

# June - July

## 24th June

It's been busy this last week, we had some Port of London Authority apprentices on board for a week, it was again a very different kind of trip. Normally we do teach a bit of sailing theory but we're mostly focused on using sailing as a tool to build confidence, practice working as a team, and develop a feeling of community. That's what sail training is really about. But this trip, as well as hopefully achieving all those things, was also a chance for the apprentices to put into practice what they'd been learning about navigation, engineering (in as far as we had winches that needed greasing... the engineering apprentice was a little disappointed that we don't have an engine), and VHF use, amongst other things.



We also had an exercise planned with the RNLI, it was going to be a pretend medical emergency, we'd call them up via London VTS, and then go through the whole procedure for how to get them off the barge and into the lifeboat with whatever pretend injury they might have.

I got to do the call on the VHF! It was super nerve-wracking! I told the apprentice's group leader that I'd never used a radio to contact someone for real, only in the classroom when I did my VHF & SRC license, so he decided I should make the call. It was a really interesting experience actually, after the initial call there were plenty of follow up questions about the age and sex of the casualty, type of injury, whether or not they were conscious and breathing. That in itself was a great exercise for me, and it was nice to finally be able to put my VHF license to good use.

Then there was a bit of confusion with London VTS saying the lifeboat was away on a real call, so I told them we'd cancel the exercise. But lo and behold, the lifeboat appeared a few minutes later! They hadn't been on a call at all and didn't know we'd cancelled the exercise, we'd already closed up all the hatches and our 'casualty' was busy doing something else at this point, but they came on board anyway, had a cup of tea, and talked us through how they would have done it, the kind of difficulties they'd face, and gave us some first aid tips.

Often on a call with a casualty on a ship they'd leave the casualty on board and treat them there, while the ship was moving towards a port from which they could call an ambulance and get them to hospital by road. With an engineless barge that would be more difficult, so we were discussing options for how you could lift them out of the hold on a stretcher, or if an air ambulance came to the scene would it be possible to do a helicopter lift with all the rigging hanging around? It was a super interesting conversation to be part of, and just not something you often think about.

I was also complemented on my clear pronunciation and nice radio voice; they got all our information on the first try cos I spoke slowly and clearly, so that was nice to hear :D

After all the fun with the lifeboat crew, we did the Thames match, we had a slightly different group on board, one or two of the apprentices stayed on, and we had some adult guests join us as race crew. This was another fun race although we didn't do quiiiiite as well, second in class on a technicality, and a very close finish with Mirosa, there was only about 6ft. in it as we crossed the line.

## 5th July

I spent this last week on the Polish square rigger Fryderyk Chopin! It was such a fantastic week I don't even know where to start.

I volunteered on there for a week last year, which just happened by chance really. The skipper of Excelsior last year, Karol, had been the bosun on Chopin, and Excelsior and Chopin both happened to be stormbound in the same port in September last year. We did a little crew swap, and I sailed with them for a week then, not having any clue what was going on because the working language was Polish, and I was the only non-Polish person on board.

This year they invited me back! They had an English-speaking trip from Szczecin in Poland to Aalborg in Denmark for the start of the Tall Ships Races.

It was *so much fun*. I actually knew what was going on, did some intense studying of the rig plan, so many lines to remember, and started to pick it up pretty quickly. I was on the first watch which works on the foredeck for manoeuvres, so we were controlling mostly the foremast and the jibs. In my watch we had the bosun, me, another deckhand who was the watch leader, and ten guest crew. The guest crew in our watch were fantastic, we danced, we sang songs, we told



*A bunch of us climbing the rigging to go and stow sails neatly, I'm the one in the bright maroon trousers. Photo courtesy of Barbora Turčová.*



jokes (only on navigational watch when there was nothing else to do, obviously...), and just generally had a good time. But when we were doing manoeuvres it was so satisfying, we worked really well as a team, and I got into it really fast in spite of not having worked on the foredeck last time.

The bosun also had plenty of jobs for me to do outside of manoeuvres and navigational watches. I got to do wire splicing on board! That was a new experience, the bosun said he normally did them in his lap (I did mine with one vice, I would have liked the full setup with one at bench height and one on the ceiling, but you know, I managed), and he had a slightly different method to what I'd done before, which was super interesting to learn about.

Also did some whippings, did some eye splices and a wall and crown eye splice around thimbles to replace various lines, and rigged up some replacement buntlines, attempted to bring down the main t'gallant so it could be repaired but didn't quite make it cos we'd already done A LOT of climbing that day and our arms were starting to feel like jelly.

Overall, an amazing week, I wanna do more square rig sailing!



## 20th July

I spent the last couple of weeks working on Pioneer, staying at Josephine's on the farm. Completely forgot to take any pictures while I was there so just gonna have to go without.

Had lots of fun, it's been very different to what I'm used to, mostly working with 8-11 year olds, and occasionally as young as 6!

I got the chance to try loads of different things, driving Charles, their little smack's boat, and Trinity, their larger launch which is used for ferrying groups out to Pioneer on her mooring.



It was so interesting using their little drudge!! We brought up naked hermit crabs with curly spiral tails, a moon jellyfish, LOADS of starfish, mostly brittlestars, and a whole host of other slimy, spiky-looking things. The kids loved it, digging through the catch and touching and examining everything.

I also did the engine checks most days and got Pioneer ready to go/put her to bed.

It was weird to be on a boat with an engine again, and good to have a refresher of how to do engine checks.

*A naked hermit crab, photo by Arnstein Rønning ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pagurus\\_bernhardus.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pagurus_bernhardus.JPG))*

Also spent every spare moment reading *The Rigger's Apprentice* by Brion Toss, cos there's a copy in the break room at the yard. Such a good book I bought my own copy and am steadily working my way through it :)