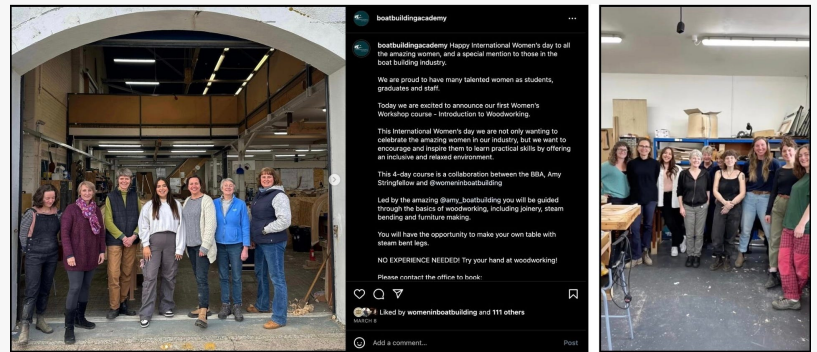


Building a Better Marine Industry Through Effective Outreach

How One Small Boat Building Academy is Paving The Way for Gender Equality in England's Maritime Scene by Annie Means

LONDON, OXFORDSHIRE, UK, October 6, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- It's no secret that the maritime industry is experiencing a drought of female employees. In its 2021 Seafarer Report, the International Maritime Organization estimated that only 1.2 percent of seafarers are women. Across other sectors of the industry, numbers aren't much better.



Lyme Regis- Boat Building Academy

“

The philosophy here is respect and kindness across the board.”

Will Reed - Principal

From shipwrights to sea farmers, historically, women in the marine sector have been underrepresented, with their stories often going unwritten, overshadowed, or censored.

Recognizing this, the Lloyd's Register Foundation, a charity born from Lloyd's Register, one of the oldest ship

classification organizations in the U.K., launched a new call for content titled "Re-Writing Women in Maritime." This project aims to reshape perceptions of women's historical roles in the shipping industry by revitalizing and elevating the stories of women in the marine sector.

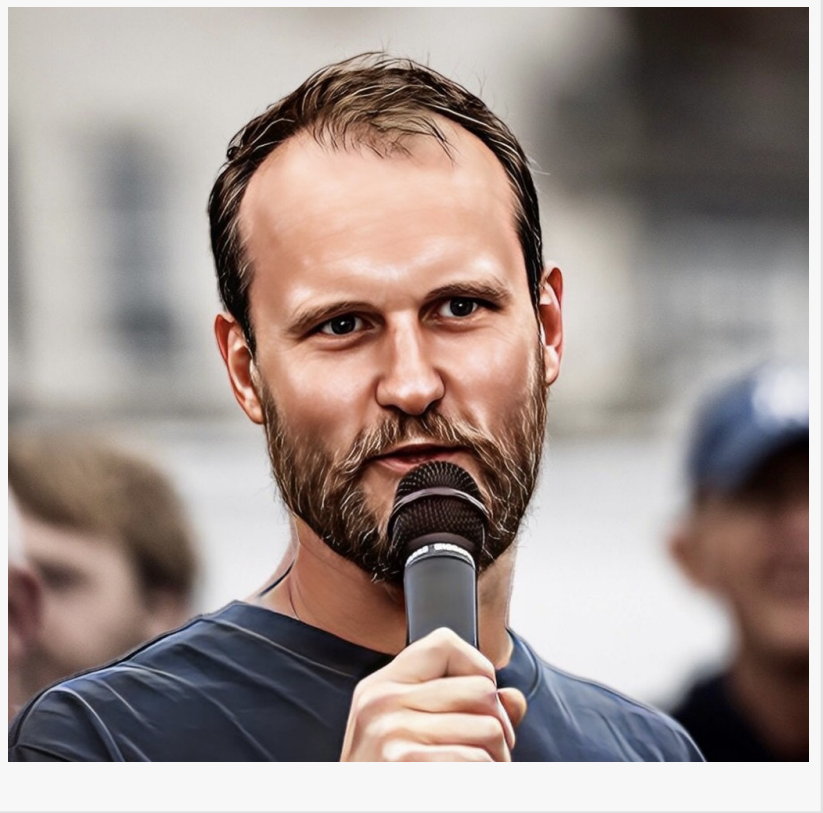
All of which raises the question: Is the lack of women in the industry, in part, caused by a centuries-long drought of decent marketing? After all, as the adage goes, you have to see it to be it.

Travel to the small seaside town of Lyme Regis, however, and you'll find that through marketing and effective outreach, one boat-building academy is taking great strides to alter the gender gap in the marine sector, specifically amongst boatbuilders.

The Lyme Regis Boat Building Academy and Furniture School. Photo by Annie Means.

Set alongside the jagged cliffs of the Dorset Coast lies the Lyme Regis Boat Building Academy and Furniture School (BBA). Its large teal warehouse doors are open to the public, and Will Reed, the Director and Co-Chair of Trustees of the academy, can frequently be found giving tours of the workshop to curious passersbys.

Founded in 1997 by naval commander Tim Gedge, The Boat Building Academy and Furniture School is a professional training institution that teaches both modern and traditional boat-building methods. A 2006 graduate of a 40-week boat-building course and avid furniture maker himself, Will Reed became the Director and Co-Chair of Trustees of the academy in 2019.



One of his goals, amongst many, was to increase the enrollment and retention of female students at the BBA.

In the academy's three most recent 40-week boat-building courses, there was zero female enrollment. This particular course is a staple of the academy. Students walk away from their instruction having built several boats from the ground up and likewise having earned a Level 3 Boatbuilding Diploma from the City & Guilds qualification.

In short, this 10-month experience serves as a direct pathway to becoming a qualified boat builder in the British marine industry. However, until the most recent course, not a single woman has participated in a 40-week build since March 2022.

"We just didn't have people applying. It was a real challenge to think 'What can we do about this problem,'" commented Reed.

Students at work at the Boat Building Academy and Furniture School. The answer to that problem evolved through collaboration.

At a Worshipful Shipwrights' Lecture last October, Will Reed met Belinda Joslin, the Founder of Women in Boatbuilding. Women in Boatbuilding is a Community Interest Company and social media movement working to support and connect women boat builders across the United

Kingdom.

Will shared his concerns about a lack of female applicants in the past 3 boat-building courses with Belinda.

“And I said, well, let's have a chat and see what we can do. And, it sort of grew from there,” said Joslin.

Together, over a series of Zoom calls and meetings, the pair created a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that the BBA has since incorporated into its brand mission. Through a variety of methods, the BBA has made a sustained effort to create a more approachable boat-building environment for potential women applicants.

Having achieved charity status in January 2020, the BBA has been able to relieve some financial barriers for students ever since. In February of 2023, the [Boatbuilding Academy launched its first-ever bursary scheme](#) that's exclusively for women. This bursary is designed to facilitate access to high-level training as a means to create equal career development opportunities.

“Becoming a charity essentially made it easier to raise funds for bursaries and to be able to support more people. It makes it less exclusive and more inclusive of people who couldn't afford it,” said Reed.

The BBA likewise launched a “Girls' Workshop” offering taster sessions for woodworking and boat building to local students. Amy Stringfellow, another Director at Women in Boat Building, teamed up with the BBA to launch “Women in Boat Building, a short introductory course to the craft.

Belinda, having come from both a boat-building and marketing background, was the ideal candidate when it came to crafting a compelling media campaign for the academy. Both events were well attended and well advertised on the BBA's social media and the women in boatbuilding platform.

Commenting on the Diversity and Inclusion strategy, Joslin said: “The basics of it were that it shouldn't be a one-hit-wonder. This has to be a whole strategy.” And so far, it looks like that strategy is working.

The newest 40-week boat-building course, launched in August, now has 25 percent female enrollment. As a Thomas J. Watson fellow studying gender in the maritime industry, I had the opportunity to sit in on the first 3 weeks of the course.

Participants in the newest 40-week boat building course at The Boat Building Academy and Furniture School.

I quickly integrated into the comradery of the workshop environment, and though I can't speak

for all women, as a participant in the course, I was struck by how enjoyable and social the academy is. As Will Reed stresses, "[The philosophy here is respect and kindness across the board.](#)" And I agree. The course was more than welcoming. In addition to fantastic instruction from tutors, students genuinely enjoyed each other's company, regularly spending time together on the weekends and after class.

Will Reed

British Boat Building Academy

+44 1297 445545

[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/659691274>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2023 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.