

## **My Time at the Sedgwick Museum**

My time at the Sedgwick museum was, in a word, wonderful. On my first day I was really nervous, I just didn't know what to expect, but I was given a warm welcome and I started feeling quite excited.

I was given a tour of the museum and I saw so many truly jaw dropping specimens. I was allowed to handle some objects, most notably the meteorites! In all honesty I was fighting really hard to keep my composure and not scream with excitement at this point. After my tour we got to work thinking about one of the current displays, which specimens are most interesting to look at and how best to utilise the available space. I was completely oblivious as to how complicated it can be to design displays and overcome the issues (such as lighting and how best to 'suspend' specimens) that we encountered, so this was really enlightening.

On my second day I got to shadow two school sessions, I learnt a lot listening to these, especially about Stan the T-Rex skull and his surprisingly tiny brain and the Iguanodon's bizarre hoofed like fingers. Then I got to go into the archives and help repackage documents. I had no idea how many objects were considered 'nasty' to documents, or the extent of the number of documents that were kept. I ended up sorting out receipts and information about purchases leading up to an expedition, which were really interesting to look at and read.

Day three was all about the technology that can be used and I had a go at laser scanning a 'Devil's Toenail' (Gryphaea) Fossil. Watching the machine reconstruct this fossil digitally purely by recording the way light interacted with it was intriguing. I was surprised how accurate the image was after we had edited it; you could even see the finer details quite clearly. From here we were able to 3D print the scan and I learnt about the different resolutions that can be used and how the printer actually works. It was spellbinding to watch it recreate this fossil out of what seemed like thin air.

On day four I delved into the depths of the museum database. We were cataloguing one of the bays consisting mostly of fossilised teeth and it was definitely a challenge. I was shown how to enter data into the spreadsheet and about all the different kinds of information they recorded to make locating specimens much easier. Every now and again we would stumble upon an object that didn't appear to be catalogued or was supposed to be somewhere else which was an interesting issue to tackle.

Sadly, my last day came around far too quickly, but I was in the lab helping with conservation work which was fun. I was given two drawers full of gastropod shells to clean and sort out. They were covered in soot from the old oil fires that used to burn there, and cleaning this off wasn't the most pleasant thing I've ever done, but I learnt how gentle and careful you have to be around such delicate specimens. Then, as a final treat I was taken into the stores for a second time and showed around more. I saw so many beautiful things! On my first trip I got to hold a piece of mars and look at labels that were hand written by Darwin himself, and on the second I was showed much more of the palaeontological specimens kept there. I saw amazing fossils held in large resin bases, huge storage units full of fossils or rocks and I learnt about how carefully the climate is controlled in these stores. It was a really great way to end my time there.

My week here was truly incredible. I spent my time doing my dream job with such lovely people, and my inner rock nerd was freed so I was in a perpetual state of excitement. All I can say is a massive thank you to everyone there and I look forward to visiting again soon!