

Alf helps to maintain the craft of mastic asphalt

With mastic asphalt roofing still regarded as a 'craft trade', **Malcolm Grinstead**, director of the **Mastic Asphalt Council**, looks at what is being done to maintain the skill and talks to one 'outstanding contributor'

The Mastic Asphalt Council (MAC) carries out a great deal of work to raise awareness amongst the younger generation about the benefits of learning to apply mastic asphalt and the career opportunities available.

New City College Hackney, formerly Hackney Community College, is currently the national centre for mastic asphalt education and training, and relies upon support from MAC and its members.

The mastic asphalt craft is taught by professional tutors and the traditional time-served apprenticeship is now incorporated into national vocational qualifications, leading to a Level 2 or Level 3 NVQ qualification.

MAC aims to protect the future of the industry by supporting apprentices through an intensive three or four-year training programme that will ensure they can install mastic asphalt to the highest standards.

The craft training programme is said to be one of the most demanding in the construction industry, and includes practical and theoretical training to use mastic asphalt across a wide range of applications.

Students can utilise state-of-the-art facilities at New City College Hackney, which include a workshop replicating a real work site and a one-tonne asphalt mixer. Several MAC members have donated plant and raw materials from which apprentices can learn the practical elements of this age-old trade.

Apprentices from Bell Asphalt, Brindley Asphalt, Guaranteed Asphalt, JPR Roofing and Flooring, Mac Morgan Asphalte, Malden Asphalt, Nottingham Rock Asphalte Roofing and Flooring, Rio Asphalt and Sussex Asphalte, currently have apprentices enrolled on the mastic asphalt course at New City College Hackney.

One individual – Alf Tufano – has been instrumental in ensuring that apprentices maintain the craft of mastic asphalt. Alf has been a mastic asphalt lecturer at New City College Hackney for the past 12 years and has worked in the sector for almost 40 years. His services to the industry have been considered so exemplary that Alf was chosen to be the recipient of a special award for 'Outstanding Contribution to the Mastic Asphalt



Steve Davis (left) presents Alf Tufano with the award for 'Outstanding Contribution to the Mastic Asphalt Industry' at MAC's Annual Awards 2019



Industry' at MAC's Annual Awards 2019 hosted at the Royal Horseguards Hotel in London.

Alf has gone full circle in the industry, having started his career as a mastic asphalt apprentice himself. He said: "I started my mastic asphalt apprenticeship aged 16 in the summer of 1981 with Natural Rock Asphalt whose offices were at the Angel in Islington. In September that year, I started at Hackney Asphalt College, as it was then known and was located in Cassland Road, Hackney. I was taught by Danny Shreaves, John Taylor and Ron the Mixerman.

"I completed my college training in 1983 and received the bronze medal

End of year practical work completed by some of Alf's mastic asphalt apprentice students at New City College Hackney

award – there weren't gold or silver medal awards. The bronze medal was awarded to the mastic asphalt apprentice who gained the highest combined marks in the set theory and practical exams. Considering that at the time there were mastic asphalt colleges in Vauxhall, Manchester and Scotland, the bronze medal winner was highly regarded. I was presented with the medal at Hackney Town Hall by the Mayor of Hackney.

"Unfortunately in late 1983 the Natural Rock Asphalt Company went into liquidation. Asphaltic kindly took over the remaining two years of my apprenticeship. In 1985, I joined Coverite Asphalters where I stayed in continuous employment until 2004. During my 23 years on-site as an apprentice and an mastic asphalt spreader, I worked on many prestigious buildings, such as the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Palace of Westminster, Old Bailey and the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall. I also worked on large shopping malls including The Whitgift Shopping Centre in Croydon and The Oracle in Reading, along with AELTA in Wimbledon and Oxford Mosque, amongst many other sites in and around London."

Alf continued: "In late 2004, after a successful interview process, I joined Hackney Community College as a mastic asphalt technician. My duties were to prepare the mastic asphalt mixer and to assist John Taylor and Terry Page in the delivery of practical lessons. When John and then Terry retired in 2007, the college's Professional Development team enrolled me with the Institute of Education in Bloomsbury so I could undertake teacher training and therefore gain a PGCE. I passed the PGCE course and have been in my present post as an mastic asphalt lecturer for the past 12 years."

At MAC's Annual Awards 2019, MAC board director, Ian Deacon, thanked Alf for his services to the mastic asphalt industry and he was presented with a trophy by guest speaker and six-time world snooker champion Steve Davis OBE. **rci**

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