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Progress update October 2021

### Conservation in Canterbury



As September turned to October my CWF modules and work on site continued without a pause for breath. But having uploaded my Historic Ornamental Carving module a moment ago, I can now pause and look back on another fun-packed month.

One thing I loved about the apprenticeship is the practical learning that often runs alongside what we learn from the CWF module and assignments. October started with a week in Canterbury and the start of our Practical Conservation module for CWF. Conservation is key part of practical of stonemasonry for those of us who care for historic buildings. Our aim is to replace as few of the medieval stones as possible, which means taking more conservative approach to caring for the fabric of the cathedral and using various methods which aim to prolong the life of stones which might deteriorate more rapidly without intervention.

At the beginning of the week, along with my fellow CWFers we spent some time being shown and having a go at using various equipment designed to conserve stonework. The demonstrations included a Thermo Tec, a hot water, high pressure jet washer; an Ibix, a system which can spray various dry aggregates; and a lazer-gun and machine which allows for easy removal of sulphation and other dirt from the surface of stones with pinpoint accuracy. Advancing our awareness and appreciation of continuing developments in conservation practice is key to our learning.

The week was jammed packed with many other highlights. One of my favourite things was a private tour of the cathedral after everyone else had gone home – the whole place all to ourselves along with our brilliant Cathedral Guide. What a privilege. It is such a splendid building and being able to move through it with very few other people around made each feature and space stand out more for me. I love the crypt so much; I think I could live in there. So much to see and such a lovely space to sit and be still and soak up what it offers. It is space which manages to be both vast and intimate at the same time.

Later in the week we headed out to Broad Oak, Canterbury's workshop to see the set-up there. Really nice facility, very inspiring. Our time there included a demo of mixing up hot-lime and using it for pointing - any excuse for me to have a go. Mortar mixes play an important part in the care of the fabric of the building. In the years I have been doing stone masonry I have never known a subject to cause tension than what ingredients you have in your mortar mix – it's a very hot topic!

On the Thursday we headed to Rochester Cathedral for the day. We had a brilliant, guided tour with the cathedral architect. It's a small cathedral, but it packs a big punch. Lots and lots of lovely features and decoration. Yet another



splendid crypt, I think I am becoming addicted to them. This one is light and bright, with a beautiful chapel in the space. There's also a very nice refectory down there too, where they make bespoke sandwiches: mashed banana, peanut and jam, for me! If you haven't been to Rochester do go, it is well worth it for the cathedral alone.

On the Friday we headed to Westminster Abbey for the day. A friend recently asked a group of us about the place we would choose to go on retreat. Instead of heading for a remote island, I would head to London. I find it so beguiling and inspiring. It had been a while since I had last been up to London as a tourist, as it were, but walking across Westminster Bridge, with a little nod to The Palace of Westminster and my one stone from my time restoring the Elizabeth Tower, and London started to work its magic.



We were guided round the Abbey by the Deputy Clerk of Works from floor to roof tops. What a stunning view of London it offers from the top. All those spires, cranes and many splendid buildings punctuating the skyline. The tour gave us plenty of the gargoyles, creatures, carvings, mouldings that would usually be missed as they are up so high and in places usually inaccessible. More things for me to think about carving myself. We were able to tour The Queens' Diamond Jubilee Galleries, which affords stunning views of the Abbey. The Weston Tower which leads to and from the Galleries is nice piece of architecture. The use of different types of stone and the tooling on the stones in the tower is real triumph.



### **Fawny Issue**

In October I also spent a couple of days finishing the carving of the fawn-like chap that I started in York last month for part of the CWF Historic Ornamental Carving module. It been a nice challenge for me, one that I have enjoyed and have learnt a lot from the experience. The practice is to look often at the model that we were each given to copy from and interpret from various angles, mark various points on my carving and then working it. With each turn it started to take shape and look more like the model. The idea is to rogue out the basic form and shape before getting down to the details, such as the ripples of the hair, the form of the horns and the contours of the eyes, lips and cheeks. The essence of the character and details are all now there, though the lips a little lower and the nose a fraction shorter than they might otherwise be.



### **Conservation in Action**

On site this month I have been able to put into practice some of my conservation skills as I am responsible for conserving part of the parapet that I covered with some sulphation. It is my task to suggest various methods for cleaning of the said sulphation and carrying out the work too. So far it has involved using a machine which is a hybrid of the Thermo Tec and abrasive aggregate and a couple of rounds of poulticing.

Also on site, a few more miles of pointing as been done... roll on November.