

A Tall Story

As part of my Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award I was required to go on a seven day trip in a field I had previously not experienced and work as part of a team. I chose to do Tall Ships. I found out about tall ships through a representative at school, and a student who had done it a while ago.

Challenger Boats

Four boys and I from Burford School; Mike Charnock, Chris Jacobs, Tom Slader and Nick Valentine; set off to the Canary Islands for an adventure we would never forget. The Tall Ships youth trust enables children from the age of 11 to experience sailing, but not just any sailing. You can choose to sail either one of the two 60 metre tall rigs or, the one I decided to sail, the challenger boats. These were two 72-foot boats each weighing 52 tonnes due to their metal hulls, making them incredibly safe. They were originally designed for a race around the world 'backwards', against the prevailing winds. There were two challenger boats and the idea was to have a race between the two to see who could get to port first.

Before we even set sail we were introduced to our crew members. There were 12 volunteer crew; youth volunteers like me and six other crew members including a cook, captain, and four people who had volunteered to help us learn how to sail. We were split into two watches, red and blue which determined when you were on deck sailing and when



you were below deck resting. The watches were spent two hours on and two hours off. Whilst you were off watch you could do whatever you wished, play cards, sleep, listen to music or just chat. Some of the time was used to explain things such as 'man overboard' drills and the knots essential to sailing.

Amazing Sailing

Each day's sailing was amazing. It was hot and we couldn't have asked for better conditions. We put all our learning into practice and sailed Challenger One into port first. During our week we sailed around 60 to 90 miles a day, mainly under sail, but using the engine when there was no wind. We were lucky enough to see dolphins virtually every day; they swam alongside the boat. We also saw pilot whales twice. We learnt how to tack, which is to turn the boat around, and many other things. Everyone on board was actively involved. The experienced crew didn't do the sailing; they just watched us to see if we were doing it correctly. Tall ships is one of the most amazing things I have done in my life. I hope to get the opportunity to do it again, but for anyone thinking about doing it, whether your 12 or 65, go for it!

Harriet Trevers

Harriet was one of the recipients of money raised at the Shipton Charity Ball Editor. (See page 45)