

My Ocean Youth Trust experience

When I first discovered sailing I had a very different opinion to it as I have today. I hated the thought of stepping on a boat or going anywhere near one due to the combination of watching Titanic too many times and a bad experience aboard a friend's dinghy when I was about three. Nevertheless, having slowly got used to the idea I started dinghy sailing with my friends and learnt to love it. When I was introduced to yacht sailing it opened up a new world of opportunities and possibilities. I then went on to do a weekend with the Ocean Youth Trust, sailing on the John Laing which is a weekend I will never forget. I made many new friends learnt many new skills and had one of the best weekends of my life.

The first night we stayed in Southampton on the John Laing after meeting the crew and getting used to the boat. We had to get up at 6:00 AM which was a struggle for some of us. We were soon motoring through the Solent in the mist encountering a boat that had lost its steering as the prop shaft had failed. As we neared the mouth the wind steadily picked up.

Visiting Cowes was great as it seemed a different life and I felt I wanted to live there. After re-fuelling we were soon sailing, we passed Portsmouth and then travelled into the English Channel. As we rolled over the waves and battled through the force 8 gale, many people attempted to fill the yellow sick bucket but they didn't even manage half full. After dodging lobster pots and riding the waves we approached Brighton. My friend and I had the job of guiding the first sail down onto the boat, when we luffed up into the wind the waves broke over the bow and soaked us from head to toe. We struggled but managed to moor on the pontoon and then we had much need showers and dry clothes.

We had a slightly more leisurely get up the next morning and woke up to a grey but calm day. We practised man over board and then for the first time (I think) a roast was cooked by Ben the first mate and two of us. I parked her on the pontoon (with some of guidance from the skipper) and after de-rigging the boat we went to bed for the last time at about midnight.

The next morning was the long clean up. Our watch had to clean the decks and finish de-rigging the boat, but at least we didn't have to clean the toilets. After getting awarded our certificates and RYA qualifications we all, unfortunately had to say goodbye to the crew and the boat.

My Ocean Youth Trust experience is one I will never forget and I have learnt so much. I can't wait to go sailing on the John Laing again in the summer for the Tall Ship races.

By Jack Trevail