

## TRAINING IN THE CRAFT



The following is a brief report of a recent meeting to discuss training within the Craft, called by Stephen Clare, chairman of the BSMGP conservation committee and of the Glaziers Trust.

The meeting was held at Glaziers Hall, with representatives from the BSMGP and the Worshipful Company of Glaziers as well as experienced practising professionals, and a representative from English Heritage. The purposes of the meeting were threefold:

- (i) to examine in detail the present provision for training;
- (ii) to recommend a strategy for training for the future;
- (iii) to discuss the use of the BSMGP website as a vehicle for disseminating information to potential trainees. (A dedicated page has been allocated for this purpose.)

The meeting was convened in the light of valid concerns about the future of the craft, but was intended to be positive and proactive in encouraging and promoting training. Our timing in addressing this issue is good, given the fact that there are a number of important recent initiatives to provide extra training.

The first agenda item was a detailed review of the present provision of training for architectural glass and design, which is limited to courses provided by colleges and university departments. These can be full or part time. The material was provided by Adelle Corrin with the thanks of the meeting, via direct contact and from the internet.

It was illuminating that, whereas some colleges were enthusiastic about giving information about services provided, others did not respond at all. This may highlight the need for the BSMGP and the Worshipful Company of Glaziers to make renewed efforts to establish relationships with the colleges and to impress upon students, perhaps through their tutors, that these two organizations make significant contributions to the craft, and have the quality of their training and their interests at heart. The meeting came to the conclusion that the provision, whilst inadequate and prey in varying degrees to the familiar shortages of funding, does continue to give opportunity for training in this area. The feeling was that it was not possible to assist in any meaningful way to improve the situation, but that a useful function could be fulfilled by providing a comprehensive and impartial description of courses available on the BSMGP website with links as appropriate to colleges. It was agreed to progress with this work.

The meeting then considered the opportunities for training for those wishing to access a basic training in the traditional craft. Two in-house schemes were illustrated, one from Holy Well Glass in Wells, and the other with the kind permission of Tom Kupper of the Lincoln Cathedral Studio. It was agreed that this information would be made available through the website to assist those wishing to develop similar structured schemes in their own studios.

The 2005 Master of the Worshipful Company of Glaziers, Phillida Shaw, then spoke about the opportunities for training within existing government-sponsored schemes. It should be noted that Phillida, along with several colleagues, has been an enthusiastic advocate for training in stained glass within such schemes for many years. This means that she is extremely well versed in the development of modern apprenticeships and training at NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) level. We are fortunate that she has now been elected to the board of the Glass Group of Proskills, an industry group, another area where she will surely continue to be a strong voice for our craft.

Following discussions the meeting felt that a structured basic training, with a recognized qualification, was essential, and that NVQ level training was the route we should support – an approach endorsed by Sarah Brown for English Heritage. Phillida Shaw then raised the question of whether or not the training providers, which are normally colleges of further education giving support by continuous assessment, may need to receive training and support themselves to better equip them to provide quality assessment. (This could involve more external assessors from within the craft, as there are very few at present.)

The need for a professional facilitator to establish better training provision with our training partners from colleges of further education was also discussed and earmarked as a possible requirement for which funding may be available.

This being said, it should be noted that the chairman amongst others had severe criticisms of the NVQ training in its present form, based on personal experience. The overall support of the meeting was tempered by a strong feeling that substantial improvements must be made to the present NVQ training programmes to tailor them to our needs, before we would promote their usage by our members. There was also real concern about providing good basic training, voiced by Alfred Fisher in particular. The possibility of establishing a small college providing such good quality basic training was discussed. It was agreed that this would be desirable, but further discussions would be necessary regarding staffing and management issues.

As a postscript to the meeting it can be reported that the Glass Qualifications Authority presented the Holy Well Glass trainee Helen Chick with her NVQ level 3 at a meeting on 12 December in Wells (photo). GQA Director Alan Murray signalled his readiness to enter into discussions at that meeting towards making amendments to the training in stained glass in line with our wishes. This is seen as a very positive step forward.

We were fortunate that, having identified glass painting as a key area for training, we were joined by Paul and Paula San Casciani. Paul outlined the structured training he provides, confirming that advanced level classes can be provided where required. It is reassuring that Paul continues to give high priority to passing on his skills. It was noted that Jonathan Cooke also provides excellent short courses in glass painting for students at Swansea Institute. To summarize, there is good tuition available, but it would be desirable for others to consider passing on glass-painting skills to trainees.

Three recent questionnaires/surveys with the aim of determining the actual number of job opportunities available in the craft were also discussed. These were the BSMGP questionnaire, a survey by ICON (Institute for Conservation) in support of a Heritage Lottery Fund application for funding for training, and finally the National Heritage Training Group, an English Heritage inspired group. The latter have commissioned the University of Reading to assess training need in traditional crafts. It would seem from the findings of these surveys that across the UK there are about 12 annual job opportunities in the conservation/restoration of stained glass. We are thus a tiny enclave within the national conservation/restoration fraternity.

Sarah Brown representing the trustees of the York Glaziers Trust highlighted the very unfortunate lack of provision for those wishing to study the conservation of glass at postgraduate level.

Sarah was kind enough to outline the proposed MA in the conservation of stained glass that it is hoped will be established at York. This will be a collaboration between the York Glaziers Trust and the department of medieval history at the University of York, which has such strength in depth in terms of stained glass expertise. This development was warmly welcomed.\*

The meeting moved on to consider the present training provision in the form of grants and bursaries. Through the generosity of a member of the Livery, the Glaziers Trust is very active in providing such training in the form of the 40-week Award for Excellence, several annual 10-week placements for trainees, and more recently 1-week bursaries to allow already established craftsmen/women to expand their expertise through placements in other studios. The Arthur and Helen Davies Travelling Scholarship adds further to the training provision available through the Trust.

We can report the success of the Heritage Lottery Fund application by ICON. This will provide funding for one or possibly two students in stained glass to work for either 1 or 2 years in a studio with a living allowance of about £14 000 per annum, tax free. This scheme will be piloted this year.

The meeting concluded with a summary of the material to appear on the BSMGP website 'training within the craft' page:

1. An impartial description of courses available in the study of architectural glass and design with links to college websites. Adelle Corrin has been asked to write formally to colleges inviting them to provide necessary information for this, and has kindly agreed to collate this information.
2. Examples of existing in-house training schemes with web links. The two schemes from Holy Well Glass and Lincoln Cathedral will be available to download.
3. A description of the workings of NVQ training with links to training providers. This will include a full description of funding available, and a structured framework for study for those starting NVQ level 3 Glass Processing.
4. A full description of grants and bursaries available with web links. The site is to be updated as opportunities become available.

There may be merit in having a 'news' area of the page to promote more frequent visits by students, but this would obviously require regular planning and updates.

Further details from Steve Clare: [stained.glass@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:stained.glass@tiscali.co.uk).

## The Glass Qualifications Authority

The Glass Qualifications Authority (GQA) is the only national awarding body for national vocational qualifications (NVQs/SVQs) aimed at Fabricators, Glass Manufacturers, Glass Processors, Glaziers, Installers and Automotive Glaziers. The individual NVQ/SVQ qualifications are based on national occupational standards derived by Sector Skills Councils (such as Proskills) and are generally aimed at large groups of employees with similar occupational competences. This unfortunately means that individual craft occupations linked to glass competences such as stained glass manufacturers, glass engravers/decorators, stained glass restoration, etc. are likely to have an individual NVQ in their own right. A number of glass craft companies have, however, used the generic units within the Glass Processing Level 2 and 3 NVQs to prove the craft competences of their employees.

GQA is looking forward to working with representatives of the glass craft sector to increase interest in national vocational qualifications and specifically open up access to GQA NVQ/SVQ qualifications. A recent success has been the achievement of Helen Chick of Holywell Glass on the GQA Glass Processing Level 3 NVQ. Helen's employer Stephen Clare is currently working with GQA to consider how the generic standards could link with BSMGP expectations. It could be that the outcome of the co-operation would be specific craft glass guidelines linked to the current units or the development of new craft units. This work is progressing.

GQA has recently offered sponsorship to the Glaziers Trust for the development of craft/professional skills.

\*EDITOR'S NOTE: Also, following validation by the University of Wales, from September 2006 Swansea Institute of Higher Education's School of Glass will be offering a BA(Hons) degree in Stained Glass Restoration & Conservation. Details: Alun Adams/Rodney Bender tel: 01792 481179; email: [alun.adams@sihe.ac.uk](mailto:alun.adams@sihe.ac.uk).