

**The Liffey Swim:
The 1970's Decade – Part 2
1973 – 1974**

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The 1973 Liffey Swim

In March 1973 an Inter-Departmental Working Group on Air and Water Pollution, comprising civil servants from seven departments – Agriculture and Fisheries, Finance, Health, Industry and Commerce, Lands, Local Government, and Transport and Power – reported its findings on water pollution.¹ This Report referred to an ongoing joint survey of the River Liffey and Dublin Bay being undertaken by Dublin Corporation, the Electricity Supply Board, and the Dublin Port and Docks Board by the University College of North Wales, Bangor (now Bangor University), under the direction of Professor Dennis John Crisp (Department of Marine Biology) to provide documented evidence of the present state of the River and its estuary from the aspect of all forms of pollution discharged into it. Preliminary data was stated to suggest that the condition of the Bay outside the inner harbour area was '*generally satisfactory*' and to confirm that the leading cause of pollution of the Liffey estuary was the Camac.¹ Stretches of rivers indicated in an An Foras Forbartha survey² as being seriously polluted included the Liffey below Newbridge and below its confluence with the Camac, the Camac from Clondalkin to its confluence with the Liffey, the Ryewater from Kilcock towards Leixlip and at its confluence with the Lyreen at Maynooth, the Tolka from Clonee to Mulhuddart and from Finglas to the Liffey estuary and the lower reaches of the Dodder.

The Inter-Departmental Report recognised that discharge of sewage from built-up areas and overloading of town sewers and sewage disposal works by increasing populations or by increases in trade wastes discharged into the sewers were among the main causes of water pollution. On the question of the health risk associated with bathing in sea water contaminated with sewage, the Report merely reiterated the findings of the Expert Panel on coastal waters in England and Wales, namely, that the health risks were negligible.³ The Report¹ cited a review of this Expert Panel's findings which was presented at a symposium in Bournemouth on *Water Pollution Control in Coastal Areas* in 1970, concluding that the Panel's original conclusions were still valid and that control of sea-water pollution was more a matter of amenity than health.⁴ Not surprisingly the Report concluded that "*There is evidence of pollution by sewage at some bathing places in the Dublin Bay area. This is an amenity problem and there is*

no consequential danger to health".¹ Reassuring (?), but in principle who would, by choice rather than necessity, want to bathe in sea water with high numbers of human intestinal bacteria? The Inter-Departmental Group concluded that a programme for the abatement of pollution from existing unsatisfactory local authority sewerage systems would require a capital investment of £35 million.

In July the *Irish Press* reported its findings on Dublin Bay, which it had been monitoring annually for sewage pollution for five years.⁵ Bacteriological analyses were carried out by the Institute of Industrial Research and Standards on sea water collected at twelve of the city's most popular bathing spots – Killiney Beach, Bullock Harbour at Dalkey, the Forty-Foot, Sandycove, Sandycove Beach, Seapoint near Monkstown, Clontarf Basin, Dollymount Strand, Sutton Strand, the Hole in the wall at Howth, Claremont Strand and Portmarnock. The findings were not as reassuring as the Inter-Departmental Report would have the populace believe and indicated that the pollution of seashores was fast approaching a crisis point.

A comprehensive series of articles in the *Irish Times* detailed the growing problem of pollution in Dublin's water resources and current and future remedies,^{6,7} the deterioration of the environment and the need to curb pollution,⁸ social and economic aspects of pollution⁹ and apathy and complacency on the part of Dublin Corporation, County Councils and the Department of Local Government as a reflection of public attitude.¹⁰ A working session on water pollution at a conference in London of the capitals of nine European cities situated on rivers heard that the political axiom "*there are no votes in sewage*" had died.¹¹

Plans to build a new bridge across the Liffey, the first since 1876 (Butt Bridge) on the seaward side of Butt Bridge to span the river between Custom House Quay and City Quay on the south side were announced.^{12,13,14} A quay-level, three span, stressed concrete design had been approved by the Department of Local Government. Talbot Memorial Bridge would not be completed until 1978. However, one newspaper Editorial pondered whether the bridge might fall into "*the category of a pyrrhic solution to the traffic problem*", given that the increasing traffic problems in central Dublin seemed to remain one step ahead of the improvements – a bridge over troubled waters.¹⁵

A successful long-distance swim went relatively unnoticed. Edward "Teddy" or "Ted" Keenan, the first Irishman to swim the English Channel in 1972,^{16,17,18} became the first Irishman and third ever person to swim the North Channel from Orlock Point between Donaghadee and Bangor, Co Down to Portpatrick, Galloway, Scotland.^{19,20,21,22} He set off at 00:54 am on 11 August completing the swim in 18 hours 26 min. It proved to be a cold (12°C), choppy crossing with jellyfish as a hazard which stung his face, chest and arms. Although the crossing is 22 miles as the crow flies, it was estimated that he swam about 30 miles because of tides and winds. An ebb tide prevented him landing at Portpatrick

itself. He came ashore at cliffs south of the town. Keenan was given a rapturous reception by the townsfolk.²⁰

An attempt by a 28-year-old English civil servant for Huddersfield, Margaret Meredith, to become the first person to swim from Church Bay, Rathlin Island to Ballycastle, Co Antrim, about 8 miles across a treacherous stretch of the sea, Rathlin Sound, ended in failure.²³ It was her fifth attempt at this long-distance swim. She would eventually succeed at the 7th attempt using breaststroke.²³ The 6-mile swim across Lower Lough Erne from Magho to Castle Archdale was won by a 16-year-old Scot, Ian Reid, from Dundee.²⁴ Kevin Murphy, who had swum the English Channel and North Channel,²⁵ was 2nd, nine minutes behind Reid. Four 11-year-old primary school children, two boys and two girls, from Killyclogher Primary School, Omagh, swam in a 3-mile relay across Lower Lough Erne from Hill's Island on the southern shore to Boa Island Bridge on the north shore in 2 hours 35 min.²⁶ Louise Murray of Bunbrosna and Sean Walshe of Cavan both successfully swam across Lough Owel from Portloman to Portnashangan, a distance of 4½ miles.^{27,28}

Sea swim races for women continued to be competitively successful. The ladies' event at the Half Moon SC Clarke Cup open sea race at the Battery in July was won by **Geraldine Dunleavy** (Dublin SC), followed home by **Mary Ryan** (Otter SC), who clocked the fastest time, and **Mary Kirwan** (Otter SC).^{29,30} The team prize was won by Otter SC [Ryan, Kirwan, K. Linnane (4th), E. O'Gorman (6th)]. At the *Irish Times* Cup Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim over 800 yards, **Bernadette Byrne** (Guinness SC) had a convincing win by 50 yards over **Terry Mason** (Otter SC) and **E. O'Gorman** (Otter SC).^{31,32,33} **Brenda McGrory** (Otter SC), who placed 5th, recorded the fastest time and the team prize went to Otter SC [Mason, O'Gorman, McGrory, Mary Ryan (6th)]. The ladies open sea race for the Dorgan Cup at the annual Dublin SC Seapoint–Blackrock event was won by **Loreto Duffy** (Dublin SC).³⁴ In 2nd place was **Deirdre Kenny** (Dublin SC) and the 3rd place went to **Mary Ryan** (Otter SC). The fastest time was clocked by **E. Goggin** (Dublin SC). Otter SC took the team prize [Ryan, McCurtin, S. Kavanagh, Mary Kirwan].²⁸ The ½-mile swim from Knight's Town, Valentia Island to Reenard Point, Co Kerry, part of the Iveragh Festival programme, was won by **Mary B Kissane**, who placed 2nd overall in the race.^{35,36} The Ladies' Long John Prom Swim was scheduled for Sunday 19 August at Salthill after the Irish National Swimming Championships at the sports and recreation Leisureland Complex, which had been opened by President Erskine Hamilton Childers on 29 June, his first public engagement since taking office on 25 June.^{37,38,39} It is unclear if the race took place as results did not appear in the press.

The open sea racing season got off to a somewhat sensational start at the Crusade Aquatic Club Westclox race at Bull Wall in June. All the swimmers whose clubs had not indicated times for their entrants were let off in alphabetical order at the 6½-min mark.⁴⁰ The handicapper's decision caused considerable

controversy. The Lee swim over the Glenbrook–Monkstown stretch of the river, which was to have been held on 10 August, was cancelled owing to an unusually small entry of six and bad weather conditions.⁴¹

The 54th Liffey Swim took place on Wednesday 22 August at 7.00 pm from Watling Street Bridge.⁴² Four swimmers, whose entries had been adjudged to be invalid because they were received too late, had swum the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim in protest, causing confusion at the finish by completing their swims with the legitimate winner.³¹⁻³³ To ensure that there would be no recurrence of what had happened at the Harbour Swim, the I.A.S.A. issued a warning that any affiliated member entering the Liffey in the vicinity of the race without permission would receive automatic suspension.⁴³

Home from Villanova University and fresh from his triumphs at the Irish Swimming Championships at Salthill, where he won eight individual Gold medals, all eyes were once again on **Francis “Chalkey” White**.⁴² Having won the Liffey Swim twice (1966 and 1967), having recorded the fastest time on five of his six appearances in the race (1966, 1968–1971; his brother, Pat White, set the fastest time in 1967; he did not compete in the Liffey Swim in 1972 because it clashed with a pre-Olympic international swimming meet in Brussels), and having set four Irish records the previous week at the Irish National Swimming Championships, his handicap was set at 9min.³⁶ He had clocked the fastest times in the Half Moon SC Clarke Cup race at Bull Wall (placed 16th off a handicap of 12 min),^{29,30} in the *Irish Times* 1¼-mile Dún Laoghaire Harbour Race (placed 6th off a handicap of 12½ min),³¹⁻³³ and in the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf, in which he was the scratch man.^{44,45} At the Irish Swimming Championships he won 100m, 200m (IR), 400m (IR), 800m (IR) and 1500m (IR) freestyle, 100m and 200m butterfly, and 200m backstroke, as well as a Silver medal in the 100m backstroke.^{46,47,48,49,50} In winning eight senior titles, White equalled Donnacha O’Dea’s tally of eight individual Gold medals at the 1965, 1967 and 1968 championships.⁵¹

Previous winners coming under starter’s orders were **Colm O’Brien** (1963, Half Moon SC, 3min 30 sec), **David Fitzgerald** (1970, Crusade Aquatic Club, handicap 5min 30sec), **Ultan Kerrigan** (1971, North Dublin SC, “At Go”), and **Fintan O’Meara** (1972, Clontarf SC, handicap 3min).⁴² The first 9 in the 1972 Liffey Swim, including the winner, and the fastest swimmer were all entrants – **Mick Fitzpatrick** (Half Moon SC, At Go), **Liam Bohane** (Half Moon SC, 4min 30sec), **Gerry Dunne** (Half Moon SC, 1min 30sec), **Dave J McCarthy** (Clontarf SC, 2min), **Peter Heffernan** (Clontarf SC, 2min 30sec), **Emmet Sweeney** (Half Moon SC, 1min 45sec), **Brendan McEvoy** (Half Moon SC, 2min) and **Dermot Neyland** (Marian College SC, 5min).⁴²

Swimmers who had had success in sea races during the season were **Emmet Sweeney**, winner of the Kelly Cup and Gold medal for the Ireland’s Eye to Balcadden Beach (Island) race ⁵²; **Dermot Neyland**, fastest swim in the

Kilmartin Cup open sea race at Bray ^{53,54}; **Fintan O'Meara**, 3rd in the Island race ⁵²; 4th in the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf ^{44,45}; **Colm O'Brien**, 5th in the Clarke Cup race at the Battery ²⁴; **Dave J McCarthy**, runner-up in the Kilmartin Cup swim at Bray ^{53,54}; **Mick Fitzpatrick**, 3rd in the Kilmartin Cup race at Bray ^{53,54}; **Mick Allen** (Half Moon SC, 3min 30sec), runner-up in the Island race ⁵², 5th in the Kilmartin Cup open sea race at Bray ^{53,54}; **E. Cadwell** (Half Moon SC, 3min), 5th in the Island race ⁵²; **Peter Pedreschi** (Dublin SC, 3min), 6th in the Island race ⁵²; **Brian Sweeney** (Half Moon SC, 3min), runner-up in the Clarke Cup open sea race at the Battery ^{29,30}; **Joe Brown** (North Dublin SC, 3 min), winner of the Kilmartin Cup open sea race at Bray ^{53,54}, 4th in the Clarke Cup open sea race ^{29,30}; **Ciaran Cassidy** (St Vincent's SC, 7min), 3rd in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim, ³¹⁻³³ 4th in the Dublin SC Seapoint-Blackrock swim ³⁴; **Peter McKenna** (Marian College SC), 4th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim ³¹⁻³³; **Pat Halton** (St Vincent's SC, 5min 30 sec), runner-up in the Dublin SC Seapoint-Blackrock Findlater Cup race,³⁴ 5th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim,³¹⁻³³ 6th in the Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf ^{44,45}; **Pat Murphy** (St Vincent's SC, 4min 30sec), winner of the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf,^{44,45} 3rd the Dublin SC Findlater Cup Seapoint-Blackrock race ³⁴; **Pat O'Driscoll**, runner-up in the Plunkett-McAllister race at Clontarf ^{44,45}; **John Cummins** (St Vincent's SC, 7min 30sec), runner-up in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim, ³¹⁻³³ fastest time of the revived 1-mile Lough Owel Swim for the Coughlan Cup, a race run annually from 1949 through 1963 and then dropped because of failing interest from Dublin clubs,^{55,56,57}; **John Murphy** (Guinness SC, 6min), 6th in the Dublin SC Findlater Cup Seapoint-Blackrock open sea race.³⁴

In the Pool at the Irish Championships **John Cummins** had taken the Silver medals in the 200m freestyle and 200m backstroke and Bronze medals in the 100m backstroke and 400m individual medley.^{47,48} At the Leinster Swimming Championships Cummins won five mens' titles – 100m, 200, and 400m freestyle and 100m and 200m backstroke.⁵⁸ **Donnacha O'Dea** returned to domestic competition after serving his six-month suspension through March 1973.⁵⁹ Now competing for Half Moon SC (formerly Colmcille SC), he celebrated his return by scoring four goals in Half Moon's 10 – 2 victory over North Dublin SC at Iveagh Baths in the Leinster Premier Water Polo League on 1 April.^{60,61} At the Leinster Swimming Championship he could only place 3rd in the 100m butterfly.⁶² He was an entrant for the Liffey Swim (handicap 5 min 30sec).⁴² Among the 68 entries were several others of Ireland's best swimmers: **Mattie Waine** (Guinness SC, 7 min), **Frank O'Dwyer** (Guinness SC, 7min 30sec), and **Brendan McGrattan** (Guinness SC, 4 min).⁴²

Swimmers who placed highly in open sea or river swims but who did not compete in the Liffey Swim were **Brian Finnegan** (Aquarian SC) of Knocktopher, Co Kilkenny, a 13-year-old student at The King's Hospital School, Dublin, winner of the Coughlan Cup for 1-mile Lough Owel Swim,^{55,56,63} 6th on the Half Moon SC

Clarke Cup race at the Battery.^{29,30} **Pat O'Boyle** (North Dublin SC), 3rd in the Half Moon SC, Clarke Cup Open sea race ^{29,30}; **Michael "Mick" Byrne** (Half Moon SC), winner of the Half Moon SC 1-mile Clarke Cup open sea race at the Battery ²⁴, 5th in the Plunkett-McAllister race at Clontarf ^{44,45}; **Tommy Farrelly** (Half Moon SC), winner of the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim,³¹⁻³³ 7th and fastest time in the Island race ⁵², fastest time in the *Connacht Tribune* Cup open sea race at Salthill ^{64,65,66,67}; **Dermot Maguire** (Cormorant SC), 4th in the Island race ⁵², 4th in the Kilmartin Cup open sea race at Bray ^{53,54}; **Maurice Linnane** (Marian College SC), a 10-year-old, winner of the Dublin SC Findlater Cup race from Seapoint to Blackrock ³⁴; **J Hayes** of Dublin, winner of the Nore swim at Kilkenny ⁶⁸; **Alan McIntyre** (Tuam SC), winner of the Blackrock SC *Connacht Tribune* Cup open sea race at Salthill ⁶⁴⁻⁶⁷; **Anthony Smyth** (Claremorris SC), runner-up in the *Connacht Tribune* Cup open sea race at Salthill ⁶⁴⁻⁶⁷; **Padraig O'Neill** (Galway SC), winner of the Galway SC Toft Cup open sea race at Salthill ^{69,70}, 3rd in the *Connacht Tribune* Cup open sea race at Salthill ⁶⁴⁻⁶⁷; and **John O'Connor**, winner of the ½-mile Valentia to Reenard Point swim.^{35,36}

The winner of the Liffey Swim was a 28-year-old Dublin taxi driver, Paul Emmett, of the Half Moon club.^{71,72,73} The maxim "*If at first you don't succeed, try, try again*" was certainly true of Emmett. Having been the runner-up in 1968,⁷⁴ 3rd in 1970 ⁷⁵ and 6th in 1971,⁷⁶ he had at last achieved his greatest swimming ambition.



**Paul Emmett (Half Moon SC), receiving *Irish Independent* Cup from Mr Paul Meehan (left),
Publicity Manager, Independent Newspapers, Ltd., with Mr Gerry Martin (right),
Hon Secretary Leinster Branch I.A.S.A.**

(Irish Independent, 23 August, 1973, page 12)

The race took place in 'traditional' Liffey Swim weather, the rain-drenched crowds lining the quays being more uncomfortably wet than the swimmers. From the moment he entered the Liffey at 2min 15sec behind the limit men, Paul Emmett swam with a steady, rhythmic front crawl, working his way up through the field. He took the lead from his team-mate Gerry Dunne just after O'Connell Street Bridge. Dunne and Emmett battled it out to the finish line, with Emmett getting home by less than a yard and the final touch. In taking 3rd place Paul Russell (Atlanta SC) achieved the highest ever placing by a member of this club.

The back markers, notably "Chalkey" White and John Cummins, responded to their handicaps with a blistering pace. Although he stood little chance of winning off a 9-min handicap, White showed the form the handicapper had taxed. He had the satisfaction of breaking the Liffey Swim record time that had stood to Scotland's Jack Wardop since 1949, the year Frank O'Donovan, an 18-year-old from Cork, won the race.⁷⁷ "Chalkey" clocked 18:02. John Cummins equalled Wardrop's record of 19:02.⁷¹⁻⁷³ The tide favoured fast times.

The Independent Shield for the best team was again retained by Half Moon SC [Emmett, Dunne, Brian Sweeney (7th), and Mick Fitzpatrick (16th), 26 pts].⁷¹⁻⁷³ This crowned a successful season for the club at other open sea races – the Half Moon SC Clarke Cup race,^{29,30} the *Irish Times* Dún Laoghaire Harbour Race,³¹⁻³³ the Bray Cove SC Kilmartin Cup race at Bray,^{53,54} the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister race at Clontarf,^{44,45} and the Kelly Cup Island (Ireland's Eye to Balcadden Beach) Race.⁵²

Top 10 finishers:⁷¹⁻⁷³

Place	Name	Age	Club	Handicap*	Nett Time
1	Paul Emmett	28	Half Moon SC	2 min 15 sec	21:10
2	Gerry Dunne		Half Moon SC	1 min 30 sec	21:56
3	Paul Russell		Atlanta SC	1 min 45 sec	22:17
4	Derek Fitzpatrick		North Dublin AC	2 min 30 sec	21:47
5	K Murray		Cormorant SC	4 min 00 sec	20:58
6	Pat O'Driscoll	12	Dublin SC	3 min 00 sec	22:07
7	Brian Sweeney		Half Moon SC	3 min 00 sec	22:08
8	M Fennell		Crusade Aquatic Club	3 min 30 sec	21:40
9	Jim Kavanagh Snr		North Dublin SC	0 min 30 sec	24:42
10	K Byrne		North Dublin SC	2 min 00 sec	23:15
	Francis "Chalkey" White†	18	Guinness SC	9 min 00 sec	18:02 (R)
	John Cummins	17	St Vincent's SC	7 min 30 sec	19:02

*Time after of limit man

†Scratch swimmer

At the end of August, John Cummins flew out to the U.S.A. to take up a four-year scholarship in Business Studies at the University of Arkansas.⁷⁸

The 1974 Liffey Swim

Pollution was still making news in 1974. The second national survey on water quality was published by the Water Resources Division of An Foras Forbartha.⁷⁹ It was a comprehensive, detailed, analytical report surveying 400 km of 31 rivers, the condition of almost all which had been found to be unsatisfactory.² Each stretch of each river was sampled on average seven times between January 1972 and July 1973.⁷⁹ Evidence was presented that most of the pollution in Irish rivers was organic in nature – urban sewage, animal slurry and silage effluent – and that in many important rivers pollution was serious and fast approaching crisis levels.⁸⁰ The condition of the Liffey above Lucan was designated as “*reasonably satisfactory*”. Its condition as it flowed through Dublin was due to its seriously polluted tributaries.

Newspaper articles on pollution of lakes and rivers filled print space – Lough Ennell was described as the cesspool of Mullingar,^{81,82,83,84} the River Lee,⁸⁵ the Lakes of Killarney and Lough Conn, Co Mayo^{86,87} the River Tolka,⁸⁸ and the River Corrib,^{89,90} The *Irish Press* published its sixth annual survey of Dublin Bay in July and August, carried in conjunction with the Institute for Industrial Research and Standards.⁹¹ Overall there were no improvements in pollution levels, and the situation had been aggravated by a drier summer than in 1973. The brightest light on the horizon was Dublin Corporation’s £13.2 million improved drainage scheme which would take seven years to complete. Dublin Corporation issued a robust response stating that its analyses of water quality in Dublin Bay indicated that the situation was improving and that there was no cause for concern on health grounds.⁹² Two further articles dealt with pollution besmirching places in Counties Derry, Donegal and Westmeath⁹³ and the River Lee and Galway Bay.⁹⁴

In September members of Dublin Corporation agreed to a motion proposed by Sean “Dublin Bay” Loftus to make a Special Amenity Order for Dublin Bay to place stricter control of pollution and development under the Corporation’s jurisdiction.⁹⁵ Later that month the Dublin Port and Docks Authority was informed by the Corporation that it would take whatever steps were necessary to eliminate the pollution that was then occurring in the Liffey.⁹⁶ The final report on the ecological survey of the River Liffey and Dublin Bay commissioned by Dublin Corporation, the Electricity Supply Board and the Dublin Port and Docks Authority and conducted by University College of North Wales was expected within months.^{91,96}

The women’s event over 600 yards at the Half Moon SC Clarke Cup open sea race at the Battery provided an exciting finish in which Yvonne Duffy (Dublin SC) won from J. Dunleavy (Otter SC) by one second.^{97,98} Mary-Jo Kissane (Otter SC) placed third. There were 21 starters. The team prize was won by Otter SC [Duffy, Kissane, Alice Kissane (4th) and Mary Ryan (6th)]. The fastest time of 13:08 was

clocked by Bernadette Byrne (Terenure SC).^{97,98} The team award went to Dublin SC [O'Driscoll, Goggin, E Gallagher (6th) and Deirdre Kenny (12th)].⁹⁹⁻¹⁰¹ The Dorgan Cup over 600 yards for the Ladies' Dublin SC Seapoint-Blackrock open sea race was won by Eileen Donovan (Aer Lingus AC) with N Lawless (Aer Lingus SC) in 2nd place and Brenda McGrory (Otter SC) in 3rd place.^{99,100,101} Dublin SC won the team prize and Brenda McGrory clocked the fastest time.

In the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim for Women over 850 yards Barbara Conway (Glenalbyn SC), swimming backstroke, finished in 1st place followed home by Mary O'Driscoll (Dublin SC) and Isolda Goggin (Dublin SC).^{102,103,104} However, the race ended in controversy. Conway's coach was alleged to have surprised the handicapper with an incorrect time.¹⁰³ Following a brief get-together between officials, Barbara Conway was declared the winner. Both the Women's and the men's races were somewhat shorter than in previous years because of construction work in operation next to the boat slip, with finishing line at the steps at the road end of the band-stand.¹⁰⁵ The fastest time was recorded by Brenda McGrory (Otter SC), who placed 7th. There were 50 entrants.

On August Bank Holiday a threatened action by the "Dublin's City Women's Invasory Force" to invade the Forty-Foot, men-only, swimming place at Sandycove either nude, semi-nude or bikini-clad did not materialise.^{106,107,108,109} This was to have been an anti-discrimination protest to establish their right to share the area with men. A spokeswoman for the group stated that the Forty-Foot represented "*a microcosm of the macrocosm of a male-dominated and male-orientated society we live in*". The 'Battle of the Forty Foot' continued over the following weeks.^{110,111} Views and counter-views occupied considerable column inches in the press,^{112,113,114,115,116} which, forty years on, make interesting sociological reading. There were also innumerable "Letters to the Editor" on issues related to the Forty Foot.

A Dublin Corporation advertisement on R.T.E., which was part of a campaign to get the public to save water, aroused public ire and protest to the Corporation and R.T.E.^{117,118,119} The advert depicted a goldfish getting more and more uncomfortable in a bowl as the water level receded, until the water level left the goldfish floundering at the bottom of an almost empty bowl. Dublin Corporation refused to drop the advert. At the end of September, the controversial goldfish advertisement won the Irish Grand Prix and Gold Star at the Irish Advertising Awards Festival at Kinsale, Co Cork.¹¹⁷⁻¹¹⁹ The Corporation announced that the advert had saved over 100 million gallons of water over the three summer months.

Abla Khairi, a 13-year-old Egyptian girl from Cairo, became the youngest person to swim the English Channel.¹²⁰ She completed her swim from France to Dover in 12 hours 30 min in choppy sea conditions and windy conditions. The previous record for the youngest swimmer was held by Leonore Modell (California, USA) who swam from France to England in 1964 in 15 hours 27 min at the age of 14

years and 5 months.¹²¹ As a prelude to the annual Dún Laoghaire Harbour Race, there was a two-man bid to conquer Dublin Bay from Red Rock, Sutton to Dún Laoghaire Harbour by Frank O'Dwyer (Guinness SC) and David Fitzgerald (Half Moon SC), winner of the Liffey Swim in 1970.^{105,122} Both succeeded, O'Dwyer's time being 2 hours 44 min.¹⁰⁵

The 55th Liffey Swim took place on Monday 12 August at 7.00 pm.^{123,124} To facilitate identification of swimmers by the spectators along the quays, the competitors wore numbered caps. The scratch man, **Francis "Chalkey" White** (Guinness SC, handicap 8min 30sec), twice winners in 1966 and 1967, wore a Blue cap with the letter "S" emblazoned on it. White had won the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim for a fourth time in July on a shortened course off a handicap of 12 min,¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵ bringing him one step closer to equalling the record five wins (1937-1939, 1944, 1946) of Richard N. Case (Clontarf SC).¹²⁵



**Mr Alan Moran, Promotions Manager of the *Irish Times* Ltd, presenting the *Irish Times* Trophy to Francis "Chalkey" White, 4th time winner of the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim, with Mr Harry Kavanagh, Hon President of the Irish Amateur Swimming Association
(*Irish Times*, 29 July, 19074, page 4)**

He also won the annual Half Moon SC 1-mile John Clarke Cup open sea race at the Battery after a neck and neck finish with Anthony "Tony" Morris (Marian College SC).^{97,98} "Chalkey" White was the back marker off 12 min and clocked the fastest time of 21:42. At the beginning of August he clocked the fastest time at the Lough Owel Coughlan Cup race in which he placed 4th,^{126,127} breaking the course record set the previous year by John Cummins (St Vincent's SC).¹²⁶

There were 80 entries among which were other previous winners: **Colm O'Brien** (1963, Half Moon SC, handicap 4min 50 sec), **Fintan O'Meara** (1972, Clontarf SC, handicap 3min 30sec), and **Paul Emmett** (1973, Half Moon SC, handicap 4min 50sec).¹²⁴ Ultan Kerrigan, the winner in 1972, did not enter on this occasion.¹²³ North Dublin SC father and son, Jim Kavanagh Snr (handicap 1min 15sec) and Jim Kavanagh Jnr (handicap 4min 10sec) once again locked horns for family honour.^{123,124} Aer Lingus SC and C.R.C. (Central Remedial Clinic) SC were clubs whose members entered for the first time.¹²³ The clubs with the largest numbers of entries were Half Moon SC, Dublin SC, North Dublin SC and Guinness SC.¹²³

Among the competitors were several swimmers who had distinguished themselves with performances in other sea and lake races: **Anthony "Tony" Morris** (Marian College SC, 6min 45sec), 2nd in the Half Moon SC 1-mile Clarke Cup race at the Battery ^{97,98} 6th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour race, winner off scratch of the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister Cup open sea race at Clontarf and fastest time,^{128,129} winner of the Dublin SC Findlater Cup race from Seapoint to Blackrock and the fastest time, ⁹⁹⁻¹⁰¹ runner-up in the Lough Owel Coughlan Cup race ^{126,127}; **William "Billy" Dunne** (Galway SC, 5min 40sec), 5th in the Half Moon SC Clarke Cup race at the Battery,^{97,98} runner-up and fastest time in the inaugural Connacht handicap Toft Cup Promenade Swim at Salthill ^{130,131}; **Peter McPartland** (Marian College SC), 3rd in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim ¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵; and **Liam Bohane** (Half Moon SC, 6min), 7th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim ¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵ 6th in the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister Cup race ^{128,129}

Others that shone were 'veteran' **Mick Fitzpatrick** (Half Moon SC, At Go), 10th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim ¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵; **Ambrose Donovan** (Dublin SC, 3min 30sec), runner-up in the North Dublin SC Plunkett McAllister open sea race at Clontarf ^{128,129}; **Pat Crowe** (Dublin SC, 5min 20sec), 4th in the North Dublin SC Plunkett McAllister open sea race at Clontarf ^{128,129}; **Niall Skehan** (Marian College SC, 6min 45sec), 5th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim ¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵; **Joe Browne** (North Dublin SC, 2min 20sec), 6th in the Dublin SC Findlater Cup Seapoint-Blackrock race Sea ⁹⁹⁻¹⁰¹; **Peter Conway** (Aer Lingus SC, 4min 10sec), 5th in the Dublin SC Findlater Cup Seapoint-Blackrock race Sea ⁹⁹⁻¹⁰¹; **Lorcan Shelley** (Half Moon SC, 6min), 4th in the Dublin SC Findlater Cup Seapoint-Blackrock race Sea ⁹⁹⁻¹⁰¹

Swimmers who had won open sea or lake swims or who had placed highly in these events, but did not enter the Liffey Swim included **Pat Mullally** (Templeogue SC), 3rd in the Half Moon SC Clarke Cup race; **Brian McNally** (Half Moon SC), 6th in the Half Moon SC Clarke Cup race, 4th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour race ¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵; **Michael "Mick" Byrne**, 3rd in the Half Moon SC Clarke Cup race; **Tommy (T.J.) Farrelly** (Half Moon SC), runner-up in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim ¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵, runner-up in the Dublin SC Findlater Cup Seapoint-Blackrock race Sea ⁹⁹⁻¹⁰¹; **Michael Langan** (Galway SC), winner of the inaugural

Connacht handicap Toft Cup Promenade Swim at Salthill ^{130,131}; **Frank McCann** (Templeogue SC), 3rd in the Lough Owel Coughlan Cup race ^{126,127}; **Mattie Waine** (Guinness SC), 5th in the Plunkett-McAllister open sea race ^{128,129}; **Brian Farnan** (Templeogue SC), 3rd in the Dublin SC Findlater Cup Seapoint–Blackrock race Sea ^{99–101}; and **D. Conroy** (Dublin SC), 3rd in the Plunkett-McAllister open sea race ^{128,129}, 3rd in the Lough Owel Coughlan Cup swim. ^{126,127}

In the pool “**Chalkey**” **White** racked up more titles – 100m¹³² and 400m freestyle,^{133,134,135} 100m (IR) ^{136,137} and 200m butterfly (IR),^{133–135} and 400m individual medley.¹³² He represented Ireland at the 13th European Swimming Championships in Vienna in the 200m butterfly ¹³⁸ and 400m individual medley.^{139,140} At the European Cup international match in Athens he won the 1500m in a 50m-pool in a time of 16:43.1, two seconds under the Olympic qualifying time for Montreal.¹⁴¹ **Tony Morris** placed 3rd in the 200m freestyle, 3rd in the 400m freestyle, 2nd in the 800m freestyle,^{133–135} and 2nd in the 1500m freestyle.^{136,137}

At the Leinster Championships Morris placed 2nd in the 1500m freestyle,^{142,143} 2nd in the 200m butterfly,¹⁴⁴ 2nd in the 400m freestyle,¹⁴⁵ and 3rd in the 100m freestyle.¹⁴⁵ **Liam Bohane** took the Bronze Medal in the 1500m freestyle.^{136,137} **Peter McPartland** won the Silver Medal in the 200m backstroke and **Lorcan Shelley** took Bronze in the 100m butterfly.¹⁴⁶ **M. Fennell** (Central Remedial Clinic SC, 5min 50 sec) was the Silver medallist in the 100m butterfly.¹⁴⁶

The 55th Liffey Swim turned out to be another classic youth versus ‘veteran’ affair – Mick Fitzpatrick (Half Moon SC), competing in his 15th Liffey Swim and one of his club’s most experienced swimmers, against Liam Bohane (Half Moon SC), a 14-year-old team-mate.^{147,148,149,150} Fitzpatrick, the lone limit man, held a lead of about 150 yards from the rest of the contestants at Capel Street Bridge. Bohane, starting 6 minutes after Fitzpatrick, powered through the field to reduce Fitzpatrick’s lead to 40 yards at O’Connell Street Bridge. He then staged a sprint finish, coming up on Fitzpatrick’s right shoulder with 10 yards to go. Bohane edged out Fitzpatrick just before the finish line to take a dramatic win and claim the highly coveted *Independent Cup* and Gold Medal.

For the second time Fitzpatrick had had victory snatched from him in the final yards by a schoolboy – Fintan O’Meara (1972).¹⁵¹ Liam Bohane had placed 3rd that year and had recorded the fastest time.¹⁴⁷ Frank Chatham of North Dublin SC claimed the 3rd spot. In the first year in which members of the club had competed in the Liffey Swim, Peter Coughlan of C.R.C. SC placed a highly commendable 4th. Previous winners Fintan O’Meara (Clontarf SC) and Colm O’Brien (Half Moon SC) finished 8th and 9th, respectively.^{147–150}

“Chalkey” White placed 13th, but yet again clocked the fastest time of 19:24. The tide played a role in his slower time compared to his record time the previous year, but he had also won the Half Moon 1-mile John Clarke open sea race at the Battery the day before, a race in which he had been pushed to the limits by

Tony Morris of Marian College SC.^{97,98} Morris, who placed 5th, recorded the 2nd fastest time in the Liffey Swim.¹⁴⁷⁻¹⁵⁰



Paul Meehan, Publicity Manager, Independent Newspapers Ltd, presenting the *Independent Cup* to Liam Bohane (Half Moon SC), winner of the 55th Liffey Swim, with Ben Kealy (middle), Hon Handicapper, Leinster Branch, I.A.S.A.

(*Irish Independent*, 13 August, 1974, page 9)

For the 4th consecutive year Half Moon SC claimed the team honours and the *Independent Shield* with their four scoring swimmers in the top ten [Bohane (1st), Fitzpatrick (2nd), Gerry Dunne (7th) and Colm O'Brien (9th) = 19 pts],¹⁴⁷⁻¹⁵⁰ adding to the team win in the Clarke Cup open sea race the previous day.^{97,98} However, their team dominance of 1973 was assuaged by other clubs – Marian College SC in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim [Peter McPartland 3rd, Niall Skehan 5th, Tony Morris (6th), Dermot Neyland]¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵; St Vincent's SC in the Lough Owel P.J. Coughlan Cup race^{126,127}; Dublin SC in the Plunkett-McAllister Cup race [Ambrose Donovan 2nd, D. Conroy 3rd, Pat Crowe 4th, and Donal Davis 8th]^{128,129};

Templeogue SC in the Findlater Cup Seapoint–Blackrock race [Brian Farnan, Pat Mullaly, P. Dawson, Gay Brennan].^{99–101}

Top 13 finishers:^{147–150}

Place	Name	Age	Club	Handicap*	Nett Time
1	Liam Bohane	14	Half Moon SC	6 min	20:27
2	Mick Fitzpatrick		Half Moon SC	At Go	26:37
3	Frank Chatham		North Dublin SC	2 min 50 sec	23:48
4	Peter Coughlan		Central Remedial Clinic SC	3 min 00 sec	23:48
5	Anthony “Tony” Morris		Marian College SC	6 min 45 sec	20:15
6	Joe Browne		North Dublin SC	2 min 20 sec	
7	Gerry Dunne		Half Moon SC	4 min 10 sec	23:18
8	Fintan O’Meara	18	Clontarf SC	3 min 30 sec	24:05
9	Colm O’Brien		Half Moon SC	4 min 50 sec	22:48
10	Brian O’Dwyer		Guinness SC	4 min 30 sec	23:13
11	Paul Russell		Atlanta SC	3 min 40 sec	24:04
12	M Callan‡		North Dublin SC	3 min 40 sec	24:13
13	Francis “Chalkey” White	19	Guinness SC	8min 30 sec	19:24

*Time after limit man

†Scratch swimmer

‡Result published as M. Callow

In 1974 the City Commissioner Michael Keating made proposals to relieve the traffic congestion in Dublin. These included exclusion of juggernaut vehicles from main city roads during peak hours, the provision of bicycle lanes and cycle parking facilities in the city, and the possibility of a tunnel for cross-Liffey traffic instead of merely erecting more parking meters, extending yellow lines and increasing the brigade of parking meter attendants.¹⁵²

It was also the year in which Ted Keenan of Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, was thwarted in attempts at two marathon swims for charity. In late August he attempted to become the first man to swim the length of Lower Lough Erne from Enniskillen to Belleek, a distance of some 20 miles as the crow flies, but nearer 30 miles with currents and islands to be negotiated. However, the swim had to be abandoned in the vicinity Bess Island after weather conditions deteriorated rapidly with gale force gusts across the lough.^{153,154} In September he was to have attempted the 17-mile swim across the Bristol Channel from Portcawl to Devon, but the worst weather in years along these coasts caused him to abandon any attempt after eight days of waiting for a break in weather conditions.^{155,156}

The year ended with the death of Erkin Childers, 4th President of Ireland, on 17 November after barely 18 months in Office, less than a month before his 69th birthday, from a severe heart attack (coronary thrombosis).^{157,158} His death occurred on the 52nd anniversary of the court-martial of his father, Robert Erskine Childers, who was executed by firing squad at Portobello Barracks, Dublin on 24 November 1922.¹⁵⁹

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