



# Surrey County ASA

---

## Honorary Life Member: Ms Ellery McGowan (Godalming SC)

Originally from Tasmania, Ellery McGowan came to UK after some years in Germany where she taught her children to swim and caught the bug that is Masters swimming. Ellery took up a position as Swimming Teacher at Charterhouse School and started swimming with Guildford City, then moved to Godalming SC. A loyal supporter of County and National Masters events over the years, Ellery also competed in World Masters, swimming with Kings Cormorants and on occasions being part of World and European Record-setting relay teams.

Ellery has travelled to many Masters meets outside of the UK mainland. A frequent competitor with Kings Cormorants at the Guernsey International Masters, she has also competed at Jersey and Cork – all popular meets as noted for their social side as for the quality of the swimming. Guernsey and Cork provided an introduction to Open Water Swimming and since 2005 Ellery has embarked upon a series of OW swims and marathon swim that have placed her right alongside the top experienced marathon OW swimmers.

A chance entry into the 2005 Edmonton World Masters Games' Open Water race produced a World Title at her first attempt. That summer she joined Dana Haugli's Channel Relay team and had the honour of swimming the final 40 minutes to Cap Gris Nez in tricky tidal conditions. Indeed, she would still be there had her fellow team members not exhorted her to sprint 500m back to the boat.

Meeting up with others, who should also have known better at their ages, Ellery got involved in the emergent Cold Water Swimming Championships, pioneered in UK by South London SC, of which she is also a member. This soon led to UK medals followed by a very successful trip to the (World) Cold Water Championships in Lake Bled, Slovenia. At Bled, and then two years later in Jurmala, Latvia, Ellery won two age group titles in water between zero and 2C.

Her open water experience continued to build over the years and Ellery is a regular at many events in the OW season. A relay in Lake Zurich in 2010 provided the spark that saw her train for a solo there one year later. On a stormy day, far from the regular sundrenchings of previous years, Ellery finished the race after 11 hours 35 minutes in a cloudburst, earning the respect of all who witnessed her last 200m, swimming into the record books as the oldest lady to complete the 26.4km.

Ellery overcame enormous reluctance on the part of the organisers to allow her to enter the 2012 New York City Ederle Swim. In a race commemorating the training route of the first lady to swim the English Channel, Ellery swam the 17.5 miles from Manhattan to Sandy Hook, New Jersey. Again setting a mark as the oldest lady finisher, Ellery gained entry to the 2013 Manhattan Island Marathon Swim, the world's most prestigious OW race.

The weather and organization logistics conspired to make this the most challenging ever in race history. Most swimmers had to be taken out of the water after a couple of hours when the stronger than foreseen tides reversed. Undaunted, Ellery resumed her swim in the Harlem River and after over nine hours triumphantly completed her swim.

Aside from her own swims, Ellery has continued to teach and coach swimming, latterly as Head of Swimming and Water Polo at Charterhouse. She has played a part in Surrey Schools swimming and made a major contribution to the early development of Jack Marriott who nearly "gatecrashed" 2012 Olympic 100 fly selection.

