



When I started this year to do triathlons, my main race was going to be TriAthy, but the Tri bug kicked in hard, and when I saw this event, I had to go back to where I grew up and give it a lash, ...so here goes;

**Registration and set up:** Due to work, didn't get down to register on the Friday night, so drove down early on Sat morning. Parked the car up, and one of the nice stewards came out to meet me (I was first there...eagerness or what!), and she brought me up to the Clonea Hotel, and got registered. Weather was perfect, with the sun reflecting over the calm and gentle waves.

Transition was just opened, and small number of people were just setting. Found my rack, and the transition steward checking my bike said "Anywhere on rack, we won't be going by number order". Nice and relaxed approach. Got everything ready, shoes clipped on pedals, water and Isobars for lunch. Check it all for the millionth and one time, and left transition.

The Dineen supporters Club (Debbie, Sophie, Tadhg and Cormac) soon arrived at the beach, putting me in a good relaxed mood, looking forward to the day. Would be lost without them. Close to race briefing, I get the wetsuit on, and head over to the edge of transition to the orders. I bumped into David Byrne there, chatting to him for a few minutes about the course, and wish him luck before being herded off to the beach the swim waves...

**Swim:** This was going to be a different start to any of the few events I had done so far. A beach start...and an Australian exit!

After sprint wave start, we were herded into place. The stewards explained the swim course, and they kindly then allowed us to enter the water for a few minutes to "acclimatise" for a few minutes before starting. Water was surprisingly not too cold, so got the head under a few times and a few strokes, relaxed and ready. The water was clear, no getting tangled in weeds today.



Time to start. Everyone waddles out of water, and we are lined up out at the back of the beach. I aim for the middle of the group, letting the faster guys off, but avoiding any bottleneck at the back.

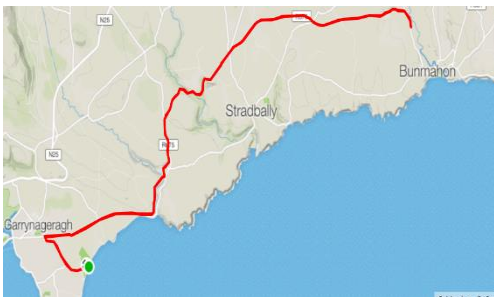
The air horn goes, the run for the waves. I waded in until up to my knees and then dive for it and aim for the first buoy. Plenty of room, no kicks, punches or elbows, maybe different behind me. As I go around the first buoy, little traffic but nothing major. So far so good.

I start to pass a few swimmers now, as I get around the second buoy and then aim back for the beach. Swimming until my hands hit the bottom, I get up and run. The water was shallow enough now so easily able to run up to the flags and then aim again for the water. As I get ready to dive in, I take quick look to my right, still swimmers coming out the water for the run, so knew I was going well. Back to the first turnaround again, swim to the next one. Again, passed a few. Got

round the next one, and then aim for the transition flags. Swam in to the water edge as far as I could and when I “hit the bottom”, up and running.

**T1:** Running up the beach, getting out of the suit, I see my wife Debbie and kids, shouts of support, as they have their breakfast. Time to give the big grin and a wave. Into transition, amidst the cheers of marshals and crowd. I see my bike and was glad where racked it. Out of the suit, helmet on, bike off the rack and gone for the bike exit. All good, no chaotic panic.

**Cycle:** The cycle is an out and back ride to just before the village of Bonmahon, along parts of the scenic coast road. Start off as I left the carpark, there is a noticeable breeze into my face, but not bothered as knew it would be only for short distance, as would be turning soon on to the coast road. Quick turn at the only roundabout, and settle in. I carefully pace myself, as I knew there a series of descents coming soon, but still make avail of the flat to get the legs moving.



I pass my parents’ house along the way (would call in later for recovery tea and cakes!). Here, I see a few cyclists on the now famous Waterford Greenway, no cheers, perhaps don’t know we are doing a tri. Get past by a few guys on their TT bikes, and I pass a few riders, as I make progress

along the sea front. I get to the Ballyvoile Viaduct, and know that this end of the flat route for a while and now a few sharp climbs and descents, and tight bends

Pass my old local, O’Mahoneys, wondered if the Guinness was still good. Now pass the Sprint race turnaround, so know I was at half way to my own turn around. Progress is steady, swapping places with a few competitors. (No, seriously I wasn’t drafting...well, I think not)

Coming close to Bonmahon, there a nice long descent, with the wind at my back, the marshals warn me of the turnaround point, to slow down and turn around the bollards on the road. Informed that I am in 84<sup>th</sup> place, about half way in the ranks. Happy enough, get the legs spinning again. Now to pay the price for the pace gaining descent, climbing with that wind in my face, but went reasonably quick.

The pack is now spaced out so on my own for a while on the return leg, so belted away towards where I can see the blue of the sea again, and across the bay where the T2 waited. Back on the flat now and made quick progress back to the beach carpark. I have my feet out of my shoes now, and directed to the dismount line. Right leg over behind me, step off, neatly before the line. Running, I see my entourage again cheering, big smile and wave again, as I pass.



**T2:** Bike racked, helmet off, socks on, runners on, lock laces pulled, heading for the run exit. Legs little heavy, but knew this would go. Bleep, next part was on to the shouts of “Go on Athy”, “Well done”, “Nearly there”

**Run:** The run took us partly back on the cycle route but then in the opposite direction towards Dungarvan, with two loops. I keep the pace reasonable now, but not too slow, the legs are feeling good. I see a lot of cyclists coming in against me, so doing still ok. The weather is dry and warm.

The long stretch at Ballinroad is gobbled up quickly, and start to pass a few runners. Eventually, I’m directed at about the 3.5KM mark, off the road, and on to the Waterford Greenway. Back toward the roads where we started, mingling with leisurely family cyclists.



At the 4km mark, a welcome water station, with a small bottle of water. Drank half of this, and the other half over my head. Refreshed. I am soon back on to the main road.



After about a KM, the second loop starts, by a turn right. By habit, I take a glance at the lane, over the low ditch, before turning it, seeing who is there. A marshal saw me doing this and laughs “I saw you looking, you’re making your move!” I give a thumps up, and a nod.

Soon back on the road against the edge of the Dungarvan bay, now at 2km to go, there is a brief but heavy down pour of rain. More than welcome, getting into the final stage, refreshed. There is a small climb before the route goes off the road again, on to a country path, for the last KM. I give the legs there last push, and give a good sprint, to finish my last triathlon of the year. Dineen family again waiting for me at the finish line. Tired but happy. Check the time, finish in 2:47.

This was a well organised triathlon but very relaxed atmosphere, with some fantastic routes and scenery. I would recommend it to anyone looking for an event to finish off the season.

**2017:** I have enjoyed and loved year minutes of all the Tri’s this year, all the training sessions, considering, if you told me in 2016 that I would doing this, I would have fell about laughing, but I’m now hooked. A lot of this has come from the support and motivation of my wife Debbie (now an official Tri widow), and my kids, listening to me about how many seconds I’ve lost (added), brick sessions, and how...and so on. Also to the fantastic club members of Tri Athy, who were there to give encouragement and advice, and the great banter between everyone. Thanks... Looking forward to 2018.



