

# OLYMPIC GAMES ON FILM: HISTORIC OLYMPICS FILMS RELEASED ON BFI PLAYER



Top row L – R: *My Stoke Mandeville Story*, *A nurse at Stoke Mandeville* (1960, Wessex Film and Sound Archive), *Women's Olympiad* (1924, BFI National Archive), *Berlin and the Olympics* (1936, BFI National Archive)

Bottom row L – R: *Mining Review 14th Year No. 3* (1960, BFI National Archive), *What Makes Johnnie Run?* (1968, BFI National Archive), *Wenlock Olympics* (1980, Media Archive Central England)

**London, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016.** As the world gets ready for the 2016 Olympics in Brazil, the BFI is delighted to announce the release of a collection on BFI Player of 100 films which have been newly digitised and made available to the UK public, exploring the fascinating and inspiring history of Olympian endeavour from 1900 to 2012. The films are drawn from the collections of the BFI National Archive and regional and national archives across the UK and include footage of the Athens Olympics 1906, the original runners who inspired *Chariots of Fire* in *The Olympic Games in Paris* (1924) and England winning a football tournament in *Stockholm Olympic Games* (1912).

In addition to being available online at <http://player.bfi.org.uk/collections/olympics-on-film/> a selection of key Olympics and historic sports films will be available to view at key big screens located across the UK in August. See full list of venues below.

The modern Olympics was born in 1896, barely a year after the Lumière brothers unveiled their *cinématographe*. Neither the Lumières nor anyone else thought to send cameras to Athens 1896 - which leaves something of an enigma surrounding a film that identifies itself as **Athens 1896**. In fact, it was shot 10 years later, also in Athens, at the Intercalated Olympics of 1906 (outside the official four-yearly sequence) and features the Standing High Jump (now discontinued as an Olympic event).

There are newsreels, amateur films, official reports and television programmes representing over a century of British sporting achievement. Two films from the 1912 games - **Stockholm – The Olympic Games** and **Olympics Games 1912** – between them offer rare footage of an England team actually winning a football tournament, and some excellent demonstrations of rope climbing and group gymnastics. The longest film in the collection is the 90 minutes of **The Olympic Games in Paris 1924**, which includes runners Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell, whose story was told in the film **Chariots of Fire**. The same film has footage of the first ever Winter Olympics at Chamonix and a memorably brutal rugby final in which Olympic values seem in short supply, with stars of the French team stretchered off, leaving the field open for a USA victory. At the end (but alas not in the film), French supporters invaded the pitch but the French team sportingly defended the American victors from their fans' wrath.

Also included is an entertaining and often surprising array of games and sports that for one reason or another never quite won official Olympic status. In our **LOlympics** collection, we salute the champions of cheese rolling, pipe smoking and uphill beer barrel racing, among other unjustly underrated pursuits.

Other highlights of the Olympics on film include: *(credit: BFI National Archive unless otherwise indicated)*

**Women's Olympiad** (1924) Great (and patronising) look at women's sporting competition when the official Olympics competition was still for men only

**Olympic Flame** (1932) An intriguing Ovaltine advert which manages to weave in a report on the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics

**Berlin and the Olympics** (1936) Rare home movie footage capturing the atmosphere inside the main stadium replete with giant swastikas and a Zeppelin hovering over the crowds at the opening ceremony

**My Stoke Mandeville Story, A nurse at Stoke Mandeville (1960-61)** captures the life of a nurse in a large hospital with a rare record of the Stoke Mandeville Games, where disabled competitors participate in a variety of sports including wheelchair basketball, archery and weight lifting. Sir Ludwig Guttman, who inspired the modern Paralympic movement, is seen as well as the USA wheelchair basketball team. The 1<sup>st</sup> Paralympics took place in Rome in 1960 so this is a local, but similarly inspired, event.  
*(Credit – Wessex Film and Sound Archive)*

**Olympiad 1948** *(Credit – Screen Archive South East)* offers a view from the stands of the London Olympics' Opening and Closing ceremonies at Wembley in 1948

**Home from Melbourne: Well Done British Boxers** (1956) British boxing champs land at Heathrow, including winner of 'most stylish boxer of the Games'

**What Makes Johnnie Run?** (1968) The Rediffusion Sports unit joined 40 British athletes in their training camp in the Pyrenees, in preparation for the Mexico City Olympic Games, and tries to discover what motivates them and who might be the medal winners in Mexico

**Wenlock Olympics (1980)** (*Credit – Media Archive Central England*) Brief but delightfully kitsch look at the history behind the Olympics

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**See Olympics and historic sporting films on big screens across the UK**

- **Belfast** - Belfast City Hall, Donegall Square, Belfast, BT1 5GS Dates TBC
- **Bradford** – Centenary Square, Bradford, BD1 1SD – 6 - 21 AUGUST
- **Bristol** – Millennium Square, Waterfront, Bristol, BS1 5DB – 6 - 21 AUGUST
- **Coventry** - Millennium Place, Hales Street, Coventry, CV1 1JD – 6 - 21 AUGUST
- **Glasgow** - Merchant Square, 71 Albion Street, Glasgow, G1 1NY – 8 - 21 AUGUST
- **Leeds** - Millennium Square, Leeds, LS1 3DP – 13 - 21 AUGUST
- **London** - At BeachEast, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford, E20 2ST – 6 - 21 AUGUST
- **London** – London Bridge City, More London Riverside, Southwark, SE1 2DB – 6 - 21 AUGUST
- **Manchester** - MediaCityUK, Salford, M50 2EQ – 6 - 21 AUGUST
- **Plymouth** - Armada Way, Plymouth, PL1 1HH – 6 - 21 AUGUST
- **Swansea** - Castle Square, Swansea, SA1 1JF – 6 - 21 AUGUST

**STILLS: A selection of images for journalistic use can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under**

BFI UK Publicity > BFI > Britain on Film > 2016 > Olympics

**USE OF FOOTAGE: Embed codes for individual films can be used to promote the collection on websites by arrangement with the Press Office**

**INTERVIEWS: BFI National Archive curator and Olympics programmer: Kathleen Luckey is available for selected interviews**

**About the BFI**

The BFI is the lead organisation for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger

### **About the BFI National Archive**

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 750,000 television programmes. For over 80 years the BFI has been an international leader in film preservation and guardian of Britain's unparalleled film and TV heritage. The BFI is an innovator in presenting films to audiences in new and dynamic ways, from cinemas to film festivals, outdoor events to online video-on-demand. At the heart of all its activities is the BFI's central aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the widest possible range of film and their own film heritage.

That heritage includes all time great British directors Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Powell and Pressburger; and the rich vein of documentary filmmaking, in which Britain led the world, including the lyrical work of Humphrey Jennings. The archive also boasts a significant collection of filmmakers' papers as well as extensive stills, posters and production and costume designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera.

Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films at the BFI John Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre in Hertfordshire. The BFI's most precious film materials are kept in optimum conditions in the world-leading Master Film Store in Warwickshire.

### **ABOUT BRITAIN ON FILM AND UNLOCKING FILM HERITAGE**

Britain on Film is one of the largest and most complex archival projects ever undertaken and is part of the BFI's Unlocking Film Heritage programme (2013-17). Unlocking film heritage for everyone in the UK to enjoy is a key strategic priority for the BFI, and Britain on Film is the public launch of a vast programme of work, which has been ongoing for over three years. Bringing together a partnership with Regional and National Film Archives and rights holder collections across the UK, this work has included a

sophisticated programme of data capture, cataloguing, copying to archival standards, meticulous preservation of original materials, thorough searching of archives across the country, new state-of-the-art equipment and digital storage facilities and the transfer of films to the BFI's online video platform, BFI Player.

Unlocking Film Heritage and Britain on Film are thanks to £15 million funding from the National Lottery and the additional support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

**Britain on Film is a project from the BFI National Archive and the UK's Regional and National Film Archives**

#### **ABOUT THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVES**

The English Regional Film Archives and other National Film Archives (listed below) hold significant collections of film and video material specifically relevant to their regions or hold dedicated collections (such as Imperial War Museums), preserved in specialised storage facilities and made widely available for education, research, communities and the wider public.

East Anglian Film Archive

Imperial War Museums

London's Screen Archives

Media Archive for Central England at the University of Lincoln

North East Film Archive

North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University

Northern Ireland Screen Digital Film Archive

Scottish Screen Archive

Screen Archive South East

South West Film & Television Archive

National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales

Wessex Film and Sound Archive

Yorkshire Film Archive



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