

# THE 1908 OLYMPICS AND THE ENTENTE CORDIALE

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## *Introduction*

When London hosted the *Olympic Games* in 2012, the overall setting was one of multiculturalism. This was London's first post-colonial *Olympics*, and this mood manifested itself at every turn, from the multi-ethnic make up of Team GB (albeit only in a marginal way in some sports) to the cross-cultural music, dance, and spectacle that characterised the opening and closing ceremonies and the Cultural Olympiad. London promoted itself as a cosmopolitan city that was able to welcome the world, and as the capital of a United Kingdom that had built its identity on a unique mix of tradition, diversity, experimentation, and progress: any ceremony that involved the Queen, Dizzee Rascal, a re-enactment of the *Industrial Revolution*, and a celebration of the *National Health Service* tells us a great deal about how London wanted itself to be seen by the world.

This was, of course, London's third *Olympic Games*, following on from those of 1948 and 1908. The context could not have been more different at each turn. In 1948, the mood was one of post-war celebration in a setting of financial austerity, with the first steps of decolonisation being played out as the teams from newly-independent India and Pakistan arrived. Forty years earlier, London's first *Olympics* had been held in the heyday of British imperialism. Each of London's three *Olympics* has thus been firmly rooted in its wider cultural and political setting.

However, a key feature of the setting of the 1908 *Olympics* that is easily overlooked by historians is that of the *Entente Cordiale*, the 1904 agreement that characterised the diplomatic, commercial, and cultural relationship between France and the United Kingdom (UK), and that helped to set the tone for military co-operation between the two empires.<sup>1</sup> While the Games were both international and imperial in their setting, they would not have happened without the *Franco-British Exhibition*, the trade fair that provided the Stadium and many of the facilities for the Games. This article offers an exploration of that setting, and a discussion of some of the ways in which the good relations of the *Entente Cordiale* were played out in the *Olympic Games* themselves.

## *The Franco-British Exhibition*

The *Franco-British Exhibition of Science, Arts and Industry* was held in the west London suburb of Shepherds Bush between May and October 1908.<sup>2</sup> It was organised by commercial and political stakeholders in France and the UK as a way of promoting the manufacturing industries of the two countries to each other, and as way of celebrating the achievements of the two countries and their empires. It was one of the most public manifestations of the *Entente Cordiale*, the agreement signed by Lord Lansdowne, the British Foreign Secretary, and Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador to London, on 8 April 1904. The Entente committed France and the UK to closer relations in the wake of Franco-British imperial disputes in Egypt and Sudan, and at a time when Germany's imperial aspirations were frightening strategists in both Paris and London. By signing the Entente, the two governments recognised each other's spheres of influence in the areas that had been disputed, notably French primacy in Morocco and British domination in Egypt. Military talks soon followed, and the Entente gradually evolved, with the inclusion of Russia through the 1907 *Anglo-Russian Entente*, into a military relationship.<sup>3</sup> Alongside this high diplomacy and military planning, the Entente created the climate for improved cultural and trade links between the two countries. The Franco-British Exhibition was the most public manifestation of this alignment.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after the *Entente Cordiale* was signed, the idea for the Exhibition emerged from talks between the *London Chamber of Commerce*, which represented the city's businesses, and the *French Chamber of Commerce* in London. Cambon supported the plan, as did the Lord Mayor of London and, from the House of Lords, the Duke of Argyll. Building on the French experience of staging spectacular exhibitions that had been forged in the expositions of 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900,<sup>5</sup> Cambon and his colleagues developed the idea that a major trade fair, with educational and cultural features and plenty of fun and entertainment, could promote both business and peace. The British were less experienced in this kind of enterprise, having done relatively little at the national level to capitalise on the experiences of the 1851 *Great Exhibition* in *Hyde Park*. The opportunity to host this major event in 1908 was thus broadly welcomed.

The task of designing the Exhibition went to Imre Kiralfy as Director-General.<sup>6</sup> Kiralfy, née Königsbaum, was a Hungarian-born Jewish émigré who had been naturalised as British in 1901. He was one of the world's leading designers of spectacles. His recent London shows had included a Venetian extravaganza, complete with canals and gondolas, in the Olympia exhibition hall in Kensington, and a Parisian-themed show at Earls Court. He started work on the *Franco-British Exhibition* in 1906, using a 140 acre (56.6 hectare) site in Shepherds Bush, an emerging suburb at the western edge of London. The site was largely undeveloped, with only a farm and some small-scale brick-making

works on it, and the necessarily remote facilities of *Wormwood Scrubs Prison*, which had opened in 1875, and Hammersmith workhouse and infirmary, founded in 1902, to the north. The Exhibition site had good suburban rail and tram links to the east and south which connected it to the rest of the city and the expanding suburbs. Construction work started in January 1907, and over the next 14 months, 12,000 men worked to build the infrastructure and buildings needed for the event.

Kiralfy's design, working within the Exhibition's brief of promoting France and Britain and their empires to each other and to the rest of the world, was eye-catching and spectacular: indeed, Kiralfy reflected on it in 1909 as 'the summit of my life's achievement in public spectacle', and described the necessity of a design concept that was 'at once novel and commanding, something in keeping with the greatness of the project'.<sup>7</sup> Two architects – John Belcher from Britain and Marius Toudoire from France – oversaw the design of the buildings within Kiralfy's overall plan. The list of buildings is impressive. It included the large showcases of a Palace of Industry for each of the nations, along with exhibition buildings based around such themes as Education, Applied Art, Fine Art, Decorative Art, Music, Machinery, Pure Science, French Artisans, and Women's Work. The Parisian city authorities had their own Municipal Pavilion, joined by the Imperial Pavilion, the Pavilion Louis XV, the Royal Pavilion, and the Franco-British Pavilion. Both countries' empires were represented with dedicated spaces, including exhibition halls, Indian and Ceylonese tea houses, the Algerian and Tunisian Pavilion, the French Indo-Chinese building, and mock communities including the Senegalese Village, populated with 150 Senegalese natives taken to London for the duration of the Exhibition, the Ceylon Village, and Ballymaclinton, a faux Irish village sponsored by a soap manufacturer. There were also fun-fair style rides, including the Flip Flap and the Spiral Railway, as well as many places for eating and drinking. The buildings give a good indication of the range of the Exhibition, and its agenda in educating and entertaining its visitors while simultaneously facilitating networking for businesses and governments.<sup>8</sup> In all, approximately 140 buildings constructed specially for the Exhibition, most of them being based on steel frames with plaster cladding and a brilliant white finish. It was this colour scheme, and a reference back to the design of the *World's Columbian Exposition* held in Chicago in 1893, that quickly earned the site the name of the *White City*.<sup>9</sup> The name that stuck, so much so that the area today is still known today as *White City* even though none of the Exhibition buildings survive. However, for our purposes it is also useful to note an alternative name that the site was given in the *Illustrated London News*: 'The Temple of the Entente Cordiale'.<sup>10</sup>

The theme of Franco-British friendship and co-operation that ran through the site's design and layout was also evident in the Exhibition's administration, advertising, and merchandising. The organisers recruited large and small companies from both sides of the Channel to display their products, ranging from

French *Chocolatiers Menier* to the *Bushmills Distillery*, and taking in heavy machinery, textiles, armaments, food and drink, cigarettes, photography, printers, chemists, household goods, and providers of gas and electrical energy. The paperwork that went to these exhibitors, such as directions and labels for display in vehicles and on stands, was printed in French or English, depending on each exhibitor's nationality.<sup>11</sup> A panel of 510 judges and 54 experts awarded prizes for different aspects of the Exhibition: in both groups, half of the officials were French, and half were British.<sup>12</sup> Posters for the Exhibition were characterised by an iconography of peace and Franco-British friendship, such as the Art Nouveau-inspired image of a female figure representing Peace surrounded by the Union Flag and the Tricolour that appeared across London and on some railway companies' advertisements.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Marianne and John Bull appeared together on numerous Exhibition products, such as the front cover of the official souvenir programme, where Marianne was shown playfully pinning a flower to John Bull's lapel. Numerous picture postcards also re-enforced the message, with photographs of the Exhibition's buildings appearing in frames embellished with the two nations' flags.<sup>14</sup> Such images, which were widely distributed before and during the Exhibition, helped to cement the idea of Franco-British friendship in the most public way. This was reinforced by the high profile presence of politicians from both countries, and British royalty and members of the House of Lords, in the Exhibition's ceremonial aspects, which had their high point when President Armand Fallières travelled to London for the opening ceremony on 14 May 1908. King Edward VII met him off the train at Victoria Station, and the two were filmed and photographed travelling to Shepherd's Bush for the event, and at various sites within the Exhibition grounds. The pictures were widely published in the press, helping to underline the cultural bond of the Entente at the highest level of state.

Before the *Olympics* became linked to the Exhibition, the organisers were already planning to include sport and physical exercise within the setting of Franco-British exchange. They planned an ambitious stadium, complete with running track, trotting track, and even a motor racing track which would have run around the perimeter of the entire Exhibition grounds with a starting and finishing straight inside the stadium.<sup>15</sup> This plan (minus the motor racing and with some other amendments) later became the template for the *Olympic Stadium*. In addition, native villagers in the various colonial displays put on exhibitions of physical culture. These displays clearly worked to emphasise the colonial otherness of indigenous peoples: the Senegalese danced and, when visitors threw coins into the pond in their 'village', they dived to retrieve them. There was also a purpose-built Indian Arena with seating for 3,000 spectators, where the famous German animal promoters Hagenbeck staged an Indian spectacular featuring acrobatics, wrestling, snake-charming, and races between men and animals, as well as a demonstration of elephants lifting tree trunks and sliding down a chute into a lake. These displays of physical culture read now as falling

somewhere between circus acts and the controversial anthropology days of the 1904 *Louisiana Purchase Exposition* in St Louis which had gone on alongside the previous *Olympic Games*.<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that, in the context of rising tensions over British rule in Ireland, the villagers of Ballymaclinton were not invited to display their own sports: a GAA demonstration in a showcase for imperial London would not have been well-advised for the planners.

This, then, was the *Franco-British Exhibition*: a theme park of the two empires designed to promote business while entertaining and informing the visitors about the life, culture, and industries of the two countries and their empires. It proved popular, with an estimated 8,000,000 visitors over the course of the year. It was Britain's largest exhibition since 1851, and it set a standard for later major exhibitions, such as the 1924 *British Empire Exhibition* at Wembley and the Festival of Britain in 1951.<sup>17</sup> It was all based around Franco-British friendship, with commercial and ceremonial aspects serving to reinforce the *Entente Cordiale*. However, a new element was to come into this setting when, in 1906, the *International Olympic Committee* (IOC) took the *British Olympic Association* (BOA) up on their offer of hosting the 1908 *Olympic Games*.

### *The Olympic Games*

The story of how the 1908 *Olympics* became attached to the *Franco-British Exhibition* has been told in detail elsewhere.<sup>18</sup> Briefly, the original host city was Rome, but the Italian government refused to assist the project, particularly in view of the cost of relief work after an eruption of *Mount Vesuvius* in April 1906, although, as Llewellyn has shown, the volcanic disaster was a pretext for Rome's withdrawal, not its cause.<sup>19</sup> With the IOC looking for a host, Lord Desborough, Chairman of the BOA, lobbied Pierre de Coubertin at the 1906 *Inter-calated Olympics* in Athens, and the IOC accepted London's offer. The BOA accordingly set up a working group, the *British Olympic Council* (BOC), to manage the Games. With only two years between London being named as host and the Games being due to start, a merger with the *Franco-British Exhibition*, which was already in the planning stages, made sense. Desborough convinced the Exhibition's organisers to take the Games on: after all, the 1900 Olympics had been held as part of the *Paris Exposition Universelle*,<sup>20</sup> and the 1904 *Olympics* had similarly been linked to a trade fair, the *Louisiana Purchase Exposition*.<sup>21</sup> Neither of these Games had been a great success in advancing Coubertin's Olympic project after its promising start in Athens in 1896: indeed, the IOC's President and founder did not attend the St Louis *Olympics*. However, with two of the first three *Olympics* linked to expositions, it was easy to see this arrangement as something of a norm. It certainly made sense to the BOC, as so much of the transport and marketing infrastructure that they needed to stage the Games would, thanks to the Exhibition, already be in place. In return, the Exhi-

bition's organisers saw the commercial benefits of the promoting the *Olympics*, as they banked on the international sport bringing in extra paying customers to the trade fair, and they duly paid the construction costs for the Stadium in return for 75% of all gate receipts.<sup>22</sup> The engineer John Webster of the local construction firm George Wimpey got the job of designing what became the world's first purpose-built *Olympic Stadium* at a cost of £60,000). He located it in the north-east corner of the Exhibition site, exactly where the Exhibition's organisers had planned to put their stadium anyway before the *Olympics* became involved: as Cook put it in the BOC's official report, they were lucky to have the 'versatile and imaginatively-creative' Kiralfy at the helm, as, 'among the many attractions his inventive brain had devised was an enormous arena for the display of various kinds of sport'.<sup>23</sup> Work started in August 1907, and the Stadium was ready for its first test event on 14 May 1908, the day on which the *Franco-British Exhibition* opened. Paul Cambon joined the Prince of Wales and Lord Desborough to watch an athletics match between the Polytechnic Harriers and the Finchley Harriers.

The Stadium was unique. With separate tracks for flat races and hurdles surrounded by a banked concrete cycling track, and an infield big enough for field events, archery, football, lacrosse, hockey and rugby union, it would have been impressive enough. With the addition of a 100-metre swimming pool, complete with a retractable 10-metre diving platform, we can get a scale of the task. This is enhanced when we consider that the stadium could house anywhere between 70,000 and 90,000 people, making it among the largest sports grounds in the world at this time. It became known as the *Great Stadium* and the *Olympic Stadium*, only later taking on the name of the *White City Stadium* after the Exhibition buildings.<sup>24</sup>

The BOC wanted to stage as much of the Olympic programme as possible in this showcase, but they recognised early on that this was not feasible.<sup>25</sup> Each sport's governing body took charge of the planning, and 11 of the 23 bodies took their events to their existing specialist clubs and venues. For example, lawn tennis went to the *All-England Club* at *Wimbledon*, shooting was split between the Army's base at Bisley and Surrey and Uxendon School in north-west London, and the *Prince's Club* in Knightsbridge hosted the first Olympic figure skating event. Similarly, the water-based sports were all held outside London, with the rowing at Henley-on-Thames, the yachting off Ryde on the Isle of Wight, and the motorboating in Southampton Water. With this wide range of sports involved, the *Olympics* started on 27 April with the racquets singles at *Queen's Club*, and ended on 31 October with the final of the hockey tournament at the Stadium. The centrepiece, though, was the fortnight of competition at the Stadium, which started on 13 July and ended on 25 July. However, many of these events were poorly-attended and drew on a limited range of nations for their competitors: indeed, in the polo and racquets events, held at Hurlingham and Queens respectively, only Great Britain competed. Instead, it

was the Olympic fortnight that was widely promoted as being the main attraction. Throughout the months before the opening ceremony on 13 July, the promoters advertised these as part of the wider *Franco-British Exhibition* experience. The *Olympics* had come to London because of the Exhibition and the Entente, and this was a key framing device as they approached. In what ways did this affect the sports? Did the spirit of the Entente manifest itself in the management of the *Olympics*?

### *Franco-British Relations in Action*

The first way in which we can see France's special place is in the size of the team that it sent to London. Despite generally excellent contemporary record keeping, particularly in comparison to the chaotic details of competitors at the 1900 and 1904 *Olympic Games*, there are some disputes over the exact number of people who took part in London. Mallon and Buchanan's excellent book has been used here, but even their figures can be open to minor debate.<sup>26</sup> In all, 23 nations were represented, with a total of 2,023 competitors – 1,979 men and 44 women. Of these, at a time of amateurism and expensive international travel, it is unsurprising that the largest single national grouping was that from the United Kingdom: 736 of the 2,023 (36%) were British, and, as we have seen, only Britons competed in some events. France, however, supplied the second largest contingent with 208 competitors, 10% of the total, or 16% of the non-British field. The French team was made up only of men – apart from Great Britain, only Germany and Sweden sent any women to the Games. The 208 French compare favourably to other team sizes. Apart from Great Britain and France, only three other nations sent teams of over one hundred – Sweden with 168, the USA with 122, and the Netherlands with 113. Obviously, France's close proximity to London helped here, but with Belgium sending only 70 competitors, Germany 83, and Switzerland having a sole representative in hammer thrower Julius Wagner, it was not just about geography. The links between French and British sport that Olympic founder Pierre de Coubertin had engendered,<sup>27</sup> and the wider atmosphere of the Entente, ensured a large French presence in London.

The large British presence ensured that there was at least one British representative in each of the 23 sports, and the final medal count – Great Britain won 56 golds, with the second-placed USA on 23 – is a testament to home advantage in this period. The French competed in 13 of the 23 sports: archery, athletics, boxing, cycling, fencing, football, gymnastics, hockey, motorboating, shooting, swimming, tennis, and yachting. Their largest contingents were in gymnastics, in which 59 Frenchman took part, with other large teams present in cycling (23 competitors), fencing (22), and football (22). Maurice Germot cut a lonely figure as the sole French representative at Wimbledon for the lawn ten-

nis event, where he won his first round match and then got through to the last eight thanks to a walk-over, before withdrawing himself from the quarter-final match against eventual winner Josiah Ritchie. Similarly, Emile Thubron is listed as the only French competitor in the motorboating, although it now appears that he was British by birth and parentage, having been born Ernest Blackelock Thubron in Durham in 1861, the son of a Durham-born dock manager.<sup>28</sup> Mallon and Buchanan cite a 1916 book that claimed Thubron passed himself off as French in order to 'give an international flavor' to the otherwise all-British event.<sup>29</sup> If we include him as French – and he certainly raced in a French-built boat – then the French performance across these 13 sports garnered five gold medals, five silvers, and nine bronzes, and they finished fourth in the medal table behind Great Britain, the USA, and Sweden. Two of the gold medals came in fencing (both in the épée, with Gaston Alibert winning the individual event and the French also winning the team event), with one each in cycling (Maurice Schilles and André Auffray in the 2,000 metre tandem) and archery (Eugène Grisot in the continental style event). The last gold belonged to the ambiguous Mr/M Ernest/Emile Thubron.

The sizeable French team thus performed respectably. However, it is in the behind the scenes sporting diplomacy of the 1908 *Olympic Games* that we can see the *Entente Cordiale* most clearly being played out. The British Foreign Office and its representatives abroad were inexperienced in dealing with sport at this period. As Polley has shown, there had only been a handful of incidents before 1908 of politicians, diplomats, and civil servants involving themselves in international sport as a way of influencing diplomatic relations.<sup>30</sup> In 1908, with Great Britain hosting the Olympic for the first time, there was a slight increase in this kind of activity, and the related settings of the *Franco-British Exhibition* and the *Entente Cordiale* ensured that all of this diplomacy related to the French.

The diplomacy was minor, and was nothing like the Foreign Office interventions that were later to characterise the inter-war period in relation to Italian, Japanese, Soviet, and German sport, but there were some telling incidents nonetheless. On 27 June 1908, French Ambassador Paul Cambon wrote to the Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, to ask if French competitors in the shooting competition could bring their sporting guns into Britain without having to pay any import duties. The Foreign Office worked on this, and found that there were no such duties, but they liaised with the Treasury and the Customs authorities to ensure that the movement of sporting arms happened smoothly.<sup>31</sup> This basic example of logistical help set the tone, a tone that ran through the more significant intervention. In March 1908, E. Seirn of the *Fédération Française des Sociétés d'Aviron* wrote to Sir Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador to Paris, to complain about the British organisation of the Olympic rowing. His concern was that the French had been told to register their team members by 1 June 1908, whereas other countries had been given until 30

June. Seirn feared that this would put the French at a disadvantage, and he asked Bertie and the Foreign Office to use their influence to effect a change. Bertie's initial reaction was that there was nothing he could do to influence a sporting body, a view with which the FO concurred: 'We certainly cannot interfere', as Gerald Spicer minuted.<sup>32</sup> However, despite this reticence, the Foreign Office decided to contact Lord Desborough of the BOA privately to let him know that Seirn had raised this. Sir Edward Davidson, one of the Foreign Office's legal advisors, duly wrote a private letter to Desborough in which he asked for Bertie to be told privately the reason for the apparent differential treatment.<sup>33</sup> In the event, nothing was done, and France did not send any rowers to the *Olympics*, but the seniority of the people involved (in particular Francis Bertie) suggests that some of those involved in British diplomacy thought that sport could be a useful if minor area in which to cement good relations with France. This tiny interventions are crucial because they broadly went against the Foreign Office's lack of interest in sport, and it was only the French for whom this change was made.

The were famously characterised by judging controversies. As many historians have shown, all the governing bodies of the various sports appointed all of the officials, and this appears to have led to some highly subjective decision-making in which the British competitors rarely lost out.<sup>34</sup> The four most famous crises related to the flying of the wrong flags at the opening ceremony, which offended representative from Sweden and the USA, to three judging decisions which the Americans perceived as pro-British at their expense. In the tug-of-war, the British police team were allowed to wear their work boots which the Americans felt put them at an advantage. In the 400 metres, John Carpenter was disqualified for running across the Briton Wyndham Halswelle, leading to the other American runners walking out and Halswelle re-running the final on his own to gain gold by walkover. In the Marathon, the Americans complained that British officials helped Italian runner Dorando Pietri up when he had collapsed, thereby stopping their runner Johnny Hayes from winning. Only in the latter case was the American appeal upheld, and the arguments that arose from these affairs lasted well into the winter of 1908 as an increasingly angry argument over fair play and sportsmanship was fought over the Atlantic.<sup>35</sup> Mallon and Buchanan have researched these 'protests and controversies', meticulously, and it is clear that only two of them involved French competitors, both in the cycling.<sup>36</sup> On 15 July, the final of the 2,000 metre tandem race was held, involving two British pairs and one pair from France. The French won, with Maurice Schilles and André Auffray beating Frederick Hamlin and Thomas Johnson by a length. However, the third-placed British pair, Colin Brooks and Walter Isaacs, claimed that Schilles and Auffray had cut across them on the final bend. They lost the appeal, and the French victory stood. The other complaint came in the final of the 5,000 metres on 18 July, when Schilles, who finished second, complained that the victorious Briton Benjamin Jones had bumped into him.

This time, he was over-ruled, and the British victory stood. Schilles and Jones were also involved in the farcical 1,000 metre sprint on 16 July. With two of the other finalists experiencing punctures, Schilles and Jones crawled around the track and then sprinted at the end, but they both exceeded the time limit and the race was declared void. Compared to the heated exchanges that characterised Anglo-American rivalries, these minor incidents in the cycling suggest that the French did not receive the kind of official discrimination that seemed to be at work elsewhere in the Games. Indeed, the three incidents resulted in one decision that favoured the French, one that favoured the British, and one that condemned both. This was hardly evidence of official bias. Moreover, Maurice Schilles drew sympathetic comments from some quarters of the British establishment. *The Times* expressed their regret over his loss in the 1,000 metres, and used the incident to show how the British and the French approached the *Olympics* with a shared respect for the rules and sense of sportsmanship: 'But with the French, as with us, it is not the winning of medals that is the most important things in sport. What we call "playing the game" is in their phrase "jouer de rigeuer'. The report went on: "Sentimentally, as well as politically, we value and are proud of our friendship with the French.'<sup>37</sup> Here was a clear statement of the ways in which the *Olympics* helped to underpin the *Entente Cordiale*.

The low level of French involvement in the controversies that dogged the *Olympics* cannot, on the face of it, be taken as clear evidence that the British officials were all working to promote the *Entente Cordiale*. Without clear contemporary evidence, such a claim would be naïve. However, it is safe to argue that the kind of tensions that arose between the British officials and the American team were noticeably absent from Anglo-French exchanges. Some of the tensions with the USA were purely sporting, while others had a political dimension relating to Home Rule in Ireland, and nothing of that kind came out between the French and the British. Indeed, once the Games had started, the bilateral relationship of France and Great Britain took a back seat in public discourse to the American rivalry, while Britain's imperial relationships with Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa also came to the fore. Press debates about the need for a combined team for the white dominions outnumbered those about Franco-British sport, while stereotypes of brash Americans who did not understand fair play were more obvious than any favourable images of the French. So, while the *Entente Cordiale* formed the framework for the *Olympic Games*, and the Exhibition created its setting, Franco-British sporting relations were never the main narrative.

## Legacies

The 1908 *Olympic Games* ended on 31 October with the hockey final. The Exhibition closed on the same day. This proved to be the last of the three trade fair *Olympic Games*: from Stockholm 1912 onwards, the *Olympics* were freed from their eight-year run as sideshows to expositions. There were still commercial interest involved, of course, but after 1908 the *Olympics* gradually moved towards the status they now enjoy: as an event that is worthwhile for a city to host in its own right, and, more recently, as an event that a city can sue to initiate regeneration and infrastructure projects.

For Shepherds Bush after 1908, the physical legacy was not straightforward: after all, this was a period in Olympic history long before the modern concept of legacy was born.<sup>38</sup> The original plan had been to demolish the Stadium as soon as the Exhibition was over. However, the Stadium quickly won favour with athletes and promoters, and the temporary sports ground found itself hosting a range of events, including firework displays and an angling match in the pool as well as sport. Subsequent exhibition organisers re-used the buildings of the *White City*, including the 1910 *Japan-British Exhibition* and the *Coronation Exhibition* in the following year. After the First World War, the site became the base for smaller industrial fairs, but by 1937 all of the original Exhibition buildings on the main site had been demolished, with the area redeveloped for housing. The Stadium, however, which took on the name of the *White City*, flourished. After the *First World War*, it became home to greyhound racing and athletics. The *Amateur Athletics Association* moved their annual championship there from *Stamford Bridge* in 1942, an arrangement that lasted until 1970, when Crystal Palace in south London became the event's new home. *White City* also hosted speedway, football, evangelical rallies, boxing, horse shows, American football, cheetah racing, and sheepdog trials. The Stadium survived until 1984, by which time it was shabby and obsolete, and the BBC built studios and office on the site. Now, the only sporting legacies on the 140-acre site are Loftus Road, the home ground of Queens Park Rangers FC, and the public swimming pool on Bloemfontein Road.

However, there is another story of legacy to be told in the streets that are now built on the site. The whole area is full of road names and building names that commemorate the *Franco-British Exhibition*. South Africa Road, Canberra School, Australia Road, India Way, Brisbane House, Canada Way and many others mark out the sites of the British imperial and dominion displays of 1908. Of the French presence, however, there is nothing: no Senegal Street, no Algeria Avenue, no France Boulevard, and no Entente Road. The *Entente Cordiale* may have provided the framework for the Exhibition and the *Olympics*: but once they were over, the legacy of commemoration was far all about British imperialism, and nothing to do with friendship with France.

## Conclusion

The 1908 Games are widely seen as the first recognisably modern *Olympics*. The link to the *Franco-British Exhibition*, however, shows that they were also of their time as the third of the trade fair *Olympics*. The setting of that trade fair as part of the commercial and cultural relationship that underpinned the *Entente Cordiale* is an essential context for the Games. It helps to explain the large French presence, the flexible ways in which the British Foreign Office experimented with Olympic diplomacy, and the absence of any bitter exchanges over judges' decisions that characterised the Anglo-American relations of 1908. Taken together, these themes suggest that France enjoyed a special place at the *Olympics*. More work needs to be done to take this further, and we can look forward to detailed case studies of how the press in each country reported the Games: such a study would amplify the themes in this paper, and provide an interested parallel to work by McIntire, Matthews, and Adams and Larsen.<sup>39</sup> For now, this introduction to the ways in which the *Olympics* fitted into the setting of the Entente and the framework of the Exhibition, helps us to understand the links between mega-events and bilateral relations of the hosts with other favoured countries. The absence of a legacy on the streets of Shepherd's Bush cannot disguise the fact that the 1908 *Olympics* were simultaneously an international event, an exercise in imperialism, and a showcase for the *Entente Cordiale*.

## Notes

- 1 J. KEIGER, "How the Entente Cordiale Began", in: D. JOHNSON/R. MAYNE/R. TOMBS (eds.), *Cross Channel Currents: 100 Years of the Entente Cordiale*, London 2004, pp. 3-10.
- 2 D. KNIGHT, *The Exhibitions: Great White City Shepherd's Bush London: 100th Anniversary of the Franco-British Exhibition 1908-2008*, New Barnet 2008.
- 3 For an introduction to the Entente Cordiale and its legacy, see A. CAPET (ed.) *Britain, France and the Entente Cordiale since 1904*, Basingstoke 2006; JOHNSON/MAYNE/TOMBS (eds.), *Cross Channel Currents*.
- 4 M. CORNICK, "Putting the Seal on the Entente: The Franco-British Exhibition", in: *Franco-British Studies* 35 (2004) 3, pp. 133-44; A. GEPPERT, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, Basingstoke 2010, pp. 101-34.
- 5 E. MATTIE, *World's Fairs*, New York 1998, pp. 18-25, 42-51, 74-85, 100-11; GEPPERT, *Fleeting Cities*, pp. 62-100.
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The 1908 Olympic Games were originally awarded to Rome, but were reassigned to London when it became apparent that Rome would not be ready. Despite the short notice, the Games were exceptionally well organised. For the first time, a stadium was specially prepared for the Games, and swimming events did not take place in the open water. Fit for a king. The Organising Committee fixed the distance of the marathon at 42km and 195m, the last 195 metres being added on to ensure the race finished below the royal box in the London stadium. This distance became official from the 1924 Games onwards. Cour The Entente cordiale, along with the Anglo-Russian Entente and the Franco-Russian Alliance, later became part of the Triple Entente among the UK, France, and Russia. It paved the way for the diplomatic and military cooperation that preceded World War I. Reasons. \* Both powers had become exhausted with imperialism

By the turn of the century both powers were satisfied with their empires and sought peace so they could consolidate their existing territories. \* Fear of being dragged into a war Japan's recent declaration of war on Russia was the spark which caused the imperial agreement. The ent... The London 1908 Olympics lasted for six months, from April 27 to October 31, and embraced disciplines such as skating (there were no Winter Olympics back then) but failed to provide a comprehensive and conclusive report. For instance, it's still debatable whether Turkey was represented at the games at all! Record-keeping in the 1908 Games wasn't great, to say the least. Turkey (then the Ottoman Empire) may have competed, but we're not sure. According to some sources, a man known only as Mr. Moullos may have been the country's lone representative. However, there's no mention of him or any other The 1908 Summer Olympics, officially the Games of the IV Olympiad, and commonly known as London 1908, was an international multi-sport event held in London, United Kingdom, from 27 April to 31 October 1908. The 1908 Games were originally scheduled to be held in Rome, but were relocated on financial grounds following the violent eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1906 which claimed more than 100 lives. Rome eventually hosted the 1960 Summer Olympics. These were the fourth chronological modern Summer