

WARRINGTON DOLPHINS CHANNEL RELAY SWIM  
ENGLAND TO FRANCE  
TUESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2011  
13 HRS 44 MINUTES  
TEAM  
STEVE CONNOR  
DAVID JONES  
ADRIAN MOYLAN  
JOANNE CARTER  
TONY FILLINGHAM  
CHRISTOPHER CARTER.

Following on from last years successful Channel Relay swim the 3<sup>rd</sup> team eventually had the opportunity to make a crossing.

The pilot had previously asked whether the team could be available for a early swim, and after a quick head count everyone was available from the 8<sup>th</sup> July .However the call did not come and we were left counting the days to the 15<sup>th</sup> July and the start of the tides that we had been booked for.

The immediate and long term weather forecast was not good, 35 MPH winds were blowing down the Channel coast and on the Monday our Pilot, rang to say that it would be unlikely that we would get away on our pre booked set of tides.

However hope springs eternal and early Tuesday morning Neil rang to say “It could be on, could we be in Dover by midnight for a 1.00 am start Wednesday morning.

Phone calls all round .One major blip. Dave Mather had always stated that the 20<sup>th</sup> July was the only day he could not come out to play. As it was his daughter’s graduation ceremony that day. This meant that Chris Carter he who watches and doesn’t get wet would have to don goggles and trunks.

On arriving at Dover Harbour Car Park it soon became apparent that a number of solo and relay swims would be starting in the early hours of the morning and .”SUVA” our pilot boat skippered by Neil Streeter led a small flotilla of boats to the beach at Samphire Hoe where the swim would start.

Shortly after 1.00 am Steve climbed down the ladder into the inky blackness of the Channel to swim the 50 metres to the beach and clear of the waters edge. On the sound of the ships horn Steve waded back into the water to start the adventure. A few tentative strokes Water Polo front crawl and then head down Steve powered his way from the English Coastline.

As SUVA headed away from the beach we could see behind us the lights of the eight other boats that would be escorting swimmers that night.

The sea was black with only a half moon reflecting out of the cloudy sky with only a few stars visible in those areas of the sky not covered by cloud.

Steve completed his swim and Dave Jones entered the water 28 years after he started a Dolphins Channel relay swim which was aborted due to rough conditions. Thankfully today’s swim was less rough but as soon as we had left the lee of the land the conditions had changed into a nasty looking chop .Dave swam strongly alongside the boat and soon it was Adrian’s turn to enter the fray. Adrian swam too far away from the boat and there may worried faces as we could not see in the choppy seas the strobe lights attached to his swim cap and Neil had to go chasing after him. Adrian was soon into his swim and ploughed a steady course towards France. Joanne the only female swimmer on the team was next up and soon settled into her swim. The choppy conditions affected her front crawl stroke, but after a few breaststrokes she switched back into a stylish front crawl. By this time dawn was breaking and we could switch off the boat spot lights and also do away with the night lights attached to the swimmers. We could also see the other boats which were widely spaced out behind us.

Joanne was soon rescued from the choppy seas as her swim came to an end and Tony who had earlier in the year completed a 4 hour swim in Dover Harbour entered the water .He immediately looked at ease in the conditions and as the Sun came up the day looked more promising. Chris Carter made his

appearance and whilst from the boat it looked like he was swimming comfortably, from the water level too much salt water was being swallowed leading to a bout of retching trying to clear the airways. After all the 1<sup>st</sup> swims had been completed everyone was more relaxed, nobody was suffering from sea sickness and whilst tiredness was creeping in all the team were in good spirits

The changeovers continued with all swimmers enjoying the 2<sup>nd</sup> swims .The sun made a welcome appearance , followed by a rain shower .The water had calmed then blown up again but by the time all the second swims were completed we were some 4 miles from the French Coast.

A tired Steve entered the water for his 3<sup>rd</sup> and last swim. A lone Dolphin was then spotted not too far from the boat and shortly after that the grey shiny head of a seal was also seen .At this stage we were not sure who would finish the swim but Dave entered the water for his last swim. By now we had entered the shallow waters of the French Coast and the water calmed as we got nearer to the shore. We were buzzed by a French Navy Search and Rescue helicopter which circled us a few times at a very low altitude before flying off. 44 minutes after entering the water Dave climbed out onto the rocks above the water line to bring the swim to a successful conclusion., and a round of applause not just from the swimmers and crew on the boat but also from the crowd of enthusiastic spectators who were standing on the rocks just above him..

