

## Royal Mail

### London 1908 Olympic Games commemorative sheet



#### The first London Olympics.

Researched and designed by Neon, the Royal Mail London 1908 Olympic Games commemorative sheet was produced to mark the centenary of the IV Olympiad, held at the White City Stadium in London.

It includes insights into the sequence of events that led to London hosting the 1908 Olympic Games; the construction of the White City Stadium; and the birth of the modern marathon. It also introduces some of the notable figures and athletes of the time – including Baron Pierre de Coubertin - as well as providing a comprehensive medal table from the Games.

Neon has been working with Royal Mail from the day we started. As well as this commemorative sheet, other projects have included celebrating the 40th anniversary of Concorde (in partnership with the Royal Mint), and 10 years of the London Eye, to name just a few.

#### Kind words...

*“Thank you for all your hard work on the Royal Mail London 1908 Olympic Games commemorative sheet, it’s a great job many thanks...”*

**DEAN PRICE**  
Design Manager  
Royal Mail

## Royal Mail London 1908 Olympic Games commemorative sheet

### THE LONDON 1908 OLYMPIC GAMES

#### THE GREAT STADIUM at WHITE CITY

**THE VENUE OF THE GAMES**  
The modern Olympic Games are attributed to Baron Pierre de Coubertin. With his great personal wealth and superior political connections, he re-constituted the ancient Olympic Games in a modern form. The Games of the I Olympiad were held in 1896 in Athens.

**THE GREAT STADIUM**  
The London 1908 Olympic Games had a specially designed stadium with seating for more than 60,000. It was constructed at White City, West London, in less than two years and housed the athletics, cycling and rowing competitions.

**THE FIRST MARATHON**  
For the first time an Olympic history athlete paraded into the stadium before the national flag at the 1908 Opening Ceremony. The competitors who took part were spectators for the occasion.

**THE CITY OF LONDON**  
The Mayor of London presented a silver medal to the first runner to complete the marathon. Machine toolmaker Thomas Peddie's silver medal the 1908.

**FROM 1908 TO 2012**  
The inaugural event was a popular part of the Olympic athletic programme. Men's 100m in the United States team, but in 1908 gold, silver and bronze medals were all won by teams comprised wholly of British politicians.

**THE GREAT BRITAIN**  
After winning three AFA titles between 1900 and 1906, British rower Edmond Carron was asked to enter the eight, 'submarine' and 'mermaid'. However, in 1908 he came out of retirement to take part in the Olympic Games, and at just under 28 years of age, he won the 'submarine' title.

**THE FIRST MARATHON**  
In 1908 US athlete Ray Egan was gold medalist in both the running high jump and the running long jump. After the London Games he was thought that he might be prepared for the 1908 Olympic marathon and decided, however, to be happy as a fisherman.

**THE FIRST MARATHON**  
British sportsman Leslie Dufresne was one of the most versatile athletes of all time. Apart from taking a silver medal for archery in 1908, Dufresne also won Wimbledon for many a season and played international football for England, representing the national football team.

**THE FIRST MARATHON**  
American Martin Sheridan was regarded by many as the world's finest athlete of the early 1900s century. At the London 1908 Olympic Games he won gold medals in both discus events and a bronze in the standing long jump.

**THE FIRST MARATHON**  
In 1908 Swedish shooter Oscar Swahn was already 60 years old when he won his first Olympic gold medal. He was victorious in both the team and individual events, three single-shot events and also took bronze in the individual running over double-shot events.

Stamp Design © Royal Mail Group Ltd 2008

106110 of 10,000 (the number of Olympic tickets and commemorative stamps) by Ethiopian Kenenisa Bekele (2004)

*"The most important thing in life is not the triumph, but the fight; the essential thing is not to have won, but to have fought well."*

One of the most famous Olympic sports originated from the London 1908 Olympic Games. It was offered by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games. During a service held for the athletes at St Paul's Cathedral in London in July 1908, Coubertin had been inspired by the sentiments of Edmund Burke, the Bishop of Central Pennsylvania. His service had included the memorable words: "In these Games, the important thing is not winning, but taking part."

### THE GREAT AND HISTORICAL 1908 Olympic Marathon Race

Perhaps the most famous incident of the London 1908 Olympic Games came at the end of the marathon. The first man to enter the stadium was the Italian Dorando Pietri, but it soon became clear that something was wrong when he began running in the wrong direction and collapsed several times. Finally, two officials took him by the arms and helped him to the line. This led to his disqualification and the awarding of the gold medal to John Hayes of the USA - the fame and glory, however, belonged to Pietri. Although he did not win the race, Queen Alexandra presented him with a special gold cup in recognition of his determination.

**THE DANCE OF THE OLYMPIC MARATHON**  
In 1908 the Games Organising Committee faced the dilemma of the Olympic Marathon at 40km and then 25km - the last 10km was added to make the total from Windsor Castle to the Home Ground in the Olympic Stadium. This became the official marathon distance from 1924.