

Martin Gwilliams  
Progress update October 2020

## Gwilliams-Shakespeare!

Writing seems altogether simple, until you try, and I've been doing a lot of writing and re-writing this month for the CWF (Cathedrals' Workshop Fellowship) Foundation Degree I am studying. The degree is in Historic Building Conservation and it forms a large part of my two-year apprenticeship at Gloucester. Over the last four weeks I've written up my notes for my Setting Out and Fixing modules, I have researched, written and compiled a Condition Report regarding an 'intervention' carried out on the building for my Conservation module and last week I spent two days in 'virtual Winchester' researching, writing and compiling a second Condition Report as part of the second half of the Conservation module.

## CWF

The Cathedrals' Workshop Fellowship (CWF) is an association of nine Anglican cathedrals established in 2006 to provide education and training for the craftsmen and craftswomen who maintain our cathedrals and other historic buildings. The key objective is to address the needs of cathedrals and commercial conservation employers for specialists in a range of craft disciplines. The students include heritage stonemasons, carpenters/joiners, electricians and plumbers. The CWF also work with national and international heritage organisations to share knowledge and best practice in craft skills training.

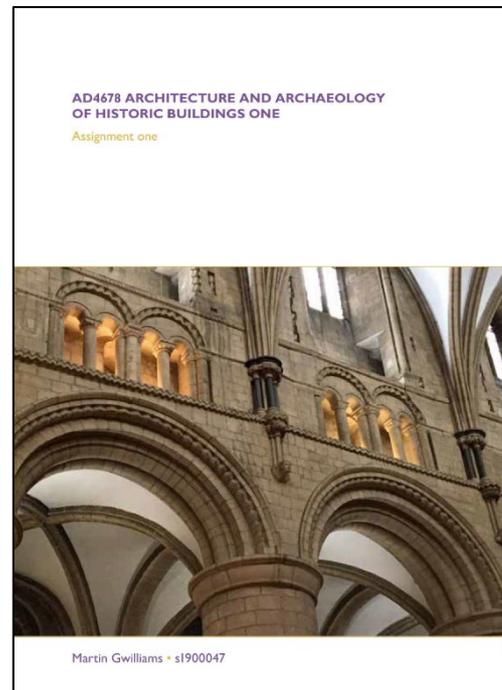
Before 'lockdown', about once a month I would travel to a host cathedral city to spend two or three days having lectures along with my 12 other CWF fellows, delivered by a field of industry experts on topics such as Learning and Studying at Work, the Principles of Stone Construction, and Architecture and Archaeology of Historic Buildings. The trips usually included a tour of the local cathedral from the crypt to the tower and roof tops. We also visited a couple of stone quarries local to where we were. Our time in Durham included a visit to a local builder and restorer of church organs. In the evenings we spend our time in the local hostelrys supporting the local economy, consuming the fine ales of that region and swapping stories and experiences.

After each session, our task is usually to write a paper or report focused on questions based on the theme we have covered over the previous few days. For instance, our most recent assignment for part one for the Conservation module was: Identify and explain an intervention that has been carried out between the mid-19th and early 20th century. We had to include:

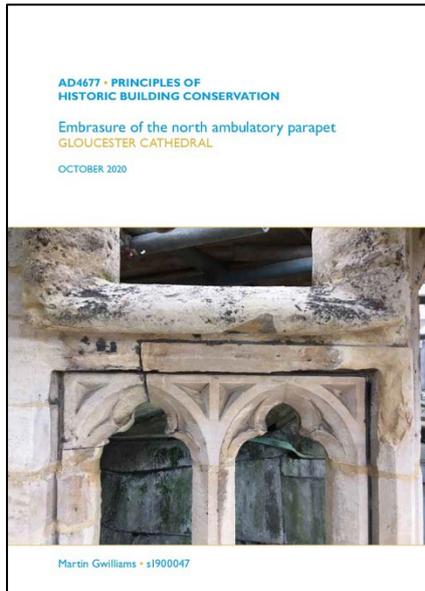
any changes of style, stone types, mortars and any other changes to the building process that we could identify which took place at this time.

the name of the architect(s) overseeing the work (where records existed) and explain the rationale behind the work as you understand it.

a discussion on the level of the success of the intervention



a consideration of how the development of 'conservation' ideals might influence the way in which the same work would be carried out on the building today.



I chose a section of the parapet of the north ambulatory for my assignment, a modest intervention which had been carried out on a portion of an embrasure during a restoration to the parapet during Victorian times.

Each topic requires a good lot of reading and research, usually with trips to the cathedral archives. The crucial thing is trying to sift out from my research what is relevant to answering the questions or requirements of the module. I spend the early part of each project writing notes. After this I start typing these up and start fleshing out details and content, referring to the questions as I go along to help keep my mind of track. Then it's a case of editing, writing, and re-writing, shaping the paper and aiming for a given word limit. I then diligently typeset each assignment to a required level and standard with a bibliography to show what has underpinned and shaped my thoughts, reflections, discussions and conclusions. Each

document usually includes images which help illustrate the theme or help make a point. The documents are then uploaded onto the CWF Learning Hub for assessment, marking and comments from the module tutor.

Through the lectures, research, reading and talking to and spending time with the rest of my cohort I'm (hopefully) becoming and more rounded stonemason. When I finish my time in Gloucester I will (hopefully) not only be able to work stone better but I will also move on with a better and broader understanding of the practical principles and philosophies which underpin the work of conservation and restoration of historic buildings. The whole experience has been extremely rewarding so far. I have learnt lots of things I never knew before and it has fuelled my interest in many new areas. I

Sadly, but understandably, for the time being our CWF learning sessions are carried out online. We still have the same high quality of teaching and lecturers. So far this academic year we have had 'virtual visits' to Lincoln and Winchester, obviously these are no substitute for the real places (and their Cathedral's), it also means I don't get to spend time with my fabulous CWF Fellows. We have one more assignment to write to Level 4, Understanding the Cathedral Environment. Then it is onto Level 5 and the second year of the degree in January.

### **Martin-angelo!**



There's still been plenty of practical work on site. This month we finished the last of the re-pointing. Before the re-pointing of the joints much of the fabric of the exterior of the north ambulatory was scarred by the presence of cement mortar, a product widely used by Victorian architects and stonemasons for restoration work. Cement mortar is bad news for the stones as it's impermeable. Water and moisture can get into the cement but can't escape through it and this usually means the moisture escapes through the stones that it is sandwiched between instead, often causing areas of the stones closest to the cement spall and decay. It's best if the cement can be raked out and the joints repointed using lime mortar.



I had the task of shelter-coating the ceilings of the vaults over a few of the windows along the north ambulatory which had in the past been rendered with cement. My task was to coat and disguise the cement to give it the appearance of stone, the same tones as the stonework. The process is quite slow as it requires several applications. Each application takes around a day to dry, and it dries to quite a different tone to that what it looks like when it's applied wet. The shelter-coat is a blend of lime putty, sand and water. The first couple of coats, put on with a brush, creates a good base colour of the stones, then with the addition of coloured pigments to the mix, and using a sponge to applying the next couple of layers the tone of the stone colour begins to soften and blend in with its surroundings. It is not on a par with the Sistine Chapel, but it has been good practical learning for me. May be I'll try something more decorative and creative next time... !