

Viki Lough

Fair Jeanne

Brockville - Kingston, Canada

August 2011



I would first of all like to take this opportunity to thank James Boyce from OYT South for nominating me to take part in the International Exchange Programme, as well as James Myatt Trust and ASTO. Without the help and hard work from these I would not have had the amazing experience I did.

I first remember travelling up to London on the 3rd February for my interview at ASTO and what felt like the longest wait to hear whether or not I was successful. Big Ben had just struck 3pm and I received the call to tell me I was one of the lucky people to gain a place off to Canada.

The 5th August came around very quickly and next thing I knew I was on the plane heading to Canada with mixed emotions, both nervous and excited. At the airport I was met by Keegan and his family, as well as Edward who was also taking part in the exchange.

That night we stayed at Keegan's house and in the morning we all travelled to Brockville to join the boat. It was about a two hour journey but a good opportunity to see some of Canada as it was the first time I had visited the country.

When we got to the boat we were introduced to the crew then we had to sign in, transfer our belongings into a bag provided by the boat and we were then sorted into our watches. I was in green watch along with Cain, Desson, Gifford and watch officers Forsyth and Tremblay. Everyone joined in with some short games with the intention of getting to know everyone.

In our watches we were given a quick 'in house' tour which went through where our bunks were, how to use the heads, how to do safety checks throughout the boat and how to correctly put on a lifejacket.

As it was a particularly hot day we were then allowed to go for a swim off the boat which I enjoyed and this allowed everyone to carry on getting to know each other. During our swim Tremblay was asking all about England and try saying phrases with an English accent which we all found very amusing.

After our swim we then got ready to sail off the dock. Green watch's job was to be on the bow lines and to then coil them after, but before we did this we set the inner and outer jib. I enjoyed setting these as we got to go out in the headrig which I have never done before.

Once all the sails were set we then headed off to a bay where we would anchor for the night. After a short sail we arrived and all helped to lower the anchor and then got ready for colours. At sundown everyone mustered on the aft deck for a ceremony called colours where we all face the stern of the boat, ring the bell, blow the bosun's whistle and bring in the ensign.

Every night all watches take it in turns to stand night watch, green watch had 4-8 am, however because we had two watch leaders we were able to split this so a smaller group would do two hours and then swap over. On night watch we had to fill in a log and note down our bearings, check the anchor to see if we were dragging and do a safety check of the boat. Myself, Cain and Tremblay were on watch 4-6 so we got to see the start of a sunrise but also to try and learn each other's accents.



Tremblay and myself on night watch

After an early start and breakfast we had colours again at 8am however this time they sung their national anthem which I thought was unusual at first but as the weeks went on I looked forward to hearing how long everyone would hold the note for. I liked this more so because back home we don't sing our national anthem at school, let alone at 8 am come rain or shine.

We spent the day sailing up stream and ended up in Cornwall. Throughout the day we had boats coming very close just to take pictures or say hello, some even circled the boat a few times. I found this odd but the rest of the crew were used to it because most people have never seen a square rigged boat before. Mr Kean, Dean and I went in the Zodiac to the marina to make sure our reserved berth was big enough and to also catch the mooring lines.

People could see Fair Jeanne heading into the marina and this drew quite a crowd with people bringing out video cameras and deck chairs all waiting to see the boat berth. Once all lines were on, the watching crowd were eager to ask questions and find out more about Fair Jeanne.

The next morning during colours it was my turn to ring the bell which didn't go too smoothly and I was pleased to get into happy hour. As green watch was first to finish happy hour we headed over to Upper Canada village which was an historic town that had been restored. We were given a list of questions that needed to be answered and photos that had to be taken. I enjoyed Upper Canada Village as there were some of the original buildings from the 1800's and people dressed up from the era working as people would have done years ago.



Green watch dressed-up at Upper Canada Village

That evening Miss Acton-Bond introduced the leadership programme that the rest of the trainees would be taking part in to gain extra credit for school. Although I didn't have to take part, as I would not gain any qualifications, I did and it was good to learn about the different leadership styles. The first activity was to fill out a questionnaire to find out more about yourself and if you were a leader in certain areas e.g. sports or music.

As we could be starting our scuba diving the next day the crew motored us back up whilst we read through the diving books.

We had an early start the next day as we needed to be at the dive centre ready to go at 9 am, although this was just across from where we were docked we still had to do happy hour. We got all our kit sorted out, split up into smaller groups and then started going through the skills in the water. Everyone was really excited about diving and breathing under water for the first time.

At the end of our diving lesson I spoke to my instructor because I already had the qualification the others were working on and there was another smaller group of trainees that were in the same position and they were going to be diving to look at some wrecks.

Black Jack, the sister ship of Fair Jeanne was meant to be running throughout the summer but due to some storm damage she was not allowed to sail. Therefore the younger trainees would be with Fair Jeanne for part of the time but mainly sailing in the whalers and camping on islands.

On their first day of arrival the rest of Fair Jeanne crew were diving so 'Super Scuba Squad' as we were now known showed the new trainees around, gave them the safety talks and went through some rope work before they set out in the whalers.

That evening Super Scuba Squad went for our first dive and I was very excited about diving off of a wreck. We had a short drive to Prescott Dive Park and this was a small section of a boat that had been purposely sunk for beginner divers. We went to 43ft and although it was a small wreck it was still amazing to see, along with the two anchors that had also been placed. After our dive Mr Rolfe came to collect us from the park in the zodiac and purposely hit every wave possible on the wave back to the boat and as I was sat at the bow I think I took most of the water and we couldn't stop laughing the whole trip back.

After dropping the other trainees off at Brockville to carry on with their diving the Black Jack crew had a go at sailing the Fair Jeanne for the day which gave them opportunity to go aloft, set sails and have a go at helming and navigation. Meanwhile Mr McNaught went through sections of our log books, in particular the terms of the rigging.

After this we started to get ready for our dive on the Rothesay, which was a passenger boat that collided and sunk. The military blew part of the boat up in an exercise but there was still plenty to see and explore.

We waited for the Whalers to come pick us up and take us to McDonald Island where we would be camping for the night. We just left the dock when the motor decided to stop working so we started to row, however due to the strong current we weren't going anywhere. Luckily a boat passed and gave us a tow to the island which we were all grateful for.

I was excited to go camping and that night we had a typical camp fire, sang sea shanties and toasted marshmallows. We didn't have a late night as we had an early start the next day to continue on with diving, so after we ate we went to bed.

We all woke fairly early the next morning and after a quick pack up Super Scuba Squad were dropped off where we would be catching our boat to take us diving. The others headed back to Brockville to take back the Whalers and to finish off their dive exams.

We dove on the Robert Gaskin in the morning, this was another good dive and we could go right down inside the wreck, however it was at this point my tank got stuck on a beam and i started to panic. Once we had come up from this dive we headed straight for what would be our last dive. It was once a boat that was transporting coal when it was caught in a storm, capsized and sank. This was my most favourite dive as the boat was practically intact, we got to see all the coal and at the end we used the current to carry us past the side of the boat into a bay where we surfaced.



Super Scuba Squad after our last dive

We got back to Fair Jeanne just after lunch and as the Black Jackers were going to be sailing on her for the afternoon we got shore leave which gave us time to go shopping and look around Brockville. As it was a hot day we went back to go for a swim and Marr, who was diving in the other group, found a gold ring everyone was diving down to the bottom in hope they would find treasure, but were sadly unsuccessful.

The next few days we aimed to sail around as our first week was mainly spent scuba diving. We set all jibs, square sails and the staysail and practiced tacking. I enjoyed going aloft to unfurl the sails whilst under sail, however panicked when I managed to get tangled in the rigging. Going out into headrig whilst underway was also good fun, especially at night. When we were set stations on ropes for drills we had to repeat the instruction, e.g. 'Aye ready course gear.' At first I thought this was odd and almost felt embarrassed to shout it back, however this feeling soon went and I enjoyed shouting out the calls.



Myself and others aloft furling the square sails

We sailed Fair Jeanne back to Brockville as the Black Jack crew were leaving and new trainees were joining, so we took both the Whalers and headed back to McDonald Island to camp for the night. The banter between the two groups was great, we took a short cut through some islands however red whaler was waiting for us, armed with water balloons. After singing some sea shanties and fending off more water balloons we soon arrived at the island. Mr Kean asked Harper if she had any valuables in her pockets, she replied no and was pushed in the water. War had begun!!

We tied up the Whalers and myself and Tremblay played last man standing, which resulting with both of us going in the water. As Mr Rolfe was pushing everyone else in I grabbed the opportunity to catch him off guard to attempt to throw him in, however this didn't work and after failing to hold onto the bench any longer I was thrown into the water, again.

It was still light once we had set up the tents so a small group of us decided to play with a football but on facing pontoons, there weren't really any rules just a scramble for the ball. After dinner we had more smores and hot chocolate, followed by a few ghost stories around the camp fire.

In the morning for breakfast we had bannock which is basically a bread mixture which we put onto sticks and toasted. I am definitely going to try this again next time I go camping! We had a quick motor back to Fair Jeanne where we unloaded the whalers and set out for Gananoque as we would be doing our kayaking course here. We arrived early evening so we all watched the film Mutiny on the Bounty because the people who were doing the leadership course were looking at the captain's leadership style.

Everyone got up on time the next morning and sped through happy hour because we were all excited about kayaking. After a short walk from the boat we arrived at the centre, were split into groups, given our kayaks and gear along with our safety talk and off we went! We went out of the marina and headed just off of an island where we went through different stroke skills and played some games to get used to handling a kayak. Tremblay managed to take on a lot of water so he was forever pumping out his kayak. We then had a paddle over to an island for lunch and then our group set off again as we were all eager to learn more skills. Forsyth and I partnered up to do the rescuing skills which went well however I found it near impossible to get back into the kayak because of the PFD (Personal Flotation Device i.e. buoyancy aid).

We had done most of the skills we needed to learn in order to get our certification so we had some free time so we kayaked stood up and pushed each other in before a slow paddle back.

That night we wanted to get an early night as we had a full day of kayaking ahead of us, however we still had to stand night watch and we had 2-4 which isn't one of the popular times. Forsyth helped me tick off more of my logbook and I was on my way to getting my leading seaman qualification.

Once we got to the kayaking centre we sorted out the gear we would need for the day and wasted no time getting in the water. We spent the whole morning paddling around the 1000 Islands, taking in some great views along the way. We ended up in a bay for lunch so Trueman, Cain and I decided to wash our hair and go for a swim. It was at this point Tremblay decided to open all the hatches on my kayak, causing my kayak to sink, nevertheless I carried on paddling around.



Tremblay and I with my sunken kayak

Eventually I pumped out half the lake from my kayak and then moved onto learning the Eskimo Roll which I was nervous about doing. Eventually I plucked up the courage and rolled but I then panicked, scrambled out and floated up. Needless to say I was pleased we didn't have to master this skill for our level one.

The next day we headed down to Kingston and whilst sailing down people who were taking part in the leadership course had to give a short lesson about a chosen subject to the rest of the trainees. They included how to make a turk's head, how to use a sextant, navigation and different parts of the boat. All of these I really enjoyed and found interesting, especially the lesson about different parts of the boat as Gifford then did a deck walk with us so we fully understood where everything was.

Once we arrived in Kingston we had shore leave and as this was a larger town there were more shops so we took full advantage of this! After a good look around it was Green Watch's turn to return to the boat and finish off sanding down the whalers' masts which we then varnished.

The next film we watched that evening was Master and Commander which we all enjoyed and then reflected on over the next few days.

We headed off into the mouth of Lake Ontario which I was excited about as we weren't sheltered from the islands so we would get some good wind which would allow us to get more sailing in and set the main as we hadn't done this yet.

At last!! All eight sails were set, the sun was shining, the winds were strong and I was having an amazing time. We decided to anchor in a bay overnight so in the morning we could set out on a long leg down to Toronto.

Before we set off we had a happy hour and then the swim test. We had to swim around the boat eight times and then tread water for twenty minutes and to pass this time we sang our favourite sea shanties Paddy Lay Back and Bound for South Australia. Most of us were pretty tired after this but wanted to wash as we wouldn't have opportunity for a couple of days so I came up with the idea of putting our shampoo into the water to save climbing back out. Many people laughed at this plan but they soon saw sense and followed.

After heaving up the anchor we were off!! Toronto here we come! I went aloft to unfurl to course which I was pleased about as I hadn't been aloft much and was still struggling climbing over the foretop (white platform on the foremast). It was another lovely day so everyone was on deck throughout the day and this gave us time to work on logbooks, work on the English and Canadian accents and learn more sea shanties. It was an odd feeling knowing you're on a lake but not seeing land either side.

Everyone on board was involved in playing a game where we were given someone's name, an object and location and we had to put all three together but without that person realising. I had to get Dean senior by the forestays with a Leading Seaman shirt, something I thought would be impossible. However with a little help from others we called him over and our plan worked. I felt slightly bad because he had been working hard on this level and really wanted a shirt so he was gutted when I took it anyway, but Dean managed to get his level by the end.

Some of us were in the headrig when someone pointed out the CN Tower in the distance which meant we were getting close to Toronto! We arrived after sailing for one and a half days and just as we came into the harbour another tall ship fired at us but sadly our cannons were no longer on board. After a good night's sleep we had shore leave and I was excited to have a look around as I had never been in a city as big before.

Tremblay, Trueman, Cain and I were in a group so we all went for lunch then hit the shops and to mark our trip Cain and I decided to get a piercing done. Realising we had to be back on the boat shortly we had to run back to the boat. We had to carry on some varnishing, painting and start some whippings on the scramble net. Whilst we were doing our jobs various people kept asking if they could rent out the boat for the day and if we did tours, I thought this was really unusual but as there aren't a lot of tall ships over in Canada people are interested and just want to find out more.

That night we watched our last film, White Squall, which although sad we all enjoyed. We then all joked about us being in a squall... if only we knew what the future would hold.

The next day we headed over to Toronto Island just as the boat went for a pump out as the black water tanks were full and started to leak. We got to the island and realised we had got off on the wrong side so had a long walk to find the maze and the park. I was surprised how big the island was, there was a small fair, boat rides and houses there. We headed over to a more open part for lunch where a group of us played football and I was taught how to throw the ball properly although I still couldn't grasp it.

We then headed back to the boat and I remember Forsyth and I laughing most of the way back due to the fact I kept slipping backwards as I was sat on the masts in the middle. With Fair Jeanne now smelling a lot better after her pump out we got ready to sail back to Kingston where we would disembark and say our goodbyes. For this reason we didn't want to head back.

Green watch was on first which we were pleased about as it would mean we would get to sleep right through until 8am. It was around 11pm that the wind started to pick up and this meant the waves were getting bigger. Desson, Dean and I went to the headrig to furl the flying jib and in this process Desson lost his torch. I was pleased to get to my bunk as I love sleeping when the boat is rocking.

At around 4am I was awoken to the sound, of a girl in the bunk above mine, being sick. Mrs Acton-Bond came in to clear it up and the smell soon got to me. For the first time ever I was feeling sea sick! Two hours later I succumbed and was sick for the very first time, on a lake which I don't think I will forget.

We had been towing one of the Whalers throughout our sail down to Toronto and back but due to the sea state she was taking on water. We brought her alongside Fair Jeanne to bail the water out when things took a turn for the worst. A large wave came and swamped the Whaler so we were order to untie the ropes immediately but due to the pressure they had to be cut. At this point I still had hold of the pump which was such in the adrift Whaler, luckily Tremblay and I managed to pull it out of the Whaler before it was too late. I was a bit scared at this point because the crew were rushing around and the boat was still rocking from side to side.

Next thing the zodiac was being launched with Mr Kean, Mr Farrell and Tremblay in an attempt to rescue the Whaler. They managed to pump out the water so she was afloat but after many attempts couldn't tow the Whaler and, with the zodiac's motor not starting and with Farrell now in the Whaler, I started to worry a bit. We managed to bring the boat close enough to the zodiac with Kean and Tremblay paddling. However there was the small problem of Farrell being in the Whaler with an engine that didn't work and no MOD box. We managed to bring the boat close enough to the Whaler without any lines being tangled to get Farrell back on board but we had to say goodbye to the Whaler. We let the coastguard know and she was found washed up undamaged a few days later.

Everyone started to wake up and gather on the cabin top in their sleeping bags where they remained for most of the day. It was at this point we all started to think about 'White Squall' and how we all joked. I and many others either had their head in a bucket or over the side of the boat being sick but everyone managed to keep a smile on their face.

Due to the fact everyone was feeling ill, tired and generally a bit down we anchored in a bay for the night. This gave us opportunity to tidy the boat, have a good happy hour, have some hot food, reassure people about what happened and work on our watch's ships concert which would be taking place the last night on the boat.

I came up with the idea of having 21 days in 10 minutes which would be a quick recap of our voyage in 10 minutes, picking out the most important parts. We managed to get this blocked out so come the next day we would just have to run through it. As we were all shattered the crew stood night watch whilst we were allowed to sleep through. As we were in our bunks Harper read out a message from her Mum saying there are tornado warnings so be careful. This scared me a little as I had never been in a tornado and after the storm we had been in it wouldn't surprise me if we did get one.

I awoke around 3am by the sound of people scrambling around on deck and the engine being revved hard for what seemed to be ages. People that were asleep on deck were sent down below to sleep in their bunks. I could hear the rain beating down and wondered what was going on. Harper then came back down and I asked her what was going on, she said there was a tornado heading for the bay, the anchor was dragging and they couldn't haul it up. I was slightly nervous as the constant blasts of the engine seemed never ending. Eventually they stopped and we were underway.

In the morning we mustered for colours and the crew then explained what had happened through the night. Due to the anchor dragging and the boat heading closer and closer to land they had to cut it free as they were unable to haul it up. They then motored round to Kingston where we finished off jobs such as a large tidy of the boat- this seemed to never end. Green watch wanted to finish quickly so we could work on our ships concert piece. We worked on our logbooks, had dinner and headed over to the park to hold our ships concert.

All three watches had completely different pieces which were all very good, and Mr Kean and Miss Chestercat played some sea shanties accompanied by the Ukelele. Other acts included a special appearance from the Black Jack King's and Wake's stand up act. All in all one very good ships concert to end an amazing trip!!

The next morning we left the dock and sailed around, this gave me time to pack my bags and it was at this point I didn't want to leave the boat, Canada or the most amazing people I had spent three weeks with. We came back into dock with a large crowd gathered. Once we were tied up alongside we had our last muster, which some logbooks were handed back where people had gained a level. I managed to find mine right at the end and got my Leading Seaman qualification signed off. We then had a group picture taken and it was time to say our goodbyes. I had been dreading this moment from the beginning as I had made friends for life. It wasn't long before the tears started flowing and the phone numbers started swapping.

I quickly thanked Miss Acton-Bond and asked if I could come out next year as an OT with her approval I shall most definitely be returning next summer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bytown Brigantine Inc. for letting me come aboard Fair Jeanne as part of the International Exchange Programme.

Thank you once again,

Viki Lough

