

Looking for Inspiration

By Mike Trippitt

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"Please do me a favour. If you know Peter Berry's number, phone him and ask him to say a prayer for me - I don't think I am going to make this. God, I am so sorry."

A woman, Lisa Clayton, sent that fax message on 2nd March 1995. The late Peter Berry was the Dean of Birmingham, and although it is 25 years since I first read the fear and desperation in the sender's words, emotion still wells within me.

"I don't think I am going to make this."

Lisa's fax was to Peter Harding her project director; for she was alone aboard her little yacht The Spirit of Birmingham, in the depths of the Southern Ocean, in a roaring storm.

In her book, *At The Mercy of The Sea*, published after her safe return, Lisa described her solo circumnavigation in chilling and frightening detail. It's a book that can change your world: how you value life and people; how you cherish what you have; and how you seize opportunity. It changed me.

Since then, Lisa Clayton has lived life out of the public eye, but she was, and remains, the first woman ever to have sailed single-handed, non-stop and unassisted around the world.

This year an East Anglian woman was once more in the Southern Ocean. Most will not have heard her name: she appears on no 'A' list; no red carpet; and on no glossy magazine.

But alone, and thousands of mile from land, Pip Hare took on the forces of nature as Lisa Clayton had done 26 years before her.

Pip competed in The Vendee Globe 2020/21 single-handed round-the-world yacht race, but unlike Lisa Clayton, she was able to share her travails and challenges with an audience watching on social media.

Her commitment, tenacity, strength, resolve and courage defy words. She is a role model for anyone looking to push themselves to the limit of their endurance, or seeking to make the most of the opportunities that life presents, or to those battling the adversities it throws at us.

Yet we've barely heard of Pip Hare, and we hardly know of Lisa Clayton.

We all seek out role models and super heroes to admire, to emulate and to motivate us. But perhaps when we do, we should not look to our sports stadia, the world's stages and big screens, or to the boulevards of our tinsel-towns.

Perhaps we should stand on an isolated shore with the wind in our hair staring out to sea. If we look hard enough we might see a small boat sailing by, and at the same time catch a glimpse of someone who will truly inspire us.

Last issue

We received the following from interested reader (Mr M. B) who supplied the following informative comments, having read the article 'Four Candles in the Fens' – Issue: Jan/Feb 2021; 'Musing'.

Congratulations on your feature on aspects of Fen Skating at Bury (Berry) Fen. Unfortunately, the skates shown are not Fen Runners but Speed Skates, possibly Norwegian Style. I have attached a picture of my Father's Fen Runner. They are fixed to a pair of wooden feet for display purposes.

Fen Runners were the skates for the masses – and for men – normally attached to their work boots. A long screw come vertically out of the heel end of the skates and screwed into the heel end of the boot, the rest of the skate was attached to the boot by three straps.



Fen Runners
Credit: Mr M.B, St Ives