

LIA DITTON ON THE FARADAY MILL OSTAR 2005

The race itself is only one part of a successful campaign. The race to find a boat; the money; qualify for the race and then prepare for the start of the race should not pass unmentioned. Two corporate sponsors had slithered through my fingers in the course of a year and so by Christmas 2004, with only 5 months counting down, I was going to be hard pushed to find another.

Shockwave was the fourth boat with which I had hoped to enter the OSTAR and I am enormously indebted to her owner, Ralph Marx, for entertaining the notion of her charter. Optimism for finding another sponsor remained until late March, but thereafter readying the boat was all consuming. With all new rigging, an entire instrument and energy set-up to install from scratch, there was certainly plenty to do. But the OSTAR is a true Corinthian challenge and a long list of people lent a hand. Twenty one companies in total provided gear, a service or a substantial discount and their enthusiasm for the project motivated me to see it through.

The refit of *Shockwave* was a far cry from the preparations I had been involved with in readying the legendary trimaran *Moxie* for a transatlantic west to east back in September 2002. Staying with the owner's sister, we enjoyed fantastic home-cooked meals and the odd evening glass of wine by an open fire. In comparison, by the end of January I was forced financially to relinquish my rented accommodation in London. From then on I resided in the yard in a small caravan, once intended as an office. Ellen McArthur may have lived in a Portacabin, but at least I enjoyed home furnishings.

Life improved dramatically with the addition of a Tesco value microwave, powerful enough to fry garlic. I was delighted when a yacht named Sapphire offloaded a year's supply of porridge oats, tinned food and a couple of kilos of cheddar! The caravan experience provided an invaluable crash course in being thrifty with electricity. I spent most nights with the heater off, watching the microwave go round in the dark. Inevitably I grew sick of baked beans, mixed vegetables and cheese. By April I found myself looking forward to freeze dried food.

I had set out to cross the Atlantic alone, but building a shed over *Shockwave* – a 14 x 10 x 3 metre bungalow, (when you are 5 ft 8ins with only two arms) appeared at the time a greater challenge. In an attempt to overcome this, I adopted the MFI flat-pack concept and constructed the frames in the car park. I hoped that this would attract assistance first thing on Monday morning, if anyone wished to park their car. With the frames successfully resting on the boat I was very grateful to the entire crew of a 200 foot power boat who not gave up their evenings to help me put the frames together but also fed me. Naturally I was sorry to see them depart.

Shockwave, known among some as the Shuttlecock after its designer John Shuttleworth, was everything that I expected her to be on the water. Although only offering a luxurious 8ft by 3ft of cabin space, *Shockwave* is a good solid offshore boat. Two major low pressure systems, which annihilated half of the trimaran fleet and all bar one Open 40, put this to the test. The consequence of lack of budget before the start appeared during the qualifying passage. In the early hours one morning I discovered two jets of water forcing their way from the forward compartment into the main cabin - round the speed and depth cables. I had given much consideration to re-glassing the dagger board case, just as I had to replacing the survival hatch which leaked profusely, but

