

Hero of the Year - Jack Brundell, Brittany Ferries

Jack is a relative newcomer to Brittany Ferries, but he has certainly made his mark. Jack will never turn down a challenge, will help out without being asked and is a fully committed member of the Brittany Ferries team. Jack's role is Customer Communications Manager, but he refuses to be bound by the confines of his role and is always looking at ways to improve various aspects of the service we provide be it onboard one of our vessels, our website, etc. Some could argue that Jack is Brittany Ferries' biggest fan.

Jack started working for Brittany Ferries in 2013 as a member of crew for 2 years and then came to work with us ashore in Plymouth in the newly created role of Customer Communications Manager just over a year ago. Most of the crew onboard our vessels are French nationals and they must be French residents. So Jack (Yorkshire born and bred), decided to move to France after graduating from university, so that he could apply to work onboard. He was successful and even wrote a blog about his experience (in French and English)
<http://jackbrundell.blogspot.co.uk>

It is unusual to have an English person working onboard (even though our crew are bilingual), and I remember receiving e-mails from Jack (chef de reception) on the Bretagne. There was much speculation in the team as to where he came from; was he English?, did he live in France? did he grow up in France? What stood out though for me, was his thirst for knowledge. He was interested in how we handled onboard complaints, the booking process, policies, etc... and he wanted to know the outcome of any customer issue that happened onboard. He came across as confident, articulate and mature.

When I met Jack for the first time in person, it was when he started his new role as Customer Communications Manager in Plymouth. I'm not quite sure what I was expecting, but I did not expect him to be so young! Initiative is not something Jack lacks, and he immersed himself immediately in his new role. As this was a new role within the company, Jack could make it his own. He not only looked at all written forms of communications we send to customers, but also our website and listened to calls in the Contact Centre. What is key is that Jack realised that he needed to look at all forms of communication from the customer's perspective before he could look at improving it. Some of the big projects he has been working on are the reformatting of passenger tickets and information, as well as the pre-departure e-mails we send out. The objective is to make the information we send out to customers relevant to them as well as ensuring it is clear and helpful.

Where Jack has stood out is his willingness to help out above and beyond, not only outside his role, but also out of hours. As we all know, social media is 24-hours a day. We have a small team of people who manage our various social media accounts and although we monitor things closely and have a high engagement level, it is difficult to ensure a 24-hour presence. However, this doesn't stop Jack. He can see Plymouth ferry port from his flat and if he realises that there is a problem out of hours (the ship hasn't arrived yet, or hasn't left yet), he will contact the operations manager to find out what the problem is and send an update via Twitter if necessary.

In the same token, if a customer tweets about a problem at another port or onboard, he will act immediately and contact the port or ship to find out more.

"Jack has been an excellent addition to the Twitter team. He's enthusiastic with boundless energy and full of ideas. He's always looking for ways to improve our service and to offer more to our customers. Jack always make sure the customer comes first and routinely goes the extra mile, whether it's tweeting at gone midnight, or calling an worried customer on his day off to provide assistance. He's helpful, quick, on the ball and someone you know you can rely on when needed." Jane Elgar, Customer Engagement Coordinator

Jack has also proved invaluable to the Customer Services team not only due to his previous experience of working onboard, but also his willingness to help us out with customer correspondence. It is very useful to have access to someone who used to work onboard who can explain how things work onboard and why things are done in a certain way, it helps us understand better and means we can offer a more considered and professional reply to our customers. Jack does not only give us support with information, but he also replies to customer correspondence. This not only gives him an insight as to what customers think of our service, but also helps us out and we appreciate it. What I admire about Jack, is that he doesn't just deal with the "easy" queries and complaints. If it's an area he is not familiar with, he will learn about it and tackle it. Although I sometimes ask Jack if he can help us out if we have a bit of a backlog, he will also come and see me to say he would like to reply to some e-mails or letters.

Another area where Jack has gone above and beyond the call of duty was when we had a series of sailing disruptions in a short spate of time leading up to Easter. With sailing disruptions, we send out SMS and e-mails to all affected passengers advising them of the situation and asking them to contact us. As you can imagine, our Contact Centre was very busy helping customers rearrange their travel plans. Jack had himself set up to answer to e-mails going into the contact centre. Not only that, but he also helped out with the list of customers who did not have a mobile number or e-mail address on their booking. Jack has not had full booking reservations training and only has basic knowledge, yet he saw this as a priority. He also stayed at work longer and came in over the weekend to help out. Members of the Customer Services team also helped out outside of normal hours and it was nice to have Jack working alongside us and the Contact Centre during this hectic time.

"Since undertaking his new role as Customer Communications Manager just over a year ago, Jack has fitted in well. He is extremely friendly and very approachable. During some recent disruptions, Jack gave up his own time and came in on his day off to help us out. Although he doesn't usually deal with customers on the telephone on a day to day basis, he was quite happy to roll his sleeves up and get stuck in by calling those passengers affected by the cancellations as well as replying to customer queries by email." Emma Bestwick, Duty Passenger Services Manager

Finally, we had a new induction of contact centre staff start in January and as part of this, colleagues from other departments will give an overview of what they do. Jack did speak to the trainees about his role, but in a different session, he also spoke with them about the onboard safety and evacuation procedures onboard. He didn't have to do this, but he offered to do it. The only time you hear about this subject is when you hear the announcement at the start of your sailing or if you read the ship

information guide given when you check-in. So to have someone who has gone through the training and go through the procedure in person is invaluable.

I have attached an e-mail that Jack sent to one of our young customers. When we received Andrew's e-mail, he reminded me of Jack and I thought he would be the perfect person to reply to Andrew. This is why Jack is my hero of the year!

As you can tell, I'm quite an admirer of Jack. He has boundless energy and his willingness to learn and help is both refreshing and inspiring.

From: Brundell, Jack
Sent: 23 March 2016 15:24
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Customer Services
Subject: RE: Andrew Frazer - Brittany Ferries reply

Hello Andrew,

I hope you're well and are looking forward to the Easter holidays.

You're very welcome regarding the Brittany Ferries 40th anniversary book – it was our pleasure; hopefully you'll find it interesting and perhaps inspiring. It is true that we've come a long way as a company from our very first ship Kerisnel in 1973 to a fleet of 11 ships!

I think you've made some very sound decisions with regard to your GCSEs which will put you in good stead for a future career at sea. Interestingly, as you have chosen to study Computer Science, currently in the Merchant Navy, ETO (Electro Technical Officers)—otherwise known as Radio Officers—are in demand and this sort of subject would be a great starting place if the technical side of things interests you more.

Thank you for letting me know about your future dates of travel – we'll see if we can organise a little surprise for you whilst on board. If there is a particular ship you're interested in visiting, I'm sure we could organise a visit for you sometime whilst the ship is in port in Portsmouth.

You are correct in saying that there are many Maritime Schools in the UK such as Warsash Academy near Southampton or South Tyneside Maritime College near Newcastle. There are also great cadet-schemes with companies such as Carnival UK (they own P&O Cruises and Cunard) – if you visit their website there is an abundance of information on the different routes you could follow. At Brittany Ferries, with our ships being registered in France and crewed by French officers, we don't offer sponsorship to schools in the UK. We primarily employ cadets and officers from the pool of candidates in France, who have attended schools such as ENSM in St Malo, Le Havre and Marseille. This isn't to say that you couldn't relocate to France one day to complete the necessary French seafaring qualifications and apply to work with Brittany Ferries – I'm sure we'd be delighted to receive your application. Although as I said in my previous email, a fluent level of everyday and technical French is a prerequisite.

Thank you also for sharing your Mum's blog – it was a great read and coincidentally, Aquitaine and Biarritz are my favourite areas of French (after Brittany, of course!) and I regularly go there on holiday. It's lovely to read of your family's happy memories!

All the best,
Jack

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 February 2016 20:19

To: Brundell, Jack

Subject: Re: Andrew Frazer - Brittany Ferries reply

Dear Jack,

Thank you very much for the email you sent on Monday. I really appreciate the answers to all of the questions.

I would also like to say thank you for the Brittany Ferries 40th anniversary book. It was a really nice present to open because today I had to go to the orthodontist to get the 'train track' braces fitted. It really made my day. I have already read most of the book and I am really enjoying it. In the book I like seeing the History and Timeline of how the Company started and how it has grown since the first days. I really liked seeing the different photos of the older ships such as Prince Of Brittany, Cornouailles and Duc de Normandie. There is also a really good picture of Barfleur in the Truckline Ferries livery.

With my GCSE options I have made the final decisions:

- French
- Spanish
- Geography
- Music
- Computer Science

These are all as well as Maths, English Language and Double Science. I was happy to hear that they were good ones to choose for this sort of job. I also chose Music because I am studying Grade 5 piano and Grade 4 Clarinet (I played one of my piano pieces on the Pont Aven last August).

I have found a few dates on which we will be traveling on Brittany Ferries:

- 11th August Portsmouth to Le Havre ~ 23:15-08:30 (Baie de Seine)
- 29th August Caen to Portsmouth ~16:30-21:15 (Normandie)

We are down at Portsmouth quite regularly though to see and take photos of the ships.

In the email you wrote back I got confused over the Sailing schools because I didn't understand whether I would have to go to the place in Le Havre or whether I could apply to the places in England such as Warsash Academy. Brittany Ferries is not included in the list of Companies sponsoring students doing the courses. I am therefore not sure if this is going to be a big problem when finishing the course.

You may be interested in a blog for Peak Retreats/Pyrenees Collection which my mother wrote about our summer holiday which included a detailed section of the Pont Aven (scroll down to the bottom to see the Brittany Ferries part).

<http://pyreneescollection.blogspot.co.uk/2015/11/loyal-clients-review-summer-holiday-to.html>

Thank you very much again for your help.

Kind Regards,

Andrew [REDACTED]

From: Brundell, Jack

Sent: Monday, 8 February 2016 12:05

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Customer Services

Hello Andrew,

First of all, my apologies for the delay in receiving this message, it seems that my original reply has gone awry. Second of all, thank you very much for your email and for your interest and passion for our company.

Your email has been forwarded to me as when I was your age, I wrote to Brittany Ferries with almost the exact same query as I too wanted to work for Brittany Ferries as a navigational officer. As it turned out, I never became an officer but I did spend 3 years working on board Brittany Ferries' vessels and now I have moved back to the UK to work in our head office. My first piece of advice, should you wish to work for Brittany Ferries, is to continue learning French and take it as far as you can, through to university if possible. Continue with your French exchanges (I loved them when I was at school) and try wherever you can to immerse yourself in the language. Working on board a French ship requires a fluent level of French in order to communicate clearly with your crewmates, passengers and any external authorities. This fluent level of French will allow you to quickly learn more technical and industry related vocabulary, which will also be key to a successful career as an officer in France.

In terms of your GCSE options, I would recommend maths, physics (or any science at this stage), geography and French – so by the sounds of it, you're already on an excellent footing. As I was once a languages student, it's really great to read that you enjoy languages and have a desire to continue learning them. I would also recommend that you continue with your extra-curricular activities such as scouts and football as teamwork and the ability to live as a team for several weeks is key in the merchant navy – your participation in those clubs will help demonstrate these attributes.

Pont-Aven and Mont St Michel are also my favourite ships, although Bretagne holds a special place in my heart as I had the pleasure of working on board her for a year. She was our first new-build and set the precedent for the rest of our current fleet with a lot of them being, in some way, based around Bretagne's layout. I wouldn't necessarily say that sailing lessons were imperative as these skills you will learn once enrolled in nautical school, what's important is your passion and that you show your love and interest in the industry and vocation. From your email alone, I can see that a life at sea is something which really interests you – so keep that drive and passion and you'll do brilliantly.

Our crews spend 7 days working on board followed by 7 days rest – however this pattern will vary from operator to operator. For example, several cruise lines such as Carnival have their officers work 4 months on, 2 months off, but whilst on board you are well looked after with recreational facilities, staff

restaurants etc. Safety procedures you would learn via a course, paid for by your employer or nautical school and the basic training for all seagoing personnel is called STCW95. Depending on your onboard role, various other training and certificates will be required, but again, this will normally be taken care of by your employer.

To work on board a Brittany Ferries vessel as a navigational officer, you would usually have to come from a French marine school and have followed this path. If you are serious about a career as an officer with Brittany Ferries, the best place to start your research would be the ENSM website as we often recruit from their pool of graduates. The ENSM is a highly regarded and prestigious nautical school in France with sites in Le Havre, St Malo and Marseille: <https://www.supmaritime.fr/en/> In the UK, we also have a rich maritime heritage and therefore we have several schools across the country where you can study to become a navigational or engineering officer and a great place to start would be: <http://www.careersatsea.org/>

Lastly, it's lovely to hear that you enjoy travelling with us and great that you find our staff and crew friendly and helpful. It's a pleasure having you and your family on board and hopefully it won't be long until we see you again. Please do let me know the next time you travel, you can email me at this address whenever.

Good luck with your studies and don't forget to let us know how you get on (and when you're next travelling with us!)

Best wishes,
Jack

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Brittany Ferries

Dear Brittany Ferries,

I am writing to you to find out about Careers in Brittany Ferries such as being a Captain or Officer. I am now 13 and in year 9. I am wanting to be a Brittany Ferries Captain. The reason I am writing this email now is because we have to choose our GCSE options in January/February so I am wanting to know which subjects it requires.

At the moment I am at the Ashcombe School Dorking, Surrey. This year I am in the second set for English, Maths and Science. I am in top set for languages in my school. For languages we are set for German and French. However I do Spanish as well which I have started last year. I also like Geography. For out of school clubs I do Scouts and Football. I think that Scouts is

quite a good thing because we do a lot of navigating. The most adventurous thing we have done is a night hike from 11pm-4:30am!

In Brittany ferries my favourite boats are the Pont-Aven and Mont Saint Michel. I really like the Spanish route and Portsmouth to Caen. Usually most inset days I go down to Portsmouth with my Granny and there are always lots of Brittany Ferries ships to see. I have been on the Amorique, Normandie, Mont Saint Michel and Pont-Aven. I am hoping to use the crossings again sometime soon, probably next holidays. I have background knowledge about nautical terminology such as Port is left and I have done a lot of map reading. I also use marine traffic on the internet where you can track all ships around the world. Is there also a possibility that I would need to take sailing lessons? I have also been on other ferry companies as well and I think Brittany ferries are the best out of all of them. Is there any advice about what sort of skills I would need to know. Another big question is how long would I be spending on the boat. Is it something like 2 days or a week? Is there any advice from the captains about how to start it all off? Would I learn safety procedures on the Job or on a course? I was basically wondering about the background information of getting started. I also had a Grandfather who was Captain in the Royal Navy.

I know French is important when working in a French company and I am definitely going to do it for GCSE. I go to France for 5 weeks per year on average. I am going on a French exchange trip to the middle of Paris in March. Hopefully I will be able to extend my French knowledge when I am there. (By Eurostar this time but hopefully I will be going on Brittany Ferries another time)

I really like travelling with Brittany ferries and the staff are really friendly on-board. Especially the Pont-Aven. I will hope to go on a Brittany Ferries ship soon.

Thank you very much,

Andrew [REDACTED]

Email- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]