

The Athletics Museum: a AAA Legacy Project



**Amateur
Athletic Association**

In summer 2018, AAA formally identified the project of creating a museum of athletics as part of their legacy to the sport. Since then, a small team has been working to put this plan into action. Thank you for your interest in and support for the project; this newsletter provides an update on our progress to date.

We've deliberately kept this to two sides of A4 (and very low-tech to emphasise the need for a skilled volunteer) – if you can help us to identify material for exhibitions, would like to volunteer with the project or to receive further information, please get in touch and pass this on to interested friends. Our current exhibition plans are listed overleaf but if you have ideas for other topics or can help us to identify objects or recordings which will tell more stories, we would love to hear from you.

Why do we need a museum of athletics?

The Athletics Museum (TAM) aims:

to identify, preserve and display material which tells the story of athletics

to provide an appropriate space for events which sustain and celebrate the sport of athletics and engage the museum's local community

to develop resources to demonstrate the importance of athletics to local communities across the country

to show visitors that through athletics "Everyone can set a personal best"

TAM's exhibitions, displays and activities will highlight the enormous range of stories that can be told through images, audio and video recordings, objects, and statistics about individuals of every age, ability, and background who have exceeded their own expectations through athletics. From sports days to park runs, club stalwarts to Olympic champions, TAM's stories will show how athletics inspires our hearts and minds.



What progress have we made so far?

The heart of the museum's collection will be the silver trophies awarded to winners of (W)AAA and England Senior Championships. Research into the history and conservation of these trophies has given us a clear idea not only of the potential exhibitions the museum can display but also of the administration and record-keeping required to bring out the unique contribution athletics has made to communities in the UK.

The donors of which trophies provide links to: the Gunpowder Plot, the first use of aerial photography for archaeology, a royal kidnap, 'the Death of Dirce' sculpture in Tate Britain, the abolition of slavery, the world altitude record, Lillie Langtry, and swimming the Nile Rapids?

For the last two seasons, England Senior Champions have received a presentation sheet compiled by TAM along with their trophy. These sheets give an overview of the traditions, heritage, and previous champions of each event, identifying new winners with the stories and achievements of those who have won the

trophy before them. Feedback from athletes, as well as their parents and coaches, has demonstrated the value today's champions place on their link to former champions.



We're now aiming to develop this with a 'pop-up' exhibition at the English Schools Championships this summer showing just some of the stories of athletes who have progressed from ESAA's extraordinary annual competition to securing AAA trophies and international honours in a variety of disciplines, not all of them in track and field. The work of our volunteer John Mackie is demonstrating the enormous depth of material available here. At an international level, the power of the stories which the trophies reveal was given (multiple) gold-medal winning status in June when Philip Andrew used the Hassan Pacha Men's 100m trophy to highlight the achievements of Arthur Wharton to Usain Bolt.

Behind the scenes, we've identified best practice in the conservation of silver with the help of Birmingham Museums, who have also helped us with the photography of the trophies. We were in good hands with David Rowan, whose experience includes shooting the images you will have seen of the Staffordshire Hoard, and earlier with Ruth Brennan at the Royal College of Art. Training sessions with West Midlands Museum Development, Collections Trust and the Oral History Society have also allowed us to identify what information we need to record about the objects (real and virtual) in our collection, not to mention how long recording everything takes.

As well as all of you who generously gave up their time at the consultation meetings we held in June, we would like to thank AAA Board members, England Athletics, NUTS, ESAA and Birchfield Harriers for their ongoing support of the museum project. In addition to the professional advice noted above, we have also benefitted from sessions with Sporting Heritage, the Army Museums Ogilby Trust, the Hockey Museum, the Association of Independent Museums and the Assay Office in Birmingham.

What are the plans for 2020?

Pop-up exhibitions in key topics: ESAA, centenary of WAAA, 'Running the Sport: athletics during 150 years of AAA', 'Breaking Barriers: 4 and 5 minute miles', 'Great Rivalries'.

Online and social media presence

Create volunteering team (most roles can be carried out at home and training can be provided, contact us for job descriptions and further information): volunteer co-ordinator, collections archivist, communications and/ or social media manager, exhibition teams, oral history interviewers and administrator.

Set up a board of trustees and confirm administrative arrangements

Schools resources for Ancient Olympics Sports Days

Heritage toolkits for clubs and associations

Get in touch by contacting

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