

I was so happy'

MANY must have thought that Pete Winchester's Humber crossing days were over.

Having swum it 68 times, his Humber King title was probably safe. And at 72 years old, he's not ashamed to say that he's no spring chicken.

But something told Pete there was another Spurn Point to Cleethorpes swim in him yet.

The task was more daunting than ever. His last crossing was in 2006 when he swam for three hours to Spurn Point and then rode an aqua-cycle back, which took another four hours.

He's seven years older now – and it made the swim he has done 68 time before a lot more nerve-racking.

"I was very conscious of my age this time around. There aren't many people who have done this sort of thing, let alone at 72, so I didn't know what impact it would have on my body.

"And even though I had done it before, there was a seven-year gap.

"People were warning me about the low temperatures in the middle of the water where it is deeper. Sometimes, when you get there, it's like hitting a brick wall.

"There was a lot to think about this time around. All of these things made me a lot more nervous about this swim than any I have done before."

But the fear didn't deter Pete. If anything, it just forced him to train harder. For months, he has been swimming between the flyover on the A180 and Corporation Bridge with training partner Mark Bird, building up his stamina.

"I trained harder because I was nervous. Mark

Most men at 72 years old are full of stories about the past – but not The Humber King. Pete Winchester talks to reporter **James Dunn** about what's next after completing his 69th swim across the Humber – and there's no mention of armchairs or crosswords.

really pushed me on that little bit further every time so when it came to the day, I felt ready for it."

At 6.15pm on Saturday, all the hard work paid off. Pete completed his 69th Humber swim in two hours and 41 minutes – three minutes faster than the first time he crossed the estuary in 1975 while in his 30s.

"All the worry and hard work just meant that when I got to the other side, the feeling was that much better. There was a strange, thick fog in Cleethorpes so I couldn't see the shore. But suddenly, I dug deep and got a handful of sand. I was so happy, I put my feet down and jumped and almost cleared the water.

"I still couldn't see anything but I could hear my crews going 'great swim' and 'fantastic time'. And even though I had wondered if this swim was a good idea, at that very moment, all I could think about was the next one. I want to do it again as soon as possible."

The swim raised more than £1,000 for the Grimsby and Cleethorpes Yacht Club, of which he is a member. The club is raising money to buy training boats to encourage more people into the sport. But Pete's next swim will be dedicated to a friend of more than 30 years, Annette Truman.

Annette was the secretary of the North East Lincolnshire Sports Association when Pete did his first swim – and when he did his last one in 2006, the group made him sports personality of the year. She is now suffering from Parkinson's Disease but it hasn't stopped her helping Pete get sponsorship for his 70th swim, likely to be in August. It will be in aid of Parkinson's UK.

"She's been a great friend for a long time and has done so much for the sporting community in this area. We've already got quite a lot of support and I'm hoping to do the swim as soon as possible.

"I'm hoping to do the 70th crossing in early



ONLINE GALLERY

To see these pictures and more visit

www.grimsbytelegraph.co.uk/pictures



IN TRAINING: Swimmer Pete Winchester prepares for his 70th Humber swim, by training in Grimsby Dock. Inset, a wet, cold but triumphant Pete in December 1960, after winning the Grimsby and Cleethorpes ASA Christmas Morning swim.



DEDICATION:

Pete's 70th pan-Humber swim will be dedicated to his friend of more than 30 years Annette Truman, who was secretary of the North East Lincolnshire Sports Association when Pete did his first swim.

legend who will be coming to the area soon. Dr Julie Bradshaw MBE holds the world record for swimming butterfly stroke around Manhattan Island, New York – a 28.5-mile course in nine hours and 28 minutes. She is also one of an elite group of swimmers to have done the Triple Crown – the English Channel (22 miles), Catalina Channel (22 miles) and Manhattan Island.

"Julie and I have been friends for more than 30 years. She wants to add the Humber to her list and she's going to do butterfly. It's very impressive – I couldn't even swim a stroke."

And although Pete's eyes are firmly fixed on the future, there was one thing he wanted to say about the past.

"I just wanted to say a big thank you to all the people who helped and sponsored me. It's raised more than £1,000 – and rising every day. I'm as proud of that as I am with the swim.

"Mark really pushed me in training which helped me come in with such a good time. The yacht club also helped me out and held a regatta later that day. Both Mark and the yacht club bought me a lovely bottle of malt when I finished so I left with two. I guess they thought I needed warming up – and they were right. Finally Des Holmes who supported me on the boat did a great job. I couldn't have done it without any of them."

● **ON THE WEB:** More photos at www.grimsbytelegraph.co.uk

OAKLANDS NURSERIES

1/2 PRICE

BEDDING PLANTS

Barton Street, Laceby Tel 879126