

Observers Report

Audrey Scott Ladies Commemorative Relay

6th August 1994

Observer: Frank Richards
Type: France - England
Successful: YES
Time: 14 hours 40 minutes

Team

Alison Streeter
Paula Townley Rivett
Laura Burtch
Lee Williams
Margaret Partridge
Kathy Batts

04.35 We all assemble on the crosswall Pontoon , load on the baggage and take on the team (Harbinger with Barrie Darling)

05.05 We leave the harbour en route to Pt Do Rideno France . The Ladies team soon settle , Alison and Margaret et their heads down in the stern Cabin , Lee in the saloon . Kath , Paula and Laura opt to stay on deck in the air .

06.16 The sun shows itself through thick cloud . Barry is at the wheel , 'Aegean Blue is ahead of us with Nora Tolandano from Mexico who started swimming the night before at 11.10.

07.06 All aboard are on deck as we approach Mike and his swimmer to wish her well and cheer her on . She gives a small wave back .

07.49 We are just offshore pt D Rideous France , Alison goes in and swims to the beach, she raises her arms , I whistle her in and at

07.52 The swim starts , what a dull , grey morning it is .

08.25 Bacon cooking , Alison gets a whiff of it and calls out " that smells good".

08.52 Paula in after a good changeover , Alison has covered 2.1 miles , Lee says she has a headache and I give her two paracetamol tablets .

09.52 Bit of a chop on the sea as Laura takes over , Paula did 1.9 miles

10.30 Laura going strong and steady at 58 strokes per minute Boyfriend David never takes his eyes off her as she swims .

10.52 Lee is in now , one of the bubbliest girls ever, she danced about on deck waiting for her turn saying 'I want to pee , I want to pee'.

10.58 A carrier ship swings to starboard to go around us and we give a thank you wave , Laura did 2.1 miles , great going.

11.52 Margaret takes over from Lee ,this is her first real sea swim , but she had a great swim .

12.52 Kathy's turn now , she is a bit worried but strokes strongly , unfortunately the sea is starting to rough up for her

13.10 These are far from ideal conditions but she is doing very well despite swallowing some sea-water.

13.52 Alison in for a second time now , she likes this rough water , she looks very strong and sure of herself, the sun is breaking through here and there which helps a bit, but Barry is concerned about the flood tide , it is just not coming through like it should and we are not as far north as we should be .

14.52 Paula again , she says she wants to see faces on deck so we oblige of course

15.18 Rough now , we rock and roll in the swell , Barry radios Mike to see how Nora is doing

15.52 Laura takes over and swims out well away from the boat as well roll about , these are big seas now

16.52 Lee in again , but she swims way off course , I whistle her back , and she comes closer laughing , Chris Stockdale rings to see how Margaret is enjoying herself .

17.52 Margaret is in again , she seems a bit apprehensive this time , and understandably so with these big waves , but she swims strongly and capably .

18.52 Kathy's turn again , she says she feels sick , but goes in without any hesitation . She swims on the starboard (weather) side . She had previously told me that her last big sea swim was a relay 19 years ago .

19.15 She stops coughing and chocking and spitting out sea water , but continues strongly .

19.37 Kathy stops and asks 'how long?' I tell her 15 minutes , she is feeling the strain and I think has stopped now 5 or 6 times to cough up sea water.

19.52 Alison now goes in for a third go , as a relieved and gallant Kathy comes out , she stuck to her guns well in these awful seas . Alison Whoops !! she loves it !!

20.52 Paula is in now , with a lightstick tail. It is dark and we are now off Dymchurch .

21.07 Paula calls out ' this is lovely ' . She is really enjoying herself , with her lovely strong narrow stroke , there is no waste in her style . Margaret remarks on her speed she really motors.

21.45 Alison takes over from me with a torch at the rail as I go below to change into the gear to go into the dinghy to escort the last swimmer to the beach . the honor of landing will go to Laura .

21.52 Lovely effort from Paula , and Laura goes in for the last lap of the swim . We are about ½ mile off the beach and the crewman and I prepare to take off in the inflatable . I have a 'thing' about outboard engines and with these big seas sweeping under us I pray the bloody thing keeps going . I have spent half a lifetime watching blokes yanking on that piece of string trying to restart the things, and I really hope it does not let us down now .

22.11 We are tossing about on a switchback as Laura swims between us and Harbinger , when Barrie calls out he can go no closer I shine the torch just in front of Laura so she can follow the direction to go in . For the umpteenth time the crewman tells me to keep as low in the dingy as possible as the huge waves sweep below us (I just love know all sods who insist on teaching Granny how to suck eggs) The swim to the beach seemed interminable but Laura kept plugging away , as the surf picked her up with about 150 meters to go I yelled at her to keep going as we could not get closer. We would never get back out through the surf without getting swamped or flipped over.

22.32 Laura stands on the dry beach below the Dymchurch sea wall and waves her arms . I blow my whistle as Harbinger sounds his siren and all aboard cheer. I call her and she swims out to us , we haul her aboard the dinghy and head back to Harbinger . We debate on whether to transfer to the main boat here , or further out where the sea might be better , I say I do not want to spend another minute in the dinghy than I have to and neither does a tearful Laura . The crew man tells Barry to go further out but then the outboard cuts out on us (sods law isn't it !) I will NOT express my feelings at this point !.

Barrie comes alongside us as the crewman performs the famous yanking act . Laura (in tears) says she wants to swim to Harbingers stern and climb aboard . She does so as I toss the painter aboard . I think she feels safer in the sea than on this dinghy (I know how she feels)

All safe on board we start the long run home to Dover , a long , hard day , but the ladies made it , and what an indomitable team they proved to be in the (at times) most daunting conditions.

THE 'WEAKER SEX' ? FORGET IT .AUDREY SCOTT WOULD BE PROUD OF YOU ALL , I KNOW I AM Frank Richards