

Warrington Dolphins Channel Relay 2016

We are now back now from Dover and I'm still getting over what we achieved in the early hours of Tuesday 28th June. In summary, it was the most challenging swim I have ever taken part in, for many reasons, but mainly due to the good old British weather! ☺

I have the upmost respect to all swimmers who have swam in 1 way and 2 way relay crossings or taken on solo swims. The sea is a different beast when it comes to swimming, with all normal swimming conditions going out of the window. The power of the tide means you have to adjust to the sea conditions, give it your best and help each other through the swim. This year's relay did just that and had to deal with some very challenging conditions from the very start. There were 9 other relay teams that left Dover at the same time, unfortunately 3 aborted within the first 1 to 2 hours and another around 8 hours in, which gives you an indication to how choppy and challenging the water was. When this happens you do feel sorry for the swimmers and reminded us all of what we had taken on!

The relay team spirit was positive throughout and I think we helped each other along through encouragement and an endless supply of Jelly Babies (Never want another one again!).

I have to single out Alan Pomfret who did an unbelievable job of making sure the swimmers knew when they were due in, checking that everyone was okay. Alan never left the side of the boat from when Richard started to when Adam touched France. I think we would have been lost without his experience, calm head and encouragement during swims. If you stopped to adjust you goggles you would hear Alan shout "Come on, get moving, what you stopping for, get on with it!" Alan would communicate 10 minute and 5 minute warnings when a swim was due to finish.

Although it can be challenging, the team spirit, the reward of finishing is just electric and I personally got the same buzz and excitement from my first crossing back in 2014.

It was great to be reunited with our pilot Eddie Spelling and the crew of Anastasia. Those who know Eddie will understand his dry sense of humour! Eddie and the crew welcomed us and looked after us during the swim.

Thank you to the Dolphins committee for their support in the run up to the swim, to friends, family and fellow swimmers connected with the Dolphins, your kind words and encouragement have been fantastic in the run up to the relay. Thank you to family members who stayed up in the early hours of Tuesday morning (Emma Waterhouse and Emma Taylor) watching our path. ☺

I hope you find the below interesting and hope it inspires more swimmers to come forward for more Channel Relay crossings, I know I would like to again. ☺

Rob Waterhouse, Team Manager

The Relay Team

It was an absolute honour to have been able to manage this year's Channel Relay team who consisted of (from left to right), Greg O'Connell, Marc Pomfret, Adam Farini, Rob Waterhouse, Richard Taylor and Chris Carter.

This was Chris Carter's 9th crossing of the Channel and I have total respect for him in what he has achieved in swimming many times over a challenging yet rewarding swim. I was so pleased to have Chris on board with the experience of the Channel.

Richard Taylor, Adam Farini and Greg O'Connell were experiencing their first Channel Relay. Adam who, at just 17, took the opportunity to take part in this year's relay with a brilliant positive attitude. I hope he has great memories from the crossing.

This was Marc Pomfret's and mine 2nd crossing and was great to be reunited with Marc after our last successful crossing back in 2014.



So here goes....

Sunday 26th June 13:30

Eddie Spelling, our pilot, had been speaking with me over the previous 4 days. We had planned a swim on Saturday 25th or Sunday 26th but they were cancelled due to the weather. The wind was proving an issue for our slot and we needed the wind to be 6 knots or below. Anything over 6 and the swim was a write off! There was a possible slot Tuesday, but if we missed this, there was no other time in our slot. I was checking shipping forecast texting Eddie about possible windows, then I get the following text whilst watching the football.

“Standby for 1800hrs forecast today. Maybe and that's a big maybe to start tomorrow afternoon with a meet time of 1500hrs in the water for 1600hrs OR Tuesday 0400 in the water for 0500. Ed”

Having already been told that anything above 6 knots would be a no no, I informed the team of the above text but was still expecting the 0400 start on Tuesday. So I continued to watch the football thinking of a lie in Monday, slow journey down to Dover, good night sleep for a 4am start.

I then noticed Eddie posted the below on his Facebook page:-



Love Swimming The Channel

26 June at 17:47 · 🌐

Looks like we are in for a night swim Monday into Tuesday.



👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



At first I thought, this must be a team in front of us, I then realised this was us!!

Having checked the shipping forecast the above post meant starting in a 7-8 knot wind, but reducing to 2 knots overnight. I text Eddie back to check if this was correct, Eddie confirmed by texting,

“Yes mate. Best chance to do it. Rest of the week a no go. Gear the team up....don't forget your light sticks!”

So, there would be no lie in, in fact it was drive down, swim, and drive back...no sleep!

I messaged all the team and we were all heading to Dover to meet Eddie at 3pm on Monday.

Monday 27th June

After a 7am start, Richard, Chris and myself left Warrington in one car, Adam and his dad Mike left earlier in another, with Marc and Greg leaving Newcastle. Alan was making his own way down and would assist on the boat.

We all arrived in Dover around 1430 after a long but clear journey down to Dover. The weather was overcast and a bit threatening. Mike Farini and I went to the Dover office for our 24hr car pass. When we spoke to them they asked what boat we were travelling on. I said, it's a Channel Relay on Anastasia. The response was “What, really??! What, you're going out this afternoon”? Mike and I looked at each other. I wasn't sure going out this afternoon was the best option, I checked my phone for any comms from Eddie, but no, we were still on!

Other teams (9 relay teams) were arriving, we had a University doing a 2 way, other students doing a 1 way. It was great to see so many other swimmers! We encouraged each other and wished other teams the best of luck!

I text Eddie to say we were all here and we picked our bags and headed out to the Marina entrance.



Mike had to take the above photo about 6 times as each swimmer wanted a pic on their phone!
Thanks Mike 😊

We then met the crew of Anastasia, gave our passport details, names and any medical information. Our observer then wanted our swim order which was

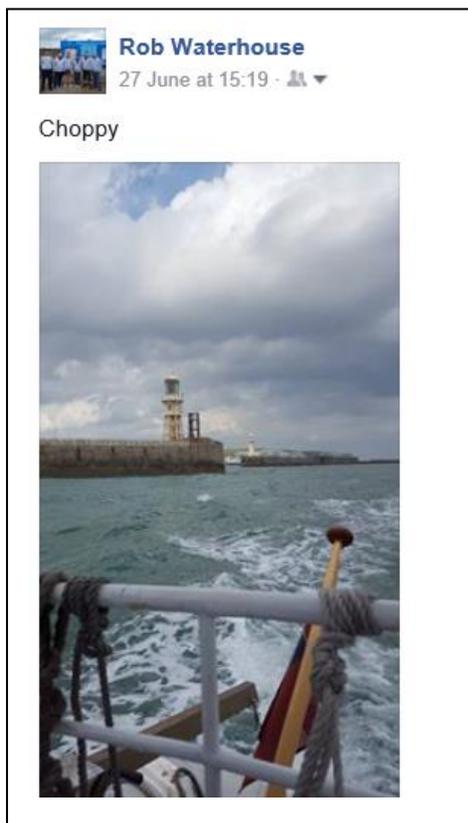
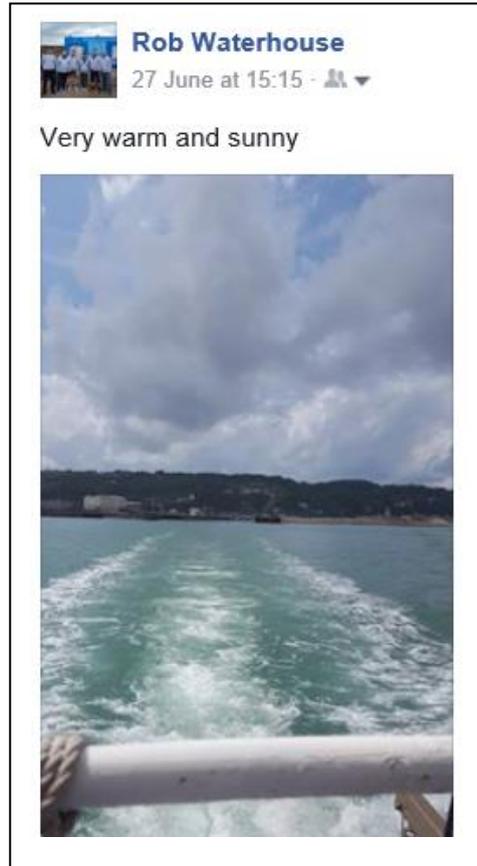
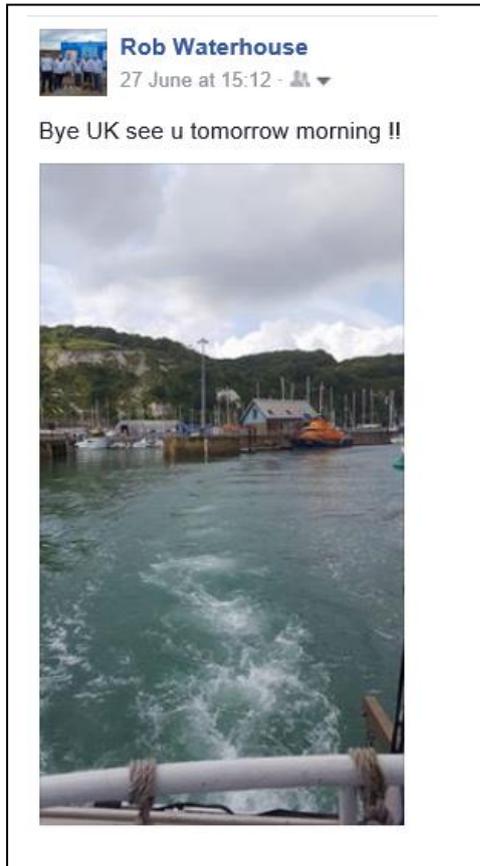
1. Richard Taylor
2. Adam Farini
3. Marc Pomfret
4. Rob Waterhouse
5. Greg O'Connell
6. Chris Carter

Chris said to us, if you all step on it with your swims, I may only need to swim the once being the 6th swimmer! 😊 Wishful thinking Chris 😊.

We also joked that if we put our foot down, we could get back to watch England in the football that evening! 😊

As we gave our swimmer order to the observer, the engines started and we were off to our swim!
Too late to pull out now!

I put on
Facebook:-



As I was posting these pictures to Facebook, Richard Taylor was getting himself ready for the swim.

Richard looked nervous, we all did, especially with the huge lumps and swell of the water. This was going to be a demanding start!

Eddie steered the boat as close as he could near to Sanfirehoe. Richard was then ready and realised he had to swim to the shore, climb out before the swim started! The joys of being 1st in the swim order! ☺

The rail was opened on the boat, the chop and swell of the sea was energetic and Richard jumped in! He swam to the shore where two people were sitting....I wonder what was going through their mind when a gentlemen in a yellow cap, goggles and swimming trunks climbed out! :-)

Richard raised his hand that he was ready, one of the crew raised theirs and we were off at 15:48 from Sanfirehoe.

Eddie tweeted the following:-



Love Swimming T

27 June at 16:28 · 🌐

And on the menu today we

A team of 6.

Started the swim from San
interesting start.

No1 Richard Taylor

Air 18.9c

Water 15c

Sea state I can see my hot

Long swell.

Stroke rate 62

Let Battle Commence



Like



Comment



Rob Waterhouse

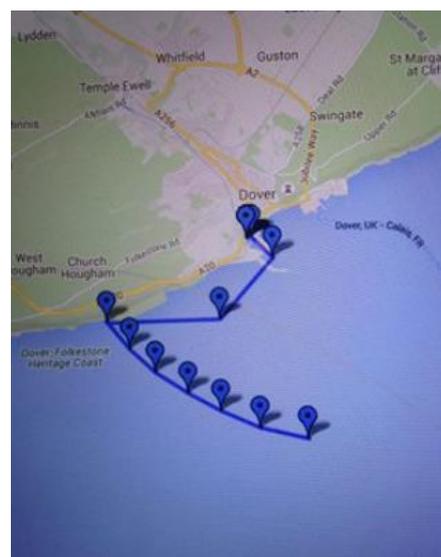
27 June at 15:52 · 🌐

Richard Taylor is off



Richard gave us a flying start and was swimming very strong over the oncoming waves. Richard was looking comfortable (although I'm sure it wasn't whilst in the water).

What a brilliant swim!



Adam was now gearing up for his start in the water and at 16:48 we had our next change over

Eddie tweets:-



Love Swimming The Channel

27 June at 17:02 · 🌐

No2 Adame Farini
Water temp 16c
Air 20.9c
Wind 1.7NE
Wave High large long lumps but getting better
Stroke rate 64 🏊👍
Doing well

Interesting spelling of Adam!!

Adam started off very strong, he was instantly hit by a number of high waves as he swam to the side of the boat.

There was no let up with the waves and Adam was having to re-adjust his stroke but after 10 mins he looked comfortable.

The waves were now taking their toll on the swimmers on the boat to, with a queue for the sick corner of the boat! 😊

Marc Pomfret was now gearing up for his swim and at 17:48 our next change over:-



Love Swimming The Channel

27 June at 18:00 · 🌐

No3 Marc Pom Fret.
Air 18.3c
Water 15.5c
Sea state , Getting better
Stroke rate 53
1.9 nm to the shipping lane

Interesting surname Marc! 😊

Adam climbs on board, still smiling and described the conditions and “Interesting”Great! I’m going in after Marc!

Marc was also facing similar conditions, the waves did appear to be dropping but not by much, Marc was swimming strongly.

About half way in and Marc’s goggles come off, he quickly puts them back on (after some words of encouragement from his dad Alan! “get on with it”!). Now it looks like Marc’s hat is coming off, I hope he is okay.

Alan then says to me, “Rob, you have 10 mins until your swim”. Richard had gone to lie down, Adam was sat recovering from his swim and I was next. I felt I was going to have a bit of a shock when I got in.

Hat went on, goggles on, ear plugs in, trunks tied up....I’m ready!! Come on!! I went to put my stuff back in my bag and the boat swayed to the right all of a sudden and I was thrown to the rails. I was okay 😊

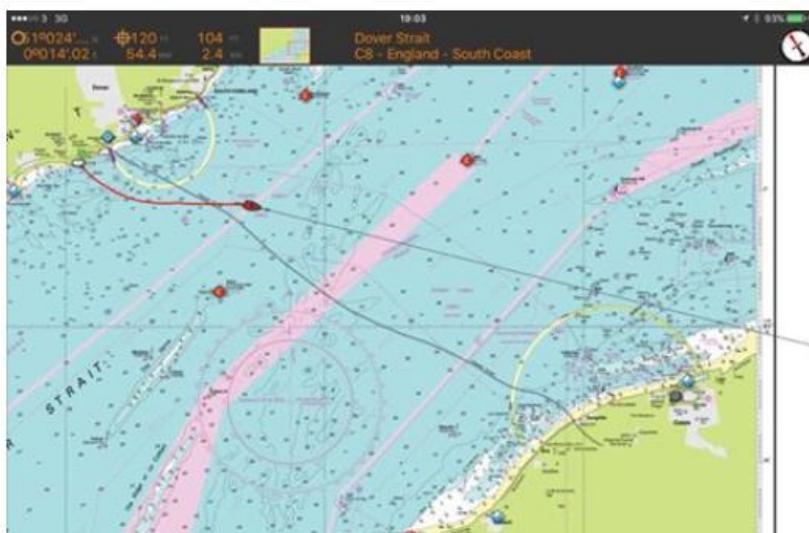
The observer opens the back of the boat, I climbed down the steps to the small ledge at the bottom as the water then covered my feet. BLIMEY IT'S COLD!!! 15 Degrees....I don't think so!! More like 11!! I'm then told to get in, so with a leap of faith, I jump in, I was immediately hit by the cold. It felt like the first week at Budworth but raw, it really got to you. I started swimming, concentrating on my breathing, let's get that under control. Richard, Adam and Marc did brilliantly, as this was a demanding start, not for the faint hearted!



Love Swimming The Channel

27 June at 19:04 · 🌐

No4 Robert Waterhouse
Water temp 14.5c
Air 18.1c
Sea state, could be better
Stroke rate 60
Just on the edge of the SW lane
Lapsed time 3hrs 14 mins...doing well



The pull of the water was strong, really strong, as your head went into the water to breathe out, you could see the blue calm water, but to breathe in, when tilting your head, I was then met with a relentless demanding set of waves. You were being thrown from one side to another, the boat was all over the place (like me), I tried a couple of times to breathe both sides (having spent months training) but forget that, I just couldn't get into my stride so back to breathing one side. I swallowed so much water that I felt like throwing up, it didn't feel fun! Eventually I managed to settle down but I couldn't get comfortable. My feet started to chill along with my shoulders, it was a tough start! So I just kept going until I saw my 10 minute warning from Alan, then 5 minute.

Greg was now at the back of the boat and I was given the nod to get to the back of the boat, Greg then jumped in, in my head I wished Greg luck.

I got out as Greg started to swim, he looked comfortable and was swimming smoothly.



Love Swimming The Channel

27 June at 19:58 · 🌐

No5 Gregory O'connell
Water temp 14c
Air 17c
Sea state getting there
Stroke rate 51
Been bizzy in the lanes this evening

I dried myself, which is an interesting experience on a rocking boat! It took me around half an hour and then I had something to eat. Greg was still looking comfortable in the water, very smooth stroke.

Chris was now getting ready and then swapped with Greg. We were hearing that England were 2:1 down in the football and realised we weren't missing much.

As Greg climbed out he said, "The swim was brilliant. Now I'm back on this *** boat! It's worse than a hangover"!



Love Swimming The Channel

27 June at 20:58 · 🌐

Night draws in and with light sticks

No6 Christopher Carter

Water temp 14c

Air 16.4c

Sea state dropping off and should be a nice flat run on the next tide.

Midway in the SW lane

The water seemed to be settling and Chris looked comfortable, however, as he entered the separation zone, Chris would not be alone! Look who has come to say hello Chris. There were small pockets of jellies, Alan said let's not make a fuss for Chris... They seemed bigger than what I remembered two years ago! But Chris just kept going! They were just low enough not to worry him.

There was
hoover

also a lot of sea weed and some random
bags!



Darkness was starting to fall and the green light sticks on Chris was starting to shine through. Chris looked at ease and had a good smooth stroke. Richard was given his 10 minute warning that he was about to get in, he looked unwell from the rocking boat.

Chris was given his nod to come back in the boat & Richard jumped back in, I was slightly concerned for Richard as he looked unwell but he went off really quickly. He looked strong and darkness was falling as the time now was 21:48. We were all now into our 2nd set of swims.

Chris climbs out and says, that was cold. Let's hope I don't need to go back in there again and laughed! 😊

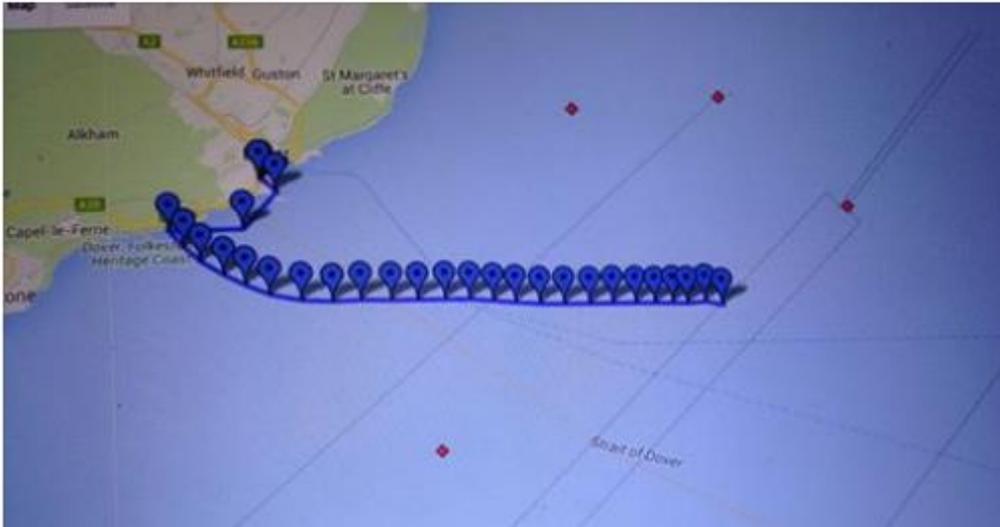
Eddie is unable to tweet once we are passed the separation zone but my wife was up at home, probably worrying, posting updates about our position! 😊



Emma Waterhouse with Rob Waterhouse.

27 June at 22:17 · 🧑‍🤝‍🧑 ▼

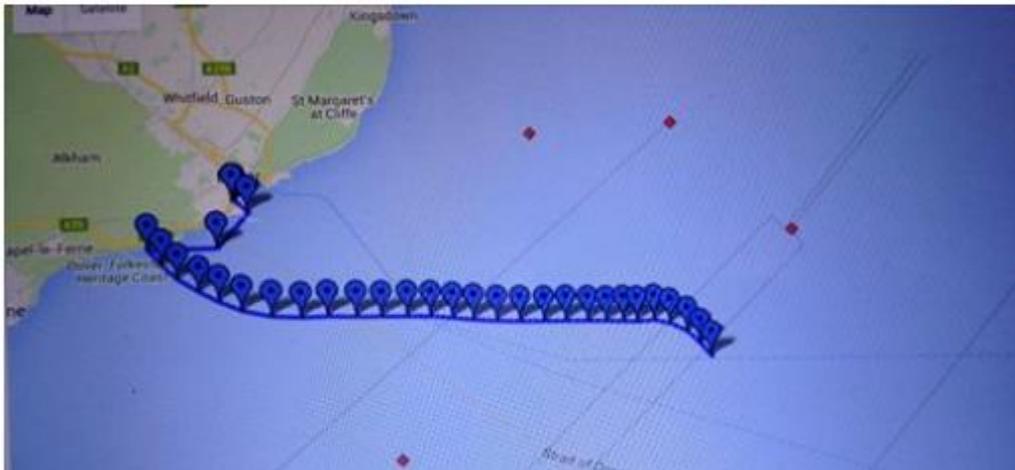
I think we may have lost contact now they have got to this point!!!!'m presuming swimmer number 1, Richard is back in and they are still going strong!!!They are doing so well!!!!🥰🥰🥰xx



Emma Waterhouse with Rob Waterhouse.

27 June at 23:05 · 🧑‍🤝‍🧑 ▼

It looks like 2nd swimmer Adam is now in and still going strong!!!Well done guys!!!xx





Emma Waterhouse with Rob Waterhouse.

Yesterday at 00:05 · 👤 ▼

So it looks like they are still going strong and swimmer number 3 Marc is back in again!!!!Keep going guys,you are doing amazingly!!!!Looks like there's no sleep for me tonight!!!!😊😊😊😓😓xx



Richard, Adam and Marc had their swims in darkness. They all looked comfortable and strong, you could see the lights of France in the distance. On the radio I heard that another relay team had aborted, I felt for them and reminded me that this could happen to us. The coastguard announced to all vessels that there are up to 10 channel swimmers in the sea and that we take priority!!

Each swimmer would go in for a rest after their swim, we were starting to get tired and at 00:48 it was my turn to jump in.

There is something not quite right stepping on the back of a boat, in your trunks, in the dark jumping into the dark. Alan said for me to give it everything, I was unlikely to get in for a 3rd time so I jumped in and gave it all you have got. At 01:06 Emma posted:-



Emma Waterhouse with Rob Waterhouse.

Yesterday at 01:06 · 👤 ▼

It's the turn of Bob again!!!!Woohooooo!!!Go Bob!!! Looks like they haven't gone very far but I'm thinking it's the angle we are looking at it from!!Just hoping all is going ok,I'm sure it is!!!!Just keep sending positive vibes out to them!!!!!!xxxx



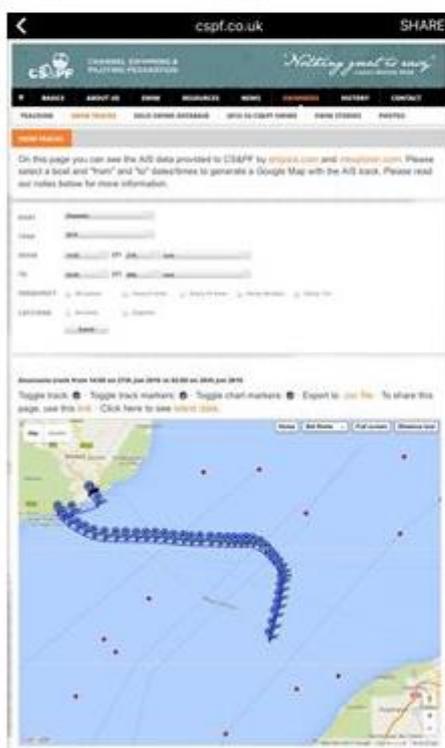
The water felt warmer, much calmer and I felt I could step up and really give my all, especially after half a bag of jelly babies, crackers, energy drinks...I needed to burn this all off.

All I could see was a red light at the front and a window, nothing else. As you swam there was a slight white glare in the water but that was it, nothing else. The hour went really quickly, breathing out under water into nothing but I didn't mind that, I felt at ease this time and gave it what I could. I then seen two glow sticks on the steps, it was my turn to get out and for Greg to get in! I was tired!

Richard's wife, Emma, was also tracking us and posted the following. Our position was getting closer!



They are a bit wiggly. Well done boys. Xx



Eddie posted the following:-



Halfway across NE lane lined up on the Cap.
Teams in good spirits with 7 mile to go.
Sea still a bit chunky

At 02:06 Emma posted:-



Emma Waterhouse with Rob Waterhouse.

Yesterday at 02:06 · 🧑‍🤝‍🧑 ▼

Swimmer number 5 Greg is back in!!!!Looks like they are making fab progress!!!!Nearly there guys,there's some positive vibes defo coming your way!!!xxx



Emma Waterhouse with Rob Waterhouse.

Yesterday at 03:15 · 🧑‍🤝‍🧑 ▼

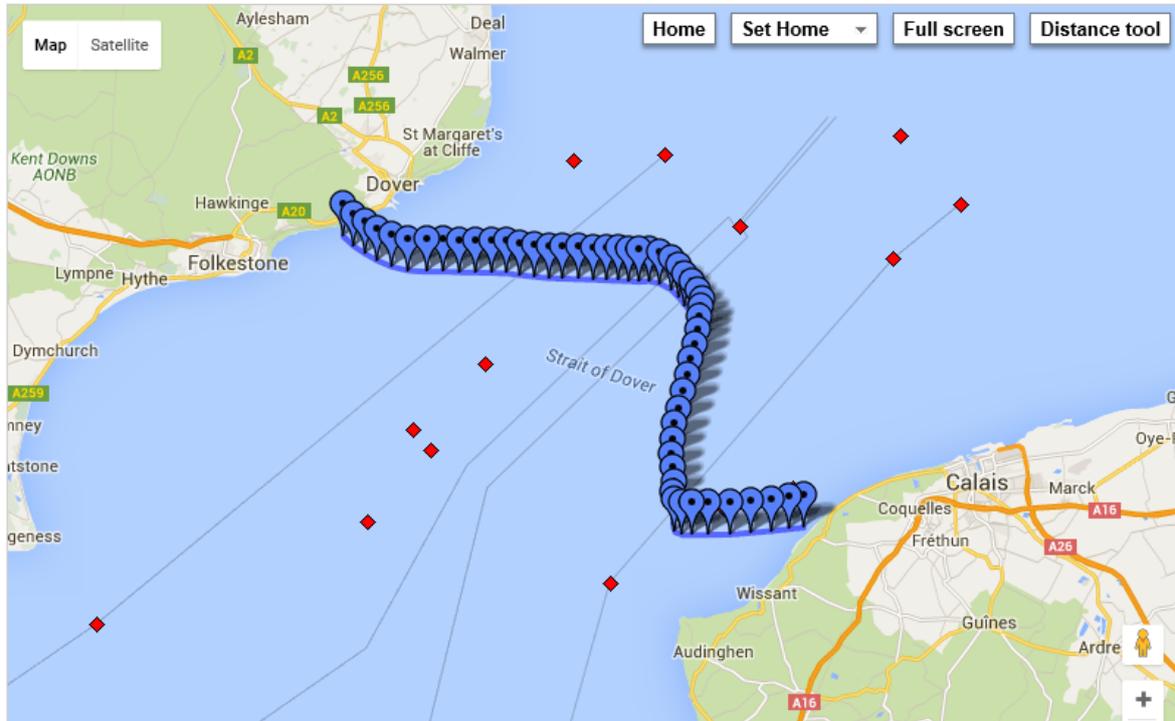
Swimmer number 6 Christopher shud be back in now!!!!So nearly there!!!xxx



Light was starting to show in the sky, Chris looked comfortable again.

Warrington Dolphins Relay 2016 (6) swim on 28th June; Pilot: Eddie Spelling / Anastasia; Time: 13:39:00

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Rob Waterhouse, Team Manger.