

## Kate – SHTP2 Blog – September 2019

For the first two weeks of September, I was on placement at Pioneer Sailing Trust in Brightlingsea, Essex for my second rotation. I was able to get involved with work in the office and workshop as well as the practical sailing side of things. In the office, I learnt about and wrote reports on the National Heritage Lottery Funded conservation projects of Priscilla, a locally-built Smack now used for small groups and charters, and the Trinity House Launch 393, used as tender for Pioneer. I also wrote two blogs for Pioneer Sailing Trust while I was there, one an update on what was going on in the yard and the second, about my (unwarranted) worries about going sailing (as a non-sailor)!



### Where's our table? September 2019

Being on placement at Pioneer Sailing Trust for two weeks has given me a snapshot of what is happening here at Harker's Yard as we head into the crispy autumn days of 2019.

In the workshop, Fraser, one of the boatbuilding apprentices, is working on 39ft racing yacht Lady Nancy. Lady Nancy was built in 1893 at Neilsen's Yard in Norway as a one-off design and the current rebuild has been commissioned by a relative of Jamie Green, the previous owner of the boat, in his memory. After the rebuild, the aim is to race Lady Nancy again and continue the success this elegant and historic vessel has had over a long lifetime. Sitting on a wheely office chair, Fraser tells me he is fettling in the rebate to accommodate the planking. Working on Lady Nancy will be his first big planking project and

what a project it is.

Next to Lady Nancy is what looks like a bright blue Thunderbirds machine or futuristic turtle. This is the mould for the internal fit of the composite version of the 24ft rowing gigs which Harker's Yard has been successfully producing for the last eight years.

Yesterday, armed with a sledgehammer and impact driver, I helped Eleanor to fit wheels onto the frame under the mould so that it can be wheeled down the road to local company White Formula to be moulded in GRP. The external shell of the gig is being moulded at the moment and when both pieces are back at Harker's yard, they will be sandwiched together,



ready for the wooden fit out to be completed and spars made. Eleven local rowing clubs now own the eighteen of the robust Harker's Yard rowing gigs, which are perfect for the choppy conditions of the rivers and estuaries of the north Essex coast. Having previously focused on wooden gig building, the yard is now moving to composite gigs which is proving just as successful. As well as enabling the apprentices to learn different boatbuilding skills, the internal buoyancy fitted into these composite gigs increases their safety while the equal weight and specifications makes them competitive with the wooden version.

There's a lot of talk about the missing wooden table which used to be in the Pioneer Sailing Trust tea room.



It's been sneaked into the yard to be sanded and varnished after a few too many stray lunchtime forks. I test my finishing skills and patience with a few coats of Epifanes varnish and it's starting to look very shiny indeed. Too shiny for potential crumbs and coffee mug rings? By the



end of my placement, a controversial imposter table appears in the tea room hinting of a new office-based home for the beautiful table we have been working on. Whatever your opinion, it's important to keep that cup of coffee as close as possible!

## Going Sailing

I first arrived at Harker's Yard in summer 2018, super nervous and without any idea what to expect from a National Historic Ships assessment day. The reality was a day out on the most beautiful wooden ship I had ever seen, Pioneer. Never having sailed anything bigger than an optimist dinghy as a kid, shouting "two-six heave" seemed almost comical. *What does it even mean?* Trying to impress amongst a selection of sailors, I quickly hid my ridiculously round, red sunglasses and busied myself with the aforementioned heaving.

Fast forward to September 2019 and back I was again for my second rotation of the SHTP2 project. Still nervous, my time on placement at the museum-ship Cutty Sark not having prepared me perfectly for taking to the water again, I was met with just as kind and generous a welcome as the previous summer. As it turned out, Pioneer had been being used for residential trips for the last few weeks and I would not be out sailing every day. I spent my time in the office, writing up information about one of Pioneer Sailing Trust's other conserved vessels Priscilla, a fishing smack built locally in 1893. A National Lottery Heritage funded project had enabled the Trust and apprentices to conserve Priscilla for operational use: sail training and racing, including in the Colne Smack Race, which took place while I was there.

Thursday of my first week dawned bright and chilly. With an egg sandwich in my bag (*is this going to be too stinky a lunch for a boat situation!?*) and four different jumpers, I set off on my first day trip with the Pioneer team. The group we're sailing with can't wait to get on board – and they'd made cake. We launch out to Pioneer in the estuary. Within five minutes I've fallen on the deck and ripped my jeans. Within ten minutes



we're all playing eye spy while we wait for the kettle to boil. Everyone's got an egg sandwich. Four is the perfect amount of jumpers. It's all going to be fine. And it is, more than fine. We chat water fights, flapjacks and seagulls. We put up the staysail. And the working jib. One of the group, Angus, keeps telling jokes. *Why did the banana go to the doctors? He wasn't peeling well.* The cake comes along for the journey but doesn't get eaten until we get back to the yard. It is a well-travelled cake and it tastes great.

Although I may not be singlehandedly sailing off into the sunset anytime soon, I have learnt a sheet from a halyard, a tack from a clew. Ironically, the most important thing I have learnt is something I experienced on that assessment day last summer too, only it was so natural I didn't realise it then: never underestimate the ability of Pioneer Sailing Trust to make you feel welcome and at ease on land or at sea. Thank-you all.



## Cutty Sark

In my final weeks at the Cutty Sark, I have learnt more about deck repair and we have been continuing to sand and oil the bulwark panels on either side of the main deck before the weather turns cold and wet – the ship is looking great. The last part of the SHTP2 project is in Portsmouth at the National Museum of the Royal Navy which I am very much looking forward to and will hopefully be a great few days to finish what has been a been an amazing year. A huge thank-you to everyone I have worked with and those who have shared so generously their knowledge, skills and time.