



Hastings & St. Leonards Voluntary Lifeguards Lake Windermere Swim Tuesday 11th August 2009

On Tuesday 11th August there was movement at Bassenthwaite at 4am. Seven sleepy but expectant faces appeared in the kitchen at 4am, no-one really saying too much, just getting their breakfast and checking once more that everything was packed and ready to go. It was an easy drive down to Waterhead, the northern point of Lake Windermere, but then you wouldn't expect too much traffic at that time! Once there Doug parked his car at the Pier where he'd been told he could leave it, our car and Matt's were unloaded and everyone started to get ready. Doug had been drawn to provide the safety cover first so he, Dean and Matt got changed. It was very misty and quite eerie looking into the merky distance.



Matt on the board, Dean swimming and Doug as safety cover leave Waterhead with the rest of us watching

Dean 'greasing' himself up before starting the swim at 5.56am on Tuesday 11th August.



Once they had disappeared into the early morning mist the rest of us (Malcolm, Jenni, Fred and myself) made our way to the first point where we hoped we could see them. We could but only just see them through the mist. So we made our way to Bowness where Rob joined us. Jenni was next to provide safety cover and paddled out to meet them. Because of the misty conditions it meant they took a longer route hugging the shoreline more than going down the centre.



Jenni leaving Bowness to meet the team and take over safety cover.

From Bowness there was no opportunity to change the safety cover, so Malcolm, Fred, Rob, Doug and myself made our way to the southern end and waited, and waited and waited. Sadly the weather deteriorated into a cold, miserable and drizzly August day. We kept asking the trip boat 'skippers' if they had seen them but they go along the opposite side of the lake. We were able to talk to Jenni on the radio and eventually we saw them about two miles away. We had never expected a strong current in the Lake but it took over three hours to make it to the end, and to make it worse it was absolutely pouring with rain!!



At last they came into sight, and it was pouring with rain.

Dean came ashore at 3.07pm (9 hours and 11 minutes after wading into Lake Windermere). It had been a hard challenge for him and the current and cold conditions had taken their toll. Dean and the team decided that a one way swim was enough for today but we'll be back - the Lake won't beat him.



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Dean had a hot drink, some food and warm clothing and made a quick recovery. Next was getting him back to Bassenthwaite and into a bath followed by some hot food. We learnt a great deal about the Lake and have already discussed what changes we'll make next time.

We have also cemented the team, it was an excellent team exercise and although not everyone was able to provide safety cover we were all involved and felt part of the team.

The club has got a few more projects to explore and undertake in the future and would welcome others joining us.