

Heritage Skills

The Heritage Skills project is all about looking at the important traditional heritage skills that maybe are dying out in the area that we need to look after our pre 1990 buildings. Within this region we have some fabulous heritage but what we've found is that we have a real lack of people who are skilled in being able to look after this heritage. That's what we're all about introducing people to it as a sector, getting people skills in it so we can look after our heritage better.

Concentrate your hammering a little bit more towards the back, but you don't want to thin it out too much, if it's too thin it'll split the metal. On an angle that way

We basically just have a fun day, bit of blacksmithing and just try and enthuse people with the passion for the craft of hammering hot metal.

It will have a tendency if you keep putting it in and out of the fire it will work harden. This is where your artistic talents will come into play. I've never done it before; it's the first time I've ever done it. Well I was a bit nervous at first but it's not as difficult as I thought it was going to be, because of the stuff we are making obviously and yeah it's really good fun. I never thought I would be able to do this but I'm not doing too badly. Once you've done that just put a point on the end, a long thin taper. What were mainly looking at today is just giving people that first taste of something. There's a great satisfaction of working with your hands. What we find is a lot of people who go into traditional skills nowadays are maybe people who've been working at desk jobs for 20-30 years and they are fed up of sitting at a computer and want to use their hands again.

Well once they've gone, they've gone; it's just as simple as that. There have been certain skills that have been lost and once they are lost are very difficult to recover. You may have written evidence or photographic evidence but it's not the same as having somebody whose still there doing it and continuing it.

I've come along here to find out how you do a dry stone wall. I'm interested in doing one for myself at home. It's just practical skills, a lot of people now are working in service industries and maybe education and such like and the actual manual skills aren't being used. People are living a more sedentary lifestyle and it's just something different for them to come out, start working and lifting and sweating and yeah people seem to enjoy it.

It's really important to look after our traditional skills and the training aspect of it, in particular. Although the North East has a wealth of traditional buildings and traditional landscapes they're often at risk and by putting training days like these or live projects, because you can't beat working on something that's going to stay where it is. It means that people continue to learn those skills and they are passed down the generations and also with a project like this which is so community focussed having events on it that people can book on and come on from the local community. It means that people have a better ownership of their own heritage.