

A heritage skills training project at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and the Museum of East Anglian Life.

The two Norfolk and Suffolk museums have funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Skills for the Future programme to deliver a programme of traditional skills training between 2011 and 2015.

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse is a 50 acre site near Dereham in Norfolk. It is offering six traditional skills-based 18-month apprenticeships in areas such as heritage farming and horticulture. There are also 24 6-month to 12-month internships suitable for both young people and those looking for a second career in areas such as historic engines, environmental conservation and more generic areas such as visitor services and events planning.

Museum of East Anglian Life is a 75 acre site in the Suffolk market town of Stowmarket. It is offering 14 12-month internships across the duration of the programme, plus a series of three month taster courses. The latter are designed to provide participants with an insight into a range of traditional skills, as well as providing help with generic employability skills.

All 75 trainees on the programme are taken on as employees and undertake their training via a range of work experience, accredited courses, one to one training and placements. Placement partners have included the National Trust, private estates and companies, Wildlife Trusts and other museums.

The trainees comprise a mixture of people of different ages and prior levels of education and training. They are learning both about their chosen area of skill, but in some cases also simply benefitting from being in a working environment, and from meeting others working in their chosen field of work.

Some of the trainees have progressed within the scheme, for example Becky Sutton advanced from the three-month taster course onto a 12-month traineeship as a Visitor Services Trainee.



Figure 1- A hedgelaying course delivered for trainees from both sites, as well as volunteers who work at the sites

Quote from Becky:

'The three month taster course was a fantastic introduction into the heritage sector, and confirmed to me that I wanted to work in museums. I am really excited to further develop my skills through following this up with the one year Visitor Services Traineeship.'



Figure 2- Becky Sutton leading a Suffolk Punch horse and two wheeled tumbrel cart during her 3 month taster traineeship.

Others have moved onto employed roles at their placement sites. After a period of unemployment following redundancy, Jason Skipper took up a 12-month traineeship in Heritage Engineering skills. One of his placements was with the North Norfolk Railway, and now, having completed his traineeship he is employed as a steam engineer at the Railway.

Quote from Jason:

"Getting onto the Skills for the Future programme at Gressenhall has meant I have learnt a different type of engineering, and now, because of that I have met lots of new people and have a job again, in a new area of work for me."

In addition to the personal benefits for the trainees there have been both long and short term benefits for the museums, placement sites and their visitors. Museum volunteers have been able to join in with some of the training opportunities, thereby increasing their skills.

As part of their work based learning many of the trainees have undertaken specific projects, for example the re-development of some of the gardens. These garden projects are long-term improvements to the museums

which have been possible because of the trainees' presence on site.

Also, there have been additional opportunities for visitors to benefit from the trainees, for example by the museums being able to offer additional activities, led by the trainees.



Figure 3-Jason Skipper, re-fuelling the Garrett boiler during his traineeship at Gressenhall.

The project has two more years to run, and so there are still more opportunities for people to apply for traineeships.

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