

The King's Swimmers

NEWSLETTER



March 2023, Issue 01, editor Dana Prys-Jones

Welcome to King's Swimmers first newsletter- We are pleased to share with you a taste of what is to come in 2023 as well as sharing success stories from swimmers we have coached over the years.



Menorca April 2019 Swim camp

A message from our Director, Kathy Batts



We are proud of what we have achieved over our time at The Kings' Swimmers but more importantly immensely proud of swimmers we have met over the years, reaching their goals and targets and being part of their swimming journey.

I have seen firsthand swimmers self-confidence grow after attending a swim camp, feeling motivated and mentally strong to successfully achieve their goal.

We have exciting events ahead this year, which our first swim camp in Menorca starts the end of this month! Please follow and like us on Facebook and Instagram to follow the camps and fellow swimmers.

On behalf of The King's Swimmers, I would like to thank you all for your support along the way and we look forward to what 2023 has in store for us and swimmers! Good luck to those that have upcoming swims in the schedule.

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Meet our directors and swim guides and an insight into The King's Swimmers history.

Success Story

Read about one of our swimmers that attended a swim camp and how they reached their goal of swimming The English Channel

Important dates to keep in mind

List of upcoming swim camps. As well as competitions you may be interested in to compete and train for.



Our Story

Kevin Murphy, holding the record of 34 solo English Channel crossings, is the Director of The King's Swimmers. Our other Director is Kathy Batts, whom has swum the English Channel, as well as becoming the first British Lady, first European lady and 3rd British person to have swum the length of Lake Tahoe.

Kevin Murphy, King of the Channel, was training for a three-way Channel attempt in the 70's. Kathy Batts' Father Wilf was Kevin's coach. Few decades later, Kevin coached Kathy for her solo channel, round the Isle of Wight relay and Manhattan swims.

The idea for The King's Swimmers came about when both Kathy and Kevin worked as Swim Guides and mentors, for a rival company and decided to take the plunge and set up their own company. They both had a love of long distance swimming spanning many years and decided that they wanted to inspire, coach and lead by example a new generation of long distance swimmers.

From our personal experiences conquering various swims around the world, we can offer fellow swimmers advice and support from training programs, expert advice on planning and preparing for a long distance swim, GoPro Analysis, nutrition and what support you will need from your crew.

We are very lucky to have experienced swim guides. You will or may have already come across them. Ian, Marc, Paula and Dana have experience in the world of long-distance swimming. In each newsletter we will be putting the spotlight on our swim guides for us all to find out a little bit more about them!

Success Story: Caroline's English Channel Journey

I was born a worrier! I worry and stress about absolutely everything, questioning if I am capable/good enough to carry out a job or any task I am asked to do.

When it comes to my swimming, whether it pool or open water, I am a completely different person. I love the feeling of the freedom in the water and love the challenge of choppy waters, long distances, being able to fully concentrate on myself and immerse myself in the task I or my coaches have set me.

My open water swim journey started in 2016 after being entered into a 5k event by Grahame wearing a borrowed wetsuit, I was immediately hooked, and I was desperately looking out for my next event! I joined a club in Glasgow and did weekend training swims at Loch Lubnaig, Callander with several other likeminded swimmers. It was amazing to swim with others as I am usually a solitary swimmer, partly because of where I live and partly because of that 'worrying' feeling of not being good enough or fast enough and because I wear a wetsuit.

My first long distance swim was of Loch Lomond in 2017, 21 miles in 12hrs 20 minutes. It was an amazing feeling to come out at the end to people cheering and clapping, I felt on top of the world! Loch Awe, Loch Ness a double Windermere and most recently 'The Mighty 3' of Ullswater, Windermere and Coniston in succession in one day followed in successive years.

Having now convinced myself that I was more than capable of swimming the distance of The English Channel, the next step was to look into how I went about arranging it. Because I am a wetsuit swimmer I went through *Kent Coastal Swimming Challenges* and had a slot arranged for June 2019. I was so excited. I trained and trained but as I was so far away from Dover I only swam in the harbour about 3 days before my swim!



Caroline's Channel Swim. Caroline, Eddie, Kevin and Kathy.

The 'swim' itself was a disaster from start to finish. I was given the call to swim 3 times that week and had it withdrawn within a few hours due to the winds. I was losing all hope to swim but on the last day of my window it was all systems go. The only problem I then had was the fact that my coach at the time decided he wanted to go back home because he was convinced I wouldn't swim so it was left to Grahame, who at that point had very little experience in being in charge of a channel swimmer. As soon as we stepped onto the boat at 2am Grahame was as sick as a dog. This continued for the next 4 hours. During this time I had to get myself ready and prepare to embark on the biggest swim of my life while he was nearly comatose on the floor of the boat! I swam for just 2 hours 35 minutes until I had to come out because Grahame was so unwell. During that time I didn't have a feed and had nobody watching me, it was damn scary! We both recovered from that never to be repeated experience by joining **The Kings Swimmers Endurance Swim Team**. Professionals through and through, who knew what was required to get a swimmer across the channel safely. I can honestly say that I wanted to move to Dover as soon as I met Kathy and Kevin because they restored my confidence and restored my passion for outdoor swimming. They believed in me when I didn't and I loved the no nonsense approach that they had to training – if you don't want to swim for 'x' amount of hours then how do you expect to swim the channel? Hard training and being cold are part of the package, end of.

Again, the English Channel journey was not a smooth one. I was weathered out of my slot another 3 times and I was becoming very depressed and upset about the whole thing. It was messing with my head and all those doubts kept creeping back in but after a heart to heart with Kathy and Kevin I returned to Scotland convinced that I couldn't try again, until Eddie Spelling called me 3 weeks later asking if I wanted another go! I said YES straight away – 5th time lucky?

21st June 2021, everything felt so right. I had the most experienced crew in the entire world, Kathy and Kevin and Eddie Spelling and his team. All I had to do was swim to France.

I felt good and was swimming well until 5 hours in when I got tangled up in a mass of seaweed. It was like swimming through treacle, it was draped all over me, and I was getting frustrated. I used my arms to get it off and in the process pulled the tendons in my left shoulder and upper arm. The pain was unreal but there was absolutely no way I was getting out. This was my shot at getting to France and I was not giving up. From the videos that were sent to Grahame back in Dover, he knew straight away I was in trouble as my stroke was so short and strained. I continued to swim, feed and follow the instructions that were being given to me by my crew. I would not tell them how much pain I was in as I knew they would pull me out. Darkness began to set in and I knew that I was way over the time I had in my head I wanted to do but if I made it then I didn't care how long it took.

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I totally believe that when you hear those words 'This is your last feed', it is simply the most amazing feeling in the world! It means that you are a stone's throw from completing your swim. Of course, you have to keep going until you are out the water but knowing you are so close is just pure bliss. By this point I didn't want my last feed because it meant stopping and then having to move my shoulder more. I was a bit disorientated when the little rib came beside me and guided me onto Wissant beach. It was pitch black and touching that sand was such an emotional feeling. I didn't cry or shout, I was actually speechless, my internal emotions were bursting – I HAD SWAM THE ENGLISH CHANNEL!

It was so funny listening to Kathy & Kevin when I got on the boat back to Dover – They didn't know how to take my wetsuit off! I couldn't help because I was being sick and I couldn't move my shoulder but after a quick lesson with Kevin nearly ending up in the sea it came off!

I believe that yes, I had to do the swimming but it was The Kings Swimmers that got me across the channel. I learnt so much about myself and what I was capable of by attending the intense swim camps in Dover and in Menorca. It's only yourself that can put the effort in at these camps, you are given the task so either do it or don't do it. They pushed me in a productive way, taught me all about how to swim in the sea, all about the tides and how they affect the time it takes you to swim the channel and most importantly taught me to believe in myself.



Menorca Swim Camp 2022. Grahame, Dana, Ian, Caroline, Kevin and Kathy.

I love to train. If I train hard and come out feeling shattered then that's a good day's work and if I go back the next day and do the same again then that's even better.

Listen to your coaches. That's why you have one. They know what they are talking about. They have swam the channel so many times, crewed it so many times even the jelly fish know who they are!

Feed well and sleep well and most important of all is to enjoy what you are doing.

I am so looking forward to Menorca 2023. I will be there for 2 weeks this year and Grahame will be working alongside Kathy, Kevin, Ian, Mark and Dana, learning more and being on hand to support all the other swimmers. Every swimmer needs a 'buddy' they can rely on 100% of the time and I couldn't do any of this without Grahame and I am just so lucky that he supports anything I want to do.

I want to swim everywhere in the world! Of course, until we win the lottery that won't happen but nothing will take away my passion for outdoor swimming and it will all be done with the support of The Kings Swimmers– sea, loch or lake, bring it on! (And yes, if will be in my wetsuit).



Spotlight on...

Paula

Paula is one of The King Swimmers swim guides and has accomplished various long distance swims, including most recently Loch Ness in August 2022.

What is your biggest achievement to date?

Anyone knowing my swimming history would expect me to say my double Channel swim at the age of 25 would be my biggest achievement but in all honesty, I think that my biggest achievement was swimming Loch Ness (23 miles in 14 degrees) last year at the age of 54. If a slightly overweight, middle-aged, menopausal woman can achieve something like that, anyone with the mindset to achieve big things, can.

What is your greatest fear?

My greatest fear is that of failure. I'm a positive person with a very strong mental attitude to training and I think that is what positively drives me, the fear of not reaching the goals that I set myself.

If you could have dinner with a famous person, who would it be and why?

Had to think hard about this one. I think it would be Barbara Windsor. I'd have loved to hear all her stories about her massive acting career and especially about her life with the Krays.

Top tip for those wanting to swim the English Channel

My number one tip would be 'don't overthink it'. Listen to your coaches, work out what drinks/food work for you and follow the training plan. It's good to do your research but some swimmers literally go way too far into the detail that will just drive them crazy. Oh, and make sure you learn how to pee whilst swimming, one swimmer had to abandon their swim due to not being able to pee en-route.....

What is your favourite food and drink to swim on?

My favourite food is jelly babies and the mini chocolate swiss rolls. My drink is a carb loading drink but with black currant for taste. Absolutely love feeding time on a swim 😊. A chance to touch base with your crew too. Unless of course the small boat is bobbing around on Loch Ness, and you keep running out of the string attached to the bottle 😊.

If you could have a superpower, what would it be?

My superpower would be the ability to have enough time to do all the things I need to do. The time to see family and friends (I'm normally in trouble for not having seen someone for a while)!

Important dates to keep in mind for 2023...

- 3rd June- 9th June - Swim Training Camp, Dover, The King's Swimmers
- 3rd June - The Big Bala Swim, North Wales, UK
- 9th June – Great North Swim, Windermere, UK
- 29th July – Brighton Pier Open Water Swim
- 10th September – Big Brutal Swim, Llanberis, North Wales

