



Wild Wye SwimRun: Race Brief



Thank you for entering the Wild Wye SwimRun, a unique event in the Lower Wye Valley. Many thanks to Chepstow for enabling the event, as well as the landowners including NRW, NDAC and Greenways.

Locations:

Parking: Chepstow Racecourse (free parking)

Start: Castle Dell (approx 1km from Parking)

Finish: Piercefield Park (approx. 400m from Parking)

Timings:

Registration Opens: 0930

Race Start: 1030

General Instructions:

- Please wear light coloured clothing, and do not carry a torch. Lights are not permitted in Tidenham Tunnel to protect bats from disturbance (the wild bit). We will provide a swim hat. You will benefit from grippy shoes (eg fell shoes) for the second half.
- Your bib with its bib number needs to be visible at all times, and must be on your front when arriving at the swim and the finish.
- The route will be marked with arrows, and some red & white tape in the 2nd half.
- The route will be marshalled. Please follow the marshal's instructions, particularly on the one road crossing which is after about 1km, across the B4229 in Tutshill. Be aware that the marshals will not be able to force cars to stop.
- Please run on the pavement where there is one.
- In case of difficulties please look after fellow competitors, and get word to the next marshal.
- There will be a sweeper / tail-runner all the way round, as well as a lead cyclist for most of the 1st half of the race

Registration

- Registration will be at the top of The Dell from 0930.
- Bag drop will be available to Registration. These will be taken to the Finish. Small bags only please!
- There will not be toilets at the actual start area, but public toilets are available in the Welsh St Car Park, which is adjacent to the Castle Dell.

The Start

- The actual start will be uphill for approx 40m, ie in the reverse direction, rounding a bollard to run down to the Castle. This is so that runners are in single file by the Wye Bridge.
- Please run on the pavement and DO NOT OVERTAKE between leaving the Castle Car Park and entering England (far side of the Wye Bridge) - listen out for peregrine falcons that nest on the cliffs here.

Tidenham Tunnel

After about 3km the course reaches the Greenway (former Wye Valley Railway) and shortly afterwards the 1188-yard Tidenham Tunnel. This is a shared use cycleway and pedestrian route, and plenty of leisure users can be expected as well as sleeping lesser horseshoe bats!

There is a very real risk of collision with oncoming cyclists, particularly if you are overtaking and they are overtaking at the same time! So please:

- Run on the left
- Be very cautious when overtaking in the tunnel, particularly of oncoming cyclists
- In addition, be aware of the small floor-level obstructions marked with white sleepers.

Not far after Tidenham Tunnel, as you pass beside ancient woodlands full of dormice, the route leaves the Greenway. Unless conditions are very wet, it will pass through another tunnel, which we call 'Black Morgan Tunnel'. This is cobbled and somewhat uneven underfoot.

The River Crossing

As you arrive at the river, at a spot marked as 'Faggot Wharf' on very old maps, those who are swimming and those 'taking the ferry' will split off and there will be a small amount of admin. Please remember to maintain social distancing!

Please be aware that swimming may not be an immediate option due to circumstances - if so, you will be asked to wait, or you may be directed to the ferry boat. This might be because of the number of swimmers ahead of you, because of debris in the river or for a number of other reasons. Please go with the instructions, and do not start swimming if directed not to!

You will be able to swap between swimming and taking the ferry at the last minute!

Taking the Ferry

Ferry users will be required to wear a Buoyancy Aid (or PFD, for Personal Flotation Device)

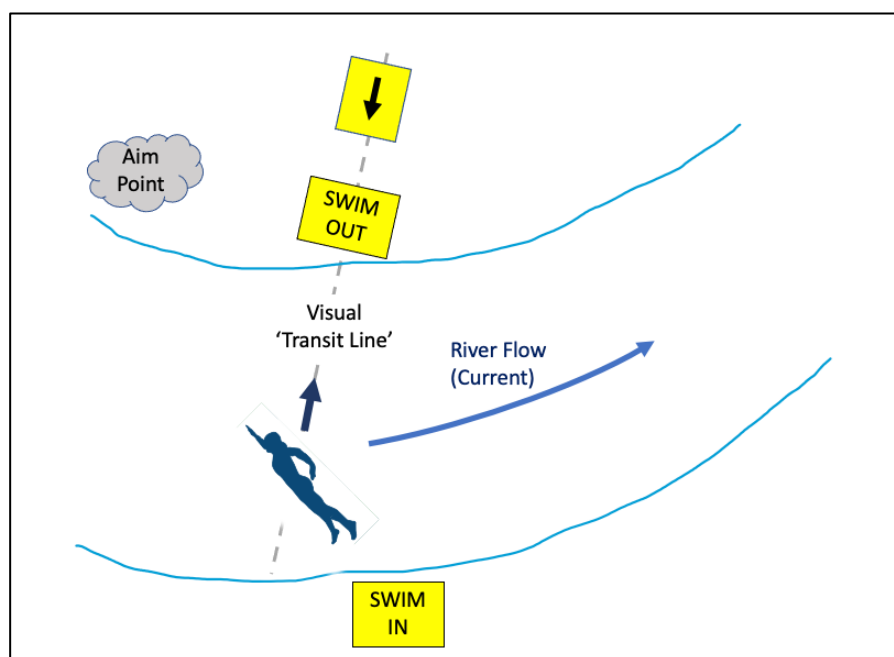
A marshal will record the bib numbers of runners getting onto the ferry, and another will record the bib numbers of runners getting off.

Swimming Admin

1. If swimming, you will be asked if you want to wear an optional Buoyancy Aid (or PFD, for Personal Flotation Device)
2. You will be given a numbered swimming hat - which you must wear - to allow easy identification while you are in the water and afterwards
3. A marshal will record your race number and your swim hat number
4. You will then be briefed by a marshal.
5. Once briefed, you can get in the water and swim.
6. There will be help getting out of the water on the Welsh side should it be required.
7. Once you are clear of the landing area, a marshal will take your swim hat, and note its number.
8. There will be a drinks station with water and flat coke, and you are free to start running once you have handed over your hat, and PFD if you took one.
9. Do not interact with any seals that also use the incoming tide to feed.

The Actual Swim

1. The race is arranged so that the swim will be close to high tide. The entry may involve wading through some reeds;
2. The exit will be clearly visible from the start, and is almost directly opposite. Be aware that the exit is onto a bank which is steep below the waterline – you have to be right there before you can stand up.
3. The water will almost certainly not be perfectly still – it is likely to be flowing slightly to right (still coming in) or the left (starting to go out). A marshal will point this out as you enter.
4. As a swimmer you should therefore swim in a 'ferry glide'. Aim your head and body slightly into the current, and slightly diagonal to the direct line to the exit (see below). In this way you should end up moving across the river directly towards the exit.
5. Some 'transit marks' will be set up, so that you can judge the angle and power to stay in line, by keeping the transit marks aligned. Don't worry if you don't understand this bit!
6. Do not worry if you are being taken a little away from the exit. Just swim to the far bank, and then swim back to the exit along the waters edge, where the current will be minimal
7. If you hear a whistle blown, it will be from the safety team - look and listen for instructions - if it does not involve you, then carry on swimming
8. If you need to attract help, tread water and put your hand in the air
9. Please remember to enjoy the swim and do not panic if you feel fish or otters nibbling your toes.



'Ferry Gliding' by swimming at an angle to the intended direction

The Welsh Side

The second 'half' of the run route, on the Welsh side, is different in character to the first 'half'. It is longer and tougher, so be prepared! The first part is different from 2021, more varied and less grassy, as we go through Livox Quarry, up a little track and back down through woods, before popping out onto the river bank and following it parallel to the river.

The latter part of the field is away from the river and climbs gently, then exits the woods across a fenceline. A ladder or similar will be provided and the crossing point marshalled. Please use the ladder and do not climb on or damage the fence.

There will be water available at Lower Wyndcliff Car Park, which is at the top of the first (and very pretty) climb through more ancient woods. After that the route follows the Wye Valley Walk – which undulates significantly! This is waymarked, and although there are a number of small paths heading off, the wider well-trodden route of the WVW should be obvious. If possible and safe, please enjoy the spectacular views which are occasionally visible. Be aware also of pedestrians and tourists using the route.

NB in the early part of the Wye Valley Walk section there are a couple of big trees down, so beware!

The latter part of the Wye Valley Walk passes through [Piercefield Woods Nature Reserve](#). This is now managed by Gwent Wildlife Trust and is one of the best wildlife woodlands in Wales. Conserved as part of the Piercefield Estate, it has matured over centuries to support an array of gnarled, veteran trees, where 750 year old Yew trees mix with ancient beech to support diverse wildlife, including some of the rarest 'deadwood' beetles in the UK!

Shortly before the back of Chepstow School, the race route deviates to the right, up a little bank and then follows small tracks, upwards but painfully runnable, through the woods to emerge at Piercefield Park; this final section will be well marked.

Race HQ and First Aid

Race HQ will include a full first aid facility. Race HQ will be located at the Start, and will move to the finish once the tail-runners have run across the Wye Bridge.

There will be also be a first aid point at the river crossing, on the swim exit side, and a further mobile first aid team with stretcher etc. Most marshals will also be first aid trained.

Spectators

We are sorry but this course is not spectator friendly, and spectators are discouraged due to Covid. The river crossing and section following that are on private land, and it is not possible to view the river crossing from any public vantage point.

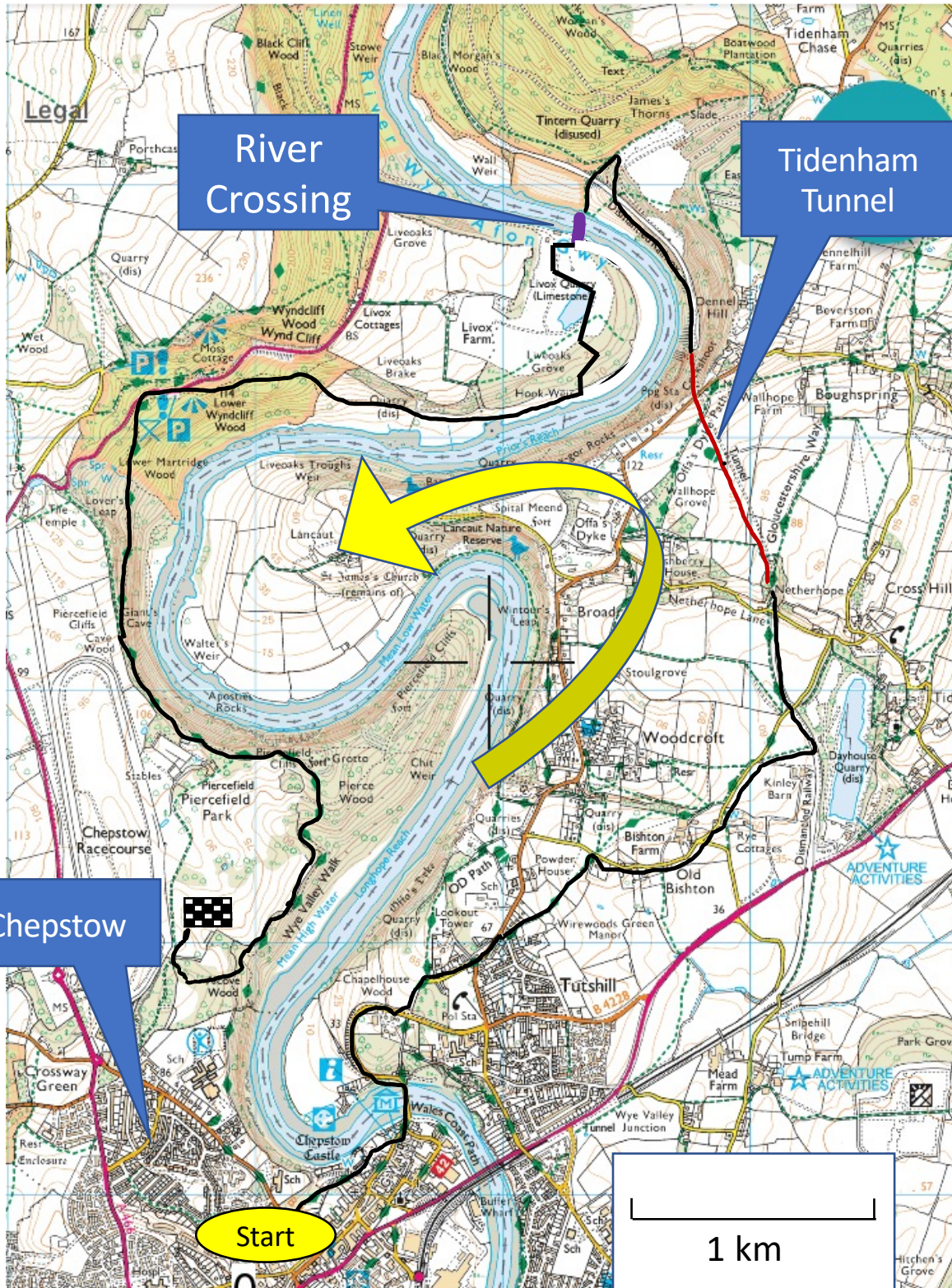
Family members etc may choose to watch the start from the area of Chepstow Castle, and then make their way to the finish at Piercefield Park. There is plenty of space at the finish to enable social distancing to be maintained.

SARA

SARA is an all-volunteer search and rescue charity, with Lifeboat and Rescue Stations along the length of the River Severn. The 200 or so members provide lifeboat cover for the Lower Rivers Wye and Usk as well as the Severn, and conduct inland missing person searches across Gloucestershire and beyond. In 2021 SARA conducted 113 different operations including six in the 48 hours following last year's SwimRun!. Please see www.sara-rescue.org.uk for more information.



Wild Wye Swim Run: Course Map





Wild Wye Swim Run: Race Start & Finish

