

Engineering boss Phil Kite turns to alcohol – for new business venture

A former North East engineering firm boss turned ocean rower has launched a new drinks company inspired by his adventures – ahead of starting his next quest.

Phil Kite has launched the Adventurers Drinks Company after discovering the long historical connection between adventuring and drinks companies as part of his new sporting adventures.

After many years managing successful North East engineering businesses, including William Cook Defence, Astrum, and Reece Group, Mr Kite's life changed overnight following a conversation over a garden fence with a River Tyne rower. It led to him rowing on the Tyne and Thames, taking on the British Coastal Rowing Championships and to row cross the Atlantic Ocean in 2019, in a Guinness world record time for a mixed four, having spent 42 days at sea.

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In a month's time he will take part in a second Atlantic row in the 3,000-mile Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, this time with Team Emotive, and he also has a goal of being one of the first to row the Arctic's Northwest Passage. It was whilst tackling a shortfall in funding for one expedition that Mr Kite discovered the long historical connection between drinks companies and adventures, leading him to team up with Orkney Distillery, makers of Kirkjuvagr gins, to create the Northwest Passage Expedition Gin.

He said: "I saw at first-hand how well customers responded to the gin's back story and the excitement surrounding the expedition. It was clear that the adventure itself became a

key part of the gin's USP and roll out success.”

The first two products produced by the business are Rowers Gin and Peak Baggers Gin, with Rowers Gin being inspired by his love of rowing in all its forms and the people he has met along the way. Meanwhile, Peak Baggers Gin is inspired by his friend and fellow 2019 Atlantic team mate Claire Hughes, who switched from a disinterested teenager to adventurer after scrambling up her first mountain with her dad.

The launch of the business and its first gins come as Mr Kite makes his final preparations to row the Atlantic for a second time. He opted to take on the major challenge – meaning he'll be rowing right over Christmas and New Year once again – after Covid forced the postponement of a goal to become the first to row the Arctic's Northwest Passage.

He said: “In 2018-2019 I had the most incredible experience rowing 3,000 miles across the Atlantic for the first and what I thought was the last time. Post-race I was interviewed by the BBC and when asked would I do it again, no was the definite answer. Roll on a few years and I am now taking part in the same race again.

“It is partly down to the fact that I am competitive and always looking for the next challenge on life's journey and now have a bit more time on my hands but it's mainly down to meeting my new crew mate, military veteran, Garreth. Over the last year I have also been supporting and helping to train Team Emotive, a military veterans' crew rowing in aid of the mental health charity Veterans at Ease. Garreth, one of their crew, had helped me raise money for my Atlantic crossing so I was happy to support them.”

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