

North Channel Swim

Date: 11 August 1973

Duration: 18 hours 27 minutes



Exhausted and relieved, Ted Keenan climbs unaided back into the boat after swimming the North Channel awaited by Cecil Lynam & John McIntyre.

Ted Keenan's swim began at Orlock Point (near Groomsport) at 00.54am on Saturday 11 August 1973. He landed at Knockinam, two miles south of Portpatrick, Scotland, at 19.21 that night, completing a 22 mile journey. The treacherous North Channel swim was undoubtedly a challenging expedition for Ted Keenan, often referred as the 'Graveyard' of all swims. In 1959, Greek swimmer Jason Zirganos died attempting to swim the North Channel swim, subsequently regarded as the 'Killer swim'.

During 1973, Ted travelled numerous times to Donaghadee to complete training exercises and to get acclimatised to the freezing temperatures of the water.

"It is largely mental attitude that means success or failure once peak physical fitness has been achieved. One plods on regardless, despite stomach and chest pains, bitter cold, threatening circulation and partial paralysis, battling with the current and the cold, the icy winds and the battering waves".

(The Fermanagh Herald, 25 August 1973)

In one boat, was Ted's 14 year old son, Brian, who organised hourly feeds for his father, accompanied by Dermot Lunny and Cecil Lynam. Also completing the journey was Pilot Captain William Long, John McIntyre, Jim Burton, David Bell and Dr. Sloan. The North Channel was a physical strain for Ted, conquering the extreme cold and the dreaded jellyfish.

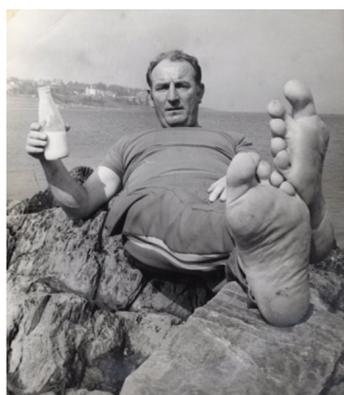


Nearly there!
Ted Keenan swimming the North Channel. He completed the crossing from Orlock Point, Donaghadee, to the towering cliffs near Portpatrick in Wigtownshire, in 18 hours and 27 minutes!
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"It was very cold for the first few hours. The circulation stopped in my right hand and was beginning to go in my left. But after passing The Dyke, in mid-channel, the temperature rose a couple of degrees".

(Belfast Telegraph, 13 August 1973)

Despite the tide turning only one mile from Portpatrick, with great determination, Ted accomplished his goal. He completed the last mile in just over 4 hours, it was undoubtedly a gruelling experience for Ted.



A Well Deserved Rest!
Ted Keenan puts his feet up at Bangor after becoming the first Irishman to swim the North Channel.
© Stanley Matchett, Daily Mirror.



Photographed at the Killyhevlin Hotel after the North Channel swim.
(L to R): Lord Mayor of Enniskillen, Alderman Richard Barton, Brian Keenan, Tony Keenan, Mrs Bridie Keenan, Chanele Keenan & Ted Keenan.