



The Worshipful
Company of
Shipwrights

Case Study – Lewis Wilde, Apprentice Boatbuilder (funded 2015-16)

Island RIBs

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I have enjoyed the first six months of my apprenticeship and have learned a lot at college, but above all at work. In the workshops at the moment we are finishing the fit-out of two Ribs. The fit-out consists of installing the electrics, console, A-frame, seats, splash-well and hatches etc. We are getting ready to do more laminating and in preparation for this we have just finished a big clean of the workshops. Hopefully we will be laminating new hulls and decks soon because this is my favourite part of the job.



At college I have had the opportunity to learn different methods of boatbuilding to what I am learning at the workshops. For our first project we are building a wooden CNC laser cut plug. The plan is to have a completed boat by the time we finish college.

I have also built a wooden frame. We started by creating a template from a screve board. During this task I realised how much of what I had learned at work was useful to me at college i.e. I needed to be able to mark out waterlines, buttock lines and diagonals onto my wooden frame off the screve board. The wooden frame is a test piece to assess my accuracy and marking-out skills.

In the first year of theory at college we have been learning the basics about boats and their surroundings and a lot about health and safety. This relates very well to the workshop as we constantly have to do dynamic risk assessments and tool box talks before starting any job, either alone or in a team. I have also noticed the difference between myself and other apprentices compared to some of the full-time college students. I can really see the value of working and studying at the same time.

I've had two City & Guilds exams in the first year and passed both of them and I have completed half of my NVQ level 2 coursework. I am currently up to date. College is one of the good things for me, I think that getting the chance to keep practicing what I've already learnt is good but I'm also picking up new skills and ideas every week.

I like laminating the most and I enjoy getting all of the moulds "sticky" although I do dread laminating the more difficult components such as the console. I like being involved in the whole build process from keel up and seeing the finished product in the water at the end gives me a great sense of achievement.

The only thing I don't enjoy as much as the rest is the electrical installation stage because I do not yet know enough to be fully involved. Due to my lack of knowledge I have to sit still and watch and just be an assistant to whomever is doing the job.

Now I have had a year to pick up basic skills, I am getting involved in some development work in the workshops. My mentors asked me to make a 500mm cross section of the 10-metre mould. This involved prepping the mould and then laying up the hull onto the cross-section. I then made stringers to go onto the hull to give the rib more core strength. Once the stringers were bonded into place and fully encapsulated I laminated a deck to go over the hulls chine-box and stringers. I have done all of the laminating for the cross-section myself from start to finish and I have really enjoyed this as a test of my skills. It is satisfying to know that I am competent enough to help out with development work.

I find the whole marine industry interesting, but the one thing that makes me want to stick at this trade above all is the engineering that goes into the boats. I also like the fact that everyone has their own ideas and twists and you can see this in all of the different hull and vessel designs out there. This is what gives me my future ambitions and makes me want to explore. As a fully qualified shipwright I would like to go out to other countries and work all around the world, meeting new people and exploring new places.

