

# Atlantic in over a million strokes

Rex Fisher embarks on a 3,000-mile endurance challenge to support mental health and to pay tribute to his late father Nick Fisher

Choosing to spend Christmas halfway across the Atlantic, sharing a small boat with three other exhausted men, is not exactly everyone's cup of tea. However, for Rex Fisher, son of former *Marshwood Vale Magazine* contributor Nick Fisher, it is part of a journey to pay tribute to his late father and to raise awareness of a charity that aims to help people with mental health issues.

A little under two years since the tragic passing of his father, Rex has embarked on a formidable journey across the Atlantic Ocean as part of the 'World's Toughest Row'. It is a 3,000-mile challenge that is a test of physical endurance and mental strength, as well as a heartfelt tribute to his late father who was a BAFTA-winning TV scriptwriter, author and fishing broadcaster.

Rex's journey is in support of Tackling Minds, a charity dedicated to promoting mental health through fishing; the charity recognises the therapeutic benefits of fishing as a source of solace and escape from everyday struggles. Anyone who remembers Nick's writing in the *Marshwood* will know his passion for the sport, which served as both his career and a personal refuge.

Speaking on *Instagram* from the Canary Islands to chef Mitch Tonks, Rex explained that the four-man crew expected to be doing three hours rowing and three hours sleeping, and that the row takes an average of 42 days.

They are on a boat named the *Rockfisher II*, named in honour of his father. Explaining the motivation for the trip Rex said: 'My dad sadly, two years ago, took his own life and left us in a kind of chaos'. But in supporting Tackling Minds he wants 'to prove to people, especially those that are survivors of suicide, that there is life after suicide. It's not necessarily a happier one but it's definitely a more resilient one, and one in which amazing things can happen.'

Nick Fisher's writing credits are vast. He was an agony uncle for *Just Seventeen* magazine and spent five years as *The Sun's* film critic, won a Bafta for creating the ITV children's drama *The Giblet Boys* and was one of the main writers on *Holby City* from 2008 until 2020. He also wrote episodes for *New Tricks*, *EastEnders*, *Hustle* and *Casualty* and created the BBC



Rex Fisher and (inset) © Nick Fisher Photograph by Robin Mills

comedy drama series *Manchild*, starring Nigel Havers as well as presenting Channel 4's *Screaming Reels* and Radio 5 Live's *Dirty Tackle*. He also wrote the novel *Pot Luck*.

Nick was also well known for his work with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, with whom he wrote *The River Cottage Fish Book*. He also wrote a volume, *Sea Fishing*, for the River Cottage Handbook series as well as starring alongside Hugh in TV shows such as *River Cottage: Gone Fishing*.

In a note to supporters before leaving, Rex illustrated the sheer size of the challenge in oar strokes alone. 'Every oar stroke has been made just that little bit easier with your support' he said, 'all 1.2 million of them!' Rex's 3,000-mile trip will be a gruelling one and an opportunity to remember the many happier times he had fishing with his dad. His teammates for the challenge are Sam Weston and Daragh MacDonagh from Dorchester, and Ed Hughes from Windsor.

Those supporting Rex on his journey are assisting a larger, vital cause. Mental health remains a pressing issue, often invisible and sometimes stigmatized. To lend your support, visit Rex's GoFundMe page at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/rex-rows-the-atlantic> and follow the journey on Tackling Minds' social media (@tacklingminds).