

*In a sense, the Olympic Games are coming home tonight. This great, sports-loving country is widely recognised as the birthplace of modern sport. It was here that the concepts of sportsmanship and fair play were first codified into clear rules and regulations. It was here that sport was included as an educational tool in the school curriculum.*

*The British approach to sport had a profound influence on Pierre de Coubertin, our founder, as he developed the framework for the modern Olympic Movement at the close of the 19th century. The values that inspired de Coubertin will come to life over the next 17 days as the world's best athletes compete in a spirit of friendship, respect and fair play.*

Jacques Rogge - Friday 27 July 2012

*In the Olympic year, Our Sporting Life made a brilliant contribution to the artistic and cultural celebrations, recognising the very special historical link we have in this country with sport.*

*Everyone involved with the project should be congratulated in achieving over one million visits to Our Sporting Life events up and down the country. Arts Council England is proud to have been involved in supporting the project.*

Alan Davey, Chief Executive, Arts Council England

## 2010 - 2012

Over one hundred exhibitions  
Over one million visitors



# Introduction

Our Sporting Life (OSL) was a unique and ambitious celebration of British sport developed by the Sports Heritage Network, the organisation of the UK's sports museums, libraries, archives and collections. The Sports Heritage Network (SHN) was formed in 2004, born out of a shared enthusiasm for the sports heritage that exists in Britain.

Its declared mission is:

*'To strengthen the network of institutions working within the field of sports heritage and to inspire public involvement in sport and its history'.*

Since its launch at Lord's cricket ground in November 2008, Our Sporting Life built on its core values to become a nationwide programme of community exhibitions.

## Inclusive

OSL was the first project of its kind to celebrate sport from grass roots to Olympic podia and to embrace all sports and all levels of sport, from amateur to professional.

## Inspirational

OSL demonstrated the unique ability of sport, and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in particular, to inspire the individual and to bring communities together.

## Personal

OSL made a personal connection with people and the way sport influenced their lives.

## Participative

OSL engaged individuals and community groups at the local level.



Linford Christie 1990  
© George Herringshaw & sporting-heroes.net

### Cover

Top: Image © iStock

Bottom left: Image courtesy World Rugby Museum

Bottom right: Archery 1908, image courtesy Pathé News

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William Kissack, Manx Cyclist c.1869  
image courtesy of Manx National Heritage



*'Our Sporting Life Isle of Man – Celebrating the History and Diversity of Manx People in Sport' has been one of the most successful temporary exhibitions we have ever held at the Manx Museum. The success can be measured by the number of visitors who came to the exhibition (c. 140,000); the amount of press coverage we received throughout the exhibition and international press using the exhibition as a backdrop to talk about the Manx cycling phenomenon and the number of prestigious events held in the exhibition space (including the launch of the Commonwealth Youth Games)'*

Katy King – Manx National Heritage



## Executive Summary

*'Our Sporting Life was important and pioneering in so many ways. It found a natural and vital meeting point between sport, art and heritage and brought them together in a way that was immediately appealing not just to a huge public audience, but especially to young people. The Cultural Olympiad was all the stronger for this emblematic project and we are delighted that legacies from it are set to emerge delivering lasting benefits.'*

*Bill Morris - LOCOG Director of Ceremonies, Education and Live Sites, and Cultural Olympiad Board Member*

Our Sporting Life (OSL) was a highly successful sports heritage project which resulted in 114 exhibitions across the country, seen by more than one million people. Led by local communities themselves, it was an outstanding celebration of Britain's unique sporting heritage, linked to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

OSL was more than a touring exhibition. It was a 'free franchise', with a strong central core display and clear guidelines, open to all museums who wished to participate. It invited communities to explore and celebrate their connection with sport. Most of the 114 exhibitions reflected geographic communities, centred on their host museum or organisation. Other types of community, including the Jewish Museum in Manchester and the Royal Yachting Association, used OSL to expose amazingly rich veins of interest. All the exhibitions demonstrated the democratising and international nature of sport. The Sports Heritage Network had carried out NOP studies before commissioning the exhibition which indicated the popularity that sports exhibitions would have amongst non traditional museum visitors. This was thoroughly borne out over the life of the campaign.

There were constraints! More could have been achieved with additional funding and the 2008 financial crash certainly affected many sponsorship opportunities. The old tension between the arts world and sport surfaced in some areas and proved to be a barrier, although in many others we overcame traditional suspicions and made new links within communities. Beyond the many individual memories and the local opportunities that have emerged as a result of OSL there are legacies of wider significance, including the Sports Heritage Network's commitment to develop a digital platform and plans for an international heritage centre at Stoke Mandeville celebrating the history of the Paralympic Games. Future major sporting events, such as the Rugby World Cup in 2015 also provide opportunities for sport specific exhibition campaigns.

The greatest legacy is a wider recognition of the importance of sports heritage and a willingness by governing bodies, event organisers and many others throughout the country to embrace the wider cultural opportunities of sport.

We are hugely grateful to all our key stakeholders for their support of what is widely seen as a thoroughly successful campaign and important contribution to the London Olympiad.

# Acknowledgements



Gladstone Small at OSL Press Launch  
November 2008 © Matt Bright



Jonathan Edwards at OSL Press Launch  
November 2008 © Matt Bright

Our Sporting Life could not have happened without the support and enthusiasm of the many organisations and individuals involved in the project. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of OSL including the following:

Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and more recently Arts Council England (ACE) for funding the National Project and many regional exhibitions

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), local authorities and other bodies that have sponsored local exhibitions, beginning with South Oxfordshire District Council Legacy Trust, Accentuate, SEEDA, Sport England, Visit Britain, Visit England, Tourism South East, Youth Sports Trust

Sports Heritage Network, all its members, in particular those on the steering committee: British Golf Museum, Lord's, National Football Museum, River & Rowing Museum, The National Horse Racing Museum, Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, World Rugby Museum

Sport governing bodies including the British Olympic Association (BOA), British Paralympic Association (BPA), Sport and Recreation Alliance and Wheelpower Stoke Mandeville

Museum networks, Museums Association and Association of Independent Museums (AIM)

Olympic Museum, Lausanne

MCC, Lord's

London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) at all levels, especially the regional cultural programmers

Telegraph Media Group

Museums Journal, Played in Britain, British Pathé, George Herringshaw & Sporting Heroes.net, John Batty, Angela Davison

Sports men and women who embraced and supported the project including: Guin Batten, Jonathan Batty, Sophie Christiansen, Ray Clemence, George Cohen, Jonathan Edwards, Mark Hunter, John Inverdale, Chris Jenkins, Liz McColgan, Mark Ramprakash, Sir Steve Redgrave, Dame Shirley Robertson, Gladstone Small, Ben Hunt-Davis

Above all, the museums who hosted Our Sporting Life exhibitions, their staff, volunteers and all who loaned objects, stories and images

# OSL Report Preface



Paul Mainds Chair OSL. Trustee & Chief Executive River & Rowing Museum, image courtesy RRM

*'The project was innovative as it, for the first time in many years, brought many of Dorset's museums together in one project. Secondly, the focus of the exhibitions were not based solely on the collections already held but depended on actively seeking out objects from within the community.'*

Dr Jon Murden –  
Dorset County Museum

This report represents the conclusion of the Our Sporting Life campaign, which stretches back over six years in the planning. The "Hood" report, a survey of Britain's sporting heritage, was launched at Lord's in 2006 within months of the announcement in Singapore. That report identified not only the breadth of sports heritage within the country but the fantastic opportunities that it provided.

The initial OSL Campaign concept was developed by the core members of the Sports Heritage Network and great thanks are due to all of them. We were encouraged very early on by Lord Moynihan, Chairman of the British Olympic Association, Roy Clare, Chief Executive of Museums Libraries and Archive Council and Jonathan Edwards and many others at London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG)

The project simply could not have happened without the funding of central costs and staff time by Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and more recently Arts Council England (ACE). We are enormously grateful to them for displaying such faith in our idea.

A project of this size justifies a careful evaluation and also provides useful lessons that can be applied in the future. Rather than simply provide a bald evaluation with a mass of statistics, we have divided this report into two parts. The printed report focuses on the detailed answers to the key measures of performance that we promised to meet. Separately, by electronic means, we have made available all the statistics and detailed case studies that have been produced by the 100+ partners that have made the project possible.

I am immensely grateful to both Louise King and Cookie Scottorn who, over the life of the project, maintained their enthusiasm and provided that continuity of contact that was so crucial to what was such a potentially complex project.

The real heroes are those museums and other organisations that took the franchise, accepted the challenge and created their own exhibitions and above all, their own activities. They enabled the project to be truly nationwide - from Morpeth to Falmouth, from the Isle of Man to Weymouth. Copies of this report are being circulated to all of them so that it can be shared with their communities and with those who provided volunteer time and money.

There is not enough space to list all the people and all the organisations that have contributed to this project and whose contribution must be acknowledged. I am grateful to them all.

I hope that we have helped to define what the Cultural Olympiad meant in the years leading up to and including London 2012. I hope that while OSL may have finished, the opportunities and the relationships that it has created may provide a real legacy both in this country and overseas.

# Project Description

*'... the website proved to be invaluable in enabling partners, sports clubs, and interested members of the public to understand the project and to fit the local activity within the national context.'*

Gareth Hughes,  
Project Manager, Artreach

Our Sporting Life celebrated the history and heritage of Britain's outstanding commitment and contribution to sport with a nationwide community exhibition programme. OSL responded to a desire to broaden and deepen access to sports museums and collections and build partnerships across the heritage sectors. Asking the question 'What does sport mean to you?' OSL was seeking to identify sporting moments, heroes, objects, photographs and experiences that inspired the people of Britain and told the story of great British sport. The process developed a greater understanding of sporting collections held by museums, libraries and archives and how to use them more fully.

The exhibition model worked on a franchise basis consisting of two elements 'national' and 'local'. A national 'Core', common to all the community exhibitions, told the story of British Olympic and Paralympic history including a film provided by the British Olympic Association. All the panel text, images and video for the Core had been previously researched and provided as part of the package. Around the Core each participating organisation was able to add their local stories, working with sports clubs, sporting organisations, schools and community groups to collect material. The local stories could be displayed in a variety of ways depending on the venue and resources available. The national and local content was brought together in a strongly branded exhibition with a flexible display system that was designed and procured through the national programme.

Brand guidelines were provided including template designs for posters, flyers, press releases, object labels and OSL post cards. All the templates could be downloaded along with a limited number of images, to keep a uniform design.

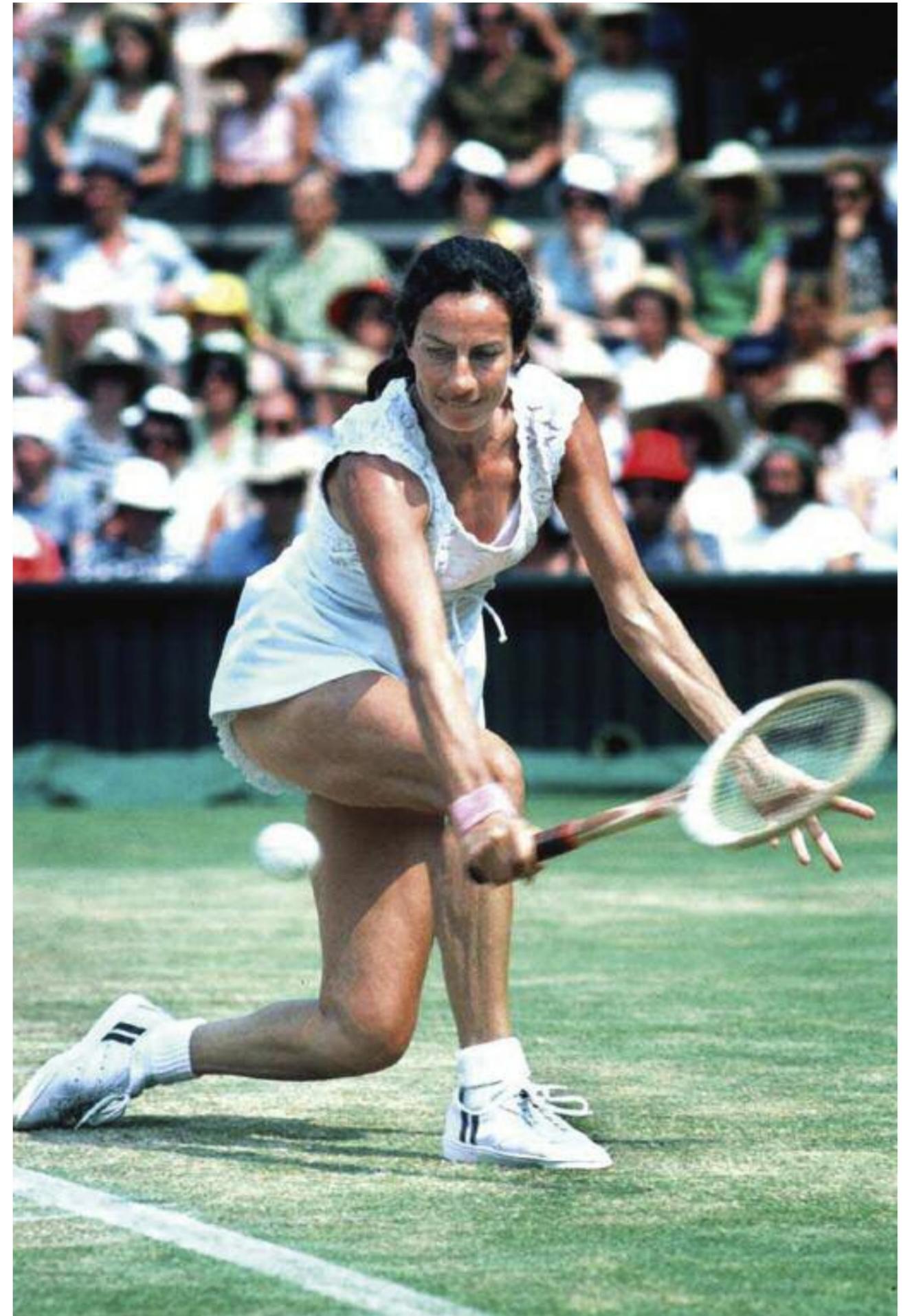
The exhibition kit consisted of aluminium cube frames with either clear or printed Perspex panels which fitted together in a variety of combinations and were back lit. The OSL website [www.oursportinglife.co.uk](http://www.oursportinglife.co.uk) designed and hosted by Signals, combined with social media, provided a central point for information on the exhibitions taking place around the country, with opportunities for the participants to send in exhibition details, press releases and information on OSL events as well as specific stories and images.



Right: Woman tennis player 1920

Far right: Virginia Wade 1977

© George Herringshaw & sporting-heroes.net





# How it Worked

*'It was useful to talk through with the designers Richard Fowler Associates (RFA Design) and see an example of a national core to understand the modular concept of the exhibition. ... RFA was very efficient and helpful in both creation of the local panels and assembly of the exhibition kit.'*

*David Irskine, Designer,  
Bucks County Museum*



The Sports Heritage Network started to develop ideas for Our Sporting Life in 2007 with background research and brain storming sessions. In November 2008 a stakeholder's launch was held in the Long Room at Lord's. There was great enthusiasm and over fifty members of the network brought objects for display. From this successful meeting the idea for a series of community exhibitions to be held throughout the country developed.

After much work a promise of funding was secured from the Museums, Libraries and Archive Council (MLA) from its Renaissance and Subject Specialist Network programmes and the People's Record. The grant was given to run a community exhibition programme through the regional hub structure. Each region was given the opportunity to apply for funding through the MLA Innovation funding stream, to buy kit to put on a series of exhibitions working with interested local museums.

In December 2009 tenders were opened for exhibition designers and after a series of interviews RFA Design were appointed as the OSL designers. Working with their parent company Idess they developed a design using a modular aluminium cube display system. RFA Design were essential to the success of the project, working with exhibitors on the local exhibition panels and in many cases designing the whole exhibition.

The project coordinator Cookie Scottorn was appointed in January 2010 and the programme manager Louise King in May 2010. Both posts proved vital for the running of the national project. Having someone to evangelise the project, visiting and presenting to individual venues and showing examples of the exhibition system proved invaluable for organisations to plan and scope their own exhibitions.

*Left: Deborah Brennan-Johnson at the private view of Our Sporting Life: Sporting Heroes at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. Deborah grew up in Telford and started racing at the age of 16. Selected for the 2000 Sydney Paralympics to race in the T34 track event, she brought home gold and bronze medals. During the 2004 Athens Paralympics, Deborah won silver for the 200m and bronze for the 100m wheelchair racing. Image © IGMT*

*Above: Montague Spencer Ell (1891-1968), image courtesy River & Rowing Museum*

# Time line

**June 2006**  
SHN mapping survey published, The Hood Report

**2007**  
OSL community exhibition programme devised

**November 2008**  
OSL Stakeholders Launch at Lord's

**November 2008**  
Project awarded the first Inspire Mark in the South East

**Autumn 2009**  
MLA funding agreed

**December 2009**  
Tender process and interviews held for exhibition designers

**January 2010**  
Project coordinator appointed

**February 2010**  
Exhibition design development completed

**March 2010**  
Exhibition toolkit produced

**March 2010**  
First phase of the website launched

**March 2010**  
Press Launch of the project at Lord's

**March 2010**  
National exhibition programme begins

**May 2010**  
Programme manager appointed

**June 2010**  
Regional Project partners identified

**July 2010**  
Expressions of interest ratified

**August 2010**  
Innovation Funding and partners confirmed

**September 2010**  
Phase 2 of website launched

**March 2011**  
First year evaluation complete - 33 Exhibitions opened

**April 2011**  
Second year project funding agreed MLA/ACE

**March 2012**  
51 exhibitions open since April 2010

**April 2012**  
Arts Council agree to continue funding project to December 2012

**July September 2012**  
London Olympic and Paralympic Games

**December 2012**  
114 OSL exhibitions held since project began

Although the original model for the exhibition was created to work through the MLA regional structure, other organisations soon expressed interest in the project. Ultimately each region involved used the exhibition in their own way to suit their organisations and partnerships. We also worked with other organisations who held sporting exhibitions using the Our Sporting Life model but were not OSL branded. The final evaluation spreadsheet, evaluations forms and case studies give a detailed picture of the many variations used and can be found in the OSL 'e-pack'. We created a visitor survey for the project, the web results via Survey Monkey can also be found in the 'e-pack'. Some venues used hard copies of the survey and those results have not been included. *(Please see details on the back page)*

*'It was fantastic to feel part of a wider sporting movement and it was great for sharing ideas with other OSL exhibition curators.'*

Katy King - Manx National Heritage



*Left: Lord and Lady Desborough summer 1908, image courtesy River & Rowing Museum*

*Right: Lord Coe signing his OSL post card, image courtesy River & Rowing Museum*

# Map and Dates

*'The new relationships we have nurtured amongst Reading's sporting community has raised the museum's profile and helped to embed our place at the heart of the town's cultural life.'*

Catherine Roberts – Reading Museum



- 1 River & Rowing Museum Henley  
13 March - 11 July 2010
- 2 Olympia  
16 - 19 March 2010
- 3 Meridian Leisure Centre Louth  
20 July - 30 September 2010
- 4 Worcester Cathedral  
7 - 30 August 2010
- 5 East Midlands Airport  
5 October - 7 November 2010
- 6 National Ice Centre Nottingham  
9 November - 17 December 2010
- 7 Harrow Museum  
31 January - 3 April 2011
- 8 Curve Theatre Leicester  
8 February - 10 March 2011
- 9 Bristol Records Office  
9 February - 17 June 2011
- 10 World Rugby Museum Twickenham  
14 February - 24 February 2011
- 11 Bromley Museum  
14 February - 24 February 2011
- 12 Concordia Leisure Centre Northumberland  
1 March - 18 April 2011
- 13 Box Hill Dorking  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 14 Woking Bikeathon  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 15 County Hall Kingston  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 16 Camberley Library  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 17 Tattenhams Library  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 18 Surrey Sports conference Kempton Park  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 19 Horley Library Surrey  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 20 ACS Cobham  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 21 Godalming Library Surrey  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 22 Guildford Library  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 23 Surrey Heath Museum  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 24 Go Surrey, Surrey Arts Festival  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 25 Surrey Hills Road Cycle Race Festival 2012  
Dorking March 2011 - August 2012
- 26 Cranleigh Library  
March 2011 - August 2012
- 27 Buckinghamshire County Museum  
5 - 12 March Intro exhibition
- 28 Send and Ripley Museum  
7 - 31 March 2011
- 29 Fit City Broughton Pool Salford  
10 March - 10 May Touring Nov 11 main
- 30 Guildford Sports Park  
15 March 2011
- 31 Gallery Oldham  
15 March - 14 April 2011
- 32 Chertsey Museum  
21 March - 10 April 2011
- 33 Ironbridge Gorge Museum Coalbrookdale  
21 March 11 - 29 February 2012
- 34 Ironbridge Gorge Museum Eniguitry Gallery  
4 April 11 - 9 September 2012
- 35 North Lincolnshire Museum Scunthorpe  
5 April 11 - 4 July 2012
- 36 Guilford Museum  
9 April - 14 May 2011
- 37 Stockport Heritage Services  
22 April - 18 November 2011
- 38 Milton Keynes Museum  
5 May - 31 October 2011
- 39 Milton Keynes Library  
5 May - 30 June 2011
- 40 National Badminton Museum Milton Keynes  
5 May - 30 June 2011
- 41 Salford Sports Village  
11 May - 25 June 2011
- 42 Spelthorne Museum  
21 May - 18 June 2011
- 43 Keswick Museum and Art Gallery  
21 May - 2 July 2011
- 44 Barber Institute Birmingham  
27 May - 18 September 11
- 45 Godalming Museum  
21 June - 9 July 11
- 46 Newcastle City Library  
7 July - 6 September 11
- 47 Haslemere Education Museum  
11 - 31 July 11
- 48 Milton Keynes Road Show Bletchley Leisure Centre  
23 July 2011
- 49 Buckinghamshire County Museum  
23 July - 12 November 2011
- 50 Salford Quays Watersports Centre  
26 July - 27 September 2011
- 51 Eton Dorney  
3 - 7 August 2011
- 52 Rural Life Centre Tilford, Farnham  
10 - 21 August 2011
- 53 Museum of Farnham  
1 - 17 September 2011
- 54 Milton Keynes Road Show Emerson Valley Sports Pavilion  
3 September 2011
- 55 The Manx Museum  
3 September 11 - 1 September 2012
- 56 Milton Keynes Road Show Wolverton Outdoor Pool  
4 September 2011
- 57 Wycombe Museum House  
29 September 11 - 29 March 2012
- 58 Guildford Spectrum  
2 - 9 October 2011
- 59 Surrey History Centre  
11 October - 11 November 2011
- 60 Milton Keynes Road Show MK Dons Stadium  
22 October 2011
- 61 MK Dons Tour Bus Greenleys MK  
26 October 2011
- 62 Discover MK Westcroft Library  
27 October - 10 December 2011
- 63 MK Dons Tour Bus Manor Fields Bletchley  
2 November 2011
- 64 Milton Keynes Road Show MK Lions Arena  
6 November 2011
- 65 Robin Park Indoor Sports Centre Wigan  
25 November 11 - 3 February 2012
- 66 London International Boat Show Members Lounge  
6 - 15 January 2012
- 67 Hawkslade Community Centre Stoke Mandeville  
9 - 23 January 2012
- 68 Harrow Museum  
13 Jan - 3 April 2012
- 69 MK Dons Stadium  
23 Jan - 30 April 2012
- 70 Queens Park Centre Bucks  
23 Jan - 4 Feb 2012
- 71 St Mary's Church, Aylesbury  
6 Feb - 20 Feb 2012
- 72 Tameside Museum Service  
10 Feb - 28 April 12
- 73 Friars Square Shopping Centre, Aylesbury  
24 Feb 2012
- 74 RYA Scotland  
24 - 26 Feb 2012
- 75 Gunnersbury Park Museum  
25 Feb - 28 August 2012
- 76 Central Library Aylesbury  
27 Feb - 5 March 2012
- 77 Sturminster Newton Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 78 Gillingham Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 79 Swanage Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 80 RYA Dinghy Show London  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 81 RYA Liverpool Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 82 Sherborne Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 83 Blandford Fashion Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 84 Wareham Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 85 Shaftesbury Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 86 Maidenhead Heritage Centre  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 87 RYA Falmouth  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 88 Reading Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 89 Museum of English Rural Life  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 90 Bromley Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 91 Portland Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 92 Bucks County Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 93 Charnewood Gallery  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 94 Bowes Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 95 Banstead Library  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 96 Haselmere Library  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 97 Caterham Valley Library  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 98 Ewell Library  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 99 Ashford Library  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 100 Manchester Jewish Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 101 RYA Cowes Isle of Wight  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 102 Poole Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 103 Blandford Town Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 104 Best of OSL River & Rowing Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 105 Dorset County Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 106 The Centre Games MK Shopping Centre  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 107 National Football Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 108 Community Games Woverton Park MK  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 109 Beaminster Museum  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 110 RYA in Weymouth 2012  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 111 Langely Academy  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 112 Discover Milton Keynes Wolverton Library  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 113 RYA Brightlingsea Sailing Club Colchester  
13 March - 11 July 10
- 114 The MCC Museum Lord's  
14 May - 9 September

## Key Measures of Performance

# Stimulate sustainable relationships between local organisations and museums

*'For the Launch we partnered Brentford FC Community Sports Trust, HOTS (Hold on to Sports) and Together We Create, to offer a day of free sports-related activities in the museum and the park.'*

Vanda Foster – Gunnersbury Park Museum

*'The Milton Keynes Project is a collaboration between local sport and heritage partners (Milton Keynes Council; Heritage and Sports Development Departments, Living Archive, Milton Keynes Dons Sport Education Trust, National Badminton Museum, Badminton England and Milton Keynes Museum) working together to raise awareness of and promote the history of local sport and to encourage participation in sport at grass root level.'*

Shane Downer – Milton Keynes Council – Community Facilities Unit

Participating venues have established strong, new, sustainable local partnerships and relationships through the course of their development of an OSL exhibition. These have included:

- universities and academic institutions e.g. University of Leicester, University of Bristol and the International Centre for Sports History and Culture De Montfort University
- The National Football Museum and the University of Central Lancashire secured funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) under the Collaborative Doctoral Awards Scheme for a fully funded PhD on sports museums in the UK which includes a detailed analysis of Our Sporting Life
- local media partners e.g. BBC Bristol, BBC Leicester, the Teesdale Mercury and local newspapers
- sports and leisure centres
- youth groups e.g. Active Surrey, Choysez Bedlington (Woodhorn) and V-Involved Tameside
- local council leisure services teams e.g. South Oxfordshire District Council ran sports taster days with OSL Henley, and North Lincolnshire District Council ran 'On Target' sessions for 13 to 19 year olds

All venues have acknowledged that these links will be sustained into the future to create a legacy of future co-operative events.



Above: Red Bull racing through Milton Keynes, image courtesy Milton Keynes Council – Community Facilities Unit (Heritage Dept)



Right: The teams meet before the Baseball re-enactment at the Surrey Sports Park in 2011 (Photograph courtesy of the Youth Baseball Association UK)

*'We were keen to form new relationships and were successful in developing these with many sporting groups, and many of these are likely to be sustained long after the project end. By exhibiting in sports grounds, leisure centres, sporting events we reached new audiences'*

Lalage Grundy – Surrey Heritage

*'We regularly had arm chair exercise groups using the bowling game on Kinect Sports and we became a popular place to visit for teenagers after school. This was particularly pleasing as we generally struggle to attract this demographic to independently visit the Manx Museum'*

*Katy King - Manx National Heritage*



## Key Measures of Performance

# Attracting new museum audiences

*'We took the display to non-traditional venues; sports and leisure centres, schools and outdoor locations in order to engage with a different audience.'*

*Lalage Grundy - Surrey Heritage*

*'I had never been in a museum before. The exhibition opened my mind and visiting a couple of museums was great'*

*Volunteer - National Football Museum*



*Above: Young people who worked on an OSL project in Greater Manchester, image courtesy National Football Museum*

*Left: © iStock*

*Below: HRH the Princess Royal at OSL Louth © Chris Schubert*

*Below right: Young people involved in OSL Woodhorn, image courtesy Woodhorn Museum and Northumberland Archives*

Our previous research showed and evaluation proved that the exhibitions attracted non traditional audiences.

A number of lead regional organisations have imaginatively used public spaces that are seen as 'non-traditional' cultural venues and this has resulted in engagement with a traditionally hard to reach demographic for museums and cultural organisations. They included the National Ice Centre (NIC), Nottingham; East Midlands Airport; Concordia Leisure Centre, Northumberland; Fit City, Salford, and the Meridian Leisure Centre in Louth. The Royal Yachting Association held a travelling exhibition in various venues, including the International Boat Show at ExCel, various sailing clubs and Falmouth Maritime Museum.



## Key Measures of Performance

# Creating a flexible and transferable exhibition template nationwide

*'The light boxes and film did create a more exciting display than we could have managed. The sound effects were wonderful for a sports exhibition, giving a real sense of excitement and dynamism'*

Gunnersbury Park Museum



Top: OSL Henley, image courtesy River & Rowing Museum

Below: OSL Worcester Cathedral, image courtesy RFA Design



The project and infrastructure was successfully adapted to different models depending upon location, with locally distinctive displays being produced that left a lasting legacy within the communities involved. In the case of the Meridian Leisure Centre, Louth and the National Ice Centre Nottingham, elements of their displays have been retained on a permanent basis.

The flexible, modularity of the exhibition system has also allowed for greater dispersion to smaller venues within a region and a community resulting in wider engagement at a local level, for example: Surrey History Centre created a small OSL exhibition that toured around the county to 30 venues and events during 2011 and 2012 as part of their 2012 celebrations.

*'Backlighting the panels certainly added to the quality and feel of the exhibition. However the lighting was probably the most limiting factor in terms of flexibility and ease of use. Requiring power to every element of the exhibition was rarely easy, and the internal wiring could become complicated for clients particularly in the national core. All of these challenges were overcome though, so it is perhaps subjective whether the aesthetic benefits outweighed the effort required. The exhibition approach on the whole was successful. We feel proud to have been involved in the delivery of this unique and ambitious project. The lessons learned provide a valuable foundation on which to build even more exciting temporary and touring exhibitions in the future.'*

Matt Langstaff - RFA Design (OSL Exhibition Designers)



Top left: OSL Leicester Curve Theatre

Middle left: Guin Batten, Silver Medallist Sydney 2000 at the 'Best of OSL'

Bottom left: Manx National Heritage

Top right: OSL Henley

Middle right: Grand Challenge Cup foyer case River & Rowing Museum

Bottom right: OSL core exhibition kit

## Key Measures of Performance

# Encouraging networking between museums, libraries and archives



*'As a national project with an accessible story, strong brand and house style OSL was an ideal vehicle to further develop partnership working across the museums in Dorset.... The partnership with the community museums was successful, this was the first combined project with this number of Dorset Museums all working to the same outcomes. The project has consolidated the links between the museums and paved the way for future projects.'*

*Dr Jon Murden – Dorset County Museum*

Museums worked together to produce their Our Sporting Life exhibitions. Through collaborative working practice between participating museums, smaller, volunteer run organisations were mentored through the exhibition process by larger, more experienced museums achieving a legacy of skills, confidence and quality standards that will be taken forward into future exhibitions.



Far left: Archery history image courtesy WheelPower Archive Stoke Mandeville

Above: South London Harriers

Left: Children looking at OSL exhibition at Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, IGMT collection

## Key Measures of Performance

# Inspiring children and young people

*'We used this exhibition:*

*- to explore how sport can mean different things to different people*

*- to celebrate the sporting achievements of different students*

*- to show the school within the local community context*

*For us the process of creating the exhibition was just as important as the final display. Workshops and sessions were run on the theme of OSL during the exhibition planning to generate content e.g. music linked to sport, sporting stories.*

*We also used the exhibition as the focus of supporting transition work, so that our new year 7 students created content over the summer which we then added to the overall exhibition.'*

*Jenny Blay - The Langley Academy*

The number of young people engaging with Our Sporting Life exhibitions has been high through both curriculum related activities and exhibition-linked events.

Woodhorn Trust, Tameside Museum, venues in the Greater Manchester Museum Forum and the National Football Museum have successfully enabled young people to curate their exhibitions engendering a great sense of pride and ownership through the process. The Langley Academy Slough used the school community as the basis for their OSL exhibition.



Above: Sophie Christiansen and The Langley Academy students, OSL Launch, March 2009

Right: Marc Leach, young Salford boxer, at a fight in Gorton, image courtesy Salford Museum and Art Gallery

*'I found ways and means of engaging young people with content in the archive and the project has enabled me to test first hand models of working with young people.'*

*Juliet Hardy, Creative Mentor at Woodhorn*





## Key Measures of Performance Sector skills building and volunteer training

*'The exhibition would not have happened without volunteer pressure at the outset and their continuing enthusiasm and commitment'*

Jane Whittaker - The Bowes Museum

*'We involved many volunteers and encouraged people to take up sport. Most of the Re-enactments had training sessions and were fully accessible'*

Lalage Grundy - Surrey Heritage

*'I really enjoyed the trips we went on, it's good to visit a range of places or places I would have never visited without being involved in OSL. The responsibility available to us when creating the exhibition made it feel like it was really our project.'*

Volunteer - National Football Museum



The Our Sporting Life programme has proved to be a good opportunity for skills building within the sector. Many exhibitions relied on volunteers to collect information, run oral history programmes, write panel text and organise events. Most of the sports clubs involved are run by volunteers and, in the case of Our Sporting Life Henley, the volunteers received specific training related to archiving and collections care, funded by The Peoples Record. Other Museums ran similar schemes and developed collection care toolkits for clubs to use in the future.



Left: GB Athletes Parade Reception David Weir  
Picture taken for GOC by David Poultney

Above: Olympic swimming team 1912, image  
courtesy Leicestershire Museum and Art Gallery

Right: Sporting stars at the opening of Bowes  
Museum OSL Exhibition June 2012 image  
courtesy of the Bowes Museum, Stephan Taylor  
(photographer)



## Key Measures of Performance

# To raise awareness and a deeper understanding of museum's own collections

*'Staging the exhibition raised awareness of the need to reassess the contemporary collections we hold'*

*Dr Jon Murden – Dorset County Museum*



All participating venues have acknowledged the willingness of local sports clubs and associations to share information and donate memorabilia, and the breadth of stories displayed in the Our Sporting Life programme covers a remarkable range of sports. New collections have been discovered and accessioned as a result of hosting an OSL exhibition.

*Left: Weybridge Ladies Rowing Club late 1920's, image courtesy River & Rowing Museum*

*Above: 1908 football and 2003 rugby ball, image courtesy River & Rowing Museum*

*Below: Jonathan Edwards at OSL Visit Britain, image courtesy River & Rowing Museum*



*'It gave us a unique opportunity to engage new and diverse audiences, to engage young people in the exhibition process and to display previously unseen collection items..... We were also able to showcase collection items that had not been displayed before and also to increase our knowledge and interpretation of these objects and archive material'*

*The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust*

## Key Measures of Performance

# Inspiring tourism and engagement with London 2012 Games

In March 2010 Our Sporting Life was featured on the Visit Britain stand of their international tourism show. Sports heritage became a key part of the opening ceremony and much of the media coverage of the Games.

Without a planned large London exhibition or a presence at the Olympic and Paralympic venues, OSL's impact was not as extensive as it could have been.

*'I've been interested in the Olympic Games for a while now and it's great to see that there is finally something to recognise our local sports people, they've done a good job over the years'*

*Visitor to the Our Sporting Life exhibition at East Midlands Airport*

*'It's great to celebrate local Olympians, it's got me and the kids really excited about the 2012 games'*

*Visitor to Our Sporting Life at the Meridian Leisure Centre, Louth*



*Main image: Members of the Gold medal British team compete in the men's track cycling team pursuit at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games*

*Small image: Members of the Gold medal British team at 1908 Olympic Games*

# Social and Learning Outcomes

*'The exhibition also highlights the role sport has played in the creation of a new secular Jewish identity in Manchester.'*

*Manchester Jewish Museum*

*'The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies is to programme future displays as part of the Mandeville Legacy project'.*

*Milton Keynes Council*

*'The group (of Manchester OSL Museums) met every month to look at exhibition best practice at other museums, research stories, identify and borrow appropriate objects, write new text, create interactives linked to the stories and objects, work with designers and museum professionals to create the new exhibition and finally, to develop a public programme of family activities to complement the exhibition'.*

*National Football Museum*

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Our Sporting Life programme demonstrated significant learning outcomes for both organisations and individuals. Organisations developed a new breadth of knowledge and understanding about their current collections, and are using this to inform their collection policies. Involvement in the programme has seen organisations change their attitudes towards sporting history and place a new value on sporting collections and sporting stories from their communities.

In terms of individuals, the findings demonstrate that exhibitions led to an increase in knowledge and understanding about local history, the nation's sporting past, and the potential for community groups to impact on public venues and organisations. The most significant area of learning was through enjoyment, inspiration and creativity. Learners felt inspired after attending an exhibition, they enjoyed learning about their community and stories of sporting heroism. The exhibitions often encouraged a change in behaviour by supporting different audiences to visit venues such as museums, and encouraged people to deposit objects relating to their community's sporting past in museums for future generations.

## SOCIAL OUTCOMES

The findings demonstrate that Our Sporting Life impacted on all three Social Outcome areas. It encouraged stronger and safer communities by reaching new audiences, working together with its communities to develop exhibitions, and often working with other organisations to tell difficult histories and untold stories of local heroes. Many partnerships have been forged to support future projects and programmes, and many organisations said that a significant outcome for them included the partnerships developed with local communities and individuals.

Our Sporting Life provided support for health and wellbeing. Many exhibitions provided information on healthy living, supporting people to join sports clubs, and activities to engage new audiences with healthy lifestyles. The main area of success here though was through helping children and young people make a positive contribution to public life. Many exhibitions placed children and young people as curators and decision makers for their exhibitions, with plans to continue these partnerships.

The exhibition programme was strongest though in terms of strengthening public life. It encouraged participation from volunteers in all areas of exhibition development and delivery. Many museums worked with new volunteers and saw a shift in culture for both the organisation and individuals. In several instances it allowed museums to work in a new way with their communities, opening up exhibition spaces specifically for community exhibitions and to tell the story of their locality. This in turn inspired the community to feel part of the venue, and develop an ownership of its work, often leading to the creation of consultation groups and audience forums.



Above: Lillian Venet, Manchester Jewish Museum, image courtesy Manchester Jewish Museum

# Lessons Learned



Above: Handcycling , image courtesy iStock

Right: The Calcutta Cup, image courtesy World Rugby Museum

There are some key lessons learned that all venues have identified as being of benefit for the development of future projects of this scale and nature.

In the process of developing content for their exhibitions, many venues found there is a lack of a single knowledge resource for Olympic and Paralympic history. Venues had to carry out their own, often primary, research to find information about their local Olympic athletes and sports heroes and this has been time consuming and resource heavy.

Our Sporting Life provided central support for a number of specialist activities – design and production, pre-curation of panels, rights clearance for images in the national core, and the right to use the British Olympic Association video. The heart of the concept for OSL relied on organisations working with their communities and sports clubs to develop a bespoke exhibition. For many organisations this proved a challenge. The resources required to engage with communities, borough and district councils and sports organisations that may never have been involved with anything like this before cannot be underestimated and requires careful planning.

*'The time allowed for working with the young people from the start of the project to the text panel print deadline was not long enough. This meant that we had to guide the young people with regards to the content and style of the panels more than we would perhaps have liked to'*

Tameside Museum

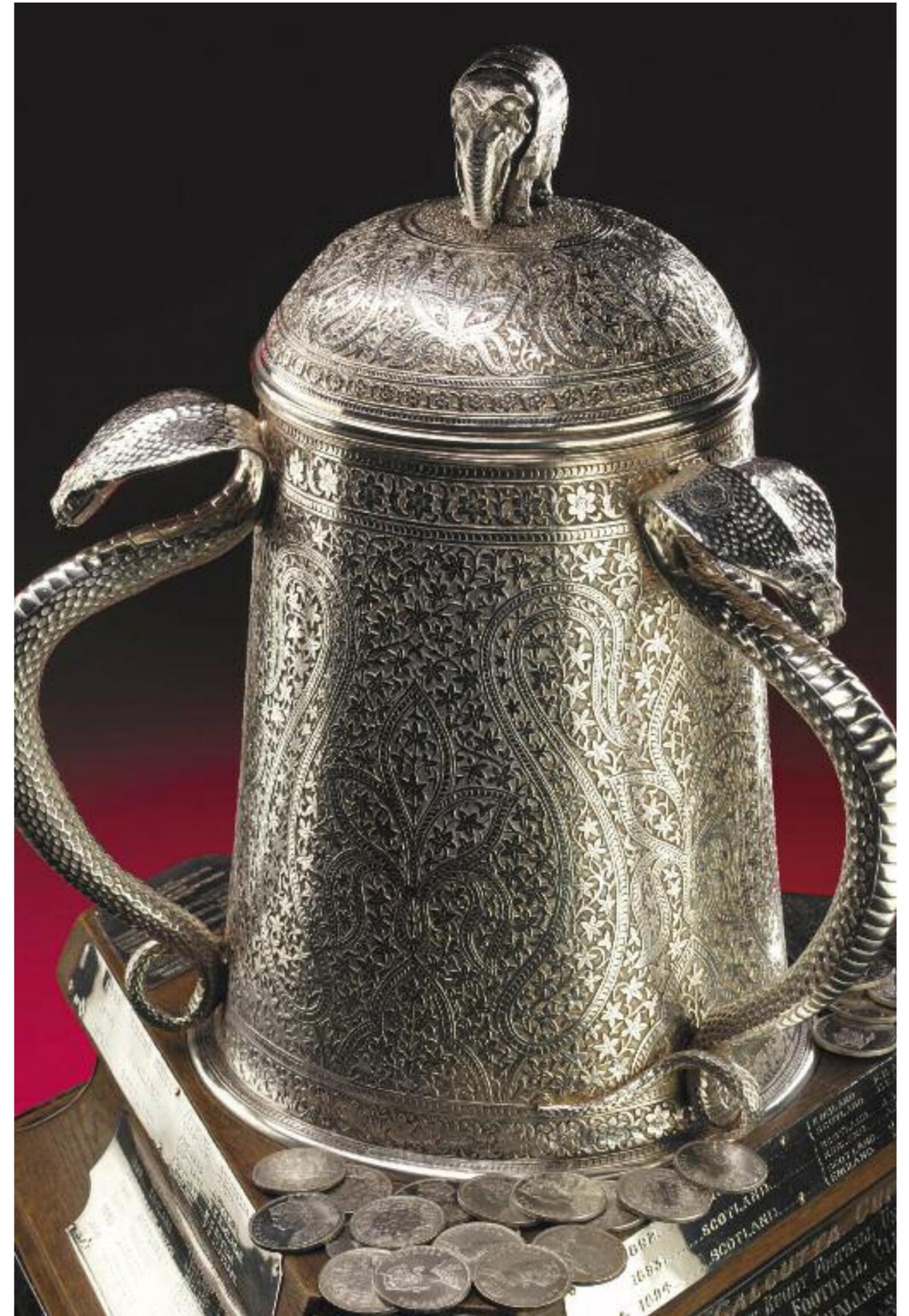
Likewise, the costs associated with the copyright for high resolution imagery for sports stars, especially Olympians, proved very high for many venues. A number of venues found that developing relationships with local media partners helped give access to some imagery at low or no cost.

*'One thing we found challenging was the cost associated with photographs of current sports stars and establishing the copyright of images. This often slowed down our development and held up the exhibition progress'*

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

*'Many stories came from individual leads rather than from people coming forward through the community display, although some had seen the displays which stimulated them to contact the museum directly'*

David Erskine Buckinghamshire County Museum



# Legacy and letter to Rio

*'Our exciting challenge is to now build on the outstanding success of Our Sporting Life. A key legacy of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics will be large numbers of people continuing to explore, enjoy and learn from our unique sporting heritage.'*

Kevin Moore, Chairman Sports Heritage Network and Director National Football Museum

Our Sporting Life has shown that at least a million people across the country have a great interest in our unique sporting heritage. It has also demonstrated how people of all ages and backgrounds can benefit greatly from coming together to explore this sporting past. We need to capture the tremendous enthusiasm which Our Sporting Life has untapped. The next step is to provide even greater opportunities for the public to engage in preserving and interpreting their sporting heritage. Our Sporting Life has revealed that some of this heritage is in danger of being lost and we need to ensure it is saved for our children and grandchildren. We also need to share our skills, knowledge and experience by developing the Sports Heritage Network, particularly by a strong online presence and through social media.

Kevin Moore  
Chairman, Sports Heritage Network



Above: Athletes entrance march 1948, image courtesy Pathé News

Right: Entrance of the Athletes 2012, image courtesy DCMS



*'We were delighted to be a part of the success of the OSL project leading up to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. OSL helped raise the awareness of the Stoke Mandeville story and our ambitions to develop the collection in the future.'*

Martin McElhatton, Chief Executive WheelPower

Milton Keynes will have a permanent museum exhibition showcase at Stadium: MK as a result of their OSL programme. They are establishing the first local sporting school loan boxes with contributions from the partners and to be administered by Milton Keynes Museum and an Advisory Pack – Keeping Your Club History Alive giving basic guidelines on collecting and looking after collections.



Brazil's unique culture and passion for sport were no doubt crucial in winning the games for Rio in 2016. That same passion and a unique relationship with sport at every level have helped to define the success of London 2012. The 'Our Sporting Life' campaign was designed to be a celebration at community level of society's relationship with sport. Britain shares with Brazil a proud sporting history and an enthusiasm at all ages and at all levels of society. We hope that the OSL legacy from London will inspire further opportunities for Rio and subsequent Games!

*'I think projects like these are really important for people's development, and the end result gives the participants something to be proud of for a long time.'*

Volunteer - National Football Museum

*'The research (from OSL at Reading Museum) has now been added to the museum's collection of background information where it remains accessible to future historians.'*

Catherine Roberts – Reading Museum

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