

# Ellen Elizabeth King

1909-1994

The following events were carried through:—  
 25 Yards Learners—Girls—1. L. Ogilvie; 2. H. Dickson.  
 25 Yards Learners—Boys—1. W. Bishop; 2. J. Booth.  
 Invitation Team Race—Girls—1. Gillespie's (N. Fraser, E. Smith, J. M'Dowall, E. King).  
 The above team were too strong for Broughton and Boroughmuir, winning easily in the fast time of 1 min. 14 secs., being one sec. faster than last year's team.  
 Invitation Team Race—Boys—1. Bruntfield; 2. Gillespie's.  
 A good race, Bruntfield just winning by inches.  
 Invitation Breast Stroke (100 yards)—1. G. Cormack, Boroughmuir; 2. G. F. Fisher, Portobello. Won by 1 yard. Time 1:31 2-5.  
 50 Yards Handicap (Boys)—1. T. Canning; 2. J. Cranston.  
 Blindfold Race (Girls)—1. M'Dowall.  
 50 Yards Handicap (F.P.'s)—1. W. Jenkins; 2. G. Campbell. Won by half a yard. 27 1-5.  
 50 Yards Handicap (Girls)—1. Louise Miller; 2. Ethel Smith; 3. E. King.  
 Boat Race (Girls)—1. Oxford; 2. Edinburgh; 3. Cambridge.  
 Plate Diving—1. J. Cranston; 2. A. S. Robinson.  
 50 yards (open to Rugby 1st XV).—1. T. Canning; 2. J. Cranston.  
 F.P.'s played Boroughmuir F.P.'s at Water Polo, but were too strong for them, having the assistance of G. and R. Campbell, the Internationalists. Boroughmuir put up a game fight, but were beaten 5-1.

At the Inter-Scholastic Swimming Gala held in Infirmary Street Baths on 4th June, Grace Bateman won the bronze medal in the race for girls under 12. In the team race Gillespie's team, consisting of Patricia McKinnon, Margaret Foster, Lorna Ogilvie and Grace Bateman, were second and gained bronze medals.

The following awards have been gained during the season from the Royal Life Saving Society:—

Bronze Medallions—J. Cranston, T. Canning, A. S. Robinson.  
 Proficiency Certificates—James Cranston, William Crarer, D. Erskine, George Simpson, James M'Leod.

A special note must be made of the performances of Ellen King during this session. These include the East of Scotland 50 yards ladies' championship in the record time of 33 secs.; Bronze Medal for 100 yards (Breast stroke), 96 1/4 secs.; Scottish record-holder for 100 yards (Back stroke), 83 secs.; Silver Medal for diving; and Cameron Lees Trophy for graceful swimming. We are very pleased to note also that she has been chosen to represent Great Britain in the Swimming section of the Olympic Games to be held at Paris in July of this year.

TENNIS.

TENNIS, last summer, was as well taken advantage of, both in regard to the numbers playing and the improvement in play,



MISS ELLEN KING.

Extracted from the James Gillespie's School Magazine 1924

**BURNMOUTH'S GALA DAY.**  
 ANNUAL SWIMMING GALA (under S.A.S.A. and E.C.A.S.A. Rules)  
 in BURNMOUTH HARBOUR.  
**SATURDAY, AUGUST 13TH.**  
 commencing at 2 p.m.  
**HALF MILE EAST OF SCOTLAND CHAMPIONSHIP.**  
 Come and see the "WONDER GIRL," MISS ELLEN KING. "Scotland's Greatest Swimmer."  
 Something New!  
**THE ZENITH WATER NYMPHS** from Edinburgh.  
 Admission to Pier—1/2; Children, 6d, including TAX.  
 Return Railway Fare from Berwick, 9d.  
**A DANCE** will be held in the Hall at 8 p.m.  
 Ladies, 1/6; Gentlemen, 2/.

Berwick Advertiser 11 August 1927

**EDINBURGH LADY SWIMMER CREATES NEW RECORD.**  
 Miss Ellen King, of the Warrender Baths Swimming Club; Edinburgh, broke her own Scottish ladies' record for the 100 yards back stroke at the first gala of the ladies' section of the Warrender Club. Miss King, who is only 15 years of age, is a stylish all-round swimmer, but specialises in the back stroke. Her time for the distance was 80 2-5 seconds, being 2 1-5 seconds inside the previous record.

Dundee Courier 22 September 1924

having entrants will be called to discuss the position next week.  
**FAMOUS SWIMMER TO VISIT ARBROATH.**  
 Miss Ellen King, Edinburgh, the famous swimmer, is to give exhibitions at the opening of Arbroath's new open-air pond on July 7.

Dundee Courier 2 July 1934

## The greatest Scottish swimmer of the pre-war era

Ellen Elizabeth King was described variously as 'wonder girl', the 'greatest Scottish swimmer of the pre-war era', and famous Edinburgh swimmer. She represented Britain at the Olympic Games 100 years ago in 1924, and again in 1928. As captain of the Scottish ladies' team at the British Empire Games in 1930 Ellen King won three medals.

## Attended James Gillespie's School and swam for Warrender Baths Club

Ellen Elizabeth King was born in Renfrew in 1909 and brought up in Edinburgh. She lived in Warrender Park Road with her father who worked for Edinburgh Corporation as a Weights & Measures Inspector, her mother and her brother. Ellen attended James Gillespie's School and was a member of Warrender Baths Club. She was featured in the James Gillespie's School Magazine, 1924.

## Chosen to represent Great Britain at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris

At the age of 15 she was as the chosen to represent Great Britain in the swimming team at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. She was the youngest member of the British team. Another member of that British Olympic team in Paris was Eric Liddell, a student at Edinburgh University and after whom the new sports building at James Gillespie's School is named. In 1924 Ellen secured sixth place in the 100 yards backstroke but at the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam she went on to achieve silver medals in the 100 yards backstroke and the 100 yards freestyle relay.



## The first Scottish swimmer to set a world record

In 1924 Ellen King held the Scottish ladies record for 100 yards backstroke. In Glasgow in 1927 Ellen King became the first Scottish swimmer to set a world swimming record. This was in the 200 yards breaststroke. In the same year she won her first international medal at the European Championships in Bologna, winning the gold medal with the 4x100 yards relay team. The following year in Southport Ellen set a world record for the 150 yards backstroke and at the Olympic Games in 1928 she broke the world record for the 100 yards freestyle. Ellen King was the first swimmer to win titles in three different strokes.

## Swimming coach and teacher

Miss King, as she was known to hundreds of Edinburgh school pupils and University students, dedicated her life to coaching and teaching. She taught swimming in many Edinburgh schools, coached swimming at the Warrender Baths Club and Edinburgh University and was Scottish National Swimming team coach for several years. Ellen King retired 50 years ago in 1974 and died 30 years ago in 1994. She was inducted into the Scottish Sports Hall of Fame in 2002.