



Lions Clubs International British Isles & Ireland

PRESS RELEASE

Marketing & PR Committee

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Quadriplegic Lions Club member Hilary Lister sails into the record books

Lion Hilary Lister sailed into the record books this evening when, arriving at Dover, she became the first quadriplegic female to sail single-handed around Britain and the east coast of Ireland.

Lions Club member, Hilary, sailed clockwise around the coasts of England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland, encountering the full range of maritime weather conditions from dead calm to gales and at times through extremely difficult sailing conditions. Calling at 46 ports on the way, she and her Support Team, received enthusiastic and dedicated local assistance arranging port and overnight facilities and generous hospitality by Lions Club members at 37 of her stopover points, as well as donations for her Trust Fund from many other Lions Clubs.

Lions Club members across the British Isles & Ireland applaud Hilary's fantastic success in achieving her Dream.

Background

Hilary Lister, is a member of Whitstable & Herne Bay Lions Club, and is aged 37. She first experienced daily pain from ankle to thigh at the age of 13 and by the age of 15 was confined to a wheelchair. Her medical condition was subsequently diagnosed as a progressive neurological disorder - Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD) – which meant that over the coming years, as she grew into a young woman, she would gradually lose the use of almost all of her body whilst still leaving her in incredible pain.

Just before Hilary married Clifford in 1999, she began to lose the use of her hands and arms and could no longer continue her work as a biochemist, but more than that, the most basic tasks, like eating and washing, suddenly had to be done for her. With her condition worsening, Hilary was forced to give up her life bit by bit and her independence. A miracle occurred when a friend introduced her to sailing. It was the first time she had left the house in three months. Within a few minutes of being at the lake however, out in the wind and sunshine again, she had fallen in love with sailing and had found a new reason for living. It provided a fresh impetus and transformed life for Hilary.

Hilary's condition now is such that she is only able to move her head, eyes and mouth. She lives in Kent with her husband Clifford and their chocolate Labrador, Lotti. Her home is wheelchair friendly and equipped with modern technology allowing her to use her computer through voice recognition. Through a switch she operates with her forehead, Hilary is able to control some of her environment, like changing channels on the television, answering the phone and opening the front door. However, she relies totally on her husband, carers and friends to manage so much of her life for her. When Hilary says "sailing saved my life", she means it.

It was Hilary's longing to be independent, to grasp the freedom that was almost within reach, which gave rise to her dream to sail across the English Channel. At a visit to the Boat Show, the Royal Yachting Association offered to help with training with 'Day Skipper' and 'Competent Crew' courses and basic radio operation. In return, they would provide help through the UKSA who would teach Hilary to sail a boat, once she had a boat she could sail. She also met Emma Richards who had sailed around the world in 2002. With Emma's help her sponsor (Pindar) lent her a boat, and on August 23rd, 2005, Hilary achieved her dream of sailing single handed across the Channel in 6 hours 13 minutes and entered the record books for completing the world's longest sail by a quadriplegic.

Almost immediately, Hilary started dreaming of her next challenge – to sail solo round the British Isles ! Pindar came to her assistance again, putting Hilary in touch with Artemis, a firm of global fund managers and sponsors of the Artemis 20 race series. They agreed to provide Hilary with a modified Artemis 20. The boat was modified to provide all functions, including setting the sails, and steering, to be controlled by Hilary's breath through a "sip and puff" interface. By sucking or blowing down three straws she can control the yacht throughout the passage.

Hilary set sail from Dover accompanied by her 'wet' crew of 3 in the support boat and her 'dry' crew of 3 in the three land vehicles which would become the team's 'home' for the next 3-4 months. The many Lions Clubs along Hilary's route around England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland also assisted her with local support, facilities, publicity and receptions.

Conscious of how lucky she has been to be given the opportunity to fulfil her own dreams, Hilary is acutely aware of how difficult it can be for disabled or otherwise disadvantaged adults to achieve similar goals. As a legacy to her own achievements, Hilary has formed her own registered charity, 'Hilary's Dream Trust', to hopefully make such opportunities available. During her round Britain challenge, Hilary has raised money for the charity, with the help of local Lions Clubs.

During her circumnavigation, Hilary faced many challenges and obstacles. However, nobody who knows her, or is aware of her achievements to date, doubted her ability to achieve her dream; she is a remarkable young woman.

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