



The SPAB Fellowship Information Pack

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

“Our hosts, understood the challenges we faced: the long journeys, the demanding schedules, and the need to be polite and engaged, even when we were exhausted. Their empathy made a big difference. I'd like to offer that same support to future Fellows, helping them feel comfortable and settled during their journeys, as they embark on what will no doubt be a similarly enriching but demanding experience.”

James Bull, carpenter and millwright Fellow 2024

“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

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

Fellowship Officer Pip Soodeen is happy to answer any questions, or requests to apply in an alternative format and put you in touch with a past Fellow before submitting your application.: 0207 456 0900 philippa.soodeen@spab.org.uk

Key 2026 Fellowship Information and Dates

10 July 2025	Applications open
1 October	Applicants online Q&A session
10 October 2025	Application deadline
Early November 2025	Interview invitations
19 November 2025	Pre-interview drinks Candidates and their partners are invited to SPAB's London offices to meet current Fellows, the interview panel and other candidates
20 November 2025	Interviews
11 – 16 December 2025	All candidates contacted and Fellowship offers made

Block dates 2026

Block I:	23 March - 22 May (9 weeks) (7 weeks back at work or Millwright placement)
Block II:	13 July – 4 September (8 weeks) (7 weeks back at work or Millwright placement)
Block III:	26 October- 11 December (7 weeks)

The Fellowship Programme

The training, organised by the SPAB, is divided into three blocks of around eight weeks.

In the first two blocks, Fellows experience traditional materials, skills and repair techniques via 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 and their use in walling and roofing
Timber	the growth of timber in managed woodland; its seasoning and conversion; modern methods of drying
Brick and tile	the distinction between the production, use and properties of hand-thrown and extruded or machine-moulded bricks/tiles
Mortars	the properties of mortars; their constituent materials; preparation, use and analysis
Various	visits to roofers, lead casting, glassworks, forges, 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 the 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

Bursary

Regular Fellowship bursary of £8,400 bursary paid monthly over the 6 months of training. Additional Millwright training bursary of £4,200 paid monthly over the 9 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 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.

Supervision

Pip Soodeen Fellowship 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 that 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 [UK 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 Officer.

Apply Online

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

Complete the [online application form](#) by **10 October 2025**.

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. Three or four Fellows are usually chosen each year, and candidates are generally notified within a week after interview whether they have been successful or not.

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 £8,400 will be paid directly to the Fellow (£12,600 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 the Fellows return to work. Several contracting firms or organisations regularly send candidates because of the quality of the training the successful craftspeople receive.

Fellowship Expectations:

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

- Attend all visits
- Act & drive responsibly
- Comply with site Health & Safety procedures
- Review their own insurance requirements
- Act politely and write thanks to each of their hosts.
- Keep a sketchbook journal of their visits.
- 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 at one of Historic England's webinars.

Give some time, in future months, to promoting the SPAB and the Fellowship programme