

Historic Moment for Emsworth Maritime and Historical Trust (Emsworth Museum) Olympic Hand-Over Flag flies in Emsworth

On Sunday 24 August an Olympic Handover Flag was raised at the Emsworth Museum, North Street, to celebrate the moment when London became the official Olympic Games Host City.

Earlier in the year, somewhat hesitantly, I had applied to LOCOG (the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games) for one of their specially commissioned flags for Emsworth Museum and was surprised to receive several encouraging telephone calls from Bruno Peek, OBE, MVO, the handover flags co-ordinator. The flag, 6ft by 3ft with the handover logo in union colours and the date of 24 August 2008 on a white background, arrived in early August. It was one of only 600 delivered to locations including Armed Forces and embassies around the world, City Halls, British Council offices and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices.

At about 3.45 pm on the handover day, under the watchful eye of District Officer Richard Owen from the Hampshire Constabulary and their coach Mike Williams, four young athletes from Havant Athletic Club ran around the centre of Emsworth to show the flag to residents and visitors. Accompanying them was a fifth member of the club carrying an Olympic torch used in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. At the end of their run they were welcomed back by Members of the Trust, the Baptist Church Girls' Brigade, Scouts, Cubs, parents, friends and invited guests. Trust Chairman Gerry Williams and Olympian Chris Wilkinson (tennis in the Barcelona Olympics in 1992) then raised the flag on the museum's flagpole. Later, thanks to Daphne Laycock, the Girls' Brigade Leader, and a team of helpers, we all enjoyed a tea party in the adjacent Baptist Church Hall — kindly sponsored by the Emsworth Food Festival CIC and The Brookfield Hotel.



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On the following day, with help from John Forster and the Emsworth Scout Group, the flag was again raised (this time on a temporary flagpole) at the Emsworth Show. Also several times during September the flag was raised on the Museum flagpole. It is now held in the Museum archive (with pictures and information about the event) as a record of a special occasion in the history of the village.

The torch used has itself an interesting and unique history, being presented to the Southsea Fire Brigade some years ago by a Fire Brigade in Germany, and was

subsequently donated by them to Havant Athletic Club, a small club of some 160 members across all ages. All five athletes from the club who contributed to our flag raising, four of whom are still in full time education, have represented Hampshire in various age groups. Corin Reynolds, one of the Club's youngest team managers, manages the National Young Athletes league. She has twice won the Portsmouth Mile race, which is the curtain raiser for the Great South run, and remains undefeated champion. Alice Reynolds and Josh Kelly have produced several Grade I performances this season and were chosen to represent Hampshire at the English Schools' Championships in Gateshead. Josh gave up the chance of competing for Hampshire in order to run the flag round Emsworth. Liam King won the Young Athletes League 'Athlete of the Season' award, and Amy Bream is an up and coming distance runner and was selected to represent Hampshire Schools at cross country in Paddock Wood in Kent.



This occasion was important in a number of ways: it focused a great deal of local attention on the Museum and also by involving many young people in the Emsworth area served to unite us all with pride in the British successes at the recent Olympic games in Beijing. We shall look forward to hearing of the Havant Athletic Club's successes in the future (possibly in the 2012 London Olympics).

Dorothy Bone