

The Heritage  
Crafts Association



# RED LIST OF ENDANGERED CRAFTS

[redlist.heritagecrafts.org.uk](http://redlist.heritagecrafts.org.uk)

2019  
edition

The full Red List of Endangered Crafts  
report 2019 can be downloaded from  
<http://redlist.heritagecrafts.org.uk>

## The HCA Red List of Endangered Crafts 2019 edition

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Sieve and riddle maker Steve Overthrow  
*Photo by Daniel Carpenter*



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# 2019 edition

## The HCA Red List of Endangered Crafts

- *212 crafts now feature in the research, up from 169 originally featured in 2017.*
- *Four crafts are listed as having become extinct in the last generation, with sieve and riddle making revived since 2017 but paper mould and deckle making a new entry, the last practitioner Ron MacDonald having sadly died in 2017.*
- *36 crafts are listed as **critically endangered**, including 16 new entries and six re-classifications from other categories.*
- *70 crafts are listed as **endangered**, including 20 new entries and nine re-classifications from other categories.*
- *102 crafts are deemed **currently viable**, including 14 new entries and one re-classification from another category. Despite this classification, these crafts are not risk-free or without issues, and will continue to be monitored.*

The HCA Red List of Endangered Crafts, published in 2017, was the first report of its kind to rank traditional crafts by the likelihood they would survive to the next generation, based on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding principles, led by the Heritage Crafts Association (HCA), the only UK UNESCO-accredited NGO working primarily in the domain of traditional craftsmanship.

The list attracted extensive media coverage both in the UK and abroad, shining a light on heritage craft practices under threat from a number of identifiable issues.

The HCA committed to updating the list on a regular basis, and so between September 2018 and February 2019 over 900 organisations and individuals were contacted directly by email and telephone and invited to contribute to the research. Participants were asked to provide background information about each craft, such as its history, techniques and local forms, as well as current information relating to the number of skilled craftspeople and trainees, and the ongoing issues affecting the viability of the craft.

Each craft was then classified into one of four categories of endangerment using a combination of both objective criteria (such as numbers of crafts people and trainees) and subjective criteria (issues affecting the future viability of the craft including training opportunities and market trends).

Issues affecting the viability of heritage crafts vary on a craft-by-craft basis, though many can be grouped, and possible solutions devised that will help many crafts practices become more viable.



## The HCA Red List of Endangered Crafts

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Neon bending, which has been practised in West Yorkshire since the 1920s, is a new entry to the Red List.  
*Photo by Neon Workshops*

**The Red List of Endangered Crafts is a fascinating project to work on, not just because it shines a light on the state of our craft heritage today, but also because it sparks important conversations that we might not otherwise be having.**

One point often raised is that cultural practices such as these have always ebbed and flowed through history, coming to the fore and fading away as part of a constant shift of markets, technologies and social movements. Why should we, in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, produce a piece of work seeking to disrupt this state of flux by demanding interventions to preserve these practices?

And yet for me the Red List isn't an uncritical demand for preservation. It's about being attentive to cultural change and, through this attentiveness, opening up opportunities yet to be discovered; opportunities for society to have a debate about which parts of our culture we want to carry with us into the future, and for individuals to use these repositories of knowledge to create rewarding livelihoods for themselves in ways we might not yet even be able to imagine. Without initiatives like the Red List, we could be sleepwalking towards a situation

*“Let's have that collective debate about the knowledge we wish to carry into the future, from which tomorrow's craftspeople can create new livelihoods..”*

in which these opportunities are greatly reduced, purely as a result of the precariousness of tacit skills such as these. Often too subtle to be faithfully recorded in words or on film, they require continuity of practice and one-to-one transmission in order to survive.

So let's use this opportunity to have that collective debate, facilitated by the Heritage Crafts Association, but led by those individuals who stand to benefit most from carrying this heritage with them, not for the sake of our past, but for the sake of their future. Let's use it to give a voice to those who have previously been excluded from the heritage debates which have rarely been allowed to stray beyond the preservation

of museum artefacts and historic buildings into the realm of the lived experiences of working people.

And where preservation is deemed appropriate and useful, let's do it in an intelligent way, not to make these crafts forever reliant on subsidy, for that is seldom what they want, but to strengthen them so that they can continue to adapt to survive.

Another point that is sometimes raised is that the Red List, as a methodology, is intrinsically negative in that it focuses on what we risk losing, rather than celebrating what is thriving. While we acknowledge the truth in that, we feel the pros far outweigh the cons, and we strive to tell the positive stories the Red List throws up, not least in the hope that they will inspire more positive stories in the future.

Among these stories is that of sieve and riddle making. After being listed as extinct in the first edition of the Red List in 2017, two individuals came forward to take up the craft, one of them enticing the previous last-of-the-line maker out of retirement for tuition, and now both are on the verge of commercial production. Elsewhere, one of the few remaining fore-edge painters has been thrust into the limelight, with an MBE in the New Year's Honours and invitations

to demonstrate internationally... there has been a commitment from the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers to invest in fan making skills... and the HCA has launched its new Endangered Crafts Fund. We hope that with the release of the 2019 edition we will be celebrating many more good news stories like these.

So please take some time to read about the crafts and craftspeople featured here and on the Red List website, and join us in the continuing conversation about how we might carry this living heritage with us into the future.

**Daniel Carpenter**  
Red List Project Manager, March 2019

# Extinct crafts

Crafts classified as 'extinct' are those which are no longer practised. For the purposes of this research, this category only includes crafts which have become extinct in the past generation.

Cricket ball making



Gold beating



Lacrosse stick making



Mould/deckle making



## Mould and deckle making

The last paper mould and deckle maker in the UK, Ron MacDonald, sadly passed away at his home near Maidstone, Kent, in November 2017. Ron did manage to pass on his skills during his lifetime, but his main student, Serge Pirard, lives and works in Belgium. As a result, mould and deckle making is now listed on the Red List as an extinct craft in the UK.

Ron started to learn mould making when he was 16 years old, undergoing a five year apprenticeship at his father's company Amies & Son Ltd in Maidstone. At the time, moulds and deckles were mainly supplied to paper mills manufacturing sheets of high quality paper for stationery and arts. There is still a demand for good quality traditionally made moulds.

Like many of the crafts we have looked at in the course of the Red List research, this has a knock-on effect on other allied crafts, such as commercial handmade paper making, which also features in this edition of the Red List as a critically endangered craft.

NEW  
ENTRY

## Sieve and riddle making

Sieve and riddle making is the first craft to be downgraded from extinct to critically endangered, after two makers took up the challenge to revive it after seeing it listed as extinct in the 2017 edition of the Red List.

Steve Overthrow from Somerset began making sieves and riddles at the beginning of 2018. Steve has received advice and tuition from previous last-of-the-line Mike Turnock (formerly of Hill & Sons, Whaley Bridge) and after a period of product development and refining is on the verge of commercial production.

Colin Davies is a cockle fisherman from Swansea who has recently started making sieves and riddles commercially, after watching an episode of BBC Countryfile featuring the Red List report on sieve and riddle making.

We hope that the craft will now go from strength to strength, serving markets such as gardening, shellfish harvesting, ceramics and cooking.

RE-  
CLASSIFIED

# Critically endangered crafts

Crafts classified as 'critically endangered' are those at serious risk of no longer being practised. They may include crafts with a shrinking base of craftspeople, crafts with limited training opportunities, crafts with low financial viability, or crafts where there is no mechanism to pass on the skills and knowledge.

## Basketwork furniture making NEW

Bell founding (*from endangered*)

Clay pipe making

Clog making (hand-carved soles)

## Damask weaving NEW

Devon stave basket making

Fan making

## Fair Isle straw backed chair making NEW

Flute making (*from endangered*)

Fore-edge painting

## Hat plaiting NEW

Horse collar making

## Kishie basket making NEW

## Maille making NEW

Metal thread making

## Millwrighting NEW

Oak bark tanning

## Orrery making NEW

## Paper making (commercial) NEW

Parchment and vellum making

Piano making

Plane making

## Pottery (industrial) NEW

## Reverse glass sign painting NEW

Saw making

Scissor making (*from endangered*)

## Shinty caman making NEW

Sieve and riddle making (*from extinct*)

Spade making

## Spinning wheel making NEW

Swill basket making

Tinsmithing (*from viable*)

## Wainwrighting NEW

## Watch face enamelling NEW

Watchmaking (*from endangered*)

## Withy pot making NEW



## Issues facing the craft

The mainstream paper industry employs fewer workers nowadays, meaning there are fewer people with the skills who may wish to set up in a more handmade setting.

People are used to paying very low prices for paper and are not prepared to pay a premium. Although there is a market out there for the very best product, advertising to this market can be prohibitively expensive.

Paper mould making is now extinct in the UK and the lower quality alternatives do not compare. To make paper on a commercial basis a Hollander beater is required, which is very rare second hand, and very expensive to buy new.



# Commercial handmade paper making

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

NEW  
ENTRY



**Left:** Jim Patterson,  
Two Rivers Paper  
**Opposite:** Zoe Collis,  
Two Rivers Paper  
*Photos by  
Alison Jane Hoare*

The key characteristic of a handmade sheet of paper is imperfection. But the measure of craftsmanship is how little variation there is within the imperfection, and this level of skill comes from practice and repeat-making on a commercial scale.

To make paper, cellulose fibres are softened and refined to make a paper stock which is levelled using a wire mesh-covered mould with deckle on top to form a sheet. This sheet is then couched onto felt and pressed to extract water. The dried sheets may be hand dipped into a further bath of gelatine size if required.

There are currently only two sites operating at the handmade end of the paper making industry. Two Rivers Paper Company in Somerset employs two full-time commercial handmade paper makers and one apprentice, and Frogmore Paper Mill in Hemel Hempstead is a working museum, education and heritage centre employing two craftspeople.

Papermaking has been one of the very few heritage crafts to take advantage of the government's Trailblazer apprenticeship scheme, but only by adapting the model developed by the mainstream paper industry. Zoe Collis, recruited by the HCA during a pre-apprenticeship pilot programme in West Somerset, is the first such apprentice. Despite being government-supported, the apprenticeship still relies on a high degree of financial support from Two Rivers.

# Watchmaking

## CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

The heyday of British watchmaking was between 1630 and 1890, with advancements such as the balance spring and the detached lever escapement meaning that by 1765 watches could keep such accurate time that they were worthy of the introduction of a second hand.

In 1792, London had around 20,000 watchmakers working in largely independent workshops and responsible for the manufacture of 15,084 watches for export. Amazingly, these craftspeople made up around 1/50th of the city's one million population. However, by the end of the nineteenth century Switzerland became the centre of the world's watch-making industry and remains so to this day.

There is only a small handful of businesses still practising traditional watch and chronometer making in the UK today, with fewer than twenty professional makers earning a living from making as opposed to restoration. If one or two were lost there would be a high risk of the skills dying out altogether.

As there is also a national skills shortage of traditional watch makers in Switzerland, it is not unknown for high-grade makers and restorers to be recruited internationally and their skills lost from the UK. The lack of supporting networks and opportunities for development is another reason for UK watchmakers to relocate to Switzerland, exacerbating the attrition of skills from the UK.

**Right:** Struthers Watchmakers  
**Opposite:** Dr Rebecca Struthers  
*Photos by Andy Pilsbury*



## Issues facing the craft

Due to the low number of master watchmakers in the UK and the amount of time it takes to train, there are limited opportunities for those wishing to further their skills beyond technician level. The few schemes that are available offer a minimal contribution towards the minimum apprenticeship wage of £3.70 an hour (2019). However, qualified technicians will already be earning the national living wage but require a great deal of additional training, typically taking a further three to five years to reach the skill level of a master watchmaker.

It is now virtually impossible to create every component of a watch in the UK due to a shortage of allied craft businesses, the most extreme examples being spring making and jewel making, neither of which still exist in the UK on a commercial level. Rebuilding these networks of allied craftspeople takes time and is very expensive meaning watches completely fabricated in the UK are considerably more expensive to produce than those made in countries with better trade support.





# Reverse glass sign painting

NEW  
ENTRY

## CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

Think of a Victorian-era pub and what often springs to mind is its glass signage – cut, embossed, reverse painted and gilded or silvered, with characteristic lettering and ornate decoration.

In days past, every city would have teams of makers competing with each other to push the boundaries of this craft, producing signs so intricate and stunning that they would – in terms of their cost and impact on viewers – be the equivalent of today's most influential viral advertising campaigns.

The ubiquity of this craft meant that individuals could specialise, and rely on the other allied craftspeople around them to fulfil their own craft specialisms. Today, however, there are no such local communities of practice, so those wishing to pursue this craft to the highest level must master such diverse skills as brilliant cutting, French embossing, acid etching, gilding and silvering, as well as having an artistic eye for composition and design.

Today, David Adrian Smith from Torquay is the standout master of this craft, having been apprenticed in the 1980s, studied historical examples and books, and travelled to the USA to perfect his skills. David has revived many of the skills from extinction in the UK in the following decades.

Commissions for Ginstute and  
Jameson's Irish Whiskey  
*Photos by David Adrian Smith*





# IRISH WHISKY

## Issues facing the craft

This is an example of an apparently thriving craft that is at the same time very vulnerable. There is currently only one practitioner who can teach all of the relevant skills, and despite having taught over 300 students from the UK, no one else has yet gone on to master the full range of skills necessary to pass on this craft in its entirety.

Glass cutting wheels made of carborundum are extremely hard to source. Modern diamond wheels are not suited to the task.

## *Common issues affecting craft viability*

**We can group many of the issues heritage crafts are dealing with into a number of broad categories. Doing this can help focus our advocacy and support so we can help as many crafts as possible.**

**Training:** these issues often centre on the prohibitive cost of training, the reluctance of qualifications agencies to accredit niche occupations, and the resulting difficulty in attracting funding.

**Recruitment:** this includes difficulties in recruiting trainees and new entrants to the crafts.

**Ageing practitioners:** in some crafts the youngest known craftsperson may be approaching retirement age.

**Technology:** new technologies can make older ones seem redundant, but often there is room for multiple technologies to operate alongside each other, each offering something of value.

**Market:** this category can include a reduction in the demand for the product or the inability to reach out to potential customers through marketing and developing distribution networks; it also includes competition with lower-wage economies worldwide.

**Supply of materials and tools:** the availability and costs of materials and tools; as crafts become more niche then suppliers may no longer find it cost-effective to supply a wide range of materials.

**Small business challenges:** increased bureaucratic burden for small businesses; business rates and the cost of affordable workshops; the need for business skills as well as craft skills; the challenges of passing on a craft business.

**Miscellaneous:** including restrictive legislation and loss of allied industries upon which many crafts rely.

Steve Roche, stonemason  
and lettercutter  
*Photo by Mark Shenton*



# Endangered crafts

Crafts classified as 'endangered' are those which currently have sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation, but for which there are serious concerns about their ongoing viability. This may include crafts with a shrinking market share, an ageing demographic or crafts with a declining number of practitioners.

## Arrowsmithing

Bee skep making NEW

Bicycle making

Brass instrument making

Brick making

Broom making

Brush making

Carpet and rug tufting NEW

Chair caning

Chair seating

Clock making

Clog making

Coach building *(from critical)*

Coopering (non-spirits)

Coppersmithing (objects)

Coracle making *(from viable)*

Corn dolly making NEW

Cricket bat making

Cutlery making and tableware NEW

Engine turning

Falconry furniture making NEW

Flintknapping (masonry)

Folding knife making

Founding (ferrous metals) *(from viable)*

Free reed instrument making NEW

Gansey knitting NEW

Gilding

Globe making

Glove making *(from viable)*

Hand grinding

Harp making

Hat block making *(from critical)*

Horn working

Hurdle making

Illumination

## Japanning

Keyboard instrument making *(from viable)*

Ladder making

Lead working

Letterpress NEW

Marbling *(from critical)*

Nalbinding NEW

Neon bending NEW

Northumbrian pipe making NEW

Oak, mast, spar and flagpole making

Targeting

Passementerie

Percussion instrument making

Pole lathe bowl turning

Rake making

Rush matting NEW

Sail making

Scientific glassworking

Shoe and boot last and tree making NEW

Side saddlery NEW

Slatting

Smocking NEW

South Downs trug making

Split cane rod making

Straw working NEW

Surgical instrument making NEW

Sussex trug making

Tile making (wall and floor tiles)

Umbrella making NEW

Vegetable tanning *(from viable)*

Wallpaper making

Wheelwrighting *(from viable)*

Whip making NEW

Wooden pipe making NEW

Woodwind instrument making



# Neon bending

ENDANGERED

NEW  
ENTRY

Every neon sign you've ever seen has been hand bent by a skilled artisan. Glass tubes are shaped using nothing but heat and expert manipulation. A metal electrode is fitted at each end and the tube is filled with one of a variety of special gasses. To bring it to life, an electric current ionises the gas in the tube, causing it to emit coloured light.

One surprising fact about neon is that, despite being famously associated with locations like Paris and Las Vegas, neon lighting was actually discovered in 1898 by British scientists William Ramsay and Morris W Travers, before being popularised in the twentieth century by Frenchman Georges Claude.

The second surprising fact is that, since the 1920s, British neon production has centred on West Yorkshire, where at one time there were two dozen neon workshops. Oldham Signs in Leeds was the largest neon fabricator in Europe until it closed in 2003, and its makers were displaced to either set up their own workshops or leave the industry. Today there are only around six or seven workshops remaining.

Despite enjoying a surge of interest in recent years as more people choose to turn away from screens and embrace analogue culture, neon bending still faces plenty of issues that threaten its survival, hence its entry into the Red List as endangered.

Nevertheless, the craft of neon bending offers huge potential for the future, as not only is neon lighting evocative and desirable, but for these environmentally conscious times it is also more energy-efficient than LEDs... and totally recyclable!





**Opposite:** Participant tuition on the ribbon burner

**Below:** Richard Wheater operating electron bombarder, mobile neon workshop, Iceland, 2013

*Photos by Neon Workshops and David Lindsay*

## Issues facing the craft

The three or four polytechnics that used to run neon-related courses were all shut down in the 1990s and the courses not replaced. Training is now much more sporadic and depends on the availability and inclination of individual makers to pass on their skills.

Part of neon's recent exposure has come through fine artists, who would often rather commission the work than learn it themselves. As a result, the craft can be devalued by artists and their public in favour of the concept that lies behind the work.

Fewer gases are available than in the past, hence fewer colours to choose from, as suppliers consolidate their business in a dwindling market.

## Issues facing the craft

The cost of making from scratch is often a price companies and individuals are not willing to pay to support a lastmaker's wage, let alone enough profit to train a younger person.

Craftspeople rarely want ongoing subsidy; the markets they have cultivated can sustain them. What they need is short-term but fully-costed assistance to allow them to take the time away from production to train someone, or to build up their business to a level that can absorb the financial hit of diverting resources to skills transmission.



NEW  
ENTRY

# Shoe and boot last and tree making

ENDANGERED

The difference between wooden lasts and trees is that lasts are the forms around which shoes and boots are made, and trees are the forms used to keep them the right shape when not in use. While some makers adapt standard blanks known as rough-turns, one or two make fully bespoke lasts and trees from scratch, shaped precisely to the customer's feet.

Unfortunately, few people nowadays are aware how shoes are made, and even fewer know what shoe lasts and trees are.

As a result, the Lastmaker House Project run by Steven Lowe and Dominic Casey finds itself enjoying very little recognition within the UK, whilst at the same time attracting students from as far away as Australia, South Korea, Japan, Lebanon, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Thailand and the USA.

Budding makers from all over the world recognise the value of British craftsmanship and skill, and yet this doesn't translate into the kind of home-grown support that would provide the current crop of lastmakers (all of whom are now over 50) with enough breathing space to take on and train a new generation of British last and tree makers.

**Opposite and right:**  
students at Lastmaker House  
*Photos by Steven Lowe*



## *What is the Heritage Crafts Association doing?*

Since the publication of the Red List in 2017, the Heritage Crafts Association has taken the following actions to help safeguard endangered crafts:

With the support of the Dulverton Trust we have employed Mary Lewis as part-time **Endangered Crafts Officer** tasked with making interventions (support, mentoring, funding bids for example) that could make a difference to endangered crafts.

We have set up an **Endangered Crafts Fund** to help at-risk crafts to overcome the short-term obstacles standing in the way of their long-term viability.

*We can't do all this alone... please join the growing community of likeminded individuals dedicated to celebrating our heritage craft skills and safeguarding them for the future...*

We have continued to **advocate on behalf of the heritage crafts sector** to policymakers and funders on the issues facing heritage crafts and the changes that are needed to solve them.

We have committed to **continuing the Red List of Endangered Crafts research** at two or three yearly intervals, though this will rely on continued fundraising following the kind support of the Radcliffe Trust (2017) and South, West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership (2019).

## *What can policymakers do?*

**We have some very clear asks to put to Government to help improve the support for heritage crafts:**

**Clarify the role of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport** in supporting heritage crafts, and make changes to ensure that heritage crafts are supported by this department and its agencies. At the moment heritage crafts fall in the gap between arts and heritage.

**Ratify the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage** or provide support and recognition of equivalent status. At the time of writing, the UK is one of 17 of the 193 UNESCO member states not to have ratified it.

**Take action to address the issues affecting the future viability of heritage crafts**, particularly relating to education, training and small business support.

## *What can the public do?*

One of the most effective ways to help is to support our work by becoming a member of the Heritage Crafts Association at [www.heritagecrafts.org.uk/get-involved](http://www.heritagecrafts.org.uk/get-involved). Not only will this help us become more financially sustainable as an independent charity but it will also help build a community of likeminded individuals whose voice will become increasingly difficult for policymakers to ignore.

Secondly, if you are able to, please donate to our Endangered Crafts Fund at [www.heritagecrafts.org.uk/ecf](http://www.heritagecrafts.org.uk/ecf) which we have set up to ensure that our most at-risk heritage crafts within the UK are given the tools and support they need to thrive.

Thirdly, but no less importantly, you can support your local craftspeople by buying and commissioning their work and telling your friends about the wonderful products your local heritage craftspeople have to offer.



## Currently viable crafts

Crafts classified as 'currently viable' do not appear on the Red List as they are in a healthy state or have sufficient practitioners to transmit their skills to the next generation. This does not mean that the crafts are risk-free or without issues affecting their future sustainability/viability. We will continue to monitor them for changes.

Armour and helmet making

Automata making

Bagpipe making

Basket making

Batik **NEW**

Billiard cue making **NEW**

Blacksmithing

Boat building

Bookbinding

Bow making

Bowery

Braiding (*from endangered*)

Button making

Cabinet making

Calligraphy

Car manufacturing

Carpentry

Carpet and rug weaving

Chair making

Charcoal burning

Coach trimming **NEW**

Cob building

Coopering (spirits)

Coppersmithing (stills)

Coppice working

Crochet

Drum making

Dry stone walling

Dyeing

Edge tool making

Embroidery

Enamelling **NEW**

Farriery

Felting

Fender making

Fletching

Flintknapping (objects)

Fly dressing

Founding (non-ferrous metals)

French polishing **NEW**

Furniture making

Glass engraving

Glassworking

Goldsmithing

Guitar making

Gunmaking

Hand engraving

Handle making

Harris Tweed weaving

Hedgelaying

Jewellery making

Joinery

Knife making

Knitting

Lace making

Leatherworking

Marquetry

Medal making

Metal spinning

Millinery

Model engineering **NEW**

Mosaic **NEW**

Net making

Organ building

Origami **NEW**

Orkney chair making

Paper making (studio)

Patchwork and quilting

Pewter working

Pole lathe turning

Pottery (studio)

Puppet making

Quilling **NEW**

Rag rugging

Rocking horse making

Rope making

Saddlery

Shoe and boot making

Signwriting

Silversmithing

Spinning

Spoon carving

Stained glass and glass painting

Steel pan making **NEW**

Stick dressing

Stone carving

Stonemasonry

Stringed instrument making

Swordsmithing **NEW**

Tailoring

Tapestry weaving

Tatting **NEW**

Taxidermy **NEW**

Thatching

Tile making (roofing tiles)

Timber framing

Toy making

Upholstery and soft furnishings

Weaving

Wig making **NEW**

Wood carving

Wood turning