

# BREAKING INTO OLYMPIC CIRCLES: WOMEN AND PARALLEL VERSIONS OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES 1900-1936

BY  
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## *Introduction*

Early versions of the Games organized by the *International Olympic Committee* (IOC) after it was founded in 1894 were marked by the interplay of nationalistic discourse and friendly international competition.<sup>1</sup> The first element of this article looks at how women entered the Games from 1896 to 1912. The *Olympic Movement* revised the ancient Greek Games to suit the tastes of anglophile French aristocrat, Baron Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937).<sup>2</sup> Coubertin's ideas for a modern version of the *Olympic Games* developed out of his concern for nationwide fitness in France and his internationalist outlook, whereby co-operation through sporting contests could replace military aggression.<sup>3</sup> The *Olympic Games* therefore reflected transnational flows as they moved from venue to venue, stimulating increasing numbers of people to greater mobility in order to compete, spectate and officiate. As a special edition of the *Journal of Olympic Studies* has explored, the 1900 Paris Olympic Games particularly signaled the advent of modernity and sporting spectacle.<sup>4</sup> What began as a relatively small festival nevertheless set a pattern that was copied by later tournament organizers in other sports.<sup>5</sup> By the time that the Games returned to Paris in 1924, the travelling sporting mega-event had begun to evolve and the presence of female athletes would become more pronounced.<sup>6</sup>

However, the place of women within the early Olympic sporting spectacle remains contentious. It has been difficult to establish an exact number of female participants between 1896 – 1936, in part due to the uneven development of the *Olympic Games* themselves and in part due to the changing schedule. In Athens for instance, while Karl Lennartz has provided evidence that there were both documented references to a woman who ran the marathon distance in March 1896 before the official Olympic marathon race for men and another within twenty four hours of the sanctioned event, there remains a lack of clarity as to whether reports of 'Melpomene' and Stamati Revithi might refer to two separate competitors or the same person.<sup>7</sup> So while important potential pioneers might be traced to the earliest modern revivals of Hellenic culture, it is also

important to remember that the first *Olympic Games* were not merely sporting tournaments or artistic competitions, but also significant commercial enterprises.

The staging and ambition of the festivals owed much to the popularity of the *Exhibition Movement* and women were arguably a much more integral aspect of this wider phenomenon than present in popular sport. Indeed, there is evidence that the mercantile aspects of these exhibitions concerned amateur administrators who wished to keep sport somehow pure from profitmaking.<sup>8</sup> However the confluence of sport and commerce was evident with the inclusion of female athletes in the Paris *Olympic Games* in 1900. Existing transnational aspects of women's sport were highlighted and their wider place in national sporting cultures was showcased. Croquet, tennis, golf, equestrianism, ballooning and yachting were pursuits that all required access to considerable resources. If middle class women amateurs predominated amongst the first female Olympians, this was to change quickly and by 1912 the working class swimmer was an important part of Britain's medal hopes.

The second section of this article argues that the modern *Olympic Movement* reflected the times in which it was operating and therefore its philosophies could change. Alongside competitions in literature, music, painting, sculpture and town planning, Roche has called the effect of social democracy and feminism on the wider *Olympic Movement*, its ideology, rules and rituals 'alternative internationalism'.<sup>9</sup> It is the often-overlooked aspects of female international rivalries that this article explores, albeit in a provisional way. As a relatively small sporting and cultural festival before *World War I*, selective aspects of Olympic tradition subsequently became reinvented, while other elements were forgotten or lost.<sup>10</sup> Many women and girls used sport in a 'symbiotic' relationship that promoted their involvement in physical culture but also contested their wider place in public life. This process was led by Alice Joséphine Marie Million (1884-1957), a young French rower, who later became a figurehead of an international movement for women's sport.<sup>11</sup> Under her married name, Alice Milliat had acted as the non playing secretary of Femina, a football team had already competed against Dick, Kerr's Ladies of Preston in 1920. She was to become the head of an international movement to include more athletic events for women in the *Olympic Games* from 1921 onwards.<sup>12</sup> Women's football was sufficiently established to be part of this wider activist community that also included track and field athletics, a version of Czechoslovakian handball called „Hanza“ and basketball.

The *Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale* (FSFI) was founded in 1921 with Milliat as its head and remained the international governing body for women's athletics until the *International Amateur Athletic Federation* (IAAF) took over control in 1936.<sup>13</sup> After the first tournament titled the *Women's Olympic Games* in Paris (1922), Milliat gave into pressure to rename these meetings the *Women's World Games* and they subsequently took place in Goth-

enburg (1926); Prague (1930) and were last held in London (1934). These initiatives were held in parallel with the IOC version of the *Olympics* and effectively merged in 1936 at the Berlin Games. This article focuses on some of the key personalities in women's athletics at this time. The conclusion argues that the episode is a significant illustration of a growing sense of transnational activism which began to call for sport as a right for women before the *World War II*.

## *Women Competitors and the Olympic Games Before World War I*

The consensus view is that women participated in two sports (tennis and golf) at the Paris *Olympic Games* in 1900. This opened up the schedule mainly because Paris-based sports organisations involved in tennis and golf, who did much of the organization, already had female sections. However, the *Paris Exposition*, held at the same time as the Games from 14 May to 28 October, featuring a Palace of Optics and an illuminated Celestial Globe, also symbolized both technological and cultural modernity.<sup>14</sup> Not only did the extended time-span give scope for a considerable range of activities, it would appear that some competitors did not know whether they were taking part in the *World Fair* or *Olympic Games* events. The media called the festival as a whole 'International Games', 'World Championships' and the 'Grand Prix of the Paris Exposition'.<sup>15</sup> This was not the only complication; the inclusion of women on the United States team in 1900 led to debates about how this affected definitions of amateurism across the major sports bodies. Tedder and Daniels suggest that the first female victor in Paris was American-Swiss yachtswoman Hélène de Pourtalès (1868-1945) who sailed the *Lérina* with her husband to victory on 22 May 1900; competed again on the 23 June and finished second in a race two days later.<sup>16</sup> An Italian equestrian, born in Russia, Elvira Guerra (1855-1937) rode her horse *Libertin* in the Hacks and Hunter class.<sup>17</sup> Balloonist, Madame Maisson, who sailed with her husband to fourth place in an endurance race, was similarly almost lost to the record and we have few details about French croquet players Filleaul Brohy, Marie Ohnier and Mademoiselle Desprès.<sup>18</sup> Croquet competitions included women-only and open disciplines and Mallon has argued that Madame Brohy and Mademoiselle Ohnier may now be considered the first two women Olympians.<sup>19</sup> There are undoubtedly more biographical and competition details to unpick regarding the record of women in single sex and mixed competition.<sup>20</sup>

Out of an entry of six female tennis players, British Wimbledon star, Charlotte 'Chattie' Cooper (1870-1966), won against Frenchwoman Hélène Prevost (perhaps Yvonne, 1880-unknown) in the singles final, held in July at the Ile de Puteaux Club, of which Coubertin was a member.<sup>21</sup> Both Marion Jones (1879-

1965, later Farqhar) of the USA and Hedwig Rosenbaum (also known as Hedwiga Rosenbaumová, 1880-1927) of Bohemia are credited on the current IOC website as being bronze medalists for the women's singles.<sup>22</sup> Cooper also won the mixed doubles title with Reginald Doherty (1872-1910), making her a double-winner, but this is not listed on the official IOC site.<sup>23</sup> Since the tennis players did not compete for medals but cash prizes, it has become a more recent convention to call the winners gold medalists.<sup>24</sup> A letter from Mr. C. A. Voigt of the *Tennis Club de Paris*, a member of the committee and honorary secretary for foreign countries published in *Lawn Tennis* reported that the Ladies' singles winner had won 350 Francs and the mixed doubles winners had each taken 300 Francs.<sup>25</sup>

Biographical details on Prevost have been difficult to confirm, but she also appears to have won the silver medal in the mixed doubles with a Scottish-born player of Irish descent, Harold Mahoney (1867-1905); Rosenbaum and Jones were both credited bronze medalists with British partners Archibald Warden (1869-1943) and Laurence Doherty (1875-1919) respectively. Golfer Margaret Abbott (1876-1955) was one of four Americans competing against six French women. Abbott was to become the first female US gold medalist, with her compatriots Pauline 'Polly' Whittier (1876-1946) and Daria Pratt (later Karageorgevich, 1859-1938) winning silver and bronze respectively, although Whittier represented the *Golf Club de Saint-Moritz*.<sup>26</sup>

Pourtalès narrowly beat Cooper to become the first woman to win an Olympic gold, Daniels and Tedder suggest, the former in an open category rarely acknowledged in 'official' histories.<sup>27</sup> Bill Mallon does not recognise Pourtalès as a competitor but acknowledges that she may have co-owned the vessel and dismisses ballooning on the grounds that, like motor sport, it was a power-assisted performance and therefore not properly 'Olympic'.<sup>28</sup> This appears questionable and seems not to read the evidence in its context at the time but he is by no means alone in these interpretations. It seems likely that at least twenty-two women took part in 1900, including six tennis players, one yachtswoman, three croquet players, ten golfers, one balloonist and one equestrian. It is difficult to be definitive, but least five countries were represented in female events: Bohemia, France, Great Britain, Switzerland and USA but mixed competition and participants who held dual nationality involved a more complex set of identities.

Established networks for women's tennis, golf, yachting, balloon flight, equestrianism and croquet help to understand why certain activities could be incorporated into the schedule well before other sports. Other participants may well come to light, especially a second female sailor, though the IOC database lists just the seven individual medallists for tennis and golf.<sup>29</sup> In 1904 all of the six female contestants at the *St Louis Exposition* were United States archers, who competed across three disciplines (the team, the double Columbia and the double National rounds).<sup>30</sup> Matilda Scott Howell (1859-1938) became a triple

gold medallist. A 'non-Olympic' women's shooting competition was won by Mabel Taylor of the USA. Also peripheral to the trade show, the St Louis *Olympic Games* in 1904 therefore had a very limited international female resonance.<sup>31</sup>

In May 1905 the *British Olympic Association* (BOA) was formed and initially led by the politician and sportsman William Henry Grenfell, Lord Desborough (1855–1945).<sup>32</sup> The *Greek Olympic Committee* tried to 'reclaim' the Games and become permanent hosts in what became known as the *Inter Calated Games* of 1906 and athletes registered as representatives of their national associations from then onwards. Desborough was president of the *Olympic Games* held in London in 1908 and, along with his wife Ettie (1867–1952), turned a sporting event into a society occasion with many lavish entertainments.<sup>33</sup> The associated *Franco-British Exhibition* of 1908 was an elaborate kaleidoscope of influences, and the stadium, although purpose built, was a more basic structure.<sup>34</sup>

Male Olympic participants were very much more in evidence than the female competitors. There were approximations of 1,971 male competitors in London in 1908, compared with 44 registered female athletes.<sup>35</sup> Women took part in five sports in 1908: archery, ice-skating, motor-boat racing, lawn tennis and yachting. This was supplemented by diving and gymnastics demonstrations. Having narrowly missed inclusion, women's swimming and diving first entered the Olympic schedule in 1912 at Stockholm and developed from then on. <sup>36</sup> Even though women made up only a small percentage of the athletes in London, a prominent narrative around the *Olympic Games* included the political radicalism of the suffragettes and threatened disruption as a result. Bombs, hoaxes and arson were 'classic acts of terrorism' used in a bid to be part of the governance of the country but sport could also showcase the discipline and camaraderie of feminist principles.<sup>37</sup> A growing sense of transnational activism began to call for sport as a right for women into the Edwardian period and beyond. By the time the *Olympic Games* would return to London in 1948, there would be something like 390 female and 3,714 male competitors.

However, we still know relatively little about where sport featured in the lives of celebrated sportswomen, such as Charlotte Cooper Sterry and what her Olympic medal meant in the wider context of her long-standing career which saw her continue to compete at Wimbledon until 1919. It seems highly likely that her enthusiasm for *Wimbledon* surpassed that of the *Olympic Games*, which held less appeal. However, this article does not have enough space to look at her sustained enthusiasm for tennis across her whole life. Like later British women Olympians, Lottie Dod (1871-1960) and Dorothea Lambert Chambers (1878-1960), Sterry was already a famous amateur sportswoman. All three held *Wimbledon Championship* titles several times over before they took their Olympic medals (Dod a silver in archery and Chambers a gold in tennis respectively at the London Games in 1908). All of them also wrote briefly a-

bout their philosophy of tennis at what, then, was the highest level: Dod in *Tennis* (1890), part of the *Badminton Library* series, Sterry and, more extensively, Chambers in *Lawn Tennis for Ladies* (1910).<sup>38</sup>

At the 1908 London Games, archers William and Lottie Dod won a gold and a silver respectively, to become the first brother and sister medalists.<sup>39</sup> Lottie had beaten ninety-nine competitors to take the *Ladies' Day* gold medal of the *Royal Toxophilite Society* in 1906, in spite of having only recently joined *Welford Park Archers* after moving to Newbury. Women's archery competitions often had a larger field than men's and in this the Olympics was an exception with twenty-seven in the male competition and twenty-five in the female.<sup>40</sup> Dod was ahead on the first day in blustery conditions, only to falter on the second and final day of competition, losing the gold medal to Sybil 'Queenie' Newall (1854-1929) of *Cheltenham Archers*, with Beatrice Hill-Lowe (1868-1951) of *Archers of the Teme* coming third.<sup>41</sup> This was a record-making result, aside from the achievement of the Dod siblings. At fifty-three years and 275 days, Newall was still the oldest woman to win an Olympic gold medal at the end of the twentieth century. Born in County Louth, and from a well-known family, Hill-Lowe became Ireland's first female Olympic medalist.

In addition to the twenty-five women archers, Syliva Marshall Gorham accompanied her husband aboard *Quicksilver* in the motor-boat racing; Frances Rivett-Carnac (née Greenstock 1875-1962) was on board *Heroine* in the 7-metre sailing class and the Duchess of Westminster, Constance Edwina Grosvenor (formerly Lewes, 1876-1970), sailed as owner on her yacht *Sorais*, but is cited in many texts as an additional crew member rather than as an Olympic competitor.<sup>42</sup> In the indoor tennis, Britain's Gwendoline Eastlake-Smith (1883-1941) won the gold and Angela Greene (sometimes called Alice, 1879-1956) the silver medal, while Märtha Adlerstrahle (1868-1956) took bronze for Sweden. Eastlake-Smith celebrated victory by marrying another tennis player, Dr Wharram Henry Lamplough (1878-1945), two days later and competed in 'married-doubles' competitions thereafter.<sup>43</sup> The women's singles was an all-British medal board won by Dorothea Lambert Chambers, over Penelope Boothby (1881-1970) and Ruth Winch (1870-1952). The women's skating individual competition gold medal went to Florence 'Madge' Syers (1881-1917), who had come out of retirement to compete, and Dorothy Greenhough-Smith (1882-1965) took third place.<sup>44</sup> Else Rendschmidt (1886-1969) won the silver medal for Germany. London-born Syers had entered the *World Figure Skating Championships* in 1902, forcing the *International Skating Union* to accept women, as there were no rules to prevent them from competing. She easily won the first women's world championships when they were introduced. Madge supplemented her 1908 Olympic victory with a bronze in the pairs with her husband Edgar (1863-1946). This was a fitting testament to his support, as he had encouraged his wife to more athleticism in her skating and these Madge became

world champion at the time of her Olympic victories. A heart condition forced her to retire from competition soon after and she died, aged thirty-five, in 1917.

Barney has suggested that the Stockholm Games of 1912: 'Signalled the arrival of the *Olympic Games* as the world's premier international sporting event' due to control of the programme by officials of the international sports federations, rather than by individual organizing committees.<sup>45</sup> In 1912 women took part in three sports; tennis and newly inaugurated swimming and diving contests (although the sailing events were officially listed as 'mixed', I have yet to find a female competitor).<sup>46</sup> Of the expanded programme for fifty-four female athletes, the aquatic competitions involved forty swimmers and divers from eight countries. Working-class swimmers became more evident in British female Olympic amateur tradition than tennis players, in part, because of their larger numbers. Some were also world class. Irene Steer (1889-1947) of *Cardiff Ladies Premier Swimming Club*; Isabelle 'Belle' Moore (1894-1975) of Glasgow; Annie Speirs of Derby (1889-1926) and Jennie Fletcher (1890-1968) of Leicester were the gold-winning team in the 4 x 100m freestyle relay event.<sup>47</sup> Steer therefore became Wales' first female Olympic title holder and Moore remains Scotland's only female gold-winning swimmer.<sup>48</sup> Fletcher was also took third place to become Britain's first individual female swimming medalist in the 100m freestyle relay, behind two Australians, Sarah 'Fanny' Durack (1889-1956) and Mina Wylie (1891-1984).<sup>49</sup> Thereafter, athletes' bodies became more visible and the mediation of those bodies increased with the popularity of the *Olympic Games*.<sup>50</sup> This affected the image of the female competitor, as much as the male athlete. However, given the youth of the female swimmers and the length of the journeys, let alone the tournaments themselves, this caused problems over who should supervise the young women and how they should spend their time. My initial research for Jennie Fletcher, for example indicated that this was her first and only journey abroad as a single woman before she later migrated to Canada with her husband and settled on a farm to raise six children.

The remaining fourteen female competitors in 1912 were tennis players. The indoor medals went to Britain's Edith Hannam (1878-1951) and Mabel Parton (1881-1962) who took gold and bronze medals respectively, split by silver-medalist Thora Castenschiold (1882-1979) of Denmark. The outdoor singles had no British women in the top three for the first time: leaving Marguerite Broquedis (1893-1983) of France, Dora Köring (1880-1945) of Germany and Anne Margarethe Bjurstedt of Norway (later better known as nationalised American, 'Molla' Mallory, 1884-1959) to take the honours. Hannam also won a mixed doubles gold medal with Charles Dixon (1873-1939). All tennis events were to disappear from the schedule from 1924 for forty years, reappearing in 1984 as an under twenty-one demonstration event and then as a full medal sport in Seoul in 1988 in the newly-professional era. It could be argued that, in the intervening time, female swimming and diving became the most significant

focus in the women's Olympic programme, until the first track and field athletic competitions in 1928.

Whatever these difficulties of quantifying who did what, the exhibition movement was to have direct benefits for women's sport before the *First World War*, in spite of De Coubertin's antipathy to female athletes.<sup>51</sup> For both men and women, the programme of Olympic sports took some considerable time to regularize, as the examples of cricket, curling, lacrosse, motor (car, bike and boat) racing, polo, rugby, tug of war and velocipede competitions indicate.<sup>52</sup> Whole sports and particular disciplines have sometimes been in, and then out of, the schedule.<sup>53</sup> The *Olympic Games* between 1900 and 1912 have therefore to be placed in context of increased international communications; more urgent calls for female suffrage and larger anxieties about militarization. British newspapers reported that the home team had come fourth in the athletics and third overall behind USA and Sweden in 1912, with the 1916 Olympics due for Berlin. This caused some newspapers to make the accusation that Britain had 'lost' the Games, and with it considerable international sporting prestige. In view of anxieties about popular imperialism, the military strength of European neighbours and concerns about Britain's role in Africa, America and Asia, it is likely that the assessment of Stockholm would have been considerably worse without the medals of the women tennis players, swimmers and divers.

### *From 'Women in the Olympic Games' to the Creation of an Independent 'Women's Olympic Games'*

With the return of the 1920 *Olympics* in Antwerp, France's Suzanne Lenglen (1899-1938) dominated the women's tennis singles tournament for the gold medal. She gave up only four games, three of them in the final against Dorothy Holman (1883-1968) of Britain who also won a silver medal in the ladies' doubles with Winifred Beamish (1883-1972). Lenglen won another gold in the mixed doubles with Max Décugis (1882-1978) and a bronze in the women's doubles partnered by Élisabeth d'Ayen (1898-1969). Meanwhile, Kathleen 'Kitty' McKane (later Godfree, 1896-1992) and Winifred McNair (1877-1954) took gold in the women's doubles; with McKane also partnering one of Britain's finest sportsmen of the day, Maxwell Woosnam (1892-1965), to the silver medal in the mixed competition.<sup>54</sup> However, the lure of professionalism promised a more lucrative reward than Olympic victory for Lenglen. During the inter-war years, as tennis became less important to the *Olympic Games*, female amateur track and field athletics joined women's swimming and diving as centre-piece events. However, the rise of female track and field athletics as sporting spectacle was to take place gradually within the IOC-controlled schedule and more quickly outside of this patrimony.



The structures of women's athletics in Britain grew mainly in educational settings but there were also several talented working-class athletes. In 1921 a women's section was formed at *London's Kensington Athletic Club* with Sophie Elliott-Lynn (1896–1939) and Vera Palmer (1901–1998) both important enthusiasts before breaking away in 1923 to found *Middlesex Ladies' Athletic Club*.<sup>55</sup> Where women worked or studied together, they often played together.<sup>56</sup> This included war-work, often done alongside men, and particularly dangerous munitions manufacturing, nursing or communications roles: Elliot Lynn rode a Harley Davidson as a despatch rider for the War Office and served in France in the *Women's Army Auxiliary Corps* (WAAC) before returning to her agricultural and zoological studies in peacetime.<sup>57</sup> The *British Women's Amateur Athletic Association* (WAAA) was formed in 1922, although competitive events pre-dated its formation.

More important than the British influence was Alice Joséphine Marie Milliat (1884–1957), a young rower from Nantes in France.<sup>58</sup> Married and widowed relatively soon after, Alice Milliat worked as a translator and became President of the *Femina Women's Sports Club* in 1915, three years after its formation by Pierre Payssé.<sup>59</sup> In France, the exclusion of women from male sports federations had led to a rise in the number of sports clubs dedicated to their interests. Several prominent women were showcased at a *French national track and field athletics meeting* in 1917 and Alice Milliat became President of the *Fédération des Sociétés Féminines Sportives de France* (FSFSF) in 1919. She therefore inaugurated a national coalition of female sports clubs that was to have a considerable international resonance.<sup>60</sup>

Milliat first visited Preston in 1920 as a non-playing administrator with the Paris-based *Femina Women's Football Team* and was much impressed by the local hospitality and public support for the Dick, Kerr Ladies in Preston. In her subsequent career as an administrator and activist, she devoted considerable energy to promoting women's sports. With the expansion of the programme of the *Olympic Games* now overseen by the international federations of sport, rather than local organizing committees, Milliat targeted track and field athletics as fundamental to the inclusion of more women in a greater range of disciplines. Team games nevertheless featured strongly in her vision for more democratic sport. The *International Amateur Athletics Federation* (IAAF) had been created in August 1913 with Swedish administrator Sigfried Edström (187–1964) elected as its President. As Carly Adams has shown, the IAAF worked closely with the IOC because of the central role of athletics in the programme of sports; this enhanced Edström's relationship with de Coubertin and therefore his ability to gain significant positions in international sport.<sup>61</sup> In 1920, Edström was co-opted as a member of the IOC, and one year later he joined the first executive board.

While women's swimming, diving, skating, tennis and a mixed yachting event would feature at the Antwerp *Olympic Games* in 1920, female track and

field athletics were not admitted. As a direct response to the *International Olympic Committee's* refusal of Milliat's request that these events be included in the 1920 Games, the FSFSF broadened its remit. Milliat's relations with the IAAF and the IOC have been characterized as: 'A process incorporating pockets of resistance, ambiguities and struggles' and it seems unclear whether she ultimately wanted a separatist *Women's Olympic Games* or if this was a diplomatic strategy to advance the interests of female athletes within the existing structures.<sup>62</sup> In 1921, female representatives from France, Great Britain, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland took part in an international athletics meeting inaugurated by Milliat, staged in Monte Carlo. A related international congress was attended by American, Austrian, British, Czechoslovakian, French and Spanish representatives. On 31 October 1921 the *Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale* (FSFI) was formed. This group began to campaign on a worldwide scale for the advancement of women's sport, specifically targeting the inclusion of athletics in the Olympic programme.<sup>63</sup> In 1922 the first *Women's Olympic Games* was staged in Paris as a separatist event with one hundred and one competitors taking part in front of crowds of 20,000 spectators. At the seventh Olympiad, held in Antwerp, there had been approximately eighty female participants. The second edition of the FSFI tournament became known as the *Women's World Games* in Gothenberg, Sweden in 1926; a title that was maintained for the third tournament in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1930 and the fourth in London, England during 1934.<sup>64</sup>

Although this was an emerging transnationalism, the parallel *Women's World Games* and IOC competition provide examples of unmistakable connectivity between different kinds of sport and therefore diverse women from a range of backgrounds. However, this raises important questions of just how little we know of the lives of those who took part and, in particular, whether the women who participated from 1922 to 1934 should be considered 'Olympians'. For instance, the American flag bearer in the 1922 Paris *Women's Olympic Games* was Lucille Ellerbe Godbold (1900-1981).<sup>65</sup> One of seven children from a family of educators, 'Miss Ludy' taught at *Columbia College* in South Carolina for fifty-eight years. A 'Ludy Bowl' touch-football game was inaugurated at Columbia in her honour in 1955 and a \$1.1 million sports facility named after her in 1974. In 1968 Ludy became the first woman admitted to the *South Carolina Athletic Hall of Fame*. In many respects, Godbold's life and career were exemplars of *Olympism*, as she was dedicated to inspiring many young women to take up sport and physical activity (reportedly saying that she taught everything but golf and dance).<sup>66</sup> By looking at the different lives of Milliat, Godbold and others, in comparison with the IOC-recognised women Olympians from this period, it is evident that we need more work on female sporting international relations.

The star of the seven-woman English squad at the Monte Carlo meeting in 1921 was captain Mary Lines (1893-1978), a relatively unknown worker for

Schweppes (a carbonated drinks manufacturer in Drury Lane, London) who trained at the Lyons company track nearby.<sup>67</sup> The Lyons coffee house company directors supported many sports and leisure pursuits for their workers and subsequently gave the *Perpetual Cup* to a women's athletics meeting from 1924. This featured in the company magazine *Lyons Mail* with Vera Searle (née Palmer) the winner for the first three years. In Monte Carlo, Mary Lines set world records to win both the 60 metre and 250 metre races. She also won the long jump; contributed to victories in both sprint relays and finished second in the 800 metre event.<sup>68</sup> Between 1921 and 1924, in her short international career, Lines set a total of thirty-three world records or best performances in track and field events.<sup>69</sup> This included an IOC-recognized female 100 metre sprint record of 12.8 seconds in 1922.<sup>70</sup>

Most of the English team were drawn from the more middle class Regent Street and Woolwich Polytechnics, however Mary Lines dominated again in 1922 to lead an England victory by fifty points to the United States' thirty one. France took third place (twenty nine points); followed by Czechoslovakia (twelve) and Switzerland (six).<sup>71</sup> In spite of the strength in depth of Czechoslovakian worker's sport, only Marie Mejzlikova won an event by taking the 60 metre sprint in seven and three quarter seconds. She would later become a world record holder over 100 metres. Unfortunately, Mejzlikova is but one of the leading figures of women's athletics about which little is now known. Quite how points were calculated also remains unclear and there were occasionally tied events: Britain's Hilda Hatt (1903–1975) and Nancy Voorhees (1904–1979) of the United States came equal-first in the high jump, though subsequently the record was awarded to the American woman for fewer failed attempts.<sup>72</sup> Significantly, thirty-eight countries sent representatives to the second parallel congress in 1922, signaling a growing international movement for women's sport.<sup>73</sup>

However, financial weakness meant that the FSFI had to curtail its activities, underlined during the third congress on 31 July 1924 when the situation was so acute that an annual meeting had to be deferred to a bi-annual assembly. Henri de Baillet-Latour (1876–1942) had objected to the unauthorized use of the term 'Olympic' for the women's games soon after he became IOC President in the autumn of 1925, as he also did when the student games began to use the title. The 1926 Gothenborg *Women's World Games* would be privately funded and have eighty-one participants. By 1926 the IAAF had agreed to take control of the women's programme at the 1928 *Olympic Games* but rather than the ten events agreed with Milliat, offered only five. The British *Women's Amateur Athletic Association* (WAAA) read the inclusion of just five events in 1928 as a de facto attempt by the IAAF and the IOC to dissolve the FSFI and withdrew a team in protest. This remains the only gender-based boycott in Olympic history. The stand-off eventually led Milliat to comply with a delegation from the IAAF, conforming to the technical rules and general conduct outlined by them.

Financial difficulties in maintaining an international network of the scope of the FSFI would later dictate further assimilation. Further concessions followed, such as renouncing team games and attempts to include women's cycling in order to maintain some control of athletics.

In the 1928 Amsterdam *Olympic Games* the five women's track and field events were the 100 metres; high jump; 800 metres; discus and the 4 x 100 metres relay. Milliat had repeatedly asked for more disciplines.<sup>74</sup> In spite of a world record time by first place athlete Lina Radke of Germany in 2:16.8 and personal bests for second placed Kinuye Hitomi of Japan and third placed Inga Gentzel representing Sweden, the 800 metre race was not contested again by women in the *Olympic Games* until 1960.<sup>75</sup> Allegations that competitors were distressed and fell onto the tracks were much exaggerated.<sup>76</sup> Since this was the first time Germany had re-joined Olympic competition since *World War I*, Radke's success marked an international resurgence for their female athletes, although it has been difficult to obtain more information on her sporting career, as it has been for Gentzel. As we become more familiar with the lives and careers of more female athletes, we will be able to assess transnational influences more effectively.

Kinuye Hitomi (sometimes spelled Kinue or Kinuyé, 1907-1931), based in Osaka, was a particularly significant and under-researched athlete who competed at *Women's World Games* in 1926 and 1930.<sup>77</sup> As well as holding women's sprint, middle distance and hurdle records for Japan, she was also a good discus thrower. Hitomi traded world records in the long and triple jump with Britain's Muriel Cornell (1906-1996); registering 5 metres 98 centimetres in 1928, for instance.<sup>78</sup> As Wray Vamplew has noted, Cornell was deprived of an opportunity to compete because women's triple jump was not included on the Olympic programme until 1996, but she managed the British women's team in 1936 after injury ended her career and became a WAAA stalwart.<sup>79</sup>

In spite of her untimely death at the age of twenty-four, after returning from competing in Europe, Kinuye Hitomi appears to be the personification of the 'sporting girls' that appeared in Japanese Girls' magazines in the 1920s and 1930s. As the work of Miho Koishihara has shown, in contrast to 'yamato nadeshiko' a compliant, highly feminine traditional ideal, the sports girl dared to play tennis, be photographed in swimming costumes and run wearing shorts.<sup>80</sup> As well as fictional protagonists of short stories, role models who had achieved international recognition were featured in *Shoulo kurabu* (Girls' Club), one of the most popular magazines with a circulation approaching half a million copies. In addition to other popular Olympians like multiple swimming medallist Hideko Maehata (1914-1995), *Shoulo kurabu* had several non-fiction stories covering the attendance of Japanese athletes at the *Olympic and World Women's Games*. Kinuye Hitomi featured at least twice in such picture stories, first in 1928 declaring her ambition to set a world record in the 800 metre race and second, in October 1931 as 'The Benefactress of Athletics'.<sup>81</sup>

Middle distance events, including the half-mile and cross-country distances, continued to develop under WAAA auspices, with athletes like Gladys 'Sally' Lunn (1908–1988) competing.<sup>82</sup> A postwoman in Birmingham, she started running with Birchfield Harriers and her first international successes came in 1930 at the *Women's World Games*, when she won the 800 metres race. At the WAAA Championships in 1932 she broke the world 880 yards record in a time of two minutes, eighteen seconds. At the *White City World Games* in 1934 she set a world 1000 metres record, completing the distance in almost three minutes flat and registered a mile time of five minutes, seventeen seconds in 1937. Clearly, if there had been a women's 800 metres race at the 1932 Los Angeles or the 1936 Berlin *Olympic Games*, Sally Lunn would have been a strong medal contender. Barbara Keys has suggested that these were the two most important international sporting events of the decade but we can see significant aspects of cultural internationalism outside of, and away from, these mega events.<sup>83</sup> There were multiple layers of internationalisation therefore, involving some contradictory constructions of what women's sport represented.

In conclusion, thanks to the work of historians like Duval, Lovesey, Robinson and Watman we are beginning to understand the significance of Florence Birchenough (1894–1973) captain of the British team at the 1926 *Women's World Games* and her colleagues. Much remains to be known about Mary Lines, Vera Searle and more famous British athletes like Sophie Elliot Lynn. It would seem that Ethel Edburga Clementina Scott (1907–1984), a member of the 4 × 100 metres relay team which came second in Prague, might be the first woman of Caribbean descent to represent Britain in athletics.<sup>84</sup> Her father was a merchant seaman born in Jamaica and she later worked as a medical secretary. Other competitors and administrators involved in the widening scope of international women's sport have yet to find their place in history and more transnational research needed to address this agenda.

By 1933 Alice Milliat was ill and struggling to coordinate the sporting success for which she had largely been responsible at international level. She had dropped football from the activities of the FSFI, though Liselott Diem has found evidence of a request for soccer by an English *Women's Sport Federation*.<sup>85</sup> A proposed triathlon competition was probably not as we would know the sport today, but was deemed less interesting as multi-sport competition by 1934 than a pentathlon of athletic events. At the 1930 *Women's World Games*, Germany's nineteen athletes led the medal tally from England for the first time, as they did again in London in 1934, so there is much to be done about the role of the FSFI competitions in developing national athletics cultures in a range of countries, not just in Britain. The sole Canadian entry in 1930 had been the six players of the *University of British Columbia* basketball team, unlike 1924 when the Edmonton Grads had toured Europe.<sup>86</sup> In the 1930 Hazena (handball) competition, Czechoslovakia took the title.

The WAAA London hosting committee for the *Women's World Championships* in 1934 was led by John Beresford, Baron Decies (1866-1944) and patrons included the great and the good from British sport including Lord Aberdare (1885-1957); Lord Desborough (1855-1945); Lord Hawke (1860-1938) and those from London society such as Gordon Selfridge (1864-1947).<sup>87</sup> This was clearly a major event and the degree of patronage requires further analysis. Eileen Hiscock (1909–1958), who had captained of the British women's athletic team at the 1932 Los Angeles *Olympics* and was the current English 100 metre record holder, spoke the oath at the opening ceremony: 'We take part in the true spirit of sportsmanship...for the honour of women's athletics and for the glory of sport.' Lord Desborough released a dove. The programme notes featured Gladys Lunn as the 800 metre race title holder. There were ambitious proposals that visiting teams would have free accommodation and full board, so the practical and social arrangements also deserve more attention from researchers. The events were the 60 metre sprint; 80 metre hurdles; 100 metre sprint; 200 metre race; 800 metre race; 4x100 metre relay; pentathlon; high jump; discus; javelin; shot put; basketball and Hazena. Countries competing included America, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, England, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Palestine, Poland, Rhodesia, South Africa, Sweden and Yugoslavia.

However this was to be the last such tournament and by 1936 women's athletics were part of IAAF control. While the IOC and IAAF did not want to regulate, let alone develop women's sport, by the early 1920s these organisations could ill afford to be seen *not* to control aspects of international competition. The gradual and contested process of FSFI assimilation between 1920 and the 1936 Berlin *Olympics* reflected a policy tension as to whether women's athletics could, and should, be a separatist movement. However, Milliat's actions were successful to the extent of stimulating broader coverage in the contemporary media over questions with much continued relevance: why should women take up sports? For whom and for what purpose are the *Olympic Games* intended? If, by 1926, the records set under FSFI competition were ratified by the IAAF, why are the women who took part still not officially recognised as Olympians? We might expect that such a mature organisation would be able to retrospectively address this aspect of its own history.

## Conclusion

Alice Milliat achieved the inclusion of some women's track and field athletic events in the *International Olympic Committee* version of the Games between 1928 and 1936 after a considerable degree of agitation. Between 1921 and 1934, she had also hosted several international conferences on women's sport and staged four major tournaments. Milliat had planned for a fifth event to be

held in Austria during 1938, which was abandoned because of the Anschluss with Germany. The integration of women's athletics was achieved in the face of considerable, sustained opposition at the highest levels of the IOC. Therefore the development of a separatist *Women's Olympic Games* should not be exaggerated. The diplomatic relations between Milliat, the *International Amateur Athletic Federation* and the IOC around this period can seem labyrinthine. Yet these debates show tactical alliance and the willingness to use dispute to win concessions in advancing the cause of women's sport. It would be more accurate to view the relations between Milliat, the IAAF and the IOC as parallels involving interconnected personnel. Ideologically, each group developed a wary surveillance of the other as a way of influencing public opinion. This has to be seen in a context of a circulation of ideas as much as a movement of bodies to compete in athletics.

The problematic inclusion of some track and field athletics disciplines in the IOC *Olympic Games* and the development of a parallel *Women's Olympic Games* movement therefore requires further analysis. Women administrators like Milliat and female competitors like Mary Lines changed the IOC version of the *Olympic Games* in physical, visual and symbolic ways. For instance, a single medal tally of gold, silver and bronze was often cited in the press for each team, so women became important to the ways in which nations imagined themselves in comparison with others in international sporting competition.<sup>88</sup> Less obviously, the FSFI had encouraged teams of no more than twelve for the athletics programme of the 1930 and 1934 *Women's World Games*, so the British continued to send this number to *Olympic Games* in 1932 and 1936. Furthermore, as this work has demonstrated, the IOC version of the Games was part of, but did not define, the sporting career of many of these women athletes. Women who took part in FSFI events travelled in Britain and Europe to represent their club, experiencing cosmopolitan influences and freedoms. Important decision-making roles were also to have long legacies, not otherwise available because of the IOC patrimony. What was the experience of Mary Lines and her colleagues when they travelled abroad to represent their country? How were they perceived by the local, national and international media?

In relation to the points made about networks, parallels and interconnections in this work, it is important to remember that the Olympic programme for women became generally more diverse between 1920 and 1936. We cannot directly attribute this to Milliat or athletics but their diplomacy led the way for other sports. Swimming and diving continued to be staple British women's medal events in official Olympic competition when tennis disappeared; fencing was introduced in 1924 (only the foil discipline though); gymnastics became a full medal event in 1928; figure skating moved from being held on the *Summer Games* programme in 1920 to the first *Winter Games* in 1924. Yachting remained a mixed event with Dorothy Wright (1889-1960), from West Ham taking part as the only woman and winning a gold medal aboard *Ancora* in 1920, a

vessel jointly owned by her husband and father.<sup>89</sup> M.H. Roney appeared in the eight-metre class in 1928 and Beryl Preston (1901-1979) also competed on the water in 1936. A demonstration of women's speed skating took place in 1936 (to become a full medal sport in 1960) and the same year Helen Blane (1913-1990), Amy Birnie Duthie (1905-1994), Jeanette Kessler (1908-1972) and Evelyn Pinching (1915-1988) represented Britain in the alpine skiing events.

The first woman to carry the flag for Britain at an Olympic opening ceremony was skater Mollie Phillips (1907-1994) at the 1932 Lake Placid Winter Games. Heather Guinness (1910-1942) was to win silver in the foil in Los Angeles losing to Ellen Preis (1912-2007) of Austria. The Welsh swimmer Elizabeth Davies (1912-2001) won a bronze behind Eleanor Holm (1913-2004) of America and Philomena Mealing (1912-2002) of Australia in the individual 100 metre backstroke competition. With colleagues Margaret Cooper (1909-2002); Edna Hughes (1916-1990) and Helen Varcoe (1907-1995), Davies led the British team to the 4 x 100 metre bronze medal behind the United States and the Netherlands.<sup>90</sup>

Without going further into lists of results, we can see that the decades of the 1920s and 1930s evidenced a growth both in women's sports associations and international rivalries. These conflicts illustrate some of the practical and political difficulties concerning activism in sport for women's rights during the period. Other worldwide currents influenced the growth of women's sport, often beginning from specific local cultures of work and leisure. The global sports star could be so described during this period because the transport and communications infrastructure existed to make events easily reported and broadcast to a wide audience. Although there were problematic bonds with many of the countries involved under FSFI and Olympic competition, links were partly maintained through international female sporting tournaments. We simply do not know how significant these influences may have been in wider political, social and economic terms. We also do not know enough about the biographical history of many women Olympians beyond rather basic statistical histories. Where did sport fit into their lives? What were these influences on the next generation? What did their communities think of their achievements? These highly talented individual and supra-national ties have been underwritten in the history of sport and especially touring as an element of international female Olympic connectivity.

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The 1936 Summer Olympics (German: Olympische Sommerspiele 1936), officially known as the Games of the XI Olympiad, was an international multi-sport event held in 1936 in Berlin, Nazi Germany. Berlin won the bid to host the Games over Barcelona, Spain, on 26 April 1931, at the 29th IOC Session in Barcelona (two years before the Nazis came to power). It marked the second and final time the International Olympic Committee gathered to vote in a city that was bidding to host those Games. The next Olympic Games were held in 1948 (the Winter in Switzerland and then the Summer in London). YouTube Encyclopedic. 1/5. The Modern Olympics. The revival of the Olympic Games in 1896, unlike the original Games, has a clear, concise history. Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937), a young French nobleman, felt that he could institute an educational program in France that approximated the ancient Greek notion of a balanced development of mind and body. Winning medals at the Olympic Games has always been considered the most prestigious mark of an athlete, and a source of glory for the athlete's country. During that time East German women suddenly dominated events such as swimming, winning medals in 11 of 13 events both in 1976 and 1980. The Olympic Torch Relay, now an inextricable part of the modern Olympic Games, was a Nazi influenced creation of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Olympic Games in the midst of the Third Reich were the first truly modern Olympics comparable to the. During the early years, the organizers of the Olympic Games struggled to gain a meaningful place in the world's cultural consciousness as Coubertin's beloved Paris, but the French, and more generally, the international audience, evinced little interest in the revived Olympic Games. The lack of respect for the games was made apparent by the decision to make the Olympics merely a supplementary Exposition Universelle Internationale's programming.