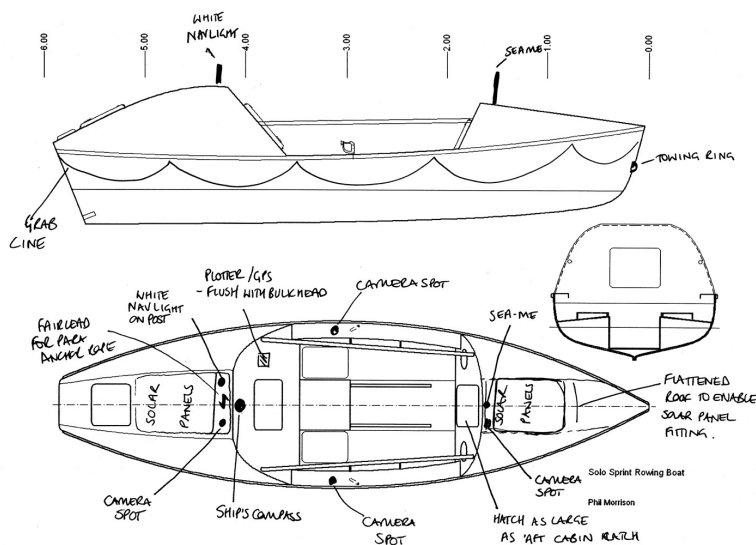


computer programming. He would have been so interested in the gadgetry and wizardry of all that, particularly about the training, planning that goes on behind the scenes and the navigation. He used to sail when he was younger. I remember, too, he always had this maxim: 'If you can't take a joke, you shouldn't have joined'. Whenever I'm doing something I don't enjoy, I remember his words."

Dedicated to the memory of her father, Sarah is planning to raise £20,000 for the Arthritis Research Campaign, in addition to a £100,000 target to run the rowing challenge. She is fearlessly ambitious and determined to achieve her goal. She wants to be not only the first woman to row solo across the Indian Ocean but also the fastest and youngest person. Only two men have made successful crossings of this dangerous ocean under oar: Simon Chalk in 2003 and John Williams in 2007. Is she really prepared to break and make all the records?

"Yes!" she replies enthusiastically. "A lot of it will come down to the weather. If the weather's with me, it could be very good. If the weather's against me, it might be really awful. I've been given advice to start



A drawing of Sarah's boat which is under construction.

as far south as I can. If the currents are southeasterly, they'll push you up north fairly quickly. With regard to beating the men's record, I'm quite bulky compared to a lot of girls. I'm going in a smaller, faster boat too."

Sarah admits to some fears.

"Shipping traffic. I will try to head away, but if I do come into contact I will just have to hope and pray. The big cargo ships can't see you. They can't always change their course quick enough. You have to make yourself as visible as possible or call them up on the radio."

Sarah will also be on the lookout for wildlife as she sights dolphins and birds for the WDCS (Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society) and the RSPB.

She is aware there could be unwelcome visitors, too.

"Sharks could become interested and rub their bellies along the boat. I don't think it would be necessarily malicious. The boat is made from carbon fibre and is super strong. It's actually more sunstroke and dehydration that are the problems. Equally, hypothermia. If I go into the water, hopefully I will be tied on and I'll be able to get back in the boat quite easily."

Sarah exudes such a strong feeling of confidence and self-belief. There must be something that really frightens her.

"Sure, I wouldn't like to admit it, but sometimes you can get this self doubt. Gosh, can I really do that? Another part of me says yes, of course you can do this. My biggest fear is not getting the sponsorship. It's just happened to a friend of mine. A larger expedition with four people to the South Pole, but they were £350,000 short. I try not to think about it too much. There's no point in worrying about it."

She adds: "People often say the biggest challenge is to get to the starting line. I've

got time on my side. I'm keen to launch it properly, making it credible. I'm very serious about it. As a solo female, I hope that's very attractive for sponsorship."

Sarah has certainly made an impressive start. Her family and friends are all very supportive. Her website, www.sarahouten.co.uk, is up and running with a wealth of information. She has already gained support from food and organic cosmetic companies. She is keen to secure backing from local and national companies for mutual publicity. A potential TV documentary and book publication is also in the pipeline. You can even sponsor Sarah by a mile for £25. All the details are on Sarah's website.

With the memory of her father, her total resolve and determination, Sarah is set to make rowing history.

"From a young age, I have wanted to do something big. I knew from the age of 14 that I really wanted to row. I liked the power of the blade through the water, moving yourself along. While rowing at university, I found out about ocean going races. That's what I want to do. I love being at sea. I love rowing. What better way to do it than row across the ocean? This just feels right."

You can help Sarah succeed for just £25

If you have been inspired by Sarah's story, you can help her reach her fund-raising target.

Sponsor her for a mile for £25 – and your name will be grafted on to the cockpit of Sarah's boat. Simply send a cheque (made payable to Sarah Outen Ltd) with your name and address to: Sarah Outen, 25 Buckingham Road, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6RX.

Alternatively, you can pay via Sarah's website at www.sarahouten.co.uk