

# Career Profile: Membership Officer

**Name:** Lucy Jacob

**Company:** SPAB

## **What first led to you considering a career in building conservation?**

It was sort of an accident. My background is in archaeology and I was originally trying to find a job as a field archaeologist. But I graduated in 2011 and the recession meant there were no jobs going. Plus, I began to realise that short term contracts and being away from home a lot wasn't very compatible with family life. So I began looking for jobs/training in the heritage sector generally and landed an internship with the National Trust.

## **What initial qualifications did you gain before starting your career?**

BA in Archaeology and an MA in Human Origins and Palaeolithic Archaeology

## **Did you then undertake further qualifications?**

Not qualifications as such but I often do short courses to learn new skills or update my existing ones.

## **Did you do any volunteering or work experience before gaining a paid role? If yes, how did this help you in establishing your career?**

Lots! I volunteered for the National Trust, Cotswold Archaeology, and the Surrey Historic Environment Record whilst studying for my BA. I wanted to get a feel for the range of jobs out there.

Then I did the voluntary internship with the National Trust during my MA. After graduating, I volunteered for a couple of local museums whilst working.

And I currently volunteer for the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance as co-editor of their monthly email newsletter.

## **What was the most challenging moment on your career path and how did you overcome this?**

Lack of jobs definitely. My first year after my MA I had three part-time jobs at once because I didn't seem to be able to get a full-time role. I essentially overcame it by taking any relevant work I could and volunteering as well, in order to gain skills and experience to complement my academic record. And applying for anything that sounded even vaguely relevant.

## **Do you have experience of working in another field? If so, in what ways have you found this has contributed to your success in the heritage sector?**

Before coming to work for the SPAB, I spent a year as a Venue and Events Coordinator for a charity in Milton Keynes. I learnt a lot about event management, admin, marketing, social media—the kind of transferable skills that have really helped me in my current jobs.

And I have a second job as a freelance content writer. I don't write about heritage at all! But I've improved my writing and communication skills, as well as my understanding of digital marketing and SEO. This comes in handy when I'm writing letters, emails, and reports for members, as well as for working with our Comms team to attract new members to the SPAB.

## **What advice would you give to someone who perhaps does not have the means to pursue a postgraduate qualification but wants to enter the heritage field in some capacity?**

You don't need a postgrad qualification to work in support roles like mine. But if you find you are missing out on jobs because other candidates do have those qualifications, it's worth thinking about how to develop the transferable skills that every job needs—like IT skills, admin experience, customer service, marketing (especially digital marketing) etc. If you can afford to give some of your time for free, volunteering can be a great way to get a foot in the door.

## **What was the most useful piece of advice you were given when starting on your career path?**

There's no such thing as a perfect job. It helped me realise that I didn't have to do exactly the role I thought I was *meant* to do—giving up on becoming a field archaeologist ultimately led me to a job I love in a related sector.