



PRESS RELEASE

Boatbuilding training buoyant in Falmouth after 100 years

It's been 100 years of smooth sailing for Falmouth Marine School as the maritime education specialist reaches an incredible anniversary.

In 2020, staff and students from the historic institution celebrated a centenary of providing training for the boatbuilding industry, an integral part of the maritime history of Cornwall.

As a site of education, the School can trace its history back to 1825, when it was originally known as the Falmouth Classical and Mathematical School, providing education in Latin, Greek, French and mathematics to the residents of a rapidly growing Falmouth harbour.

On the 1st October, 1920, 96 apprentices from Cox & Co (Falmouth Docks) began their boatbuilding apprenticeships with the School.

After the Second World War, in the early 1950s the school became a technical college offering its first full-time boatbuilding course and in 1980 it became Falmouth Marine School, part of The Cornwall College Group.

Today the College is recognised as one of the leading educators in the region and beyond for its diverse courses, which include marine engineering, marine science and watersports courses, as well as continuing with its boatbuilding provision.

Located in the heart of the boatbuilding industry at Ponshardon, the boatbuilding courses and apprenticeships equip students with both traditional and modern boatbuilding techniques.

It is the only place where students can gain specialist training with access to dedicated workshops in both traditional and new wood techniques as well as in the latest range of composites.

And it is their achievements and stories that showcase the value of the courses to the community and around the world.

Falmouth local Ben Davis secured the position of wing manager for Ben Ainslie's America Cup team thanks to his expertise in boat technology gained at Falmouth Marine School.

He said his course "provided me with a fantastic stepping stone for my career".

"The most important thing I learnt is laminating epoxy systems, which is now what I'm using every day as wing manager," he added.

Live projects are an integral part of the boatbuilding courses, students have built a prototype for a new generation of sailboat, worked on the creation of a replica Viking boat for an exhibition at the National Maritime Museum Cornwall and built a Viking Prow, for a centre piece at Chelsea garden Show, to name a few.

Charlotte Ray, aged 33, is one of the students that worked on the sailboat prototype for Peter Crockford.

"It's such valuable experience to work on a boat that will be used at a professional level," she explained.

"To be part of something using latest techniques on a brand new design that no one else has ever built before is mind blowing, I don't think any other college offers this level of engagement and development for their students."

Matt Smitheran, aged 17, worked on the building of a 15ft skiff for a client, something he called "a fantastic experience".

"On the boatbuilding course we learn all the various boatbuilding and composite skills, but to put them all together and build a boat is really rewarding," he explained.

The students' current project is the restoration of St Michaels Mount Post boat for the National Trust and St Aubyn Estates. Build in 1954 the 14ft Sciff was used to transport post to St Michaels Mount.

The Post boat is a heavily constructed clinker vessel, built with 3/8th pine or larch planking over oak steam frames. Starting at the stem she requires a number of structural repairs and replacement of some worn and cracked planking.

Head of Falmouth Marine School Steve Taylor said everyone at the School was “extremely proud of our history and our place in Falmouth’s maritime history”.

“All of our courses focuses on the skills and knowledge needed by the industry, thus ensuring that our students are fully employable when they leave us,” he continued.

“We work with a multitude of employers on live projects and work experience placements. This provides the students with first class experience in the industry which is proving to lead directly to employment.”

If you would like to study at Falmouth Marine School please visit www.falmouthmarineschool.ac.uk or call 01326310310.

ENDS