

Career Profile: Stonemason/Workshop Manager

Name: Tom Flemons

Company: Cliveden Conservation

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

I quite accidentally began my career in commercial 'marble masonry' creating kitchens and bathrooms. Whilst at college during my apprenticeship I learnt about stone masonry, conservation and building repair. This sparked my interest and led me to change direction after completing my apprenticeship.

What initial qualifications did you gain before starting your career?

I finished school at eighteen having completed my A levels and then took City and Guilds Craft and Advanced Craft level in masonry.

Did you then undertake further qualifications?

After this I enrolled on a post graduate year course in Architectural Stone Conservation. After completing this and working for a few years I was fortunate to gain a place on the William Morris Craft Fellowship in 1992.

What was your first paid role?

I was paid as a marble mason during my apprenticeship my first steps into 'restoration & conservation' were with a large masonry company with an outpost in Yorkshire.

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

After completing my conservation training finding a job and re-locating from the south to Yorkshire to follow my interest

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 need neither a degree nor a postgrad qualification but the right attitude, passion, practical skills plus good interpersonal skills. These traits will get you a long way!

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

A headmaster when I was at primary school told us that you can tell something created by a craftsman by looking at the back to see if the same care and attention to detail extends to those areas unseen by the general public or visitor. This stuck with me even before I knew which direction my career would take me.

Outside of your talent and knowledge as a craftsperson, what other skills have you found it necessary to develop in order to further your career?

People skills, IT skills and general people management and communication.

What would your advice be to a young person wondering if a career as a craftsman would be right for them?

Find out about all the different crafts and skills that you could learn. Speak to as many people as you can, if possible try and get some experience of any that interest you to inform your choice.