

Martin Gwilliams
Progress update September 2020

One down, one to go

My time in Gloucester is whizzing by. I am now into the second year of my apprenticeship. It has been an extremely rewarding experience so far and I have developed and gained lots of skills, thanks to my colleagues in the stone yard and the tutors and cohort on the CWF programme.

I was recently putting together a presentation to give to a group of friends back in an old parish in London about my journey and training to become a stonemason. Putting the words and pictures together gave me the opportunity to look back on what I have done so far in my newish career. I was particularly struck by what I had managed to squeeze into my time so far at Gloucester: regular banker work making all sorts of stone components; plenty of fixing and setting out in the mix; the Foundation Degree in Historic Building Conservation with the CWF which has expanded my knowledge and understanding of all sorts of topics. This month has been no different.

Hoodmould



At the beginning of the month I completed the final stage of fixing the hoodmould by pointing up the joints. This process was done in phases over a week. The first phase was to fill the joints of days I gently sprayed the mortar filled joints with water to keep the mortar moist as this stops it from curing too quickly which can cause cracks to appear in the mortar causing it to fail. After a few days it had started to harden so I was then able to knock it back with a stiff brush. This is done in order to compact the mortar in the joints, so it forms a nice bond between the stone, leaving no gaps. I sprayed the joints again and left them to cure for another day. Towards the end of the next day I was able to scratch back any excess mortar to leave it flush with the joints and the face of the stone. Job done!



In between the phases of pointing up the stones, I worked the corbel I had done the setting out for a few weeks ago. I got to work the stone in the Norman way, with an axe. The north ambulatory has a large portion of its original Norman masonry, which includes a series of corbels that indicate where the roofline of the abbey once was before it was raised in the 14th century. Pascal gave me the task of restoring one of the corbels which had perished. Having picked out a suitable piece of *Lepine* from the stock in the yard, I marked up the stone using the templates I had previously made. After a quick reminder from Pascal about how to use the axe, I got to work with it. I had used an axe before when I was on work placement at the Cathedral, around 14 months ago. The main reason for using the axe is so that the surface of the stone bears the same style of tooling marks as the original Norman stone. The axe can appear unwieldy; however, a great degree of control is used to take away the necessary excess stone, with each strike of the blade leaving the tooling marks I mentioned. I did use a mallet a chisel to work the barrel and cavetto. Once completed I fixed the stone in place.

Virtual Lincoln

The penultimate week of September saw the restart of the CWF study sessions. Instead of visiting Lincoln, the two days of lectures (including a virtual tour of the Cathedral) were delivered via Zoom and You Tube. The theme for this module was Conservation. A feast of learning was provided through quality resources that were well crafted and well put together. The series of talks, videos and Q&As covered topics including report writing, mechanisms of decay, lime mortars, cleaning techniques and much more. It was a really good introduction to another key area of historic building conservation. The first project for this module is to write a report on an intervention that has been carried on Gloucester Cathedral during Victorian times. I have selected a section of the parapet on the north ambulatory. More on this next month.

Love letters



I took a few days of annual leave either side of my time in virtual Lincoln. In between repointing the outside of my house, I managed to squeeze in some lettercutting. I am currently experimenting with arranging the letters of words, cropping said letters in ways which still makes the word readable and legible (hopefully), however, posing a little bit of challenge to the viewer. See what you think...