

Neil's Eddystone challenge

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A Plympton man who completed a solo swim of the English Channel last year in memory of his best friend who died of a brain tumour is about to embark on his next big swim.

Neil Brinkworth, who is the founder of Plymouth Open Water Swimmers (POWS) will be swimming the 14 miles from the Eddystone Lighthouse to Plymouth Hoe in early September. – weather permitting.

“I have always dreamt of swimming this ever since I was a young boy. I was brought up on stories about the Eddystone Lighthouse and the Eddystone reef,

tales about ship wrecks, strong tides, storms, sea monsters and about the disasters that struck the lighthouses over the centuries.”

To date it is believed that there have only been three successful swims; in 1914 Jabez Wolffe was the first person to swim from the Eddystone Lighthouse back to Plymouth Pier. He was known as the unluckiest channel swimmer in history, having made at least 22 attempts to swim the English Channel and never succeeded.

In 1977 Christine Sifleet successfully completed the swim in a time of just over 10 hours and the last person to successfully complete the swim was Sharon Price 1987 in just under seven hours. Both swimmers have been helping Neil plan this swim by providing him with in depth insights into the challenges he might face.



Neil is hoping to become the fourth person to complete the swim and has recruited a fantastic support team to give him the best possible chance of successfully completing the challenge.

Neil is hoping to have the swim verified with an observer to ensure the swim conforms to the Marathon Swimming Federation (MSF) Rules. For the swim to be verified by the MSF, Neil will only be allowed to wear a swim hat, goggles, swimming trunks (no wetsuit) and is not allowed any outside assistance, apart from receiving his feeds from a feedline.

His main support crew will consist of Andrew Butler and Sian Lane who have both crossed the channel and are established long distance marathon swimmers.

They will ensure that Neil stays hydrated and feeds during the swim as well as providing motivation and support.

Tom Thorpe, from Ocean City Kayaks will be providing safety cover throughout Neil's swim. Tom is an established kayaker in his own right, having kayaked around the coast of Ireland unsupported in 26 days in 2019. Tom is well conversed with the tides and currents around the Eddystone as he would regularly paddle out to the Eddystone Lighthouse after work when training for his around Ireland challenge.

The swim would not be possible without a boat which is being provided by Plymouth's Ben Kellet from the InDeep Dive and Charter boat centre. Ben and his team have a wealth of experience and knowledge of the waters around the Eddystone and are regular visitors to the Eddystone Lighthouse and Reef.

With so many swimming groups on the rise and the popularity of swimming growing, Neil and a few friends set up Plymouth Open Water Swimmers (POWS), for people who want to take their swimming to the next level and focus on long distance open water activity.

Plymouth Open Water Swimmers regularly swim at Firestone Bay all year round including the cold winter months. Their warmth and friendship keeps them going throughout the winter and they have adopted the saying 'nothing great is easy' – a quote attributed to Captain Matthew Webb, the first person to swim the English Channel in 1875.

Neil's 21-mile solo channel swim in July 2019 was in memory of former Babcock colleague and best friend Mat Luscombe and raised thousands of pounds for Brain Tumour Research and St Luke's Hospice.

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