

SATURDAY 28TH APRIL 2012

LUDO'S CHALLENGE BEGINS FROM COWES

In gusting winds and continuous rain Ludo Bennett-Jones, along with fellow crew member Will Homer, set sail from Cowes to Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight on Saturday afternoon (28th April) in their 16 foot Wayfarer dinghy for the first leg of a 2500 mile circumnavigation of the British Isles.

Sponsored by BT, Ludo's challenge is to be the fastest and youngest to sail around the UK coastline in such a small dinghy. He is joined by Will for the first leg to North Cornwall and will be accompanied by several other young sailors during the trip. In addition to breaking two records if he succeeds in his endeavour, Ludo aims to raise more than £100,000 for two significant charities – the Ellen Macarthur Cancer Trust and Sport Relief.

Ludo has had first-hand experience in understanding the importance of the work that both charities undertake. During the limited downtime on the voyage, Ludo will be visiting some of the projects supported by Sport Relief and meeting some of the young cancer patients helped by the Ellen Macarthur Trust. The circumnavigation is estimated to take around 10 weeks to complete.

There was a terrific send off for Ludo and Will at the Ellen Macarthur Cancer Trust offices in East Cowes with friends and family gathered to wave bon voyage to the intrepid adventurers who were not at all put off by the less than idyllic conditions for the start of their journey. They were immensely pleased that by the time they set sail over £12,000 had already been pledged for the two charities.

Ludo's progress can be charted on www.loveludo.com and there is a page for making donations.

With the very poor weather conditions preventing sailing on Sunday Ludo and Will made the journey from Yarmouth to Lymington this morning and as a result of further severe weather conditions will now set off for Weymouth on Tuesday morning from Lymington.

For further press information please contact Sue Hardwick on 07710 260743 or email susan@hardwickpr.com

Notes to editors:

Ludo Bennett- Jones is 21 and is from North Oxford

Will Homer is 21 years old and is from Warwick and is studying Naval Architecture at Southampton University

Background to the Ellen MacArthur Cancer Trust

Dame Ellen MacArthur launched the Ellen MacArthur Cancer Trust in 2003 after she spent some time with a similar organisation in France.

We are a nationwide organisation who aims to rebuild confidence in young people who have suffered from Cancer and Leukaemia through sailing. We work with every primary treatment centre in the UK.

Often these children have spent long periods in hospital and can be suffering from low self-esteem and a loss of confidence as well as missing out on large parts of their childhood. Their siblings can feel isolated in circumstances where the parents naturally centre their attention on their sick child.

Studies into the psychological effects of cancer in children highlight how important positive personal relationships with others are in facilitating coping with cancer. They also state how difficult it is for the children (especially teens) to establish independence and a sense of control over their lives and maintain a sense of personal worth.

The children are initially invited to take part in a four-day sailing trip on Yachts in the Solent, which are run throughout the summer holidays. They are all about having fun; barbeques, rib rides and lots of water fights! This enables the young people to work together as a team and to take part in the duties on board the boats. After the initial trip, the Trust annually invites the children back to take part in other sailing events until they are 18. These events include J.P. Morgan Asset Management Round the Island Race, Cowes Week and a week-long residential week at the Bradwell Outdoors Centre in Essex.

Inviting the youngsters back to take part in other events enables the Trust to establish ongoing relationships with them. Once the young people are over 18 we train those who are interested so they can return as volunteers.

This quote from a mother shortly after one of the first trips we have run sums up the Trust's work: "It has never been the cancer that has worried me but the depression that came with it. She had lost her self confidence and had a very low self esteem, but the Ellen MacArthur Trust has changed all that. From the minute I picked her up she hasn't stopped smiling, she has talked non stop about her trip, she is singing and dancing and walking tall. She was able to have fun and relax for the first time in years. Of all the medicines she had, this one - the trip - was the one that made her better!"