



The Worshipful
Company of
Shipwrights

Case Study – Nick Mason – Apprentice Boat builder (funded 2018-19)

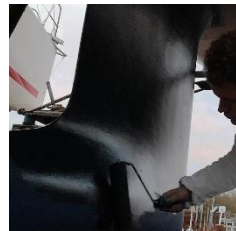
X -Yachts GB

<https://www.x-yachts.com/en/>

My first year as a boat building apprentice has been mostly great. I was fortunate enough to be employed by X-Yachts GB as a boat building apprentice after working for them on a temporary basis for approximately six months prior. Since the beginning of the apprenticeship I have increased responsibilities and become a solid member of the team. I'd say that my job title is a yacht technician. I don't have a specialisation, but I have experience in a variety of trades. Valeting, polishing and teak cleaning to more technical and skilled jobs such as electrical installation, plumbing and rigging work. I enjoy the variety of skills used within the work at XYachts GB and it has allowed me to become competent and confident in a variety of aspects within the yachting industry.

A brief overview of some experience gained in year one 2018-19

- Antifoul removal, Preparation, Application, Product knowledge, copper coat, water line marking.
- Manual Bilge pump installation,
- Battery installs.
- Plumbing (water and sanitary systems only)
- Teak Cleaning, 2 part systems
- Interior Valeting, bilge cleans, exterior valets
- Machine polishing deck & topsides, 3 part systems, rotary
- Mast work
- Winch cleaning
- Radar installs
- Full navigation upgrade (B&G and Ray marine)



In this photo (left) I am seen applying a soft antifoul to the keel. Antifouling is generally applied during the warm summer months. I will do the removal of old, preparation and application of new antifoul.

Nick Mason – X-Yachts

My first week at college was as you'd expect. Getting to know everyone and going through the standard health and safety protocols. Basic joinery skills in the workshop where we made dovetail frames. We talked through the course and what is involved in each of the four years. I was looking forward for what was to come. Not all my time was spent in the workshop.



Class, if you can call it that, is more of a playground, is where we studied. The first piece of homework was to research traditional boat building methods such as strip planking, carvel and, my favourite, clinker. I did enjoy researching these and I learnt a lot about the history and the techniques used in building these boats. So far, my biggest achievement in the workshop is building one half of a mould for one the boats I will eventually make. A brief process of this is Preparing the surface with parting wax and sealing the gaps with plasticine. Then applying two coats of gel coat allowing time for setting followed by 4 layers fibre reinforced plastic. This was my first time laying up anything and considering I did it on my own on such a large scale I think I did very well.



In these pictures I demonstrate three stages. Preparing the mould and fastening of the parting board followed by application of gel coat followed by application of FRP and 2-part epoxy resin. The second half of the mould was not a success. Someone had contaminated the activator with acetone leaving the gel coat gelatinous and the FRP fibre reinforced paste! The technique I am using for my hull is vacuum infusion. This essentially puts your mould into a vacuum sealed bag whilst sucking resin in from a reservoir and spreading and saturating your build material. All done using a tiny little vacuum pump.

I feel very fortunate to be in the position I am. The job itself isn't boring as the variety of work is grand. I get a sense of achievement frequently. Every time I get to do something more and more technical my interest spikes. Having a week at college every month makes the job a lot easier.

Although I enjoy my job, I don't adore it. Sometimes it is gruelling. Especially when it's raining, a boat needs washing and you can't hear anything because it's just too damn windy!

Sometimes it was, and still is, troublesome to get things done due to antisocial colleagues and often lack of tools. But most of the time it is a pleasure. Similarly, in college, I find it interesting. I'm always learning something new and it has my attention. It's helping me to figure out some ideas for the future of my career.

I'm looking forward to years three and four where we will start to take a closer look into drawings and designs. Properly creating and using a lofting floor. However inspired the course has me, there are things that cause concern. Some of the behaviour displayed by other apprentices has frequently surprised me. Just constant nonsense and play time. The workshop was in no state to work in when we started. A lot of time has been spent getting the workshop ready for us to use. I think that this should have been done in preparation. We have, quite frankly, wasted too much time with this process. I would say that I am getting as much out of this course as I can with the facilities and resources provided. I would be lying if I said I wasn't slightly underwhelmed with the course with regards to professionalism and effectiveness of learning. I'm pushing myself to do better and to be better with a vague idea of where I see myself in the future after the apprenticeship has finished.

I like the idea of combining the skills and knowledge I have gained from working for X-Yachts with the research and practical skills I have been working on at college. Maybe someday I would like to design and build my own boats which would be better than anything I have seen at the consumer level. I like the idea that a nice boat doesn't have to be extortionately expensive. Or maybe I see myself continuing as a yacht technician, familiarising myself with more and more systems and techniques where eventually I will be able to present myself as a self-employed and successful.

Overall, I would give my first year a 7 out of 10. There are things that could improve both at work and at college. Things that I thought were a standard. But overall, I have got it well. I'd be happy to discuss my first year in more detail if needed or even share more about where I see myself in a few years and more about myself.