



# FRESH AIR SCULPTURE

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Blacksmithing course helps students forge careers working outdoors**

Transporting forges and anvils 60 miles from Hereford to Gloucestershire to teach blacksmithing sounds a tall order, but all the students were fired up to learn and have produced fantastic artwork.

The blacksmithing course was organised jointly by UK charity The Ernest Cook Trust, and Fresh Air Sculpture, which stages a biennial show in Quenington and runs outreach education programmes. The course took place at the Trust's Skills Workshop, at its headquarters in Fairford.

The six students on the blacksmithing course are being helped by the Trust to work towards employability awards, so they can go on to find employment in practical, outdoor-based roles.

Their six tutors were all Artist Blacksmithing undergraduates at Hereford College of Arts, and running this course has also contributed to their final degree show.

All the equipment – including six portable, coke-fired forges and six anvils – was transported from the College to The Ernest Cook Trust, and set up in a purpose-built outside space.

“This is the first time we have ever run this type of course, and everyone was excited to take part,” said Pete Tatham, The Ernest Cook Trust's Outdoor Learning Officer. “Two of our students in particular want to be metalworkers, so this was an ideal opportunity for them.”

The students being trained are from Farmor's School, Fairford; Abingdon & Witney College; and Paternoster School, Cirencester. They have been working with Pete in the Trust's Skills Workshop, using a range of materials to produce everything from picnic benches and birdboxes, to bughouses and shelters, as well as sculptures that double up as habitats.

During the blacksmithing week, they tackled the '150mm Challenge', where each has created a sculpture using 150mm of metal, adopting the skills they have been taught by the Hereford students.

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Curator of Education at Fresh Air Sculpture, Emily Bird, said the organisation has a long-standing relationship with Hereford College of Arts, whose blacksmithing course is among the most prestigious in the country.

She said: “At Fresh Air Sculpture, we are passionate about preserving rural crafts such as forging. We are committed to supporting the arts and giving everybody the opportunity to access this programme, particularly those students who struggle with mainstream education. To provide them with an opportunity to succeed in the arts is an important and precious one.”

The Ernest Cook Trust is a UK-wide educational charity, which creates Outdoor Learning experiences for children, young people and their families, on its own estates and with partner estates across the country. It also gives out some £2m in grants every year, to support Outdoor Learning activities. For more information, visit <https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/>.

For more information about Fresh Air Sculpture, whose next exhibition is in June 2024, visit <https://www.freshairsculpture.com/>.

[Watch TV coverage of the Blacksmithing course](#), as reported by Andy Howard on BBC Points West.