

Dover: On the advice of local experts, Bill Pickering waited a month for favourable conditions to swim the Channel. Often Bill grew impatient, for he knew that the folks back home, in Bloxwich (where he manages the swimming baths) believed in him... Many (like Mrs Lawrence, the Fund Chairman) had subscribed towards the £400 - raised to cover his expenses. Then - a deputation was sent to Dover telling Bill to "get on with it!" Spurred to action by such ill-considered advice - Bill Pickering decided to give his doubters "a swim for their money!"

At St. Margaret's Bay, his father greased him for the attempt, and Bill (with a good-luck kiss from his now-anxious wife) waded into the Channel. Ahead of him lay an all-night swim - while the experts (whose knowledge of local conditions is unsurpassed) warned that the tides and the weather were against him.

From now on - Bill relied on his own courage and the great skill of his pilot - Jack Burwill, a Dover boatman. With ~~some occasions~~ ^{some occasions} selected ~~hours~~ ^{hours} - (he is a vegetarian) - Bill swam on - into the Channel night. During the hours of darkness - the lone swimmer battled on through a rain-storm. Next morning, he waded ashore near Calais - fourteen hours six minutes after leaving Dover. A time later established as a world record for the England-to-France crossing.

And in his hour of triumph - Bill Pickering remembered Bloxwich. While his wife puts all our thoughts into words.