



TfL Corporate Archives Subject Guides

Subject Guide No 1: London Transport Executive and the 1948 Olympic Games

The 1944 Olympics were to have been in London, but this was obviously impossible in view of the War, so the International Olympic Committee (IOC) offered London the 1948 Games instead.

The Games were notable for their austerity, as Britain was in a very poor economic state, and there was no money for new facilities. There was a budget of £750,000, and the Games in fact made a profit of £30,000. Existing facilities had to be used, with Wembley Stadium and Empire Pool chosen as the main venues, and other sports taking place at Henley-on-Thames, Torbay, Bisley, Sandhurst, Windsor Great Park, Herne Hill and others. There was no Olympic Village, so athletes were accommodated at ex military and RAF camps at Richmond Park, Uxbridge and West Drayton, and a number of schools and colleges outside London.

London Transport was involved right from the start of preparations in 1947 (Ref: LT 000232/507) and the TfL Corporate Archives holds many documents that tell the story of the organisation's involvement. Transport by bus was to be provided for competitors and officials (Ref: LT 000232/117), with free travel passes (Ref: LT001208/114) issued, which were also valid for Underground travel.



A new footbridge was provided at Wembley Park Station, and a new road named Olympic Way linked this station to Wembley Stadium. This was opened on 8 July

1948, and a booklet was produced to commemorate the event (Ref: A.B.B. Valentine's papers, LT 001237/10; A.A.B. Valentine, Member of London Transport Executive 1948-1954, Chairman of London Transport 1959-1965).

Special designs were produced for publicity at certain stations, designed to welcome visitors or to give directions (Ref: LT 000371/098).

Work was done to organise bus routes needed by Olympic competitors and officials for their journeys to and from the Olympic venues and accommodation (Ref: LT000367/117). In total, 4,104 athletes required transportation.

After the games, it was considered that the whole operation had been a success (see Valentine papers LT001237/10), and there was a letter of thanks from the Olympic Organising Committee (Ref: LT000233/339).

Highlights of the collection relating to the 1948 Olympics include:

- LT000232/117 6-page report on transport for the Olympic Games. It shows that the main form of transport for spectators was by rail, with less than expected use of bus and trolleybus services.
- LT000232/507 3-page minutes of the first meeting of the Olympic Games Advisory Committee of London Transport, held on 8 July 1947.
- LT000233/309 Letter of thanks to the London Transport Executive from the Organising Committee of the XIVth Olympiad London 1948 dated 27 October 1948.
- LT000367/117 Detailed routeings for Olympic Games.
- LT000371/098 Publicity and decorations at stations.
- LT001208/114 Timetables of events & venues.
- LT001237/10 Programme of opening of Olympic Way, Wembley on 6 July 1948 (includes photos and map). Detailed typewritten reports and overview of London Transport's contribution to the 1948 Olympic Games

Much of the above material is currently available online through the Winning Endeavours website <http://www.winningendeavours.org/>. This website enables the searching for images relating to London's Olympic past as contributed by 25 archive repositories and is part of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

If you would like to know more, or would like to book an appointment to view any of the above items, please contact the TfL Corporate Archives at corporatearchives@tfl.gov.uk, or call us on 020 7126 1268.