

Community Engagement and  
Preserving the “Legacy” of London  
2012:  
Case Study of the British Olympic  
Association Archive at UEL

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# Focus of the Talk

- ▶ This talk will be jointly presented by the University of East London Archives Team of Monna Matharu and Paul Dudman.
- ▶ We will undertake a case study reflection of the role of “legacy” in relation to the London 2012 Olympic Games as represented within the British Olympic Association (BOA) Archive which is deposited within the UEL Archives.
- ▶ We will be focusing on the respective conference themes of:
  - ▶ Whose legacy stories are heard and whose are not heard? And :
  - ▶ How can Universities contribute to inclusive regeneration/good growth in areas with high levels of deprivation such as East London?
- ▶ We will consider the BOA Archives as a case study example the cultural legacy of London 2012 is represented within the “official” archive of TeamGB, documenting British engagement with the Olympic Movement from 1906 to the present, covering three London Olympic Games.
- ▶ We will also consider the role of UEL in helping to facilitate and encourage community engagement with our archive collections, enabling voices that have previously not been heard to have their place within the archival space.

# Legacy and London 2012

- ▶ “10 years after a the eyes of the world were fixed on a small part of East London, the Old Stratford has been cut off and more hidden than ever.” (Cuddeford, 2022).
- ▶ Courtney (Stratford resident) : “` Everyone’s moved out,’ he continued. ` Either the rent got pushed up too much or the council moved them out. Nothing they said about the Olympics was true. Here things got worse. It’s a ghetto area where people feel unsafe and forgotten about.” (Garner-Purkis, 2022).
- ▶ Courtney (Stratford resident) “It’s almost becoming a forgotten wasteland. Nothing goes to where the community actually lives, they don’t even cut the bloody grass. All the investment goes to frontline Stratford so tourists think they are in a nice affluent area.” (Garner-Purkis, 2022).

# Conflicting Narratives - Official & Community

- ▶ The concept of “legacy” especially as it related to the impact of the London 2012 Olympic Games on all aspects of society and economics within East London is inevitably “contested.”
- ▶ There is a polarisation of views between the “official” narrative of London 2012 being one of the most successful Olympic Games on record; both in terms of the hosting of the Games; the regeneration of a deprived area of East London; and the success of TeamGB in the home Olympics!
- ▶ Compared with many community responses to the London Olympics of 2012 which challenge the inclusivity of the Games and the “broken promises” of a lasting legacy on issues relating to affordable housing and additional support for local businesses and communities living within the London Borough of Newham.

# UEL and the Archive

- ▶ The University of East London (UEL) presented itself as the Local University for London 2012 Olympic Games.
- ▶ Both Team USA and the TeamGB Medical Team used the UEL Docklands Campus as a base for the 2012 Games.
  - ▶ Equipment for our UEL Sports Dock Gym was funded through Team USA and has only just been replaced after a decade, with the existing gym equipment being offered to community organisations.
  - ▶ Newham community access to the Gym has been seen as one of the legacy outcomes of the Olympics.
- ▶ Several UEL students participated in London 2012 and UEL's commitment to supporting sports scholars has been a major selling point for the UEL post 2012.
- ▶ Given UEL's proximity to the Olympic Park, this was one of the key drivers for the University being awarded the British Olympic Association Archive and Library awarded in 2010 after a tendering process.

# The BOA Archives

- ▶ The BOA Archive contains material detailing the history of both British participation in the Olympic Games and also the history and development of Olympianism as a movement. The BOA Archive covers the period from 1906 to the Present Day and Beyond.
- ▶ Archive of the BOA as an Organisation - incorporating traditional primary archival materials including:
  - ▶ Correspondence,
  - ▶ Minutes of meetings, and sub-committees
  - ▶ Administrative and financial records
  - ▶ Material relating to London's hosting of the Olympic Games in 1908; 1948; and 2012.
  - ▶ Organisational records and press cuttings.
  - ▶ Photographs; Invitations, programmes and tickets; biographical materials; publicity materials; etc
  - ▶ Artefacts and Memorabilia

# LOCOG, the BOA and London 2012

- ▶ The records of LOCOG (the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games) are now located at The National Archives in Kew.
- ▶ Mostly digital records equivalent to about five terabytes (5TB) of data - comparable to around 50 kilometres of paper records. Further information on the TNA Discovery website at:  
[discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/details?Uri=C13273031](http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/details?Uri=C13273031)
- ▶ In relation to London 2012, the BOA Archives hold both documentary and physical artefacts evidencing the “legacy” of TeamGB’s involvement in London 2012.

# Representation of “Legacy” in the BOA Archives

- ▶ In terms of how the British Olympic Association has represented London 2012 and its “legacy”, this has very much been to focus on the positive success of the British Olympic Team that competed in London 2012.
- ▶ Given the role of the British Olympic Association as the National Olympic Committee (NOC) for Great Britain and Northern Ireland, it is perhaps inevitable that the Archive should have this focus, with an emphasis on documenting the work of the BOA as an organisation and highlighting the successes of the British Teams at the Olympic Games.
- ▶ Records to date which document London 2012 in particular, these include the preparation of the London 2012 Olympic Team and related documentation linked to LOCAG for the preparation of the Olympic Village.
- ▶ A recent deposit also includes extensive plans and information on the development and construction of the Olympic Village in Stratford.
- ▶ Post the London 2012 Games, there is a strong focus on collecting the celebratory aspects of TeamGB’s success, including extensive press cuttings and the collection of physical artefacts belonging to Team GB members.



# Archives as Legacy of London 2012 1

- ▶ What is perhaps less evident in the BOA Archives and the LOCAG Archives, both of which err towards the provision of the official narratives of London 2012, are the community voices of those who were either involved with the London 2012 Olympics in some capacity (volunteers, Games Makers, etc) or whose lived experience was directly impacted by the London 2012 Olympics.
- ▶ A few community organisations like Eastside Community Heritage have attempted to bridge this gap by undertaking community-focused oral history projects, for example, *Olympic Memories: Olympic Boroughs Past, Present and Future*; and *Tubular Bells and Copper Flowers*.
- ▶ However, these community focused collections do tend to get lost within the wider dominant narrative associated with affirming London 2012 as a success story. Do local archives need to do more in terms of community engagement and outreach to ensure these under-represented narratives are documented, whilst ensuring the ethics of such engagement.

# Archives as Legacy of London 2012 2a (Challenges)

- ▶ Can documenting the history of the London 2012 Olympic Games through archival collecting be seen as a lasting legacy component of the Games?
- ▶ What are the challenges and opportunities associated with this approach?
- ▶ Challenges:
  - ▶ Who is collecting what, where and how?
  - ▶ Does the archival legacy of London 2012 actually exist and in what forms? E.g. digital, analogue, oral history, artefacts, community records, individual memorabilia from athletes, coaches, support staff, volunteers, games makers and members of the public?
  - ▶ Challenges of preserving access to born digital materials, e.g. East London Legacy 2012 project at UEL.
  - ▶ Funding opportunities which adequately provide opportunities for preserving legacy.

# Archives as Legacy of London 2012 2b (Challenges)

- ▶ Can documenting the history of the London 2012 Olympic Games through archival collecting be seen as a lasting legacy component of the Games?
- ▶ Opportunities:
  - ▶ Tenth anniversary marks an opportunity for greater cross institutional collaboration to ensure greater access to London 2012 themed materials and project-related funding opportunities. For example, working with Newham Council's Archives in Stratford.
  - ▶ Cross-institutional projects focusing on contemporary collecting of materials reflecting on the history of London 2012 and its legacy, both good and bad. For example, the collaborative inter-generational project between London Stadium Learning and the BOA Archives at UEL funded by the HLF and entitled, 'Passing the Flame.' See: <https://passingtheflame.uk/>
  - ▶ Collaboration with organisations to help document and preserve Olympic heritage, e.g. Wenlock Olympian Society; The National Paralympic Trust; and others.
  - ▶ Working in collaboration with community heritage organisations like Eastside Community Heritage and Newham Heritage Month to help document community-focused responses to the London 2012 Olympic Games.

# Archives as Legacy of London 2012 - Clays Lane Live Archive

- ▶ One example we found whilst researching for this paper is the Clays Lane Live Archive held at the Bishopsgate Institute.
- ▶ Clays Lane Housing Co-operative was the second largest purpose-built, fully mutual, singles co-op in Europe and the largest in the UK. It was an experiment in building close-knit communities as a way of helping vulnerable single people in East London. Initiated by the Borough of Newham, the Housing Corporation and the then North East London Polytechnic (now University of East London) in 1977.
- ▶ In 2006 the co-op received a compulsory purchase order from the London Development Agency. In 2005 the co-op lost its fully mutual status as a result of a Housing Corporation enquiry, which transferred its assets to Peabody Trust. This effectively made protecting the co-op (by this time the Clays Lane estate) against the Olympics even harder. At the time of eviction 430 people inhabited the Lane.
- ▶ Link: <https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/collections/clays-lane-live-archive>

# BOA Archives & Community Engagement

- ▶ Newham Heritage Month 2022. Supported a number of community organisations to access the BOA Archive in preparation for their own community led/focused projects in 2022. These included:
- ▶ Sylvia Morgardo and Sylvie Belbouab visited the BOA Archives in preparation for their Newham Heritage Month project to research the 2012 Cultural Olympiad for their `Art in the Park` project which focused on the cultural events which took place in the Olympic Park in Stratford during London 2012.
- ▶ Pākiki Theatre's Vickie Holden and Raewyn Lippert visited the BOA Archive to research their theatre production for children entitled `Who Want's to be an Olympian?`
- ▶ Supporting Ranelagh Primary School with their `Run Ranelagh Run - a school's archive journey with Salvatore Rubbino.`
- ▶ Newham Heritage Month = <https://www.newhamheritagemonth.org/>

# Participatory Community Focused Engagement

- ▶ UEL Archives has a commitment to participatory collaborative community-based projects with the aim of working with and supporting community organisations in helping to shape community-focused projects documenting community heritage.
- ▶ Our work aims to be inter-disciplinary enabling the cross-pollination of ideas across departments and communities facilitating and enabling innovative new approaches to engaging with local communities and respecting their memories and heritage.
- ▶ Recent heritage projects, we have undertaken community projects focusing on migratory lived experiences; Olympic history; and community heritage projects in East London, have provided opportunities for both students and locals in exploring co-production and empowerment.
- ▶ Engaging with local communities and organisations and listening to how they want their community histories to be told and how we can support this work.

# Tate Lives - Listening to the Community

## - What Stories Do They Want To Tell?

- ▶ “Neighbourhoods are made up of many communities with precious memories in locals’ hearts and minds. Spaces and places for residents to meet are often the glue that holds neighbourhoods together, bringing a sense of belonging and support. What is valued are places open in the evenings and weekends to relax, socialise and build local relationships in an organic way.”  
*Emma-Jane Crace, Royal Docks Community Voice.*
- ▶ This quote, taken from our Tate Lives project documenting the community history of North Woolwich and Silvertown in East London, reflects on the importance of “legacy” being grounded in the community experience ensuring that our work is focused on preserving not only the “official narratives” but those stories and memories which are preserved within our communities.
- ▶ Our work needs to be responsive to these histories and ensure we are listening to all of the voices within our community and working with them to ensure we are preserving a more rounded “legacy” of the Olympics in London.

# Contact Details

- ▶ UEL Archives
  - ▶ Link: <https://www.uel.ac.uk/study/student-life/library-archives-learning-services/library-archive>
  - ▶ Twitter: [@ArchivesUEL](https://twitter.com/ArchivesUEL)
  
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