

**The Liffey Swim:
The 1970's Decade – Part 3
1975 – 1976**

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The 1975 Liffey Swim

The economic and employment issues in respect of the building of an oil refinery in Dublin bay^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10} and the opposing view that Dublin Bay should be preserved as an amenity area ^{11,12,13,14,15,16,17} occupied many minds, public groups, councillors and the government throughout 1975. A Dublin urban study by members of the Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland urged for the rehabilitation of the River Liffey and the protection of Dublin Bay from unsuitable, intrusive or incongruous industrial development.¹⁸

Pollution in the River Liffey and in Dublin Bay continued to occupy headlines. The estimated cost of the Dublin drainage scheme increased from £11.3 to £13.3 million to drain 14,600 acres of land west of Blanchardstown, Clondalkin and Lucan, to relieve the south city drainage system and to provide better accommodation for flood waters, to reduce pollution of Dublin Bay by redirecting the River Camac through the drainage system thereby eliminating a major source of pollution of the River Liffey, and to build a new treatment works and pumping station at Ringsend.¹⁹ The *Irish Press* reviewed in a series of articles many of the issues surrounding pollution, industrial development and traffic infrastructure in relation to the Dublin Bay area.^{20,21,22,23} The granting of a Special Amenity Area Order by Dublin City Council for the portion of Dublin Bay under its jurisdiction was welcomed as “*as battle won, but not the war*”.²⁴

The new Water Pollution Advisory Council was assessing local authority sewerage systems in relation to pollution to prepare a report for the Minister for Local Government by the end of the year.²⁵ A Joint Oireachtas Committee on EEC Legislation expressed concerns as to whether parts of Dublin Bay such as Bull Wall, Dollymount and Killiney Bay would meet EEC water standards for bathing. This invoked the wrath of Dublin Corporation and a robust response that there was no scientific evidence to back such statements, that the comments of the Joint Committee caused “*unnecessary public disquiet*” and made very serious allegations in respect of its stewardship over Dublin Bay, and that careful and regular examination of water samples by their medical staff proved that there was “*nothing remotely approaching a health hazard*”.^{26,27} The spokesman for the

Corporation referred to the £20,000, three-year survey by experts at the University of North Wales, which had been jointly commissioned by the Dublin Corporation, the E.S.B. and the Port and Dock Board, that would be published shortly and would attest to the good water quality in Dublin Bay.^{181,182} Subsequently James Tully, Minister for Local Government, and Charles Haughey clashed in a Dáil debate on the Local Government (Planning and Development) Bill over whether or not bathing in Dublin Bay posed a health hazard.²⁸

Women were still excluded from the Liffey Swim, but nonetheless continued to compete in other sea and river swims. In the ladies ½-mile swim run in conjunction with the annual Half Moon SC John Clarke Cup open sea race, **Deirdre Murphy** (Terenure College SC) took the winner's honours in a time of 13:41, while **Maeve Canning** (Otter SC) placed 2nd and **Mary Ryan** (Terenure College SC) was 3rd, who also recorded the fastest time of 12:50.^{29,30}

The Women's Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim over 900 yards was won by the Glenalbyn swimmer **Michele Garvey** (handicap 4min; time 10 min 30 sec), **Geraldine Dunleavy** (Dublin SC; handicap 2 min 15sec, time 12:20) finished in second place and **Bernadette Wall** (Otter SC; handicap 1 min, time 12:01) was third.³¹ The fastest time was recorded by **Michelle Kavanagh**, Irish freestyle champion (Otter SC; handicap 5 min 15 sec; time 10:50), who placed 6th. Otter SC took the team prize: Dunleavy, 3rd; Catherine Linnane, 4th; Kavanagh, 6th; Susan Linnane, 13th = 26 points).

Twenty-five ladies competed in the inaugural Church Island Swim at Lough Owel for a Stonefacings manufactured trophy with the arms of Lough Owel SC (presented by Dr T.E. Winckworth). **Barbara Buggy** (Aquarian SC) won, followed home by **Paula Greer** (Terenure College SC) in 2nd place, who also recorded the fastest time of 10 min, and **Karen Daly** (Cormorant SC), in third place.^{32,33,34,35} The team prize went to Cormorant SC (K. Daly, E. O'Gorman, Ann Shaloo, Ursula McCarroll).

At the annual Robertstown (Co Kildare) swimming festival, the women's ½-mile race in the Grand Canal, **Eileen Donovan** (Aer Lingus, handicap 1 min 15 sec) won in a time of 12:02. **Antoinette Finlay** (Terenure College SC; handicap 1 min 45 sec; time 11:45) was 2nd and **D. Byrne** (Guinness SC; handicap 45 secs; time 12:52), 3rd. **Paula Greer** (Terenure College SC) recorded the fastest time of 11:21.^{36,37} Terenure College SC collected the team prize: Antoinette Finlay, P. Greer, Mary Ryan, Terry Mason.

The Women's ½-mile race for the Dorgan Cup at the Dublin SC Open Sea races at Blackrock was won by **Donna Higgins** (Central Remedial Clinic SC; handicap 45 secs) in a time of 12:35.^{38,39,40} **Catherine Linnane** (Otter SC; handicap 2 min 30 sec) took second place in a time of 11:15 and **O. Heavey** (Otter SC; handicap 1 min) placed 3rd in 13:08. **Mary Ryan** (Otter SC) was fastest in 9:40. Terenure College won the team prize: Catherine Linnane, 2nd, O. Heavey, 3rd; M. Canning, 6th; Susan Linnane.

The Ladies Prom Swim at Salthill, Co Galway, held in conjunction with the Toft Cup Swim, was won by **Fiona Sweeney** (Galway SC; handicap 2 min), **Dorothy Rabbitte** (Galway SC; handicap 2 min 25 sec) placed 2nd, and **Valerie Small** (Galway SC; handicap 5 min 5 sec) was 3rd. **Deirdre Desmond** (Galway SC; handicap 5 min 25 sec) clocked the fastest time.⁴¹

The 56th annual Liffey Swim was held on Friday 15 August, 1975 and attracted 89 entrants. **Francis ‘Chalkey’ White** (Guinness SC) was absent as he was competing for Ireland in the men’s Europa Cup Group C which was being held in Athens on the same weekend.⁴² Had he competed he would again have been heavily handicapped as he had been the fastest swimmer in several of the prominent races: the John Clarke Cup open sea race at Clontarf,^{29,30} the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim, in which he placed 9th,³¹ the Coughlan Cup race at Lough Owel, clocking 12:56 to beat his own course record by 28 sec,^{32–35} and the Robertstown Grand Canal swim.^{36,37} **Kevin Williamson** (Terenure College SC, 100m, 200m, 400m and 1500m freestyle champion, 4 x 100m Individual Medley Champion, runner-up 800m freestyle), **Ian Corry** (Royal Belfast Academical Institution SC, 100m and 200m breaststroke champion) and **Desmond Coyle** (Marian College SC, 200m backstroke champion) were also on international duty in Athens.⁴² The scratch man was **John Cummins** (Marian College SC; handicap 7 min 20 sec).⁴³ Dublin SC had the highest number of entries.⁴³

Several previous winners were among the entrants: **Colm O’Brien** (1965, Half Moon SC; handicap 5 min),⁴⁴ **Ultan Kerrigan** (1971, North Dublin SC; Limit man “At Go”),^{45,46} **Fintan O’Meara** (1972, Clontarf SC; handicap 4 min 10 sec),^{47,48,49} and **Paul Emmett** (1973, Half Moon SC; handicap 5 min).^{50,51,52} Among the runners-up and third placed swimmers from the previous decade of the Liffey Swims who were still striving for the coveted goal of the *Independent Cup* and Gold medal were **Gerry Dunne** (3rd 1967,⁵³ 2nd 1973,^{50–52} Half Moon SC; handicap 4 min 10 sec), **Mick Fitzpatrick** (2nd 1972,^{47–49} 2nd 1974,^{54,55,56,57} Half Moon SC; Limit Man “At Go”), **Paul O’Dea** (2nd 1971,^{45,46} Half Moon SC; handicap 4 min 30 sec), **Paul Russell** (3rd 1973,^{50–52} Atlanta SC; handicap 3 min), and **Frank Chatham** (3rd 1974,^{54–57} North Dublin SC; handicap 3 in 40 sec). An interesting entry from outside the metropolitan area was **Greg Buckley** (Sunday’s Well SC, Cork), who had as an 11-year-old schoolboy won the Lee Swim in 1971⁵⁸ and had clocked the fastest time in the Lee Swim in 1974.^{59,60}

The handicapper had taken into account the record of the swimmers in the season’s open sea, river and lake swims: **Gerry Dunne**, winner of the Half Moon 1-mile John Clarke Cup,^{29,30} **Kevin Doran** (Dublin SC; handicap), runner-up in the John Clarke Cup open sea race,^{29,30} **Lorcan Shelly** (Terenure College SC; handicap 6 min 30 sec), 3rd in the John Clarke Cup open sea race^{29,30}; **Fintan O’Meara**, 6th in the John Clarke Cup open sea race^{29,30}, 3rd in the Ireland’s Eye to Balscadden Beach (Island) open sea race^{61,62,63}; **Joe Browne** (North Dublin

SC; handicap 3 min 40 sec), winner of the Dún Laoghaire Harbour swim ³¹; **Pat Crowe** (Dublin SC; handicap 6 min 30 sec), runner-up in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour swim ³¹; **Brian Farnan** (Templeogue SC; handicap 6 min 10 sec), 3rd in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour swim,³¹ 6th in the Ireland's Eye to Balscadden Beach (Island) open sea race,⁶¹⁻⁶³ 6th in the Dublin SC Seapoint-Blackrock Findlater Cup open sea race and fastest time ³⁸⁻⁴⁰; **Mick Fitzpatrick**, 4th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour swim ³¹, 2nd in the Ireland's Eye to Balscadden Beach (Island) open sea race. ⁶¹⁻⁶³



Fourteen-year-old Gay Brennan (Templeogue S.C.), winner of the Island race at Howth, picture with the Independent Newspapers Trophy (*Irish Independent*, 19 July, 1975)

Other achievers were: **John Cummins**, 6th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour swim ³¹; **Gay Brennan** (Templeogue SC; handicap 6 min), winner of the Ireland's Eye to Balscadden Beach (Island) open sea race ⁶¹⁻⁶³; **Ambrose Donovan** (Dublin SC; handicap 4 min 10 sec), 4th in the Ireland's Eye to Balscadden Beach (Island) open sea race ⁶¹⁻⁶³; **Barry Murphy** (Aquarian SC; handicap 6 min), winner of the 1-mile Coughlan Cup race at Lough Owel, Mullingar ³²⁻³⁵; **Bernard Reddington** (Clontarf SC, handicap 3 min 20 sec), runner-up in the Coughlan Cup race at Lough Owel ³²⁻³⁵; **Declan Coughlan** (Half Moon SC, handicap 2 m in 40 sec), 3rd in the Coughlan Cup race at Lough Owel,³²⁻³⁵ 6th in the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf ^{64,65}; **Peter Pedreschi** (Half Moon SC; handicap 3 min 50 sec), 4th in the Coughlan Cup race at Lough Owel ³²⁻³⁵; **J. Fagan** (Crusade Aquatic Club; handicap 2 min 50 sec), 5th in the Coughlan Cup race at Lough Owel ³²⁻³⁵; **Pat Freeman** (Guinness SC; handicap 3 min 50 sec), 3rd in the Robertstown Swimming Festival 1-mile swim in the Grand Canal ^{36,37}; **Peter Conway** (Aer Lingus SC; handicap 5 min 10 sec), 6th in

the Robertstown Swimming Festival 1-mile swim in the Grand Canal ^{36,37} **J. Freeman** (Guinness SC, handicap 3 min), 4th in the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf.^{64,65}; and 10-year-old **Ciaran O'Driscoll** (Dublin SC; handicap 2 min 30 sec), winner of the Dublin SC Seapoint–Blackrock Findlater Cup open sea race,^{38–40} **J. Fagan** (Crusade Aquatic Club; handicap 2 min 50 sec), 5th in the Coughlan Cup race at Lough Owel ^{32–35}; **Pat Mullally** (Templeogue SC; handicap 7 min), 5th in the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf and fastest time ^{64,65}; **E. Cadwell** (Dublin SC, handicap 4 min), 5th in the Ireland's Eye to Balscadden Beach (Island) open sea race ^{61–63}; **Eddie O'Reilly** (Guinness SC; handicap 5 min 20 sec), runner-up in the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf ^{64,65}; and **Peter Heffernan** (Clontarf SC; handicap 2 min 30 sec), 3rd in the Dublin SC Seapoint–Blackrock Findlater Cup open sea race.^{38–40}

Dublin-based swimmers who placed in the first three in open sea, river and lake races, but who did not compete in the 56th Liffey Swim were: **Marcel Kral**, a 12-year-old (Glenalbyn SC), winner of the Robertstown Grand Canal Swim ^{36,37}; winner of the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf ^{64,65}; **John Dunleavy** (Glenalbyn SC), runner-up in the Robertstown Grand Canal Swim ^{36,37}; **Brian Geoghegan** (Marian College SC), runner-up in the Dublin SC Seapoint–Blackrock Findlater Cup open sea race ^{38–40}; and **Paddy Coughlan** (Central Remedial Clinic SC), 3rd in the North Dublin SC Plunkett-McAllister open sea race at Clontarf. ^{64,65}

Among those placing either 4th or 5th who did not compete in the Liffey Swim were: **D. Hannigan** (Aer Lingus SC), 4th in the Robertstown Grand Canal Swim ^{36,37}; **Maurice Linanne** (Marian College SC), 4th in the Dublin SC Seapoint–Blackrock Findlater Cup open sea race ^{38–40}; **Brian McNally** (Half Moon SC), 5th in the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim ³¹, 5th in the Dublin SC Seapoint–Blackrock Findlater Cup open sea race ^{38–40}; **C. Wynne** (Marian College SC), 5th in the Half Moon SC John Clarke Cup open sea race.^{29,30}

In open sea and river swims in the south and west of Ireland, **David Barry** (Dolphin SC) won the Lee Swim from Monkstown to Glenbrook, with **Charles O'Connor** (North Monastery SC) in 2nd place and **Chris Bowles** in 3rd place, while his brother Declan Bowles clocked the fastest time in 4th place.^{66,67} In the Prom swim promoted by Blackrock SC at Salthill, Co Galway for the Connacht Tribune Cup, the first six places were taken by Galway SC, the only Connacht swimmers in this open sea race. The race was won by **Billy Dunne**, 2nd was **William Cahill** and 3rd was **Michael Langan** in the fastest time.^{68,69} The Toft Cup Swim from Blackrock Tower to Seapoint at Salthill was won by **Michael Langan**, who also clocked the fastest time, with brothers **Barry** and **Michael Heskin**, placing second and third, respectively.⁷⁰

At the Irish Swimming Championships in the Cranny Pool at Leisureland in Galway, several of the Liffey Swim entrants had medalled: **John Cummins**

(Marian College SC), 2nd in the 100m ⁷¹ and 200m ^{72,73} freestyle, 3rd in 200m backstroke, ^{74,75} 2nd in 200m, breaststroke ^{74,75}, 3rd in 100m butterfly ^{74,75}; **Anthony “Tony” Morris** (Marian College SC; handicap 7 min), 3rd in the 400m freestyle ^{72,73}; **Brian Farnan** (Templeogue SC), 3rd in the Boys 400m individual medley ^{72,73}; **David Cummins** (Cormorant SC; handicap 6 min), winner of the Boys 100m ⁷¹ and 200m backstroke, ^{74,75} 2nd in the Boys 100m butterfly, ⁷¹ 3rd in the Senior 1500m freestyle ^{74,75}; **Greg Buckley** (Sunday’s Well, Cork), 2nd in the Boys 100m, ⁷¹ 200m ^{74,75} and 400m ^{74,75} freestyle; **Pat Mullally** (Marian College), 3rd in 200m freestyle ^{72,73}; **Pat Crowe** (Dublin SC), winner of Boys 100m ⁷¹ and 200m ^{72,73} breaststroke; and **A. Cruise** (Half Moon SC; handicap 6 min 20 sec), 3rd in the Boys 100m ⁷¹ and 200m freestyle. ^{74,75}

The 56th Liffey swim was decided in the final stretch of the race. Veteran Ultan Kerrigan, one of the limit men, had led until just after the Four Courts, when he was overtaken by ten-year-old Ciaran O’Driscoll of the Dublin Swimming Club, the youngest of the 89 competitors. However, with 50 yards to go David Cummins, a 13-year-old from the Cormorant Club who was a pupil in St Vincent’s C.B.S., Glasnevin, who came with a surge after O’Connell Bridge, passed O’Driscoll to claim the victor’s laurels in his 4th Liffey Swim. ^{76,77,78} He literally stole the thunder from his older brother, John Cummins, the scratch man, who was considered to be the favourite for the race. Dave Cummins had indicated his distance strengths at the National Championships in Galway in the Senior 1500m freestyle when he placed a highly creditable 3rd behind Kevin Williamson and Francis “Chalkey” White. ^{74,75} He was also the holder of two National Under-age backstroke titles. ^{71,74,75} The gallant O’Driscoll held on for 2nd place and Brian Farnan (Templeogue SC) claimed the third podium position.



The Liffey Swim podium trio: (left to right) the winner David Cummins (Cormorants SC), runner-up Ciaran O’Driscoll (Dublin SC) and 3rd-placed Brian Farnan (Templeogue SC) (*Irish Press*, 16 August, 1975, page 13)



Presentation of the *Independent Cup* to David Cummins, winner of the 56th Liffey Swim by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr. Patrick “Paddy” Dunne, Labour Party. (*Irish Independent*, 16 August, 1975, page 9)

The fastest time was recorded by Lorcan Shelly (Terenure SC) who finished in 4th place, clocking 21 min 18 sec.⁷⁶⁻⁷⁸ The *Independent Shield* for the best team performance went to Dublin SC – Ciaran O’Driscoll (2nd), G. Bohane (7th), Pat O’Driscoll (9th) and Kevin Doran (12th) = 30 pts.⁷⁶⁻⁷⁸

Top 10 finishers.⁷⁶⁻⁷⁸

Place	Name	Age	Club	Handicap*	Nett Time
1	David Cummins	13	Cormorant SC	6 min 00 sec	21:20
2	Ciaran O’Driscoll	10	Dublin SC	2 min 30 sec	24:58
3	Brian Farnan		Templeogue SC	6 min 10 sec	21:28
4	Lorcan Shelly‡		Terenure SC	6 min 30 sec	21:18
5	J Fagan		Crusade Aquatic Club	2 min 50 sec	25:15
6	Gerry Dunne		Half Moon SC	4 min 10 sec	24:07
7	G Bohane		Dublin SC	4 min 10 sec	24:10
8	Pat Mullally		Terenure SC	7 min 00 sec	21:37
9	Pat O’Driscoll	14	Dublin SC	4 min 00 sec	24:42
10	John Cummins†	19	Marian College SC	7 min 20 sec	21:27
12	Kevin Doran		Dublin SC		

*Time after limit man

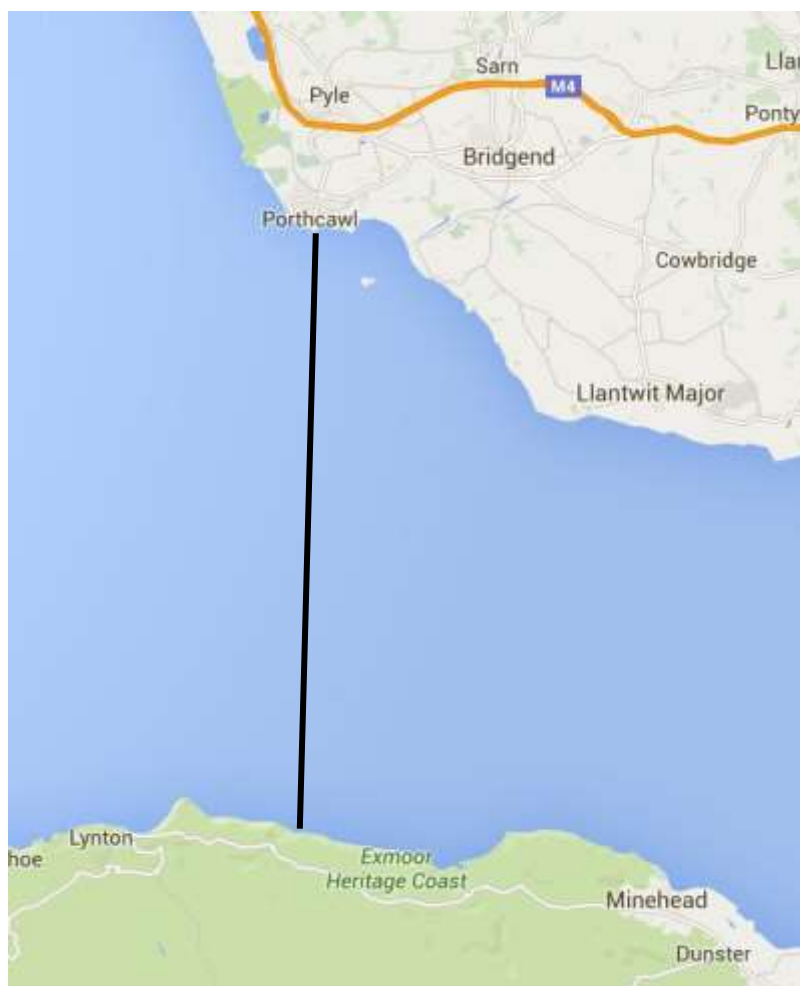
†Scratch swimmer

‡Fastest time

The Leinster branch of the Irish Amateur Swimming Association named Kevin Williamson (Terenure College SC) and Miriam Hopkins (Aquarian SC) as “Swimmers of the Year”.⁷⁹

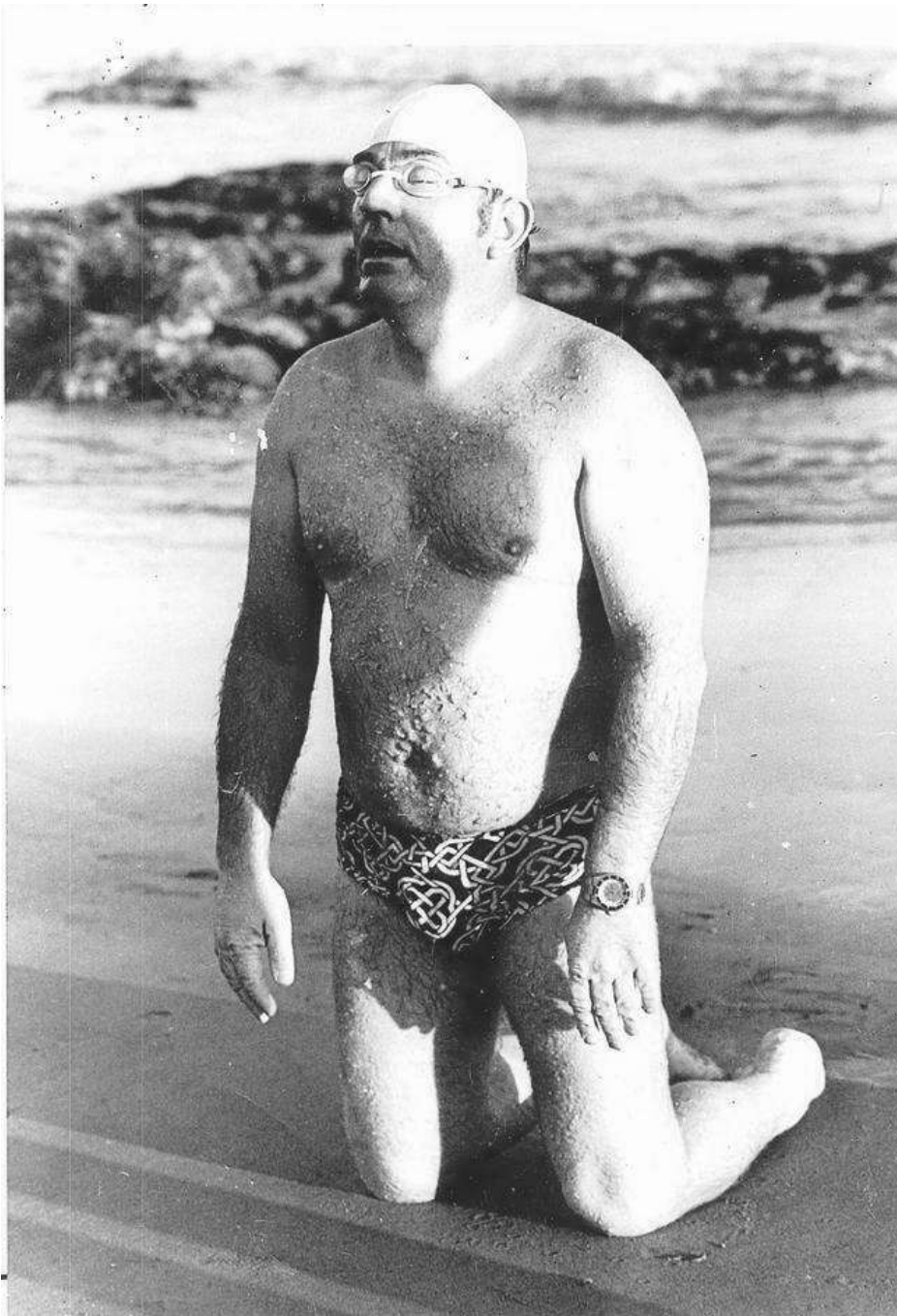
On 4 February 1975, Lynne Cox from Long Beach, California became the first woman to swim across the Cook Strait from North Island to South Island, New Zealand. She achieved the 22.5 km crossing in 12 hours 7 min in heavy seas and strong winds with a water temperature of the 10°C.⁸⁰ Her attempt to swim the North Channel in August 1975 was unsuccessful.⁸¹ A 20-year-old American, Jon Erikson, a physical education student from East Madison Park, Chicago, broke the record for the fastest two-way swim of the English Channel. He swam from Dover to France and back to Kingsdown Beach, Kent, 9 km north of Dover, in 30 hours, beating the record set by his father, Ted Erikson, in 1965 by three minutes.⁸²

On 17 July Ted Keenan from Enniskillen swam the Bristol Channel from Glenthorne Beach between Lynmouth and Minehead on the north Devon coast to Coney Beach, Porthcawl, Glamorgan, a distance of 19 miles as the crow flies.^{83,84,85,86}



Bristol Channel Swim by Ted Keenan 1975

He was accompanied by the 90-foot pilot boat *Margam Abbey*. Because of the strong cross-tides Keenan had to execute a three-legged water marathon in making the crossing in 14 hours 26 minutes. He thus completed the three channel swims in these Islands – The English Channel Swim from England to France on 13 August, 1972 (18 hours 11 minutes) and the North Channel Swim from Northern Ireland to Scotland on 11 August 1973 (18 hours 27 minutes), becoming the first man to achieve the treble.



**Ted Keenan kneels on Coney Beach after Bristol Channel Swim
(*The Impartial Reporter*, 23 September 2013)**

The 1976 Liffey Swim

The long-awaited inquiry, which was conducted by planning inspectors, into the building of an oil refinery in the Dublin Port on land reclaimed from the sea began its oral hearings.^{87,88} After just six days the applicants, Aquarius Securities Ltd, closed their case after only calling three witnesses and without presenting any evidence on the handling, loading and unloading of the oil, factors important in ensuring environmental protection.⁸⁹ The Minister for Industry and Commerce, Sean Keating, made available to the inquiry the report he had commissioned from An Foras Forbartha to guide his decisions.⁹⁰ Sean Dublin Bay Loftus unofficially released copies of the 140-page report to the press.⁹¹ The proposed Dublin site performed poorly in all the assessments carried out and was considered by An Foras Forbartha to be unacceptable on economic and environmental grounds. Other arguments for and against the Dublin Port refinery were presented over the following weeks.^{92,93} At the beginning of May, Mr James Tully, Minister for Local Government rejected the appeal of Aquarius Securities to build an oil refinery, a decision that was welcomed by many civic, preservation and environmental groups,⁹⁴ but deplored not unsurprisingly by the Irish Petrol Retailers' Association.⁹⁵ Other posited that the decision failed to distinguish between Dublin Docks and Port and Dublin Bay, each of which belonged to separate worlds of activities which were not interchangeable.⁹⁶ The *Irish Press* editorial cited a United Nations press release for World Environment Day, which contained the words of a Red Indian chief addressed 125 years previously: "*We only inhabit the earth or traverse the seas for a fleeting period of time. In that time we should seek to enhance and preserve their riches for our children, not despoil them or destroy them*".⁹⁷

The debate over swimming in Dublin Bay from a health safety perspective continued with the approach of the summer season. Speaking at the fifth summer school of the Health Inspectors Association in Waterford, the Dublin Region Public Analyst, Dr Fergus Hill, stated that there was no difference in the health of Dublin Bay swimmers compared to non-bay swimmers in respect of the incidence of gastroenteritis, dysentery and infectious hepatitis.^{98,99} In spite of this, he continued, and having himself swum in Dublin Bay for 40 years, there would be newspaper articles quoting various coliform counts, scaring off Dubliners from enjoying one of the greatest amenities on their doorsteps.

In July the Minister for Local Government revealed that the Greater Dublin Sewerage Scheme which was originally costed at £13.3 million would now cost £23 million. Completion of the scheme had now been pushed back to summer 1977. The 3-mile long, 12-foot wide tunnel along the Grand Canal to Ringsend originally estimated at £3.5 million was revised upwards to £5.2 million.¹⁰⁰

In October the long awaited scientific study on the River Liffey, Liffey Estuary and Dublin Bay, commissioned by the E.S.B., Dublin Port and Docks Board and

Dublin Corporation and carried out under the direction of Professor Dennis John Crisp, FRS, of the University College of North Wales (now Bangor University), was published.¹⁰¹ The aim of the report was to provide an assessment of the environmental condition of River Liffey from Leixlip to the Port Area, the outer Liffey Estuary and Dublin Bay.^{102,103,104}

The upper river was declared healthy as far as its confluence with the River Camac, below which the Liffey was polluted as far as its estuary. Dublin Bay itself was described as 'normal' with 'no evidence of harmful ecological conditions'. The discharge of sludge into the Irish Sea was regarded as having minimal effects on the environment. The Dublin City Engineer, Mr Kevin O'Donnell, stated that the completion of the Greater Dublin Drainage Scheme with the removal of the wastes from the Clondalkin and Naas Road areas from the River Camac would address the unhealthy state of the Liffey in the vicinity of Butt Bridge. The condition of the outer estuary would be greatly improved when the new outfall works was commissioned and the crude sewage discharge at White Bank seawards of the Pigeon House was terminated.

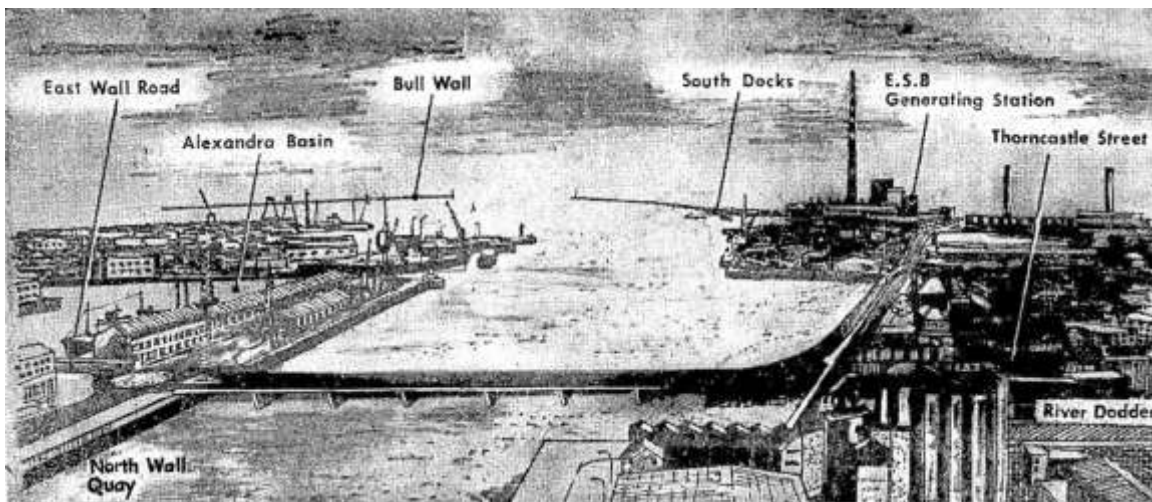
The report further indicated that the benthic flora of Dublin Bay (the marine flora living at the bottom of a body of water) was entirely normal for a shallow water bay and that there was no evidence that the plume from the River Liffey created harmful ecological conditions in the Bay. The report concluded that the Liffey had very little effect on Dublin Bay as a whole because there was a strong clockwise circulation continually flushing the Bay, which maintained high water quality standards.

However, the water in the Bull Wall, Pigeon House and White Bank area of the estuary would continue to have a high level of bacterial contamination and would not meet the water quality specified in the E.E.C. Directive on Bathing Places. The City Engineer indicated that this would mean the dismantling of the facilities at Bull Wall, a move that was likely to arouse protest from swimmers who favoured the deeper water on the harbour side of Bull Wall.¹⁰⁵

The south-west part of Dollymount Strand was frequently contaminated by water into which sewage was dispersed which got there over the half tide wall. The report concluded that the sewerage outfalls were not located close enough to the Poolbeg take full advantage of the seaward flow. The report reiterated that the sanitary significance of bacterial indicators in sea water could not be adequately assessed as there were no internationally accepted standards for recreational waters and that "*there is little general epidemiological evidence to link higher coliform counts with health hazards to sea bathers*". The report also provided biological explanations for the "Liffey Whiff", which was caused gases released through anaerobic decomposition of organic detritus in the river bed.

The issue of the men-only bathing place at the Forty-Foot, Sandycove, and whether or not men who swam there had the right to bar women reared its head once more.¹⁰⁶ The battle of the bathers became the battle of the sexes with

members of the Irish Women United replacing a “Men Only” notice with two signs reading “Public Bathing Place” and “Women Welcome Here”. When banners were unfurled by the some 20–30 protesters, skirmishes led to bags of flour and salt being flung at some of the women by members of the Sandycove Bathers Association, during which one woman was tripped and injured^{107,108} The Irish-woman United threatened legal action, including a High Court injunction, against the Sandycove Bathers Association to restrain them from preventing women swimming at the Forty-Foot.¹⁰⁹ A flurry of letters to the daily newspapers followed presenting differing viewpoints.



**An artist's impression of the proposed new bridge across the Liffey at Ringsend
(*Irish Independent*, 13 August, 1976, page 7)**

Plans for a privately built toll bridge across the Liffey from North Wall to Ringsend were put to a special meeting of the Dublin Port and Docks Board by Thomas Roche, vice-chairman of Cement-Roadstone in August 1976, with an estimated cost of £1.2M (€2.16M).^{110,111,112} The overall span of the bascule bridge was 682 ft (208 m), with one of the six spans opening as a single leaf for shipping traffic. The projected toll for cars at 1976 prices was 10 – 20 pence (13 – 26 cent) with a traffic loading of 6,800 – 11,400 per day. The Dublin Corporation Public Relations Officer, Noel Carroll, stated that the Corporations Engineering Department felt that the toll bridge had no future.¹¹³ The East-Link Toll Bridge (now renamed Tom Clarke Bridge) did not open until October 1984.¹¹⁴

On the long distance swimming front, in May 29-year-old Linda McGill, a former Australian Olympic swimmer in 1964 in Tokyo, became the first person to swim around Hong Kong Island, a distance of some 29 miles, in 17 hours 1 minute, swimming most of the way topless. She had previously conquered the English Channel, Sydney Harbour and Canada's Lake St John in Quebec Province (27.2 miles).¹¹⁵ In August, two 20-year-olds, former Liffey Swim winner Fintan O'Meara (1972) and his North Dublin S.C. clubmate Peter Heffernan, swam across Dublin

Bay from Red Rock, Howth to Dún Laoghaire Pier. O'Meara's time was 2 hours 17 minutes, Heffernan, 4 minutes longer.¹¹⁶

In September, for the third time in three successive months, a planned attempt by Ted Keenan to become the first to swim from Portpatrick, Scotland to Northern Ireland across the North Channel had to be abandoned because the 24-hour forecast got the weather conditions completely wrong.¹¹⁷

Women continued to compete in open sea swims. The Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim attracted a good entry.¹¹⁸ Michele Garvey (Dublin S.C.) returned to defend his crown from 1975. Michele Kavanagh (Otter S.C.), Lassie Lawless and Pat Kissane (Aer Lingus S.C.), Terry Mason (Terenure S.C.) who won in 1971 and placed 2nd in 1973 and Elizabeth McGrory, a freestyle and backstroke swimmer.¹⁰⁹ The race was won by Antoinette Finlay in 11 min 45 sec (Terenure S.C., off 3 min 30 sec), a 13-year-old, who got up with a tremendous finish to take first place from her club-mate Mary Ryan (Terenure S.C., off 4 min), who clocked the fastest time of 11 min 18 sec. Fiona Canning (Otter S.C.) placed 3rd, D Byrne (Guinness S.C.) 4th, E. Donovan (Aer Lingus S.C.) 5th, and C. Greene (Aquarian S.C.) 6th.¹¹⁹ The team award was claimed by Otter S.C. (Fiona Canning 3rd, Michele Kavanagh, Elizabeth McGrory and Maeve Canning).¹¹⁵

Forty-seven competitors took part in the Church Island women's swim at Lough Owel in July.¹²⁰ Conditions were described as dry if a trifle cold. The race was won by C. Bohane (Aquarian) in 14 min 40 sec. M. O'Driscoll (Dublin S.C.) placed 2nd, D. Byrne (Guinness S.C.) 3rd, S. Kinsella (Aquarian) 4th, E. Shaloo (Cormorant S.C.) 5th and Mary Ryan (Terenure S.C.) 6th.^{116,121} The team prize was won by Aquarian S.C. Mullingar Sub Aqua Club and the Civil Defence patrolled the race.^{116,117} The annual Green Island Pier Head ladies ½-mile swim at Kinvara on Galway Bay was won by Noreen McMahon (Kinvara S.C.), 2nd was Elizabeth McCormack (Kinvara S.C.) and 3rd was Pauline Monahan (Gort S.C.).¹²²

The annual Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim for the *Irish Times* trophy ended in controversy.¹¹⁴ Gerry Dunne (Half Moon S.C.) just pipped Patrick Quinlan (Guinness S.C., off 3 min), a 15-year-old student at Beneavin College. However, Dunne was disqualified for taking a wrong course. To make matters worse two of his Half Moon S.C. team mates were also disqualified for the same reason.¹¹⁴ David Cummins (Cormorant S.C., off 9½ min) placed 2nd in the fastest time of 24 min 34 sec, Gay Brennan (Templeogue S.C., off 7 min), 3rd, Pat Murphy (Aquarian S.C., off 7 min) 4th, Gerry Seery (North Dublin S.C.) 5th, and Liam Bohane (Aquarian S.C.) 6th. The team prize was won by Templeogue S.C. (G. Brennan 3rd, Brian Farnan 10th, Pat Mullaly, John Houlihan).¹¹⁴



Dún Laoghaire Harbour Swim Winners 1976

Left to right: Francis White (four times winner), Antoinette Finlay (Terenure S.C.), Alan Moran (Promotions Manager, *The Irish Times* Ltd), Pat Quinlan (Guinness S.C.), Harry Kavanagh (President, Leinster Branch, I.A.S.A.). Source: *Irish Times*, 20 July 1976, page 4

The Lough Owel mile swim for the P.J. Coughlan Cup was won by 12-year-old Peter Conway (Aer Lingus S.C.) from an entry of 70. Michael McCann (Templeogue S.C.) was 2nd, J. Dunleavy (Dublin S.C.) 3rd, J. Coghlan (Cormorant S.C.) 4th, R. Daly (Aquarian S.C.) 5th and B. Murphy (Aquarian S.C.) 6th. The team prize was won by Aquarian S.C. David Cummins (Cormorant S.C.) set the fastest time of 14 min 04 sec.^{116,117} The annual Clarke Cup open sea swim at the Battery, South Wall under the auspices of Half Moon S.C. was won by William "Billy" Reddington (Clontarf S.C.).¹²³

The Plunkett-McAllister Cup Open Sea Race at Dollymount was won by 15-year-old Nicolas "Nicky" O'Meara (Clontarf S.C., off 1 min) in 14 min 50sec, a substantial improvement on his 13th placing the previous year.¹²⁴ The other placing were: 2nd, William "Billy" Reddington (Clontarf S.C., off 3 min) in 13 min 30 sec; 3rd, C. Boland (North Dublin S.C., at go) in 16 min 40 sec; 4th, J. Kavanagh (North Dublin S.C., at go) in 16 min 45 sec; 5th, J. McLoughlin (North Dublin S.C., off 2 min) in 15 min 00 sec; and 6th, Derek Wilkes (North Dublin S.C., off 1 min 30 sec) in 15 min 45 sec.¹²⁰ The team prize went to North Dublin S.C. (3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th) and fastest time was recorded by D. Cummins (Cormorant S.C., scratch) in 11 min 7 sec.¹²⁰

The Green Island Pier Head ½-mile swim at Kinvara on Galway Bay was won by Patrick Tully (Kinvara S.C.), who was followed home by Leonard Murphy (Kinvara S.C.) and Richard Johnston (Kinvara S.C.).¹¹⁸

The annual swim from Ireland's Eye to Balscadden Beach at Howth was won Brian Sweeney (Half Moon S.C., off 1 min), a 40-year-old Dublin grocer, in 21 min 20 sec.^{125,126} Gerry Seery (North Dublin S.C., off 3 min) placed 2nd, Peter Heffernan (Clontarf S.C., off 1 min) 3rd, Anthony "Tony" Morris (Marian College) 4th, Peter Coughlan (Central Remedial Clinic S.C.) 5th, and J O'Shea (Aquarian S.C.) 6th.^{121,122} The team prize was won by the promoting club Clontarf S.C. (Peter Heffernan, Fintan O'Meara, Nicky O'Meara, V. Keogh). David Cummins (Cormorant S.C.) set the fastest time of 16 min 5 sec.^{121,122}

A hardy bunch of 21 youths, aged 11 to 19, competed in the Lee Swim from Glenbrook to Monkstown. The race was won by Ken O'Sullivan (Eglington S.C.), Donal Barry (Dolphin S.C.), an 11-year-old, placed 2nd, and C. Bowles (Sunday Well S.C.) was 3rd. Kieran O'Regan clocked the fastest time of 15:10 for the one mile course.¹²⁷

The Galway Swimming Club annual Prom Swim from Blackrock diving tower to Seapoint, Galway was won by 14-year-old William Cahill in 26:59, off a handicap of 2 min 25 sec. He was followed home by the 1975 winner Michael Langan, off 6 min 50 sec, who clocked 23:12 with Brian Desmond 3rd in 29:15, off 2 min.¹²⁸ The men's Connacht Open Handicap Prom Swim over the same course for the Claude Toft trophy attracted a large entry from across the province. The same three swimmers figured in the podium positions: 1st, Michael Langan (Galway S.C.), off scratch at 7 min, in a time of 23:17, 2nd, William Cahill (Galway S.C.), off 4½ min, in 26:22 and 3rd, Brian Desmond (Galway S.C.), off 2 min, in 28:55.¹²⁹

At the National Swimming Championships at the Cranny Pool in Galway, seventeen-year-old Kevin Williamson (Terenure S.C.) retained his 100m^{130,131}, 200m^{132,133}, 400m^{128,129}, and 1500m^{134,135} freestyle and 4 x 100m individual medley^{130,131} titles and also took the Gold medal in the 200m butterfly^{130,131} and Bronze medal in the 200m breaststroke.^{126,127} He also won the 800m freestyle title later in the year at the Aquarian Swimming Club Gala at Newpark, Blackrock.^{136,137} Fourteen-year-old David Cummins (Cormorant S.C.) retained his Boys 100m and 200m [National record] backstroke titles^{130,131}, took Gold in the Boys 100m butterfly^{128,129} and in the Boys 100m^{126,127}, 200m^{128,129} and 400m^{128,129} freestyle, and Boys 400m individual medley [National record].^{130,131} He went on to take the Silver medal in the Senior 800m freestyle later in the year.^{132,133}

Kevin Williamson represented Ireland at the Games of the XXI Olympiad in Montréal, Canada, in the 200m, 400 and 1500m freestyle.¹³⁸ He was voted male "Swimmer of the Year" by the Leinster Branch of the I.A.S.A.^{139,140} He was also won the inaugural Levi's Youth Sports Gold Award selected by a panel of sports

editors from National newspapers and RTÉ.^{141,142} The trophy took the form of a single laurel leaf set in a replica of the Levi's bronze button mounted on a plinth of Connemara marble.¹³⁷

Two members of the Marian Swimming Club were involved in a dramatic rescue at Lough Owel following the I.A.S.A. championships in Galway. Tony Morris of Santry and Brian Conroy of Dun Laoghaire had stopped at Lough Owel for a swim before continuing to Dublin.^{143,144} They were members of the club team which had won the Gold medal in the Men's 4 x 100m medley team, clipping 0.4 sec off the Irish Record (John Cummins, Brian Conroy, Des Coyle, Tony Morris, 4:24.1).¹⁴⁵ Just as they were about to dive up, they heard a cry that there was a man in difficulties in the lake about 50 yards off the shore. They dived in and brought a man and unconscious child ashore. Both recovered from their ordeal. The man's daughter had fallen overboard from a rubber dingy into the water and her father had dived in to try to save her, but he himself got into difficulties.^{139,140}

The Liffey Swim took place on Saturday 14 August, 1976. Given that Independent Newspapers had been proud sponsors of the Liffey Swim from its earliest days, surprisingly there is a complete lack of coverage of the 1976 Liffey Swim in the *Irish Independent*, *Sunday Independent* and *Evening Herald*. It was listed in "Your Sport Diary" of 14 August in the *Irish Independent*,¹⁴⁶ and in "Weekend Sport Diary" in the *Irish Press*,¹⁴⁷ but there was no detailed build-up, pre-event coverage of entrants, handicaps and commentary on possible winners or fastest swimmers as in previous years. The only scant report appeared in the *Irish Times*.¹⁴⁸

Kevin Scully (Templeogue S.C.) won the Independent Newspapers Cup and Gold medal and was followed home by this club mate, John Houlihan, winner of the Leinster Schools Junior Boys 100m backstroke¹⁴⁹, the Leinster Age-Group Championships Boys U14 100m backstroke¹⁵⁰ and the Leinster Swimming Championships Boys U14 100m backstroke.¹⁵¹

The team prize was won by Templeogue S.C. (1,2,11,12 = 26pts). This club team may be one of the youngest to have gained this award – John Houlihan (b. 1962), Rory Farrelly (b. 1960), Aidan Kearney (b. 1960), who was Silver medallist in the Men's 100m backstroke at the Leinster Championships behind David Cummins¹⁵², and Kevin Scully (b. 1959).¹⁵³

David Cummins, the scratchman aged 14, who had won the Liffey Swim the previous year, clocked the fastest time. Cummins had had remarkable success in the pool during 1976. He won the Leinster Swimming Championships Men's 100m butterfly, 200m backstroke and 400m freestyle titles,^{147,154} the Leinster Age-Group Boys U16 100m butterfly title in a National Junior record¹⁴⁶, the Leinster Schools Intermediate Boys 400m individual medley¹⁴⁵ and 100m backstroke¹⁴⁸ titles, the Irish Schools Intermediate Boys 100m backstroke Gold medal,¹⁵⁵ set an Irish Junior Record for the 100m butterfly when finishing third at the Aquarian Swimming Club Gala^{132,133}, a plethora of titles at the National

Championships in the Cranny Pool in Galway (see above), and the Gold medal in the Junior 100m butterfly at the F.I.S.E.C. Games in Bruges, Belgium and took the Gold medal for Ireland in the Junior 4 x 100m freestyle with John McGrory, Pat Carey, Brian Farnam, swimming the final leg.¹⁵⁶

Top finishers:¹⁴⁴

Place	Name	Age	Club	Handicap*	Nett Time
1	Kevin Scully	16	Templeogue S.C.	6 min 45 sec	Not Reported
2	John Houlihan		Templeogue S.C.	6 min 00 sec	Not Reported
3	Peter Coughlan		Central Remedial Clinic S.C.	3 min 00 sec	Not Reported
4	Patrick White		Guinness S.C.	0 min 50 sec	Not Reported
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11	Rory Farrelly		Templeogue S.C.	6 min 30 sec	Not Reported
12	Aidan Kearney		Templeogue S.C.	8 min 30 sec	Not Reported
	David Cummin†	14	Cormorant S.C.	10 min 30 sec	21:32‡

*Time after limit man

†Scratch swimmer

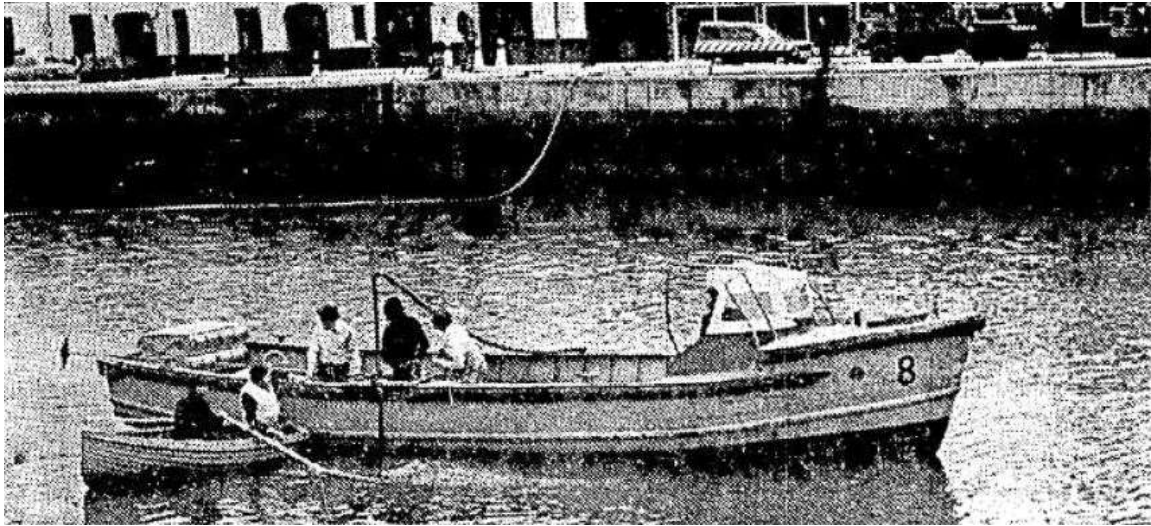
‡Fastest time

The well-known voice of the Liffey Swim departed Eirean shores. Paddy Condon, the 'fast-talking' commentator on the Burgh Quay loudspeakers of the annual Liffey Swim, was appointed Sales Manager for Ireland of London's Tara Hotel, a subsidiary of Aer Lingus.^{157,158} He had been an Aer Lingus executive as coordinator of tours for visiting travel agents. As a Clontarf man his primary interest was swimming. He was a member of the Irish Olympic Council in 1948. He was also a keen golfer and had been Captain of Royal Dublin.¹⁵⁹

In August 1976 Dublin Corporation and the Port and Docks Board announced a collaborative project with Irish Industrial Gases to sweeten the breath of Dublin's Anna Livia. The all too familiar odour to any Dubliner crossing any of the bridges over the Liffey was caused by anaerobic breakdown of thick biodegradable organic sludge deposits which had built up in the river bed.^{160,161,162,163} In the river below Butt Bridge, the bed dropped sharply allowing build-up of the sludge, with consequent changes in the water flow pattern and retention of water for a longer time, resulting in rapid use of dissolved oxygen and anaerobic conditions.

The pilot scheme involved pumping river water through a perforated sparger on George's Quay to mix it with gaseous oxygen. The oxygenated water was then

spread over a specific area below Butt Bridge, through a hose carried on a small ferry sailing in a planned pattern on the Liffey, to create conditions for aerobic breakdown of the deposits.¹⁶⁴ This process had proved successful with remediation of rivers in the United Kingdom with worse smell problems.



**Spreading of oxygenated water in the River Liffey
(*Irish Independent*, 11 August, 1976)**

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