

Transcript for **Can and will: Gwyn Haslock**

Can and will: Gwyn Haslock's story

My father always encouraged me in sport so I don't look at this woman–man competition thing. I'm just a surfer and if I feel I want to try it, I'll go out and try it.

That's my father, Fred Haslock. That's me. That's me there. That's my brother belly-boarding. These are the wooden surfboards which I first started on in about the 1950s. They're now called belly boards. You just lie on them and catch the wave coming in and it's a way of learning to catch waves. The lifeguards started bringing down the longboards which we called the Malibu boards. So I went with Trevor Roberts and he said you can only surf it if you carry your board. In those days they were very heavy and 10ft long.

This is in about 1965 and, er, you note that there's no wetsuits. We didn't have our wetsuits to put on in those days. In a way, it's lovely surfing without a wetsuit. It's freedom. I think people got a bit namby-pamby now, really.

My first competition was in 1965, where I was the only lady because there was not a ladies' category so I had to go with the men. I had a competition in about '67 and I was the first ladies' British Champion.

I just love the freedom of being out in the sea and going with the flow of the wave. There's nothing like it. Every wave is different. You paddle for it and as soon as you stand up and catch it, you're zooming down on it, to try and flow and go as long as you can and just be one with the wave.

I've had some strange looks as I've gone down by younger people. But then as soon as I go out in the water they can see that, yes, I can catch waves and perhaps it encourages them. If there's an older person who can do it, they say, 'Well, look, if she can do it, so can I.' I may not be here much longer so just go out and enjoy it.

Over 60 years after getting her first board, Gwyn still surfs most days on the beaches of Cornwall.

Gwyn Haslock

Can and will

Surf forever