

TRAINEE BLOG: BELINDA CREE

APRIL 2021

BACK FOR ROUND 2

That's right! I'm back on my placement – a new placement this time. After a long break over the winter months, I've returned to the Shipshape programme to join **Pioneer Sailing Trust** as their trainee for 5 months. This is to 'make up' for the lost sailing time from last year's season due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Last year I was in Lowestoft (with the Excelsior Trust) but this year I'm a little bit down the coast in Brightlingsea.

So, at the beginning of this month there's been a fair amount of travel involved, you can check out my stops on the map opposite. I took the ferry from *Belfast* to *Liverpool*, then drove my new shore-side accommodation in *Colchester*, but then almost straight away - I was back on the road and on my way to *Hamble*!

Before I'd even crossed the threshold at Pioneer, I was invited by the boss of *Jolie Brise* (Dauntsey School) to join them for about 2 weeks – which would include their staff training – arranged to facilitate some essential 'back to sea' training for their crew and school staff as they would soon be able to take their pupils back out to sea. I was going to be there with Jess (a fellow Shipshape trainee), and Alanna (Pioneer's trainee from last year, she works there now!)



JOLIE BRISE

We arrived after a long drive on Tuesday 6th April, and I was so impressed with *Jolie Brise*! She's a gorgeous pilot cutter, and I was really struck by how well she had been taken care of (and all the modern tech on board too!). She's a big deal this old gal... *Jolie Brise* was launched in 1913, was the last boat to carry the Royal Mail under sail, has won the Fastnet Race 3 TIMES (including the first race in 1925) – but she's still going strong. With Dauntsey's pupils onboard, they've sailed her across the Atlantic 6 times, crossed the Bay of Biscay 10 times, and navigated a whole 200 miles up inside the Arctic circle!! (Not to mention winning the Tall Ships races 4 times – she still has it)

So after a coffee, a lateral flow Covid test, and a safety/domestic induction from Skipper Adam... Jess, Alanna and I settled in for our first evening on board. That weekend, the rest of the crew who were taking part in the refresher training arrived, and we had a busy 2 days of Man Over Board (MOB) drills, tacking, gybing, hoisting, changing sails, dropping and raising anchor, safeguarding, Cat 0 Medical supplies familiarisation and much more! It was fantastic to be onboard with so many skilled seafarers – a very good atmosphere of mutual encouragement and support, it was a good opportunity to ask questions of folks who are well established as Mates and Skippers – plus comparing notes with fellow Bosuns, and crew who were new to the vessel.



Painting the bottoms of the stanchions and patching up the covering boards – I mixed in a non-slip component to the black paint which will give it a tough, matt finish – but for the detail around the helm and transom I left this out and left it with a high gloss finish instead (like the hull)



The unlucky 'Oscar' – a 40kg dummy used to add a touch of realism to MOB drills, slightly harder to get out of the water than a bucket tied to a fender! I took this picture from the dinghy; it was interesting watching the maneuver from that vantage point.

The rest of my time there included doing some odd-jobs on board to help finish up their winter maintenance before the season starts proper – I was preparing, priming and painting the covering boards. We also had a fab session on sail theory with one of the full-time crew. This went into a lot more detail than I'd covered before – particularly when it came to making the most of the sails; power versus efficiency; sheeting angle; and the GZ curve of stability.

I've put together a little 2 minute short film summarising some of the highlights of my time at Jolie Brise.

[CLICK THE PICTURE BELOW TO WATCH ON YOUTUBE](#)



Link not working? Try here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkJEXDRHX6E>

STARTING AT PIONEER

On the 19th April then I was back in Essex and ready to hit the ground running at Pioneer Sailing Trust! I was so excited to get back there since my short visit last year and really get stuck in to their operations as their trainee.

Along with 1st Mate, Alanna, our first mission was to finish re-rigging Pioneer in advance of our first trips of the season in the coming weeks. Due to the timing of the last placement, I had missed this at Excelsior at both ends of the placement, so I was particularly looking forward to getting involved with this, sure it would be such a good way to properly familiarise myself with Pioneer.



Hanging out in the bosun's chair – while the actual 'safety' aloft comes from the full body harness I'm wearing, the bosun's chair allows for more comfort – so you're never dangling with just the straps around your limbs while working.



It was incredibly windy up there – and this is before the topmast was hoisted up into place, so there was more height to come later!

And it definitely was... It was incredibly useful – and just bizarre – to watch the rigging suddenly take shape with each new line or block we introduced. I think because I was aloft most of the time, I was more focused on the individual tasks at hand, and physically couldn't really see the 'big picture' – so then when I came down on the second day I was thinking, huh! That's a lot of rigging! I'm so glad I was there to take part in this process. It's one thing to look at these things in a textbook, another thing entirely when you're trying to haul metres worth of wire over your head!

Then apart from the rigging, I've been doing lots of little tasks in service of getting Pioneer ready to launch, for example: greasing the seacocks; reattaching one of the hatches; helping to put the mainsail on; seizing the pin rails to the mizzen shrouds.

There was also some work to finish on 'Charles' – Pioneer's tender. The hull had recently been anti-fouled, so I focused on the topsides – sanding down any spots; preparing the surface with acetone then primer; doing a quick repair to the bow; and then finally painting the grey topsides and touching up the red anti-foul (because even fancy painter's masking tape likes to disturb whatever is underneath it!)



Preparing the topsides of 'Charles' (Pioneer's tender) for painting

Here's a photo I took of 'Charles' just before the final coat of paint. You'll see the masking tape there in blue.

This is placed over the water line, so the red anti-fouled section is the part of the boat that will sit under the water.

The topsides then are the sides of the boat that are visible when she's sitting in the water. It was a bit fiddly to get the tape line perfectly curved over the clinker shape of the carbon fibre body, but the overall effect looks great!

So the plan is to get Pioneer off the hard on the next big spring high tide, which is this week at the end of April. Once she's afloat again, she can return to her mooring – where we can still finish up some jobs onboard too, and then she'll be ready for the season.

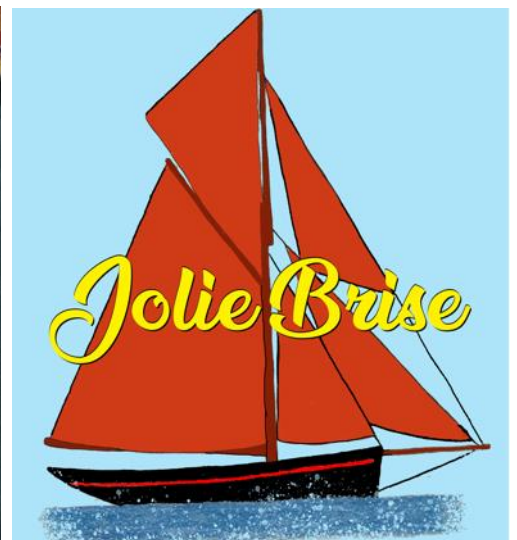
In summary, I've had an amazing first week at Pioneer. I've definitely been doubting myself more since last autumn, questioning my own abilities and even my future in the industry – but I'm already comfortable enough here to just let myself enjoy this wonderful learning opportunity and ask whatever questions I have too.

I'll be back next month to catch you up on the launch!

ARTISTIC ASIDE...

While I was at Jolie Brise I decided to do a little drawing of the boat – I just wanted to make something for the crew as a wee thank you for having us. But then I took the notion to try and do something with the image using Photoshop.

I don't have any experience in digital art really, I can edit photos but I don't really make things from scratch, and never illustrations. But I'm quite happy how this turned out and I thought it'd be interesting to see what I could do with some of the other nautical drawings I've done as a supplement to my (rigorous) notes I've kept while on the project.



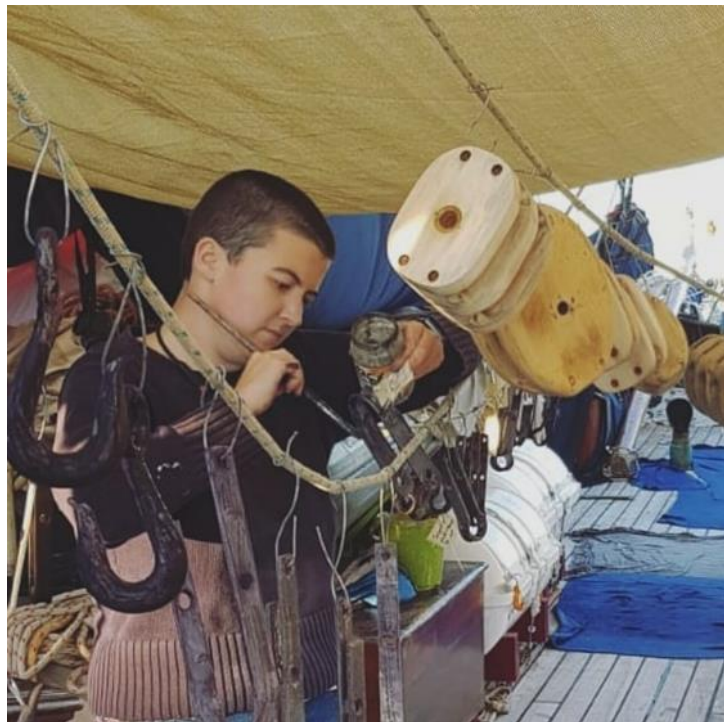
BONUS ROUND!

My previous blog for National Historic Ships was October 2020, and now I'm talking about what I've been up to in April 2021 – but there's been more happening in between than just walking the dog and knitting! Although there has been plenty of that too...

For about 2 months at the end of last year, I was volunteering on the winter refit of tall ships *Blue Clipper* and *Maybe*, of Maybe Sailing (a UK based sail training charity) out in Portugal. It was an amazing experience, I got so much out of being there – I was able to practice some of the skills I'd learnt on SHTP2, and learn some new tips and tricks from the amazing permanent crew who were out there too.



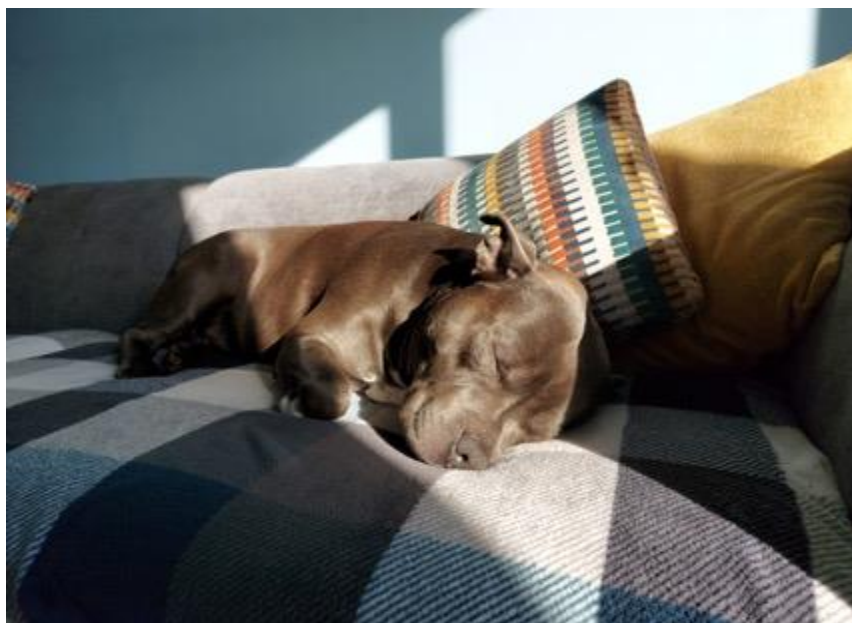
Mixing two-pack paint – it's quite the science! The wrong mix or the wrong thinners could render an entire batch unusable, and once mixed the paint can melt through a plastic container! It might look like I'm not doing anything here, but I'm clearly supervising ;)



Here I am applying vac-tan to all of the metal components of the many blocks on board – that's the wooden cheeks hanging up ready to be oiled on the other line. The vac-tan contains anti-oxidants which will eliminate any rust still on the surface. Excuse my furious expression, I was concentrating...

And then while I was back in Northern Ireland with my family, I kept myself busy by completing some qualifications online (Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and Level 3 Supervising in Food Safety).

I also decided to try a wee joinery project too to see how well I could remember some of things I was taught at Pioneer while I was visiting there last September – so I tried to recreate a saw-horse based on how I was shown by one of their boatbuilders, and I think it went pretty well!



Now that I'm back on placement, Baxter the dog can resume his usual napping schedule in peace