

Swimming the English Channel

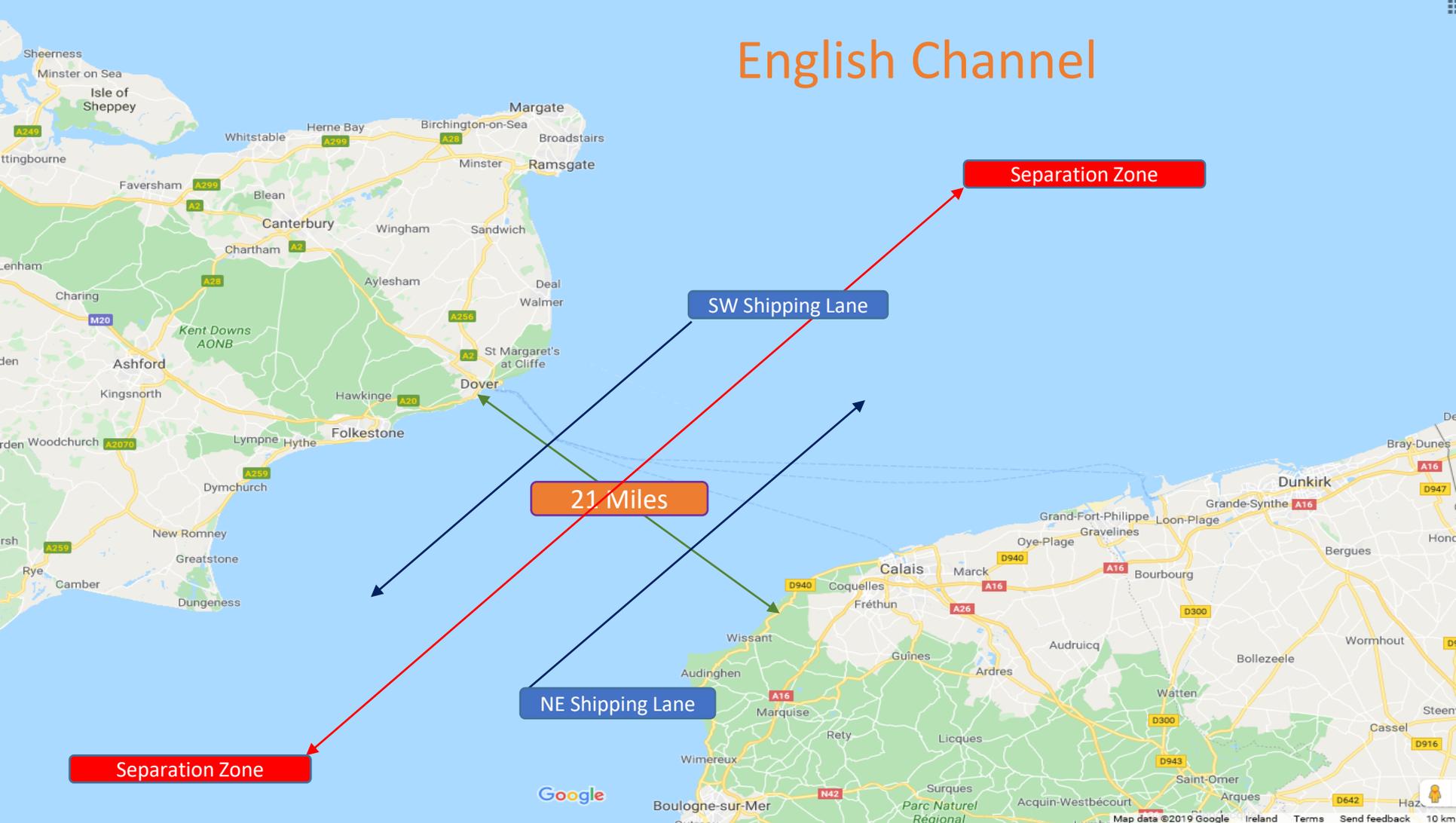
Fergal Madden
Hudson Bay Hotel
28th March 2023



What Is The English Channel

- 21 miles (35km) straight across as the crow flies
- Typically swam from England to France
- Very strong tidal currents & weather is unpredictable
- Busiest shipping lane in the world
- First swam in 1875 by Captain Mathew Webb – 21hrs 45 minutes to swim it

English Channel



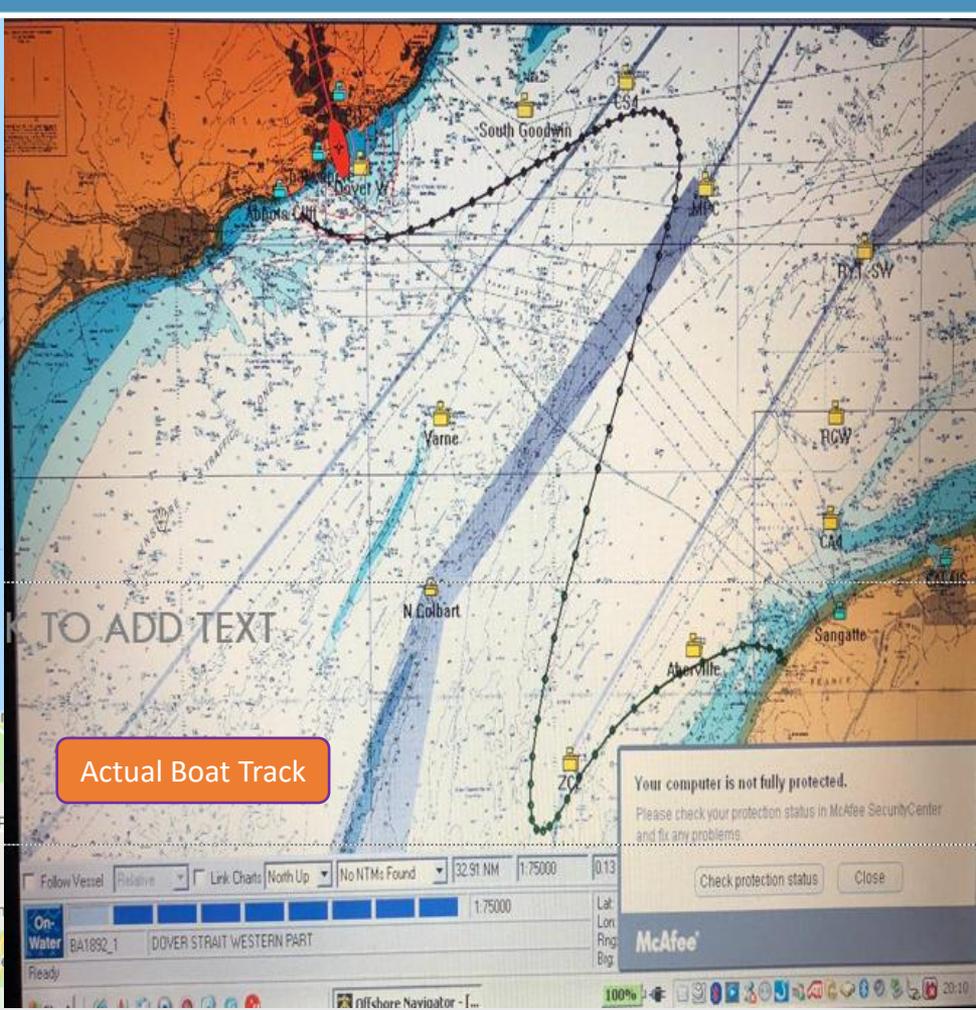
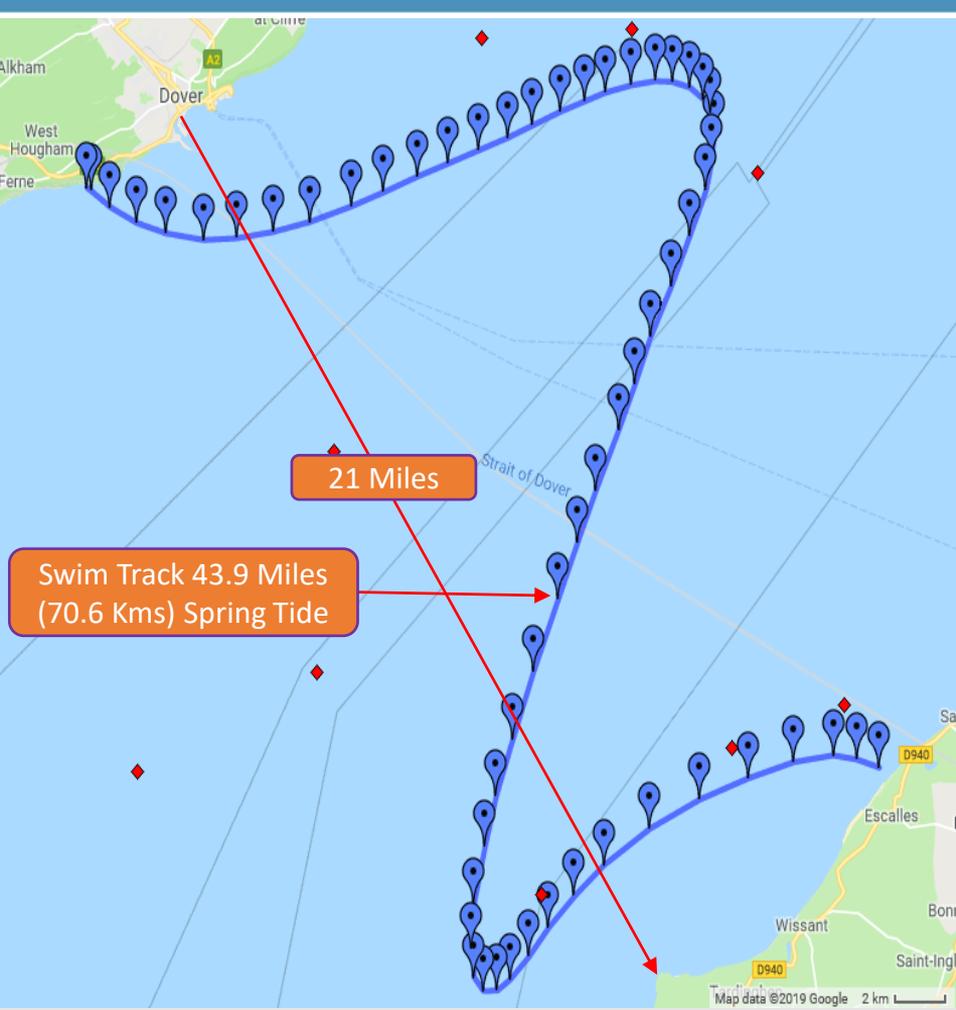
Separation Zone

SW Shipping Lane

21 Miles

NE Shipping Lane

Separation Zone



Why Swim The English Channel

- Ultimate challenge & most famous of all swims
- More people have climbed Mount Everest than have swam the Channel
- Unpredictable – No two swims are ever the same
- High Risk - People have died trying to swim the Channel
- No point being old and grey and say “why didn’t I have a go at it”!!!

What Is Required To Swim The Channel

- 2-3 year waiting list to get a swim slot
- Standard swimming togs, swim hat, goggles – No wet
- Complete 6 hour Qualifying Swim in water of 16°C or
- CS&PF Boat/Pilot & Official Observer to witness your
- Support Crew (min 2 at least)
- A lot of training – 3 years in total



Swimming Experience

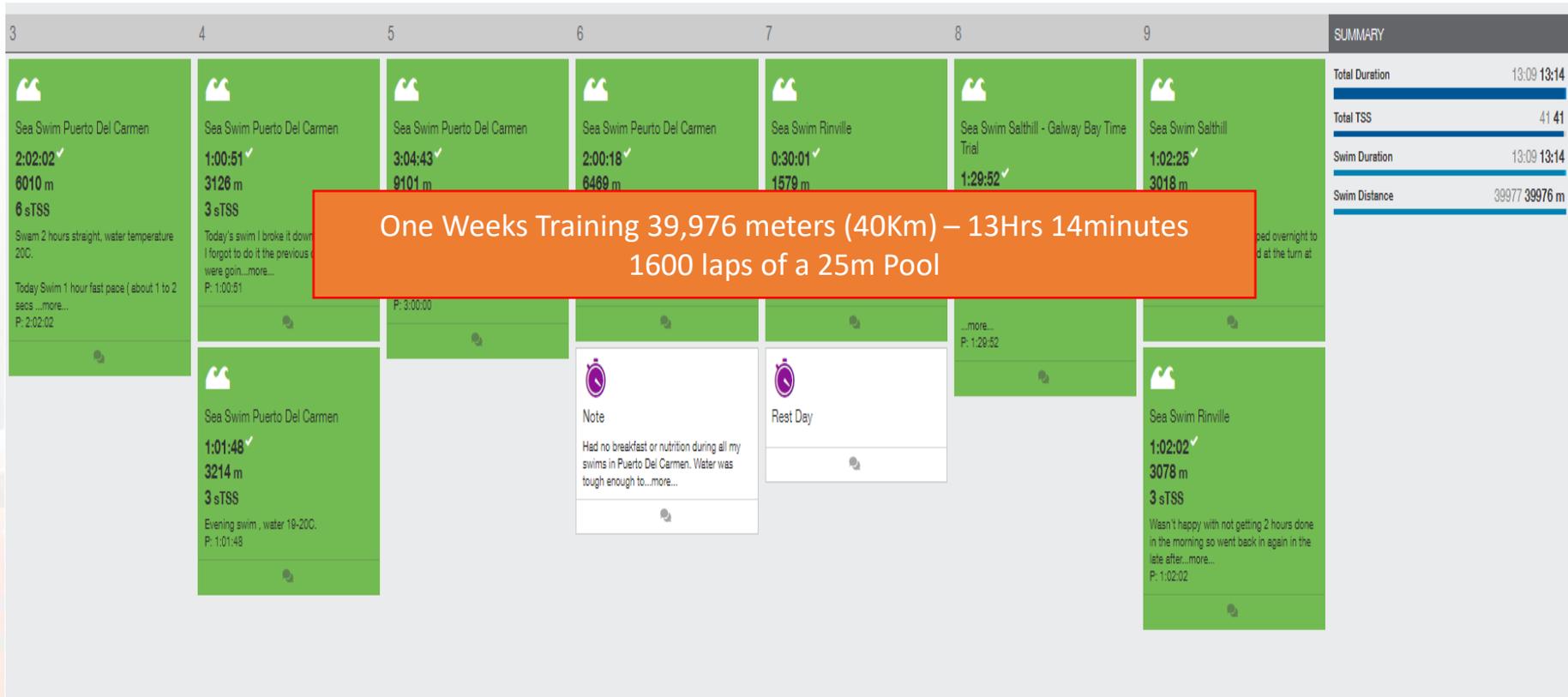
- 29 YEARS old before I learned to swim!!!!
- Qualified Pool Lifeguard, Open Water & Pool Coach & PADI Dive Master
- 8th Irish & 1st Connaught person to achieve the Triple Crown OWS 2022 (280th in world)
- ILDSA Connaught Open Water Swimmer of the Year - 2018 & 2019
- January 2023 – Awarded Galway All Star Award for Swimming 2022
- English Channel Relay 2018, Fastnet Light House to Baltimore (22Km) 2021, numerous crossings of Galway Bay & Lough Gill
- 3 Ice Miles & 10 Ice kilometres – First Ice Mile was at 1.9°C water temperature - In togs!!!

Channel Training

- 6 days a w
- 20-45km/
- Swim all y
- can get as
- Coach, Nu
- Swimmer
- Understar

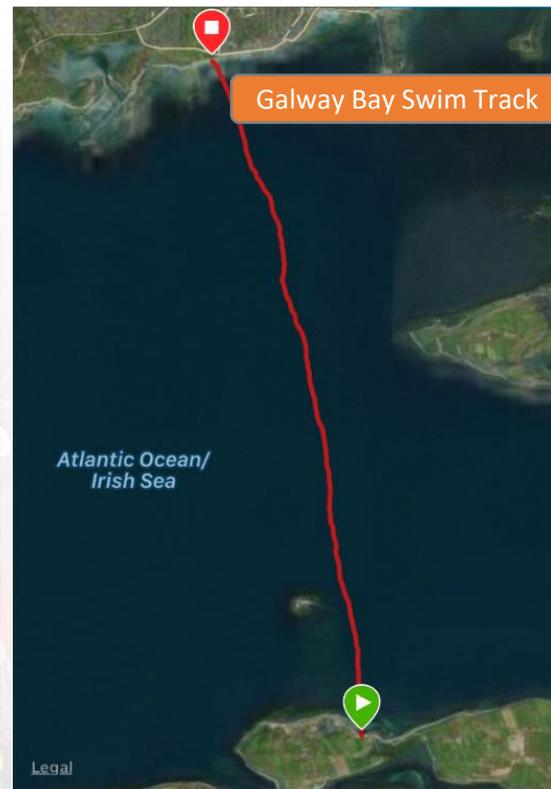


1000km = 40,000 laps of a 25m swimming pool!!!



One Weeks Training 39,976 meters (40Km) – 13Hrs 14minutes
1600 laps of a 25m Pool

Training In All Conditions!!!



Support Crew for the Channel

- 3 Support Crew – Experienced swimmers who gave freely of their time
- Your life is in their hands, and you must trust them - Even when the going gets tough
- Eyes on you at all times in the water – Day & Night
- Allowed to get into the water (1 hour max) as a support swimmer
- Prepare your feeds
- Monitor swimming stroke rate - Hypothermia

English Channel Crew



Crew Rules For The Swim

- *“I Was Not Getting Out Unless I Was Dead”*
- *“Don’t ask Where You Are, How Long I Am Swimming, How Far To Go, Swim Feed to Feed”*
- I decided to wear my watch however I was warned *“Cut the hand of me”* if I turned it on!!
- Mike Ball (Pilot) reminded me *“That I was not getting out even if I told him I was cold, unless he seen me swimming in the opposite direction and not responding to commands then and only then would he pull me”*
- **Bottom Line - No point arguing with the crew!!!!**

Rules & Facts About The Channel

- Cannot touch the boat or any person in the water
- Enter the water and exit the water with no assistance
- Can you get out for a toilet break??

No, use your imagination!!!

- What do you think of while swimming??

Everything, very observant!!!

- Feeds are given by a feed bottle attached to



Rules & Facts About The Channel

- What happens if you get stung by a jellyfish

Suck it up and keep swimming!!!

- If you get sick and puke??

You keep swimming!!!

- Everything is observed and recorded by the comments

Solo Swim Log

Swim Number: 087/S

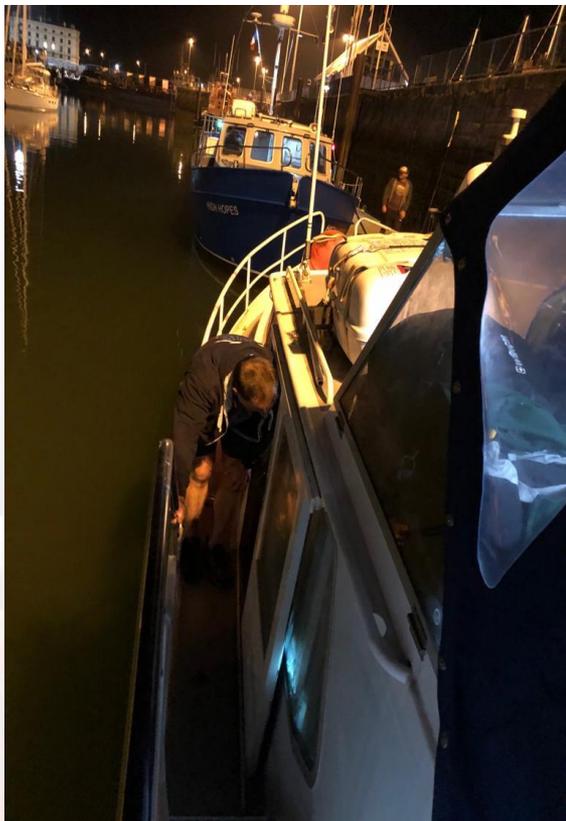
Swimmer: Fergal MADDEN

Page: 2/4

Time (BST)	Swim Time	Notes
03:15	03:30	Feed 6 - Bottle thrown to Fergal, which hits him in the head. Following that, the feed went well. Another good feed from Fergal who settles back into a good stroke.
03:45	04:00	Feed 7 - Good feed though Jellybabies that we're in base of drink bottle were lost.
04:15	04:30	Feed 8 - Drink feed taken well but when Jellybabies were handed to Fergal us, they were dropped. First signs of dawn approaching. Sea Temp: 18.1C - Air Temp: 19.8C - Wind - 7.5 Knots N Sea State: Calm Flood Tide
04:22	04:37	Entered SW lane.
04:45	05:00	Feed 9 - yet another quick feed. Immediately following the feed, Paddy has to quickly move to the starboard side as he is now also suffering seasickness. While there is little wind, there is a large swell.
05:15	05:30	Feed 10 - Fergal continues to do quick feeds, and is now settling off more quickly after feeds. Looking stronger with every stroke. He asks for Ibuprophen but Alice confirms that he has already had this with his previous feed.
05:45	06:00	Feed 11 . Great consistency from Fergal. He is really settling to a good rhythm with his feeds. Alice has noticed this too. As the sun rises on from between a couple of clouds on the horizon, the ship Sea Cougar passes close across the bow heading down channel. Heavy swell continues despite little wind.
06:15	06:30	Feed - 12 good feed After feed Mike Oram asks support team why Fergal isn't taking warm feeds. The reply is that it was discussed but he preferred the drinks cool. Sun well clear of the horizon and Fergal appears to enjoy the sun on his back. Sea Temp 18.2C - Air Temp 19.5C - Wind - 5.0knots NE Sea State: Calm Slack Tide - swell reducing slightly
06:45	07:00	Feed 13 - Paddy delivers Fergal his next feed of tea and Jellybabies. Fergal finishes these quickly and resumes his swim. Paddy however is sick again. We are closing toward the half way point.
07:15	07:30	Feed 14 . Good feed. Swell has slackened, no wind now at all.
07:35	07:50	Leaving the SW Lane and entering Separation Zone.
07:45	08:00	Feed 15 - Good feed Sea Temp 18.5C- Air Temp 20.3C - Wind - 1.9 knots NE Sea State: Calm Ebb Tide
08:00	08:15	Alice sits near the bow, close to Fergal, with her phone and whiteboard. She is relaying messages that have been sent to Fergal on social media, and a few equations!!
08:15	08:30	Feed 16 - During his feed Mike Ball offered some of his flapjack, but Fergal refused . He asks for a support swimmer. Paddy starts getting ready. Observer reminds support swimmer of regulation.

The Big Day Has Arrived!!!

- At 10:15pm we left Deal and headed for Dover Marina
- “Gallivant” our boat was along side the dock - We loaded our gear
- 30 minute boat trip to the start “Samphire Hoe Beach” – Nerves were at an all time high!!!!
- Donned the swimming gear and greased up – Shook hands with everyone
- Mike Ball one of the pilots said to me “To take a few minutes to myself when I got ashore and have a pee if I liked” in his best English accent



Follow

Fergal Madden started swimming at 23:45 from Abbots Cliff on Gallivant piloted by Mike Oram. Keep up the good work Fergal!

9:55 PM - 2 Aug 2019

5 Likes



5



English Channel Swim is On!!! Destination France!!!!

- 20 minutes before midnight on Friday August 2nd I jumped off the Gallivant into the dark English Channel waters
- Water temp was 18°C but felt colder – I had trained for cold water
- Swam to a **Lonely, Dark, Eerie, Gravel Beach on the SW Coast of England**
- Exited the water as required and gather my thoughts for a few moments
- The Siren on the Gallivant sounded - **English Channel swim was on!!!**

Video of the Start!!!



Swimming at Night!!!

- Once I got into my swimming rhythm my nerves disappeared
- In the middle of the night I hit a “wet bag” in the water which brushed off the left side of my body – Instant Burning – Blue Jellyfish Sting
- Feeds - 45 minutes apart for the first two feeds and then 30 minutes thereafter
- Every time you stop for a feed in the Channel you go back 200 meters!!!
- Sense of direction in the Channel was unknown – Set the speed and follow the boat

20 Hr Feed Plan - English Channel

Feed Time

Feed Type

Treat

Energy

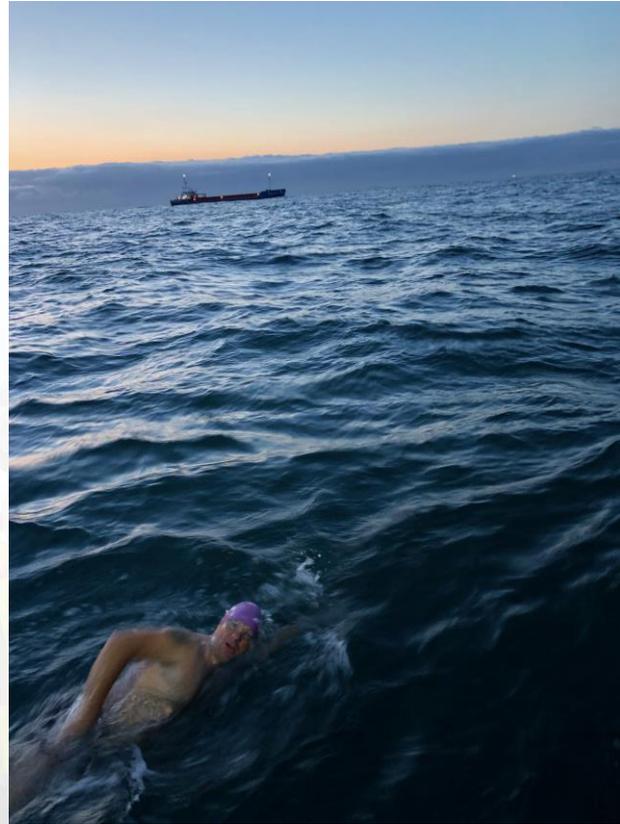
20 hour feed plan for Channel Swim August 2019										
Number	Time	Product	Volume	Notes	Volume	Energy	Carbs	Caffeine	Salt	
Bottle No 1	00:45	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy	Make NEARLY double strength i.e. 83g or 5 scoops to 500ml water	250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 1	01:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 2	02:00	Go Electrolyte	Electrolyte	250ml GO Electrolyte	40g (2 scoops) in 500ml	250	73	17		0.235
Gel No 1	02:30	SIS GO Energy Gel	ENERGY Gel	60ML ENERGY GEL	1 gel packet	60	86	22		
Bottle No 3	03:00	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy	Make NEARLY double strength i.e. 83g or 5 scoops to 500ml water	250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 3	03:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
TEA	04:00	TEA	TEA	~200ml	MUG HOT TEA WITH 2 TEASPOONS SUGAR + MOUTHFUL SOREEN MALT LOAF/Banana	200	32	8.4	30	
Bottle No 4	04:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 4	05:00	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 2	05:30	Go Electrolyte	Electrolyte	250ml GO Electrolyte	40g (2 scoops) in 500ml	250	73	17		0.235
Gel No 2	06:00	SIS Caffeine Gel	Caffeine GEL	60ml Caffeine GEL	1 gel packet	60	85	21	75	0.04
Bottle No 5	06:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
TEA	07:00	TEA	TEA	~200ml	TEA + Jelly Babies (5)	200	117.5	23.5	30	
Bottle No 5	07:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 6	08:00	Go Electrolyte	Electrolyte	250ml GO Electrolyte	40g (2 scoops) in 500ml	250	73	17		0.235
Gel No 3	08:30	SIS GO Energy Gel	ENERGY Gel	60ML ENERGY GEL	1 gel packet	60	86	22		
Bottle No 7	09:00	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 7	09:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
TEA	10:00	TEA	TEA	~200ml	MUG HOT TEA WITH 2 TEASPOONS SUGAR + MOUTHFUL SOREEN MALT LOAF/Banana	200	117	23	30	
Bottle No 8	10:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Gel No 4	11:00	SIS Caffeine Gel	Caffeine GEL	60ml Caffeine GEL	1 gel packet	60	85	21	75	0.04
Bottle No 6	11:30	Go Electrolyte	Electrolyte	250ml GO Electrolyte	40g (2 scoops) in 500ml	250	73	17		0.235
Bottle No 8	12:00	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Gel No 5	12:30	SIS GO Energy Gel	ENERGY Gel	60ML ENERGY GEL	1 gel packet	60	86	22		
Bottle No 9	13:00	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 10	13:30	Go Electrolyte	Electrolyte	250ml GO Electrolyte	40g (2 scoops) in 500ml	250	73	17		0.235
Gel No 6	14:00	SIS Caffeine Gel	Caffeine GEL	60ml Caffeine GEL	1 gel packet	60	85	21	75	0.04
Bottle No 9	14:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
TEA	15:00	TEA	TEA	~ 200ml	TEA (2 teaspoons sugar) + Jelly Babies (5)	200	117	23	30	
Gel No 7	15:30	SIS GO Energy Gel	ENERGY Gel	60ML ENERGY GEL	1 gel packet	60	86	22		
Bottle No 11	16:00	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 11	16:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Gel No 8	17:00	SIS Caffeine Gel	Caffeine GEL	60ml Caffeine GEL	1 gel packet	60	85	21	75	0.04
Bottle No 12	17:30	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
TEA	18:00	TEA	TEA	~ 200ml	TEA (2 teaspoons sugar) + Jelly Babies (5)	200	117	23	30	
Gel No 9	18:30	SIS GO Energy Gel	ENERGY Gel	60ML ENERGY GEL	1 gel packet	60	86	22		
Bottle No 12	19:00	SIS	Carb	250ml GO Energy		250	157	39	0	0
Bottle No 10	19:30	Go Electrolyte	Electrolyte	250ml GO Electrolyte	40g (2 scoops) in 500ml	250	73	17		0.235
Gel No 10	20:00	SIS Caffeine Gel	Caffeine GEL	60ml Caffeine GEL	1 gel packet	60	85	21	75	0.04

Sea Cougar Oil Tanker
200 meters long
80,000 Ton Loaded



Waiting for the Sunrise!!!!

- Swimming at night is mentally tough – You can't see anything
- Knew my time in the water from my feed plan and it would start to get bright early @4am- **this would give me a lift**
- Sunrise at 5:30am wasn't as expected and it was an **overcast morning - it was nice to see daylight again!!!**
- I knew everyone at home was watching my tracker and I could feel that presence in the water.



Morning in the Channel

- Some stage in the morning Paddy got in to swim for an hour and later in the day Paschal got in also
- Our observer kept a very close watch that they stayed behind me!!!
- My crew had a tough time – 4 out of 7 people on the boat were sea sick
- One stage I had **Paddy puking up at the bow of the boat and Paschal puking at the stern of the boat – all on my side!!!**
- WhatsApp Group set up to relay messages to me on a white board



Morning in the Channel

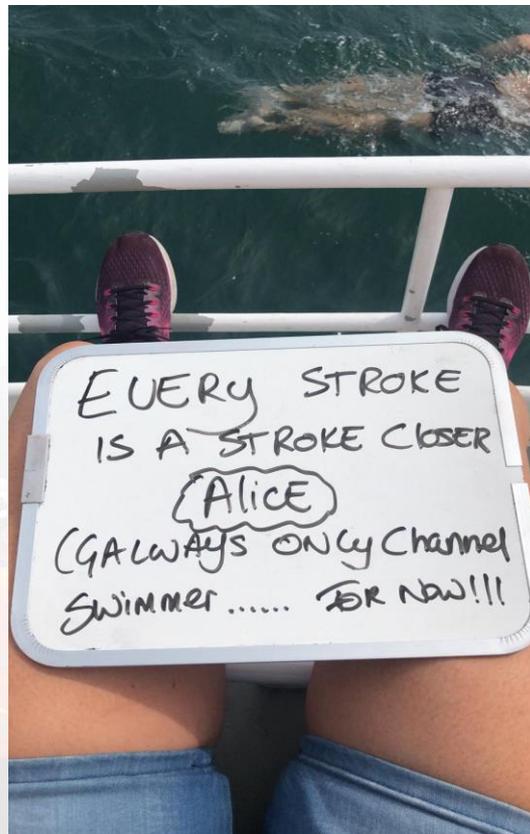
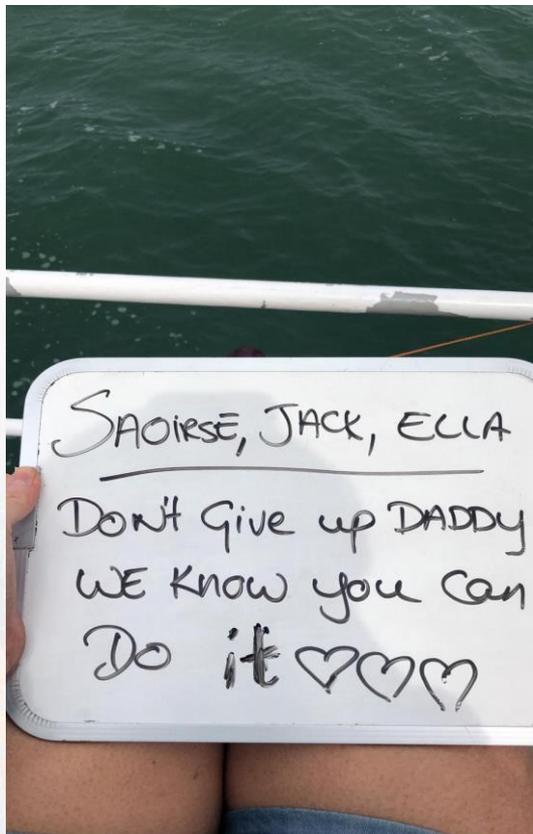
- Stroke rate consistent 52-58 strokes/min - 55,500 arm rotations cross channel
- Could see the French shoreline on my LHS and thought I was in the French Inshore waters and up my pace
- All was going well till a ship passed me on my LHS and then I know I was still in the French Shipping lane – back off on the pace
- Several times I seen the French shoreline and several times it disappeared – It would break you!!!

New Day – Just Keep Swimming!!

- The more I got into the swim the more determined I was – prepared to leave every ounce I had in the channel
- *“You have nothing till you have it in your hand”* – Reluctant to drop my guard or get excited
- Tough swimming would start when we got into the French Inshore waters – *It did – 14 knot (Force 4) wind against spring tide (last 4 hours)!!*
- Crew asked if I wanted to go on the sheltered side of the boat - *I said No, I swam in worse conditions in Galway Bay*

Getting Closer to France

- Cap Griz Nez could easily be seen now but wasn't getting any closer – Being pushed up the Channel by the spring tide
- Swam on the spot for over an hour - **Didn't move 1 meter forward**
- Mike Ball (Pilot) gave me a mouthful of a bacon sandwich and told me *“That we were going to get to France”*
- Messages on the white board were coming in thick & fast – Lots of support & encouragement





Getting Closer to France

- Alice put up that I had *“Blackrock to Sea Point”* to go @ 2km - Time to *“Empty the Tank”* and I picked up the pace
- Even at this stage I didn't let my guard down – People have been as close as 500m and not made it!!!
- Then *“Blackrock to Palmers”* @1km and I could see White Cliffs but not the shoreline
- Paschal & Alice had joined me in the water now and I know I was getting close

Finally, We Hit French Soil!!

- Couldn't see the bottom of the sea, seaweed or rocks as we got closer!!!
- 50 meters to go my left hand hit sand – “Then and only then I know I had it”
- Attempted to stand up but was unsteady so I crawled up the beach!!!
- Stood up, wobbled a bit and the Siren sounded from the Gallivant
- My swim was finished - I had earned the title of “*Channel Swimmer*”







Cap Blanc Nez - France

- Landed at Cap Blanc Nez at 4:31pm Saturday August 3rd – Hitler looked across the Channel from this point!!!
- It took me **16 hours and 46 minutes to cross the Channel & 3 years of training**
- As is customary we picked up numerous pebbles from the beach as souvenirs and I put them in my togs
- Realised I had to swim back to the boat 300m away and for the fear of drowning with the weight of them I gave them to Paschal



Back On The Boat

- Climbed on board the Gallivant and shook hands with everyone – *“Mission Accomplished”*
- Couldn't lift my arms – Paddy & Paschal dried me of and helped me to get dressed
- 8 Boats/Solo swimmers went out on the Channel that day – 4 made it across
- Returned to Dover which took over 3 ½ hours to get back across the Channel

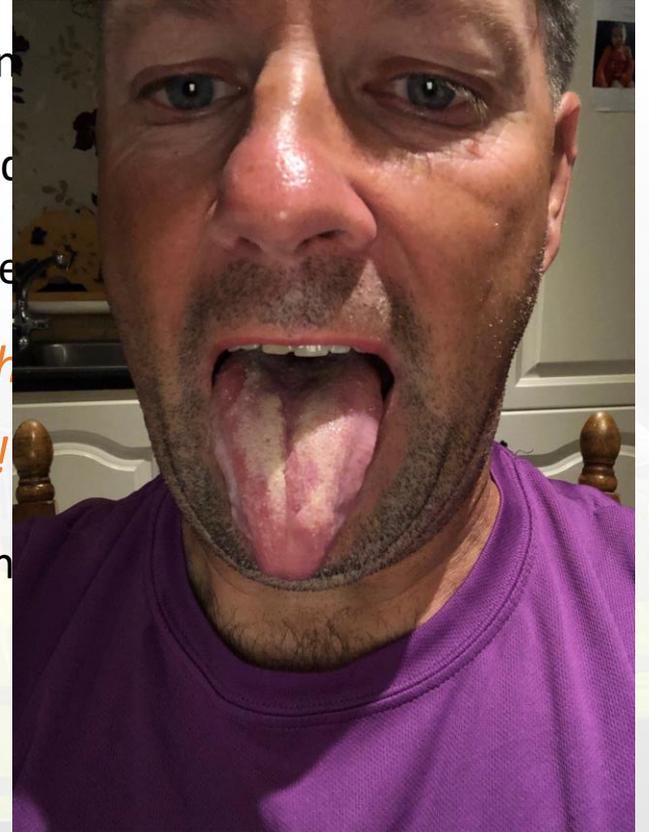
Back In Dover, UK

- Unloaded the boat and stopped at McDonalds on
- Mouth was destroyed from the salt water - Very d
- My crew were still suffering from the effects of se

Paschal asked Paddy if the can of coke in the

Paddy said the whole fridge was moving!!!

- I went through all the messages of support & con
hours that night
- Next day we packed up and headed home!!!





CS&PF
@csandpf

Follow

Unofficial success on 3 August: 1-way solo Fergal Madden, time 16:46, pilot Mike Oram. cspf.co.uk/swim-routes/MT... Comhghairdeas Fergal!



Channel Swimming & Piloting Federation - Swim Routes

The Channel Swimming & Piloting Federation (CS&PF) is the largest and most comprehensive governing body for English Channel swimming.
cspf.co.uk

7:27 AM - 4 Aug 2019

7 Likes



What's Next???

- **August 2023** – North Channel 20 miles – Northern Ireland to Scotland
- **NC** - Part of the 7 Ocean's and the - **Hardest channel of all swims!!!!**
- **NC** - Cold water and is the home for the Lions Maine Jellyfish
- **August 2024** – Bristol Channel 17 miles – Glenthorne to Porthcawl
- **BC** - Strong tides, looking at 27 mile swim

In Closing

- Its not a cheap sport nor do I do it for a charity – **Cover my costs!!!**
- Like to support me I have lots of “**company logo room on my togs**”!!!

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- More than glad to do talks to share my job
- Finally - **Thank you for your attention!!!**

