

Janice - January blog

Over Christmas I caught up with friends and family, some of whom I hadn't seen since I ran away to sea last April, and I did a few shifts in the local pub, which was great craic!

After the break I didn't get off to an amazing start, as my ferry time got pushed back. So I ended up arriving a day later than planned and missing the first day back, which wasn't ideal; but I guess these things happen!

The first week back at the International Boat Training College (IBTC) was kind of weird because we had gone from a group of eight to a group of four, and our little training workshop felt empty. But we were distracted from this fact by learning how to make a spar (pole). Not gonna lie, spar making isn't something I was ever particularly excited to learn about – but I REALLY enjoyed it! There was something fascinating about the process of taking a rectangular piece of wood and using only a little spar gauge which we had made, a plane, and some sandpaper. We made (almost) perfectly cylindrical poles! The process was super interesting, planing the wood down to basically a cylinder and then having lots of (dusty) fun sanding it up to make the final shape!

After a little practise, we used our new skills to make a boat hook, which was a really fun exercise, and it was cool to see that the same technique was used for the wee practice one and the 6-ft boat hook.

After a super productive week at the (IBTC), I had a super unproductive weekend, mostly due to the fact that I met up with some friends from Sea Cadets for a pint and a catch up.

The next week in college we spent a day getting more familiar with some of the power tools, something which I find terrifying! We got a chance to have a go with a lot of different tools, from electric sanders to an angle grinder. It was really fun, and nice to have a chance to get a bit more used to handling the tools and practising on offcuts before we come to actually use them on something important. I'm still not a massive fan of using the electric tools – but at least I feel more competent using them now.

We also spent a few days learning about lofting and pattern making. Lofting was super interesting, and it was fascinating to see how a table of numbers actually becomes a boat! The lofting was something I found tricky and fiddly, but I think by the end of the course I had gotten my head around it. Pattern making was also really interesting (and nowhere near as complicated as I had expected it to be, which was a lovely surprise!)

We were also lucky enough to get to do the RYA diesel engine course, which is something I've wanted to do for years! It was really interesting, and we even got to practise on a real working engine, which, I think, made us all feel a lot more prepared for when we work with real engines in our placements.

To finish off January, we got to do the part of college I have been most looking forward to ... wire splicing! This is a skill I've wanted to learn for ages, and I'm so glad I finally got the chance. It was really challenging, and I need waaaaay more practise; but I'm so pumped that I've had a go at it! We also learned how to serve the wire using traditional methods and tools which was

suuuper interesting too! By the end of the three-day course, our hands were a bit the worse for wear. But this was definitely my favourite part of IBTC so far!