

## Swimming the English Channel from Dover in England to Calais in France

### The first Channel swimmer

On a foggy August afternoon in 1875, a lone swimmer dived from Admiralty Pier in Dover into the cold waters of the English Channel. Nearly twenty-two hours later, the exhausted man staggered onto French soil at Calais and became an instant hero. Captain Matthew Webb had become the first person to swim across the English Channel.

Twenty-seven-year-old Webb was a merchant seaman from Shropshire. He had always been a powerful swimmer and, hearing of J.B. Thompson's failed attempt to swim the Channel in 1872, he was inspired to give up his job and train as a long-distance swimmer. Webb's first attempt had to be abandoned due to bad weather, but he returned to the icy Channel waters two weeks later.

Many of the hardships that Matthew Webb had to deal with during his pioneering swim are still faced by modern-day Channel swimmers. In fact, some of his methods for dealing with these hardships are still used today. Webb coated himself in oil for protection against the cold and jellyfish stings. He was also accompanied by boats so his friends could protect and feed him. It must be said, however, that the ale, brandy and beef tea they supplied are not standard for today's cross-Channel swimmers!

Captain Matthew Webb



1. Nearly twenty-two hours later, the exhausted man staggered onto French soil at Calais and became an instant hero.

Find and copy **two** different words from the sentence above that show how tired Matthew Webb was. (1 mark)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name **two** of the hardships that Matthew Webb faced in swimming the English Channel and explain how he dealt with them. (2 marks)

1. Hardship: \_\_\_\_\_

How he dealt with it: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Hardship: \_\_\_\_\_

How he dealt with it: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Using information from the text, write whether each statement is true or false. (2 marks)

Matthew Webb's first attempt to swim the English Channel was not successful. \_\_\_\_\_

The first successful swim of the English Channel was in 1872. \_\_\_\_\_

J.B. Thompson and Matthew Webb swam the English Channel in 1875. \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew Webb took twenty hours to swim the English Channel. \_\_\_\_\_