

Carpenters Fellowship Frame 2026

Course CF01: Building a replica Round house: archaeology and carpentry combined

The Clumps at Wittenham has a long history of stone, bronze and iron age occupation and though the construction of a round house frame we will delve into the history and tools use in this archetypal early British building.

The Earth Trust occupies and manages this historic site and the aim is to deliver a complete round house over two courses, several months apart, completed when it opens the next phase of its development as an environmental charity embedded in the landscape.

The course is in the 5 days before The Carpenter's Fellowships annual 3-day conference so the opportunity exists for students to extend their stay and join in the lectures, activities and celebration. This will include a tour of the Earth Trusts Offices which were built 21 years ago by 105 timber framers from the CF and the TFG in a staggering 16 days

The frame and posts for the 8m diameter round house will be constructed using local coppice materials, contemporary skills from the past with an array of appropriate tools from prehistory.

In the first course the main frame will be constructed and assembled in a temporary location during July. On the subsequent course in early October this frame will be moved into its permanent location within the Earth trust landscape development be re-erected thatched and daubed. See the course description below.

During the first part of the week, practical experience in how tools were developed in the Iron Age will be explored with blacksmith **Tom Timbrell** from Heritage Blades and Pario Gallico



Tutors: Archaeological Builders **Marc Cox** is an archaeologist and carpenter based in Somerset. He manages the Avalon Archaeology Centre and has spent his adult life committed to ancient and traditional building techniques. He has worked across Europe at a range of Open Air Museums, building and repairing archaeological reconstructions and sharing his passion of ancient hand tools through his company, **Newhaven Coppice**.



Caroline Nicolay is a director at PARIO GALLICO (gallic cauldron). She is an archaeologist specialised in heritage interpretation, and ancient / vernacular construction techniques. She focuses on earth building, thatching and paint-making, working from archaeology and heritage crafts to support the upskilling of anyone interested in using traditional techniques and materials. Caroline is a leading force in Iron Age structures, having led and been involved in more roundhouse builds than almost anyone in the country



Course programme

This workshop will begin with the freshly felled trees being processed and converted into the different components of the building, using replica hand tools. We will cut mortice, tenons and simple lap-joints without a single saw in sight! (Well... unless participants want to test out our replica Iron Age handsaw. The posts will be charred and raised into postholes, based on the archaeological footprint of the original roundhouses discovered near the Clumps.

During the week the group will split into teams and switch jobs regularly:

Working with Marc, you will focus on peeling, shaping and putting together the wall plates and rafters plus weaving the hazel purlins into place to create a strong basket-like roof structure. This will all be done with archaeologically-appropriate tools, which we'll learn how to use effectively and care for.

Working with Caroline, you will learn hands-on the key principles of earth construction and how to make wattle and daub walls ... without cracks! From understanding the materials to choosing appropriate techniques for your local environment, participants will be able to experiment and practice while asking questions and looking deeper into the archaeology of construction and its modern applications.

By the end of the week, we will create a model roof structure and can look at ancient methods and materials used for thatching.

Starting by a presentation of the various traditional materials used for thatching (such as straw, reed, heather, broom, bracken..), their advantages and drawbacks, we will chat about various fixing methods and tools available to beginners. While we might not be able to work on the roof itself, a frame at ground level will provide practice space for participants wishing to learn more about simple, vernacular thatching.

This is a unique project, bringing together decades of research and hands-on experience in the world of prehistoric experimental archaeology, building archaeology and historical / traditional construction.

See here for more information on your tutors

<https://www.pariogallico.com/>

<https://blackdownhills.org.uk/event/craeft-fayre-archaeology-and-heritate-crafts/>

<https://www.heritageblades.co.uk/>