



The Worshipful
Company of
Shipwrights

Case Study - David Patterson – Boatbuilder apprentice (funded year 2019-20)

Butlers Traditional Wooden Boats, Cornwall

<https://www.butlerboatyards.co.uk/>



David Patterson had substantial experience before he joined Butler & Co, working on traditional Tall Ships. He immediately demonstrated commitment by travelling from Scotland to Cornwall for an informal interview. David was 25 years old when he started at Butler & Co and had already travelled round the world funding his trip by working on Tall Ships. He wanted to work with Butler & Co, in a formal apprenticeship setting, to expand upon the experience he had already gained working on traditional vessels, and to gain some qualifications. We had a chat with David at the end of his first year to review his progress.

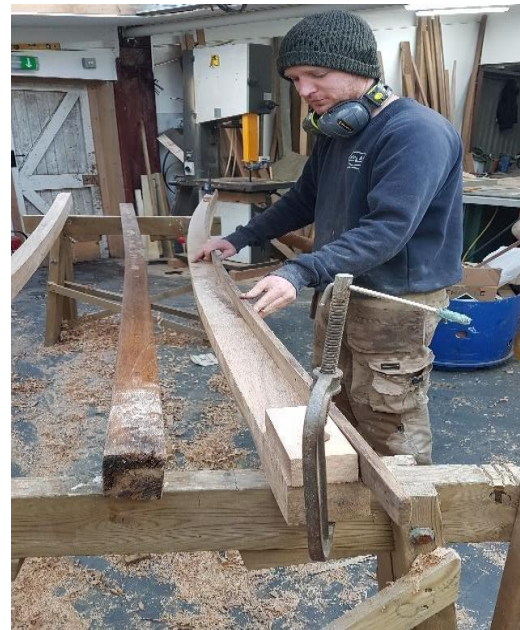
Making his mark... “*I feel I have come a long way in a short time. Whether anyone else does is a different story. But in all seriousness, I can genuinely see a difference in my work and confidence when given a new job to do, compared to when I first started with Ashley Butler. I’ve done a lot of different jobs and even had my own project which has been great.*”

David Patterson – Butlers Traditional Wooden Boats

Skills and Knowledge...

My first job when I became an apprentice was to fashion a Brest hook on the Tunnag - which is a 44 ft ketch built in Scotland in 1936. The Brest hook is made from English oak from the tongue of the tree I believe, but also could have been where a branch started. Point being it had grain running in every direction and was extremely tight. I started the job by removing the old one and patterning it off. I then had to get the lumber as mentioned above and flatten it off with an electric plane. I fitted the pattern adding material for the bevels then cutting it out with a skill saw. I also had to do a rebate for the beam shelf, which was difficult for me at the time as one rebate ran parallel and the other at a slight taper. Finally, I then shaped the back end to a nice even curve.

Another very challenging job was when a local customer came into the yard with a mast that was in about 7 different pieces. Apparently, he didn't take the mast out before driving away with his boat on a trailer and his mast hit an overhead obstacle above the road! Ashley (the boss) asked me if I'd feel competent doing. I was excited when he asked because doing spar work has long been on my list even if it is just 13'. I found some scrap spruce from another mast being made for a different boat. It took me about 3 half days to complete the job. It came out great and I was very happy with it.



I'm really enjoying my time here. Ashley keeps giving me interesting jobs and the staff are great. No one is too busy to answer a question or help each other out so it's a really good place to learn, which is a massive relief because I did travel down from the highlands of Scotland to do work with Ashley so I'm glad I did! I found work at a yard in Blyth at a Tall Shipyard there, and the contract ended the following September so was pretty good timing. It was a bit of a gamble on my side and probably on Ashley's side too, but I feel it has worked out well. Ashley treats me well and fairly. He also knows so much, and I've learned so much more in these past two years from Ashley than in past years in other yards.

David Patterson – Butlers Traditional Wooden Boats

What about the future?

I have a few plans, which now they seem a lot more manageable and achievable since working with Ashley. I think once I've finished my apprenticeship I might go sailing on a tall ship for a season. And I'll probably apply for a few visas to work abroad but only when I'm 100 percent confident I can do anything thrown at me..."