

Key people

These three people played key roles in Fanny Durack's Olympic quest.

Sarah Frances (Fanny) Durack

Born: 1889 in inner-city Sydney, New South Wales

Role: Swimming champion and female Olympic pioneer

Age at the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games: 22

Died: 1956

Appearance: Quite tall, very strongly built, dark eyes, long and dark wavy hair, dark brows, strong jaw

Character: Strong-willed, very competitive, a brilliant athlete and a rebel

Comments: Fanny Durack was the daughter of a hotel keeper and part of a large Irish family. A strong woman, she would not let anyone bully her or tell her what to do. She knew that she was a world-class swimmer and fought against those who wanted to stop her from proving it at the Olympic Games.

Many of Fanny's actions shocked people. She tried new swimming strokes, wore brief costumes, trained with men and stood up to swimming officials in order to reach her goals. Fanny Durack became an example to other women of what they could achieve.



Fanny Durack (left) and Mina Wylie (right) at Stockholm

Wilhelmina (Mina) Wylie

Born: 1891 in Sydney

Role: Female Olympic swimming pioneer

Age at the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games: 21

Died: 1984

Appearance: Medium height, lightly built, long blonde hair, blue eyes

Character: Easy-going and friendly, with a good sense of humour, but a hard-working and determined competitor

Comments: 'Little Mina' learned to swim as a baby and was the star attraction at her father's swimming shows. She could not understand the fuss about women training with men or the costumes she wore. Mina knew she was a good swimmer and was determined to swim at the Olympic Games.

Rose Scott

Born: 1847 at Glendon near Singleton, New South Wales

Role: President of New South Wales Ladies' Amateur Swimming Association, 1908–11

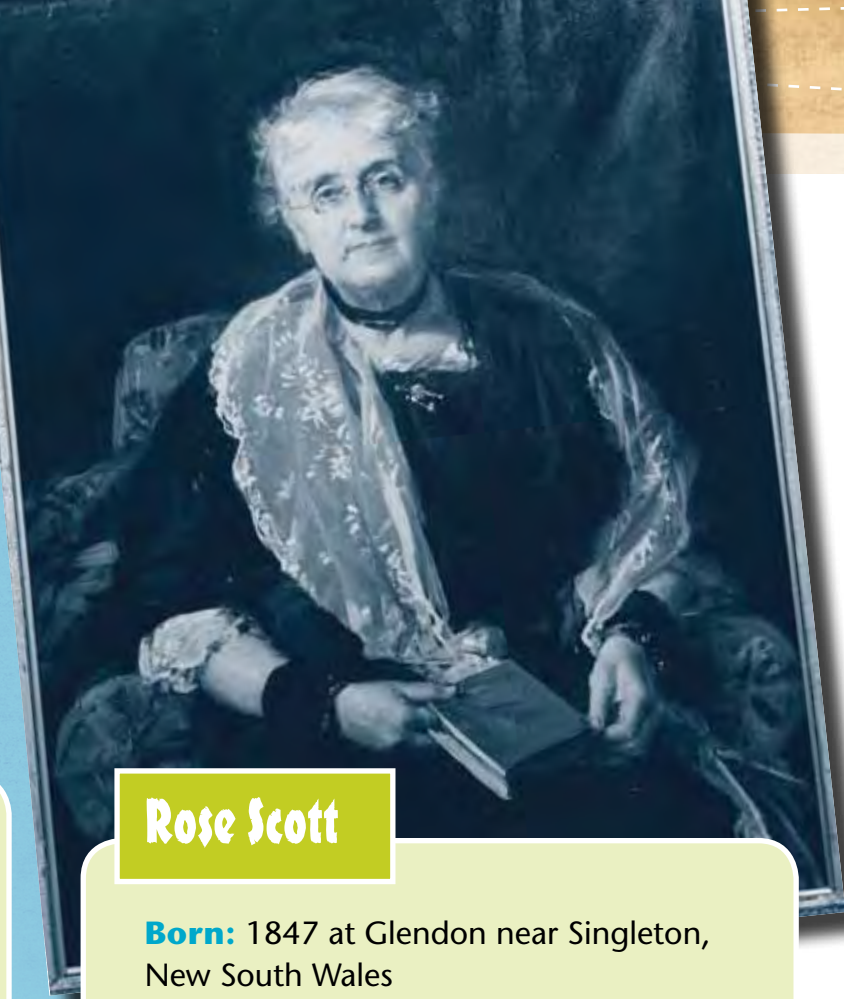
Age at the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games: 65

Died: 1925

Appearance: Fair skin, white wavy hair, round face, stocky, well-dressed and stylish

Character: Intelligent, well-read, strong-minded, stubborn, a passionate feminist and a powerful personality

Comments: Rose Scott had worked hard for women's rights all her life. She was a famous feminist, but tried to stop Fanny Durack achieving her Olympic dream. This was because Rose Scott believed that mixed bathing in brief swimming costumes would shame women and bring out 'the animal in man'. She wanted to protect women from this, so she was determined to stop women from competing at the Olympic Games.



Women dive in

In 1900, most Australian women could not swim and water sports were for men only. However, times were changing. At beaches around Australia, women began to question the idea that they should cover up their bodies and paddle in the shallows.

1900

Coogee Beach, Sydney



LOOK AT THOSE GIRLS ...

Fanny Durack was only eleven years old, but she was already a keen swimmer.

I'M GOING SWIMMING AT COOGEE BEACH.

OK, LOVE - HAVE FUN.



She swam with her best friend, Mina Wylie.

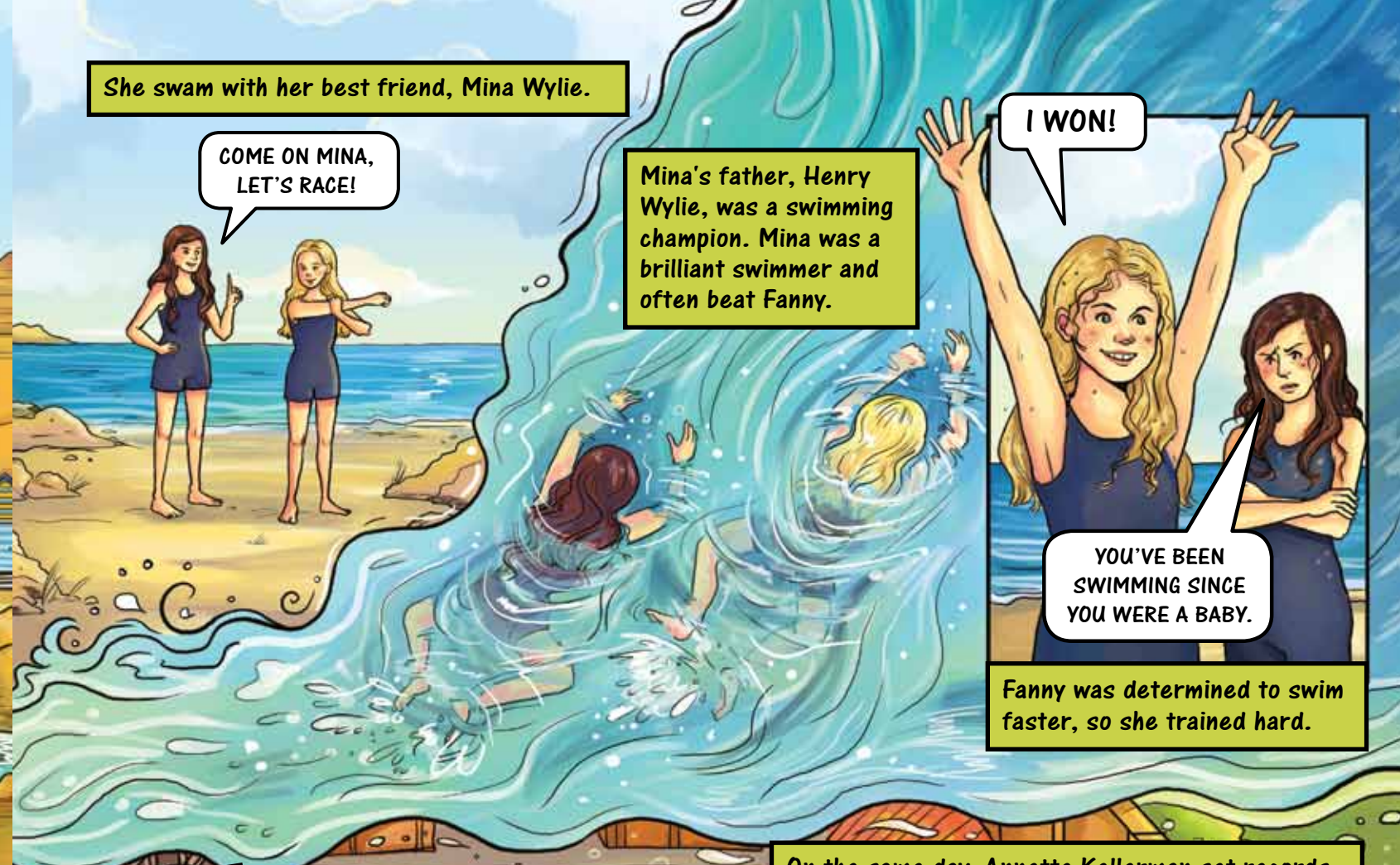
COME ON MINA, LET'S RACE!

Mina's father, Henry Wylie, was a swimming champion. Mina was a brilliant swimmer and often beat Fanny.

I WON!

YOU'VE BEEN SWIMMING SINCE YOU WERE A BABY.

Fanny was determined to swim faster, so she trained hard.



1902

Fanny was 13 when she swam her first big race, the 100-yard breaststroke, but she came last ...

On the same day, Annette Kellerman set records in the 100-yard and 1-mile swims.



Fanny felt inspired to become a swimming champion, too.

1903

At Coogee, Fanny and Mina were coached by Mina's father.

MAKE SURE YOU
KICK HARD, GIRLS.

THAT'S IT!
GOOD!

WE'RE GETTING
FASTER!

1906

Three years later, Fanny's hard work paid off.

HOORAY!

THE WINNER OF
THE BREASTSTROKE
IS FANNY DURACK!

Men were allowed to watch women's
races, but this was about to change.

All official races were overseen
by the New South Wales Ladies'
Amateur Swimming Association.

Famous feminist Rose Scott decided to introduce a new rule.

LADIES, WE MUST PROTECT OUR
GIRLS FROM THE MEN. WE NEED A
WOMEN-ONLY RULE FOR OUR RACES.

BUT WHAT ABOUT
THEIR BROTHERS
AND FATHERS?

NO MEN!

LASA
MEETING
TONIGHT

Many people did not agree with the new rule.

IT'S SILLY!

WHY CAN'T WE SWIM
WITH THEM?

1907

When Henry Wylie built a new pool
called Wylie's Baths at Coogee, he
allowed mixed bathing ...

... and let Mina and Fanny train with the men.

I'M TRAINING HARD TO
TRY AND GET INTO NEXT
YEAR'S OLYMPIC TEAM.

I WISH THEY'D LET
WOMEN GO TOO ...

Soon the girls were
swimming record times.

Summer
1910-11

At the Australian Ladies'
Swimming Championships,
Mina beat Fanny in three
races to become champion.

AUSTRALIAN LADIES'
SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP

THERE MUST BE A
WAY TO BEAT MINA ...

13

12