

= Jade Etherington =

Jade Etherington (born 9 March 1991) is a British former alpine skier who , with her sighted guide Caroline Powell , won silver in the women 's downhill skiing , combined and slalom , and bronze medals in the Super @-@ G at the 2014 Winter Paralympic Games in Sochi . Their three silvers and a bronze at the Winter Paralympics made them the most successful female British Winter Paralympians of all time , and the first Britons to win four medals at one Paralympics . Because of her success at the 2014 Paralympics , Etherington was the British flagbearer at the 2014 Winter Paralympics closing ceremony .

Etherington has only five percent vision in both eyes , thus competes in the visually impaired category , thus needs a sighted guide , Caroline Powell . The pair have competed together since August 2013 . After asking for a new guide through Facebook and after two other applicants pulled out , Etherington and Powell combined in April 2013 .

= = Personal history = =

Etherington was born in Chelmsford on 9 March 1991 , to Amber , a Braintree District Council employee , and Andrew , a stockbroker . They lived in The Causeway , Maldon , but when Jade was seven they moved to Lincolnshire . She was born with glaucoma and Axenfeld syndrome , a visual impairment which can lead to blindness . She inherited it from her mother , Amber , who lost her sight at 14 . Her three younger sisters also have the condition . Despite undergoing multiple surgeries as a child , by the age of 17 she began to lose her sight . She describes her vision as " very blurry with little focus " , and she has a recorded five percent vision in both eyes , which puts her in the B2 classification .

Etherington was educated at The Deepings School in Lincolnshire before matriculating to Bishop Grosseteste University where she was awarded a degree in education and geography . Etherington studied to become a geography teacher with The Open University , undertaking a PGCE , but placed her career on hold to concentrate on the 2014 Winter Paralympic Games . In 2014 she was awarded doctorate of science honoris causa by Anglia Ruskin University .

= = Skiing career = =

Etherington began skiing while still sighted at the age of eight , being taught by her father Andrew and her sisters . She continued skiing recreationally for the next ten years . In 2009 she joined the British Disabled Ski Team (BDST) at development level , and began racing internationally in 2011 . The following year she carried the Olympic torch through Lincoln , and was inspired to compete at a higher level after watching the 2012 Summer Olympics and Paralympics in London .

Etherington 's at Europa cup and International Paralympic Committee (IPC) alpine skiing events was achieved with her sighted guide Fiona Gingell , but Etherington was forced to appeal for a new guide on her Facebook page after Gingell married and moved to America . After two applicants pulled out , she was left without a guide at the beginning of 2013 , but Heather Mills , who had not qualified for the World Championships , offered her coach , John Clark .

The pair qualified for the 2013 IPC Alpine Skiing World Championships in La Molina , representing Great Britain . At La Molina , Etherington came fourth in the women 's slalom and came third in the women 's super @-@ G , taking bronze . The runs ensured her place at the 2014 Winter Paralympics in Sochi . Etherington teamed up with Caroline Powell in April , allowing her to compete that season . Etherington and Powell began skiing together in August 2013 .

= = = Paralympics = = =

The 2014 Winter Paralympics was Etherington 's debut Paralympics , competing for ParalympicsGB . She competed in the downhill , winning a silver medal with Powell on 8 March 2014 . Slovakian Henrieta Farkasova came 2 @.@ 73 seconds ahead . This was the first time a British woman had

won a Winter Paralympic medal on snow , and ParalympicsGB 's first medal of the 2014 Paralympics . Etherington then won a bronze medal in the women 's downhill skiing , and silver in the slalom and the super combined . After winning a silver medal in the super @-@ G visually impaired event on 14 March 2014 , she and Powell became Great Britain 's most successful female Winter Paralympians , and the first Britons to win four medals at one Paralympics . However , they pulled out of the giant slalom , which was on the day of the Sochi 2014 Closing Ceremony . The four medals she won at the 2014 Winter Paralympics were part of a total of six for ParalympicsGB , 66 % of the total British medals at the games .

Etherington was the flag bearer for Great Britain at the closing ceremony , despite rupturing an ovarian cyst , which left her in a wheelchair for much of the day of the ceremony ; she was able to walk and carry the flag having taken painkillers . After the end of the 2014 Winter Paralympics , she was unsure if she would continue competing at international level , saying " I don 't really know what I want right now " . In November 2014 , Etherington announced her retirement from the Paralympic Alpine Skiing programme , aged 23 .