

January Blog

After a very pleasant and chilled out Christmas break it was time to finally begin our last six weeks at IBTC. It started with spar making and the process of spar making traditionally starts with stripping four strips of bark off the tree and leaving the tree in an almost square shape whilst it seasons to protect it and dry it out. Once the wood has seasoned you shape the tree into four or eight sides, if four sides you then take it down to eight, then to sixteen etc. until you have enough sides that you can sand the wood to a round shape. Usually 32 sides is enough. We didn't have a tree to do this with but a big chunk of square wood roughly 3 foot long and about 8" wide. Before we started to round the wood, we wanted to add a taper and effectively create a masthead over which standing rigging would lay. Once we scribed the tapers onto the wood we began to plane down the sides to our scribed lines and cut out the shape of the masthead.



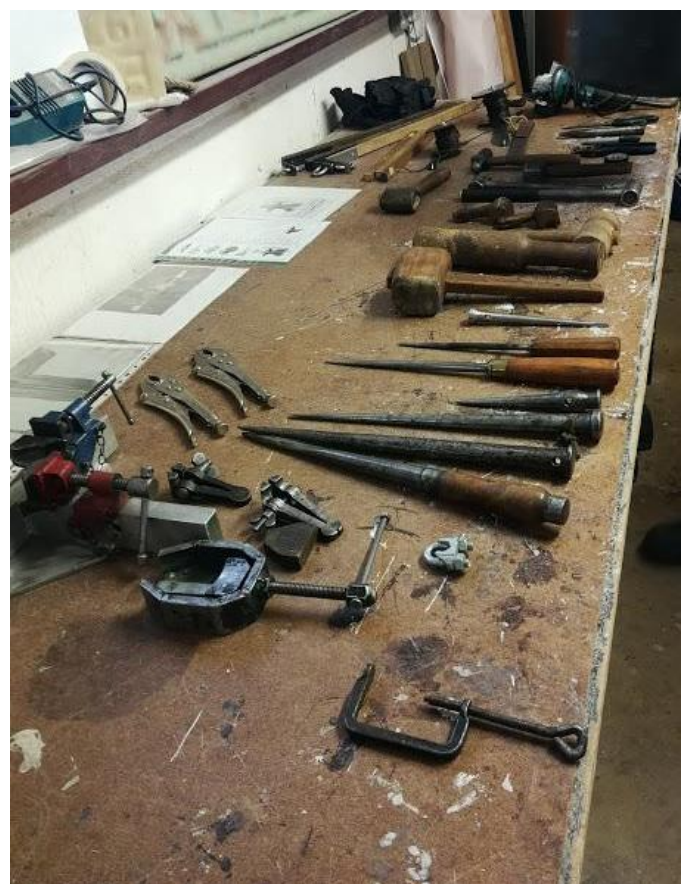
A complete model mast one of the trainees has made.

Also, as part of the spar making, everyone made a boat hook, although I decided instead of completely finishing the boat hook I turned it into a paddle for a canoe I eventually want to build.

In the second week of January, we got familiar with the safe use of power tools for a few days including skill saw, router, jigsaw, machine plane, and various sanding machines. Then we went through the RYA diesel engine syllabus with an engine IBTC have set up for us and also learned how to fit in the basics for plumbing and electrics on boats which we all found very interesting – this will be very useful in the future when we do our placements and in jobs further down the line.

After a classroom heavy week we then went into planking repairs and pattern making which I found incredibly useful. Pattern making is all about how to get templates from the boat and make something. For example, we made a template bulkhead, using marking gauges and jigs, out of the dingy's hull shape (from inside the boat) then marked and cut out a plywood bulkhead. The planking repair was a very useful exercise for us to do and we ended up steaming a plank onto a carvel planked motor boat the college was making as a student project.

To round up January, half of us did wire work splicing and grommet making and the rest did painting and varnishing. I was in the group that did wire work and it was great fun. I have a decent amount of rigging experience however, wirework is a tricky thing to learn because it requires more tools and gear than rope.



Above left is all of the things we were going to make during our wire working course, above right is all the tools we were going to use to make them.

Overall it was a great January and in between all of that we went to an abandoned church ruin, saw some Norfolk wherries during their winter sleep and went to the ASTO Conference in Southampton which was a fantastic event, followed by a look around Bucklers Hard in the New Forest.



The team in southampton after the ASTO Conference