

First historic environment apprentices pass Gateway!

ClfA has been actively engaged in the development of alternative entry routes into careers in archaeology and the historic environment for many years. It's nearly 20 years since we worked on the development of National Occupational Standards and an NVQ in archaeological practice, 15 years since we developed a structure for formalised workplace training placements and just short of ten years since we started working with Historic England and sector partners on the development of apprenticeships. Achieving change in the way that new entrants into a sector are recruited and trained takes time and a lot of effort, but when all that hard work comes to fruition, it's worth celebrating.

We have previously reported on the approval for delivery of six historic environment Trailblazer Apprenticeships by the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), covering archaeology, conservation and historic environment advice. We're delighted now to be providing end-point assessment for the very first apprentices to have completed their training programme as Historic Environment Advice Assistants and to have passed 'Gateway' – the point at which they are judged by their employers and training providers to have gained the knowledge, skills and professional behaviour required to be

competent and to be ready for formal assessment.

Getting to this point has been a huge collaborative effort on the part of Historic England, acting as coordinator for the programme and employer for many of the apprentices, and Strode College in Somerset as training provider. And, of course, not forgetting the apprentices themselves – many of whom are completely new to the historic environment sector and have embraced the challenges of a brand new programme as well as Covid restrictions, which have impacted on their work.

Over the course of the next three months, the apprentices will be assessed against the knowledge, skills and behaviour criteria set out in the apprenticeship standard by our small team of assessors, all historic environment sector experts in their own right. Rigorous monitoring, moderating and standardisation processes, as required by IfATE, will ensure that the assessment is fair, robust and consistent. Successful completion and a pass or

distinction will allow the apprentices to be professionally accredited by ClfA at Practitioner grade.

A second cohort of Historic Environment Advice Assistant apprentices is currently being recruited. Hot on their heels, we expect recruitment for the first cohort of Archaeological Technician apprentices to start later this year. The first cohort of Archaeological Specialist apprentices, following a three-year, Masters'-level programme, will also be commencing this September.

The delivery of apprenticeships is one way we can ensure that the sector has access to the high-level skills it needs to meet demand and provide benefit to society. Providing alternative routes into (and through) a career in archaeology is also key to diversifying our sector and ensuring we are able to draw on a far wider pool of talent. We hope that more will follow.



Apprentices at St Andrews Church, Taunton. Credit: Historic England