

= Henry Taylor ( swimmer ) =

Henry Taylor ( 17 March 1885 ? 28 February 1951 ) was an English competitive swimmer who represented Great Britain in four Summer Olympics between 1906 and 1920 . Taylor served in the Royal Navy during the First World War , and continued to swim competitively until 1926 . His fortunes declined after he retired and he died penniless . His record of three gold medals at one Olympic Games ? the most by any Briton ? stood for 100 years until it was equaled by cyclist Chris Hoy in 2008 . Tying the medal count of American Mel Sheppard , he was the most successful athlete at the 1908 Olympics .

= = Early life = =

Henry Taylor was born in Hollinwood in Oldham , Lancashire , on 17 March 1885 to James , a coal miner , and Elizabeth Taylor . Henry 's parents died when he was young and he was raised by his older brother , Bill . Taylor learned to swim in the Hollinwood Canal , and practised in any water body he could find ? baths , becks , canals , lakes , etc . , including the Hollinwood Canal and Alexandra Park 's boating lake . Austin Rawlinson , who was Taylor 's friend and later president of Amateur Swimming Association , recalled that Taylor " loved his swimming more than anything else in life " . At the age of seven Taylor swam in his first race .

Bill became his coach and Henry trained in the Oldham Baths , and from 1894 in the Chadderton Baths , often on the " dirty water days " because of cheaper admission . During this time he continued to train in the canal and when he got a job at a cotton mill , he spent his lunch times swimming in the canal . At 5 ' 5 " ( 1 @. @ 65 m ) and weighing 10 stone 6 pounds ( 66 kg ) , he wore a hand @-@ woven silk swimming costume weighing about an ounce .

= = Career = =

Taylor came to attention after success with Chadderton Swimming Club . He was selected for the 1906 Intercalated Games in Athens . Although he was not expected to win any medals he won gold in the one mile freestyle , a silver in the 400 m freestyle and a bronze in the 4 x 250 m freestyle . Later that year , Taylor broke the world record for 880 yards ( 800 m ) . He was an automatic selection for the 1908 Summer Olympics .

During the 1908 Summer Olympics in London , Taylor won gold medals in the three events in which he took part : the 400 m freestyle , the 4 x 200 m freestyle , and the 1500 m freestyle . He finished first in all of the races he took part in during the games bar one . After performing well in the heats of the 400 m freestyle , he finished second in the semi @-@ final to Austrian Otto Scheff , who won the same event in the 1906 Intercalated Games . However , in the final Taylor finished 10 seconds ahead of the Austrian who won the bronze . The British press hailed Taylor as " Britain 's Greatest Amateur Swimmer " . He was the first man to hold the world record for the 1500 metres freestyle , a feat that he completed on 25 July 1908 in a time of 22 : 48 @. @ 4 in London . His haul of three was the most gold medals won by any Briton at the Olympics . This feat was not repeated by any British participant in the Olympic Games for a century until Chris Hoy won three gold medals in cycling events at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing .

Four years later , Taylor was selected for the 1912 Summer Olympics in Stockholm . In the 4 x 200 m freestyle relay , he helped his team win bronze . There were no Olympic Games in 1916 because of the First World War . Taylor joined the Royal Navy in 1914 and kept fit by swimming around the ships when his ship was anchored at Scapa Flow . He was present at the Battle of Jutland . A popular story tells that during the course of the battle , his ship , HMS St. Vincent , was sunk and while the survivors waited for two hours to be rescued , Taylor swam around encouraging his crewmates . However , this story is probably a myth as HMS St Vincent was not sunk at the Battle of Jutland . He was transferred to HMS Ramillies where he remained until he was demobilised .

After the war , Taylor returned to swimming . He took part in the Morecambe Bay Race , winning eight times over a period of 20 year and at one point held the record . Taylor attempted to emulate

Matthew Webb in swimming across the English Channel but failed due to bad weather . He annually took on the French champion , swimming in the River Thames and the River Seine and winning on every occasion . Taylor 's last appearance in the Olympic Games was at Antwerp , Belgium , in 1920 when he again helped the 4 × 200 m freestyle relay team to a bronze medal .

= = After swimming = =

Taylor continued swimming competitively into his 40s until he retired in 1926 . He also played water polo for England . During his career he won over 35 trophies and 300 medals . He suffered a setback when the public house , the Nudger , he owned in Dobcross was closed due to financial difficulties . Taylor became an attendant at Chadderton Baths . To raise money , Taylor was forced to sell most of his prizes . He died in obscurity aged 65 on 28 February 1951 , at lodgings in Brierley Street , Chadderton , he was penniless and unmarried . He was cremated and his remains were scattered at Rochdale Cemetery .

The trophies Taylor won were collected and temporarily displayed at Chadderton Baths . In 1969 he was posthumously inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame . In 2002 , a blue plaque was unveiled at Chadderton Baths commemorating his swimming achievements . At the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing , China , Rebecca Adlington became the first British swimmer to win more than one gold medal at a single Olympic Games since Taylor won three in 1908 .