

MY EXPERIENCE OF THE CEMETERIES PROJECT

For me this was really a dream come true to be involved in this project. Living in a rural village I didn't imagine I would get the chance to get involved in something like this. I am very much a labourer by nature, I love manual work. I like nothing more than coming home, hands sore, muscles aching and well a bit grubby. It means for me a job well done, and apart from aspects of the course for example scaled drawing, or inputting information into a database which of course were great to do but left you nice and clean, this is exactly how I have felt every time I have finished a day on the project.



Cathy learning to apply lime mortar, February 2013

I was helping my Dad a while back putting up a greenhouse, and he said (as we started to place in the glass), "This time we walk not run". This was because we are both fast workers and it meant we had to slow ourselves down. I wanted to add this because I think it fits in well with my experience here. When we have been working on these beautiful monuments, we have had moments when we could 'Run' and moments when we have had to 'Walk'. But I want to also add that we have also had to take 'Baby Steps'. One moment you can work at as fast a pace as you like and you will do no harm to a grave or even its surroundings, or people around you. Yet quite often you have to slow yourself down and do a tiny bit at a time because to go any quicker could cause damage, to the grave, to another member of the group or to yourself. It is because of this reason I loved it so much, there was never a dull moment because you have to change your stepping all the time.

To take what appears to be a pile of rubble, put the pieces together and find it was a stunning chest tomb, or to clear an area of what looks like just brambles, ivy and rubbish and there under it all is a Ledger Slab revealing names that have gone from people's memories and sight and are again spoken on someone's lips, in a sense brings that person back to life. I find this beautiful.



Cathy starting work on the Grade 2 listed monuments in the churchyard, June 2013

I have learned so many new crafts and hopefully put my own talents to good use. I have been interested in churches and graves since I was very small, and always hoped one day to do what I am doing now, I just didn't know how to get into it. I want to say a huge thank you to all involved in the Preservation team especially for having me on the group. For all the questions they have answered, for the time taken to show me things I may not have understood. I honestly believe it is them that have topped this experience, they have made the learning great fun. One thing I would like to see is groups of school kids having a go, seeing this magic unfold, and maybe having a try at some of the clearing, or laying mortar and perhaps scale drawings of a grave. Maybe if they see the beauty of it now then in the future, they will be experiencing this with the same excitement as I have been.

Cathy Mijatovic, June 2013