

National Paralympic Heritage Trust Pilot Investigation of the Collections



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August 2015

1. Executive Summary



Image from the extensive WheelPower image archive, depicting early wheelchair archery and equipment

Over the next five years, the National Paralympic Heritage Trust (NPHT) will “map, conserve and make accessible to national audiences, collections and archives relating to the British Paralympic movement. It will create an accredited permanent heritage centre at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, the Birthplace of the Paralympic Movement, a national network of satellite exhibitions and a virtual museum”.¹ One of the first stages of this process is to begin to understand what collections exist in the UK, the potential loan and donation opportunities

for these collections to the NPHT, and the feasibility of creating a single heritage centre and associated exhibitions as a consequence. This report details the findings of pilot research in this area.

Through a series of small selected interviews, desk research and stakeholder surveys, a significant amount of objects, artefacts, images, film and oral history have been identified relating to all stages of the Paralympics from the 1940s to the present day. The findings suggest that these objects are held by organisations and individuals across the country, however most are not catalogued, access to them is, at best, limited, and many are at risk of loss or destruction. In addition, the historical indifference to the Paralympics (and sporting heritage in general) on the part of heritage organisations, has meant that objects have not been systematically collected in the public sphere, and are instead largely held by individuals, sports clubs and sporting bodies.² As such, they are ad hoc, uncatalogued and it is difficult to establish exactly what exists. There is, however, a substantial amount of good-feeling towards the NPHT by all stakeholders, and this is reflected in both the readiness to share information, and the willingness to loan or donate objects.

Therefore, whilst this research has demonstrated that a wealth of collections exist with a small sample, it is clear that a significant, detailed piece of work must now be conducted to ascertain more precisely what collections and objects are held in the UK, and to what extent these are able to narrate the different elements connected to the British Paralympic story. In particular there is a need to research through the sports governing bodies, clubs and a far greater list of individuals.



6 Paralympic Athletes
John Lesorre 2004
National portrait Gallery

¹ Vicky Hope-Walker. National Paralympic Heritage Plan. 2015.

² Brittain, I., Ramshaw, G., and Gammon, S. The Marginalisation of Paralympic Heritage. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*. Volume 19; Issue 2. (2012): pp.182 – 183

2. Context

It is widely accepted that the Paralympic Games originated in England in the mid-1940s,³ but, despite this, Paralympic heritage has been consistently underexplored and undervalued as a subject for museum study and display in Britain, resulting in the loss and displacement of relevant collections.⁴ This situation is not unique to the Paralympics as sporting heritage in general had been underrepresented as a museum subject until very recently.⁵

However, although Paralympic material has not been a priority of the established heritage sector, the same cannot be said of Paralympians and administrators of the Paralympics. Here the collections have been valued, but largely developed ad hoc, with little support to protect objects and place on public display. What has been collected is, understandably, based purely on personal interest, resulting in a large

abundance of material, where often even the owner is unaware of what the collection contains. So although there have been few exhibitions relating to the Paralympics, it cannot be said that this has been because of a lack of material culture.

“Issues around disability representation are not, in most organisations, being discussed”.
Research Centre for Museums and Galleries.



Geisha Doll presented to Paralympian, Caz Walton, 1964
 Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies



Wax figure commissioned for the 2012 Paralympic Games
 Royal College of Surgeons

In addition, the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) has conducted a number of studies with a specific focus on disability representation in museums. Their research concludes that there is “a wealth of material in wide-ranging museums and galleries” but that most is not on display, and, where it is conforms to the stereotypical perception of disability being other.⁶ So even where disability heritage is explored, it tends to perpetuate the myth that it is less important, different, heritage. This is not only detrimental to the understanding of the story of the Paralympics, and more widely, disability heritage, but the nation’s heritage in general.

However, the increased interest in the Paralympics over the last ten years, coupled with London hosting the event in 2012, has resulted in a newfound interest in the preservation and display of Paralympic heritage. The task now is to find out what still exists, where it is held, and ensure it is displayed.

³ Brittain, I. *The Paralympic Games Explained*. Routledge: Oxon. 2010.

⁴ Official website of the Paralympic Movement. *London 2012*. IPC. 2012. <http://www.paralympic.org/london-2012-overview>

⁵ Reilly, J. *Sport, Museums and Cultural Policy*. PhD. University of Central Lancashire. 2014.

⁶ Research Centre for Museums and Galleries. *Buried in the Footnotes*. University of Leicester. 2004. p.13; Research Centre for Museums and Galleries. *Rethinking Disability Representation*. University of Leicester. 2008. p.10.



Cigarette case from the 1964 Games showing what is believed to be the first use of the word "Paralympic". Tony Sainsbury

3. Methodology and Findings

To understand more about Paralympic heritage, two research questions were set:

- What type of Paralympic collections are held in the UK, who by, and where?
- What is the potential for these collections to be loaned or donated in the future to a National Paralympic Heritage Trust?

"Paralympic collections" has been defined as anything which helps to tell the story or history of the Paralympic Games. Both tangible (for example objects, memorabilia, photographs, and film) and intangible (for example stories, tradition, and song) collections are relevant.

To answer these research questions, the methodology used a three stage approach: 1) Initial desk research into Paralympic collections in the UK; 2) the distribution of an online survey through a range of networks; and 3) a series of telephone interviews with existing contacts and survey respondents to discuss collections in-depth and identify key objects. A total of 42 responses were given to the online survey and 21 telephone interviews were held. The findings are presented below.

"It is not just memorabilia, documents and other related objects that could be used as part of telling the Paralympic story, but rather it is also the legacies, stories and achievements of Paralympic athletes, administrators and advocates that must also be considered". Brittain, I; Ramshaw, G; Gammon, S. 2012.

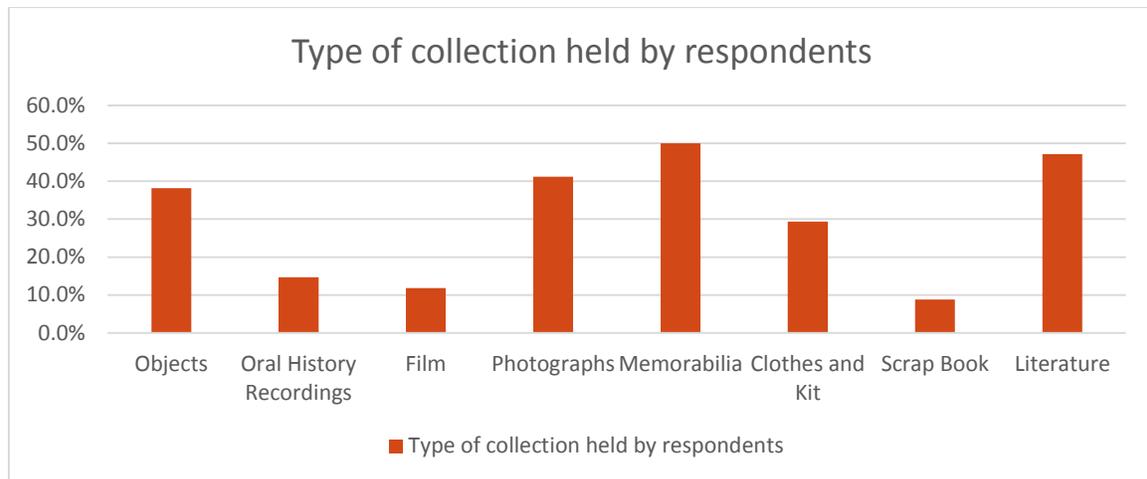


The importance of oral history to the Paralympic Story, for example, the narratives told by ex-Paralympian, John Harris

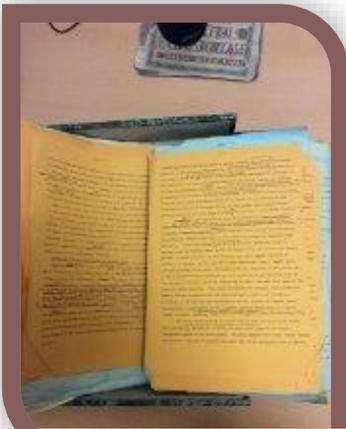
3.1 Type of Objects

Individuals and organisations were asked to describe the types of objects held within their collections. Many people were unsure what type of objects counted as heritage or were worthy enough to be eligible for inclusion in a future exhibition space. There was also a strong perception that only physical, expensive objects were of importance. However, with discussion and exploration of what type of things might be included, a significant amount of material was uncovered. The findings demonstrate that there is a wealth of material available, covering a broad spectrum from kit and medals, to film and oral history as illustrated at figure 1.

Figure 1



Source: Survey responses



Sir Ludwig Guttmann's half-typed original manuscript of his autobiography, complete with notations. WheelPower archive

This suggests that exhibitions about Paralympic heritage could be rich, with film, photography, and oral history helping to contextualize and bring to life the objects and literature available. Moving forward, it will be important to establish which collections are relevant to the British story of the Paralympics, and which only to the international story. For example, a definition may be made that material of interest is international in nature prior to 1960 when the first Paralympics were held in Rome, at which point, only material specifically related to British athletes, administration, and development, or associated with the 2012 Games, is included. Many collections hold, for example, items which tell the story of the Paralympics but have no

direct British link, although are interesting in narrating the wider Paralympic story, for example a bus stop in Sir Richard Craven's collection from the Sydney Paralympics. Images of objects from the collections are illustrated throughout this report and are also detailed in a separate collections report. They include unique pieces which chart the development of the Paralympic movement such as a cigarette card with the first use of the word "Paralympic" from 1964; a half completed manuscript of Sir Ludwig Guttmann's autobiography, complete with notes and comments; the Fearnley Cup which was presented to the Stoke Mandeville Games in 1957 and represented to Guttmann a rubber stamp of approval from the International Olympic Committee; Jim Richardson's throwing frame and Discus from the early 1990s; medals and kit from many different



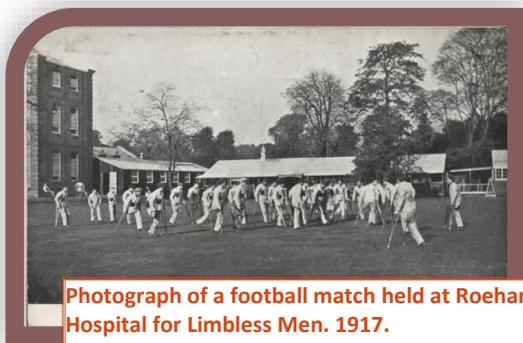
Oil painting of athlete Maggie McEnery. National Galleries, Scotland

individuals; literature, including the commemorative books produced after the Paralympics held by Sir Phillip Craven; and an amazing array of personal stories which share the spirit of the Paralympics. It is important to note that many collections have yet to be catalogued. This means that individuals and organisations were able to talk about some of the collections, and even name some of the objects they held, but often they were unsure of exactly what was in the collection, and, in several cases, had little idea at all. Therefore, a vast amount of objects are waiting in collections yet to be discovered. Tony Sainsbury's collection is an example of this, amounting to "a shed's worth" of material.

One of the key areas for future exploration will be the substantial photography and film archives held by different organisations. These will be vital to the heritage story, but copywrite should be established on all items before use. The author had brief conversations with Channel 4 for example, and they were unphased by the use of their archives to support the NPHT.

3.2 Object Dates

Individuals and organisations were also asked to comment on the timespan of the objects they held. There is an abundance of material from the 1980s to the present day, especially in relationship to the 2012 Paralympics, held in collections by heritage venues and individuals such as Tony Sainsbury's. There also appears to be a significant amount of material relating to the 1960s and 1970s, largely held by private individuals such as Jean Stone and in organisations related to the Paralympics, for example, WheelPower. Understandably, there are fewer collections relating to the early beginnings of the Paralympic movement and the Stoke Mandeville Games, however, even here there is a significant belief by organisations such as the International Paralympic Committee, that significant collections are held to successfully support museum display.



Photograph of a football match held at Roehampton Hospital for Limbless Men. 1917. Brighton and Hove Museum

There is even evidence of material relating to the development of the story prior to 1940 in existence. However, in the early days, there was no real understanding of the importance of the objects, largely because the concept of the Paralympics was so new, that many objects were not kept. In addition, many items from the very first Paralympics in 1960 appear to have been destroyed in a fire.⁷

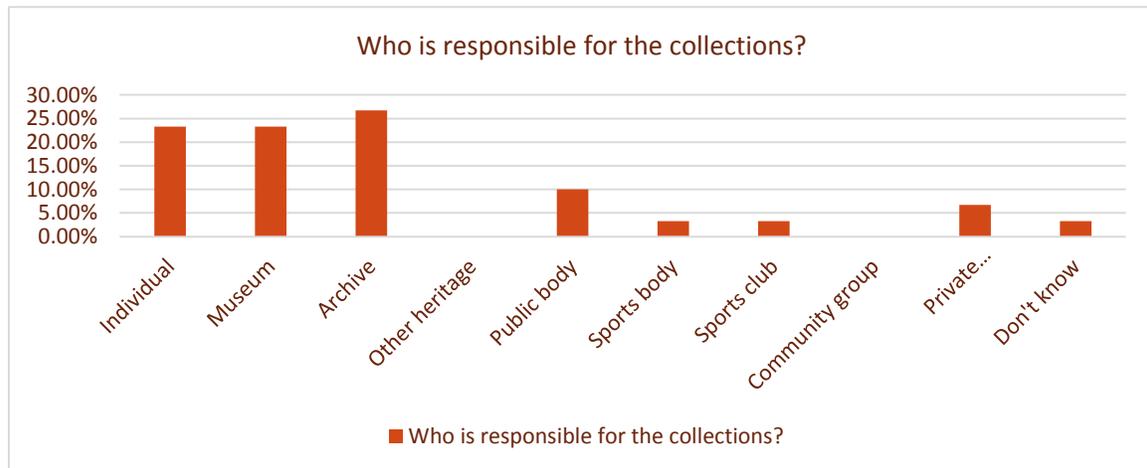
⁷ Brittain. Ibid. 2009

3.3. Collection Ownership

As illustrated at figure 2, collections are held and owned by different types of organisations and individuals and many are held by Paralympians themselves. This suggests that it will be imperative to find out more about these collections and explore and use networks which directly connect to Paralympians past and present. The data also suggests that organisations which are not directly considered to be heritage venues, will be of paramount importance to future activity. It also suggests that in a detailed mapping exercise, the percentage of collections held by individuals, a sports body, or club is likely to increase considerably.

“I have personal memorabilia, photographs and objects from competing as a Paralympic athlete. I also have some literature that may not have been published widely”. Anonymous.

Figure 2



Source: Survey responses



**The Fernley Cup, 1957
IWAS archive**

Organisations with relevant collections include the British Paralympic Association; The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies; Oswestry Town Museum; Sainsbury Archive, London; The British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive, and Aesthetic Surgeons; Sport Technologies Institute, Loughborough; Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum; Epping Forest District Museum; WheelPower; National Galleries, Scotland; Tyne and Wear Museums; Royal College of Surgeons, London; St Fagan's Museum, Cardiff; Museum of Liverpool; The Wellcome Trust; Royal Mint Museum; Ipswich Record Office; The International Paralympic Committee; North Lincolnshire Museum; International Wheelchair Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS); National Portrait Gallery; Portsmouth

Museum; Mass Observation Archive; Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood; The National Archives; The British Library; University of East London; London Metropolitan Archives; University of St Mark and John, Plymouth; Sheffield City Archives.

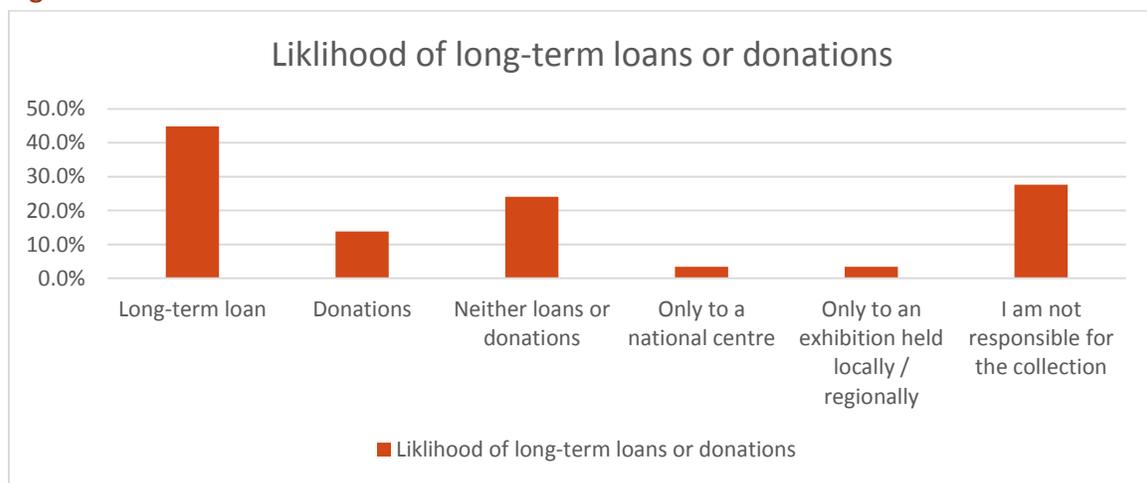
3.4 Likelihood of Long-Term Loans and Donations

Although it is not intended that all of the collections would be held by a single central store, the potential to mount exhibitions and create permanent displays is dependent on the willingness of organisations and individuals to agree to long-term loans or the donation of their objects. Figure 3 illustrates that, of those who completed the survey, over half were open to offering collections for long-term loan or donation. The question was also included in the telephone interviews, and most were open to the potential of long-term loans or donations. In fact, there was significant support, especially from Paralympians and Paralympic administrators, who felt that planning for a national centre and satellite exhibitions was essential, and offered them a route to donate any relevant collections.



"Mandeville" the mascot for the 2012 Paralympic Games. V&A Museum of Childhood

Figure 3



Source: Survey response

For those who were unwilling to loan or donate, there were several reasons: 1) the items were precious to them and they wanted to keep them in their family unit; 2) they wanted more information about what would happen to the items, and more specifically, more information about the NPHP and confidence in its future plans, for example the Oral History of British Athletics held at the British Library and Sound Archive; 3) there needed to know what "long-term loan" meant in this context; 4) they were not responsible for the collection, for example the items were

"I have been hoping for some time that a suitable organisation might exist to donate my collection....It would be sad for it to be lost later in time". Chris Cohen, ex. IPC Chairman.

on loan to the museum from an individual as at the National Museums, Liverpool, and so they could not comment on likelihood of loans. There was some interest in only having collections exhibited on a national platform, mainly by national organisations such as the The National Archives who themselves have a national remit, and from individuals who would prefer to see the items on display near their home, for example Jim Richardson, however, this was a small

percentage and was largely a preference rather than a condition.

3.5 Collection Location

Although there is a concentration of collections in London, objects are held in venues and with individuals across the country, as illustrated at figure 4 and discussed early in this report at 3.3. Although this study is only a representative sample, it does suggest that nationally there are a substantial number of collections which relate to Paralympic heritage. One of the key issues will be to find and catalogue these collections, especially where they are not held by heritage organisations, in addition to those yet to be catalogued in heritage venues. There will also undoubtedly be a good deal of duplication in material, especially in terms of more recent Paralympics, leading to a need for diplomacy when dealing with individuals and their collections, and practicality in terms of storage space. The fact that the collections are distributed across the nation, means that any resulting exhibition will be able to explore the Paralympic story on a national, regional and local scale.



Commemorative stamp from the 1992 Paralympic Games in Barcelona.
Chris Cohen

Figure 4



Source: Survey Responses



Bedcycle designed by Sir Ludwig Guttmann in 1949.
Science Museum, London

3.6 Collections Care and Access

To understand more about existing collections, respondents were asked about how and where their collections are stored and whether or not they are accessible to the public. Those held by individuals are often kept in loft spaces or sheds, in boxes and containers making it difficult to tell exactly what items are held, their significance or any need for object stabilization. As a

result, there is a significant risk that these collections could be lost or destroyed. The collections held by the organisations connected to the Paralympics are in differing states of categorization and protection. For example, the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies is supporting organisations such as WheelPower and the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS) to

“The records are safely preserved but have not yet been accessioned due to other priorities”. Anonymous, The National Archives.

explore their collections, digitize where possible, offer advice on collections care, and make management of the objects more robust. In terms of heritage venues, whilst the collections are largely protected, often the contents of the collections are unknown along with any significance. A lack of priority of accessioning and categorizing Paralympic collections was reiterated many times by many different organisations.

Although, in theory, collections are accessible to the public, in reality they are not. Public access to collections held in heritage venues is generally only available through appointment. There are several instances of museums exhibiting loan items, for example Tyne and Wear Museums, but in general any collections held are in store. For those individuals and private organisations where collections are held, public access is usually only provided in partnership through special, one off displays.

3.7 Themes Addressed by the Collections

As a result of the objects identified, there are many different themes and narratives which could be told through temporary exhibitions and permanent displays about the Paralympic heritage of Britain. These include, but are not limited to:

- The historical development, and birth of, the Paralympics and the story of Sir Ludwig Guttmann
- Why do people become Paralympians and narratives associated with overcoming adversity
- Changing technology, for example the advancement of wheelchair technology, and how this has impacted on not only competition, but wider society
- Changing perception of the Paralympics and the Paralympic athlete
- The move to Internationalism in 1951
- The debate about whether or not Paralympians can also be Olympians
- Are the Paralympics and Paralympians viewed the same by different nations?
- The branding, advertising and monetary changes of the Paralympics
- The role of the volunteer in the Paralympics
- The competition categories: the rules, classes, and how these have changed over the years
- The politics of disability and how the perception of disability has changed
- Art and fashion associated with the Paralympics



The Beano, 2012. Edition featuring Paralympian Oscar Pistorius. The Wellcome Trust

It is clear, therefore, that there is a wealth of opportunity here, for example, to link to the formal learning agenda by providing resources and exhibitions linked directly to the National Curriculum; in-depth research of the history and heritage of the Paralympics within the context of many different areas; and the increased representation of disability heritage and its place within the nations heritage as a whole.

4. Recommendations

The findings of the research demonstrate that are many collections held nationally, by different organisations and individuals, with a large potential for long-term loans and donations. There are several steps which should now be considered to move the project on to the next stage.

4.1 Define the time-span and geographical nature of the story to be told

4.2 Define how the British element of the Paralympic story differs from the International element and ensure this is reflected in collections policy

4.3 Define what is meant by the term “collections”, and be very specific about this when talking to potential partners

4.4 Define what is meant by the term “long-term loan” in this context, the process an organisation of individual would need to go through to loan to the project, and the available access they would have to their collections

4.5 Define what is meant by, or could be meant by, the terms “heritage center” and “satellite exhibition”

4.6 Identify the key themes of interest to ensure any future collections mapping can prioritize these areas

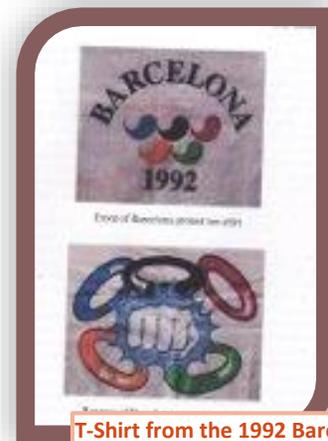
4.7 Conduct an in-depth stage two mapping of Paralympic Collections in the UK



Caz Walton's tracksuit from the 2012 Games
Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies

4.8 Establish the storage space available for the NPHT to hold collections itself, in partnership with the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies and Buckinghamshire Museum Trust. Establish realistically the number and type of objects which can be physically held by the NPHT.

4.9 Word of mouth will be vital! Grow contacts and keep in touch with those already made with regular updates and newsletters



T-Shirt from the 1992 Barcelona Paralympic Games.
Tony Sainsbury