

TRAINEE BLOG: BELINDA CREE

JUNE 2021

SAFETY FIRST

In last month's blog I mentioned we had been getting Pioneer ready for her survey – quite literally the box-ticking exercise that allows her to operate legally as a commercial vessel of her class. Trinity, our very big tender, also requires coding – so at the very beginning of this month I finished off a few more bits and pieces we needed to complete before either vessel could be properly signed off on.

One basic component of the coding, is the safety equipment each vessel is required to carry at all times. These vary a lot depending on the size of the vessel and the type of work you want to do with it – a privately owned yacht that is only being used for the owner's own enjoyment for example, doesn't require ANY safety gear by law in the UK (but you'd like to think folks would take sensible precautions).

So because the survey had technically already happened, all that was required at this stage was that we added or refreshed any safety gear missing from the vessels, and then we could just send photographic evidence of this to the surveyor in order to get everything signed off (they wouldn't actually need to come back to inspect these little additions in person). The kit required had been ordered, so when it arrived it was just a matter of making sure it got to the right vessel, with the right signage, and the right storage. Often with revisions like this after a survey, it's not that the kit was missing altogether, just that what is there might have expired or batteries need replacing, after all – the vessel was coded successfully before...



Before & after of the fire cap being replaced.
The fire cap is the part of the lifejacket which contains the mechanism which, when coming in to contact with water, sets off the gas bottle which inflates the jacket.



As 'Trinity' will only be coded as an inshore vessel, these 6 red flares should be more than enough to catch someone's attention should that be required! Here I was just making sure each flare was still in date.

I enjoyed this task as it's obviously very sensible for me to get familiar with the safety gear we carry – and not just a general understanding of what all commercial boats are likely to have – but what Pioneer is carrying, WHERE it's stored, HOW and WHEN they usually inspect and replace it between seasons...

PRIMARY SCHOOLS



A hermit crab popping out to see what was going on



We found 100s of starfish, but this was the biggest!

In the middle of the month, we had two weeks of sailing almost everyday! This was part of a project with the harbour, where classes of local school kids would come down for the day and spend some time either with us or the Harbour team – doing activities like: dredging, sailing, crabbing, making crabbing lines, driving the ferry and visiting a local marine life exhibition.

I spent all of this time on Pioneer, where we hosted one group – around 8 children or so – for the whole day they were here – this meant more time at sea than if we had to bring people back and forth for the other scheduled activities on land.

It was absolutely fantastic having these kids and their teachers on board with us! Come rain or shine they were always keen to get involved. I was so pleased to hear from the kids themselves how much they enjoyed that (best school trip ever apparently!) The main highlight I think for most people was the dredging.

On board we have a miniature version of the old dredges Pioneer would have carried back in her working days as an oyster smack. This looks like a very strong net, attached to a long metal contraption – which gets thrown over the side of the boat while she is moving very, very slowly under sail. The reason we have to go so slowly is so that a) the dredge will be least likely to 'bounce' along the sea floor without collecting anything, and b) to not damage the sea floor by scrapping it too harshly or too quickly with the dredge.

One day – as a real treat – we had Dr. Michael, a marine biologist, with us! It's always nice to hear people talk about the area of knowledge which they are passionate about, especially when they are trying to share that knowledge with you, but this in particular was VERY useful for me and Alanna I think! Kids ask the best (and weirdest) questions about the sea life we bring to the surface and inspect in buckets on the deck, so I've stored away many of Dr. Michael's facts and tips for the next time I need to name that starfish and explain how they eat. Here's just one top tip, there's a really colorful slug-looking animal which also looks like a mix between a rainbow and a cactus we found a good few of in the area – but despite their spiky slug-like appearance these are known as 'sea slugs'!

PIONEER CUP

On Saturday 26th June we hosted the 'Pioneer Cup'! This was a gig race, with all of the competing gigs being ones which have been made here at Harker's Yard by the boatbuilding team and apprentices. There were 11 gigs racing, each with 4 rowers and a coxswain, around a course of 5 miles starting near the harbour, up the River Colne and then back down to the finish at Pioneer.

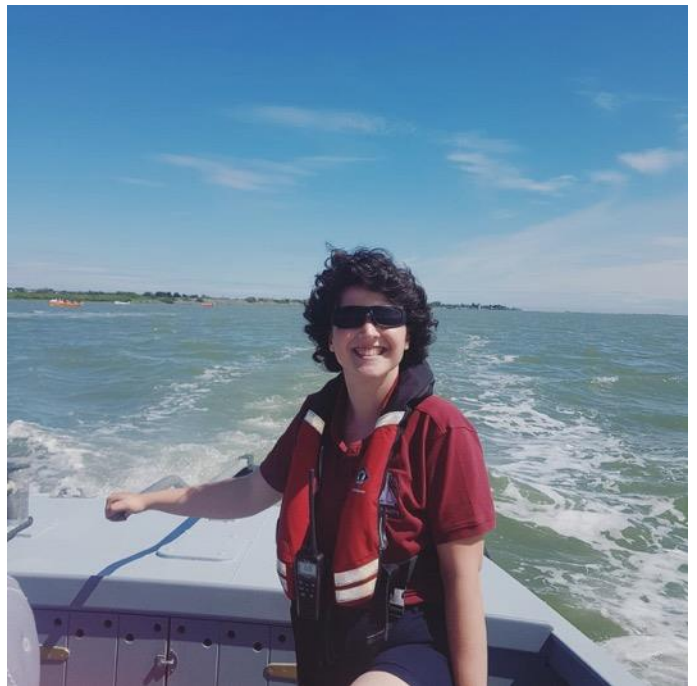
I was there on the day to helm Trinity, and take two of the filmmakers out to capture all the action around the course. This was a pretty perfect assignment for me, I had a chat with them before we took off, got a look at their kit and what lenses they had to play with so I knew what kind of shots they were looking for and then I figured out where on the course I thought would be best for their range and Trinity's capabilities. I never thought I'd be using my filmmaking degree AND my RYA Powerboating Level 2 simultaneously but here we are!

It was a great day, I think the competitors really enjoyed it, all the staff helping out seemed pretty pleased as well. It's also very encouraging to see events like this able to go ahead as restrictions ease, while also being mindful of people's safety.

I got so much out of that day – it was so incredibly useful being out on Trinity and helming her by myself. I think it'll always be the 'path of least resistance' to let other crew pilot the tenders or go to the moorings etc. while I still feel like I'm 'just' learning, but this was a great opportunity to test my skills and look after Trinity by myself. I do find it difficult sometimes to understand what people are trying to tell me when I'm driving – especially as I've probably already figured out in my head what I'm gonna do – but I managed to get back into the berth first time without even the most well-intentioned of advice!!



Rowhedge Coastal Rowing Club



Me, having a wonderful time in the sun