

CLONTARF

Clontarf, located about 3 miles from the center of Dublin was the scene of the battle of the same name in 1014. Brian Boru, the claimed High King of Ireland traveled to Dublin to deal with a rebellion led by the Leinster Clans and the Dublin Norsemen. The battle to put down the rebellion took place at Clontarf and Boru won, but, unfortunately for him, was killed in one of the final battle scenes – surely the seeds of a major Hollywood hit movie!

At the time the image was taken, Clontarf was the transit destination for thousands of Dubliners on a sunny Summer's day, being the end of the tram line and the nearest access point for Bull Island and its Dollymount Strand. This was the larger of only city 2 beach destinations for Dubliners (the other being Sandymount) and could end up incredibly crowded when the weather was fine. There was one additional problem, however. The shore line in Dublin was and is very shallow, so low tide could see a walk of nearly a quarter of a mile from the beach to get to waters edge and even further to get to a suitable depth. And the tide came in very fast, trapping many an unwary person who dallied too long at the low tide mark. In later years, it was not uncommon to see motor vehicles, driven by their unsuspecting owner to low tide point, stranded in 4 or 5 feet of water.

To deal with the low tide issue, the Clontarf Baths were constructed in 1920. Built of concrete, this ingenious set up would naturally level up and fill with seawater at full tide. The inlet pipes would then be locked and the water would be retained as the tide ebbed, thus providing a permanent seawater swimming pool minus the sand of course. And, needless to say, the pool was unheated, providing a bone chilling experience for many a Dubliner.

Clontarf is now an exclusive inner suburb of Dublin. In these earlier days it was more countryside. And, accordingly, land was much cheaper. Clontarf was the location of Ardilaun House, the residence of Lord Audilaun, of the Guinness family. Ardilaun House was located in St Annes Estate, now a public park. The house and estate were always regared with some resentment by the locals and the house suffered a major fire in the 1950s. It is not known to this day if the fire was accidental!