

TRAINEE BLOG: BELINDA CREE

APRIL 2020

Time flies when you're having fun! As much as I feel at home on Excelsior, I cannot believe I've been here over 2 - nearly 3! - months. We had our Midpoint Reviews recently and that really hit home just how much of the project we have completed. It was a very useful exercise; I feel more focused now in my intentions for the 6 months ahead.

In the past month I've been working pretty solidly on the boat, there's always something to do. She's changed quite a bit since I arrived, looking much more ready for sea to be sure. Obviously, there was the sailings/rigging to go up, but now the bowsprit is in place the deck looks really different, complete! There's only one more thing to do on the bowsprit - reattach the bobstay - then it'll be done!



Hauling in the new bowsprit for the first time
(L to R) Mate Isaac, Me, Skipper Nick

I'm quite keen to make the most of this extended period of refit/maintenance, and leave the boat looking very well looked after. For example, there's some tasks that while wouldn't be a top priority for getting ready to go to sea, are a 'nice to have' when there's time to do them. For example, I've been working on some of the metal pins and spare shackles we have onboard... **not pictured: hours of work!*



BEFORE

Unseizing and removing the rust from
some of the ship's shackles



AFTER

Freshly applied black bituminous paint,
over and undercoat of 'Rust Beater'

We discovered there was a crack on one of the jaws of the main gaff - which had been hidden under the leather covering them to prevent wear as the gaff travels up and down the mast.

I drilled a hole straight through the affected wood, from the top to the bottom, so that we could insert a thick metal bolt into the jaw. Secured top and bottom with a washer & nut, this would hold the cracked wood together. Before I put the bolt in, Isaac applied a very strong, very weird looking expanding glue to the open crack as well. Now that I've sanded, treated and painted the jaws - they are ready to be recovered with new leather.



Finishing a repair on the main gaff



Repainting the housing
for the hydraulics

We're getting a new element fitted to the hydraulic system we have on the deck; this powers the capstan - a large barrel sized winch that sits on the deck between the bow and midships. A very cool piece of kit, this can be used to help hoist the heavy mainsail when sailing short-handed. Since I've been on board, we've also used it to hoist the topmast up in place (*I was in control of the winch at the time, which felt like a lot of pressure. I had a mental image of the topmast dropping on to the deck like a torpedo. But that did **not** happen!*) Skipper Nick repainted the top of the capstan before this work was due to be carried out, so I also gave it a little bit of TLC and did the same to the metal housing which sits on top of the capstan, that the lever etc. sits inside.

Looking forward, my main goal in the short term is to make a start on my Day Skipper & Yachtmaster theory. This has been one of my main goals for the project, and it's still my intention to do my Day Skipper practical towards the end of the traineeship - likely to be in October time - external factors permitting. I've done a little revision so far, but it'll be good to really get stuck in and broaden my knowledge,

I included this little drawing in one of my letters home to a dear friend. I wanted to give her an idea of: what I'm up to; that I wish I was sailing; what length I'd like my hair to be; and how much of my time is spent listening to audio books while I'm working alone...

