

Press Release

TOM'S ONE IN A MILLION – AT LEAST!

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Apprentices don't come more unusual than Tom Haigh!

To say he is one in a million would be an underestimate. The 19 year old from Street is thought to be the only spelt milling apprentice in the UK.

Tom has started work at Sharpham Park, an organic food farm base near Glastonbury, which specialises in growing spelt, a nutritious, organic and ancient 'cousin' of wheat.

Sharpham Park's owner Roger Saul (founder of the Mulberry fashion house) built his own spelt mill which was officially opened by the Countess of Wessex in June 2007.

Today, as the country's only dedicated spelt mill, it is processing around ten tonnes of spelt grain a week, some of which is sold as bread flour to bakers around the UK.

As production increased the company recognised the need to recruit help for Pete Tincknell, miller since the mill was commissioned.

Production manager Kate Willis said: "This is such an unusual production process we knew we had to train someone else to help Pete and make sure the skills did not die out.

"We have never taken on an apprentice before but somehow this seemed the obvious solution. We wanted to find someone who could become as passionate about the process as we are and who we could train from scratch. Tom was a great choice."

The placement was organised through the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), which works with employers to match suitable apprentices through Apprenticeship vacancies which can be found at www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Jack Fleming NAS Employer Services Manager in Somerset, said: "Apprenticeships like this definitely don't come around that often and it is great to think we are playing

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our part in preserving such an unusual skill. It also shows how versatile Apprenticeships and training providers can be in meeting the needs of employers from a wide range of industries.”

The NAS worked closely with Yeovil College to come up with a formal training programme which would fit spelt milling and now Tom is working towards an NVQ Level 2 in Performing Manufacturing Operations, which was specifically adapted for his training needs.

For the former Crispin School pupil, the move into milling is something of a lifestyle change. After leaving school with a clutch of GCSEs, Tom went to Bridgwater College to train as a bricklayer – but he discovered it was not what he wanted.

He saw an advertisement for the spelt mill apprentice and decided it was an unusual opportunity he wanted to pursue.

He added: “I’m really enjoying it now, especially as I know I am part of something special. And I’m earning good money at the same time as learning - it is perfect for me.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

Further information from: Sue Bradbury (LSC public relations) on 01872 863863.

National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)

The NAS was announced in January 2008 and officially launched in April 2009. Reporting to the Departments for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the service will drive forward the Government’s ambition for Apprenticeships. The service aims to bring about a significant growth in the number of employers offering Apprenticeships.

The NAS will assume total responsibility for the delivery of Apprenticeships that includes: Employer Services; Learner Services; and a web-based vacancy matching system. This online system enables individuals to search and apply for live vacancies and allows employers, and their training providers to advertise their vacancies to a wide range of interested applicants.

The service has ultimate accountability for the national delivery of targets and co-ordination of the funding for Apprenticeship places. It will act to overcome barriers to the growth of the programme and assume responsibility for promoting Apprenticeships and their value to employers, learners and the country as a whole.