

“We cannot let up until our sport is purified”: marathon swimming and the troubled boundaries of authenticity



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Scott Zornig (2011)

- “[...] We must be loud and our voices must be heard. We cannot let up until our sport is purified and distanced from the sports which cause confusion.”

- “...a set of common or joint activities bound together by a network of communications” (Kling and Gerson, cited in Strauss 1984: 123)
- “...groups emerging, evolving, developing, splintering, disintegrating or pulling themselves together, or parts of them falling away and perhaps coalescing with segments of other groups to form new groups, in opposition, often, to the old.” (Strauss 1978: 121)

www.warwick.ac.uk/go/channelswimmer

Becoming a Channel Swimmer

Research and Data

Resources

Welcome to "Becoming a Channel swimmer"

My name is Karen Throsby and I am a sociology lecturer at the University of Warwick. This website is part of a two and half year ESRC-funded sociological research project, entitled "Becoming a Channel swimmer: identity and embodiment in an extreme sporting culture".



After two and a half fabulous years of fieldwork, reading, writing, and of course, lots of swimming, the funded period of the project has now come to an end, and I am concentrating on writing the research up in journals and as a book, currently titled, "Immersion".

I have also published a magazine highlighting the key findings of the research - you can download this by clicking on the image to the left, or you can e-mail me for a hard copy. In addition, there are lots of papers and podcasts, plus a library of blogs, videos and other resources on the website to browse through. Enjoy!

Contact

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[The Long Swim](#) (my blog)

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Mon 04 Mar '13

[New journal article out today](#)

Sun 17 Feb '13

Newsflash...

First journal publication from the project out today.



<http://www.thelongswim.blogspot.com>

The Long Swim

SUNDAY, 14 APRIL 2013

When the wheels come off...

Sooner or later in a sport like marathon swimming, something will go wrong and you won't be able to finish a swim. It's an occupational hazard. Even with the hardest and most meticulous training, this can happen; but with an early season swim in unseasonably low temperatures, the risks are increased. And so it was that my attempt to swim the Cabrera Channel on 10 April ended with me being hauled out mid-Channel, too cold to continue.

We set off from the port of Sa Rapita at 7am and motored over to the beautiful island of Cabrera - a closely protected nature reserve to the south of Mallorca. The journey was thankfully quick (bearing in mind my uselessness on boats), and after a few moments to settle my stomach, we started getting ready for the swim. I felt great - full of energy and optimism. The water in the sheltered bay was glassy and clear, and even though a thick mist hung low on the water, I was looking forward to some warming sunshine later on. Jumping in, I felt the usual rush of adrenalin - the mild shock of the water, plus the excitement of the swim to come. And off I paddled, feeling good, with the team from XTRM of Toni, Rafael and Laura on board the boat, along with Peter.

It's difficult for me to pin down exactly what happened in the hours that followed, but although the boat's thermometer was showing 15 degrees, it felt SO much colder - perhaps as a result of my lack of acclimatisation beforehand, or the weight I have lost over the winter, or windchill, or the sapping effects of the cool mist that hung low over the water for the first few hours of the swim. Or perhaps it was just cold. By hour two, I was heart-sinkingly cold; chilled right through to the core. And I just couldn't stop thinking about it. It was like being eaten by cold from the inside and my positive mood was being eroded with it.

TWITTER



Karen Throsby
thelongswim

thelongswim Next stop MIMS. Only 7 weeks to go!

54 seconds ago · reply · retweet · favorite

thelongswim Well done to all the Tampa Bay swimmers yesterday - looked like a bit of a brute.

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FWSAuk Check out our conference programme - we wish June would hurry up so we can hear our fantastic speakers!
fwsaconference.wordpress.com/conference-pro...

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thelongswim @Tanni_CT to be honest, if they're asking now, they're very late and panicking!

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Join the conversation



Motivation Monday: Meet the Woman Who Swam the English Channel

Monday, 10/8/2012 at 11:50:12 AM



By [Alanna Nuñez](#) 



Swimming the English Channel—cold, dark, and full of jellyfish— isn't something most people would jump at, but one woman recently braved the 22 miles of water between England and France. She wasn't crazy (or trying to escape a mad man)—she was going it for a good cause.

When Brittany King, 29, took the dive to support the [Banfield Charitable Trust](#), she had to follow strict guidelines from the Channel Swim Association: No wetsuits are allowed, and she couldn't touch anyone during the duration of the swim, although she swam alongside a boat carrying appointed observers the entire time. If she broke any of those rules, King would not be recognized as having completed the swim, even if she made it to the other shore.

To put things in another perspective: More people have climbed Mt. Everest than have completed the English Channel swim.

But the Cypress, TX, resident was up for the challenge. Her fitness resume already included being an NCAA athlete, running five marathons (all for charity), completing an Iron Man, and climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.

Brittany King (Shape magazine)

- “I found that sometimes you have to adjust your goal to reach your dreams. I never planned to wear a wetsuit, but I had to face reality that I am not a penguin. My body just couldn’t handle the hypothermia. Every person is different. But the end result was still the same.”

Steve Munatones (DNOWS)

- “What we find surprising is that she had a wetsuit on board her escort boat in the first place, especially one that fit her. That is not something that the usual English Channel aspirant does, no matter how honorable their charity channel crossing is. [...] There is no shame in calling it a day. But calling for a wetsuit rubs the Channel swimming and marathon swimming communities the wrong way, especially when so much publicity is the result.”



"The toughest athlete in the world is a 62 year-old woman." -
D.L. Stewart. Dayton Daily News

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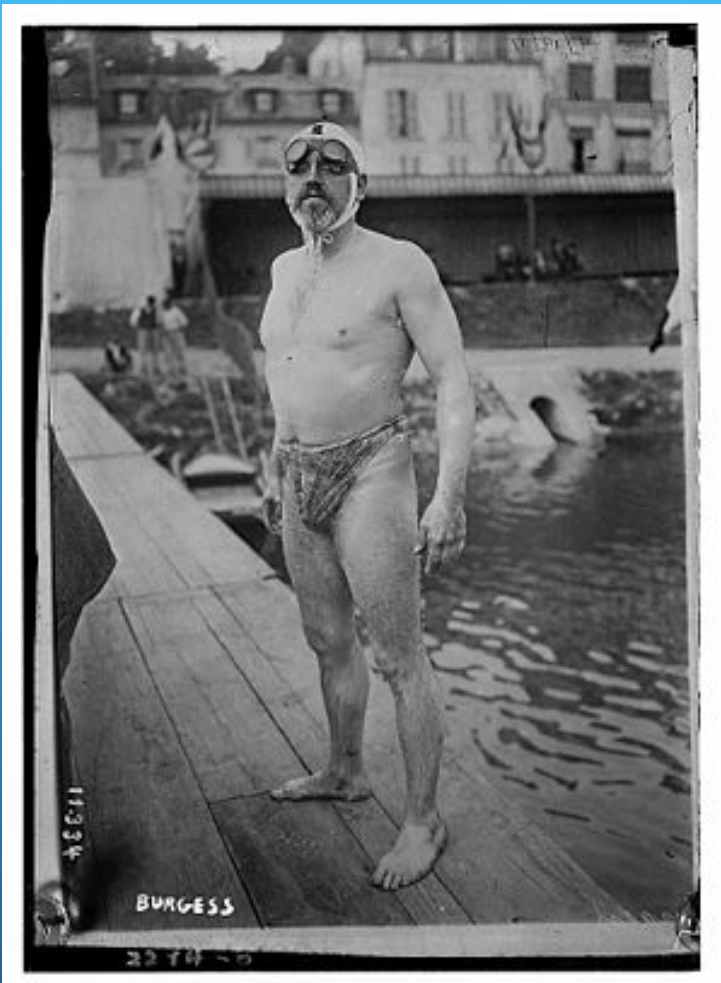
*What's your Xtreme
Dream? Live life large
and support Diana!*



- “The swimmer, Capt Webb, is the original pioneer who inspires successful and aspiring Channel swimmers to this day.” (CS&PF)
- “The sport of Channel swimming traces its origins to the latter part of the 19th century, when Captain Matthew Webb made the first observed and unassisted swim across the Strait of Dover swimming from English to France in 21 hours and 45 minutes.” (CSA)

Evan Morrison (Freshwater Swimmer)

- “The tradition: The knowledge that when we enter the water to begin a long swim, we’re using the same simple technology (textile suit, cap, goggles) as those who came before us, as far back as the 19th century. What other sports can boast as level a playing field over time?”



Diana Nyad (water drip device)

- “But many of us in this sport are entering new territory in these swims that have never been done. While respecting the clear rules of no unnatural flotation, no help in forward speed, many of us are innovating as much as we are plain swimming”

- “I await the introduction of inflatable arm bands to Channel swimming with great excitement.”
- “While you’re at it, why not just put in a mini Jacuzzi off the side of the boat [...] If someone lets in hot water necklaces, someone else will let in the Jacuzzi and then we have a corrupted sport with no real accomplishment / honor / valor associated with it.”

Kiewa (2000: 150)

- “If the distinctions are blurred to insiders, from the outside they are quite invisible. Climbers are climbers to the general population, who would not normally distinguish among them.”

- “[...] It remains highly unlikely that any of the pets who may receive life-saving support from the charity will give a rat’s ass if their salvation came gift-wrapped in a wetsuit.”

- “I’m swimming the Channel next year in a suit. I don’t particularly care if a group of people that not many other people care about don’t certify the swim. If it means I swam a mile less than someone not wearing a wetsuit I can live with that. Will I have swum the Channel? Well, I wouldn’t have walked across, [would] I?”

Scott Zornig (2011)

- “My single, simple request is please do not label it [long distance wetsuit swimming] a ‘marathon or endurance swim’ because it falls into a completely different category which the word ‘swim’ has no part of.”

Kiewa (2002: 156)

If you -

Brag of your climbs

Publicize your climbs

Climb in poorer style than the first ascent

Bring the climb down to your level

Call the climbs by numbers

Make any monetary gains via the cliffs

You're not a climber!

- “So sad that a publicity hound who skews the facts to promote herself is the one who gets an article written about her. There are so many swimmers who train hard and follow all Channel swimming rules and never see one word of ink regarding their efforts.”

To conclude...

