

Not the only 'Ladyee' to have swum the English Channel!

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University of Birmingham alumna, Nancy Douglas, pipped David Walliams to the post when she became the first solo Channel swimmer of 2006.

His may have been the most publicised Channel swim of 2006 but Nancy crossed the 21-mile stretch from Dover to France in an extraordinary time of 11 hours and 16 minutes, raising much needed cash for a disabled relative.

And in a little twist, it was at the University of Birmingham's swimming pool that David Walliams put in the hours of training that led to his sporting achievement last month.

Nancy graduated from the University in 2003 with a BSc in Maths and Sports Science, where she was a keen member of the University swimming and triathlon club.

Following months of training, she finally stepped into the water for the first stroke at 2.45am very early on a July morning. With a boat full of supporters following her progress, she battled through jellyfish, sewage, tankers and ferries in waters of 14°C.

But Nancy says it was the finishing stages of the swim that were the toughest challenge: "At nine hours I could see France only three miles away but the wind had picked up to 15-knots & the tide was coming out - not good as it can push you back towards England!"

Nancy battled for the next 2¼ hours to get into France. Not only was it physically draining, but it became psychologically tough too: "That was when the demons tried to jump into my head, saying it was 'too hard you can't do it'. It was a difficult time, I could see France, but it wasn't getting any closer and I was swimming as fast as I could."

Despite the draining effects of the Channel crossing, Nancy pushed on and drew strength from the support of the team around her. She explained how she felt when she finally realised she was on the other side: "I was getting tired, hungry, sleepy, fed up...but I shook all those feelings off & kept plodding on after yells of support and a few stern words from my crew! Eventually I could see the French sand below me - I was going to make it!"

Nancy took on the challenge to raise money for an electric wheelchair for a family member and has so far raised almost £3200.

She said: "Thank you for everyone's support, you have all been very generous. I really enjoyed myself. This is the one thing I have always wanted to achieve, I am so happy I can tick that box now!"

Ends

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Notes to Editors

Further information Lucy Hood - PR, Media and Promotions Officer, University Sport Birmingham

tel: 0121 414 2662 / email: l.hood@bham.ac.uk

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