

More Than Just Volunteering: My Journey with the Mid Trent Churches

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Different jobs, one goal – helping where I can

A 13-year-old volunteer shares what it's really like to support the church community

LUCAS ATTWOOD

Introduction

As part of my Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award, I have spent the last three months volunteering with the Mid Trent Churches. What started as a requirement for my DofE Award quickly became an enjoyable and rewarding experience that helped me learn new skills, meet new people and become more involved in my local community.

During my volunteering, I had the opportunity to help at several churches across the Mid Trent Benefice, including All Saints' Church in Sandon, St Peter's Church in Hixon, St Rufin's Church in Burston and St James the Great Church in Salt.

A Variety of Experiences

One of the things I enjoyed most was the variety of activities I was able to take part in.

I helped with a baptism service and several Sunday services, including a breakfast service. These experiences helped me understand how much preparation and teamwork goes into running church services and welcoming people into the church community.

I also supported the "Down Memory Lane" event at Sandon Parish Room, where locals shared photographs, memories and stories about the history of the Sandon area. It was amazing to learn more about the community and hear about how the village has changed over time.

Caring for the Church and Community

Part of my volunteering involved helping to care for church grounds and community spaces.

One of my favourite experiences was helping at St James the Great Church in Salt, where I helped tidy the churchyard and cemetery. It was rewarding to see the difference that regular effort could make, transforming overgrown areas into a more welcoming and respectful space for visitors.



Despite how hard we tried though the pesky leaves always found a way to return 😊

I also supported the Oak Tree Farm rural project at All Saints' Church, Sandon, where I helped replant holly bushes. This showed me how churches can play an important role in supporting environmental and community projects.

Supporting Special Projects

As part of the church's remembrance activities, I crocheted poppies (with a little help from my family 😊) for the "1000 Poppies" display at All Saints' Church. It was great to contribute to a project that would be seen and appreciated by so many people.



I also completed an Activities Idea Project for the National Lottery Heritage Fund Project, helping to develop ideas that could encourage people to learn more about local church heritage and history. This work showed me how much planning goes into community and heritage projects.

Helping at Community Events

Another of my favourite experiences was supporting the Bluebell Walk at All Saints' Church, Sandon. I acted as the back person on the walk and helped collect money from walkers. This gave me the opportunity to meet people, take responsibility and help ensure the event ran smoothly. I also got to introduce people to my dog Milly, who also loved the walk.



My Highlights

★ **Favourite Event: Bluebell Walk**

🌿 **Most Rewarding Job: Tidying the cemetery at St James the Great**

🤖 **Most Surprising Thing: Learning how much work happens behind the scenes at churches**

🧶 **New Skill Learned: Crocheting poppies**

🏰 **Most Interesting Fact: A church has stood on the site of All Saints' Sandon for 1,000 years**

Did You Know?

- A church has stood at the site of All Saints' Sandon for 1000 years
- At St James the Great, Salt church the headstones (in the original cemetery) were moved and laid flat around the perimeter of the cemetery.
- The "1000 Poppies" project helps commemorate and remember those who served their country.
- Churches are not only places of worship but also important centres for community events, heritage projects and environmental activities.

What I've Learned

Throughout my volunteering experience, I have developed confidence, communication skills and a greater understanding of how churches support their communities. I have learned the importance of teamwork, reliability and being willing to help wherever needed. I have also learned more about the history of local churches and the important role they play within their communities.

Perhaps most importantly, I have discovered that even small tasks can make a real difference when everyone works together.

Why Volunteering Matters

Volunteering is important because it makes a difference to your life and to other people's lives. Anyone thinking about volunteering should give it a try – you'll learn new skills, meet fantastic people and make a real difference to your community.

A Thank You

I would like to say thank you to:

- **The church wardens for welcoming me and showing me how things work.**
- **The volunteers who supported and encouraged me.**
- **Everyone who has helped me grow in confidence throughout my volunteering experience.**

A special thank you to David Wright for helping to organise my volunteering and introducing me to the church wardens. I would also like to thank Elizabeth Jarrett and Robert Walls for all their support, encouragement and guidance throughout my volunteering journey.

“Volunteering has helped me grow in confidence and feel part of my community”.