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# GO EARTH INTERVIEW WITH TRACY EDWARDS

## PART 1

This transcript is of an interview with Tracy Edwards, MBE. The interviewer was Martin Berman of Go Earth. The interview provides a fascinating insight into the life and times of one of the most famous yachswomen of modern times.

The interview will be serialised in this, and future, editions of Boat Trader. Below is part one.

**Go Earth:** Welcome everybody, I am Martin Berman from Go Earth and I'm absolutely delighted to welcome Tracy Edwards MBE.

Tracy is perhaps most famous for skippering an all-female crew to great success during the 1989 Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race.

Her fame stems in part from the sad fact that most male sailors simply thought it was impossible for an all-female crew to compete for success – and how very wrong did Tracy and the crew prove them to be.

However, let us start at the beginning. What were you like at school Tracy? It has been said that you originally wanted to be a ballet dancer.

### EARLY YEARS

**Tracy Edwards:** My mum was a ballet dancer, so it was always thought that I would follow in her in her footsteps - and I did go to arts and drama school. I was never suited to being a dancer though, much more of an actress, always the drama queen.

Those were happy times because I lived with a happy, middle class family with nothing to complain about.

Sadly, my father died when I was 10 and everything in my life changed. My mother unfortunately met a man who she married, and he became my stepfather. He sold up where we were living and moved us to Wales, which was a good thing. We lived on a farm, surrounded by animals, hillsides, and beaches, which was wonderful.

My relationship with my stepfather though was horrendous - we hated each other equally. I would take every opportunity to wind him up and at some points the relationship became violent.

I was also being bullied at school, which I did not tell my mum – so I just stopped going to school and became a troubled teenager.

I was so angry and aggressive and found myself lashing out at everything. Therefore, it was not really that surprising when I was finally expelled from school when I was 15.

**Go Earth:** So, you had an interesting start to life - interesting and joyful in some ways, and not so enjoyable in other ways. So, after you were expelled from school, you were looking for something to do? What first got you interested in sailing?

### INTRODUCTION TO SAILING

**Tracy:** Well, it was just luck! I had no idea what I wanted to do, I had no direction, no exams, no qualifications, no dreams, no self-belief and no sense of any worth in myself – although my Mum tried very hard to instil that in me, it was always easier to believe the bad stuff.

So, my mother very sensitively suggested that I should go backpacking to Greece. We knew people out there and a friend of ours had a piano bar - and so off I went backpacking through Europe and ended up working in a bar in Zea Marina.

Every day I would see these beautiful luxurious, charter yachts out on the Marina and it never really occurred to me that people worked on these boats and that it wasn't just people that own them that were onboard. Every so often I would meet crew members from these boats, and I thought that it sounded like an interesting lifestyle.

One night, a guy came into the bar and he said 'My name is Mike Coombs and I'm the skipper of a yacht called Kovalam. My stewardesses literally just walked off the boat and we are just about to take on a charter. Do you fancy being the stewardess?'

At 17 years old I agreed to give it a go - the next day I was on the boat and four days later, we were in Rhodes, ready to pick up a charter.

Although I was horribly seasick, and still do get seasick, I realised within the first week that I had found what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. That is pretty amazing at the age of 17, I was so lucky that I fell across my path.

For my first trip, Mike was a great Skipper and his cook, Janie, took me under her wing. Every boat I ever worked on, without exception, had a great Skipper, cook and

crew. Every single one of them mentored me in some way and showed me that I was better than I thought I was. This opened doors for me and showed me opportunities and for a teenager, and then a young 20-year-old, that's such a gift, and I'm so lucky.

### ON BOARD – NO SEXISM?

**Go Earth:** It certainly sounds like you were in the right place at the right time. Although you have certainly had some challenges which you've overcome magnificently. I did note the order of importance of skipper and then cook, would you say that order of importance applies to most long voyages?

**Tracy:** Absolutely and this is interesting - It seems to be the case that in the charter world, it does not feel like there's any sexism.

I can't believe I'm going to say this, but it felt like we were all in the right place/position.

I was a girl, so I was a stewardess. The cooks were all female, the skippers were all male. And so, it represented if you like, the family dynamic - the nuclear family. I think this is why I loved sailing at the beginning so much.

My love with the ocean and racing came later but initially for me, I think it was that sense of belonging and that sense of certainty and almost having a mother and a father. That may all sound very weird, but I think all of us have that sense of belonging, because of those anarchic structures, and we were all very much the same personality.

Almost everyone I met on boats at that time was running away from something or had bad experiences or did not fit in. I always felt that I was on the outside looking in and when I got on the boat, I felt I was on the inside looking out and finally I was part of something. So, it all felt very natural and it wasn't until I got into racing that I realised ah, okay, this is sexism.

### WHAT ME – COMPETITIVE?

**Go Earth:** So how did you specifically get into racing and decide the move from working onboard, to having your own yacht and wanting to race it? What ignited



that spark to want to race and become competitive on the ocean?

**Tracy:** It is interesting because I didn't know I was competitive before I started racing - I didn't think I had a competitive bone in my body! I thought it was quite lazy.

The reason I pushed myself was because I had people around me who pushed me. I would be on charters where you'd end up wherever you would end up - that could be the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, Caribbean, America etc.

I started to meet more people off other boats, who I would spend my free time with at weekends. Nine times out of 10, someone would say, 'let's go racing'.

So that was our free time and I was lucky enough to get several, I realise now, quite famous racing yachts, with some amazing crews. I just took to it like a duck to water and thought that it was so much fun.

This was the next level of sailing and I was still mostly having to make sandwiches, but then also actually being allowed to, on this casual racing scene, watch and learn. Obviously, I was not allowed to do anything important, like steer or trim, but being allowed to grind or tidy up the cockpit. And watching and learning was the main thing and I never really saw it as a career, but it was a next step for me.

## THE NEXT STEP

I was going out with a guy and sitting on his boat in Antigua and I saw this book called Cape Horn Support - I took it out and I opened it up and he was in it. I asked was it him and he replied that he had raced in the boat called Condor, with Sir Peter Blake, in the Whitbread Round the World Race.

I asked him what the Whitbread was and he told me that it was a long distance race all the way around the world with fantastic people, fantastic sailing, fantastic racing - 'it's just a wonderful experience.' So, I thought I'd have a go at that!

He went on to tell me that women don't do Whitbread and this was the first indication that I might not be allowed to do something I wanted to do. And as it happens, a yacht sailed into Antigua a couple of weeks later,

that was doing the Whitbread. I approached the yacht and asked if I could have a place on board and I did get a place.

I did the first leg of the Whitbread on this boat called Norsk Data, as the cook, but it was a bunch of amateurs.

The Skipper was an absolute nightmare and it was the first time that I felt scared at sea and wanted to get off the boat. So, I did the first leg of the 85/86 Whitbread on this boat, which stopped in South Africa, where I got off the boat.

## NO GIRLS ON BOARD!

I wanted to continue the race somehow, I just knew I could not stay on that particular boat. And then by chance, I happened to be speaking to the guys at Atlantic Privateer, who told me that they had just lost their cook due to illness.

I offered to be their cook and the Skipper replied, 'Absolutely not, we're not having a girl on board - it's not going to happen.'

So, I went to the owner he asked me what the Skipper said? I told him the Skipper said no and he replied, 'This should be fun - let's get you on the boat as cook and see what happens.'

He was he was a very naughty, fun man who was on the boat for most of the legs of Whitbread. So, I was on board, but I had to work very hard because I wasn't wanted, and I was made to feel like I wasn't wanted.

But then we won the next leg coming into New Zealand, so I went from being 'that bloody woman on the boat' to a good luck charm. So, the rest of the trip wasn't too bad...

## SAILING IN GENERAL

**Go Earth:** Remarkably interesting! Let us come down slightly from those high levels if we may, just to talk a little bit about sailing generally before we go on to the main Whitbread race.

Just thinking about those people who are starting to get into sailing or thinking about getting into sailing - how would you recommend they go about learning about sailing?

You were willingly dragged into it by the sounds of it, but for the typical person, what do you think is the easiest way to get into sailing to learn the ropes?

**Tracy:** I think there's various things that you can do that are not quite as drastic as I was.

We partner with a company called NauticEd and they provide information on courses that you can do, and they can recommend sailing schools across the world.

If you are in the UK, the RYA is a fantastic place to start - even if you don't live near the sea, they will advise on local reservoirs etc. Everywhere there is water, there are boats and we are a maritime nation.

**Go Earth:** Yeah, totally agree - sailing clubs will normally welcome people with open arms and help beginners.

You don't have to live near the coast and in fact, I did my first dinghy sailing on a flooded coal pit would you believe.

In terms of buying a boat, Go Earth helps people buy boats. What sort of things would you advise people to do, that are thinking of buying their own boat?

You of course went to one extreme with Maiden, but for the typical person buying their first boat, what would you advise them to do?

**Tracy:** I would get great advice from someone like you or from the sailing club. I think it's about giving yourself enough of a challenge that you're not bored but not scaring yourself.

It is sensible to understand your capabilities on the water and buy something that you can have fun in. You don't want something that makes you anxious or stressed, but something you can grow into.

And then you can always take your next step. I learned that the hard way and took my daughter out on a big boat sailing when she was two years old. She got seasick and hated it, and it took me years to get her anywhere near a boat again after that.

So, I think it's all about recognising your capabilities and stretching yourself.

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Tracy with Maiden in Seychelles

## LIVING AND SLEEPING ON BOARD

**Go Earth:** That sounds like very sensible advice.

Let us just think a little bit about a long voyage. A leisure voyage as opposed to a race - what are your top tips for living and sleeping onboard? What sort of things do you think people should look out for?

**Tracy:** Planning, planning, planning everything, everything.

Everything that I have learned about sailing is down to planning and it does not matter whether you're racing around the world or nipping around the coast. The more you plan, the safer and happier you will be.

If you throw more than one person into the mix, to have planned properly before you leave means less arguments, less stress, and less anxiety. It is a process and we all have our own plans and processes that we put into place.

What you are trying to do is reduce the element of luck to its smallest part.

You want to have thought of as many possible scenarios as possible.

You've got your basics first, so you need your food and drink. Is the boat equipped with everything I'm going to need? Do I have the right clothing? Does everyone else around me have the right clothing? It's always worth checking on everyone else and I think that's just caring.

Safety is obviously paramount.

Have you got the right safety equipment and has it been checked? Is your insurance adequate? All these things you would probably do is a one off, and then each trip, you've got your smaller items such as, food, clothing and navigation equipment to sort out.

Do you have your charts? They aren't as widely used anymore but I still use and love my charts. Do you understand the tides lined up to the weather etc.

It's easy enough to make yourself a checklist and you never get to the point where you're so professional, you've done it so many times that you don't have a checklist. I always have a checklist!

## ONTO WHITBREAD

**Go Earth:** Yes, a planning checklist - I absolutely agree. It's quite easy to forget something. Sometimes you can forget the most obvious things as well.

Let us move on to Whitbread race, the one for which you are most famous. You have talked about 85/86. But in a sense, it really started in 1987 when you re-mortgaged your house to refit a 58-foot yacht. And the question some people might ask, was this a wise thing to do? Re-mortgaging your house to buy a boat?

**Tracy:** I finished the 85/86 Whitbread and out of 260 crew, there was only three women in the race.

I was told the reason that women don't do this race was because it was too hard.

I had gotten to the end of the race and thought it wasn't that hard – what were they all on about?

This is like the world's best kept secret! It was like the ultimate man shed at the bottom of the garden.

I thought that if I can do it, anyone can do it, so I wanted to go around again. But I wanted to go around as the navigator. I had learnt to navigate when I was chartering and I love navigation, it's my passion - and I'm a better navigator than I am a cook by far!

So, I thought about ways that I could go around the world as a navigator.

No men's boats are ever, ever going to let me be a navigator on a boat. It was my mum that said to me there was no point moaning about it - 'If you don't like the way the world looks, change it.'

So, I thought about the changes I could make, to realise my goal of navigating. So it was actually quite a selfish decision, which became more when I realised that people really didn't think we could do it.



Tracy Edwards and the crew celebrate after winning the Whitbread

## AN ALL-FEMALE CREW

When we finished the race in May 1986, I had pretty much made up my mind to put an all-female crew into the race so that I could navigate.

And then we were met with this barrage of aggression and hurdles, and 'You can't do this, you're going to die'.

Apparently, women weren't strong enough, smart enough, tough enough to take part – oh and women don't get on apparently.

It was extraordinary reaction. I expected people to say that we couldn't do it but not to be so vociferous about it.

And of course, that just made me dig my heels in even more, and that's when I realised the world of sailing needs an all-female crew and we need it now.

I just thought this has got to change, it's crazy. So, my passion then became to prove that women could do it and for me, anything I did was necessary, it was natural, and it needed to be done.

## RE-MORTGAGING THE HOUSE TO BUY AN OLD WRECK!

If I couldn't raise the money to build and design a brand new boat, I would re-mortgage my house to buy an old wreck and then to re-mortgage the old wreck to pay for the restoration - my poor bank manager!

It just made sense to me and I wasn't fearful of it. It was just the next step because always at the forefront of my mind was that if we fail, the next woman that comes along is not only going to have all that opposition, she's going to have my failure hanging around her neck like an albatross.

So that was what drove me. If you're going to do something, you can't do by halves, and if you don't throw everything into it and give up, you'll never know. I had to give everything to make it happen.

## TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

**Go Earth:** Yes, there's always that fear of had you done things a little bit different a little bit more isn't there?

So, in terms of refitting Maiden, let's just talk about the biggest technical challenges that there were. Obviously, it was a project boat when you got it - what were the main technical issues you had?

**Tracy:** When we first bought Maiden, we bought her to win on handicap so at that time, the Whitbread was won on 'time and

distance' - so it would be a whole fleet and then there'd be first over the line and then first on handicap. So we bought a boat that could win on handicap.

And then the Whitbread changed the rules after we bought the boat and said we're going to have classes and you only win over the line. I was like 'Oh my god, right, okay...'. We were in a great boat in a nice competitive class, but we were very heavy. Disque D'or III, which was what she was initially named, raced her in the 81/82 Whitbread. And she'd just been around the world with Bertie Reed the South African single-handed sailor.

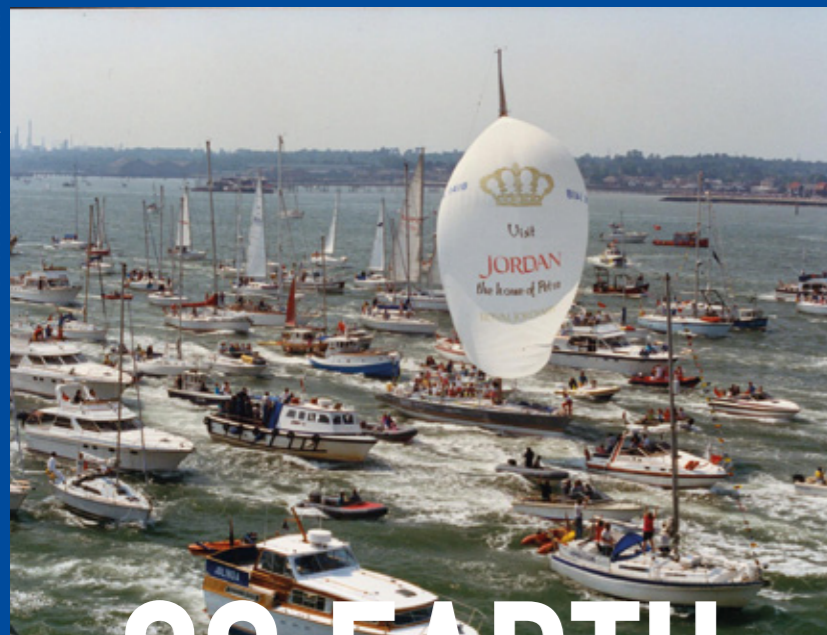
**Martin is a Director of Go Earth Ltd, holding a variety of boating and other qualifications. He has written a series of articles for Boat Trader that are intended to be genuinely useful for the boat-buying public.**

**Go Earth helps clients who are considering buying a boat by providing valuable advice and training; searching for the right boats; and helping clients buy them more economically. We typically save our clients substantial sums when buying a boat. Our website is [www.boatsearch.earth](http://www.boatsearch.earth).**

**Tracy Edwards MBE gained international fame in 1990 as skipper of the first all-female crew to compete in the world's toughest yacht race, the 33,000 mile Whitbread Round the World Race.**

**In 2014 Tracy rescued Maiden and set up The Maiden Factor and Foundation charity to raise awareness and fundraise for education for the 130 million girls worldwide currently denied this basic right. Maiden's new mission is working with community programmes around the world which empower and enable girls into education and support them to stay through their teenage years. [www.themaidefactor.org](http://www.themaidefactor.org)**





# GO EARTH INTERVIEW WITH TRACY EDWARDS

## PART 2

This transcript is of an interview with Tracy Edwards, MBE. The interviewer was Martin Berman of Go Earth. The interview provides a fascinating insight into the life and times of one of the most famous yachswomen of modern times.

The interview will be serialised in this, and future, editions of Boat Trader. Below is part two.

**In part 1 of this interview (published last month) Go Earth and Tracy Edwards, at the end of the interview, were discussing the challenges in getting the boat, Maiden, ready for Whitbread.**

### GOING ON A DIET??, STRIPPING AND GETTING BACK TO A SKELETON (THE BOAT, THAT IS!)

She had beautiful varnished wood cabins inside, so it was an old type of Whitbread boat. We realised the main thing we had to do was get rid of the weight, so we ripped the interior out of the boat - we completely removed it with sledgehammers. We took it right back to her skeleton and then we redesigned her ourselves, to be very open plan. We wanted it to be user friendly, logical, and practical. As a team, we all had something to offer, we all had our areas of expertise.

We added coffee grinders because a woman's strength is in a different area and kept it very basic down below. One gimbaled gas burner, no oven and a very basic nav station.

### KNOW YOUR BOAT

The great thing was that because we redesigned the boat ourselves, we knew every inch of her. Jenny, who was our electrician, ran every single cable in that boat. And Claire who was our Doctor, understudied the guy that did the plumbing and put in every single pipe.

We all understood intimately how this boat worked, and therefore, when anything went wrong, we knew how to fix it. So in a way, what started out as a disadvantage of having to do all this work, ended up being an advantage, because we were probably the crew that knew their boat the best out of anyone in the fleet.

**Go Earth:** Yes, I absolutely understand that. I got my new (old) boat about four years ago and learning all the ins and outs of the boat actually can take some time.

So you had lots of different things happening - how did you go about planning

the project? Was it just a case of ploughing ahead, or did you fully plan?

### PROJECT PLANNING

**Tracy:** I have to say, I pretty much learned on the hoof. But I'd raced around the world with one of the best teams in the 85/86 Whitbread and I had not realised how much I've learned - which was a lot and I didn't know how much I knew!

I started putting the plan together and seemed to understand various processes. Howard Gibbons, who I met very early on, became my project manager, and the two of us became pretty much inseparable through the whole project. He was a yachting journalist and loved the idea.

I didn't have any preconceived ideas about an all-female crew because there had never been one, so it was a freedom in a way. We could do what we want and how we wanted it, and we could construct the team in a way that suited us.

We were very non-hierarchical - Yes, I was the Skipper Navigator, but I had two watch captains who ran the watches and I didn't interfere with that. We developed a system of management that worked for us.

### THE KING AND I

**Go Earth:** That sounds most interesting Tracy. I guess the key phrase to use is that 'It worked for you.'

So there's a lot of activity going on and boating is not necessarily the cheapest way to spend your time. Famously, the late King Hussein of Jordan helped finance the venture. Can you tell us a little bit about the background of that, how you met him? How he became interested in what you were doing?

**Tracy:** I met HM King Hussein I and Queen Noor when they chartered a boat that I was stewardess on in Newport, Rhode Island in 1985. I was just about to go and do a transatlantic to get started with the 85/86 Whitbread and told him about this.

He was fascinated with my lifestyle and we ended up down in the galley - I was

doing the washing up and he was doing the drying. He was an extraordinary man and anyone who had met him or even knew anything about him knows that he was.

He was just one in a billion people and incredibly special. He was a people collector, and collected people from all over the world of different classes, colours, creeds, ethnic backgrounds, cultures, nationalities - he was fascinated by people and he loved human beings and that is a very appealing trait in someone.

### PASSION FOR NAVIGATION AND RADIO SYSTEMS

We got on really well and found out we both had a passion for navigation and radio systems. We both loved taking mechanical things apart and putting them back together again, so we had a lot to talk about.

When I got back to the UK, I went and had lunch with him and we struck up a friendship. And I know that sounds weird, but it's not because he did this with many people. When I went to his memorial service, I met the most extraordinary range of people whose lives he had touched. The world really misses him right now, we could really do with a great leader like that.

He was always on the end of a phone if I wanted to ask his advice about something to do with Maiden. I flew back and forth to Jordan quite a few times and we would discuss aspects of the project. He could not understand why we could not find the money and every so often he would help us out.

We did our first transatlantic race, The Route of Discovery in 1988 with this boat that we had just completely restored and won - coming first on handicap and second over the line.

After the victory, we couldn't understand why we couldn't find sponsorship and King Hussein thought it was ridiculous and offered to sponsor us. So that is how Maiden ended up that beautiful grey colour with a red and gold stripe because that's the same colour as Royal Jordanian Airlines. He was a visionary and he said that we would carry the message of Jordan around the

world, which was peace and equality. We were really the first project ever sponsored by a nation.

This was 30 years ago, long before the United Arab Emirates was even sponsoring football teams. He was way ahead of his time and that is the only reason we got to the start line in the end was because of him.

### SILLY PUNS

**Go Earth:** That's something to have a contribution of such significance. Of course, when you name boats, they often have silly puns as their names. I have heard it said you originally want to call it Made in England, is that correct?

**Tracy:** No, she was initially called Maiden Great Britain. At the time, though, there was an initiative by the government about being British - buy British products, made in Great Britain etc. So it was it was a play on words Maiden Great Britain. And then of course, when we were sponsored by Jordan, we dropped Great Britain and just kept Maiden.

### SAILING

**Go Earth:** So, let's talk about sailing itself. Some people just think sailing a yacht is just letting the breeze take you where it will. It's nothing like that, of course and there's a lot of technical stuff and physics involved. What would you say were the main technical skills required to race a monohull?

**Tracy:** I think there's stuff that you can learn and then there are people who are just born with this amazing ability. Now, I'm not a person born with this amazing ability, I have to work very hard to understand the math and the physics - it's not my natural, default state. So for me, learning to navigate was no easy feat, but once I learnt it, it just became part of me.

It always surprises people who think I must be a great sailor because I'm really not. I mean rarely would the girls ever allow me to trim a sail or get on the wheel!

### KNOWING YOUR SKILL SET

I knew where my skill set lay and what I am good at is picking great teams. I pick the best teams in the world and after we got





this crew of women, I realised that I was in awe of the women who could get on the wheel and feel the winds in the ocean and just instinctively know what to do.

I would watch them and think, how do you do that? I can steer a course and I can do wind angles and I know the technical side of it, but it's not something that is natural to me.

I'm always bowled over by the teams that I pick where they have this natural ability, but then you can learn to be a technical sailor. I've learned all the things that I've learned and you can learn your apparent wind and your wind speed and your wind angle and your tell-tales and, to a certain extent, feel what the boats doing.

So yeah, I think there are two types of people; people who are born with it and people have to learn it.

**Go Earth:** I did a bit of dingy sailing and you do feel the wind, very literally – and that's not trying to shift eight tonnes of stuff around the place! Impact is instant and there is something about an instinct for feeling the wind. That's not my thing, I will admit and sometimes I say that my scuba diving skills come in useful when dingy sailing – I often end up in the water!

You mention people and that clearly is a very important thing to take a great deal of account of. On a long ocean-going trip, what people skills do you think you need? On the Whitbread, were there any people issues?

**Tracy:** I know people don't believe this, but we literally didn't have one argument on the entire race – which was a really important point because people said that women didn't get on, which is a load of garbage. I don't know where that comes from, but not

from women! Its different sailing around the world with men and women. It's not better or worse, it's just different, we are different.

Men were very non-communitive, with a lot of grunting going on and not much overt care and attention for each other, although we had a lot of respect for each other.

Women are naturally caring and communicative and we didn't stop speaking for nine months, which I loved.

It was good to show emotion and what I find fascinating about women is that two women can spend five minutes waiting for a bus and at the end know everything about each other.

Men can sit there are say 'morning' and that's it – so it's that depth of understanding your fellow sailor that I

really enjoyed. Mentally I could do a solo sail, but I wouldn't want to as I love being around people who are enjoying the same experience. The most heated debate we had was about whether we should pole out the blast reacher! [Go Earth note: A blast reacher is a non-overlapping sail, similar in concept to a jib top, for use in heavy winds].

## WORLD'S REACTION TO SUCCESS

**Go Earth:** We've talked about the differences between a male crew and an all-female crew. I did note you say that you did not stop talking for nine months - that sounds like a positive thing really. Communication is key in all aspects of sailing when you have a crew, so that's absolutely understood. So obviously, you were doing what some people regarded as surprisingly well in the Whitbread. Were you surprised with the world's reaction to your success?

**Tracy:** Yes, I think we were. We were living the strange life where we were juxtaposition - we thought we were a professional racing team and everyone else saw it as a bit of a novelty.

We sort felt I think at times that we were starting to carry people with us. But then of course when we won in Australia and then New Zealand, and realised how shocked everyone was, we thought 'oh we've still got a way to go'.

At the time of crossing the finishing line, it was staggering what happened in Southampton - 600 boats in the water, 50,000 people in ocean village!

It literally took us two hours walk from the boat pontoon to the Royal Southampton Yacht Club, as everyone wanted to shake our hands and take photographs. It was such an amazing day and so wonderful, but I don't think it's really until we watch the film 27 years later, that we realised what an impact Maiden had had.

It did have a huge impact and with what we're doing with Maiden now, so many people come up to us and say, 'Oh my god, you changed my life - you changed my world'.

People bring their grandchildren down and show them Maiden, it's amazing. So we have had a far reaching impact that none of us understood at the time - we hoped we'd made a change and we hoped we'd proved that women could do it, and I'm just proud to say I think we did a lot more but it's taken us a long time to realise that.

## BOOKS AND THE FILM 'MAIDEN'

**Go Earth:** You wrote a couple of books. The first one was simply called 'Maiden' written with Tim Madge, and the second one called 'Living Every Second'. Can we look at 'Maiden' - how did that come about? Why did you write it? What was your role and Tim's role in writing it?

**Tracy:** It was Tim who instigated it and Tim lived and breathed every second of the project, he was always around. I think he recognised something in it that people would want to hear about.

I hadn't thought of it, as I didn't think I could write a book but what he said to me was that we could do it in two parts. I would write about everything that happens on the leg, and then he would join them together. I'm a prolific diary keeper and love keeping the logbook very detailed - as we all did.

We put a lot of detail into the logbook and we even had a crew diary in the head. So, if you were in the head for a while, you would get the diary out and just write your thoughts. There's some very strange stuff that got written in there!

Every leg we would finish, I would hand over the logbook and my diary to Tim and he would literally piece the whole thing together and fill in the blanks with interviews with me. I guess it was quite an unusual way to do a sports book at the time, but it was incredibly well received, and it's back on The Times bestseller list for 19 weeks and No. 1 for some weeks.

**Go Earth:** Yes, indeed. So, we then come on to your second book, 'Living Every Second'. It's a sort of autobiography some 10 years or after the with Whitbread. I would guess

it's aptly named as it describes your life up to that point and even up today, living every second and burning the candle at both ends. Can you tell us a little bit about this book why you wrote a second book?

**Tracy:** It seemed natural. After I finished the Whitbread, I went on to do the first all-female crew to attempt the Jules Verne non-stop around the world record with Sir Peter Blake and Sir Robin Knox Johnson's 92 foot catamaran Enza, which obviously we're in renamed Royal Sun Alliance after our sponsor.

In the middle of organising Maiden II, which was the first ever mixed gender racing team on Grant Dalton's hundred and 25 foot catamaran, I had my daughter and decided that I didn't want to risk my life anymore.

So, I became Shore Manager for Maiden II, with a male Skipper, the wonderful Brian Thompson and a female Skipper, the talented Helena Darvelid. And then it seemed, I had time on my hands - they were out there breaking records and I'm running the project, so it seemed natural to do a catch up book to take us from the end of the Whitbread.

It was for my daughter in a way, as I knew she'd be born after I'd finished writing the book. I have to say, it's not a book I particularly like now, and I have revised it to a better version, which is now on Kindle - called Maiden Over, which is obviously a play on cricket. Maiden Over is a much better read, it's more up to date and a little bit more reflective.

**Go Earth:** I agree that writing is sometimes challenging. I write a short article every month for boating press, usually submitted about four seconds before the deadline, as the editor will (happily?) confirm! But it's challenging writing two or three pages, what's it like writing a whole book? It must be time consuming.

**Tracy:** Both times I did have time on my hands and found it very cathartic. I tend to write a lot anyway, so I loved I loved writing. I've just finished my third book actually and it's in just being edited at the moment. It





will be out in spring next year and called 'Maiden Rising'.

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

**Go Earth:** We'll look out for that. We've talked about your books, let's talk about the film. I saw the film and found it refreshingly straightforward and honest, describing the highs and lows of Maiden and your life.

What I particularly liked, was that the film gave equal prominence to all the other members of the crew. They all had a chance to tell their story and that was a really refreshing approach.

Do you still manage to keep in touch with them?

**Tracy:** Oh yeah, we were together for nearly two years - not just the race but beforehand. What we all went through together meant that we were always going to end up being lifelong friends.

Immediately after the race, we did all disappear to do our own things, but we would always try to have reunions when we could.

And then of course, Facebook came along which was fantastic for us, and a lot of sailors we all have friends all over the world. Suddenly there was this virtual community and that brought us together a lot more. We were getting to the point where we were managing projects all over the place.

With the film, we had all this footage, but nothing was ever really done with it. I didn't know that 30 years later, there'll be a documentary coming out, but the footage was there.

## MAIDEN WAS DUMPED

At the time I discovered Maiden had been dumped in the Seychelles, I met Alex Holmes, who was the director of filming Maiden.

I had given a talk at his daughter's school and he came up to me afterwards and said how much he enjoyed the story - 'Please tell me there hasn't been a film made about it, because I really want to make a film!' And then he started talking about scripts and actresses.

He asked me why I seemed disappointed and I just assumed that he'd want to use the footage. He was a documentary maker, so he thought all his Christmas' had come at once upon learning about the footage.

The bad news was that I had no idea where all of this footage was, so he spent two years looking for the footage. It was everywhere - we handed it over at every stopover with different news channels, and different programme makers. It was cut around, some thrown away some of it was rerecorded. I mean, it was just everywhere.

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# GO EARTH INTERVIEW WITH TRACY EDWARDS

## PART 3

This transcript is of an interview with Tracy Edwards, MBE. The interviewer was Martin Berman of Go Earth. The interview provides a fascinating insight into the life and times of one of the most famous yachtswomen of modern times.

This is the last part of our three-part interview with Tracy Edwards. The previous two parts were serialised in the two previous editions.

**In part 2 of this interview (published last month) Go Earth and Tracy Edwards were discussing, at the end of the interview, how Tracy had found various pieces of film footage that would eventually form the basis of the film 'Maiden'**

### FOOTAGE EVERYWHERE

But the first thing I did was say to him, that this has to be agreed by the whole crew, because this is Maiden's legacy. I mean, this is us and this is really important. So that gave me great opportunity to really call around everyone and ask them what they thought. Everyone was really enthusiastic but one interesting question I got from most of the girls was, how honest are we going to be? And I just said, let's do it warts and all, let's show girls, that success is not always easy and pretty and looks a certain way. Let's really show them and I thought that was really, really important and Alex was very much the same.

### TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

We all agreed we would just tell the truth and if there was something we didn't like, we could take it out. Alex was true to his word and we made a few tweaks with the technical stuff, but it came together as it came together. And then of course, it was wonderful when all the crew flew into the UK to do their interviews because we would all get together in the canteen, while other people did their interviews.

In June 2018, Alex organised for the film to be shown at BAFTA with friends, family and colleagues and associates, as a sort of test run. We had a wonderful evening at BAFTA, and it was the first time all of us, bar one of the crew, had been in the same room, at the same time in 27 years.

And it was such fun! Everyone just kept laughing because once we'd seen each other, we started talking and that was it. None of us could stop.

### CHILDREN REALISING THAT THEIR MOTHERS WERE 'COOL!'

But what I loved more than anything else that evening was watching everyone's children look at their mums in a whole new light. It was wonderful - I remember Jenny's two little boys, looking at her and saying,

'Mum, you're like really cool'. So it was a wonderful experience. I'm so thankful to Alex Holmes and the crew, I think they could have said a lot of worse things about me. I think they were quite restrained.

**Go Earth:** Okay, so can we move on to some of your other work which people might not be so familiar with. I suspect many people don't know what you've been doing in the field of child exploitation and online protection centre. And you've taken on a degree in psychology. Would you like to tell us a little bit about this?

**Tracy:** After Maiden Two, I made a very bad decision to go and organise around the world racing in Qatar and I invested a lot of my own money into it - they didn't pay us and I lost everything. So in 2005, I had to start literally from scratch, so I decided that I had to get a job. It was the first time, and this is important for later on, that I realised how important it was having education. Here I was, looking for job, living London. I could navigate and sail around the world but there's not much call for that in London really.

### TRACY'S CHILD PROTECTION WORK

I landed on my feet because as an ambassador of the NSPCC I was invited to go and look around the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre, run by one of the most inspirational human beings I've ever met in my life, a guy called Jim Gamble QPM - a very tough Northern Ireland policeman who had started CEOP as it was called.

This was the world's first look at holistically protecting children online and this was right at the beginning of all the online stuff that we now know about - thanks to mostly him.

After we'd looked around, he asked me if there was any chance that I was looking for a job? He said he was looking for a Project Manager to work for two years to put together the world's first conference for young people to explore safety online. And that had me written all over it.

So, I worked for two years for CEOP to put the whole project together and raised funding. That was a that was a real lesson for me, but I mean, just wonderful, amazingly, because it was such a horrible subject matter. It was a wonderful place



Maiden Returned to UK

to work because of the amazing police men and women who do an awful job, keeping our young people safe online and then working with 140 teenagers from 20 different countries - that is actually why I'm grey! Working with different forces all over the world was an extraordinary opportunity.

In the end, the work that we did contributed to the 2009 resolution on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was the first time that have been updated since 1946. So it was an extraordinary thing to taking part in.

After I finished my contract, I thought that I would quite like to continue to work in child protection, and that's when I decided to go and do a degree in psychology, which I did at Roehampton University. I was finally getting an education, which was better late than never.

### STORY UP TO DATE – MAIDEN AND THE MAIDEN FACTOR CHARITY

**Go Earth:** So let's bring your story up to date. From what I understand there are sort of two strands to this - the restoration of Maiden itself, and your brilliant educational charity for young women, the Maiden Factor Foundation. So let's start off about the restoration of Maiden itself. How did you rediscover her?

**Tracy:** I was literally looking for something to do and I just met Alex Holmes and the documentary idea has been started.

### RESCUING MAIDEN

I had an email from a marina in the Seychelles saying, did you know that your beautiful boat Maiden has been sitting here past few years and although we're trying to maintain her, she's slowly rotting away? The guy that dumped her here, ran out of money and got on a flight and left and if nothing happens, soon, we're going to take her out to sink her because she's not even worth scrap.

It was the most heartbreaking thing I ever heard in my life!

So I picked up the phone and called them and said, 'Please don't sink her, we're going to raise some money and buy her.' So even though it took quite a while, all of the original crew helped with this and we did a big crowd funder and raised money to buy her.

We bought her in October 2016 and at that time, as a complete coincidence, I was doing a talk for a travel organisation at the Dead Sea in Jordan. The woman who was organising the conference said 'Oh, I hear you've just rescued Maiden, how wonderful is that? Let's go and do a press conference in Amman' because of the links to HM King Hussein I and everything.





Maiden Crew visit to school

So we drove the four hours to Amman do this big press conference that she organised which was very well received. The Jordanians still have a massive amount of affection for the Late King Hussein.

When I got home, the phone rang one night, and it was HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein who is King Hussein's daughter. And she said, 'I hear you rescued Dad's boat; how can I help?'

So I told her that we needed money - quite a bit of money as the restoration is going to be massive. And then I want to do something with girls' education. I'm thinking of something like a world tour, where we raise funds and awareness for education. And she very generously contributed a significant amount of money, so we shipped Maiden back to the UK and completely restored her to her former glory - she looks stunning now, just so gorgeous.

## SKIPPERS AND CREW

Then we got a new all-female crew together and decided we were going to have legendary skippers, who would take turns and we have a permanent crew.

Our first Skipper was the wonderful Nikki Henderson who came second on Clipper. Our second was Wendy Tuck, who is the first woman to win around the world race. And then our third skipper, before COVID stopped us, was Liz Wardley of Volvo fame.

## THREE-YEAR WORLD TOUR - EDUCATIONAL CHARITY

We decided that what we would do a three-year world tour, covering 90,000 ocean miles and stopping at 30 destinations, in 20 countries.

For the first part of the three years, we worked with six partner charities learning about the hurdles to education. We raised significant amounts of money for them, and funded programmes all over the world to get girls into education, which was fantastic. Before we got stopped in March, the second part of our world tour was going to be our community programmes, working again with schools, which we will do once we've restarted again.

## MULTI-FACETED PROJECT

We are a wonderfully, multifaceted project because we can do whatever we want. It's

not a race and we're not tied to any rules or governing body.

We have what we call 'Mile Builders' on board, these are young women who want to get miles under their belt so that they can get licences or get onto racing boats. We also have two guests onboard who make donations to our charity.

When we get into port, often there is a flotilla that will come out and meet Maiden. We've actually had fans of Maiden standing cheering as she motors into marinas - it's just wonderful to watch. The different generations of people seeing her is great, as it's proof that they can do whatever they want to do. Maiden is so inspirational; she is living proof of what a girl can do if one person believes in her. And to me, that's actually the most important part of what we do.

## CHILDRENS' MESSAGES OF HOPE

We also raise funds and these fantastic Yacht Clubs at the stopovers, who become our hosts. They help us raise funds and awareness. They introduce us to communities with whom we work and we have hundreds of school children down

onto the boat, which can be more than a little hectic!

Maiden carries Messages of Hope written by thousands of children from all over the world, to other children all over the world and that gets carried in a baton, which gets presented to Maiden before she leaves and is then collected by the children the next stop over. They add messages into the baton and put their hand prints on the spinnaker.

We have this wonderful Spinnaker, with a spiral of handprints of children all over the world, getting bigger and bigger and bigger, and that'll be full by the time we finish. We are putting the messages of hope, as we call them, together in a call to action, which will be presented, hopefully to the UN when we finished - which is obviously not when we thought it was going to be, but a bit later.

## COVID IMPACT

So when we got to the Caribbean in March, COVID stopped us in our tracks and we managed to get the crew all home safely.

My daughter, who runs our shore events, was literally on the last flight out of Antigua. And then our wonderful sponsor Inmarsat helped us ship Maiden back to the UK so she wouldn't be left in hurricane season in the Caribbean. And then another wonderful person shipped her cradle from Newport, Rhode Island. She's now sitting in Hamble, patiently waiting for us to resume and it looks like we'll be doing that in April next year. So, all we do at the moment is now fundraise so that we can continue.

**Go Earth:** So that brings us up to date with Maiden and obviously, once it's safe again, the programme will restart. Do you want to tell us a little bit about what your charity does? Projects that you have been involved in?

## THE MAIDEN FACTOR FOUNDATION

**Tracy:** The Maiden Factor Foundation, basically is the organisation that runs everything we do. When we go into port, for every pound we spend putting that stopover

together, we expect to raise three pounds for girl's education. That's the premise upon which we fund the charity and everything we do. So we have funded programmes in Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Guatemala, America and the UK.

We don't just work with getting girls into education, we fund programmes in developing countries, and work with and support communities to keep girls in education and remain throughout their teenage years. In developed countries, where we have this privilege of education, often it's not appreciated or it's not continued, and we know that girls drop out at alarming rates between the ages of 15 and 18. I mean, I'm a total case in point.

My passion is definitely keeping teenage girls in school, which increases their life opportunities exponentially. We know that if you educate a girl, you reduce child marriage, you reduce the spread of every disease, we have a better chance of controlling viruses, we reduce infant mortality rates and increase the socio economic status of her community and her country.

So equality in education, I think in my humble opinion, is the key to absolutely every problem we have on this planet. I think the perfect example of how important it is to educate girls, so they become world leaders and businesswomen and politicians. The fact that the countries most successful at dealing with COVID are all run by women is a case in point.

**Go Earth:** It might be interesting to do a statistical correlation between them. But we'll move on from that if we may.

So you've explained what the charity does and the importance of its work, which I think we'd all agree with that. It seems to me that one of the issues one of the major issues in some of the developing countries, is cultural and financial. Do you tackle those things directly?

**Tracy:** There are lots of different reasons children in developing countries don't go to school. I have learned more in the last three years, than I have my entire life, about the rights of girls and women.

Each country has its own peculiar problems, so we've really spent the first part of our world tour learning about all this and choosing the programmes that we want to fund. They've been a range programmes from digging wells, which are then managed by women of the village, not the men by the women.

## EQUALITY AND YOUNG WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Why? Because they don't want their daughters walking for eight hours a day carrying water, they want them in school. And you're often working and funding communities who want their girls to go to school, but because they're the least valued, they have to do the menial work - such as carry the water, have babies, do the cooking or look after their younger brothers and sisters.

Water is one of the projects all over the world that we funded. We also worked with a charity that changes the culture around FGM. Once a girl is cut, she stops going to school, she gets married, often at the age of nine or 10, and then starts having children which often lead to death. There's culture, religion, poverty, resource poverty...

The next problem that we all have on our horizon, unless we have equality in education, is food and water shortages - these things with climate change are coming our way. That's another thing to note, it is often women and girls that the forefront of the climate change fight. So, there's a myriad of reasons why girls don't go to school and there's a myriad of reasons why they should go to school.

I think what we're looking forward to mostly in the next part of our programme, is a much more hand-on environment. So we're actually working with projects in mentoring and teaching. The girls motivate whenever the crew sail in anywhere and they know they motivate and inspire. So we'll be looking at our next set of projects that will be funding and wrapped around everything we've learned.



## TRACY'S MBE AND HER WHITBREAD MEDAL

**Go Earth:** The work you're doing is very inspirational and the motivation of the children you work with is obviously very important.

So let's just talk about something a little bit recent and also stems back a little bit to the past your well-deserved award of the MBE.

**Tracy:** Getting the MBE was amazing and surprising - I have to say, my mother and I did stand outside Buckingham Palace and she did look at me and go 'How the hell did that happen?' It was an honour and I'm still very honoured to have that recognition from the Queen, for doing something in the sport that I love.

We've recently had a Crowdfunder for Maiden, and I can't ask people to put their hard-earned cash into my charity, if I'm not willing to front up as well. So financially I can't but I knew I had things that are precious, that people may like. So, I'm auctioning my jacket that I wore in a team photograph when we won the Whitbread, and my Whitbread medal. It got picked up by someone that I was selling my medal to raise funds for Maiden and it's suddenly went viral! I had an email from

a woman saying, please, please don't sell your Whitbread medal. I'm going to make a donation, as long as you agree not to sell it. So, she donated much more than we'd anticipated for it and I kept my metal.

### WHAT NEXT?

**Go Earth:** That's very nice – and good to hear that people are supporting what you're doing. So, you've obviously had a very busy and adventurous life. What next for Tracy Edwards?

**Tracy:** Maiden Factor Foundation is my life - it's probably the best thing I've ever done in my life. It feels like everything that I've ever done, every project I've worked on, all the ups and downs, every lesson I've ever learned, has culminated in this moment of my life. I feel like this is what I was meant to do and that I'm equipped, at the right time in the right place to do the right thing.

The amount of joy this project gives me is immense and I feel quite selfish actually, for enjoying it quite as much as I do. It's full on for me until I'm no longer required. But I'll keep going as long as I can with this charity and hope that one day, it will be sustainable and able to stand on its own two feet. I don't know whether Maiden will be donated to something or someone will carry on the

work for me, but this is everything. I will not have done my job as a human being, and as a woman, if I leave this planet without having done everything within my power to make sure my daughter and other girls never, ever have to go through what we went through just to do their job or fulfil their dreams - or be considered of equal importance in the human race. It's something that I just can't walk away from.

**Go Earth:** Well, Tracy on that thought, I'd like to thank you very much indeed for telling us some of your fascinating story. Thank you very much, Tracy Edwards MBE.

**Tracy:** Thank you, Martin. I really enjoyed it and good questions and interesting questions. Thank you.

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