

<i>Relay Team A</i>	<i>Club</i>	
Ronan Joyce	Phoenix	<i>ex International swimmer, Inishbofin Swim, Killary Fjord Swim, Cavan Swim</i>
Colm O'Neill	Phoenix	<i>ex International swimmer, Solo Channel Swim, Inishbofin, Lough Erne, Cavan Swim</i>
Martin Cullen	Barrow & Phoenix	<i>ex International swimmer, Inishbofin Swim, Killary Fjord Swim, Cavan Swim, Lough Erne</i>
Willie Tracey	Phoenix	<i>Inishbofin Swim, Cavan Swim</i>
Pat Nash	Half Moon	<i>Solo Channel Swim, Inishbofin Swim, Rottnest Swim (Australia)</i>
Francis Lyons	Phoenix	<i>Inishbofin Swim, Cavan Swim</i>

<i>Relay Team B</i>	<i>Club</i>	
Niamh Fitzgibbon	New Ross	<i>Rottnest Swim (Australia)</i>
Gerry Carroll	Phoenix	<i>Many long distance relays, Inishbofin Swim, Lough Erne, Cavan Swim</i>
Fergus Cooney	Sandycove	<i>Ex International Water Polo player</i>
Ken McCarthy	Aer Lingus	<i>Cavan Swim</i>
Jerry Kiersey	Eastern Bay	<i>Inishbofin Swim, Lough Erne, Cavan Swim Won Dunlaoghaire Harbour swim</i>
Sean Dervan	Phoenix	<i>Inishbofin Relay, Cavan Swim</i>

<i>Relay Team C</i>	<i>Club</i>	
Andrew Flannagan	Corrib	<i>Ex International Swimmer, Dublin Bay Swim Galway Bay Swim, Cavan Swim</i>
Pat Manning	Half Moon	<i>Solo Channel Swim, Many long distance relays, Rottnest Swim (Australia), Inishbofin Swim, Cavan Swim</i>
Katie Coyle	Corrib	<i>Cavan Swim</i>
Declan O'Grady	Millennium	<i>Killary Fjord Swim, Lough Erne</i>
Owen Sisk	London & Phoenix	
Martin McCarthy	Corrib	

Event Organiser:- Martin J. Cullen

Training Advisor:- Colm O'Neill

29th May Cavan Swim – 12 swimmers

Mid June night swims at Seapoint in Dublin and Blackrock in Galway

4th July leave Dublin for Dover

5th July familiarization

6th July EARLY Morning start of relay swim – 2.30am (approx)



Ken McCarthy, Martin Cullen, Martin McCarthy, Owen Sisk, Pat Nash, Pat Manning, Jerry Kiersey, Niamh Fitzgibbon, Sean Dervan, Andrew Flannagan, Katie Coyle, Willie Tracey

The Irish Dream Teams

It started off as a solo swim and then two solo swims but injuries turned these into a two way relay attempt which had never been done before by an Irish team. I approached a number of people and was very pleasantly surprised at the response, even though some people allege they were approached when they might not have been in their full senses after a tippie or two!! Before long it was two teams and amazingly it grew into a third team. A disparate collection of swimmers from all walks of life, a wide span of ages and capabilities joined together because most had a dream to swim the English Channel, the Everest of swimming, but to do a two way swim was truly an opportunity of a lifetime.

Many hours of pool training, including a 24 hour swim challenge in the NAC, Blanchardstown, sponsored by Liam Bohan the MD of the NAC, were put in by all. The average distance covered each week by the swimmers was 10,000 to 15,000 meters.

Next came the sea training from the beginning of June and the 3½ mile lake swim in Cavan organised by Sean Walsh and the Cavan Icebreakers. Towards the end of June we had a couple of night swims both in Dublin & Galway to give everyone a feel of what was to come.

On the 4th July most of the swimmers gathered at the Irish Ferries terminal, North Wall where we received a blessing from Fr Paddy Culhane of Chapelizod and then off on the Ulysses, pure luxury in comparison to what we had to look forward to! Long car drive diagonally across England to the South East corner and the usual witticism about why not use the Channel Tunnel, etc.

On Monday evening last swimmers arrive at 8.00 pm and cars are loaded with provisions to bring down to the three boats for midnight.

It is 1.53 am on Tuesday, 6th July 2004, as 3 Irish swimmers enter the water from the beach at Samphire Hoe, just to the south of Dover harbour. They are Ronan Joyce, Niamh Fitzgibbon and Andrew Flannagan. The lights from the mainland and the white cliffs offer a great backdrop to these historic beginnings. Air temperature is 13°C, which is mild and the water temperature is cool but not cold, no intake of breath as the body is immersed. The current is strong as it is a high spring tide which has just turned. We are informed by the pilots that very good progress must be made in the first two hours if we are to have any chance of success. Splash, splash, splash, arms hitting water and legs kicking and the three escort boats edge away from the shore and each other. The 5 remaining swimmers on each team are going through all sorts of emotions and just want their first swim to be out of the way so as they can use up some of their nervous energy.

The crews on the 3 boats have seen it all before but not 3 teams from the one country all swimming at the same time!

The three boats and pilots are Aegean Blue with Mike, team A, Sea Satin with Lance, team C, and Anastasia with Eddy, team B.

Michael with team A, Aoife with team C and Jimmy and Breda with team B are our safety team.

Just before 3.00 am another swimmer from each team gets ready to enter the water. Swim gear comprises swimming togs, silicon hat and goggles. Vaseline is applied to anywhere that rubs and Safe Sea applied against possible jellyfish stings. Second set of swimmers enter the water behind their team mates and on the siren the first swimmer gets out. It is important to get dry as quick as possible and to get as warm as you can. Liquid, preferably hot, and food in any form are essential, even if in small quantities.

It is still dark and quite cool and the talk is sparse. Some try and sleep, others are on constant lookout. Nerves are still not settled for those that are yet to swim. The forecast was good until late on Wednesday but having looked at various satellite sites we had our doubts but it did look as if we had enough of a gap to manage to get over to France & back.

All went well as the day progressed and all the important points on the crossing were reached within the allotted time. The three teams were fairly evenly matched with a mix of experience, new talent and variety of ages and strengths.

Team C started to pull away on the 5th/6th hour and they were about a mile ahead as we entered the NE lane. At this point Teams A & B headed South in an effort to make up the lost distance and land to the south of Cap Gris Nez within the time and the tide. Team C took the straighter route to the north, heading for the spot under the lighthouse at Cap Gris Nez.

During the afternoon the wind started to build from the NE and reached the 16 to 19 knot mark. This gave us a choppy sea but despite this a lot of the swimmers increased their distances during their second swims.

Pat Manning, from team C, was the first to land in France in 13hrs and 16mins.

Colm O'Neill, from team A, was next in at 13hrs 50mins.

Fergus Cooney, from team B, landed at 14hrs 25mins.

By this time the wind was against the tide at about 19 knots and the sea was very confused in the overfalls off the point of the Cap. This area is always the same for the first 2 miles when the tide runs NE. It is a problem for any return leg.

At 17hrs 53mins team A had to call it a day as one of the team was too ill to carry on.

At 21hrs team B also had to call off their swim as the weather in the area they were in became very nasty. The best description being "it was like being in a washing machine".

Team C battled on and despite all the odds, including very bad sea-sickness, they finished on the training beach in Dover harbour just before 7am on Wednesday morning, i.e. 27hrs 48mins. Owen Sisk had the privilege to swim ashore where he was hugged by the event organiser, Martin Cullen, the only two people on the beach at that hour of the morning.

This was the first two way crossing by an Irish Team.

The first time any country had 3 teams at the same time swimming the Channel.



*Pat Manning on the rocks at
Cap Gris Nez.*

*Pat became the first Irishman to
complete a solo, relay and double
relay swim.*

*Congratulations and deep admiration to all because conditions were very bad,
especially on the return leg.*

Already teams for next year are being discussed!!!!