

## Coastal Notes

On 28<sup>th</sup> November, yachtswoman Ellen MacArthur set off on her latest record breaking round the world trip. This time she is trying to beat Francis Joyon's time of 72 days, 22 hours, 54 minutes and 22 seconds set in February of this year.

Ellen's 75 foot trimaran, 'B & Q', has been extensively refitted over the summer, with every aspect of the vessel having to be as near perfect as is humanly possible. One important innovation that Ellen hopes will never have to be used is a remotely activated life raft, which could save her life if she were to be washed overboard.

'B & Q' is fitted with a host of electronic wizardry that will enable Ellen to monitor what is happening at any part of the boat, from the sails and mast to the 3 hulls. Autopilot will allow her to snatch some sleep, but she is unlikely to get more than 30-40 minutes at a stretch.

Already, 10 days into the race, she has broken the record to the Equator and is now 11 hours and 34 minutes ahead of Francis Joyon's time. There's still a long way to go and lots can happen before February 9<sup>th</sup> at 4 minutes past 7 in the morning; that's when she has to cross the finishing line to set a new record.

Ellen has come a long way since she was in Stonehaven in 1995 during her round Britain trip in 'Iduna'. She had been ill in Montrose, but felt well enough to continue. The indomitable person who had saved her dinner money for eight years to buy her first boat wasn't going to be beaten by stomach pains! How often since then has that diminutive frame shown just the same determination?

As she came up the coast the clear day turned to fog. She had no means of seeing vessels other than eyeballing them, so decided to get close in to the shore to keep out of the way and hoisted her radar reflector. As a precaution, she called the Coastguard to let them know that she was tacking up the coast in fog; this would also have let any shipping in the vicinity know where she was.

MRI picked up her call to the Coastguard. They, as it happened, had just installed a new piece of equipment, specifically designed to find a vessel purely with a radio signal. This was a chance to try it out on a small vessel close inshore, always the most difficult kind to track down. MRI 38 duly found 'Iduna' and escorted her safely into harbour. The next morning MRI's engineer sorted a small problem with the outboard engine for her, then she set off north on her journey. Just to the north of Stonehaven she was entranced to be accompanied by a school of dolphins, her first experience of dolphins in the wild.

Since that time Ellen has kept in touch with MRI and we all wish her well with her latest adventure.

To keep track of Ellen's progress in her record attempt, visit [www.teamellen.com](http://www.teamellen.com). There are web cams, photos, audio clips, along with the latest weather and race statistics available to download. At the moment she is trying to slip down a corridor between a high off St Helena and low pressure developing off the Brazilian coast.

*'It's going to be actually quite difficult to sit between the high and the low because if we go too far south, and go behind the front of the low the sea conditions will be terrible and there will be no wind, and if we go into the north into the high we will lose the wind completely and we won't be able to stay in the gap, so timing is going to be absolutely crucial. It may pay off, it may not, but we don't really have any choice - we've got to go through that gap and we've got to hope we make it so it's going to be*

*very, very important to get the timing right and get the boat sailing as fast as I possibly can to get through that gap to spit us out into the Southern Ocean*'. Quote from Ellen's website.

'Taking on the World', Ellen MacArthur, 2002

For further information or to get involved with MRI as a volunteer, please contact 01569 765768 or email [hamish.mcdonald@btconnect.com](mailto:hamish.mcdonald@btconnect.com).