

TENACIOUS 2013 – Jo Garsia

A phone call from Richard and goodness gracious,
I'm sailing from Gibraltar to Southampton aboard Tenacious!
After months of countdown excitement and anticipation,
I packed and repacked until there was no more time for preparation.
After many hours flying at 40,000 feet,
Spotting the three masts of Tenacious was such a treat!
Up the gangway- so nervous and unsure,
What exactly had I got myself in for???
I had absolutely no idea, truth be told,
What amazing experiences the next 5 weeks would hold.
Safety briefings complete and our ship loaded with stores,
We sailed into the setting sun- next stop the Azores!
We bid farewell to Gib, the apes and the rock,
Time to sail around the clock!
Spain on our starboard, Morocco on our port,
I'll try summarizing the next 37 days in this short report.
Surrounded by 360 degrees of ocean I suddenly found,
The earth, in fact, is actually round!
Other facts became quite clear quite fast,
Like sleeping is not simple and it's a very tall mast.
By day two I was feeling quite queasy,
And I remembered this sailing gig isn't so easy.
If nothing else seasickness is a great ice breaker,
No greater conversation maker!
But soon queasiness was a thing of the past,
And we were scurrying up and down the mast.
Climbing aloft, furling sails
Tying clews, sanding pinrails.
Cleaning heads and scrubbing decks,
Vacuuming and safety checks.
Taking the helm and navigation,
Sunrises for contemplation.
Card games and great sunsets,
Birthday cakes and egg contests.
2, 6 heaving and setting squares,
Cuppa soups and overboard scares.
Evacuation drills and learning knots,
Keeping watch and eating lots.
Galley duty and looking for whales,
Hoisting jibs and force 9 gales.
Racing dolphins, rope splicing
Buddy checks and potato dicing.
The Jubilee Sailing Trust is unique carrier,
Age and physical impairments are no barrier.
I very quickly learned that mobility and agility,
Are just minor aspects of ability.
Amongst our crew were people from all walks of life,
Who'd been challenged with all kinds of strife.
Loss of limbs, trauma or a degenerative condition,
Combat, stroke, loss of hearing or vision.

Whatever their story, the overwhelming similarity,
As characters defined by resilience, not disability.
Unanimously there was great admiration,
For these crew members who were such humble inspiration.
The moods of the Atlantic were varied and vast,
She is big, she is strong and she changes her mind fast!
You could go to sleep thinking all is well,
Only to awake to a stormy hell.
The wrath of the Atlantic,
Made tasks like eating, sleeping and standing rather frantic.
I found myself thinking in the midst of the commotion,
How foolishly I had underestimated this ocean!
At the mercy of the sea,
Is perhaps as powerless as we can be?
Jaw dropped and eyes opened wide,
At times hard not to be terrified.
But the bunch of strangers which on the ocean were thrust,
Had formed a phenomenal trust.
You're in it together and no storm is too strong,
If you thought you were alone, you were so very wrong.
And then she would settle and be so charming,
Lapping on the hull so gentle and calming.
When the sun shines bright and the wind is just right,
We sail the sea, quite triumphantly.
What you learn is a great respect,
And that you never know what to expect.
Land ahoy! Exciting news,
For the permanent and voyage crews.
Exploring the Azorean streets of cobble,
My sea legs had a distinctive wobble.
As we explored the sights of the volcanic isles,
The safety of land brought many smiles.
But back to sea to continue the fun,
Searching for the elusive sun.
Visiting Ireland and France on the way back to the UK,
Unexpected bonuses of my adventure away.
Far out- no hiding I was from Australia,
But to be sure I decorated my bunk with Aussie paraphernalia.
In this award cultural exchange is an important part,
But when given this task it's hard to know where to start.
After Scottish Jonny's rendition of the Neighbours theme,
My cultural exchange challenge soon became quite extreme.
After passionate defense of our sporting teams,
I keenly described AFL, lamingtons and monotremes.
Then when asked if Australia really is 'paradise'?
Confused, I kept the reality check relatively nice.
Yes, we do have koalas, Kylie, vegemite and SUN,
But there's a serious side, as well as the fun.
The many days at sea gave me the chance,
To describe Australia past the well known first glance.
From our challenge of trying to 'close the gap',
To asylum seekers, and hung parliament in a flap.

And in return I learned from our chats together,
There's a lot more to Britain than a queen and bad weather.
In an Irish pub we caused quite a commotion,
As 600 years of British history was re-enacted by the Bosun.
Discussions of Scotland's upcoming independence poll,
And the London bombings legacy still having it's toll.
The accents of the British Isles,
Each told their stories in unique styles.
A personal Aussie highlight for me,
Was celebrating ANZAC Day morning at sea.
A minute's silence with a gentle ocean sway,
A unique marking of an important day.
The story of Gallipoli was told,
Shared with a deck full of new friends braving the cold.
The light was low as our flag was proudly raised high,
Followed by ANZAC biscuits for all to try!
The absence of Google prompted much deliberation.
Deprived of text messages- we rediscovered conversation.
Beneath the stars, in the freezing cold,
The past was relived and many stories told.
People spoke of memories, hurdles, ambitions and fears,
Telling stories of mistakes, achievements and careers.
We shared opinions, riddles, jokes, dreams and hopes,
While keeping lookout, washing dishes and pulling some ropes.
And in finding out a more and more about each of the crew,
You slowly discover more and more about you!
I had never known,
Just how quickly a ship could become home.
Eight hundred and eighty eight hours after first climbing aboard,
In Southampton we were safely moored.
All too soon the adventure was done,
So many memories of great people and of such a lot of fun!
It was time to post the many postcards that had been written,
And make plans to visit new friends all over Britain.
Enriching my life in so many ways,
I will always hold dear my Tenacious days!

My experience aboard Tenacious and into the wonderful world of tall ship sailing pushed me out of my comfort zone and achieving things I could never have imagined. I would like to say a big thank you to The Australia Britain Society, The Young Endeavour Youth Scheme, The Jubilee Sailing Trust and the Association of Sail Training Organisations for supporting the Tall Ships Award and making this experience possible.