

ASK ABOUT IRELAND

Memories of a Liffey Swim Winner

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*Cannon Kenneth Ruddock today
By kind permission of Cannon Kenneth Ruddock*



*1947 Liffey Swim
L to R: P.G. Condon (North Dublin), 2nd; Kenneth E. Ruddock (Carlow), Winner;
B Collinge (Half Moon), 3rd
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The 1947 winner Cannon Kenneth Ruddock recounted some memories of his experience of completing the historic swim as follows:

"I remember several aspects of the long race. The Liffey and all its bridges were very familiar to me because I went to school at the King's Hospital in Blackhall Place near where the race began from a Guinness Barge. I never liked the smell especially when the tide was out!

The water was not very clean at the beginning of the race but as you swam down towards Butt Bridge the saltiness of the incoming tide was quite clear. It was quite frightening going under O'Connell Bridge as it is a perfect square 50 yards in length. All that you could see in the hazy distance was the rounded arch at the other end. Also, as the race was coming to the end, the splashing of the swimmers trying to win was very loud.

After the race was over I was feted by some people in the Four Provinces Ballroom in Upper Camden Street, I think. The cup was presented to me once again. The following day when I returned to my hometown of Carlow, I was met at the train station by members of the Carlow Swimming Club who gave me a hero's welcome home.

Later the chairman, Jimmy O'Neill, who had given me excellent support and advice, arranged for a presentation dinner in a local café. I received a lovely chiming clock. The chimes still ring out in our lounge and remind me at times of that evening in 1947 which stands out in my life. Naturally my mother, who was present at the function, was very proud as were other members of our family, together with the local people.

I was one of the very few swimmers from outside Dublin to win the race. *The National and Leinster Times* in Carlow carried an extensive coverage of the event in one its summer editions that year. I think that I am one of only two other people who later were ordained priests of The Church of Ireland who won the race.

When I returned to our boarding school, the then Headmaster gave me permission to attend training sessions for prospective Irish entrants to the Olympic games but unfortunately I did not make the grade.

At a reception for the 75th anniversary race of the first running of the race, we past winners were feted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin at a dinner in the Mansion House. I knew Pat Condon who won second place the year I won. I had never met the person who was third. But I do remember him saying to me in a humorous vein when he saw my clerical garb that there must have been holy water in the Liffey in the year I won! This is all part of the fun of swimming and of the happy memories which transcend and overcome all barriers and divisions."



**Certificate awarded at 1995 commemoration dinner
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