

**Meshellae Payne - November/December Blog Post**

## **6 Weeks of Boatbuilding at IBTC**



## Part 1: Learning the Ropes



Our time at the International Boatbuilding Training College started off lightly, with introductory lectures exploring timber in general, boatbuilding terminology, and the technical aspects of boatbuilding. These lectures, along with tours around the college and closer looks at the various projects going on, allowed me to begin to build a more cohesive idea of how boats are built and begin to understand the process. They also served as an opportunity for us to meet and interact with some of the students on the full-time boatbuilding course at the college.

Our first week ended with a couple of days of learning knots, rope work and splicing, sessions which definitely list as one of my favourite experiences during the course. I found knot work really interesting, and it was great to expand on some of the knots I had learned on the *Lynher* in October, and get to try my hand at splicing.



Our next week was spent in the workshop, where we had practical sessions teaching us lamination and steaming. My favourite part of this was definitely building the jig. It was the first time since doing archaeology in university that I had the chance to do something like that, and I forgot how much I enjoy it!

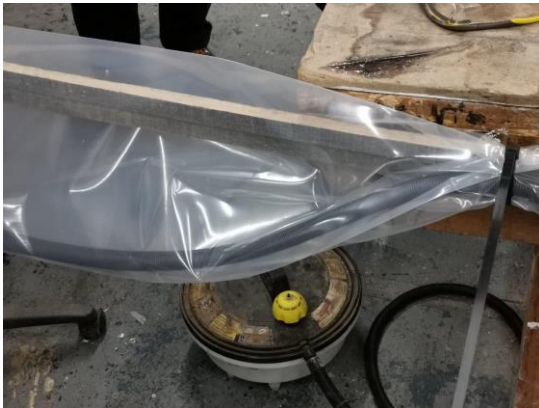




Not only was I fascinated by the steaming process, it also helped me better understand some of the concepts we had learned in the previous weeks' lectures. The steaming process softens the wood fibres, allowing them to be easily bent. However, if you over-steam the wood these fibres can easily be fried and break apart instead of bending, ruining your timber.



We each got a chance to steam and bend some pieces of wood, and although mine didn't curve as cleanly as I would have liked, I believe that with practise it is something I can definitely get a hang of.



## Part 2: Joining the Joiners



Our third week found us in the joinery workshop, ready for our three-week joinery course. This was definitely a challenging part of the course for me, as it was the first time I had used most of the tools that we found on our benches. Although over the first few days I often found myself frustrated and overwhelmed, by the end of the three weeks I became quite attached to my tools, figuring out their quirks and how to effectively use them to get my desired result.

Our first task was to make a bench hook, which we could use to steady our wood when sawing etc. This involved planing a long piece of wood to make it square, sawing it in half, joining those halves to make a wider board, and then fastening the hooks onto that board. It was my first bit of woodworking, and although there were a few bouts of frustration along the way, I was quite proud of what I was able to create.

Over the next couple of weeks I would go on to make a mallet, joiner's square, and some scarf joints.







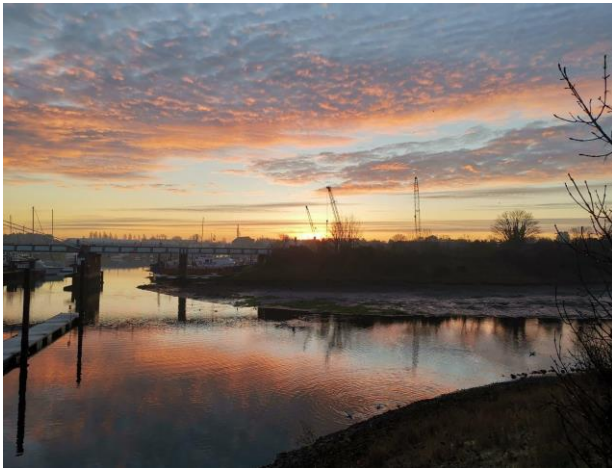
### Part 3: Finishing Touches

Our last week and a half at IBTC contained some of my favorite sessions at the college. It began with an introduction to caulking, and getting to try my hand at all the different caulking methods there are. I particularly enjoyed getting to work with and pour pitch, even though it involved working outside in ridiculously cold weather. The smell and mess of the operation definitely made up for the cold, and it was great to get a chance to use this more traditional caulking method.

Caulking also introduced me to oakum, which I discovered I could easily waste away hours preparing, slowly stretching and rolling it, building up large bundles for stuffing into the plank seams. This was another material whose smell made me jump at the chance to use it!

I had seen and wondered about the mini decks I had seen in the workshop before, but I didn't think we would get a chance to make them ourselves, so I was very happy to find out that this was a part of our programme. It was a great project to work on, although not without its own frustrations! (Namely making the rebates for each mini plank)

Our last few days at IBTC were definitely the most relaxed, which was a great way to end a jam-packed period of time. The days were spent learning about and getting to practise painting and varnishing, two more activities that I could easily spend hours doing.



My time at IBTC was challenging, often frustrating, but more than anything else it was immensely interesting. The instructors at the college were encouraging, helpful and just amazing people overall. I feel grateful for the chance to meet and learn from them.

