTIONAL

- Heat, Weld or Solder Heritage Metalwork
- Thermal Cutting Metal for Heritage Work
- Dismantle and Fix Heritage Metalwork

Although this qualification is not yet nationally recognised it is the only current option to cover this spectrum of training and will be supported and endorsed by NHIG and Hereford College of Technology.

In addition a second set of more personal and aspirational certificates will be available for a series of 'best of' categories including;

- Best Blacksmith Award (for student with best practical forgework - assessors award)
- Best Portfolio Award (for student with best portfolio completion - assessors award)

These will form the basis of a competition between students with the winner of each category being chosen through the course assessment process.

The resources of specialist knowledge and experience needed to plan and manage the delivery of this training programme have come from a small working group, derived from the NHIG council, called the 'Training Steering Group'. The selected members of this group are;

- Adrian Legge: Senior blacksmithing tutor at Hereford College of Technology with over 30 years blacksmithing & 20 years teaching experience.
- Bethan Griffiths: Director of The Ironwork Studio with 13 years experience in ironwork design and consultancy.
- Brian Hall: Director of Hall Conservation with 25 years experience as a metal conservator with ICON Professional Accredited Conservator Restorer accreditation
- Chris Topp: Director of Chris Topp & Co with over 30 years experience as a heritage ironwork specialist.
- David James: Director of George James & Sons with over 30 years experience as a heritage ironwork specialist.
- Glenn Young: Director of The Heritage Crafts Alliance with over 40 years experience within the heritage training sector involving the procurement, delivery and assessment of craft training.
- Paul Allen: NETS forgework tutor at the National School of Blacksmithing, Hereford College of Technology. Over 35 years blacksmithing and 25 years teaching and advisory experience in the craft.

Their combined specialist contributions were aimed at forming a well rounded programme that balanced the needs of the sector with the delivery of training. In achieving this they also consulted, during the planning stage, where appropriate with;

- Trainers and training providers
- Ironwork specialists
- Employers
- The current workforce

The management resources needed to deliver the training are split between the Training Steering Group (voluntary role) and the Project Manager (paid position) although the NHIG board of directors are responsible for overall governance (voluntary role). The Training Steering Groups chairman has overall line management responsibility with the group as a whole in charge of setting targets, tracking of progress, making decisions and approving changes through the regular project reviews. This group will

employ freelance staff for accounting and basic administration services and hire a project manager who will be accountable for the day to day delivery and assessment of the project.

The NHIG has a partnership agreement with Hereford College of Technology and it is their role to provide practical and theoretical training and to monitor the progress of students throughout the block release part of the programme.

The finance of the programme has been secured at a total value of £392,000 and breaks down as follows;

- £350,200: Heritage Lottery Fund grant awarded under its 'skills for the future' programme with a requirement that at least 10% of the project costs are provided by partnership funding with at least 5% of this value in cash.
- £21,500: in cash from;
 - British Artist Blacksmiths Association (BABA)
 - Construction Skills
 - Chris Topp & Co Ltd
 - Eastlake & Beachell Ltd
 - Historic Royal Palaces
 - The Ironmongers' Company
 - York Consortium for Conservation and Craftsmanship (York CCC)
- £20,300: In professional voluntary time calculated in accordance with the Heritage Lottery Fund rates of pay which vary to reflect unskilled, skilled and professional time. This funding contribution has been secured from members of the NHIG council. Training Steering Group whose management role within this project is voluntary.
- Bridging Loan to cover 10% HLF Retention Period; In addition to the cash needed to complete the project a bridging loan has had to be secured to cover the HLF 10% retention of grant period. The final 10% of the grant will be withheld until the programme's completion report has been accepted by the HLF. The bridging loan provides the cash flow for the programme to continue during this time and has been secured from;
 - Orchard House (IFAs) Ltd – Holistic Independent Financial Advice

The programme evaluation and reviews will be on going from the time of project delivery commencement in order to keep track and reflect on the progress and outcomes of the training by the management and the Heritage Lottery fund. They will also provide the information the management needs to make decisions and approve changes as the programme develops. Following the completion of the delivery of training the programme will culminate with an evaluation report, compiled by the Training Steering Group and Project Manager, which will appraise the programme as a whole.

The outcome of this project is that it will provide students with specialist training, education and experience they cannot access elsewhere as at present there are no educational opportunities or skill based courses in heritage blacksmithing. As a result this programme will not only address this need but also provide the heritage blacksmithing sector with;

A SYLLABUS: This will outline the necessary skills and knowledge. Not only will this form the basis of the course but it can also be used to enhance the ability of the sector to discuss, evaluate and share good practice.

A COURSE: This will provide a structured training delivery programme. This course will be the first specialised training programme for Blacksmith Conservators, a new model in a niche sector.

AN ASSESSMENT PROCESS: A standardised assessment against which individuals can be appraised.

THE NHIG AWARD FOR BLACKSMITHING CONSERVATION; A measure against which competency can be assessed and evidenced in order to demonstrate the skills the students have gained.

SKILLS: It will provide students with relevant experience and advanced skills for their future careers and by doing so will increase the skills, capacity and diversity of the current workforce.

As the entire course syllabus is mapped against National Occupational Standards and the assessment against the current National Qualification Framework the above outcomes will be not only valuable but also valued by both the heritage ironwork and training sectors.

The intended overall outcome of the scheme and the general focus of the NHIG will be to ensure that the craft skills required to respect our heritage of wrought ironwork are fostered and given a marketplace in a commercial world which is at present informed by cost alone. As such the course structure encourages the sharing of knowledge and good practice within the existing workforce but the aim is to also enhance the sharing and knowledge of the sector as a whole. In order to do this the NHIG will publish the outcomes and lessons learnt on completion as it is hoped that this will enable a greater understanding and appreciation of the needs, education and standards within the heritage ironwork sector.

Sustainability of the training programme is a real possibility once initial funding ceases as having mapped it against National Occupational Standards and the National Qualification Framework it will be accessible to mainstream education funding. Therefore if demand is created for a measure of competence then there is potential for the establishment of a permanent training course. Consequently this programme is intended to be the pump priming for an ongoing requirement for training and accreditation in the sector, supported by an insistence on the achievement of certain standards by the national heritage bodies and grant awarding bodies. This is seen as a requirement at present in other build heritage craft sectors when engaging individuals / companies and the field of heritage ironwork deserves no less.

To increase this opportunity NHIG will seek to enhance and develop the outcomes by lobbying for the development of both an NVQ at level 3 as well as a technical certificate at level 3. This process has been successfully completed for the NVQ level 3 in many other sectors of the heritage standards. Success in this lobby would provide the opportunity for the establishment of an accredited apprenticeship in heritage ironwork at level 3. This route will provide an opportunity for the course to become financially sustainable as by providing a recognised qualification the course provider will be able to drawdown mainstream educational funding.

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