

Martin Gwilliams

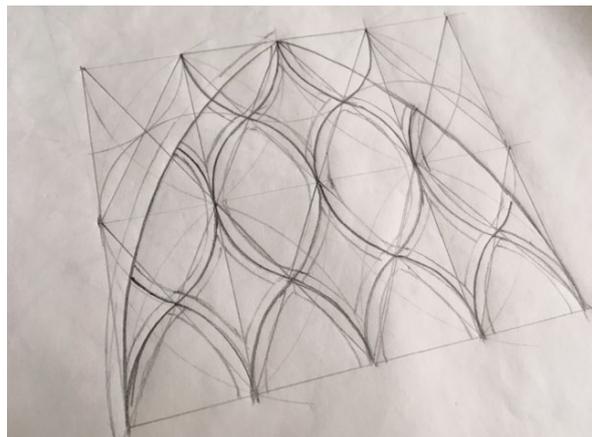
Progress update 6 April – 8 June 2020

### Lockdown learning

Martin writes: *To misquote Dickens, 'It was the best of times and it was the strangest of times,...'. My nine weeks on furlough provided with the perfect opportunity to get down to lots of learning, though it was strange not being able to do my job for such a long period.*

*On Monday 6 April and for the next nine weeks, I set myself a mental timetable of geometry in the mornings and then letter drawing, which also including learning some basic calligraphic scripts, and letter cutting in stone in the afternoons. My trusty tutors came mainly in the form of Geometry of Construction, T.B. Nicholls and N.P Keep; Drawing Geometry, J. Allen; Batisseurs au Moyenage, T. Hatot (one Pascal lent to me!); Letter Carving in Stone, T. Perkins; The Annotated Capital, L. Cardozo-Kindersley; Writing and Illuminating and Lettering, E. Johnston. I did give myself some breaks - leisurely lunches with my wife, daily walks to keep of the excess from all I consumed, and I also got back into playing darts – it's good for mental maths!*

*Geometry is a key ingredient in the Setting Out process of practical stonemasonry. I have only touched on it a little and practised it mainly when I was studying for my Advanced Diploma in Stonemasonry at the Buildings Crafts College in London almost four years ago. For each stone component I made during the course, I had to produce and full-size drawing – 2D and 3D. One of my current modules for the CWF part of my apprenticeship is Setting Out. This has meant taking measurements and making a*



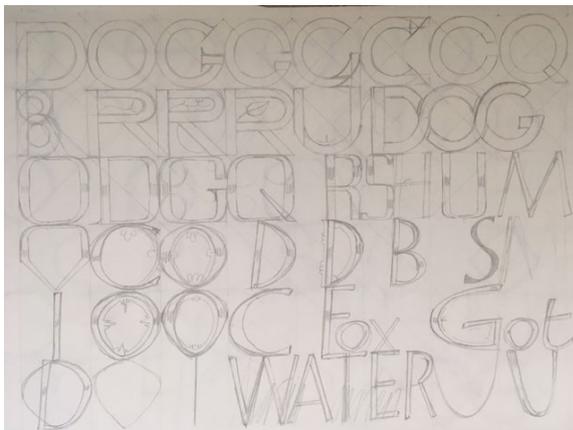
*detailed study, including drawings, of a hood mould that sits over a 14<sup>th</sup> century window in the north ambulatory of the Cathedral which needs replacing. I worked my way through the various exercises laid out in the geometry books, practising, practising and practising again, bisecting and constructing all sorts of angles, lines and shapes – 2D and 3D and by the end of the weeks I found myself designing gothic windows with multiple ogees and central rose windows - I don't have a church to put them in yet and they won't quite fit in flat I'm living in so they'll stay in my drawing book for now. The more and more exercises that I did the more and more I became amazed at what can be made with a compass, ruler and pencil and how the square, the circle and the triangle feature so much in architectural design and how they might blend together to make the shapes so common in the fabric of cathedrals. I was pleased that I was able to put my new found skills to the test when I returned to work at the Cathedral in June, bisecting lines and creating lines and curves in order to create the drawings for my Setting Out project.*

## Love letters



*Letter cutting in stone was my first introduction into the world of stonemasonry back in January 2013. I spent three days on a letter cutting course in Lincoln, after which I was hooked. I found myself a weekly evening class at the Buildings Craft College in east London, formerly or practised such in the last 12 months so this really was my best chance in ages to get back to my first love.*

*As with the geometry books, I made my way through the various exercises set out the various lettering books I had to hand, my favourites and go to ones are Tom Perkins' and Edward Johnston's, mentioned above. Perkins' book has helped me to hone my skills for drawing and understanding the geometry of 'Trajan' and other Classical lettering forms of ancient Rome, which are the blueprint for western letterforms. After practising the drawing of each letter many times, I set myself a few projects to layout single words or phrases in creative ways and to cut these in stone. Perkins' book also has several useful exercises and tips for being able to create other styles of letterform which has allowed me to broaden my repertoire of lettering styles. Having so much time on my hands I was able take my time cutting each letter and aim for perfection with each cut of each letter.*



*In my early teens I remember being given calligraphy sets on a few of occasions as gifts for either my birthday or for Christmas. I must have put them to the back of a cupboard until some day when I simply threw them away. A shame really, because thanks to my time on furlough I now wished I had picked them up and used them earlier in my life as it is such a lovely art, craft and skill to produce lovely letters. My handwriting in fairly appalling, almost embarrassing when I sometimes can't read what I have written (I could have been a GP!), but what pleasure I now find in slowing down and being able to create nice letters, words, phrases, poems as gifts and cards for family and friends.*

*As with the geometry and letter drawing, I made my way through, Writing and Illuminating and Lettering by Edward Johnston, a master of fine penmanship and typography, completing the various exercises, learning a few of the rudimentary lettering styles and I also began to add foliage and vines in a very basic way of attempting illuminated letters. By the end of*

