

In at the deep end

A friend of mine has a mantra they get new sail trainees to repeat when the going gets tough on the water and the fear sets in: "I'm not scared, I am excited! I'm not scared, I am excited!..."

For me, there is a *very* thin line between anxiety and excitement, and I've become acutely aware of that line again this month having uprooted once more for the third phase of the Shipshape Programme: Placements.

It wasn't until Christmas that I knew for sure where my placement would be; originally I was set to move to Brixham to work with Trinity Sailing Trust. Sadly they ceased operations just a couple of weeks before I started the SHTP2 programme. The uncertainty and worry turned into elation when I was told I would instead be going to Working Sail. And what a time to join the team!



But leaving the comfortable IBTC bubble complete with routine, my Shipmates, friends and housemates in Lowestoft and then *properly* moving house to the other side of the country... Well, it's been tough. Luckily I've had the support of my partner Jack who has made the move to Cornwall with me, my family back in Birmingham and my friends in the Southwest sailing community, I know it would have been a lot tougher without them.

You all know who you are - Thank you x



February began with a week of workshops from former IBTC student and professional Sailmaker Lucy, who had returned to the college especially for the workshops.

Lucy taught us how modern and traditional sails are constructed and shaped, how to inspect a sail and repair small holes and tears and how to replace a whole panel in the sail when the damage is too great to fix. She also showed us how to use a sailmaker's palm and sail needles and demonstrated various sewing techniques which we then used to make a tool bag out of sailcloth.

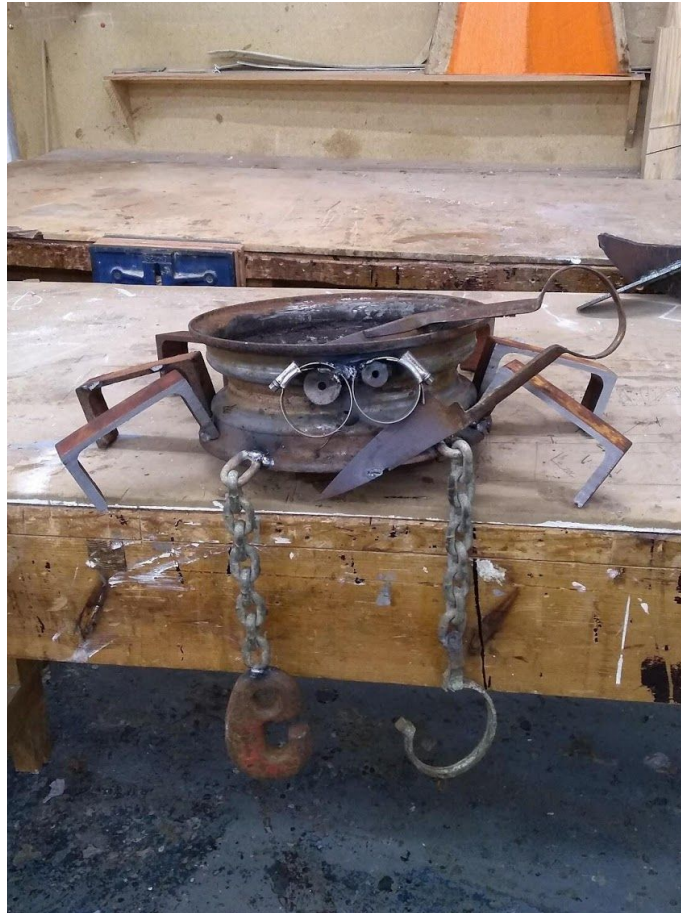


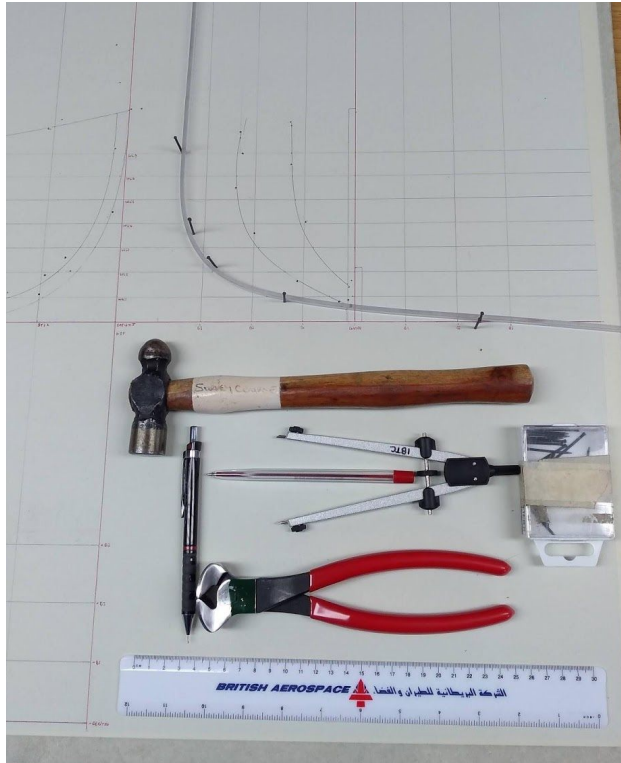
Later in the week Lucy introduced us to leatherwork, which we are likely to use on traditional boats as protection against chafe, wear and tear. She explained how leather is made using vegetable or chrome tanning methods. Working with leather is really good fun, it was surprising how different it is to work with once it's wet! I chose to make a cover for the wire grommet I had made previously in wire work, using baseball stitch and although I managed to rip the leather slightly I was quite pleased with it.

I really enjoyed our week with Lucy, she's very knowledgeable and patient!

We were very grateful to spend a whole day with Steve, a local fabricator who had very kindly given his time to teach us how to weld. This session was brilliant! Steve demonstrated how to use stick and mig welders and the plasma cutter but said the best way to learn was to just have a go! So after a quick test run we were challenged to create a sculpture, starting with a bit of skip diving to find objects to weld.

Belinda and I chose to make a crab out of a wheel hub, some chain and a length of U-bar, which we cut into crab legs. The more we added the better it looked and this was a great way to experience how different metals and thicknesses react to welding. We were very happy with the finished piece and it was great to see what the others had come up with too. We brought our masterpieces back to the college and they were a real hit with staff and students!





Our final sessions at IBTC were all about lofting. We each produced a lofting board by creating a grid and using a “table of offsets” to plot points. We used tacks and a batten to make a fair curve through the points and the resulting lines were drawn on the board. This is a very simple yet meticulous process, which took a whole day and a half to complete just a small scaled down drawing! Later we went up to the lofting floor to see in more detail how you would use the lines to take measurements and create patterns to actually build a boat.

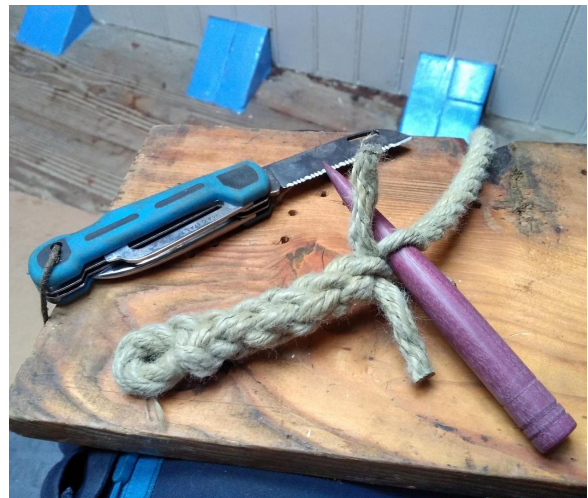
I was very sad to say goodbye to everyone at IBTC. I loved every minute of my time there and learned so much. It’s a truly brilliant college with amazing staff. I miss them all a lot.



But the next adventure awaited: my placement with Working Sail. Just in time to help with the launch of their beautiful new pilot cutter, 'Pellew'. Her older but smaller sister 'Agnes' was in the middle of her winter refit so I hopped aboard with skipper and good friend Brendan and got stuck in. The first major job was to restep her mast. We attached the blocks, shrouds and forestay before lifting it back into the boat with the crane. Once in place we could reattach the rigging to the boat. Next we lifted the topmast - Brendan went aloft to guide it through two hoops that support it, while myself and a couple others hoisted it with the anchor windlass. Some of the skills I learned at IBTC went into practice; using power tools and splicing the new handrails. I also helped to paint Pellew's interior ahead of the launch. There were several teams onboard installing and testing the various systems and putting the finishing touches to the carpentry.

There was a real buzz at the boatyard the day before the launch. We had many visitors, taking photos and asking questions. By lunchtime the massive 400 ton crane had arrived on site to lift Pellew into the water, but the weather forecast was not looking good and we weren't sure if the launch could go ahead. Luckily there seemed to be a window between 7:00 and 9:00am.

There were already lots of people at the yard to watch the lift when we arrived. The crane crew were fitting the slings around Pellew when a hailstorm set in. This passed and the crane began to lift her out of the boat shed, within 5 minutes her keel kissed the water for the first time and the crowd in the yard and across the river cheered! Once in, she was turned around and her mast was stepped. Exhausted, we all went for a celebratory breakfast.





Pupdate - Shipshape dogs, February.



Bertie, Working Sail

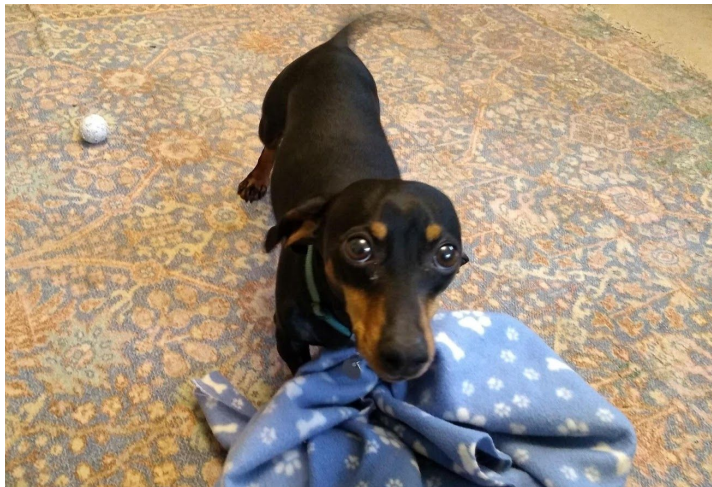
Wiry boi.

Whimsical beard.

"You can't catch me!" when off-lead.

Sits patiently under pub tables.

Very good boy.



Otto, Working Sail

Tail in hyperdrive.

You may look at his blanket, but please, no touch.

Feet made for digging.

Olympic Bottle Chaser.

Very good boy.



Joyce, Spatch's Doggo

13 years young.

Partner in Spatch 'n' Joyce Furniture Delivery Service Inc.

Cow print fancy dress.

Very soft ears.

Very good girl.