

## Rotation - Sea Change

I had my rotation this month and went to work with Sea Change, based in Maldon, Essex, on an engineless Thames barge. Sea Change own a recently built replica of a Thames barge that sunk in WW1, called *Blue Mermaid*, and are interested in using her to carry cargo. So to do this they have to carry out an inclination test to see how much weight she can carry, and where she can carry the weight so that they can calculate what cargo she can hold. To do this, *Blue Mermaid* has to be in a place where there is little wind and no waves (so she doesn't heel over), and have access to both sides of the hull. A bit tricky.



One of my first days aboard included helping to move *Blue Mermaid* to a lock a few miles away from Maldon, and where we got locked in with only a few metres to spare around us. I spent most of the day moving around two tonnes-worth of weights, reweighing each one and the pallets they sit on. In the inclination test, they move the weights around to make her heel, and measure the angle of heel to get an idea of how she would behave with a full cargo.

After the inclination test we moved *Blue Mermaid* onto a buoy, and then I spent a night on a sloop Sea Change own but keep in TS Rigging's shipyard in Maldon. The next day TS Rigging showed me around their boat yard. They were mainly working on restoring an old Thames barge, and I helped out with a bit of welding, really cool stuff! They also had an old Brixham trawler there that they were trying to raise funds for. She was looking a bit sad, but still had huge potential. There was also a coding inspection going on in the background, so lots to look at and be interested in. They also make traditional sailing materials tailored for each project or boat, from blocks to masts to film sets.

After this it was back on the *Blue Mermaid* to go to Brightlingsea to pick up divers to dive on the original wreck of the *Blue Mermaid*. On the way we anchored up on some hard sand, and in the early hours of the morning when the tide was low, we scrubbed the hull to get rid of any barnacles or sea life attached there. When we reached Brightlingsea the divers came aboard very quickly because the weather wasn't looking that good and the longer we left it the worse the weather was looking. We spent a bit of time trying to locate the wreck, and unfortunately, when the divers went down, they didn't find much because the visibility was poor and the tide was pulling them in the wrong direction.



After a long search we decided to call it a day and maybe try again next year. A wreath was dropped in memory of the people that died in the wreck.

That sums up the first week with Sea Change. During the second week we had a group of sail trainees from London Nautical School sixth form. A great week, with lots of fun and sailing - the

most memorable moment being a night sail with an eclipse. We also sailed down some pretty tiny channels.