

Heritage Skills Careers

Enjoy working with your hands? Passionate about history? Relish a practical challenge? Want to make a difference to historic buildings for generations to come? If so, then a career in the heritage skills sector could be perfect for you!

What are Heritage Skills?

Heritage skills specialists work to protect, conserve and maintain older and traditional buildings, from houses to palaces, churches to ancient monuments, traditional farms to industrial buildings. The work of these specialists is hugely varied, includes those who are skilled craftspeople and those who are trained professionally.

No two heritage buildings are ever alike, so working in the heritage skills sector is varied, changing, and constantly challenging, with plenty of opportunities for to tailor your work to your interests, to travel and meet new people, and to develop your skills throughout your career.



adapting to new challenges – leaving a legacy for the future - working in a team – feel passionate about work – continuous training – job tailored to interests – attention to detail – working outdoors – professional development – no two jobs alike – problem solving – making things that last – range of opportunities

What Kind of Jobs are Out There?

Archaeologist – uses survey, archive, and excavation techniques to research and record material remains of the past

Brick Layer – repairs, conserves, and builds with brick and tile, working on walls, chimneys, and decorative features such as archways, often using traditional brick bonds, fine gauged work, and lime mortars.

Builder – uses traditional techniques and materials such as lime, stone and brick to repair and maintain the structure of traditional buildings

Blacksmith – forges and shapes metal for practical and decorative use in buildings, both restoring older pieces and making new items that are in sympathy with existing metalwork

Buildings Surveyor (conservation accredited) – Records traditional buildings and provides advice on any defects or problems with a building, and advises on repairs, maintenance, or conservation work necessary.

Carpenter/Joiner – makes household and structural items out of wood, including staircases, doors, gables, window frames and furniture, using traditional joints, tools, and working methods, and drawing on specific knowledge of how wood weathers and changes over time.

Conservation Accredited Architect – specialising in the conservation of historic buildings and monuments, and in the design of extensions, alterations and additions to traditional buildings, conservation architects are highly skilled and qualified.

Conservation Officer – works to look after existing heritage by promoting understanding of the past and advising and granting consent for building works, and works strategically to protect heritage for the future by planning for change and use of heritage buildings and areas.

Conservation Structural Engineer – inspects traditional buildings for structural problems, and provides advice for work to ensure that buildings are structurally sound.

Conservation Specialist – specialises in the study and practical conservation of specific materials or items, such as cloth, books, paper, or paintings, often working on intricate design work and aiming to conserve the maximum original fabric possible.



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Dry Stone Waller – Repairs and maintains existing stone walls, and constructs new walls, often using locally sourced material.

Heritage Manager/Project Manager – Works on historic buildings, sites, and conservation areas to protect, conserve, and manage activities at these places. Often involves organising building works, and liaising with other professionals and craftspeople involved.

Glazier – restores and preserves plain or stained glass, and also designs and installs traditional glass in both new and older buildings.

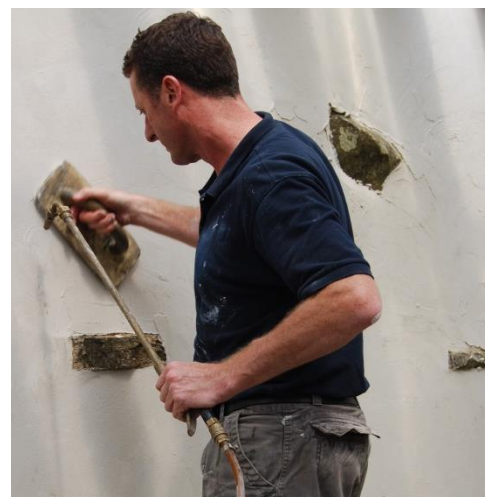
Lead Worker – shapes and welds lead using traditional techniques for roofs and other areas of traditional buildings.
Painter and Decorator – Uses traditional methods and materials to repair and conserve interiors and exteriors of historic buildings; work is often intricate and requires a great deal of attention to detail.

Plasterer – repairs, makes, and replicates plasterwork in heritage properties including walls, floors, and decorative pieces.

Roofer – uses modern techniques and heritage skills to design and construct slate, tile, and lead roofs, both repairing smaller areas and replacing entire roofs.

Stone Mason – cleans and repairs old buildings, preserves and replaces facades, lintels, sills and decorative carvings. Also uses lime mortars and considers structural impact of conservation work.

Steeplejack – carries out conservation work and structural surveys of buildings in difficult to access areas such as roofs, towers, monuments and chimneys, with reports feeding directly in to the work of engineers, architects, and conservators.



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Experience and Qualifications

There are several routes in to the sector, for school leavers, those with experience of mainstream construction, and those wishing to move into the sector.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a great way to gain qualifications and on the job experience at the same time, so that you can earn while you learn! They are particularly good if you are more practical in your approach, and can lead to an NVQ Level 3, a technical qualification like a BTEC, or even an HNC, HND or Foundation degree.

Apprenticeships are available through many colleges or directly with a business. To find more information, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

There is now a specialist heritage skills advanced apprenticeship developed and delivered by Heritage Crafts Alliance <http://www.heritagecraftalliance.co.uk/>

NVQ in Heritage Skills

The NVQ is a good route if you wish to become a craftsperson specialising in a particular trade. You can study at Level 2 and progress to Level 3, or some people may be able to start at Level 3 depending on their prior experience or qualifications.

NVQ Level 3 in Heritage Skills includes experience of hands on training and allows you to apply for your Gold Heritage CSCS card, which proves that you are a recognised tradesperson who has specialised skills. NVQs Level 2 and 3 in heritage skills are available in the following areas:

Trowel Occupations	NVQ Levels 2 & 3 Bricklayer, Craft Mason
Wood Occupations	NVQ Levels 2 & 3 Site Carpentry, Bench Joinery, Wheelwrighting NVQ Level 2 Heavy Structural Timber Framing
Roofing Occupations	NVQ Level 2 Hard Metals and/or Lead NVQ Levels 2 & 3 Roof Tiler, Roof Slater, Roof Tiler and Slater NVQ Levels 2 & 3 Thatching
Decorative Finishing and Industrial Painting	NVQ Levels 2 & 3 Painter and Decorator
Façade Cleaning/Repair	NVQ Level 2 Façade Preservation
Plastering	NVQ Levels 2 & 3
Accessing Operations and Rigging	NVQ Levels 2 & 3 Steeple jacking
Stonemasonry	NVQ Levels 2 & 3 Stonemasonry
Understanding Repair & Maintenance of traditional pre 1919 buildings	NVQ Level 3 – 2 days
Award in Heritage Construction	NVQ Level 2 – 8 days

Higher Education Qualifications

Specialisms such as civil engineering, conservation architecture, building surveying and heritage management require formal academic qualifications and accreditation. In addition to these qualifications, professionals working in these roles need good communication and teamwork skills, and relevant work experience.

Undergraduate Degrees

Undergraduate degrees allow you to develop your skills and passion for a subject, and you may also be able to choose optional modules in heritage specific areas, depending on the university or college you choose. Undergraduate degrees related to heritage careers include:

Archaeology BA or BSc, Architecture BSc, Art History BA, Building Surveying BSc, Civil Engineering BSc, Classics/Ancient History BA, History BA, Town Planning BSc



Masters Degrees and Post Graduate Qualifications

Masters degrees are usually undertaken in one or two years and are focussed on developing your skills in a more specific area. They demonstrate commitment to a chosen field, higher knowledge, and ability to apply skills. Some postgraduate qualifications also include work-based placements. Masters degrees associated with heritage careers include: Conservation, Architecture, Buildings Management, Building Surveying, Historic Preservation, Heritage Management, Town Planning and Historic Environment Conservation.

Professional Accreditation

Becoming accredited means that your work is to a recognised international standard. Some degree courses lead to accreditation, whereas for other specialisms accreditation is achieved through work in the field. Accrediting organisations include RIBA, AABC, and IHBC.



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Progression and Opportunities

Heritage is an area of construction which is experiencing growing demand. There are 375 000 listed buildings in the UK, and 20% of homes in the UK were built before 1919 using traditional methods. These buildings all need repair, maintenance and conservation work if they are to survive for future generations to use and enjoy, and this work needs to be done by trained, knowledgeable specialists.

At all levels and occupations within the heritage construction sector there is room for growth and expansion into new fields, learning new techniques or training for a higher qualification. Continued Professional Development is recommended no matter what your specialism, in order to keep up with the latest thinking, methods, and practices. It is clear that there is definitely a future in heritage.



Where Can I Find Out More?

See Useful Weblinks download at www.nect.org.uk/hsi/heritage-skills-in-education or email skills@nect.org.uk