

Fellows 2025

<https://www.spab.org.uk/learning/fellowship>

Gerard Edwards, Stone Mason, Malahide, Dublin Age 40

Education and Qualifications

Gerard's education has been through time served on site; hands-on learning alongside other craftspeople from the age of 14; gaining experience on his tools doing the work.

Initially in conventional construction reaching into traditional building repair as a stone mason. Developing his knowledge in working with lime on brick and stone masonry, historical pointing techniques, lime plastering, gaining multi-disciplinary knowledge in - roofing, slating, copper and lead work, structural repairs as well as carpentry: internal joinery/windows and roofing timbers. His work has included repairs to historical concrete from 1920s up until 1970s. Matching aggregates/binders and finishes to concrete elements. He completed three weeks one-to-one tuition with Dr Gerard Lynch, learning historical pointing techniques.

Employment

1998 - 2002 Stone mason with Stone craft, based in Ballyknockan, Co. Wicklow. Building stonewalls and houses in dry stone and mortar, using OPC in modern construction techniques.

2002 - 2010 Self-employed, Keltic Stone. Began some restoration work, subcontracting to Interclean based in Dublin, at that time the biggest conservation company in Ireland.

2011 - 2013 Working site manager, Summit Conservation, including organising specialist subcontractors like lime plasterers and stained-glass artists.

2013 - 2018 Self-employed, Edwards Brothers Ltd. carrying out aspects of building conservation and began to work with breathable insulation systems. Projects included Ashford Castle, Adere Manor, Richmond Barracks 1916 commemoration building, St Kevin's Church, Harrington St.

2018 - 2020 PMAC Ltd, responsible for the organisation of all specialist subcontractors while also working on the tools. Gerard grew the company from a single employee to over 20 craftspeople.

2020 - present Self-employed, working for himself, with just his two nephews. This gives him good oversight of the work, carrying out high-end masonry and pointing works. In addition, Gerard works with Brian Tobin on lime plastering projects.

Gerard (Ger) most enjoys his time working when 'on the tools'.

Profile

With over 23 years of experience in stone masonry and conservation, Gerard Edwards has dedicated his career to conserving old buildings. Working on diverse projects, including castles, churches, and residential structures, developing sound experience expertise in lime plastering, pointing techniques, and structural repairs. While his skills are advanced, Gerard believes he has reached a point in his career where he needs to explore broader perspectives to further develop his conservation philosophy.

Hoping the SPAB Fellowship will be a platform to enhance his skills, learn innovative techniques, and deepen his understanding of sustainable conservation. He is also eager to share his knowledge and become an ambassador for traditional crafts in Ireland.



Gerard's extensive hands-on experience includes brick and stone masonry, roofing, and conservation of historical concrete. He has trained under experts like Dr Gerard Lynch and has mentored younger craftspeople, including his nephews, who now work in traditional trades. Gerard has already been involved in work organising SPAB Ireland working parties, where he has taken on complex repairs and demonstrated techniques to others. He hopes to use this opportunity to bring advanced conservation techniques back to Ireland, inspiring others to value and care for historic structures.

Ross Harris, Carpenter, Millwright Fellow, Uckfield, East Sussex, Age: 33

Education and Qualifications

2009 Uckfield Community College - A levels - English Language, Photography, Graphics
2010 Eastbourne vocational college - Art foundation
2010-2013 Camberwell College of Art - Drawing
2023 City and Guilds NVQ Level 3 - Furniture making and design
2022-2023 City and Guilds Cabinet Making qualification under the tuition of Andrew Laphorn.
2023-2024 Kings Foundation, Building Craft Programme
2024 NOCN NVQ Level 3 - Heritage skills wood occupations

Employment

2014-2017 Self-employed working for Barcombe Landscape - amenity maintenance, woodland management, fencing, brickwork and carpentry

2017-2020 Self-employed working on building projects under the direction of Neil Parker, bricklayer/mason and general builder and a range of projects for Richard Klose, stone mason/builder

2020- 2022 Self-employed builder working on personal own projects - including a large tile hanging job and alterations and repairs to an Edwardian terrace house. Began using hot-mixed lime plasters and mortars

2024 - Since completing the 2023-24 King's Foundation, Building Craft Programme Ross has continued working on a self-employed basis on his own projects, also as a sub-contractor recently working for Stephen Bull

Profile

Ross Harris has nearly a decade of experience in the building trade, specialising in conservation carpentry. His passion lies in understanding the methods and philosophy behind repairing historic structures. Having worked on various conservation projects, Ross often questions the material and method choices specified by architects but feels he needs greater expertise to fully articulate his concerns.

He sees the SPAB Fellowship as the chance to learn niche skills, refine his craft and deepen his knowledge of conservation philosophy. While site work has made Ross acutely aware of the complexities of repair versus restoration, he looks forward to the exposure to conservation-related issues which will help him build a well-rounded approach to future decision making.

He views the Fellowship as an opportunity to share his experiences, learn from others and with a deeper understanding of repair philosophy, he would like to teach.

Ross brings a diverse skill set, with experience in timber framing, joinery, lime plastering, and bricklaying. His recent participation in the King's Foundation, Building Craft Program honed his adaptability, as he worked on projects across the UK while integrating into new teams. Often keeping the group focussed on the task in hand. Ross led a group at the Tibbermore Church working party with SPAB Scotland, attended the SPAB Peak District working party helping out wherever he could and is keen to stay involved with working parties throughout the country in the future.

His inquisitive nature drives him to explore the 'why' behind every project, ensuring his work is thoughtful and sensitive to the historic fabric of a building. Ross's enthusiasm for learning and his dedication to collaboration make him a valuable addition to the Fellowship.

His hobbies and interests include visiting old buildings, furniture design and making, gardening, cheese, film and fine art.

Viv Walker, Carpenter, Bampton, Penrith, Cumbria. Age:29

Education and Qualifications

September 2018 - August 2019 University College Dublin, MSc Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture: First

September 2014 - August 2017 Glasgow School of Art BA (hons) Fine Art: Painting and Printmaking

September 2013 - August 2014 Kendal College, Cumbria, Foundation Diploma in Art and Design

Employment

July - August 2018 - Assisting with the re-thatching of an Iron Age roundhouse, Butser Ancient Farm Hampshire

2019 - 2020 - Prehistoric collections cataloguing and conservation assistant at Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle (voluntary)

2020 - 2021 - Field Archaeologist, Oxford Archaeology North, Lancaster

2021 - 2022 - Field Archaeologist, Wardell Armstrong LLP, Carlisle

2022 - Present - Field Archaeologist (casual), Archaeological Services WYJS, Leeds

2017 - Present - Self-employed craftsperson. Craft workshop leader, forest school practitioner and member of the management team of Cumbria-based children's education charity Eden Ventures. Carpentry work and experimental archaeology projects, some voluntary/unpaid.

Profile

Viv Walker is passionate about heritage crafts and sustainable building techniques, a journey that began during her time in commercial archaeology. Witnessing the negative impact of poor-quality housing developments, Viv began to appreciate how traditional building methods can benefit the environment and cultural heritage. Her recent workshop renovation project provided hands-on experience in timber framing, lime pointing, and joinery, fuelling her interest in conservation.

Viv sees the SPAB Fellowship as the ideal opportunity to deepen her technical knowledge and explore the holistic approach she admires. She values SPAB's philosophy, which emphasises the correct choice of materials and techniques in historic buildings and believes the Fellowship will allow her to refine her skills while learning from expert craftspeople. Additionally, Viv is eager to gain insights into setting up a specialized conservation business and contributing to the repair of heritage structures for future generations.

Viv brings nearly a decade of woodworking experience, specializing in timber framing and hand-carved reliefs. She progressed from green woodworking to carpentry and timber framing and learned to microscopically identify wood species during her MSc. Her academic background in archaeology provided her with a strong foundation in practical experimental research techniques, including rediscovering Iron Age bowl repair methods. Her skills extend beyond woodworking to ceramics, small-scale glass working, basketry, lime pointing and stone knapping, showcasing her versatility and passion for traditional crafts.

She has worked on diverse projects, including constructing a hazel roundhouse and renovating a stone workshop, where she used local vernacular methods and sustainable materials like sheep's wool insulation. A supporter of inclusivity, she has contributed to initiatives like Sistxrwood, a women-only timber framing event.

Viv is enthusiastic about collaboration, thrives in team settings, and is eager to share and refine her knowledge throughout the Fellowship.

Tom Stevens, Thatcher, Wimborne, Dorset Age: 37

Education and Qualifications

Served traditional apprenticeship and subsequent journeyman stage as a thatcher. At the time of my apprenticeship there were no formal qualifications available in thatching.

Employment

2006 to 2010 - Thatching apprentice

2010 to 2015 - Self Employed - Journeyman / subcontractor

2015 to Present - Stevens Master Thatchers Ltd - Thatcher

Profile

Tom Stevens has focused on mastering the craft of thatching for over 15 years. Appreciating that good conservation requires an understanding of multiple crafts, he is keen to be able to advise on building elements that sit alongside his thatching. Driven by the need to confront the substandard repair practices he often encounters; Tom is looking forward to learning about associated trades during the Fellowship. While most building owners are willing to maintain their buildings in good order, Tom sees a gap in knowledge about appropriate methods and materials. He believes the SPAB Fellowship will help him bridge this gap, enabling him to share better advice to his clients.

Over the past twelve months, Tom has spent time trying to source materials as close to home as possible, after some discussion, a farm close to him is now growing decent straw solely for thatching, which he can just go and pick up. Tom has contrasted the drive for imported water reed, supplied in premade bundles, supposedly saving labour, time and skill, to the labour of love that is straw thatching.

He knows two very good spar makers who are “an individual breed of considerable experience”. Tom is looking to do some spar making himself - everything from cutting the hazel to producing the spar by hand. Committed to sustainable practices he advocates against modern shortcuts, such as plastic spars, while recognising budgetary constraints of his clients. He described “growing with a job” on which they gently propped a roof by adding a few braces to assist the pole rafters “It wasn’t part of the building it was just helping the building.”

Beyond his craft, Tom is pursuing a building surveying qualification to expand his understanding of historic structures.

His enthusiasm for learning and sharing knowledge is evident in his mentoring of others and his efforts to support fellow thatchers.