

## MY CHANNEL SWIM

Edward Williams

On Tuesday 22nd August 2006, I swam from Dover to Calais in 14 hours in aid of Prostate Cancer Research. The swim was 26 miles long and I finished it just before midnight. It was the most amazing yet painful experience of my life, but it was worth it and we have successfully raised over 30,000 pounds for Prostate Cancer Research. The money is still rolling in and if you would like to contribute, then please feel free to do so by clicking [here](#).

Below is a diary entry that I wrote three hours after completing the Channel. It is a very accurate example of how the challenge is 99% psychological rather than physical.

We have reached the end of an era. Yesterday I swam from Dover to Calais in 14 hours and for the first time in my life I experienced both agony and ecstasy in the same moment. We left Dover at 9.40am and reached Calais at 11.40pm. As we set off from Shakespeare beach, I could feel the sun beating down on my back, as I cut through the calm glass like water, like a knife through butter. I couldn't believe my luck with the calmness and warmth of the water. Unfortunately, the sea's characteristics changed and I spent 10 hours of the swim battling with gigantic waves, that were so big they engulfed the boat. As we reached the first shipping lane, I could see gigantic super tankers speeding all around me and I felt like a blade of grass in a rainforest. By this stage the waves were so big that I could clearly see some of my crew members lying on the deck of my pilot boat, but I carried on, battling against the odds. Swimming to France is very difficult to comprehend, so I imagined myself swimming from feed to feed every half hour. After 8 hours, we had reached the middle of the channel and all I could see was water in every direction, there was no land in site. Physically I felt fine, but psychologically I was beginning to suffer, as I envied the people on the boat hugely. One second I would be happy and laughing inside, the next I would be swearing at my crew and crying inside. I was wondering how I could justify getting out and thinking of excuses to tell people. I felt multiple personalities battling and arguing with each other inside my own body and thankfully the positives outweighed the negatives. As a huge wave lifted me to the same level as the roof of the boat, I saw France and knew that I must continue.

During my 14 hours of swimming, I covered 26 miles and experienced every emotion that one can feel. 3 hours before the end, as darkness set in, I was in a very bad psychological state and was convinced that I was going to get out. However, I could not face the embarrassment of having wasted a year of my life and having to tell people that I failed and more importantly failing myself, so I put my head down, picked up my stroke rate and sprinted for 3 hours, which was the most painful experience of my life. As I was sprinting, I could see the lights of France all around me and the darkness didn't seem so depressing anymore. Above me I could see the midnight sky every time I turned to breathe, littered with stars and the magic of the situation filled me with awe and a new found determination to succeed. I could see huge jellyfish illuminated beneath me by the light of the moon, but I didn't care, I just wanted to reach my goal. My muscles were on fire, my kidneys were pounding, as I was unable to go to the toilet and my internal organs felt like jelly. Before I knew it, the escort boat was behind me and a dinghy was escorting me into France. I could feel my eyes rolling in my head as the hypothermia

started to set in. Suddenly, I felt a wave starting to catapult me towards the beach, followed by another one and I knew I was close. As emotion welled up inside me, I felt myself touch rock. I held onto that rock as hard as I could and pulled myself out of the water with my last ounce of strength. As I did so, a piece of the rock came away in my hand. I put it down my trunks so that I would have a souvenir to remember the greatest experience of my life. I heard a foghorn sound in the distance, signifying the end of my marathon, as the reality of the situation set home. I removed my goggles, looked up at the sky, as a life time dream became a reality. As the light house of Cape Gris Nez, illuminated the ocean around me, I swam back to the dinghy, where I had to be dragged from the water and we returned to the main boat, ready to head back to England. I was wrapped up in blankets as I drifted off to sleep, safe in the knowledge that I had joined an elite group of people, as the 676th person and one of the youngest in history to have conquered the Channel.