

Those who dream by night - in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that all was vanity, but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes and make it possible.

— T E Lawrence.

IT'S not easy, finding something to do which no-one else has ever done before.

All the high mountains have been climbed. Even worse, you can struggle up the most remote peak in your neighbourhood and there, at the summit where no man should have left his foot-steps, you're more than likely to find a rusted sardine can or, at the very least, a Super C wrapper.

In the world of single-handed sailing, why, anything you can do Sir Francis Chichester has already done better.

Well, not quite. In 1966, when the Queen of England laid her blade on Sir Francis' shoulder it was reward for circumnavigating the globe in Gypsy Moth IV — a 54-foot yacht so state-of-the-art that it included draught beer on

# The last of the happy amateurs

tap in the cabin below.

By comparison, Ant Steward's homemade NCS Challenger is but a tub. When he sold everything he owned and started building it, in his flat in Cape Town, he was planning on a 20-footer. When he was evicted, because his neighbours couldn't stand all his late-night hammering and nailing, the boat became even shorter after an accident with a BMW.

Takes a certain kind of craziness, just to put to sea in a 19-footer. To take it round the world, to become the first man to do that distance in an open boat, you need to be truly nuts.

Ant Steward doesn't see it that way, of course.

"Well, I did study law for a while but then I thought: if I'm not careful I'll end up like you," the 29-year-old told his collar-and-tied audience at a slideshow in Johannesburg where, incredibly, he picked up his first substantial sponsorship, from Hollard Insur-

## Ant Steward is busy sailing round the world in an open 19-foot yacht. Terry Baron met him.

ance, for a journey already half-completed.

The craziness must be catching. No insurance company, in its right mind, should underwrite a sailor in such a small boat so open to the elements — a sailor who navigates by sextant and soggy school atlas, who drinks salt water and eats raw fish.

But that's Ant Steward for you. The last of the happy amateurs. Before this epic voyage he lost his mast while rounding Cape Horn with an "eccentric American" who had never sailed before.

"It was the usual story," he recalls. "A big disaster. Everything went wrong. We ran out of food. Most of our equipment was washed away. I'm quite experienced when it comes to masts falling down."

Quite so. Steward survived that crossing through the most dangerous seas in the world. He also survived when the Challenger was dismasted by a storm two days out of American Samoa by fixing a jury rig out of spinnaker pole and boom, and handsteering 17 days and 1500 miles to New Caledonia.

Details, details, details. When Steward managed to miss Ascension Island by around 50 miles he was saved by a gaggle of gannets. Old salt that he is, Steward knew these birds don't stray too far from terra firma so he made landfall, all right, simply by following them home.

So it goes for Ant Steward. His boat is so small he can carry only

75 litres of fresh water. No matter. He has a little desalination machine and so what if it leaves the seawater still 20 percent salt?

So, how does he stand so much of his own company?

"Well, I talk to myself. I talk to the whales and the dolphins and, yes, they do talk back to me. I've read War and Peace twice and Gone With The Wind."

So far it has kept him sane across the Atlantic and through the Pacific as far as Brisbane, Australia, where the Challenger lies at anchor. He will join it there early this month.

Then he plans on another world first — to spend around 75 days at sea in his open boat while he sails non-stop from Darwin to Durban.

Why? One feels one must ask the question even though he's been asked 1000 times before.

Anthony Steward answers the impossible as best he can: "It's never been done before so I suppose it's the challenge."

"Think about it. Next time you're on your way to work. Don't go to the office — go somewhere else."