



## Students get hands-on at iconic Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings

Shrewsbury Colleges Group students have become the first to gain hands-on experience of traditional construction methods, as part of a National Lottery-funded programme to plug England's heritage skills gap, using 18th Century Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings as a site for hands-on learning.

On Thursday 8 March, 12 Level 1 and 2 Brickwork students spent the morning at the Flaxmill Maltings site learning to make the 'great' bricks that were used in the construction of the iconic Grade I listed Main Mill - the world's first iron-framed building and forerunner of modern day skyscrapers, which was built in 1797.

Northcot Brick, specialist traditional brick manufacturers, have been making by hand 30,000 of the special sized bricks needed to restore the Main Mill. Today they passed on their expert knowledge, demonstrating traditional hand-throwing methods. The students were then able to get hands-on and make their own bricks. Some of the bricks the students produced will be included in a time capsule, to be placed within the Main Mill later this year.

The session is part of Historic England's Heritage Skills programme, supported by the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation which offers a number of training opportunities, work-based placements and continuing professional development opportunities for construction trainees, students, contractors, craftspeople and professionals. The programme is being made possible under the wider £20.7 million National Lottery refurbishment of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings.

**Kate Gunthorpe, Senior Building Surveyor at Historic England said:**

*"One of the biggest challenges to the future preservation and maintenance of our built heritage is the shortage of craftspeople and gaps in skills needed for traditional construction techniques and materials. This programme aims to teach these in ways that will attract young people to rewarding careers in heritage and construction, which are so vital in ensuring England's historic buildings can be restored and maintained for future generations to enjoy."*

**Stuart Raine, Construction Trades Curriculum Leader at Shrewsbury Colleges Group said:**

*“This brick making session was a unique opportunity for our students to learn a new skill, which could help to broaden their future employment opportunities. There is a national shortage of bricklayers and by working with companies and projects like the Flaxmill Maltings restoration, Shrewsbury Colleges Group can inspire students to enter the construction trades, bringing great opportunities to the community. This trip was a chance for them to see and feel part of the exciting developments taking place right on their doorstep.”*

**Alan Mosley, Chairman of the Friends of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings said:**

*“It’s fantastic to see students local to the Flaxmill Maltings learning how to make these unique bricks today, and benefiting directly from the restoration project and skills programme. The bricks, which are approximately one third larger than standard sized bricks, tell part of the history as they were used for construction during a period when the number of bricks used in new buildings were taxed to raise funds for wars in the American Colonies, and using larger bricks was a method used to reduce the amount of bricks required, and consequently the amount of tax which would be charged.”*

**Michael Brown, Managing Director of Northcot Brick said:**

*“We are proud to be working with Historic England in the restoration of a project of such historical and regional significance. As a company we are committed to using our traditional brick-making expertise to help preserve our nation’s architectural heritage for future generations and to helping young people learn about and appreciate the value of genuine craftsmanship.”*

**Councillor Nic Laurens, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Shropshire Council said:**

*“I am delighted to see training activities such as this on offer at this internationally important historic site so people can learn first-hand about its unique construction and the complex restoration works which will bring the first iron framed building in the world and adjacent kiln back into productive use.”*

**Mark Wordsworth, Chairman of the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation said:**

*“We’re delighted to be able to support Historic England’s Heritage Skills Programme, which keeps vital heritage skills alive and kicking for the next generation. The programme fulfils two of the goals of the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation: to encourage training and enable access into careers in the arts and to ensure that our heritage is preserved.”*

The Heritage Skills programme also includes hard-hat tours for heritage, construction, colleges and universities and local interest groups, giving behind-the-scenes access to the works in progress and learning from the expert craftspeople working on the project.

For more information please contact [Juliet.Baillie@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:Juliet.Baillie@historicengland.org.uk)

For more information about the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings please visit [www.historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/visit/shrewsbury-flax-mill/](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/visit/shrewsbury-flax-mill/)

## **ENDS**

**For further information, images and interviews, please contact Tamsin Foster, Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Public Engagement and Promotions Manager at Historic England on 07500 855246 or email [tamsin.foster@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:tamsin.foster@historicengland.org.uk)**

## **Notes to Editors**

\*The Stage 2 project at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, which has also received National Lottery funding of £20.7million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), will restore the Grade I listed Main Mill – the first cast-iron framed building in the world and forerunner to the modern skyscraper, and the Grade II listed Kiln along with landscaping and a new car park. When complete there will be visitor interpretation, activity space and a café on the ground floor which will be managed by the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings. The upper four floors of the Mill will provide commercial office space. A programme of activities will be available during construction with training opportunities and chances for the local community to get involved.

Work began on 19 June 2017, carried out by Croft Building and Conservation Ltd, who are responsible for structural repairs to the Main Mill and reintroducing windows that were closed during the Maltings phase. This will flood the building with natural light. The works should be complete by the end of 2018 when work will start to repair the Kiln, fit out the buildings and complete all associated landscaping work and car park. The works will be completed in 2021, when the restored spaces will be open to the public.

The Flax Mill was built in 1797 and was the largest employer in Shrewsbury. The flax business declined in the 1870s and the mill closed in 1886. The site was converted into a maltings in 1897-8, when the Kiln was added. After being used as a temporary barracks during World War Two, the site resumed as a maltings until its closure in

1987. These works will transform and open the site back up for local people, visitors and local businesses.

### **About [Historic England](#)**

Historic England is the public body that champions and protects England's historic places. We look after the historic environment, provide expert advice about it, helping people protect and care for it, and helping the public understand and enjoy it.

Historic England, who took over the site in 2005, and its partners Shropshire Council and the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings are building on the success of the Stage 1 project, which created a visitor centre (opened late 2015) within the Office and Stables part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, and have secured funding to cover the Stage 2 project which is due to open to the public in 2021.

### **About the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation**

The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation was set up by Andrew in 1992 to promote the arts, culture and heritage for the public benefit; since inception Andrew has been the principal provider of funding for all its charitable activities. In 2010, the Foundation embarked on an active grant giving programme and has now awarded grants of over £18m to support high quality training and personal development as well as other projects that make a real difference to enrich the quality of life both for individuals and within local communities. Significant grants include £3.5m to Arts Educational Schools, London to create a state of the art professional theatre, £2.4m to The Music in Secondary Schools Trust, £1m to The Architectural Heritage Fund, \$1.3m to the American Theatre Wing and over £300,000 annually to fund 30 performing arts scholarships for talented students in financial need.

[www.andrewlloydwebberfoundation.com](http://www.andrewlloydwebberfoundation.com)

The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation has awarded a grant of £95,447 towards Historic England's Heritage Skills Programme.

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### **About the Heritage Lottery Fund**

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk). Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #HLFsupported and #NationalLottery.