



The Worshipful
Company of
Shipwrights

Case Study - Joseph Boothby- Apprentice Shipwright (funded 2015-16)

Blyth Tall Ship

www.blyhtallship.co.uk



Over the time I have worked at Blyth tall ship I have learned many traditional skills and been involved in many exciting parts of this project. I hope the below writing gives some insight into the rich variety of valuable experiences that have been possible thanks to the support I received from the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights. One of the highlights of my time at Blyth Tall Ship was the month I spent working in Whitby while our Ship was taken out of the water in the floating dry dock at a boatyard called Parkol. Work was needed on the Hull to

replace planks below sea level. I had the opportunity to replank our 100-year-old vessel in Northumbrian oak. The planks were 4 inch thick and 15 foot long, on stern of our boat both port and starboard below the water line. I steamed the planks, and, working quickly fastened them to the frames in a frantic process that requires total concentration, coordination and teamwork. I was assisted by Parkol's shipwright John Loatham, son of the local boatbuilding legend Jack Loatham, (who, during an evening visit to the Whitby museum was displayed on the walls in paintings depicting his yard of a bygone era and his boatbuilding expertise.) Once we had fixed the planks I used oakum to caulk them in the traditional manner. After a gruelling but fantastic month of work we had to make a swift exit from the dock in a weather window as very bad weather coming in and a fishing boat that had run into difficulty needed urgent maintenance in the dry dock. After delicate manoeuvring we were out and safely moored up. We had just to wait to see how the new planks took up before she could sail home.



Another highlight of my time here was when the celebrity Robson Green got in touch to say he was interested in our project and wanted to feature us on his programme tales of Northumberland. He came to the workshop with film crews in tow. We sailed with him and we were surrounded by flying drones filming the ship from all different angles. The film crew kept saying "don't look at the drone" this was so that the shot looked natural but it was hard not to as we had never seen anything like it before. Once Robson's crew had visited us, other newspapers and news reporters and local schools and boating enthusiasts arrived at our workshop in a continuous stream which has made for a lively and vibrant environment at the project.

I have had the opportunity visit timber yards and with the

guidance of BTS to see timber converted from 'in the round' to baulks and to select trees with just the right bend for a particular beam or just the right zigzag to get some grown knees out of (a structural bracket that requires curved grain for strength).

Currently I am making name boards for our ship and in doing so I have learned traditional decorative and letter carving of which I am proud. I am applying coats of paint to these in between writing these paragraphs in order to get it ready for a



Royal visit to the renaming ceremony of our ship. This is anticipated to be a well-attended event and a prestigious ceremony. It is a very good opportunity to display some of the traditional skills I have learned as the name plates I've been making will be a part of this important ceremony.



I have greatly enjoyed working and learning traditional skills and there are forever opportunities available as professional riggers, retired engineers or sailors are always visiting the workshop to donate tools and share skills and talk about maritime heritage.