

SHIPWRIGHT

*He draws the stem, the keel,
the sternpost: chalk gripped
in oaken fingers, the sweep
of each arc bodily made
on the boat yard floor.*

*When he's done he steps back,
rakes his sawdust beard, squints,
stares, eyes sharp as chisels.*

*Senses aching for the scent
of the blade through heartwood,
rising notes of the mallet's strike,
the white cleave of a wave.*

Exeter Ship Canal is still a working place and the SGC Marine Shed remains a haven for the repair and maintenance of wooden boats. In the late 1990's two pilot cutters: Eve of St Mawes and Lizzie May were built here by Luke Powell of Working Sail. Both vessels now sail out from Cornwall. This poem is dedicated to all those past and present who strive to keep Exeter's Maritime Heritage alive.

Kim Squirrell - Quay Words Writer in Residence - July 2023