

Martin Gwilliams

Progress update November 2019

Martin joined the stonemasonry team as the Apprentice Stonemason at Gloucester at the beginning of September 2019. One of his first jobs was to repoint the joints and beds around the stones of the Lady Chapel, these had been raked out earlier in the summer as they were full of very hard cementitious mortar which was damaging the masonry in this area.

At the end of his second week Martin spent two days talking to members of the public who came to the workshop at the Stonemasons Yard over two days which were part of the Heritage Weekend, an annual national event. He explained to the visitors the type of work the stonemasons produce and the methods they use and answered their specific questions. He spent some of the time demonstrating and teaching the rudimentary methods and skills of carving stone and letter cutting in stone to the visitors.

The stonemasonry team are currently working on the conservation programme to the North Ambulatory Project. The project involves cutting out the badly weathered and eroded stones in the bays and the working of replacement stones. So far Martin has cut out, worked and fixed over 10' of string course for the second elevation of the exterior of North-East Chapel and has also produced indents for some of the cushion capitals and has made repairs to stonework on other bays. This has involved some setting out for making templates and sections. He also helped with lifting and installing the first the six new gargoyles on the parapet, a Gloucester rugby player.

Martin has started his Cathedrals' Workshop Fellow Foundation Degree attending sessions in Gloucester and Salisbury, in September and October respectively. He has spent much of the last six weeks researching and reading for his first assignment, Learning and Studying at Work, a report about the North Ambulatory of the Choir and the exterior of North Ambulatory. This project has increased his knowledge of the history and architecture of the Cathedral and has given him a greater sense of purpose to the work he is doing. Later this month the CWF meets in Durham for three days of further workshops and seminars. He has now started research on his second assignment, The Principles of Stone Construction in which he will learn more about the types of stones that were used to build the Abbey church and those which have been used to restore it the Cathedral church.

Through each of the modules he hopes to gain a wealth of knowledge and practical skills through experiences on the Foundation Degree and during his time as the Apprentice Stonemason.

I am really enjoying the experience of working along side a great team of stonemason who between them have so much skill and knowledge which they are passing on to me. In these first couple of months I have been able to use the skills I have gained my formative years and I have added new skills that have given me a better understanding practical masonry. It is a great privilege to be a stonemason working on restoring and repairing the Cathedral, following in a long line of the many, many masons who have work gone before me.