



The Worshipful  
Company of  
Shipwrights

## **Case Study - Tom Dickinson – Apprentice Boatbuilder (funded 2018-19)**

### **Harry King and Sons Boatyard (funded 2018-19)**

**[www.kingsboatyard.co.uk](http://www.kingsboatyard.co.uk)**

I started my Shipwrighting apprenticeship at Kings Boatyard on the 8th October 2018 with the idea to begin a new career working around boats. Prior to Kings Boatyard I have had a range of different experiences when it comes to being on the water along with general boat maintenance. I started sailing at around the age of eight years old at a local sailing club participating in Topper and Wayfarer racing up until the age of around twelve. Alongside my club sailing I have also sailed around the east coast and even over to the French coast with my parents on board their yacht of which I am still doing today although we are now moored down the south coast which brings a whole new sailing environment and conditions. Previously I have worked at Topsail Charters in Maldon who run three Thames Barges and helped to maintain and crew them both in and out of season. I have also previously had a week's work experience down in Cornwall at Pendennis Shipyard where they build and refit Superyachts.

My aim with the Shipwrighting apprenticeship is to take all of my previous boating experiences along with any new ones I may encounter to the next level to gain a recognised qualification in boat building and maintenance so that I can pursue a successful career that I can enjoy. Kings Boatyard so far has been the perfect place to begin this pursuit. I can happily say that I have settled into working in the yard and have been enjoying the work that I do. My bosses, Gus and Sarah Curtis are a pleasure to work for. Their generosity towards me along with their laid-back approach to the running of the yard never make me feel under pressure or out of place. This makes me feel inclined to complete any task at the best of my ability and therefore motivates me to be able to keep on trying to improve where I feel I can. Through the past year that I have been at Kings Boatyard I have learnt an incredible amount when it comes to the running of the yard, shipwrighting and boat maintenance especially from Gus who is proving to be a fantastic mentor. I never feel afraid to ask for help or guidance on any task I am working on, as much as I try to work things out by myself there are times where safety can play a part or

even a simple misunderstanding of my instructions. No matter the task I am confident that I will always find the answer if I ask Gus.

One week of each selected month I spend at the Pioneer Trust boatyard in Brightlingsea. This is where all the shipwrighting apprentices from around the east coast meet to complete a week of training in shipwrighting and other skills that are required to achieve the overall qualification. The week is taught by a Paragon tutor called Charles Eales who has many previous shipwrighting experiences. This is another aspect of the apprenticeship that I really enjoy, mainly as I have met a few new people who are of a similar age to me and similar interests which as a result makes us all a new group of good friends. Currently we are all working on building a small Cocktail Racing Dinghy out of fibreglass, which for me is proving to be quite challenging but still enjoyable when you're learning alongside your friends.

As with all qualifications there are exams that need to be completed however so far I haven't had any troubles after having achieved a Merit in our most recent paper. Overall, I couldn't be happier with the selection of students on my year and I thoroughly look forward to sharing our successes in the next three years and beyond.

The past year has truly been my best since I since I've started working. The number and range of different skills that I have learnt to me is astonishing from learning how to lay up, build and fit out a racing dinghy to learning how to drive a tractor and telehandler, no day is ever the same. In addition at work we spend a fair amount of time out on the water which has been both helping developing what knowledge I have previously had and also teaching me a load of new techniques in boat handling and just being on the water in general. Overall, I can honestly say without a doubt that starting my apprenticeship with Paragon at Kings Boatyard is the best decision I have made. I never feel demotivated when I wake up in the morning but more a sense another day of learning and developing skills of which I never even imagined I would discover, alongside a number of new friendships. I most certainly look forward to spending now and the future with Kings Boatyard.

Tom Dickinson – Kings Boatyard  
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