

Fiona Cain in The Law Society Gazette: Diversity in the Royal Navy and the Legal Profession

February 23, 2024 Fiona Cain

Haynes Boone Counsel [Fiona Cain](#) authored an article for *The Law Society Gazette* alongside Commander Ally Pollard of the Royal Navy to discuss their experiences of diversity in the workplace and how the focus has changed during their careers.

Read an excerpt below:

The Chinese proverb 'We help each other in the same boat and move forward hand in hand' seems apt for Ally and my discussion about diversity. Our careers have both centred around ships, Ally having served in numerous warships, while I have resolved countless issues regarding ship construction.

We both started our careers over 25 years ago, having grown up in England at a time when there was a queen on the throne and a female prime minister. For Ally, as a teenager, this helped her believe that being a woman should not prevent her taking on any career; she thought it would be an exciting time to join the Royal Navy and to take on the challenge of being one of the first female Royal Naval officers at sea (even though women had only been permitted to serve at sea on operational warships since 1991 and, prior to 1993, women - except nurses - in the Royal Navy served as members of the separate Women's Royal Naval Service branch). As a lieutenant, Ally became one of the first women to command a Royal Navy warship and, more recently, as a Commander, commanding the Type 23 Duke Class Frigate, HMS Northumberland.

When I joined the legal profession in the 1990s, women had been practising as solicitors for 70 years. Through the likes of Ally McBeal and This Life, TV showed us the perceived life of a female lawyer. Even so, when I qualified as a solicitor at the turn of the century, two thirds of the profession were still male. I had completed my training contract at a new and dynamic law firm, Curtis Davis Garrard (which merged with Haynes Boone in 2016), but I had only one female colleague, an associate, and as I was representing clients in the male dominated shipping industry, it was rare to have female clients or female role models in my professional circle.

We have both witnessed a positive change in the diversity of our respective workplaces over the course of our careers. Across Haynes Boone's 19 offices worldwide, 53% of my colleagues are now diverse (disability, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ+ and race) and 26% of the partnership are women. For the Royal Navy, 10.7% of Regular Forces and 16.5% of Reserves are women. These statistics have been assisted by initiatives like the 'Made in the Royal Navy' ad campaign which shows a Royal Navy career is possible regardless of gender and race.

To read the full article in *The Law Society Gazette*, click [here](#).