

The Swimming Seamstress

From sewing to swimming to stitching swimsuits

Seamstress Amanda Bowden found her way to the water through sewing and now helps people design and create their own swimwear with her business The Swimming Seamstress. “Having a decent swimsuit on your body is not going to fix you, but it might give a little nudge towards feeling a bit better,” says Amanda. “This can get you into the water and then hopefully that experience will takeover and pull you along.”

Amanda started out as a teacher in schools, teaching textiles in the design and technology department. But after a period of illness and a breakdown, Amanda realised she needed a change. “I loved teaching and the children but the teaching environment wasn’t going to suit me anymore,” says Amanda. “I needed to do something and take back some control, so I decided to set up my own sewing school.” With a background in fashion and textiles Amanda’s school really took off. She taught pattern cutting, dressmaking and various craft-based subjects and then one of her students who had enrolled on a six-week dressmaking class asked about making a swimsuit. “I had never made a swimming costume, but I knew how to cut patterns and figure out a way around fabric,” she says. “So I suggested working together with a collaborative approach, because I am not a swimwear specialist, we could figure it out together.”

Four weeks into the course Amanda asked her student why she wanted to design and make her own swimsuit when they are so readily available. “I am a chatty person and found out she was a sea swimmer,” says Amanda. “When I asked her what sort of swimming she had done, she was quite modest and reluctant to tell me much. So I asked, what’s the furthest distance you have swam and she told me she had swam to France!” Amanda was so excited to have a Channel swimmer in



Amanda Bowden in her Channel inspired swimsuit

her class she told the everyone “to put their needles down”. “I had never met a channel swimmer before, to me they were like unicorns.” The conversation quickly turned to Amanda and whether she swam. “I have always been a bit of a water baby but never done any proper swimming,” she says. “So I was invited to go for a swim in the sea with her. I think I did about seven minutes of clumsy front crawl before getting sea sick, but when I got out I felt amazing.”

Amanda set out to do some longer swims, starting with a five kilometre pool swim and then a six kilometre sea swim and got the bug for marathon swimming. She started training and seeking swimsuits. “I have quite a colourful disposition and don’t tend to wear dark clothing,” she says. “I could only find suits that were black, blue with skirts and

buckles! So I thought, right, I will make my own swimming costume.” She started making her own swimwear for herself, really enjoyed it and other people started to notice them. “I set up a couple of courses at my school and people went bananas for them!” Amanda now runs a two-day course to design and make your own swimsuit across the UK and virtually too. Her swimming has taken off, swimming the Channel with a relay team and as well as offering a swimming course in Jersey this year, she will be doing it while waiting for a window to open for her to solo swim from Jersey to France! 🇬🇧

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