

## June Blog Update:

At Sea Change, we have been maintaining to give at least a fortnight of service each month. This really is just a few weeks to keep us on top of the jobs list and mostly involves ye ol paint and varnish. This has led me to other advertise my free time locally throughout the months. All in the name of variety.

My first sabbatical of the month saw me onboard the Hydrogen barge. Two chaps who I have become familiar with throughout my time here had a deck to recaulk, as I had a day free, I joined them raking seams and opening them up for the new caulking sealant they will be using. This was a good excuse to use my chisels as they were meant to be used.

Through time, I have become familiar with the large wooden barge and have spent significant time talking through the fascinating construction of this giant.



Given that the Blackwater and a lot of the east coast is in such a muddy way, I have always thought that I needed an initiation. The men of gone times would have been able to read the mud and venture across with little effort. So when asked to dig moorings out in the black water, there was only one answer I could give.

The task was to dig two 4ft deep holes into the mud, roll a large lump of concrete into them and then fill the hole back in. With the aid of a flat bottomed skiff and couple of planks of wood, we had a simple plan to follow:

Row out into the river, drop anchor and wait for the tide to go out.



The first couple of steps in the mud were definitely the hardest. I would only dare to venture a short distance from the skiff. In the mud, you will find points, which are seemingly random holes of super soft mud. It's quite easy for a thigh to be lost. Once these soft patches get you, it's natural to not want to hang around in them, so you must lever your leg back and forth to break the suction seal under your welly. All of this becomes quite easy after the first dig. Digging a hold of 4ft depth in very soft mud definitely isn't as easy as digging solid ground however, with company the whole process becomes quite a giggle. You soon realise that there no point unsticking yourself whilst you are digging because you are digging down anyway. The mud in the hole gets incredibly soft and disturbed as you go down. This makes getting out of your newly dug hole a very funny event to watch indeed. It is important that you do not let the hole cave back in as you climb out, so we found the best way was to lay wooden boards all around the hole so that our weight is well distributed as we flop out like a salmon.



As fun as the job was anyway, when you finish digging moorings, you can then take the opportunity to slide the boat down into the channel via the steep muddy bank. Some may argue that this makes it all worth it in the end.



On my other days, I have been quite the journeyman labourer. There has been the opportunity to help some friends in the yard with their project on an old smack. I had a chance to cut a rather large dovetail onto their new Carlin beam fitted.

It was nice to be able to work on some more shipwright-like joinery as some of the methods for cutting I have learnt have been quite different to ones I learnt in Lowestoft. As it is always said, there are one hundred ways to do the same thing, you just have to find the ones that suit you.



## Cutty Sark

Since arrival at Maldon, talks of going down to the Cutty Sark to help out have been planned. It was the last week of June where this plan finally came to fruition.

This month I was also able to go up aloft on the Cutty Sark's rig with TS Rigging.

It had been an idea lurking in the background for a few months prior and now finally it was possible for me to join the team down to Greenwich.

Before arriving here, I had not considered the possibility that I would be climbing such a large rig. The Barges generally have a mast of 70 to 90ft, the Cutty Sark goes as high as 152ft. This difference is easier to notice when you are looking down at it.

The first day onboard involved a tutorial on using the safety gear, a check of our knot tying abilities and then an immediate tour up aloft.

Climbing up the ratlines for the first time takes a surprising amount of strength and coordination. You notice you start to break a sweat before even reaching



the first yard. On top of the fatigue, you have to be sure you are clipping onto suitable objects at all times. All of this occupies your mind so effectively, the aspect of fear only decreases once you start climbing the rig.

Our main objective was to Black the rig. This involves taking up a satchel bag with a few rags and some Stockholm tar and carefully lathering the standing parts without dripping any onto the deck below.

Unanimously, the hardest part of the week was the scorching heat. None of us went too long without complaining about the glare back from the glass structure below.

This type of rigging work had proven to be interesting and I hope to be able to help out there more regularly.

