



England to France and back—the hard way

WENDY TREHIOU TELLS CLIFF GOLDING HOW SHE CONQUERED HER TWO-WAY CHANNEL SWIM

Wendy Trehiou, works as a Risk Manager at HSBC House on the Esplanade. When she isn't wearing a business suit Wendy likes to swim. She likes to swim a lot. In 2006 she swam the English Channel. In 2007 she swam around Jersey and in 2008 she swam from Jersey to France. Last year a second solo Channel swim was achieved and this summer Wendy completed a remarkable two-way solo Channel swim in 39 hours 9 minutes becoming only the 26th person and 13th woman to do so. We were exhausted just reading about these incredible accomplishments but managed to sit Wendy down long enough to ask her a few questions.

fe Wendy, when did you start swimming?

W I learnt to swim when I was 4 and became a competitive swimmer up to National level before I retired from racing at the age of 16. I started training again in September 2005 in preparation for my first Channel crossing.

fe When did you first want to swim the Channel?

W I have wanted to swim the Channel since I was 7 years old.

fe What do you think about when you are swimming?

W I often don't think of anything. I just swim. Every now and again I sing to myself. Fortunately no one can hear me!

fe What training did you do for your two-way Channel swim?

W Training was intense. During the winter I swam 5-6 days a week in the pool. These sessions ranged from 3,000m in 1 hour to 12,000m over 4 hours. In May I went to Spain with ten friends for a week of intensive training, culminating in an 11 hour swim. Back home I swam longer in the sea as the temperature rose. I started with a 4 hour swim in 12 degrees increasing to 6-10 hours most Saturdays and Sundays as well as swimming during the week. My toughest training sessions

involved two 10 hour swims back to back over one weekend. That was tiring! I had fish and chips on the way home on the Sunday, straight to bed and then into work on Monday morning.

fe The distance for your two-way swim to France and back is about 43 miles but, with the tides and currents, you actually covered 100 miles. How many miles in total do you think you swam or covered since the beginning of 2013?

W About 1000 miles.

fe On your two-way did you ever doubt that you could finish?

W About 3-4 hours before I completed my swim I did ask to get out as England just never seemed to get any closer and I felt I was running out of fuel.

fe In 2011 you were diagnosed with breast cancer. After surgery, chemo and radiotherapy you finally got the all clear to train in January 2012 for your second Channel swim. How did you cope with the extreme training?

W I was desperate to get back in the water and prove to myself I could still swim the Channel. Achieving the right balance so soon after completing an intensive course of therapy was hugely important. I had to train my brain as much as my body.

fe It must have been tough, all alone, just you and the elements.

W I wasn't alone. I couldn't have done any of this without tremendous support from my family, my friends and HSBC and all the wonderful people who donated to my charities. They were all fantastic.

fe Which charities did you support and how much have you raised so far?

W Since my 2006 Channel swim I have raised about £30,000 for charities in Jersey. These are: SCOPE, The Samaritans, Robin Ward at the hospital, CLIC Sargent, Macmillan, Jersey Hospice and Friends of Jersey Oncology.

fe Many people in Jersey and around the world were inspired by your two-way swim. How does that make you feel?

W It's very overwhelming. I had no idea so many people were following my swim or the impact it would have. Dealing with this has been tough but if my efforts inspire others then it makes it all worthwhile.

fe You have been recognised with several awards including the rarely gifted States of Jersey Churchill Award. How did you feel when you heard that you were to be the first person since 1998 to receive this honour?

W I was in shock. I know the other people who have received this award and I realise what a prestigious award it is. I am very proud to have been born in and live in Jersey.



The Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Michael Birt, presenting Wendy with the States of Jersey Churchill Award

Image courtesy of Dee Richards

fe What have you learnt from open water swimming?

W That I am very stubborn and headstrong! Also that, with the right dedication and commitment, you can achieve anything if you want if bad enough. I have learnt a lot about myself. I am a stronger person than I was when I did my first Channel swim and if I want something now I put a plan in place and I go and get it. It's not enough to just dream the dream you have to go and live it.

fe What would you say to someone who wants to try open water swimming?

W Give it a go. You have nothing to lose and, potentially, lots to gain. It is the most exhilarating and peaceful experience I can think of.

fe What's next?

W I have booked a second round Jersey swim next year and I'm not finished with the Channel yet. I will do another solo in 2015 and I also want to swim the North Channel (Scotland to Ireland) in a few years.