



The Worshipful
Company of
Shipwrights

Case Study – Eleanor Margetts – Boatbuilder apprentice (funded 2019-20)

Pioneer Sailing Trust, Brightlingsea, Essex

<http://www.pioneerck18.org/>



Eleanor joined Pioneer Sailing Trust in the summer of 2019. Eleanor had previously been to university studying a different discipline to boat building but had always had a very keen interest in sailing. After trying several different roles, she decided to try her hand at boat building...with great success. We sat down with Eleanor at the end of her first year to discuss her progress and experience so far...

Making her mark...

“Firstly, I’d like to say that the Shipwrights Company apprenticeship grant, and the Billmeir grant for tools has enabled me to really begin my career in Boatbuilding. Having my own tools has given me the confidence and freedom to work independently. This has allowed me to explore a lot more with techniques and approaches. I am truly grateful for this grant without which I would not have been able to move forward in boat building.”

Skills and Knowledge...

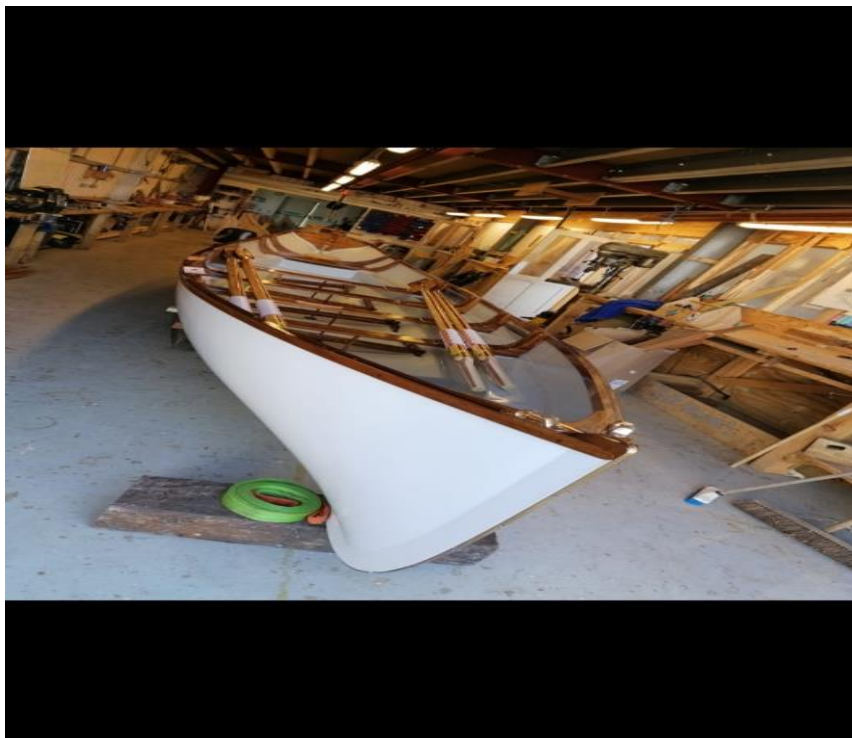
Pioneer Sailing Trust produces rowing gigs for local clubs. For my apprenticeship my main role is helping to make these gigs. The hull and interior moulding are GRP then the fit out is woodwork. Rudders, yokes, stretcher bars and a spreader for the trailer are provided as well.

Eleanor Margetts Pioneer Sailing Trust

Fitting out the gigs was, initially, most of my role. This involves a variety of hand skills as the fit out is entirely woodwork. The fit out includes thwarts, knees and stanchions all made from iroko and fitted to each individual boat.

Fitting knees was the first time I got to use my new tools. It was good for me to get to know my different tools, how to adjust them, maintain them, sharpen them and refine my hand skills in using them. Since then I have learnt a lot of new skills in just the looking after of tools. As they provide such a vital part of being a boat builder it is very important to look after them properly. I have developed my skills in sharpening, cleaning and storing tools which will continue to help me throughout my boat building career.

For my first project working entirely independently, I made a rudder. This included the skills I had been developing over the past few months. It was also the first time I could use all my tools. There were several different steps and processes to complete; machining timber, cutting to shape, gluing, riveting, varnishing or painting. It was exciting to be able to use all my new tools to create something that was useful to produce the boats. I felt after I had made my first rudder that I was beginning to become a useful member of the team, helping towards the completion of the project.



In the second half of the year I have been working on a William Fife rebuild. This has been entirely apprentice run. The other apprentice working on the boat (Tom) has been leading and has proven to be a fantastic tutor for myself. It was exciting to be given the opportunity to be a part of such a prestigious project and I thoroughly enjoyed working on the boat. I have learnt and developed a great deal of practical knowledge from this work.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working on the Fife project. I loved the variety of different tasks we had to complete and I loved the satisfaction of working through each stage and seeing the boat really come together. I found the decision-making process particularly interesting. Planning and managing the project was new for me. I really wanted to be involved with the logistics and time lining the work. I think that having a part in the whole process of a rebuild, including the budget and deadline meetings - was an important thing to learn and research and helped me get a more rounded understanding of boat building for my future. It also gave the tasks I was doing more of a purpose because I knew where we were exactly and how this task would lead to the next and how it linked in with the previous ones. I felt a lot more confident in my practical work as well so I felt I could have more of an informed role in the build. Even though the advice and guidance I have received from Tom has been invaluable.

I think that before I struggled working independently because my confidence in my practical skills was low. Now, I have gained that confidence and am able to take the initiative and work independently throughout the day. I have really enjoyed taking this step. I think I have been working on this since the beginning and recently it has started to come into effect. I don't think I 'excel' at this but in every workplace, I go to I want to be an asset and being able to use my initiative is important in achieving this.

I have learnt a lot of new practical skills. These include; lofting out, making moulds, installing and making the keel, steaming timbers, fitting carvel planks, attaching planks, roving, using a red lead mix, shaping the stem, shaping the transom knee, making templates.

I think the apprenticeship has benefited the company and had a positive impact on the local economy and community. I was able to fill in for staff on some of the sailing trips. On these trips we took out families that were struggling and gave them a day on the water. I always enjoy being on the water and the feedback from the families and their social workers was all positive. It is fantastic to watch the group gain confidence and relax throughout the day

And what about the future?

I'd love to continue boat building. I want to move into a higher pressure environment that will really challenge my skills. I am in a position now that I want to be part of a team and really excel at whatever it I am doing in the industry. Boat building is what I am passionate about and working with the high end racing boats would be a real challenge I'd love.

