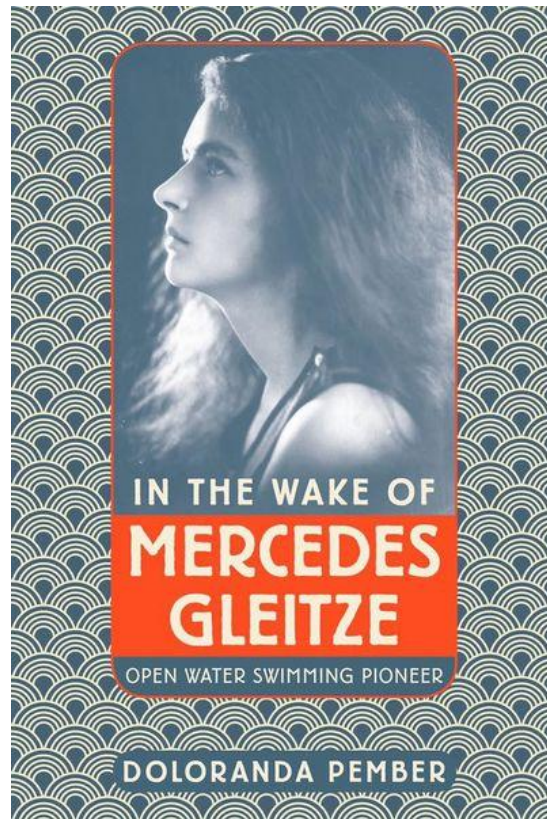




Mercedes Gleitze, Honor Swimmer, Great Britain, 1969



[Personal Website](#)

Videos: [Documentary 1](#) [Show 1](#) [Show 2](#) [Pathé 1](#) [Pathé 2](#)

[ISHOF 1](#)

Mercedes Gleitze completed first ever swims as follows: 12.8 km Strait of Gibraltar in 1928 in 12 hours and 50 minutes, starting in Tarifa, Spain and finishing in Punta Leona, Morocco; 1929, she Lough Neagh in Ireland in 20+ hours; and 20.8 km across Galway Bay in 1931 in 18 hours and 40 minutes. In 1923, Gleitze set a female record of 10 hours and 45 minutes for swimming in the Thames River.

She was the first woman from Great Britain to swim the English Channel in 1927 and did a variety of marathon swims in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. She swam 11 km from Cape Town to Robben Island in 1932 to bring the total number of marathon swims to 51 with 25 of her swims taking at least 26 hours to complete.

Shorter swims included: 1930 Hellsfont in 2+ hours and across Sydney Harbor.

Mercedes was one of the most famous marathon swimmers of the early 1900s.

With the money she earned from her swims, she established the Mercedes Gleitze Home for the Homeless in Leicester, England which opened in 1933 until it was destroyed during World War II.

She is an inductee in the International Swimming Hall of Fame (2014).

[Expanded Biography \(Openwaterpedia\)](#)