

Yankee daredevil set to swim the channel

BY DAVE BROWN

THERE is something about the open water that swimmer Jim McGuire cannot resist. That's why he braves jellyfish, bone-chilling temperatures and two metre swells to push himself to the limit.

McGuire, who hails from New Jersey but now lives on the Isle of Dogs, belongs to Bethnal Green Sharks and ploughs up and down the pools at York Hall and Mile End to prepare himself for some of the world's most extreme swimming events.

He has just returned from the Rottness Channel Swim, in Perth, Australia, a 19.7 kilometre swim to an island off the Indian Ocean coast, and is now setting his sights on swimming the English Channel in June.

"It was a bravado thing really, getting involved in these open water races," the 36-year-old told East End Life. "It all came about when I decided on a lifestyle change. I quit smoking, lost some weight, got back in the water and made a clean slate."

Jim, who had a college swimming scholarship in New Jersey, finished the Rottness race in seven hours and 16 minutes. Thankfully the sharks stayed away but he was stung by jellyfish and buffeted by boats and large waves as he made the crossing.



"About 150 metres from the shore the jellies kicked in," wrote Jim on his blog. "I was getting stung all over the arms, pits and shoulders...it was quite unpleasant but reminded you that you are still alive."

"About 25 metres from shore I knew I was still breathing and kicking, but I couldn't take it any more as the jellies hit my neck. I walked and ran the rest of the way in!"

Reflecting on the experience, Jim said: "I just took my time and did my own race," he said. "It was the longest one I have done so far."

"It was amazing that evening, it was a great party on the island which is normally inhab-

ited by about ten people. There were hundreds of swimmers there."

One of the worst things about the swim, Jim said, was forgetting to shave on the morning of the race. "After seven hours my stubble was chafing my shoulder and I ended up with a horrible scab and a big scar."

Uncomfortable it might be but he is now looking forward to the English Channel, which he will swim as part of a four-man team doing shifts of an hour in turn.

In 2012 he plans to swim the 32km solo.

"The Channel is the most notorious of the open swims," he said. "The water temperature is

going to be just ten degrees and we aren't allowed to wear wet suits."

"I've been getting down there as much as I can to get used to it. After a while you just go numb."

Jim has also swum the Hudson River in New York and will tackle Lake Zurich later this year. He has also been invited for an open swimming event at the Henley Regatta.

Jim is doing his next two swims, the Channel and the Lake Zurich splash, for a charity raising money for research into malignant melanoma.

If you want to sponsor him in his efforts go to www.justgiving.com/Jim-McGuire