

Women in Shipping



Clockwise: Christina Kalimbassieris, Angela Maxwell, Hatty Sumption and Aida Cable.

(Continued from Page 13) the important point is the desire to improve. If someone wants to dedicate themselves to a particular course, everything will be easier. If a career is only chosen for the pay it is better not to take it on. When we do things we like we tend to enjoy them more, as if it were a hobby.

"Once, I had to take on a fishing boat and when I went on board, as I never used to wear make-up or anything of that kind, I arrived with a baseball cap, a jacket, jeans and trainers.

"They threw the rope ladder and up I went.

"When I got in there were five nude men that had been swimming and wanted to get dry in the wind. They did not care that the pilot was coming, for they were not expecting a woman.

"They did not realise I was a woman, so I waited outside for them to get dressed. They offered me some coffee, and I accepted without them thinking I was a woman.

"One of them asked me a question and as soon as I answered they realised I was a woman, and they all disappeared.

"I had to laugh. Afterwards they didn't know how to come out again.

"Fortunately I am not the type of woman to get scandalised that quickly!"

Hatty Sumption

CLYDE & Co, which has one of the world's largest shipping practices, has a good representation of women, with five female partners and 15 female assistants in the British marine department alone.

Hatty Sumption qualified in 1993, since when she has been involved in a wide range of shipping and commodity trading litigation. She joined the firm's Hong Kong office in

1995, returning to London in 1999 and becoming a partner in 2001.

She specialises in contentious oil trading and charterparty work as well as bill of lading, letter of credit and other international trade disputes. She speaks fluent French and has a working knowledge of Russian and Italian.

She says: "Compared with other legal sectors the shipping sector has been known as a male dominated area, especially at the top level, but things are definitely improving. The number of women entering the field at the junior level has increased significantly over recent years.

"Making shipping an attractive sector for women to work in is an organic process, not something where specific action can necessarily be taken. I do not believe that it is about 'women's issues' like better maternity rights or flexible working.

"It is more a question of having enough people in the office and out there, both on the other side and at the client end, whose approach, whatever their gender, is similar to one's own and with whom it is easy to form effective working relationships."

Aida Cable

AIDA Cable trained as a barrister before joining Clyde & Co in 1996. Building on her first class Master's degree from Cambridge, she is now a commercial litigator with particular experience of complex, multi-party and multi-jurisdictional litigation.

She became a partner at Clyde in 2003. Her shipping practice covers all manner of bill of lading, charterparty, shipbuilding, shiprepair and ship sale-purchase disputes.

Ms Cable says: "Over the past 10 years there has been a marked increase in the

number of women practising as shipping lawyers. This reflects the shape of the legal profession as a whole and is also a consequence of the raised profile of women in all aspects of shipping business.

"Perhaps a more significant development recently has been the number of women who have achieved senior positions as partners and managers of law firms. It seems that for those that are able and willing to work hard there are no glass ceilings within the profession.

"What one would expect to see in the future is more women being appointed as arbitrators, mediators and judges. This may come about as a result of the new judicial appointment system recently implemented.

"Whether we will see more women being appointed as mediators and arbitrators will depend in part on the shipping market's willingness to use them."

Angela Maxwell

WHEN Angela Maxwell started her career as an articulated clerk at Ince & Co in 1980 she was the first female shipping lawyer to join Ince.

After four years at Ince & Co she worked for four years in the legal department of leading P & I Club, Gard.

She joined Clyde & Co in 1989 and became a partner in 1991. She specialises in shipping litigation. Her work covers all dry shipping — charterparties, ship sale and purchase, financing, management, shipbuilding, security enforcement and charterers and shiprepairers' liability.

She acts for shipowners, banks, charterers, insurers and traders.

Ms Maxwell says: "As the first female shipping solicitor at Ince & Co my nickname was 'lad' — nominated by the ex-navy office manager —

suggesting that because I wore a skirt I must be Scottish. But I do not agree that it was hard to be a woman in shipping in 1980 when I started. It was not.

"For 25 years in shipping law I have found the shipping community to be a meritocracy. I do not think it was or is a commercial area where women are truly disadvantaged, but more an area that women traditionally did not choose. It is international and fast moving. Often the financial stakes are high. For those reasons shipping is very often at the cutting edge of contract law. It is good to see a few more good women choosing shipping law."

Christina Kalimbassieris

CHRISTINA Kalimbassieris, managing director of Kalimbassieris Maritime, began her career as a claims adjuster with P&O Bulk Carriers and the London office of Poiseidon Average Adjusters.

She joined the company in 1989 and took over as managing director the following year.

In 1992, she established its first overseas office in Constantza, Romania. Building on the P&I experience acquired in Romania and an understanding of the local maritime and legislative regimes and shiprepair practices in the Black Sea, the firm opened its first Bulgarian office in Varna in 1996, followed a year later by an office in Bourgas.

"Success in the shipping industry has nothing to do with gender," she says. "The critical success factors are expertise and a commitment to first class service, factors that have everything to do with personality and drive and nothing to do with what sex a person is."

Women keep maritime industry on the boil

Maria Dixon is grateful to the males in shipping for their support in her hectic business career — but relates that along the way there have been a few hilarious misunderstandings

SOME 12 years ago, when I was the head of shipping and the Panamanian consulate in London was in the City, I used to offer tea or coffee and biscuits at the transaction closing meetings.

I used to wear an apron and serve the coffee myself. It was a custom that everyone coming to the consulate appreciated during those tortuous, nerve-racking, never-ending closing meetings.

One day we had a registration and the buyer was a Greek shipowner who had never visited us before.

While the meeting was getting under way I served the coffee.

Having finished that, I took off my apron and sat at the table where about 10 solicitors, brokers and bankers were about to start the transaction.

The shipowner was gobsmacked, asking if it was me who was going to register his ship.

After a while, we all had a laugh. He had thought I was the tea lady!

Perhaps this is the best way to illustrate how, by getting to know our capabilities, our male colleagues have

little by little accepted us, encouraged us and let us be part of the industry.

I was born in Madrid, educated in Venezuela and Spain, studied economics and journalism and have lived in London for almost 26 years, although I have adopted Panama in my heart as my country.

My career in shipping started in 1980 at the consulate of Panama in London, where I progressed from an assistant in the shipping department to the head of shipping, working there until 1998.

That year, I founded ISM Shipping Solutions, a consulting firm to assist solicitors, shipowners and the shipping industry generally.

Having qualified as an ISM auditor, through my company I provide multiple services in registration of ships, fraud investigations and consultancy to a number of international shipowners, solicitors, P&I clubs and security specialists on the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code.

My work includes advising shipping administrations on maritime policies and

regulations and individual companies that seek special authorisation from administrations on different issues.

Until last summer, I was collaborating with the Panamanian consulate in London, an involvement that I found was widely welcomed by hundreds of users.

One of my hobbies is to write regularly for the maritime weekly supplement *Mirador Marítimo* in a Panamanian newspaper, and from time to time I contribute articles to Lloyd's List.

A few years ago, I formed a Spanish-speaking news group on the internet on maritime issues.

During my shipping career I have chaired thousands of closings in transactions dealing with all aspects of registration of ships and mortgage, securing millions of tonnes and millions of dollars by ensuring that deadlines are met for shipowners and banks.

I have trained during these years many of the lawyers who now are seniors and partners in the principal international law firms in London and worldwide in Panamanian procedures.

I conceived three main programmes. The first involved changing the way Panama authenticated documents, producing an increase in the country's revenue after the first year of implementation.

The second was solving the problems arising from the clash of the 1969 and 1992 Marpol conventions by preparing the contingency plan in which Panama, and later Malta, came to the rescue by issuing the CLC Certificates (1969 convention) for tankers under the 1992 regime.

And the third was accomplishing the first bareboat charter between Spain and Panama by proposing and then preparing the wording on the documentation to be accepted by both registries.

In the 1990s I had the honour to be appointed a member of the steering committee of the International Maritime Industries Forum, being the second woman in 25 years to take such a role.

I have been a member of the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association since 1992, and started the British newsletter.

I also arranged and designed the first British and

international web pages for Wista.

In 1998, at the Wista New York conference, I gave a workshop on internet use at a time when few people had grasped the full significance of e-mail, list serve and web pages and how to use it in our daily work.

I was pleased to organise many events for the Wista shipping calendar for 2000, co-ordinating with many countries that contributed children's drawings. Sales proceeds of the calendar went to the IMO children's charity.

Since 2002, I have been giving presentations on the ISPS code since it was still in preparation at the IMO. A couple of years ago I co-ordinated a meeting between ISO and the MIT port in Panama to start a pilot programme testing seals for containers for the ISPS Code.

My activities do not stop at the end of my desk. Whenever possible I will board a ship or visit a port to stay in touch with practical "shipping life".

I have transited the Panama Canal a few times and have even climbed up the ladder to accompany the pilots and ensure that I know what life at sea means for everyone.

At present, my company represents two large and important groups within the industry, a Panamanian company in Europe that offers radio telecommunication services for ships and acts as an Inmarsat Point of Service Activation for the radio terminals on board, and a well known Spanish maritime lawyers' group. I have also been working on a project with a Norwegian company that will be a breakthrough in the industry.

In shipping there is never a dull moment. From boarding the *Communicator*, where the pirate radio Laser was illegally broadcasting, to dealing with casualties and tragedy on the high seas, to naming ceremonies, travelling constantly and training constantly in an ever-changing industry.

Life in the shipping industry is hard, but I have to thank all the professional men in the industry who have taught me so much and have respected and supported me.

Without them my career would never have been the same.

To all of them my thanks and sincere gratitude for having given me the chance and the opportunity to be part of a great industry. Maria Dixon is head of ISM Shipping Solutions.



Part of a great industry, Maria Dixon says: 'In shipping there is never a dull moment.'



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Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA) is an international organization for women involved in the maritime transportation business and related trades to support and facilitate the exchange of contacts and experiences and to promote the continuing education and networking opportunities among members and with other related institutions and organizations worldwide.

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