

The Prom Swim 2009



To Swim Just Once

I'm still not sure when it took a turn for the more serious. My swimming buddy, Shannon, suggested we push ourselves. It was all very well tottering up and down the pool but really we should train for a bigger goal. Lulled into a false sense of ability, I foolishly confessed to harbouring childhood notions of completing the annual Prom swim in Salthill. She seized on this like a hawk on a scrambling mouse. So we started to train, we even went to lessons to improve our stroke.

Then we threw caution to the wind and signed up with the swim organizers. 'Are you in the Polo team' they asked. 'No' we replied. 'Ah the triathlon team so?' 'No, we're in the twice round the pool and then out for a skinny latte team" I quipped.

July 4th, swim day arrived. With my comfort zone, now a distant memory, I was a bag of nerves. If I could convince my head that my body was capable, I had some chance, but that was proving much easier said than done. I was, according to my nearest and dearest, a nightmare to be with that day. Frayed nerves and generally green around the gills.

As I stood on the beach, with the East wind whipping the tops of my goose pimples, I had a feeling of sheer visceral panic. What was I doing? At my age? About to swim 2.2km in a howling gale and pouring rain! To my amazement, I got in the water when the man shouted go. I swam like a drowning man. Three times I nearly turned back, and three times I forced myself to go on.

As we rounded the first corner at the Aquarium, the weather took a turn for the worst and sea whipped up. There were some panicky moments when I couldn't see the other swimmers over the growing swell. At this point I had the feeling that I was getting nowhere. I emptied my mind and just counted my strokes. I lost Shannon; it was impossible to keep on any kind of straight line, I was just grateful to be going forward. The rescue boats lingered, keeping us on course. It was a relief to see other humans, as at times it got quite lonely out there!

An hour later we emerged to a heroes' welcome and sheeting rain. Exhausted but elated; we had done it!

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