

## The FriendShip Atlantic – Rowing the Atlantic Ocean

In December 2022, we set off as a team of four brothers (Jack, Hamish, Arthur and Euan Friend) to take on the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge (now known as the World's Toughest Row). Our aim was to row 3,000 miles unsupported from La Gomera in the Canary Islands to Antigua in the Caribbean, while raising funds for three charities: Drive Forward Foundation, CHAT (Mid Devon), and Kiwoko Hospital in Uganda.

We are proud to say that we became the first four brothers to row across any ocean.

The challenge itself was both physical and mental. Living in a small ocean rowing boat for over a month, we rowed in two-hour shifts, 24 hours a day, facing sleep deprivation, extreme weather, and the constant demands of navigation, nutrition, and boat maintenance. In total, we completed approximately 1.5 million oar strokes and lost an average of 10-15kg in body weight each over the course of the crossing.

We completed the row in 32 days, 20 hours and 18 minutes, finishing 3rd out of over 40 teams in a highly competitive field and achieving one of the top ten fastest Atlantic crossings of all time. Alongside this, we successfully raised £120,000 for our chosen charities through fundraising efforts before, during and after the race.

The support from the Marshall Fund was critical in enabling us to take on this challenge. The funding contributed directly to specialist ocean rowing training with an experienced coach. This preparation was essential not only to meet the rigorous safety and race entry requirements, but also to ensure we were physically and mentally equipped for the realities of life at sea. Without this support, it would have been significantly more difficult to reach the start line in a safe and competitive position.

Beyond the statistics and achievements, the experience had a lasting personal impact on all of us. Spending over a month at sea together brought us closer as brothers and taught us valuable lessons that we continue to carry into our lives.

The Atlantic is an unforgiving but remarkable place. Completing this challenge together, while raising meaningful funds for charity, is something we will carry with us for the rest of our lives.

We are extremely grateful to the Marshall Fund and the RCC for their support in helping make this possible.

### **Some photos showing the journey to the start line and across the Atlantic:**

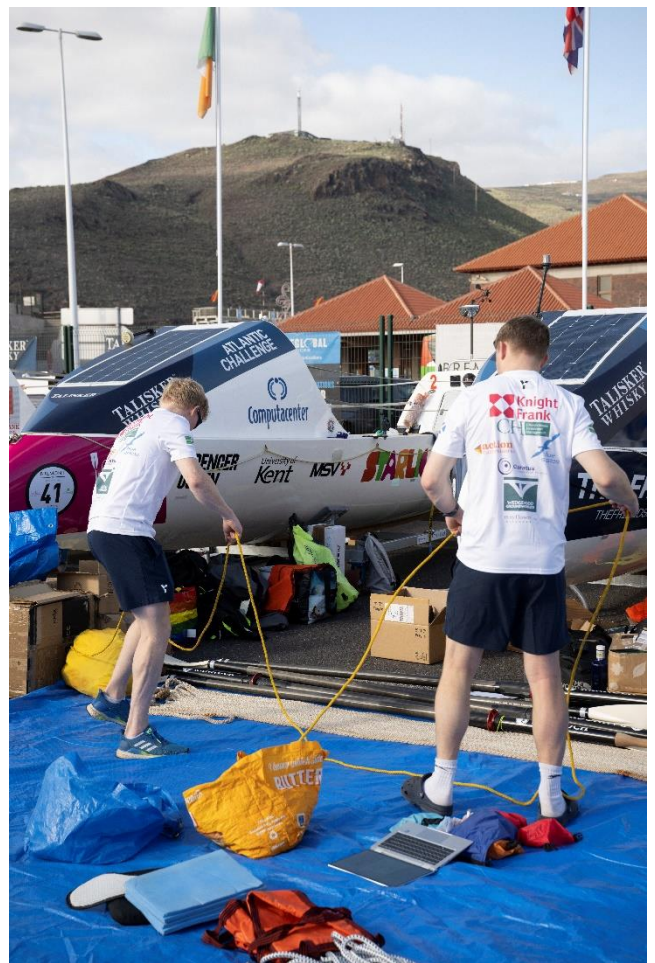


#### **Training in the South West, UK**

We spent two years training out of Exmouth Marina in Lyme Bay, building from basic boat handling on “Eppy” (named after our wonderful Granny) to multi day rows, often training 24 hours a day to simulate life on the Atlantic. One challenge we regularly faced in Exmouth, thankfully absent offshore, was the strong tides. Get that wrong as skipper and you quickly find yourself with a very unhappy crew, grinding against a 3 knot tide just to make it back to the marina in time for fish and chips.

## Fundraising launch at St Paul's, Hammersmith

Our campaign began with a launch event, charity ball and auction at St Paul's in Hammersmith, London. It marked the starting point of our fundraising efforts and set the tone for the challenge ahead. Thanks to the generosity of friends, family and supporters on the night, we built early momentum that carried through the entire campaign, ultimately helping us raise £120,000 for our chosen charities.



## Final preparations in La Gomera, Canary Islands

The final two weeks before the race were spent in La Gomera, working through rigorous safety and knowledge inspections with race organisers and safety officers. Every element of the boat had to be checked and approved, from communications and emergency systems to food, kit and medical supplies. We carefully prepared everything needed to sustain four of us at sea for over a month, knowing there would be no support once we left shore. Alongside the practical preparations, we spent time getting to know the other crews, an inspiring group of people all taking on the same challenge.



### Final training row and race start

In the final days before departure, we completed a last training row around the island to test all systems under race conditions and make sure everything was working as it should. With checks complete, we returned to shore for emotional goodbyes with family before an early morning start. Soon after, we were on the start line alongside the rest of the fleet, setting off into the Atlantic.



### The highs of life on the Atlantic

There were moments that made everything worthwhile. Sunrises and sunsets in the middle of the ocean, complete isolation from the outside world, and the rare chance to spend uninterrupted time together. Life was reduced to a simple rhythm of two hours rowing, two hours resting, repeated around the clock. Alongside the race and growing competition, there was a constant sense of the scale and beauty of the Atlantic that we were lucky enough to experience firsthand.



### The lows of life on the Atlantic

Not every moment was picturesque. Storms in the night brought large waves crashing over the boat, leaving us constantly soaked, cold and exhausted. The period between Christmas and New Year was particularly tough, both in terms of weather and being away from home. Physically, the challenge took its toll, with severe salt sores and blisters on hands and seats making every stroke painful. On top of that, the realities of living on freeze dried rations led to some fairly brutal gastrointestinal issues! It was during these moments that resilience and teamwork mattered most.



### The finish line in Antigua

Crossing the finish line in the early hours of the morning after 32 days at sea was an unforgettable moment. Seeing our partners, family and friends who had been tracking and supporting us the entire way across was incredibly special. The journey had been tough, but it was made possible by the support of so many people rooting for us from start to finish. The contribution from the NMCF played a key role in that journey, and we are hugely grateful for their support.