

July Update

This month was our first rotation to another SHTP2 partner. This meant I packed off to London for two weeks to work on *Cutty Sark*. This was really exciting for me, as I remember visiting the National Maritime Museum for research during my BA and walking past the *Cutty Sark*, staring up as this magnificent ship rises out of the ground! It was fascinating seeing how the team there look after her, as my experience of static vessels has mostly come from the National Museum of the Royal Navy. The team were really nice. There were two Shipkeepers, Ben and Rob, and a Shipkeeping manager, Simon. I mostly helped these guys with the daily maintenance. This included deck repairs, sanding, oiling, cleaning and washing the decks. It's quite a tricky thing to do when you have hundreds, if not thousands, of visitors treading the deck every day!

It was nice getting back to practical work, and I enjoyed looking up over the River Thames and seeing the London skyline, knowing I was on a ship.

Whilst I was there I managed to talk to the Curator, Hannah, and the Conservation Manager, Claire. Claire has been working with *Cutty Sark* for a long time, and was employed for the purpose of documenting everything that came off the ship (planks, masts etc) during the early 2000s when *Cutty Sark* underwent a big conservation project. She knows the ship inside out, and is constantly doing research into different areas of the ship so that it can be as accurate as possible to the year they've chosen for interpretation. Both Claire and Hannah are currently working on reconstructing Nannie, the figurehead of *Cutty Sark*, as accurately as possible. Through the years, Nannie has become less and less like what she would have been. She was almost certainly constructed by a specific figurehead builder that was working in London. I was able to go to the National Maritime Museum's Kidbrooke conservation centre to have a look at other figureheads. It was amazing to see a completely new building designed for collections!



I also went to a workshop on curating an archive at the Whitechapel Gallery. It was good to think abstractly about space and how people interact with archives.

After London I came back to Portsmouth and prepared to visit *Beatrice Maud* in Cornwall. *Beatrice Maud* is a wreck we saw when we were visiting Treluggan Boatyard last year with Dom and Barbara who run the *Lynher* barge. She was a Thames sailing barge and Dunkirk Little Ship, which alters her significance as a historic vessel because she took part in an important historic event. I decided I'd use her as a case study for one of my units as part of the Conserving Historic Vessel course we're doing alongside this programme. I started by visiting the Dunkirk Little Ships Trust boatyard where they are working on *Dorian*, which is a pleasure craft. I had a good chat with the Chairman who told me a lot about the Trust and how they decide to conserve a vessel. He remembered visiting *Beatrice Maud* twice and has photos from 1993 and a report from 2000 when it was decided she couldn't be conserved.

(I also went to Bucklers Hard which is a maritime village with a maritime museum and an absolutely fascinating history! HMS *Agamemnon*, which is a ship that took part in the Battle of Trafalgar, was built at Bucklers Hard! It was a 64 gun ship! So if you're ever in the New Forest, I would recommend

Bucklers Hard!)

The next day I went to the National Archives at Kew. I checked before I went what records of *Beatrice Maud* they hold. There were six logbooks and crew lists since 1910, when *Beatrice Maud* was built. They were fascinating to read. Some of them gave more information than others with added letters and more filled in. As she was used for coastal shipping (although sometimes going over to Calais and Boulogne), the log book was filled out every half a year. The records went up to 1932, so before WW2 and Dunkirk, but of course as I've learned, a vessel's life is sometimes more than a historic event!

So that takes me to now, when I'm sitting in a room at a B&B in Cornwall after having visited *Beatrice Maud* again for some more recent photos. It turns out the barge is in a much worse stage than I remember! From this, and the information I've had from Jerry Lewis at the DLS Trust, I think my conclusion to the hypothetical question of how best to conserve *Beatrice Maud*, would be a replica sailing vessel.

Since I've been in Cornwall I've also checked out the *Garlandstone* in Morwellham Quay and met the shipwright in Charlestown Harbour.



It's been a really good insight into what's happening in the South West in terms of historic vessels. Unfortunately, as with most vessels, the funding is thin on the ground. But the boats are proudly shown as examples of the types of vessels operating in the South West. The difference between south western-style vessels and the eastern traders is remarkable and quite distinct.

It's a shame so many end up rotting on the bank of a river. I suppose that's what we're here for!