

# Jess Hill

Heritage placement, summer 2018

From as early as I can remember, it was a family tradition to travel across the country and find all the hidden gems of the past complete with their Tudor woodwork and medieval structures. Their nooks and crannies revealed secrets from history that you just cannot find in textbooks and I strove to immerse myself in this culture. Although touring these precious estates from the past was originally a hobby, I have always sought to do something productive and wholesome during my summers away from university and finding this internship ticked all the right boxes for me.

I have always admired charities that could create such an impactful change on a project and after reading about a group of volunteers who transformed a derelict scene into a fountain of knowledge, I was inspired to continue their legacy. I dedicated my summer to help achieve what they started, my journey at Middleton was born. The summer months whizzed by in such a short time yet unlike any of my previous internships, I felt like an asset to the amazing team already working tirelessly here.

Every day brought new tasks and experiences, if I wasn't welcoming visitors to the Hall, I was taking part in guided tours, helping to prepare for a wedding and creating my own exhibitions. I even became a photographer for a day, but all these different opportunities are a just a handful of a huge variety of opportunities that Middleton has to offer. It was really a breath of fresh air to know that my contributions actually benefitted the Hall. Unlike some internships in other sectors, I was not merely a coffee maker or locked away in a stuffy back room filing reports.

Not only did I experience a multitude of different opportunities, but I also learnt a variety of skills that will certainly benefit my future. Helping out on group visit days of over 80 people taught me organisational skills and how to manage large groups of people. In my new job as an Organisational Development Graduate at PDSA, organisation is literally in my job title, and my experience managing different systems and people has crucially benefitted my knowledge enough to help me excel in my new employment.

Importantly, I also learnt key skills in how to make sure every visitor got the most out of their experience. I had never thought about how people with sight or physical disabilities might be affected by the displays and exhibitions, but after working at Middleton I learnt how to make sure these people are equally catered for and I do believe I have become more empathetic after my time here. My self-confidence has also increased, because I felt like I was listened to and my ideas were taken on board.

There are so many different things I have enjoyed since working here. I was fully immersed in the world of heritage, which is all I could have asked for, but there was also so much more to enjoy. The staff and volunteers are so friendly and down to earth, which made working at Middleton so easy and fun. I enjoyed all the surprises and challenges that the Hall brought, whether that was chasing a bird that had invaded the History Room or choosing old fashioned

sports for the Willoughby Sports Day. Again, just feeling that I was part of the team despite the fact it was my first summer here was what I enjoyed most. It was a lovely and fulfilling opportunity and absolutely perfect for anyone looking for a career in the sector, or even for someone who just wants to spend their time surrounded by lovely people doing something worthwhile.