Stanley, Jo (Hull University. Maritime Historical Studies Centre and Lancaster University Centre of Mobilities Research, CeMoRE), *Pioneering sea women: what helped them break through – and climb to the top.*

Worldwide women are a minority in the maritime labour force. Despite 45 years of equal opportunities legislation women still tend to be ghettoised in low-grade jobs and hotel-side jobs, and work mainly on cruise ships and ferries. This global survey, from 1930 to the present, focuses on the women who made the biggest leaps: deck and engineering officers post 1970s.

This paper aims to explore the ten key factors that enabled women to not only break through into the industry but stay in it. The maritime industry’s  ‘Leaking Pipeline’ syndrome (the way women leave the industry en route to the top) has been partly caused by the conflict of desire to have family versus an industry that is not family-friendly, and by discriminatory behaviour by employers and colleagues.

Building on the author’s study of UK women seafarers history since the 1750s, this highly-illustrated study uses a range of data including interviews, trades union archives, newspapers, and online mariners’ chatrooms. Creating a chronology of achievement, it examines the main known pioneers, from engineer Victoria Drummond (1920s) through to Myrna Galang Daite who in 1999 became the Philippines’ first woman to become a ship´s officer to today’s cruise ship captain such as Lis Lauritzen. The particular focus is on what enables seafaring women. What helps women enter the industry is:

1. Mentors
2. Family backing – even as shipowners
3. Education
4. Role models, examplars
5. Shortages of labour – women as reserve

What helps women staying in the industry includes:

1. Equal opportunities legislation, policies and practices (enforced)
2. Networking
3. Formal support incl. unions
4. Family-friendly employers
5. Other women’s successes too

Finally this presentation explores how women’s seafaring future will be affected by this maritime past and these pioneering women’s struggles and legacy. ‘What will help more women go to sea is more women going to sea’, say UK campaigners. Initiatives like Nautilus International’s Victoria Drummond Award (for women who’ve made an exceptional contribution to the maritime industry);  employer-led moves to actively recruit and retain women; and enforced IMO guidelines on shipboard practices are ensuring that the discriminatory past does not have to repeat itself.