



Passport to your future

Helen's Story

Helen is presently working at The Vyne

My name is Helen. I am currently working as a House and Collections Management trainee.

From day one I knew I wanted the position. I found the post on an online job website whilst doing a general hunt for something new. I had got to a point in my life where I needed change for the better and once I saw what this traineeship involved, I knew it was for me. I read through the website page for page and applied for the taster day straight away. Waiting for the email back as to whether you got a place on the taster day was nearly as bad as waiting for the 'yes you have an interview' or 'yes you have the job'.....

The Taster Day

When the taster day came it was a cold but nice February day. Unfortunately, I had injured my knee but that wasn't going to stop me showing how much I wanted the job, so along I went, crutches and all. It was interesting hobbling around the house and up the stairs on our tour but I kept up as they kept the pace slow for me.

The Introduction

On the day we were informed of what the position would entail and got to meet all the staff. We met in the brew house for a cuppa and a brief chat with the house manager and last years trainee Allie. When we saw how large her passport folder was their were a few faces in shock, though she put our minds at ease by handing it around to show it wasn't as bad as it looked. After the introduction chat we got split into groups and walked around the property with one of the conservation assistants, my group had Dominique. Walking around we met a few of the volunteers who I now work with on a regular basis which is nice that they have been there from day one. There were a few people on the taster day that seemed to be rather uninterested in what was being said but I hung on every word fascinated with the whole idea of being able to work in such an amazing place. At the end of the day I walked away knowing that was where I wanted to be and I wouldn't give up until I was in the door.

You could apply by many different ways including online, hand written, video YouTube, power point and picture. I chose the online and written options as I sent off

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two applications just in case one got lost along the way.

It took another two weeks until we were informed of our first interview, which I was thrilled to bits about. It was similar to our taster day but more involved as we were only a group of 5 or 6 very different people. We did cleaning of ceramics, watering the Oak Gallery matting, dry moping, dusting and use of ladders, this time with three of the conservation assistants, Dominique, Kirsten and Kate. In between these activities, one by one we would go off to have our chat with the house steward and house manager, which was nice as it was more informal and just a get to know each other. Straight away I felt right at home and welcome. We were told on the taster day and again in the first interview that the position didn't come with a guaranteed job at the end of the year, but this didn't phase me as I was determined to make something out of the opportunity I would hopefully be given.



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The Next Step

The next step was waiting to hear if you had a final interview, which you knew would be important as at the end of the day they could only choose one person out of many. It took another two odd weeks to hear back, but when I got the email from Carolyn, the then house manager, I was so happy I jumped off my seat. The day came and yet again I was feeling worse for wear, which to some they may have taken it as a sign to give up, but not me. So with water bottle in hand I went to show how much I wanted the job.

The second interview was with Helen the house steward and Carolyn the then house manager. This time it was more based on the application questions, which I had read through the night before so had memorised what I had wrote. Even still it felt comfortable and laid back, which was good as feeling rough didn't help. The interview flew by and it almost felt I had just come in for another quick chat. I was feeling better by the time we had finished, so I went and sat on the north lawn to call family members to let them know how it went.

It took until the next day for the phone call to come through asking if I would accept the position. When Carolyn first told me it was me they had chosen I went silent as I'm sure I heard her wrong, but when it sunk in it was the most amazing feeling ever, knowing that after all these months and many visits to and from The Wyne I had made it to the finish line, or more the starting line of my new career in conservation and restoration.

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I've now been at the property for just over a month and I love it. There has been a lot of change since I got here including change over of the house manager i.e. my line manager, which to start with was a slight worry that I would be behind due to lack of line manager for the first few weeks, but

with the rest of the house staff and general property staff by my side I'm more up to date than we originally thought, I just need to catch up on paper work.

Each day I've been in the house working along side both volunteers and the conservation assistants. Back in February the house was rather cold, so I could understand why we would have thermals as a must for the winter months, but over the last few weeks the temperature has soured up leaving the house like a green house, which at times is rather unbearable to work in but you do just carry on as you love what you do. I'm so much happier in life since I've been here and it shows both in and out of work.

So far we've been on two training course's, one at Heelis head office in Swindon for overall induction to the National Trust and two at Lyme Park for a 2 day course on house keeping.

Heelis - National Trust HQ

Heelis is an amazing place and completely different to any of the properties within the National Trust. It was very interesting to go see the difference but at the same time to know you're now part of what is one of the best organisations in world. It gave you a good overview of how the trust works and how your course will work individually for you as well. We did the basics of health and safety, CMS (collections management system), house keeping, team building and the heritage skills passport introduction. In total there are 7 of us doing the house and collections management traineeship across the UK. We come from different backgrounds and ages and yet we all clicked straight away, which is great. We keep in touch on a regular basis and also see each other every few months with the group training courses we get to go on.

Lyme Park was lovely to go see, it is Lucy's property, and to see how another property works compared to my own was interesting. It was an intensive two day course on housekeeping, which was a lot to take in, but at the same time hugely interesting. I feel we learnt a lot and it was brilliant to see everyone again. I am really looking forward to them visiting my place in September.



'Overall, this project has given me the boost in life I needed again and has given me something to work towards. It may not come with a guaranteed job at the end, but what I can guarantee is I will find one.'