

Weekend Perspec

■ TWO MINUTES WITH ...

Travelling to learn his craft

German stonemason Rene Breuer, 23, has been on the road for three years in the tradition of European artisans honing their craft as they travel. The latest section of his trip has seen Breuer repair stonework at the Christchurch Arts Centre.

So, what exactly are you doing?

To become a stonemason you must travel for three years and one day working in different countries before you can go home and begin to work. You travel around and help people who need work. Carpenters and stonemasons have been doing this for 800 years in Switzerland, Germany and Austria.

Where have you been practising your craft so far?

I travelled from my home town of Aachen and I was in Austria and Switzerland. Then I was in Spain and France before going to Egypt, Madagascar then New Zealand.

That's an interesting outfit you're wearing there...

When we are training we have to wear these traditional clothes from the 17th century all the time.

Does that raise hygiene issues?

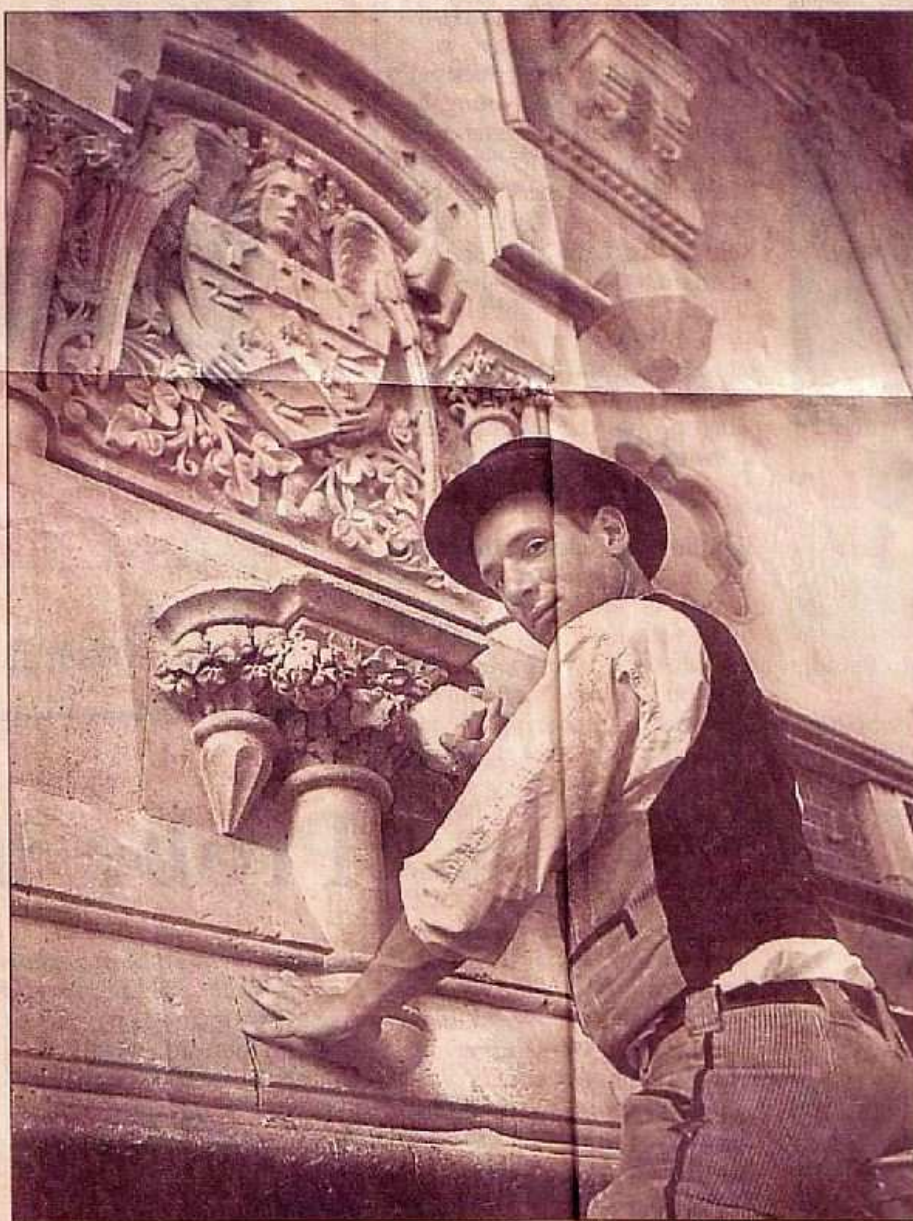
Well, it smells good, no (sniffs)? All I have are two hemp shirts, some boots, some small tools and a toothbrush, all wrapped in my sleeping blanket. The ladies love it.

Do you look forward to going home?

Well, this has been a nice time for me. I have learnt about a lot of different cultures and the people. You meet people and you help them and they help you. Next I will go to Dunedin then Tokyo, China...

Are you allowed to make any money out of it?

When you leave your home town you are only allowed to take the money that people can put in your pockets. When you



Travelling man:
German journeyman stonemason Rene Breuer works on the fireplace in the Great Hall in the Arts Centre.

Photo:
David Hallett

return, if you have anything, you must spend it on a party for your friends.

How have you lived on your travels?

Well, when you work for people sometimes they let you

stay with them. Other times you are lying beneath a million stars.

How is staying at the Arts Centre working out?

It is better than the verge.

Where were you before you came to Christchurch?

I was with a farmer near Hanmer Springs and doing some work there. He said there was a lot of stone in Christchurch and so he brought me here on Tuesday morning.

—Giles Brown