

When I first signed up for the trainer placement in Ireland I thought I was going to be building a timber frame construction. But on arrival I discovered that the week was going to be filled with many day trips out and no structured building work to be done. At first I was a little disappointed and was left questioning what I was doing there and wondering what I would get from the week. I stayed open minded and went along with it. Although it was not what I had expected to be doing, fortunately the outcome of the placement surprisingly turned out to be everything I wanted and more.

Over the course of the week our host Steve showed us around several timber frame sites and buildings which gave us a chance to explore the different joints used in the construction and to ask lots of questions about how they were built. He also gave us flexibility to chose what we did back in the workshop which meant that all of the group got to work on projects that fitted their personal aims. So I managed to practice making some of the joints that are commonly used in timber framing. This helped me to build my confidence in using the tools and in practicing the techniques that are needed. I also managed to ask enough questions and make enough notes to ensure that when I left I was confident enough to attempt to build a small timber frame construction for myself. So that fulfilled my aim of the placement. But the surprising bonus of the week was what I learnt from spending time with the other group members who had very diverse range of backgrounds. During the week I learnt things about botany, forestry, organic farming, eco buildings, environmental policy and much more. This helped me to form a picture in my mind of how I wanted to teach, work and live in the future - and how they were all interconnected. I left the placement feeling like I had a clearer sense of direction and felt privileged to have been given the opportunity to spend a week with such friendly, knowledgeable, positive and kind people.

Participant of PETS trainer placement in Ireland (June 2016).