

A sailor's work is never done...



Master rigger Igor Bjorksten preparing masts and rigging for a crane lift

KEEPING a 16th century ship in good sailing order is a true labour of love – and one that never ends. Just when you think you are on top of all the work at hand, something crops up and off you go again. And when it comes to the Duyfken that truly is the reality.

With a kilometre or two of rope supporting the masts and controlling all the hal-yards the job of a master rigger is crucial to the ship continuing to sail.

Such a task falls to the experienced hands of Igor Bjorksten, a master rigger who travels Australia and the world to provide the traditional rope rigging skills to the tall-ship community. This vital skill now resides in just a handful of craftsmen across the globe, and Igor is recognised as one of the best.

Being based here in Fre-

mantle, Igor is a vital member of the Duyfken maintenance team. His connection with Duyfken began during the construction phase of the ship back in the late '90s, his role being to prepare the masts and rigging for Duyfken's future sailing adventures.

Just as it was with the original ship, the replica Duyfken's standing and running rigging was made from tarred hemp rope from Holland, with the sails being hand sewn from flax canvas. Preparing the rigging was a time consuming process. All activities were driven by the craftsman's hands with very little use of modern equipment. In staying true to the authenticity of the original ship, the rigging team lead by Igor were required to draw on history to confirm that their resulting work was an accurate reproduction.

For authenticity the preparation of the standing rigging required that the hemp rope be first coated in Stockholm tar to prevent the natural fibres from rotting. Once coated with tar this rope would then be stretched taut section by section.

From there it would be 'wormed' – the laying of a small tarred rope into the grooves of the lay of the rope. This would be followed by 'parcelling' – the laying of tarred canvas over the wormed rope. And the final treatment, the wrapping of a layer of tarred marline over the tarred canvas. No small feat – but essential in extending the life of the hemp rope.

Over the past 15 years this task has been repeated many times as rigging is replaced due to wear and tear. This task that has been made possible because of the masterful hands of Igor Bjorksten, a master rigger of international standing.

Why not try something different. You can experience the quality of Igor's workmanship by joining Duyfken for an afternoon sail on the Swan River during the Duyfken Summer of Sail program on the Swan River until March 2015.

For more details go to www.duyfken.com/sailing.