

Natural and Archaeological Conservation SERT Placement

I found out about SERT's and what they were in one of my programme seminars at the start of last year and soon decided that the placement 'Natural and Archaeological Conservation SERT' would be a perfect placement for me as I was able to work in the Heathlands of Dorset and Hampshire and I would like to work in UK habitats in the future. Whilst carrying out fieldwork, my main daily task was to reach specific plots of each heathland we visited and use a GPS provided to find them. Once we had located each plot, we surveyed a 5 by 5 meter plot and recorded what was there on a tablet.

My dream job is to work in Dorset as an Environmental Consultant and I wanted to gain experience working in the field in an area I will likely be working in in the future as I would ideally like to work in Dorset, therefore working in this environment was very suitable for me and I would like to work in UK habitats and this placement gave me the experience in this specific UK habitat. When I was studying at college for three years I worked at 5 different establishments throughout my time there and I never felt like the work I carried out was meaningful as in all the previous placements I had done, I usually carried out general manual labour tasks but this placement made me want to work exceptionally well as I was doing something that involved me being a team member and useful to my supervisor as the research we found will aid him in research for their P.H.D which made me feel really positive about myself and the experience as my work was contributed to research.

When meeting the team I was quite apprehensive as I knew I would be meeting some very important academics involved in the SCI-TECH courses but I was also excited to learn more about what we would be doing and who I would be working with. It also gave me experience with interviews as I was asked several questions about potential experience I had and why I wanted to be involved in the SERT.

I was very keen to take part in this SERT because it was perfect for me due to the fact it combined fieldwork with 'office elements' which was very exciting to me as I am keen to work in an admin/office environment in the future and I understand that environmental consultancy involves switching back and forth to fieldwork and desk work which is an element that I am positive about in regards to a career as I would like to have the 'best of both worlds' in a career. I also was fascinated in the Ecology of Heathlands as I have learnt about Heathlands in my Ecology lectures but was keen to learn more as I struggled with understanding their life stages but after carrying out less than a week of fieldwork I can now assess Heathland Habitat life stages and differences with ease as this placement has built up my confidence in this type of identification. I had the opportunity to survey the heathland plots based on the DAFOR scale and could assess the heathland life stages by noticing whether the heathland was in its pioneer, building, mature, degenerate, and dead heath life stage.

I was very keen on learning about Archaeology which is one of the reasons why I chose to do this SERT and I now understand what barrows are and I have some knowledge on how to recognise them now however in regards to my career goal, archaeology won't come into my career in the future unless I was involved in site management potentially. For my next placement I should work to find something that has more ecology elements rather than archaeology based to it.

A problem I found that I need to grow on is the confidence to ask my supervisor to help me fully understand what I need to do in order to carry out my assigned task more efficiently. During the first

day I was only half sure what I was doing and during my next placement I will make sure I fully understand the tasks I have been assigned by asking my supervisor confidently beforehand.

I got to understand that based from carrying out this placement, work isn't potentially over once you went home. After working, on several days I had to upload all the survey entries of that day and record in a reflected log and diary about what I had learnt and my experiences, however I am capable to do extra work outside of my working hours without any problems in doing so.

After the fieldwork was carried out in April, in June the team began working together on writing up reports of each heathland. I wrote up several reports and was told by my supervisor that I had done the work required correctly but I should have contacted my supervisor more than I did as I was quite uncertain on what I needed to write, just like my uncertainty with how to carry out the fieldwork. I relied on my colleagues at the beginning to understand what I needed to do by asking them but it would have been more professional if I went to my supervisor for help more. In regards to this, I need to grow on my confidence to ask my superior for help with tasks that have been given to me; however this also shows that I am capable of thinking and solving problems on my own before seeking the advice of my superior.

Overall my experience being a team member of the Natural and Archaeological SERT was very positive and I would like to take part in a SERT again because the experiences you gain out of it and the confidence you build up is very helpful experience to gain.