

Tall Ship Adventure

May I thank you again for your generous sponsorship. It certainly helped me get the voyage of a lifetime. I'm sorry that it has taken so long to send this reply to you, but I am very grateful for your support, and I'm still remembering all the great bits of it. To tell you something of what we did and what I enjoyed most, I have included this brief reminder and summary:

I have sailed on the tall ship, Malcolm Miller, as run by the Sail Training Association. I have spent 10 days voyaging between Birkenhead and Falmouth in late July. The trainee crew, all like me, have had to run the ship, with guidance and professional navigation from the 5 permanent crew and senior volunteers. The trip was neither a holiday or a relaxing break. I was a member of the crew and was therefore expected to undertake any task on board that needed doing, including cleaning, getting up in the night to steer, checking on the boat, preventing the public boarding and raising the sails.

The 42 trainees were split into three watches, so they could manage the ship at set times for their watch. These times rotated each day, so late night watches were only every other day. To encourage competitiveness, each 13 person watch tried to better the others in a series of competitions.

The inter watch competition comprised of quizzes, sail stowing and rowing. (My watch won first prize - a crate of beer). This was all done in team style and spirit. Admiring our own work and the entertainment value of the others was all part of the fun!

The rowing was done at East Ferry Marina, which is along with Cobh (5 miles from Cork, Ireland and 1/2 mile from East Ferry) the only times we harbored. We also went swimming at the marina - in the sea of course! enjoyed setting and stowing the square sails. These are the ones where it is essential that several people climb the mast to the yard arms. The yard arms are big booms wider than the ship, that the square sails are hung from. Stowing them was very, very hard work, and didn't always seem fun when up there but, when it did it was a great feeling. When you came down and compared it to the other square sail, you couldn't help but be impressed at how neat our watch got our cumbersome sail at that great height.

Also of good fun is helming, especially at night when the boat is tilting far over to one side! In fact all of the jobs are good. Even being sat at the stern doing splices in the rain was good fun - not because of the splices, but because the boat was rolling and pitching that much we flew off the floor at the peak of every wave and were squashed down at the trough of them. It was like a really fun, ongoing roller coaster! It was nearly as impressive as the helicopter visit arranged. However the helicopters were called away to a rescue before two crew members were winched aboard.

Two things less enjoyable are galley duty and happy hour (especially cleaning the heads (toilets)). One time I had to wash up in the galley, when there is very little space (it is a good sized room, just that nearly 10 people were in it. The boat was tilting and it was very windy outside, so both doors were shut. It was the most hot and humid room I have ever been in, and the six mess men who's entire job is to clear the tables, just kept on piling the dishes up. It was a nightmare.

Anyway, I made some really good friends and had a really good time, and in the mean time got to visit Ireland, and learn how to do almost everything aboard ship. Thanks a lot again, and please don't hesitate to pass on this letter and/ or my greatest thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Sean O'Sullivan.