

**Press release from Great Britain Deaf Swimming Club:**

**Andrew Rees becomes the first British Deaf solo swimmer of the Channel 17th July 2016.**

With exactly a year to go to the opening ceremony for the [2017 Deaflympics](http://www.deaflympics.com) in Samsun, Turkey, former Great Britain deaf swimmer Andrew Rees has become the first deaf British swimmer to successfully complete a solo Channel swim.

Andrew, who represented GB’s deaf swimming team in the 1990’s, set out from Dover yesterday morning, supported by his boat, the Louise Jane, and completed the swim in a little under 15 hours.

Andrew, who is Welsh but lives in East Sussex, has trained with [Brighton Swimming Club](http://www.brightonsc.co.uk)’s Sea Swimming Coach, Fiona Southwell, herself a successful channel swimmer. He has been preparing all season for this event, going to Majorca to train earlier in the year, and completing many hours of preparation. Under the rules of the [Channel Swimming Association](http://www.channelswimmingassociation.com), he was allowed to wear a pair of ordinary swimming trunks, a hat and goggles to complete the gruelling endurance event, and has been on standby since 8th July, awaiting favourable conditions before being allowed to start his swim at Samphire Hoe Beach, near Dover, at 8am yesterday.

Andrew contacted [GB Deaf Swimming Club](http://www.gbdeafswimming.org) earlier this year, asking if he could help to raise money for the club by being sponsored to swim the event, and the monies raised are to go towards providing financial support for the team that will be selected to swim for Great Britain next July in Turkey.

Deaf athletes receive little or no financial support from central Government or sporting bodies, and they have to raise the costs of competing for their country as well as training to be in peak condition for their events. For swimmers, this means that they will usually train, in the pool and the gym, for an average of 20 hours per week, with only a few days off for Christmas and Easter, and a short summer break, as well as completing school and university assignments and trying to raise funds in order to get to events. As an example, the cost of the last 3 major competitions (2015 World Deaf Swimming Championships in San Antonio, Texas, 2014 European Deaf Swimming Championships in Saransk, Russia, and 2013 Deaflympics in Sofia, Bulgaria) has been over £6000 for each swimmer, before the cost of training at their local club, competition swimwear and associated costs are taken into account. Andrew’s sponsorship money will reduce the burden on them for the next games, and the club is indebted to him and to our previous epic endurance swimmers, the 5 Deaf Otters, a team of ladies who raised money for the club by swimming 5 ½ miles across Coniston Water in September 2015.

GB Deaf Swimming’s Chair, Brian Baxter, said this morning: “I would like to congratulate Andrew on the fantastic achievement of completing the Channel Swim solo, the first British Deaf swimmer to do so. This is a monumental coup, both on a personal level and especially for Deaf and hard of hearing swimmers. We are very grateful that he nominated GB Deaf Swimming Club as the chosen organisation for fund-raising purposes. The money he has raised will help our Deaflympic swimmers immensely, and his swim will also serve as an inspiration to them all.”

Other relevant links:

[Andrew's Channel Swim 2016 Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/Andrews-Channel-Swim-2016-348412895283119/)

[Just Giving page](http://gbdsc.easysearch.org.uk/redir/web.php?url=&s=Just%20Giving%20Brian%20Baxter&ti=QnJpYW4gQmF4dGVyIGlzIGZ1bmRyYWlzaW5nIGZvciBVSyBEZWFmIFNwb3J0IC0ganVzdGdpdmluZy5jb20%3D&app=aW5mb3NwYWNlZXN2Mg%3D%3D&spl=0&result=%3D%3D&sp=0)

Enquiries:

Margaret Baxter

Secretary, GB Deaf Swimming Club

[www.gbdeafswimming.org](http://www.gbdeafswimming.org)

Tel: 07713 739893, 01372 464761