

Forty Foot

Original Title: Forty Foot

English Title: Forty Foot

Running Time: 9 minutes

Production Date: March 2009

Country Of Origin: Ireland

Shooting Format: HD DVD

Colour or B/W: Colour

Sound: Stereo

Screening Ratio: 16/9 Anamorphic

Screening Format: **DigiBeta PAL** (Others available: HD DVD / DVD / Mini DV)

Original Language: English with some Irish

Available subtitles: English

WEBSITE: <http://www.fortyfootthemovie.com>

Category: Short Documentary

Previous Festivals & Awards:

- **Hot Docs 2009, Toronto:** Prizes: "**Best Film**" *International Documentary Challenge*, & "Best Use of Historical Genre" - *International Documentary Challenge*

The judges of the competition were:

John Sinno - Typecast Releasing

Michael Lumpkin - International Documentary Association

Oliver Sertic - Zagreb Film Festival

Angie Driscoll - Hot Docs International Programmer

This is what they said about Forty Foot:

We picked one film that we all connected with ... that film captured a place and the people with so much genuine spirit, ease and humour...

- **Stranger than Fiction International Documentary Festival 2009, Dublin:** Prizes: "Best Irish Short Documentary" & "Audience Award".
- **Dokufest**, Prizren, Kosovo, August 2009
- **Docslisboa**, Lisbon, Portugal, October 2009
- **Kasseler Dokumentarfilm & Videofest**, Kassel, Germany, November 2009
- **Big Sky Documentary F. F. Montana**, USA, February 2010.
- **Chicago Irish Film Festival**, USA, March 2010.
- **Bergamo Film Meeting**, Italy, March 2010.
- **Busan International Short Film Festival**, May 2010.
- **Seattle International Film Festival**, May 2010.
- **Doc-Europa II**, Portugal, May 2010.
- **The-HIFF**, Henley-on-Thames, UK, May 2010.

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CREDITS:

Directors: Leticia Agudo, Aoibheann O'Sullivan & Paul McGrath

Producer: Paul McGrath, Leticia Agudo

Photography: Paul McGrath & Aoibheann O'Sullivan

Editors: Leticia Agudo & Aoibheann O'Sullivan

Sound: Max Carpio & Leticia Agudo

Production Assistant: Max Carpio

Graphic design & compositing: Paul McGrath

TAG LINE:

4°C at the Forty Foot

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

On a chilly early March morning three filmmakers set out to make a short documentary in 5 days as part of an international competition. They chose the “40 Foot” swimming spot in Sandycove, Dublin, Ireland, and the people who have been swimming there for years through snow, gales or sunny mornings. The filmmakers discover that what happens there every morning is so much more than swimming.

MEDIUM SYNOPSIS (Less than 200 words):

From March 5th to 9th 2009, 142 filmmaking teams from 15 different countries tried to shoot, edit and print out a short non-fiction film as part of the *International Documentary Challenge*. One team entered from Ireland, Leticia Agudo, Aoibheann O’Sullivan and Paul McGrath. They chose to make a historical film about the beguiling, sometimes dangerous, bathing place in the Irish sea; and the irresistible attraction it poses to the groups of mostly older Irish locals who have been going there to bathe almost everyday for years. They discover a group of fascinating and fearless people!

“Forty Foot” tells the history of the place through the personal stories and characteristics of the featured swimmers. More than a film about them braving the elements everyday, this is a film about having a great and surprising spirit in the face of aging, death and economic hardship. It shows a classless section of older Irish nationals in a refreshing, encouraging and a completely unknown light to foreign eyes.

LONG SYNOPSIS (Under 1000 words):

From March 5th to 9th 2009, 142 filmmaking teams from 15 different countries tried to shoot, edit and print out a short non-fiction film as part of the *International Documentary Challenge* (www.docchallenge.org). With the years’ assigned theme of “Hope and/or Fear” emailed to the teams on the morning of the first day and a choice of two genres, they had 5 days (and no more!) to complete the film.

Three filmmakers from Ireland, Leticia Agudo, Aoibheann O’Sullivan and Paul McGrath collaborated over the chilly March weekend. They chose to make a historical film about the intriguing swimming spot known as “Forty Foot” along the coast of the Irish Sea, just South of Dublin city. They had two cameras, a wet suit and a lot of coffee, as well as hopes that the weather would be at least manageable.

The filmmakers knew about this bathing place –sure, a lot of people know about it in Dublin; they’d been there and one of them had even swam there before –during high Summer, mind you, when the water is still bitterly cold but in one of the rare instances when the sun graces the Irish coasts with its presence and makes the water seem deceptively warm. The Forty Foot is always, though, under any kind of weather, dramatic and stunning.

There are mostly older Irish locals who swim there everyday; there are some who swim on their own before dawn breaks, “in the nude” as they say, even though they are not supposed to any more, but that’s the way the like it.

There are others who come together at different times through the morning: 9, 10, 11... They arrive at the spot, wait for others, change and brave the water together, afterwards staying for a cup of tea and a chat. These people come here almost every single day of the year, whether it’s sunny, snowing, low or high tide and, most of the time, windy as hell. When the wind

blows North West, the worst kind, they tell us, they go on the opposite side, protected by the high walls of the old army garrison from the fierce waves that hit the rocks.

On that morning on March 5th, the filmmakers discovered people who are fearless, not only of the cold water and the slippery rocks, some being as old as 89! There are fearless of aging and even dying, and they celebrate life and each other's company, with the background of the dramatic Irish Sea, and the invigorating coldness of the water, in a way that surprised and enchanted the filmmakers too. The swimmers' enthusiasm is so infectious, the filmmakers come back the next morning for more shots and more chats and promise to be back and to actually get in the water with them.

The 11 o'clock group, the most fun loving and raucous of all the morning swimmers, get together outside and even organise charity events. Every year, in November, they do a "mini triathlon", a stroll, a gentle cycle and a dip in the cold waters of the Forty Foot. They get together for dinner and dances and some practice other sports. Two weeks before we met them, a gentleman from their group had died playing head tennis for the over 70s. Head tennis, we find out, is playing football by hitting it with your head and chest. Their attitude towards his death is natural and celebratory rather than sad and fearful. Some went out on a boat and threw some flowers in the water. "When I go, I want you to send me off like that" says one of the women.

These swimmers give us an inspiring example of hope. While many people as they get older, protect themselves more, and do less and less outside their homes, these men and women embrace the complete opposite: go out daily, do, enjoy and brave the elements. They are active members of society. And these swimmers are not free from ailments; amongst them, they've had strokes, operations, broken bones... One of them eyes the water enviously as the others go in; he's had an operation not long ago and is under the doctor's orders not to get in for 6 weeks. He's counting the days.

Most of them are practicing Catholics too; when we were with them, some of them were off cakes and biscuits, although they bring some for others, because it's Lent. Even so, they challenge what we know of the old Irish Catholic practices. These men and women change in front of each other (guarding their modesty though) and defy all expectations and restrictions that the Catholic Church used to impose on them, particularly for the women, and with which they have grown up. They also come from different social and economic backgrounds and sometimes they don't even know each other's surnames, even though they have been coming together on this spot for years.

"Forty Foot" tells the history of the place through the personal stories and characteristics of the featured swimmers. More than a film about them braving the elements everyday, this is a film about having a great and surprising spirit in the face of aging, death and economic hardship. It shows a classless section of older Irish nationals in a refreshing, encouraging and a completely unknown light to foreign eyes.