

October 2020 Blog

Charlie Carman



With more bad weather this last month it seemed that my contracts extension would see me through the last of the workable conditions before winter halted most of the maintenance on the *Cutty Sark*. As before, we were pushing to get as much done as possible in preparation for the winter months ahead. Despite the unpredictable weather giving us patches of heavy rain followed by bright and blustery sunshine, we managed to accomplish a lot on the ship. Alongside this, I have also been fortunate enough to take part in many other great learning experiences while continuing to work on the ship's maintenance.

Meeting the other trainees for the first time at the Bristol masterclass earlier this month and taking part in the Conservation Gateway zoom lecture last week were real highlights for my time with SHTP2. These experiences proved equally interesting, informative and fun to take part in and I am incredibly grateful to the SHTP2 team for organising these.



One of the main achievements of the last month for the team was completing the basic hull repairs with caulk around the entire ship. We had to focus on burst seams, cracks and holes that could be filled in with good time without getting bogged down. It is one of those tasks that once you start you could go on forever finding small bits here and there that need fixing. Especially as we found that just within the space of two weeks, some of our repairs had reopened around the bow, owing to where the hull planks were under most strain from the

expansion and subtraction of wood, causing some quick back tracking with the caulking guns.

We also made significant steps forward with repairs to the starboard side decking on the poop deck. Following a particularly bad storm which caused infinite leaks throughout the ship's hull, the team screwed a spare piece of ply over the exposed section and sealed with caulk. A temporary repair which has since stopped the flow of water into the ship.



You can see on the left the final pieces of deck tape and buckets being placed to hold the rain at bay.

In the background, we also took advantage of any sunny weather and knocked off excess ply and resin from the undersides of removed planks, from the section in the photo to the left. Using a hammer and variety of chisels, this was an extremely

satisfying process that made me intrigued by wood-carving as a craft.

This would lead me to book two courses with the Lyme Regis Boat Building Academy for next year.

The courses would cover a general run down of the theory of boats, their design and how they function while the second would focus more on the restoration of wooden vessels. I was keen to use the second course to learn some basic skills in wood-carving, and to have a proper introduction to the craft.



Following this came the Bristol Masterclass at the start of October. This was a fantastic experience where I finally met all the other trainees in person, as well as learn a lot from the M-Shed and SS *Great Britain* exhibitions. We even got to see the storage facility behind the M-Shed museum which had the original turning wheel from BD6, the sister ship of *Bertha* whom I had written my Statement of Significance on for the HVC course. It was a pleasure to be shown around the museum's workshops and vessels by the very keen team of volunteers that help keep all this going.



I have also had a lot of learning experiences with the HVC side of the traineeship this month. After the Bristol Masterclass, I got permission to see the SS *Robin* while she remains closed to the public. She is an interesting example of conservation focused on the preservation of original fabric, which owing to her delicate nature now means she must rest out of the water.



Just before the end of the month, I took part in the ‘Understanding the Conservation Gateway’ zoom lecture, which hosted a panel of experts from different fields and involved us discussing case studies of operational vs fabric conservation routes. It was very eye opening to hear about misdirected conservation and mistakes, by enthusiastic but uninformed heritage vessel owners. This in turn made certain the importance of the HVC course and why it is imperative to have a guidelines such as those set down in *Conserving Historic Vessels*.



Looking back on this last month and reflecting on my time as a trainee with SHTP 2, I feel absolutely honoured and humbled to have been given the chance to be part of the maritime world at present. My experience has definitely made me question whether I want to be part of the modern maritime sector, but I can certainly say now that this field is one that I want to work in, take part and contribute to in whatever way I can. As long as there are vessels such as the *Cutty Sark*, people will always have an interest and fascination with our maritime heritage.



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