

# International Open Water Swimming Association

Established 2009

## *The Wash – United Kingdom – Preliminary Investigations*

### THE WASH (Source – Wikipedia)

The **Wash** is the square-mouthed estuary on the northwest margin of East Anglia on the east coast of England, where Norfolk meets Lincolnshire. It is among the largest estuaries in the United Kingdom. It is fed by the Rivers Witham, Welland, Nene and Great Ouse.

### GEOGRAPHY

The Wash shows as a large indentation in the coastline of the map of eastern England, separating the curved coast of East Anglia from Lincolnshire. It is formed by a large bay with three roughly straight sides meeting at right angles, each about 25 kilometres (15 miles) in length. The eastern coast of the Wash is entirely within Norfolk, and extends from Hunstanton in the north to the mouth of the River Great Ouse at King's Lynn in the south. The opposing coast, which is roughly parallel to the east coast, runs from Gibraltar Point to the mouth of the River Welland, all within Lincolnshire. The southern coast runs roughly northwest-southeast, connects these two river mouths, and is punctuated by the mouth of a third river, the River Nene.

Inland from the Wash the land is flat, low-lying, and often marshy: these are the Fens of Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.



**Above: The Wash, East Anglia, UK**

Owing to deposits of sediment and land reclamation, the coastline of the Wash has altered markedly within historical times; several towns once on the coast of the Wash (notably King's Lynn) are now some distance inland. Much of the Wash itself is very shallow, with several large sandbanks - such as Breast Sand, Bulldog Sand, Roger Sand, and Old South Sand exposed at low tide, especially along its south coast. For this reason, navigation in the Wash can be hazardous for boats. A lightship marks the entrance to the Lynn Channel, the one safe channel from the North Sea to the Wash's south coast.

### WATER TEMPERATURE

The Wash varies enormously in water temperature throughout the year. Winter temperatures are brought near freezing from the cold North Sea flows. Summer water temperatures can reach into the low 20s degrees C (about 70 degrees F) after prolonged high ambient air temperature and sun. This effect, which typically happens in the shallow areas around beaches, and often only in pockets of water, is exaggerated by the large, sheltered tidal reach.

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## Initial investigations into completed swims of The Wash

Mercedes Gleitze (b. 18/11/1900 in Brighton. d. 09/02/1981 in London)



Source: Photo above (right) taken by Paul Hopfensperger at Hunstanton on September 26, 2009. Below information taken from Wikipedia @ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heacham>.

### The Wash 1929 (Age 28)

"On 29 July 1929 Miss Mercedes Gleitze became the first woman [person] to swim the Wash. Originally aiming for Hunstanton she finally came ashore at Heacham [Norfolk] after battling treacherous tides for over 13 hours". (Source – Wikipedia).

Skegness to Hunstanton – 13:17. Inaugural World Record.

### Kevin Murphy (b. 23/01/1949)

Source: Kevin Murphy Bio – Jersey Long Distance Swimming Club - [http://www.jerseyseaswims.org/html/kevin\\_murphy\\_bio.html](http://www.jerseyseaswims.org/html/kevin_murphy_bio.html)

### The Wash 1973 (Age 24)

Skegness to Hunstanton 17mils. in 13:54

### The Wash 1976 (Age 27)

Hunstanton to Skegness in 07:10 (World Record). Temp. 42F-56F

Skegness to Hunstanton - 1976 07:47 - New record, Skeg/Hun.



### Mike Read (b. 09/06/1941)

Source: Mike Read Swimming Achievements, Solo Swims of Ontario Inc - <http://soloswims.com/read.htm>

### The Wash 1974 (Age 33)

Skegness to Hunstanton (15 miles) - 16 Sep 1974 - 07:52

### The Wash 1975 (Age 34)

Hunstanton to Skegness (15 miles) - 27 Jul 1975 - 08:30

Two-Way Wash – Hunstanton – Skegness - Hunstanton (30 Miles) – 27 Jul 1975 – 16:47:56

### The Wash 1976 (Age 35)

Hunstanton to Skegness - 11 Jul 1976, - 05:57. (World Record).



## Tina Spry

1) According to a telephone conversation with Mike Read on Monday November 02, 2009 a girl called Tina Fry successfully swam The Wash after Kevin Murphy's swim in 1973 but before Mike Read's swim in 1974. He cannot remember any further information other than it was Skegness to Hunstanton and she was very young (about 13?).

2) I spoke to Kevin Murphy on Tuesday November 03, 2009 who revealed that her name was "Tina Spry" not "Fry". She was Kevin's protégé and accompanied him on an attempt on 1974 when he passed out unconscious after 8 hours 40 minutes with Hypothermia. The water temperature was 52 degrees Fahrenheit. She went on to complete the swim in 8 Hours 36 Minutes. Apparently she wanted to be the youngest person to swim the channel but did not complete it.

Further investigations revealed:-

TINA, 13, FAILS IN CHANNEL SWIM CALAIS. Mon. Thirteen-year-old British schoolgirl Tina Spry failed In her attempt to become the youngest cross-Channel swimmer when she abandoned her attempt three miles off the French coast early today. She had left Dover yesterday morning and was pulled out of the water when...

Source: <http://newspapers.nl.sg/Digitised/TOC.aspx?issueid=straitstimes19740618>

Kevin also questioned Mercedes Gleitze's swim as the "First" swim of The Wash, as he had always considered his to be the first. He said that the point of the swims was to set a "fixed distance", point-to-point swim. i.e. 'Skegness to Hunstanton' and 'Hunstanton to Skegness'. Mercedes finished in Heacham. However, he confirmed that he finished his first swim in "Holme". He also informed me that in those days, due to no training facilities as in Dover today, these swims were used as training for The English Channel attempts. They were ratified by the BLDSA. He read me out a lot of information about Tina Spry from newspapers articles he had kept in his records.

## Additional Information

Mike Read also informed me of the following:-

- There is a trophy called "The Butlins Trophy" for successful Wash Swimmers which he held for many years until 'Lindsey District Council' telephoned him to ask for it back. He thinks that they now have it.
- His swims were ratified by the crew of the Skegness Lifeboat Crew (his pilots for all his swims) and then by the BLDSA.
- **UPDATE – 06/11/2009** – Lindsey District Council, have after much investigation, found the Butlins Trophy in store! It is dirty, but will clean up. I have suggested that they donate it to IOWSA so it can be used for the proposed "King of The Wash" trophy for the most number of successful swims of The Wash.