



GCSE

C700U20-1A



THURSDAY, 6 JUNE 2024 – MORNING

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE – Component 2
19th and 21st Century Non-Fiction Reading
and Transactional/Persuasive Writing**

RESOURCE MATERIAL FOR USE WITH SECTION A

JERSEY WOMAN BECOMES THE FIRST PERSON TO SWIM THE ENGLISH CHANNEL ACROSS SIX DECADES

Meet Sally Minty-Gravett MBE – Sally is one of Jersey’s best known swimming coaches, eight-time cross-Channel swimmer and multiple record holder – the sea really is in her heart and soul! – by Lucy Griffiths.

Earlier this month, Jersey long-distance swimmer Sally Minty-Gravett swam her eighth solo English Channel crossing over six consecutive decades, setting a new world record. The 65-year-old completed the 21-mile swim in 15 hours and 30 minutes.



Sea swimming has always been a huge part of Sally’s life. “I realised very early on that sea swimming was more than just a hobby, it was my passion,” she said. “When I was growing up there were no swimming pools in Jersey so I was always in the sea. Even when I first tried swimming in a pool, I knew I preferred the open water – out in the sea it’s just you and the elements. It’s invigorating, even in the winter. It’s exhilarating when you come out of the water; even if it’s freezing cold, the tingle you get when you come out is lovely. I live for it.”

By four years old, Sally had learnt to swim in the sea and by the time she was 10, she was already a fiercely competitive swimmer, already determined to be a winner. At 14 she was pursuing longer swims, first around the island, then part of a Channel relay team. “I absolutely fell in love with being in the sea. I never got cold. For me, it was just the natural place to be.”

In 1974, when she signed up to swim the length of Lake Windermere in a race and came second, her swimming coach told her that if she could do that, she should attempt to swim the Channel. She went home, trained hard to build up her endurance and first swam the Channel in 1975, aged 18, exactly 100 years since the first-ever successful Channel swim made by Captain Matthew Webb. She always had the self-belief that she could complete the swim.

“That first crossing was completely in thick fog,” said Sally, “I could barely see anything; I only saw France when I was 3ft from the sand. Arriving on that stretch of beach after 11 hours and 56 minutes in the water was such a huge sense of achievement. It was like no other feeling I’d ever experienced.”

She went on to swim the Channel in every decade – in 1985 aged 28, 1992 aged 35, 2005 aged 48, 2013 aged 56, where she completed the swim to France in a storm, and then her amazing 42-mile two-way Channel swim in 2016, the same year she was awarded an MBE for her services to swimming.

She said, “People always ask how I find the mental and physical strength for each Channel swim, but for me it’s not hard. I swim all the time so I don’t find that tough; I meditate, sing songs in my head or think about my technique. Being in the water is where I’m happiest.”

Sally had planned her sixth decade Channel crossing swim this year as her ‘retirement swim’. “From start to finish, it was just the perfect day,” she told me. When Sally started her swim at 5.13am there was just a light breeze and she finished in daylight. “Traditionally there are always lovely French people that meet Channel swimmers at the end of their swim and sure enough as I swam in, there they were with some champagne for me on the slipway.”

Even though Sally said it was her retirement swim, she did not rule out another Channel crossing. “This was my retirement swim but if in 10 years I’m still fit then maybe I’ll consider another one,” she said. “With no more big swims ahead I can focus on learning new things I’ve always wanted to, such as surfing and sailing. Plus, if I miss long distance swimming too much, I can always dive right back in. It’s never too late to do something you love.”

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