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Water baby: Ella on the poolside and, right, heading for a record

## Little mermaid who's swum a mile aged five



Pictures: RICHARD WALKER/ROSS PARRY

THESE days, most youngsters would think it was an achievement to walk a mile. But at the ripe old age of five, Ella Stuttard has swum one.

Using a mixture of backstroke and breaststroke, she completed 64 lengths of her school pool in 67 minutes under the watchful eye of her swimming teacher.

Her parents Rachel and Garry are now awaiting confirmation from Guinness World Records that she is the youngest child in the world to swim a mile. Mrs Stuttard, 37, an interior designer from Bingley, West Yorkshire, said: 'I can't believe she has done it at five years old - it is unbelievable. I wouldn't force her to do anything she doesn't want to do but she loves swimming - I can't get her out of the water. I was a swimmer as a

By Gwyneth Rees

child but nowhere near as good as Ella. She has been able to swim underwater since she was a baby.'

Mrs Stuttard enrolled Ella for swimming lessons with the Water Babies company at just 16 weeks. A natural from the start, she soon developed confidence in the water.

Early this year she gained her Bronze Amateur Swimming medal, which is normally completed by those aged ten and above, and is now embarking on her Silver. She then completed a half-mile swim in the pool at the private Bradford Girls' Grammar School, which she attends as a Junior pupil.

And buoyed by her success, she doubled that distance on August 3. Swimming teacher Yvonne

Grant, 49, said: 'I thought I would be pushing Ella making her do the half-mile but she looked so strong I wanted to try her with the mile. The fact that she did it in just over an hour makes it doubly impressive.'

'I think we've got a champion in the making here - to get her into the Olympic team would be the ultimate dream.'

Nick Sellwood, of the Amateur Swimming Association, said: 'I have never come across a child of this age swimming a mile like this, let alone at such a fast pace.'

Ella's father, a lawyer, said: 'We are lucky that she has had the encouragement from her school and has access to a swimming pool there.'

'She only swims up to twice a week but she just loves it. We're very proud of her.'