

2027 FELLOWSHIP INFORMATION PACK



A unique annual scheme designed to broaden the skills and experience of craftspeople who work with old buildings.

The information in this pack should help you (and your employer) decide whether the Fellowship programme is right for you.

The Fellowship is a genuinely special thing, combining practical craft skills with a heavy measure of SPAB philosophy. The rare access afforded to Fellows along with the immersive nature of the course results in an experience which would be almost impossible to derive elsewhere. I end the year with a considerable increase in my understanding of conservation principles, as well as welcome reinforcement of my existing belief that old buildings are precious but must have a purpose to survive.

Tom Stevens thatcher 2025 Fellow

Please email Pip Soodeen, Scholarship & Fellowship Officer with any questions, to apply in alternative format, and to be put in touch with past Fellows before submitting your application: education@spab.org.uk

Funders

The SPAB Fellowship would not be possible without the support and financial assistance from our hosts and members, William Morris Craft Fellowship Trust, Stuart Heath Charitable Settlement, Cathedral Architects' Association, Carpenters' Company, Owlsworth IJP, Historic England, Radcliffe Trust, Worshipful Company of Plaisterers.

Key Fellowship Application Dates

1 July 2026	Applications open
6 August 2026	Applicants' online Q&A session
7 September 2026	Application deadline
26 October 2026	Interview invitations issued to shortlisted candidates
17 November 2026	Pre-interview gathering Candidates and their partners are invited to the SPAB offices for a presentation from current Fellows, and to meet the interview panel and other candidates
18 November 2026	In-person interviews
20 November 2026	All candidates advised of Fellowship appointments
Tuesday 24 November	Deadline for acceptance

2027 FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Block dates for 2027

15 March 2027	Fellowship start date Fellowship launches at SPAB London office
10 - 14 May 2027	The Repair of Old Buildings Course, week-long course in London
Block I:	15 March - 14 May (9 weeks) (7 weeks back at work or Millwright placement)
Block II:	5 July - 27 August (8 weeks) (7 weeks back at work or Millwright placement)
Block III:	18 October - 4 December (7 weeks)
Wednesday 8 December	Final presentation to Education & Training Committee, SPAB Guardians

The Fellowship Programme

The training, organised by SPAB, is divided into three intensive blocks of visits often including weekends away. Each block is around eight weeks.

In the first two blocks, Fellows experience traditional materials, skills and repair techniques during visits to workshops and sites guided by experts.

The third block is tailored to the individual interests and hands-on training needs of each Fellow.

Two elements will recur throughout the programme:

- the philosophy of repair
- excellence in craft skills

Careful and Considered Repair

“A building’s fabric is the primary source from which knowledge and meaning can be drawn.” The SPAB Approach

Fundamental to the SPAB Approach is the retention and care of historic fabric. Fellows will be introduced to crucial issues relating to methods of repair and the key dilemmas facing those concerned with historic building work - the question of ‘restoration versus repair’; when to keep and repair what survives and when to renew and how to maintain and manage our buildings for the future.

Fellows will begin to understand the decisions involved at survey, specification and execution stages as they spend time with experienced craftspeople, architects, surveyors and engineers. Over the course of the programme, Fellows are presented with a range of problems, solutions and viewpoints, all of which help them develop their own priorities and approach to the repair of old buildings.

Excellence in Craftsmanship

Traditional building skills used to be passed from generation to generation, but that seldom happens now. This has led to a gap in the sector’s awareness on the best ways to look after old buildings. The Fellowship allows craftspeople to see a range of approaches, and witness first-hand the value of skilled repairs, particularly:

- excellence in executing repairs, such as the insertion of new stone into decayed stonework, or the skilful scarfing of new and old timbers
- fine craft skills in the context of renewal such as new carved stonework and woodwork

The Fellowship Includes

Subject to opportunities available on site, the programme aims to expose the Fellows to the following subjects:

The history and traditions of building: An introduction to building development and the traditions of vernacular British building.

The materials of building: The origins and processing of materials central to traditional building and historic building repair demonstrated via visits to brickyards, quarries, sawmills and other sites.

Lime	burning, mixing; use in pointing, bedding, plastering
Stone and slate	the characteristics of different stones, quarrying and working methods
Timber	the growth of timber in managed woodland; methods of drying and conservation
Brick and tile	the characteristics of various clays, their preparation and manufacture
Mortars	the properties of mortars; their constituent materials; preparation, use and analysis
Various	visits to bell foundries, lead casting shops, glassworks, plaster workshops etc

Craft skills: Visits to a variety of trades in the field of building repair and conservation such as stonemasonry and carving; carpentry, joinery and wood carving; slate, stone, tile and thatch roofing; plaster and mortars; millwrighting; plumbing; glazing; lead conservation; iron and metals; painting and decorating.

Specialist conservation skills: Topics might include wall paintings; sculpture/monuments; decorative plaster; carved timber; paints and metalwork.

Analysis of building defects: Visits aim to give an appreciation of the agents of decay as well as likely causes of structural problems such as movement in buildings; spreading roof structures; poorly bonded rubble masonry; rusting iron cramps; failing buttresses; decay of bonding timbers.

Repair techniques: An introduction to the range of repairs e.g. provision for movement; reforming lost connections e.g. tie beams, wall plates; stabilising bulging walls; grouting; repair of timber with carpentry techniques; judicious use of steelwork or glues/resins; surface repair of stonework and brickwork.

The professions: Roles of the architect, surveyor, structural engineer, quantity surveyor, and conservation officer.

Administration of conservation: Roles of government agencies, local authorities, amenity societies, voluntary bodies, church systems, grants, and listing and legal controls.

SPAB Repair Course: The Fellows will join architects, builders, craftspeople and others on a course of lectures and visits which we have run since the 1950s.

Millwright Fellowship

Millwrighting has been identified on the 2023 Heritage Crafts Red List of Endangered Crafts as a 'critically endangered skill' and SPAB recognises the urgent need both to train new millwrights, and to encourage and equip experienced craftspeople to work on mills.

We offer a unique opportunity for one Fellow to develop their understanding of windmills and watermills. This is not a complete millwright training programme or apprenticeship, but a way for an experienced craftsperson to develop additional skills and knowledge needed for a mill's maintenance and repair.

The selected Millwright Fellow will follow the Fellowship programme for Blocks I and II but will spend Block III exploring millwrighting and related skills in more depth. They will also be offered mill-based work placements in between blocks, providing a nine-month full-time programme of learning. The bursary for this Fellowship place will reflect this additional commitment.

We are looking for highly skilled craftspeople in any relevant trade who have an interest in mills, and in using and extending their skills to repair and maintain them.

Practical Information

Funding

There is no course fee. Training costs are covered by the SPAB, sponsors and by the individuals and organisations providing the training.

Bursary

Regular Fellowship annual bursary of £8,600 will be paid monthly over the nine months of training. Additional Millwright training bursary of £4,400, paid monthly over the nine months of training.

Travel

The Fellowship will be demanding. There is a lot of travel; you will be away from home most weekdays and sometimes at weekends. If chosen, you will be travelling with two or three other Fellows during the first two blocks of the programme, and it is important that you get on well with people. We hope that at least one of the Fellows chosen will have the use of a car, which will allow the group to travel together for the first two blocks and share the costs and the driving. Sharing a vehicle is preferable, though not always practical. In recent times, Fellows have often converted their vans to provide sleeping accommodation.

Accommodation

The Fellowship & Scholarship Officer will often be able to help arrange accommodation for Fellows (many of whom are previous Fellows or Scholars). Otherwise, Fellows make their own arrangements with friends and family, camping, B&Bs or other accommodation. Fellows are provided with contact details of past Scholars and Fellows who will be willing to help wherever they can.

Accessibility

Owing to the nature and style of the Fellowship programme, it is not completely accessible. If you would like to discuss particular access needs, please contact Scholarship & Fellowship Officer education@spab.org.uk

Supervision

The Fellowship & Scholarship Officer will have regular contact with Fellows and will provide information, feedback and discussion over past and potential visits.

Fellows also have a volunteer mentor (usually a past Fellow) to help them get the most out of their Fellowship experience. This varies depending on the needs of the individual Fellows and many hosts also provide useful support along the way.

Overall responsibility for the Fellowship lies with the SPAB's Education and Training Committee (E&TC) a subgroup of this oversees Fellows' notebooks and the development of a conservative repair philosophy at two Liaison meetings a year. Here Fellows critically analyse one or two of their visits and present this for open debate.

Application Information

Eligibility

We welcome applications from skilled craftspeople from any trade who show a proven commitment to working in the heritage sector, the potential to excel in their trade and a willingness to share their approach to conservative repair.

Candidates should have completed their apprenticeship or qualified with:

- NVQ/SVQ Level 2 or 3 or equivalent from a Centre of Vocational Excellence
- or an equivalent qualification in traditional building skills from a recognised authority
- or be able to demonstrate equivalent experience in their chosen craft.

Eligible overseas candidates are welcome provided they have good spoken English and a UK base for the duration of the programme. Please note that the offer of a SPAB Fellowship is subject to the applicant providing evidence of their right to live and work in the UK. SPAB is not a registered sponsor body for the purpose of visa applications. Applicants from outside the UK and Ireland should check their eligibility for a UK visa before applying to the scheme. Please check the <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigrationUK> government website for more information.

Self-employed applicants are especially encouraged to seek additional financial arrangements over and above the value of the Fellowship bursary and to carefully programme their work in between the Fellowship blocks.

Employees should seek agreement with their employer for release for the full six months, or, for the millwright training opportunity, for the full nine months. It is down to the applicant to negotiate terms for release and treatment of wages during their time away on the programme. Fellows' circumstances and arrangements with employers vary widely from full to partial to no payment. Please make sure your employer reads the **Notes for Employers** below.

Note: No professional work may be undertaken during the three blocks of the Fellowship.

For more about the financial implications of the course contact the Fellowship & Scholarship Officer.

"The Fellowship was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! As a professional craftsperson of 16 years, I found this experience totally invaluable. It is very rare that you have the opportunity to spend months at a time with such a mixture of willing, like-minded craftspeople, learning skills and techniques from other crafts that you never thought you would benefit from, becoming a more well-rounded craftsperson."

James 'Oz' Osborne, blacksmith and 2023 Fellow

Apply Online

Before applying, please email Fellowship & Scholarship Officer education@spab.org.uk to be put in touch with a past Fellow, ask any questions or request an alternative application format.

Fellows are invited to join a live Q&A with past Fellows on Thursday 6 August. Please contact education@spab.org.uk for details.

Submit a completed the [online application form](#) by 7 September 2026.

We are committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity in the sector. We particularly welcome applications by people from backgrounds under-represented in building conservation (such as those from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, women and black and minority ethnic communities).

Interviews

Around eight applicants will be invited to interview in November, from which three or four will be selected and offered a Fellowship.

Interviews are held at the SPAB office with an informal evening beforehand to hear from the current Fellows, meet the interview panel and a few SPAB staff members. The interview panel consists of six or so people, drawn from the SPAB's committees and staff. It always includes past Fellows.

Selection

Principally the panel look for skilled candidates who:

- Satisfy the eligibility criteria above.
- Demonstrate a high degree of competence and enthusiasm to engage with other trades and professions.
- Are enthusiastic about old buildings.
- Are willing to learn, reflect on and question what they have been taught at college or on site, ask questions, and work through difficult ideas.
- Can get on with other Fellows and work as a team for the full duration of the programme. The personal interaction of the Fellows makes all the difference to the success of the programme in any given year.
- Are sociable, as they visit a large number of people who have often gone to considerable trouble to prepare for them, and who are giving their time voluntarily.
- Are prepared to spend long periods including some weekends away from home.
- Preferably have previous experience of working with old buildings.
- Are reasonably fit, as the programme is demanding both physically and mentally.
- Have a permanent UK base for the duration of the programme.
- Are prepared to contribute to SPAB and spread its principles after their Fellowship concludes.

The panel look for Fellows who will take the fullest advantage of the unique opportunity offered by the programme and will commit themselves 100 per cent to it for the whole period.

Notes for Employers

"I have no doubt that the Fellowship recognises and supports the very core of Craft skills, it is a valuable asset in these modern times where such skills do not always gain the recognition that they deserve."

William Fuller, Fullers Builders Limited

We hope that you will consider encouraging one or more of your employees to apply for the William Morris Craft Fellowship.

It is a prestigious award which will reflect well both on the individual Fellow and the firm that employs them. It is therefore important that applicants show dedication and potential to achieve high standards in their trade.

We recognise the problems of releasing good people at busy times of the year, which is why the programme allows the Fellow to return to their employment at regular intervals. It is important that the Fellow completes the whole programme in one year, and you will be asked to sign a declaration (at the bottom of the application form) agreeing to release them for the full period.

There is no course fee. Training costs are covered by the SPAB, sponsors (listed separately) and by the individuals and organisations providing the training. In addition, a bursary of £8,600 will be paid directly to the Fellow (£13,000 for the Millwright Fellow) as a **contribution towards** the costs of travel and accommodation where necessary.

Additional funds beyond the bursary payments are usually required, estimated to be in the region of £4,000 to £6,000. The employer will have to reach an agreement with the Fellow over payment of wages and commitment during and beyond the programme.

Completion of the Fellowship provides access to the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Skilled Gold Card as an Approved Apprenticeship. Search for William Morris Craft Fellowship under the Card Finder - Qualifications tab. The value of the Fellowship training is substantial for both the Fellow and their employer. The Fellows' confidence, social skills and determination to do first-class work are recognised by their employers as soon as they return to work. Several contracting firms or organisations regularly send candidates because of the quality of the training the successful craftspeople receive.

Terms of Acceptance

In accepting your Fellowship place, you should be aware of the following requirements and confirm that you are prepared to comply with them.

Attendance

Fellows are expected to attend all programmed visits unless serious unforeseen circumstances dictate otherwise. In these instances, you must notify the SPAB and the planned host at the earliest possible opportunity and request permission to absent yourself.

Failure to notify or turn up at visits may result in a written warning and the pro rata forfeiture of the Fellowship bursary (in the region of £40/day).

The SPAB must be notified, prior to your acceptance of the Fellowship interview, of all known commitments during the Fellowship period. Pre-existing commitments not agreed in advance may incur the bursary forfeiture above.

Conduct, Safeguarding and Disciplinary Procedures

Fellows are representatives of the SPAB and are expected to always act politely and respectfully.

Unacceptable behaviour may result in a written warning, deduction of bursary and even loss of the Fellowship place. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include lateness or poor timekeeping, swearing or abusive language, and lack of application.

While Fellows are not SPAB staff members, they will be expected to abide by SPAB's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Misconduct Guidelines, which will be circulated to successful candidates.

Working

No professional work may be undertaken during the Fellowship blocks.

Health and Safety

Fellows must comply with health and safety at all times. They will receive a health and safety briefing in their first week which outlines what is expected.

Insurance

The Society's insurance may not cover you for every eventually, so Fellows may wish to take out additional personal injury cover for the duration of the programme.

Fellowship Expectations:

In accepting your Fellowship place, you should be aware of the requirement for Fellows to:

- Keep a sketchbook journal of their visits.
- Act and drive responsibly
- Act politely and write thanks to each of their hosts.
- Contribute to the SPAB social media channels, blog and magazine.
- Attend the William Morris Craft Fellowship Trust's AGM.
- Attend the Scholarship and Fellowship presentation.
- Present to next year's applicants.
- Present on an element of your Fellowship at one of Historic England's webinars.
- Give some time, in future months, to promoting the SPAB and the Fellowship programme