

Dear James Myatt Trust

Thank you ever so much for giving me a bursary to join the Rona Sailing Project on The Tall Ships Race 2015. It was one of the best experiences I have ever had, and has encouraged me to keep up sailing when I start university this fall. I had been to Denmark twice before, but never visited Aalborg, a small city by the sea. As the girls from Rona walked to the city centre each day after finishing the race, we were amazed by the sheer number of Class A tall ships we saw. As some of these ships, such as Las Guayas (an Ecuadorian boat) had Open Boats, we made sure to explore all the different ways in which it varied from our boat. As expected, there was quite a difference!

We met at Heathrow Airport early in the morning, however, being from London, my journey was a lot easier than several of my friends on the boat. Having made it through security, onto the plane, and finally landing in Stavanger, Norway; we were not looking forward to our long 3-hour coach trip to Kristiansand, where the start of the race was being held. Nonetheless, we soon realised the journey would be better than expected, and took numerous photos and videos of the beautiful Norwegian countryside. When we finally arrived at the pier, it took us a while to find our boat, but when we did there were men singing sea shanties on the pontoon next to it. We decided that we would have our own boat party on the night after we arrived in Aalborg, so as we settled into our new home for the next 12 days, we discussed what boats we ought to give party invites to. This led to an hour trek around the pier, however we kept our spirits up like true Rona girls. After watching the fireworks on the same night, we had an early night, as we knew we wouldn't get much rest over the next few days.

We woke up bright and early on 28th August, the day of the start of the race, however, my watch (White Watch) was on Mother Watch this day, so we didn't do much sailing. On the plus side, the race didn't officially start until 1700 hours, so we were able to cook in fairly calm waters. I say this, but I do remember my whole watch feeling seasick while cooking. The next time we had to go on mother watch was when we made it into port in Denmark, so for half of the day we were seasick again, and then we were all fine from the afternoon, as we were docked up against Urania (a boat from the Netherlands) and Pen Duick (from France).

The race was fun while it lasted, however due to a lack of wind, it wasn't as intense as I thought it would be and the race was cut short on the second day (29th August). Whenever we saw other boats, we made sure to greet them with classic Rona songs, and also threw water balloons at them. Unfortunately, many of the water balloons flopped into the sea, and a large number of boats didn't seem impressed. Of course I made friends with everybody on the boat, however I'm happy that my watch had such a close bond and worked really well together in a team, with our watch leader and watch officer always keeping our spirits high.

When we finally reached Aalborg, we were given the opportunity to explore the area, however we were more focused on reaching the showers, having not washed in a long time. Later that weekend, we had a great time at our own boat party and then again at

the crew party the following night. We had the crew parade on the same day as the crew party, where the whole boat dressed up as Minions (aside from the Skipper and Mate, who dressed as Gru and his assistant). Many of us had assumed the parade to be just a long walk, however it was a lot more tiring than that. We had code words for when we ought to run off into the crowds, or disrupt other crews in the parade. Every so often we would have to jump onto the ground and lay there (thankfully the sun was shining and the ground was dry). On our last day in Aalborg, the crew decided we wanted to do different activities, and I thought it would be fun to go with a few friends to Aalborg Zoo. We saw many incredible creatures, and even saw a tiger being operated on! I thought to myself that they would never show that in an English zoo. On the last night we were invited to a party on the Frederic Chopin, a Polish boat that had won many awards. After staying there for the fireworks, a few of us decided to leave and just had a quieter night walking along the riverside.

Over the next two days we sailed through the Danish Islands to the small town of Kiel, Germany. The pier was unexpectedly quite a distance from the town centre, so we only went in that direction one time. On the last night the crew all went out together and reminisced about our sailing trip on the beach. We then went to sleep, and woke up early the next morning to catch a coach to Hamburg Airport. This coach trip was only an hour, and it rained the whole time, so we took that as Germany being said to see us depart! When we finally got back to London we were tearful to see each other leave, but also looking forward to seeing our families again.

Thank you once again for granting me the bursary, I would definitely recommend taking part in The Tall Ships Race to anybody I come across. I had an unforgettable time and would love to compete in it again.

