

# Obituaries

## Ella Vlandy

Teacher and hockey internationalist who knew value of 'being cheeky'

**Isabella Vlandy, teacher and hockey internationalist. Born: 6 February 1914 in Edinburgh. Died: 14 July, 2021 in North Berwick, aged 107**

**E**lla Vlandy was a lifelong sports enthusiast and reportedly the oldest surviving Scottish international hockey player.

Born before the start of the Great War, she was capped for Scotland several times, playing as a forward before and after the Second World War and serving as vice-captain in 1947. She also played tennis for her country.

Her love of sport was a defining element in her life, from her schooldays to well into her later decades, whether it was teaching, playing or spectating – she attended Wimbledon on 75 occasions.

The daughter of Maurice Vlandy, a young Greek from Crete who came to work in Edinburgh, and his Scottish wife Mary, she was born in Edinburgh and moved to North Berwick at around five when her parents took on the running of the town's Redcroft Hotel.

An only child, she attended school in North Berwick before going to board at St Bride's in Edinburgh, and she excelled in sports from an early age.

Then in 1932, aged 18, she went to the Bergman Österberg Physical Training College in Dartford, Britain's first PE teacher training centre for women, which had originally been established by Martina Bergman-Osterberg in Hampstead before moving to Kent.

She gained her diploma three years later, with a first class award in practical games, the coaching and theory of games and in a special course in dancing. Miss



↑ Ella Vlandy played both tennis and hockey for Scotland

Vlandy, who played hockey, lacrosse, netball, cricket, tennis and rounders, also held a first class instructor's certificate and bronze medallion from the Royal Life Saving Society.

Her first job post-qualifying was teaching PE at St Columba's School, Kilmacolm, Glasgow and a year later she was selected for the Scottish hockey team.

Her first game playing for her country was in 1936, against England. The Scots reportedly lost 0-1. She then played against South Africa, chalking up eight international games before the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and a further eight appearances for Scotland when the sport resumed in peacetime.

Meanwhile, following her spell working in Kilmacolm,

she took on some games coaching work in Edinburgh, where she played lacrosse for Edinburgh ladies, and a part-time role at Dunfermline College of Hygiene and Physical Education.

She transferred to Aberdeen when the college moved there during the war and in 1941 she became a full-time employee, remaining on the staff of the institution, which later became the Dundee Training College, for most of her working life.

A talented tennis player and lifelong devotee of the sport, she competed extensively, against both international opponents and in home championships, retaining the Midlands Ladies' single title several times.

She was also a keen curler and a good golfer with a handi-

cap of nine. A former captain of North Berwick Ladies' Golf Club, which she joined in 1946, she was a member of Gullane Ladies' Golf Club and played bridge at North Berwick's Marmion Bridge club.

Although her career took her elsewhere, North Berwick was always her home – she'd had a house there since 1938 – and she regularly returned to the town. But she also enjoyed travelling much further afield, including to Greece, her father's homeland.

Other interests included history, arts, the theatre and classical music. Miss Vlandy was a member of Edinburgh Arts Club, a supporter of Scottish Opera and the National Trust, enjoyed attending Edinburgh International Festival and East Lothian's Lammermuir Festival and, until her eyesight and hearing began to fail, was a regular in the congregation of North Berwick's St Baldred's Church.

She never married or had children and embraced life with positivity, focus and resolve – even when age weakened her and impaired her mobility. It could have been a bitter pill to swallow for a woman who once had been so agile and athletic but she coped with courage and determination.

The epitome of good, solid traditional values, she was admired for her humour, wit, kindness and good manners. Always gregarious, amiable and fun-loving she forged friendships that spanned the generations: at the age of 100 she presented the trophies at the East Lothian Open tennis championships and on reaching her centenary disclosed her secret to such a long life was to "just be cheeky".

**ALISON SHAW**