

Training Opportunities provided by English Cathedral Works Departments and Stained Glass Studios

Maintaining our cathedrals requires a wide range of highly skilled craft specialists including stone masons, carvers and sculpture conservators, stained glass conservators and lead workers and joiners. Out of the 42 Anglican cathedrals, thirteen have dedicated works departments committed to preserving these traditional skills. They take on trainees, offer apprenticeships, support the professional development of staff and participate in a range of training initiatives. Creating robust Workshops ensure they maintain the skills to look after their complex buildings. They also provide training opportunities for individuals whose skills can equally be applied to secular buildings.

Salisbury Cathedral's Works Department employs eight masons and two conservators who work full-time on the cathedral. Over the last 27 years, they have provided eight three-year apprenticeships by offering an approved stonemasonry placement for a student undertaking the three-year training course *Stonemasonry NVQ – Block Release* at the Dorset Skills Centre in Poundbury, Dorchester. Current student, Christian Sullivan will spend twelve weeks each year at the college and the rest of the year at the cathedral workshop where, under the supervision of a senior mason, he puts into practice tasks such as cutting out old stone, re-fixing new stone and grouting and pointing.

Lincoln Cathedral Works Department employs over 30 craftspeople. In 2010, they partnered with Lincolnshire County Council to provide practical training and assessment for the County Council's new Heritage Skills Centre which opened in 2012 in the grounds of Lincoln Castle. The Cathedral advised on the setting up of the centre which hopes to have a significant impact on skills training in Lincolnshire by providing local opportunities in a range of traditional building craft skills. A joint bid was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund Skills for the Future programme resulting in an award of £500,000. Lincoln County Council manages the Centre while key members of the Cathedral staff have qualified as A1 NVQ Assessors. The grant also supports training bursaries of eighteen months, over a period of five years, in stonemasonry, carpentry/joinery, glazing, heritage brickwork and leadwork. The students' practical training is at Lincoln Cathedral while



Figure 1 - Stonemasonry Student Christian Sullivan on an internal mitre at Salisbury Cathedral © Salisbury Cathedral Works Department July 2013

they undertake college courses to take them to NVQ Level 3. In the last three months, they are helped with their CV and to find employment. The first three graduates in November 2012 have all secured employment. The success of the scheme resulted in an additional grant of £250k being awarded, taking the number of training bursaries to 16.

The Canterbury Cathedral Stone Conservation Workshop employs 17 stonemasons. Throughout the year they offer at least six one-week work experience placements for students from, among others, City and Guilds London Art School and Bath and Weymouth Colleges and three-month placements for a variety of students from the UK and abroad.

Canterbury train their own apprentices, usually four to six at a time. Based at the cathedral they study for up to five years. For the first three years they attend block release sessions at the Building Crafts College, Stratford for theory and basic stonemasonry skills relevant to all stone buildings up to NVQ level 3.

Heather Newton, Head of Stonemasonry and Conservation, says 'students learn about modern and mechanised methods of masonry, but start using traditional hand tools to give them an understanding of their craft and an appreciation of the skills of medieval builders'.

At the end of five years, they are either retained by the workshop, find employment at another yard or undertake further training. In September 2013, two of the current apprentices will start the Cathedrals' Workshop Fellowship course.

The Cathedrals' Workshop Fellowship (CWF) was established in 2006 by eight English Cathedrals with in-house masonry workshops. Supported financially by the Worshipful Company of Masons, it is sponsored for the next four years by Ecclesiastical.

The aim was to develop a common programme of advanced training for apprentice masons. Previously, stonemasons could only gain an NVQ level 3 qualification, but

the unique CWF course enables the students to progress through work-based learning to achieve a Foundation Degree (National Educational level five).

In 2009, the University of Gloucestershire was chosen as the validating university. The first week of the two year course is based at the university, but thereafter the training is undertaken through collective study periods



Figure 2- Jason Varnam, HLF Skills for the Future Bursary student (right) working with Carpentry mentor Stuart Cook easing a rafter from the valley beam on Lincoln Cathedral © Lincoln Cathedral Works Department.

at the participating eight cathedrals. This enables students to gain, through work-based practical training in the different cathedral communities, an insight into important conservation and development work across the sector. Each cathedral funds their own students, usually current employees, and contributes to the costs of the course. The CWF employs an Academic Programme Manager who oversees the programme and provides quality assurance. Assessments are by senior staff from the individual cathedrals who have qualified as module leaders in specialised areas and who assess the work-based projects of all students. All assessments are reviewed and validated by the university.

An important objective is to underpin practical craft training with the knowledge they need to become rounded craftspeople. Subjects covered include: Architectural and Art History, Archaeology, Conservation (Philosophy and Practice), Basic and Advanced Geometry, Architectural and Decorative Carving, Stone Fixing, Geology, Structural Engineering and Project Management. "Our aim," explains Adrian Munns, CWF's volunteer Administrator, 'is to turn trainees into thinking and planning masons who can see their cathedrals in a more holistic manner and work in partnership with architects, archaeologists and conservators. Overall, students gain an understanding of stone work and its long term conservation which is generic to all heritage buildings'.

The first four 'Pilot Course' Students were all awarded Foundation Degrees (Arts) in Personal and Professional Development (Stone Masonry) in 2012. A second group of seven students completed in July 2013 and a further seven will start in September 2013.

The York Glaziers Trust (the YGT)

Founded as a charitable trust in 1967, the YGT undertakes the care and protection of all 128 historic windows in York Minster.

Since 2005, YGT has trained five stained glass conservators (four with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, one with support of the York Minster Fund) and has offered work experience and internship opportunities to conservation students from the UK, Europe and the US.



Figure 3- HLF-funded trainees Tom Vowden and Merlyn Griffiths at work at the Yprk Glaziers Trust © The York Glaziers Trust

Recognising a national shortage of training in stained glass conservation at a high level, in 2005 the YGT, with financial support from the Pilgrim Trust, commissioned a

feasibility study to determine how this could be provided. Early discussions with the University of York bore fruit and in 2008 the University launched a two-year MA in Stained Glass Conservation and Heritage Management, the only such course in the UK, with Sarah Brown as both Director of the YGT and Course Director for the new MA. A maximum of eight students a year are recruited. A theoretical framework including training in the ethics and the philosophy of conservation, history of conservation, art and architectural history, archaeology, building engineering, conservation and the impact of climate change, as well as heritage management and arts administration is combined with practical training in stained glass conservation. A key component of the course is a 16 week placement with leading studios in the UK and abroad, including the YGT.

Both the YGT and the York Minster Stoneyard are currently working on the £20 million five-year *York Minster Revealed* project, central to which is the conservation of the Great East Window. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund's £10.5 million grant, one of its requirements has enabled the Stoneyard and the YGT to expand their specialist training. Merlyn Griffiths and Tom Vowden joined YGT in September 2012 as HLF-funded full-time trainees. They will begin studying for the MA from October 2013, while continuing to work at YGT for one day a week for the duration of their 16 week placement.

Links to websites for further information

Salisbury Cathedral Works Department

<http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/history.masonry.php>

Lincoln Cathedral Works Department <http://lincolncathedral.com/building/restoration/>

Canterbury Cathedral Stone Conservation Workshop

<http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/conservation/stone/>

Cathedrals' Workshop Fellowship

<http://www.masonslivery.org/supporting-our-craft/training-educational-support/colleges-workshops/cathedrals-workshop-fellowship/>

The York Glaziers Trust <http://www.yorkglazierstrust.org/>

Becky Payne

3rd September 2013

If you require an alternative accessible version of this document (for instance in audio, Braille or large print) please contact our Customer

Services Department:

Telephone: 0870 333 1181

Fax: 01793 414926

Textphone: 0800 015 0516

E-mail: customers@english-heritage.org.uk