

Title: **Case Study**  
**Construction & the Built Environment**  
**in the West of England**

**Chris Berridge** is carving out a good career for himself as a stonemason.

Stonemasonry is a highly skilled craft which involves preparing and carving blocks of stone. The work ranges from repairing historical buildings and monuments, to making stone window frames or garden ornaments.

Chris, aged 18, works for Harvey Stone Masonry, a family-run company near Yeovil in Somerset. The firm quarries the local honey coloured Ham Hill limestone, and Chris's job involves making stone fireplaces, door and window frames.

He was a pupil at Wadham School in Crewkerne and left after GCSEs. "I didn't really know what I wanted to do," he says. "I knew I wanted to use my hands and work outside."

The turning point came when he went to the company on work experience. When he took a test in school to find out what career might suit him, it came up with a surprising result.

"For some reason I can't really understand, it came up with 'demolition expert'!" he says. But a neighbour had suggested the stone masonry company to him – knowing he wanted to work with his hands, he gave it a try.

"I just enjoyed it straight away," he says. "On work experience I was helping out, marking out stones and learning about

health and safety. And then towards the end I got to make a stone ash tray. I was really proud of that."

The firm took him on straight from school as an apprentice. Under the apprenticeship, he attends City of Bath College on block release – which means he trains at the college for weeks at a time.

Chris is currently taking NVQ Level 3 in Banker Masonry and Architectural Stone Carving – the college is acknowledged to be one of the best in the UK for training in stonemasonry.

He was also selected to compete in Skillbuild – a national competition for young people training in the construction industry – where he narrowly came second on the stonemasonry finals.

When he qualifies, Chris will have good job prospects in a construction industry crying out for skilled crafts people.

His advice for any career, but particularly in construction, is to make the most of your year 10 or 11 work experience. "A lot of people nowadays don't take work experience seriously – they just choose anything to fill in

"But I found it really helpful in deciding what I wanted to do with my life after school. I don't think people realise just how important it is."