

## **National Heritage Training Group**

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### **Specialist Heritage Skills**

The National Heritage Training Group (NHTG) provides assistance with all aspects of recruiting, training, and qualifying the UK's construction workforce in traditional building crafts. They are concerned about skills shortages and gaps and want to ensure that appropriate training is available for new and existing craftsmen and women. As an independent industry training group, they work closely with the main clients for the historic building sector, training providers and the trade unions.

#### **Bricklaying**

*The material:* Although the Romans made and used brick widely when they occupied England and Wales, it wasn't until the mid-seventeenth century that it was widely made and used again as a building material. Sometimes you do find brick in mediaeval buildings, such as churches, but this was re-used brick from the demolished Roman buildings. In the Tudor period it was made again but only used for special features such as fireplaces and chimneys or churches - usually only the wealthy could afford to use it. By the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was a common building material across the UK and most of England's Victorian and Edwardian terraced houses and tenements are built from brick.

#### **Plastering**

*The material:* Plaster can be applied both externally and internally to buildings and historically plasterers did not only apply a render, stucco or harl on walls, they could also produce decorative features such as internal mouldings and creative patterns on external walls, known as pargetting. Plaster was used to create internal and external panels, using locally available materials to form the plaster or daub to cover a wooden frame usually of wattle. The traditional material used for all types of plastering and rendering was lime which was also used to create a mortar and to paint with.

*The skill:* Today it is usual for crafts people to specialise in either solid or fibrous plastering. Solid plasterers work on internal and external walls, ceiling and floors. Fibrous plasterers are responsible for ornamental decoration on features such as domed ceilings, vaults and mouldings.

#### **Roof Slating & Tiling**

*The material:* There are several types of roof construction but not all of these are obvious when you look at the outside of a building. It is usually the roofing materials that give our historic buildings so much character and a wide variety were used across the UK. Tiles and flags were a common material and usually made of stone. But they varied in size and shape depending on which part of the roof they were used on and where in the UK the building was. Slates were more commonly used on roofs from the eighteenth century, mainly for grander buildings and then in the nineteenth century for most buildings types.

*The skill:* As with all traditional materials, a roof slater and tiler needs to be able to make best use of the original roof covering and be able to use traditional methods for fixing both the original and replacement tiles or slates in place.

## **Carpentry & Joinery**

*The material:* We have been using timber to construct our buildings across the UK since prehistoric times. As time progressed, and more and more forest and woods were cut down for building materials, timber became short in supply. After the mediaeval period, it was only used to construct the wealthier people's houses or for internal features that showed off the wealth of the property owner. Nevertheless for the vast majority of historic buildings - be it a church, home, barn, or a grand palace – timber was used to create upper floors and for the roof structure. Carpenters were usually known as 'wrights' in mediaeval times and as well as building houses, they made ploughs, carts and, if they lived along the coast, they would make ships. Joiners specialised in carving the timber so that it could be joined together with mortice and tenon joints for timber-frames, internal partitions, roofs, and furniture. Carvers used their skills to sculpt the wood into decorative mouldings, figures and shapes. Some of the best examples of wood carving can still be seen in many of our cathedrals and parish churches. You can still see a lot of historic timber-framed buildings across the UK today, particularly in South Lancashire, Cheshire, the West Midlands, Eastern Wales, Suffolk and Essex.

*The skill:* It is important that carpenters and joiners understand how different types of wood may be used and affected by different conditions, such as moisture content and shrinkage. Today, you can choose to specialise in either carpentry or joinery.

## **Leadworker**

*The material:* Lead and copper are two metals that have been used for centuries on roofs to protect slates, tiles, chimney stacks and dormer windows as well as to emphasise particularly ornate features, such as domes, turrets and spires. More recently aluminium, zinc, tin and stainless steel have also been used as a roof covering on buildings, some of which have now been recognised for their historical significance such as early 20th Century Methodist chapels and the air raid shelters from World War II.

*The skill:* Lead workers are recognised for their specialist skills in shaping lead sheet and other metals into different details, either by bossing or lead welding to make the different component items for the job. Whilst you will specialise in lead, many leadworkers offer services in copper, zinc, and stainless steel.

## **Stonemasonry**

*The material:* This is one of the earliest materials to be used for building. In the past, craftsmen often used local stone for their buildings but for some of the more important buildings, such as cathedrals and palaces, stone was either imported from another part of the UK or from Europe. We have been using this material for a very long time. Examples of prehistoric stone houses and farmsteads can still be found in places like the Shetland Islands, Northern Ireland, Wales and Devon and Cornwall.

*Where available:* Nowadays, it's not so easy to find UK quarries with a ready source of traditional stone because so many of them have been closed down for so many years. Efforts are made to re-open quarry sites but sometimes we have to source a similar stone for repairing historic buildings. Stone was widely used across most of the UK except for the East and South East of England where stone is rare and had to be imported. It was common to use stone for the main load bearing walls but to infill with flint, a locally available material.

*The skill:* There are a variety of skills that stone masons need today to repair, conserve, restore and clean masonry structures. All stone masons need to understand the various types of stone and how they react to various conditions. You can choose to specialise in either banking, fixing or cleaning stone façades. Or you can become a dry stone waller, building hedges out of stone without the use of mortar. Flint-knapping is another highly specialised skill. You need to be able to break or 'knap' the flint so that it can be set flush facing outwards on the wall.