British Women Olympians and Paralympians
Past and Present

E-Book presented by Mary Honeyball MEP
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Foreword by Mary Honeyball MEP

Inspirational athletes will always encourage children and young people to participate in sport. Learning about their experiences, trials and tribulations inspires others to strive to achieve greatness in their chosen sport.

Politicians and governments also have a duty to encourage new talent to emerge. Between 2003 and 2010, under the last Labour government, the number of secondary school children playing sport for two or more hours a week rose from 20% to 85%. Labour also set up a network of school sports co-ordinators who were responsible for working on an inter-school basis to increase the range and quality of sports available for pupils.

In an interview with the Guardian, school sports coordinator, Jo Marston has called these the ‘halcyon days’ on the basis of a previously unseen breadth and depth of competition in school sports.

In 2010 Michael Gove abolished the networks of school sports co-ordinators set up by Labour in the face of much outrage from both teachers and athletes. He later back-tracked and continued to fund the positions, albeit at a reduced rate of one day per week. He has also ended ring-fencing for the post.

This year the Olympic Games will put the importance and significance of inspiring young people firmly back on the agenda.

It’s an exciting time for London and for our British athletes. Here we celebrate some of the female athletes past and present who will and have represented Great Britain. We should be proud of their achievements and support them in this exciting year.
Nikki Emerson is one of the rising stars of the Great Britain's Paralympics Team. She was the top British athlete in this year’s London Wheelchair marathon, and also completed the 100m, 200m, 400m and 800m. In the future she hopes to take part in the Paratriathlon at an international level.

Nikki found that her life ambitions suddenly changed in 2008 when she was involved in a car accident that left her with a broken spine. During the Beijing Olympics Nikki underwent intensive physiotherapy and hydrotherapy as part of her recovery and adapting to life in a wheelchair. She found herself inspired by the talented Paralympic athletes she saw on screen. These Paralympic stars are the motivation behind her sporting career. Her potential soon led to her being coached by Dr Ian Thompson, the husband of Tanni Grey-Thompson. Tanni later advised her to concentrate on wheelchair distance races as opposed to rowing, where her athletic potential was initially recognised.

Nikki has come a long way since her first race, the Silverstone Half Marathon. Her success at Silverstone meant that she qualified for the 2009 London Marathon. After coming fourth in the 2010 London Marathon, she went on to win four medals during the 2010 Under 23’s World Track championships.

One of her most significant achievements so far has been in the 800m where she is world number six. She also ranks 7th in the world for the wheelchair marathon.

In addition to athletics, Nikki also volunteers as a coach for the disability branch of Vale of Aylesbury Athletics Club. She is passionate about encouraging sport among people with disabilities both for the positive effect on their fitness, general wellbeing and enjoyment.
Jessica Ennis - Athletics

Jessica Ennis trained at the Don Valley stadium in Sheffield, her home town. Much credit should go to Sheffield’s Council for their forethought in supporting the stadium.

The Don Valley stadium was built for the World Student Games. When accessing legacy for sports stadia, one should not underestimate the impact quality infrastructure can have in helping produce future champions. Having a world class facility has definitely assisted Jessica’s development.

Jessica Ennis was unable to compete in the Beijing Olympics due to an injury that was potentially career ending. Since returning in 2009 though she has won two World Championships in a row and a European Championship. Jessica has set her sights on the gold medal at the London 2012 Olympics.

Jessica’s career in athletics began in 2000, progressing through the junior and youth competitions, showing a promising talent for the future. She then went on to do a degree in Psychology from the University of Sheffield, before becoming a professional athlete.

In 2006 she enjoyed her first season as a senior athlete and managed to secure her first ever medal. It was a bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, and it marked the arrival of a new star on the British team where she now ranks as one of Britain’s best ever heptathletes.

In May 2007 Jessica equalled the 25 year old British High Jump record for women by jumping 1.95m. She also broke Denise Lewis’ British under-23 record for the heptathlon by scoring 6388 at the IAAF Combined Events Challenge in Dezenzano, Italy. In doing so reached the qualifying standard for the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008.

Since then Jessica set a new personal best clocking up 6469 points at the IAAF World Championships held in Osaka, Japan before suffering a cruel injury just before the 2008 Olympics.
Jessica made her heptathlon comeback at the 2009 IAAF Combined Events Challenge in Dezenzano, setting another personal best of 6587 to win the event. Her gold medal in Berlin at the IAAF World Championships resulted in a points score of 6731 and a new World Champion was crowned.

More success quickly followed in 2010 when she dominated the indoor season to win the World Indoor Pentathlon title, this time in Doha. The European heptathlon gold medal followed, and together with a new personal best score of 6823 capped a truly remarkable year.

I think I speak for every British person when I wish Jessica the best of luck for the up-coming Olympics. Given her track record, I’m sure that she will be fantastic. To have so valiantly come back from what must have been a horrible injury and to win so many medals is quite an achievement already. I hope that she’ll be adding to those medals with gold in London this year.
Tanni Grey-Thompson - Athletics

Tanni was born with spina bifida and has used a wheelchair since the age of seven. She is perhaps Britain's best known Paralympic athlete and won her first Olympic medal in the Seoul Games of 1988. In Seoul, at the age of 19 – a mere four years after the start of her athletics career at the Junior National Games for Wales - Tanni took home a bronze medal in the 400m wheelchair.

Tanni has a passion for wheelchair basketball but she is more widely known for her successes in wheelchair racing in which she holds a massive 16 Paralympic medals.

On top of her Paralympic success, Tanni has taken home 13 World Championship medals. She has broken World Records in the 100 metre and 800 metres and is currently the European and British Record holder for 100m, 200m, 400m and 800m. Tanni has also won the London Wheelchair Marathon on six occasions. She is without doubt one of the most successful British athletes of all time.

Her sporting prowess has also been recognised off the track. In 1992 she was selected as the Times sports woman of the year and in 2000 she was recognised as BBC sports personality of the year. She has been recognised at the Pride of Britain Awards twice, in 2001 for her outstanding sporting achievements and again in 2005 for her part in the successful London 2012 Olympics bid team. Tanni has also been selected for the Queens Honours several times, being made an MBE, OBE and Dame. In 2010 she was appointed to the House of Lords as a cross bench peer.

As a member of the House of Lords, Baroness Grey-Thompson has spoken out against the shocking measures proposed by the coalition's much criticised Welfare Reform Bill. She has been particularly vocal about the potentially negative effect that changes to the Disability Living Allowance would bring about. She is passionately against people with disabilities becoming ‘ghettoised’.


Today Tanni is involved in a number of charities which work to break down the barriers for children who wish to take part in sports activities. She is Chair of the Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, and was named as an International Inspiration Ambassador in 2009. She is also a coach and works as a sports commentator for the BBC.
Sally Gunnell - Athletics

Sally Gunnell is one of Britain's most popular female sportswomen of all time, and one of our most successful. She remains the only woman to hold the World, Commonwealth, European and Olympic titles simultaneously.

Sally was brought up in Essex and started her career as a long jumper and pentathlete. She became known as Chigwell’s finest following her triumph in the 100m hurdles at the 1986 Commonwealth Games. Having won the gold medal in Edinburgh, her coach Bruce Longden persuaded Sally that her strength and stamina would be better suited to the 400m hurdles. Only two years later she set a British record for that event.

Sally displayed huge talent in her new event and went on to win the gold medal at the 1990 Commonwealth Games. Only two years later at the 1992 Games Sally was up against Sandra Farmer-Patrick of the United States, who at the time was equal best in the world. Nevertheless, Gunnell’s performance in Barcelona earned her the gold in no small part due to her training under Longden.

Her passion for health and well-being was a key component of her athletics success. She took her knowledge and experience in to the printed word, writing four influential books on the subject.
Kelly Holmes - Athletics

Kelly Holmes is probably one of Britain’s best known and best loved athletes. Kelly was born in Pembury, Kent. She started training for athletics at the age of 12, joining Tonbridge Athletics Club, and went on to win the English schools 1500 metres in her second season in 1983.

Her hero at the time was British middle distance runner Sebastian Coe, and she was inspired by Coe’s successful 1984 Summer Olympics defence of his 1500m crown.

However Kelly decided to join the British Army at the age of 18. She had left school two years earlier, working initially as a shop assistant in a sweet shop and later as a nursing assistant for disabled patients.

In the Army, she was initially a lorry driver in the Women’s Royal Army Corps, later becoming a basic Physical Training Instructor (PTI).

Kelly became British Army Judo Champion, and in Army athletics events once even competed in the men’s 800 metres at a meeting, as it was considered that for her to run in the women’s event would be too embarrassing for the other competitors.

Kelly watched the 1992 Summer Olympics on television, and seeing Lisa York in the heats of the 3000 metres, an athlete whom she had competed against, and beaten, decided to return to athletics.

For several years she combined both athletics and her employment in the army, until increased funding allowed her to become a full-time athlete in 1997.
Kelly went on to win the 1500m at the 2002 Commonwealth Games and the 800m bronze at the Munich European Championships that year. In 2003 she took the silver in the 1500m at the World Indoor Championships and the 800m silver medals at the World Championships and first World Athletics Final.

Kelly’s greatest achievement came in her last major championship; the Athens Olympics in 2004. She turned in a double gold medal-winning performance, finishing as the 800m and 1500m Olympic Champion.

Since her retirement Kelly was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in the 2005 New Year Honours in recognition of her astounding achievements in athletics for Britain.
Denise Lewis - Athletics

In 2000 Denise Lewis brought home a gold medal for Great Britain from the Sydney Games competing in the heptathlon. This success was achieved despite suffering from an injury to her Achilles tendon.

Denise began competing in the heptathlon in 1989. Eleven years later, at a meet in Talence, France, she broke the British heptathlon record with a score of 6831. This record has not yet been broken.

Denise’s athletic achievements were recognised in 2001 when she was presented with an OBE. In 2011 Denise was inducted into the UK athletics hall of fame.

The heptathlon is a series of events in which competitors compete against each other in 100m hurdles, high jump, shot put, 200m, long jump, javelin throw and 800m.

As well as her gold medal in Sydney, Denise also won a bronze medal at the Atlanta Games and gold medals at two consecutive Commonwealth Games in 1994 and 1998. She has also won numerous medals at international and European athletics meets.

Shortly after the birth of her first child in 2002, Denise entered a particularly turbulent period of her career. Her links with controversial technical coach Dr Ekkart Arbeit, accused of doping athletes in the 1970s, led to her receiving a barrage of hostile media coverage.

She retired from athletics in June 2005. Since then, Denise has gone on to have a second successful career as a BBC sports pundit. She also appeared on the BBC’s Strictly Come Dancing in 2004, where she came second.

Since 2009 Denise has been an International Inspiration Ambassador. Denise uses her great sporting legacy to inspire youngsters to take part in sport and physical activity around the world.

Denise was born in West Bromwich in 1972 and was brought up in Wolverhampton. She has said that she was inspired to become an athlete while watching the 1980 Moscow Olympics on the TV as a child.
Dorothy Manley - Athletics

Dorothy Manley is the one of only two British women to have won a medal in the 100 metres at the Olympics.

Dorothy was born in Manor Park, London in 1927. She was initially introduced to athletics by one of her school teachers and worked her way up from the school, to the district and then to running for her county before the Second World War. She was evacuated to the countryside during the war, but returned to London in 1942. After that Dorothy ran for the Essex Ladies Athletics Club. She was added to a national list of potential Olympians in late 1947, and assigned to train with Sandy Duncan.

She began her training for the 1948 Summer Olympics early in March of 1948, training on the track four times a week, but never using the gym. Dorothy described the trials as a “fiasco”, having finished fifth at the Women’s Amateur Athletic Association Championships, but was still picked to represent the United Kingdom. She was working full time during 1948 for the Suez Canal Company as a typist, and used her summer holidays to attend the games although the leave was unpaid by her employer.

Dorothy’s experience in 1948 was vastly different to what our athletes can expect today. Her mother made her running vest and shorts for the Games, but she was given the blazer and skirt for the opening ceremony. While at the Games, she travelled to and from Wembley on the London Underground, as she was sharing a room with two other athletes near Eccleston Square in central London.

She qualified for the women’s 100 metres final, and finished in second place, winning the silver medal in her first international athletics event. Dorothy described her start in the race as the “best of her life”, having described her normal starts as notoriously bad. She thought that this may have actually distracted her as her start was so good that she was expecting the race to be recalled.

Dorothy has not had the recognition that she deserves for her achievements, but despite that she is a true inspiration to our current generation of Olympic hopefuls.
Liz McColgan is one of Britain’s most successful middle to long distance runners, enjoying a huge amount of success over her long career.

She was born Elizabeth Lynch and grew up in the Whitfield area of Dundee and was a pupil of St Saviour’s RC High School. Liz’s athletics career began at the age 12 when she joined her local athletics club, the Hawkhill Harriers, on the advice of her PE teacher. Liz soon discovered a talent for distance running and won her first UK titles at the age of 18. After the death of her coach, Liz coached herself in preparation for the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh in 1986.

It was in Edinburgh that Liz enjoyed her first success, taking the gold medal in the 10,000 metres, finishing nearly 12 seconds ahead of the nearest competitor and giving the host country its only gold medal in Athletics. After this achievement she went on to win a silver medal at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, South Korea.

Liz became the only Scot to successfully defend a Commonwealth title at the 1990 games in Auckland, New Zealand, when she took the gold for the 10,000 metres again, as well as taking bronze at the 3,000 metres. In August 1991, she won gold in the 10,000 metres at the World Championships in Tokyo, Japan. In November that year at the New York City Marathon, her first marathon, she won with a time of 2:27.23, beating the record for a debut marathon by three minutes.

Liz finally retired from competing in August 2001 when she fractured a bone in her foot while training for selection for the 2002 Commonwealth Games. She currently coaches young athletes, both at the Liz McColgan Health Club and Physiotherapy Centre in Carnoustie, Angus and at the Institute of Sport and Exercise at Dundee University.

In 1991, Liz was voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year. The next year she was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire and inducted to the Scottish Sports Hall of Fame.
Shara Proctor - Athletics

Shara Proctor has gone on an unusual journey to be part of the British Olympic team as the only woman to qualify for long jump for London 2012.

Shara was born and raised in Anguilla, a very small island in the Caribbean with a population of 13,600 people. Anguilla is too small to have its own Olympic Committee so is therefore ineligible to enter a team for the Olympic Games itself, but its citizens are eligible for British Citizenship.

Shara leapt (excuse the pun) the opportunity to claim her British citizenship when the chance to compete for the British team presented itself.

Her family background is political rather than sporting, and her mother is, rather fittingly, the current Anguillan minister for sport, and her rather a retired permanent secretary for education.

Shara started her athletics career as a sprinter but turned to long jump because, even on an island as small as Anguilla, there were two other women who were faster than her. She said recently that she had to make the switch because she simply hated losing; a promising quality for Team GB.

Shara’s lifetime best is 6.71 metres and her season's best is 6.68m, putting her at the very top of the British rankings. She says she is “jumping big” in training and has set a target of 6.9m this year, which would put her well into medal territory at world and Olympic level.

In recent interviews Shara has said that if she wins a medal for Team GB, in her heart it will be for her home country of Anguilla. I’m sure none of the cheering on lookers from Britain will mind this one bit, if we can see a medal in a category where we haven’t won once since Mary Rand.
On January 26 2012 Mary Rand was granted the freedom of the city of her birthplace Wells, Somerset. This long called for recognition came almost 50 years after her astounding achievements at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964.

In Tokyo, Mary Rand was the first ever British female to win a gold medal in a track and field event. This achievement came just two years after the birth of her first daughter.

Smashing the previous world record, Mary took the gold medal in the long jump with a jump of 6.76 metres. Mary was the first Brit to break a world record at the Olympics since 1932. That year at the games Mary also took home a silver medal for the pentathlon and bronze in the 4×100 metre relay.

Mary’s path to success was not an easy one. Her record in Tokyo was set four years after massive disappointment at the Rome Olympics where, after setting a British long jump record in the qualifying round, she fouled twice in the final and came ninth.

1964 was also the year that Mary was voted BBC sports personality of the year. Given this year’s disgraceful absence of women from the BBC’s shortlist it is surprising to be reminded that in the sixties almost half of the winners were women.

1964 was a particular high point in Mary’s illustrious career, but was far from the only success. Mary also broke British records in pentathlon and won medals at the 1958 Commonwealth Games and European Championships.

Fellow Olympian Brendan Foster has said that Mary was an inspiration to a whole generation of female athletes.
Tessa Sanderson - Athletics

Tessa Sanderson was a true trailblazer, being the first black woman to win a gold medal for Britain.

Sanderson was born in St Elizabeth, Jamaica of Ghanaian ancestry and later emigrated to the UK, settling in Wolverhampton. She was Britain’s leading javelin thrower from the mid-1970s, winning silver in the 1978 European Championships and gold in the Commonwealth Games three times (1978, 1986, 1990), but was eclipsed during the 1980s by the up-and-coming Fatima Whitbread, with whom she shared a long standing rivalry.

When Tessa won the gold medal at the 1984 Summer Olympics in the javelin, her victory was quite unexpected. She remains to this day the only British woman to have won gold in the category, with Fatima Whitbread only ever achieving silver. In the end, her career outlasted Whitbread's, and she competed at senior international level until 1996.

She was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 1985 New Year's Honours, following her Olympic gold, raised to Officer (OBE) in the 1998 New Year's Honours for her charity work, and to Commander (CBE) in the 2004 New Year's Honours for her services to Sport England.

Since retiring from athletics, Tessa has worked tirelessly to promote sport in London. She is currently helping to run an academy in Newham that finds and helps train athletes to represent Britain in the Olympics. In September 2009 Tessa registered her own charity sports academy carrying on her work alongside the now established Newham Sports Academy.

The name of the charity is The Tessa Sanderson Foundation and Academy, which helps Tessa to work with young people, both disabled and non-disabled, from across London.
Goldie Sayers, Britain’s number one female javelin thrower since 2003, will represent Great Britain for the third time at the London Olympics this summer.

Her first Olympic appearance for Team GB at the Beijing Games in 2008, saw her beat her own UK record with a massive throw of 65.75 metres. Despite this record-breaking throw she narrowly missed out on a medal by just 38 centimetres.

Besides competing in two Olympic Games, Goldie has taken home gold from six consecutive national championships, and has stood on the podium at several international fixtures, including taking the gold medal at the European Cup in 2007. Goldie also holds a first class honours degree in Sport and Exercise Science Qualification from Loughborough University.

Goldie broke her first record for the javelin throw at the age of 11 when, with a throw of 29 metres, she beat her school’s seniors record. It wasn’t until the age of 18 however, that she began to compete in athletics full time. Up until this point, with the support and encouragement of her school, Goldie focused on team sports including hockey and netball.

Goldie has previously said that playing team games from an early age was crucial in her athletics career. In 2006 Goldie remarked that “Team games are so important and should be on the agenda, without fail, in every school in the country, starting with primary schools”. In the same interview she pointed out that “If we want elite sport to get better, we have to instil competition in schools”.

Goldie Sayers - Athletics
Perri Shakes-Drayton was born in Stepney in east London in 1988. She went to school locally and eventually trained in Mile End. Although all of Team GB will have a home advantage this summer, Perri must particularly enjoy the games being right on the doorstep of where she grew up.

Perri excelled in 400 metre hurdles from a young age, winning her first gold medal at the age of 17 at the England Under 20s championships in 2006. She also took the gold at the Senior UK Athletics National Championships in Birmingham last year.

As well as being an Olympic athlete, Perri currently studies Sports Science at Brunel University in London. But whilst studying she has managed to find the time to become a double Bronze medallist at the 2010 European Championship with a new personal best of 54.18 seconds.

Perri has also completed her Level two coaching qualification and hopes to pass on her great knowledge and experience in athletics to young people across the UK. Perri has become an ambassador for McCain Track and Field, which provides young athletes with structured out-of-school athletics competition. Perri is also involved in a campaign by Nike called Make Yourself where she helps gives support to female athletes.

I can’t wait to see Perri Shakes-Drayton this summer. I imagine that the London Olympics will have a special significance to her as an athlete and an East-Londoner.
Talented Jodie represents Britain's greatest chance of taking a medal at the 100 and 200 metres for quite some time.

Jodie Williams was born in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire to parents who were both county level sprinters. Jodie's father recognised her talent at a young age and said of his daughter: “Jodie would finish while her nearest rival was still only about halfway up the track.”

Jodie has always been an ultra-consistent competitor, winning 151 consecutive races at junior level. She won double gold at 100m and 200m in the 2009 World Youth Championships, before taking silver in the 200m at the 2010 World Junior Championships in Canada. She then went on to take double gold in the 100m and 200m at the 2011 European Junior Championships despite being the youngest woman in both races.

This has been a great year for Jodie, with her running a season’s best time of 7.29 in 60m at the Aviva UK Indoor Championships. She was subsequently chosen to run at the IAAF World Championships in Istanbul, Turkey. Before the championships began, Jodie stated that her aim was to make the semi-finals at the championships. In the heat, she came 3rd with a time of 7.40 s and in the semi-final she came 5th with a time of 7.32 s and did not advance to the final.

After the World Indoor Championships, Jodie announced that she was to focus on getting selected for the 100m at the London 2012 Games. She stated, “Now it’s onwards and upwards for the Olympics. I’m really concentrating on the 100m because it’s always been a dream of mine to do the 100m at the Olympics.”

Jodie put her career on temporary hold earlier in 2011 so she could study for her A-Level exams in maths and psychology. She fully intends to go to university in autumn 2012 – a home win in the Olympics may seem like a doddle after the trials and tribulations of the UCAS form.
Shelly Woods – Athletics

Shelly Woods is one of Britain's best athlete's in the long distance wheelchair category and will be competing this summer in the London 2012 Paralympics.

Shelly damaged her spinal cord after falling from a tree aged 11 and was left paralysed from the waist down. Having been an incredibly active child, her parents encouraged her to find a new activity to keep her occupied. Shelly tried out a range of Paralympic sports such as wheelchair basketball, swimming and table tennis before settling on athletics. Eventually she was spotted by an athletics scout at 15 and was invited to train at a national level.

Shelly has enjoyed success as a wheelchair athlete from the very beginning. She won the Great North Run in 2005, setting a new British record for the half-marathon in the process. She is also the national record holder over 5,000 metres and won silver medals in her very first London Marathon in 2005 and again in 2006, but in 2007 Shelly won in a record time of 1:50:41.

Naturally Shelly was called to represent Team GB at the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing, and she enjoyed a very successful tournament. She won a bronze medal in the 5,000 metres wheelchair final. Having originally been awarded silver for coming second on 8 September, a controversial protest arising from a multiple collision (six athletes crashed) in the final straight led to the race being re-staged four days later. Shelly later won a silver medal in the 1500m, and finished in a strong position, beating Switzerland’s Edith Hunkeler at the line.

This summer will give Shelly the opportunity to improve on her fantastic achievements in Beijing. I'm sure we will be seeing her on the podium once again.
Fiona Pennie - Canoeing

Fiona Pennie will be competing in her second Olympics this summer as a British slalom kayaker. She is by far the most experienced woman on the British canoeing team and has a good chance of bringing home a medal this summer.

Fiona got the taste for kayaking from her mother, an international flatwater sprint paddler, when she was young. She was taken on her first boat when she was just a few months old and began learning on flatwater when she was five, competing for the first time aged eight. She was encouraged to try out slalom racing by her instructor and became hooked immediately.

After that Fiona won a bronze medal at the Junior World Championships in 2000 and won the overall Junior World Cup Series in the same year. As an Under 23 athlete, she won a team bronze medal in 2004 and an individual bronze medal in 2005, both at the European Under 23 Championships.

Fiona then moved on to adult competitions and enjoyed even more success. She won two medals at the ICF (International Canoe Federation) Canoe Slalom World Championships with a silver (K-1: 2006) and a bronze (K-1 team: 2007). She also won three bronze medals at the European Championships.

Unfortunately for Fiona, she failed to get past the qualifying rounds when she went to Beijing in 2008.
Helen Reeves - Canoeing

Helen Reeves is the only British woman to have won a medal in canoeing at the Olympics since the event was introduced in 1936. Helen used to compete in the kayak slalom event (K-1).

A canoeist since the age of 10, Helen was a World Junior Championship gold medal winner in 1996 but her competitive career was blighted by a succession of shoulder injuries and she was forced to watch the Sydney Olympics in 2000 from a hospital bed awaiting an operation. She won bronze medals in the K-1 team event at both the 2002 and 2003 World Championships and was placed in the top 10 of the individual K-1 on both occasions.

But her biggest success came at the 2004 Athens Olympics. Helen received the medal in a very unusual manner. She had originally been placed fourth on aggregate times but, while being interviewed by a television crew about her disappointment at missing a medal, several members of the crowd shouted at her to look at the scoreboard. The official results had been changed and an extra penalty had been judged against Peggy Dickens. This was enough to lift Helen into third by a fraction of a point.

Sadly for Helen the injuries that have blighted her career returned after the victory in Athens and she has now retired from competitive kayaking. She still has a great passion for the sport though, working as a commentator during the 2008 Beijing Olympics and as a press officer for GB Canoeing. She will be present again to support the new generation of kayakers this summer in London.
Rachel Morris - Cycling

Rachel Morris entered the history books at the Beijing Paralympics when she became Britain’s first ever handyclist to enter the competition. Not only did she take home the gold, but she then went on to become the only British handcyclist to be crowned double World Champion.

Rachel was born in Guildford, Surrey, and grew up in Farnham where she attended St. Peters School. She demonstrated a keen interested in sport and also helped disabled members of the local community as a Girl Guide. She completed a Duke of Edinburgh programme with the Royal Yachting Association at Frensham Ponds Sailing Club, which introduced her to sailing, a sport in which she reached international level.

On Rachel’s 17th birthday in April 1996 she suffered an ankle injury that triggered the onset of an extremely rare and painful illness, Complex Regional Pain Syndrome or CRPS. This led to her left leg being amputated above the knee in January 2003 and a few years later, the disease had spread to her right leg, forcing a second amputation.

But Rachel’s interest in sport continued when she bought a handcycle attachment for her wheelchair. She quickly reached a level that where she was competing in 2007, Barcelona and becoming the double World Champion, winning both the time trial and road race competition. It was this that led to her receiving formal Olympic funding, and she went on to win gold in Beijing 2008.

Rachel is looking to defend her title this summer in London.
Sarah Joanne Storey, née Bailey, has an impressive array of medals to her name in an impressive array of sports.

Sarah began her Paralympic career as a swimmer, winning two golds, three silvers and a bronze in Barcelona in 1992 at 14. She continued swimming in the next three Paralympic Games before switching to cycling in 2005.

At the 2008 Paralympic Games, her fifth, Storey won the individual pursuit – in a time that would have been in the top eight at the Olympic final – and the road time trial.

She also competes against able-bodied athletes and won the 3 km national track pursuit championship in 2008, eight days after taking the Paralympic title, and defended her title in 2009.

She qualified to join the England team for the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi, where she was the first disabled cyclist to compete for England at the Commonwealth Games, against fully able-bodied cyclists. She was also the second Paralympic athlete overall competing for England at the Games, following archer Danielle Brown earlier in Delhi.

Due to her impressive achievements in disabled sport, Sarah was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire in the 1998 New Year Honours. And following her success at the Beijing games was promoted to Officer of the Order of the British Empire.
Megan Sylvester - Diving

Megan Sylvester is a very exciting prospect for Team GB at London 2012.

Megan was born in Barnsley in 1994 and took up diving at the age of eight. She was inspired by her brother whose coach suggested that she try diving. Until then Megan’s main interest had been in gymnastics, which she still practices as well.

For someone so young she has a very impressive record. As a junior she showed great skills by winning all three platform events at the British Junior Nationals. She has progressed very quickly and won silver at the junior European Championships platform final in 2008 following with a fourth place finish at the junior world championships later that year. In 2009 she teamed up with Monique Gladding and won sixth place at the senior world championships in the synchro event the same year. She was just 15-years-old, making Megan the youngest athlete at the competition.

Megan has drawn huge inspiration from her family, particularly her brother, another talented diver. She has also received a lot of advice from another of Britain’s young hopefuls in diving, Tom Daley. Her dream is to take home the gold at London 2012.
Isabelle White - Diving

Isabelle Mary “Belle” White was the first British woman to win an Olympic medal in a diving event. Four years later, another woman, Beatrice Armstrong, would claim a medal in diving for Britain. These two remain the only Britons ever to have claimed a medal at the Olympics in diving.

Belle was born in Muswell Hill, London, in 1894. At the age of 18 she was selected to represent the United Kingdom in Stockholm. It was her first Olympics and turned out to be her most successful.

The event was quite unlike the modern diving, being rather more challenging. The competition was actually held from both 10 metre and 5 metre platforms. Divers performed a standing plain dive and a running plain dive from the 10 metre platform, a running plain dive and a backward somersault from the 5 metre platform, and three dives of the competitor’s choice from the 10 metre platform. Five judges scored each diver, giving two results. Each judge gave an ordinal placing for each diver in a group, with the five scores being added together to give a total ordinal points score. The judges also gave scores more closely resembling the modern scoring system.

The competition was dominated by Swedish competitors, with the final being comprised of seven Swedes and Belle. Despite the advantage the other competitors had playing at home, Belle still managed to claim the bronze in a tough competition.

Belle went on to take the gold at the European Championship in 1927, but never enjoyed the same level of success, despite competing in every event from 1912 until 1928, though she came close a number of times.
Anne Dunham - Dressage

Anne Dunham is one of the most successful British equestrians to have competed at the Paralympics.

Anne’s love of horses began when she was very young and worked at a local stable in her spare time and, by the age of 16, she was running a yard of 80 horses at weekends. She had “always wanted to compete” but while she was able to ride the horses in the stables it was their owners who competed with them. At the age of 27 Anne was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and has used a wheelchair since the age of 30.

It was not until she turned 40, when her husband sold his business, that she was able to buy a horse and begin to compete.

Anne first competed at the Paralympics on her horse Doodlebug in dressage events at the 1996 Atlanta Games. She won a bronze medal in the individual mixed Kur trot grade II, and gold in the open team event. In the individual mixed dressage grade II she finished just outside of the medals in fourth position.

Anne’s success continued at the 2000 Summer Paralympics, in Sydney, Dunham was part of the team that successfully defended their title in the open team dressage event. In the individual events at the games she finished fifth. The 2004 Athens Games were Anne’s third Paralympic appearance. As part of a team with Lee Pearson, Debbie Criddle and Nicola Tustain she won her third consecutive gold medal in the team dressage.

But in her fourth Paralympics in 2008 Anne, then aged 59, won her first individual gold, competing on her horse Teddy Edwards. She also won silver in freestyle.

In recognition of her achievements Anne was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2009 New Year Honours.
Gillian Sheen - Fencing

Gillian Sheen is the only Briton, male or female to have won an Olympic gold in fencing. Despite this she remains one of the very few gold medalists not to have received an honour.

Gillian first took up the sport at North Foreland School in Kent and won the British Schoolgirls title in 1945, the British Junior Championship in 1947 and her first British senior title in 1949. On leaving school, she went to University College London to study dentistry. Whilst there she won the British Universities title for five years and a gold medal at the World Universities Championship in 1951.

Gillian made her Olympic debut in 1952, but was eliminated in the second round. But four years later at Melbourne in 1956, she was the surprise winner of the gold medal. She edged into the final by defeating the world champion, Lídia Dömölky-Sákovics of Hungary, in a hard fought contest to decide the fourth place in her semi-final pool.

Given Gillian’s profession as a dentist, it was said in Melbourne that her flair in combat was due to the fact that the wrist action used in pulling teeth strengthened her hold on the foil.

Now 83 and living in upstate New York, Gillian has spoken of her disappointment of never receiving an honour. It does seem rather a strange decision, but perhaps she can take some solace in the fact that the Dominican Republic have paid tribute to her by placing her on a stamp.
Jane Sixsmith, is Britain’s best known hockey player.

Born on 5 September 1967 in Sutton Coldfield, Jane took up hockey at the age of twelve after she was told that she could no longer play for a boys’ football team. She went on to play hockey at club level for her hometown was chosen for England’s under-18 squad.

Jane played as a forward scoring many goals for England and Great Britain in many competitions. She is the only British hockey player to play for Team GB in four consecutive Olympics. Her greatest achievement came in 1992 in Barcelona when she captained the team to a bronze medal.

After retiring from international hockey in 2000 Jane stated:

“Sport has opened up so many opportunities. I’ve travelled the world, competed at every major tournament, winning medals at European, Commonwealth and Olympic level. I’ve enjoyed every minute of my sporting career and wouldn’t change it for anything. If you never have a go, you’ll never know!”

She takes the promotion of sport very seriously and now works for Birmingham City Council as the hockey developer. This involves taking hockey into primary schools, promoting the sport and trying to, “ignore the looks of consternation on teachers’ faces at the prospect of excited nine-year-olds chasing each other around with big sticks”.

Jane Sixsmith - Hockey
Kate Walsh - Hockey

Kate Walsh was made captain of Britain’s hockey team in 2003. She was born in 1980 in Withington, Manchester.

Kate’s initial sport of choice was swimming which she regularly trained for well into her teens. Her mother was a hockey player and Kate vowed to never play the sport as she hated standing on the side-lines shivering whilst watching her. One day though she tried the sport and loved it. Kate decided then to ditch swimming in favour of hockey as it meant she could avoid the getting up so early for training.

Walsh made both her England and Great Britain debuts in 1999 and has since gone on to play at the full range of international tournaments – the 2000 and 2008 Olympics, two World Cups, three European Cups, two Champions Trophy, two Commonwealth Games and three Champions Challenge. As a defender she has twice won medals at international tournaments at her hometown of Manchester - silver at the 2002 Commonwealth Games and bronze at the 2007 Euro Hockey Nations Championships.

In a recent interview about her captaincy and the prospects of the British team this year, Kate said:

“…the Olympic gold is the dream. When I watched it [the Olympics] when I was young I sat there thinking ‘I want a gold medal’. To stand on that podium and hear the national anthem. When I see people in that position you want it to be you and your team”.
Karina Bryant - Judo

One of the great things about the Olympics is the opportunity it provides for sports with lesser media coverage like Judo to take top billing. Karina Bryant began practising Judo at the age of 10 in Camberley Judo Club in Surrey. This was where she earned her black belt and where she continues to train to this day.

Karina enjoyed success in Judo early on taking silver at the Junior European Championships in 1995 before going on to become Junior World Champion in both 1996 and 1998.

Since then, Karina has won over 20 major medals including six at the World Championships and four European Championships golds.

Karina’s success led, in 2003, to her being named European Judoka of the Year. This in turn led to her being named in the Sunday Times’ top ten sportswomen of the year. She gained further recognition in 2004 when she was named as one of the top 100 unsung inspirational heroines by the Daily Mail.

Karina had less success at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, going out in the first round. Later that same year she suffered a serious neck injury and had to go through a great deal of rehabilitation to recover.

She made her triumphant return during the 2009 World Championships in Rotterdam, claiming the silver medal. Karina narrowly lost in the final to Chinese fighter and reigning world champion Tong Wen. What made this even more extraordinary was that it was considered that she would not even be able to compete in the competition due to her injury and only joined the 14-strong British team at the last minute.

Karina was Britain’s only medalist in Rotterdam and said at the time: “I feel great. I had a good year because I did not expect to be here. I am very happy.”

Karina Bryant is clearly a favourite to take home a medal at London 2012. I hope to see her in the final against her old rival Tong Wen, the current Olympic champion in this category.
Nicola Fairbrother took home a silver medal in Judo (56kg weight) from the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. This was the first year that women were officially able to compete for medals in the sport, 18 years after its first appearance during the Tokyo Games of 1964.

Nicola was one of the first female athletes to compete in Judo at Olympic level. Parity between men and women in the range of Olympic events has been a long time coming.

At the Barcelona Games of 1992, 159 sports were open for men to compete in whilst there were only 89 in which women could take part. Following the inclusion of women's boxing in the programme of London 2012, this year will be the first ever Olympics in which women and men can compete in the same range of sports.

Nicola’s silver medal at the Olympics was no mean feat but she just narrowly missed out on the gold. The following year, however, she became world number one when she won the World Title in Hamilton, Canada. Over the course of her 23 year career she also won gold at the European level.

Her performance was also recognised out of the dojo. In 1994 she was awarded an MBE for her contribution to British sport. She was also named European Judoka of the year in 1993 and was runner up in the Sunday Times Sports Award several times.

Nicola has commented on the benefits of Judo in all areas of life from promoting self-confidence to developing respect for others. Nicola has praised the accessibility of the sport because it is for any size or shape. However, she has also raised the issue of the significant costs involved in taking part.
Like many professional sports, Judo can be expensive to take part in, especially when youngsters are first starting out. The price of classes and equipment can act as a barrier to potentially successful competitors even trying the sport.

Nicola is a strong supporter of Judo at grass-roots level, and is helping to inspire a whole new generation of judokas in her role of owner and editor of Koka Kids magazine, as well as through her work with schools, judo clubs and national governing bodies.

She also now works as a judo commentator for the BBC and reports on the sport for the World of Judo magazine.
Heather Fell - Modern Pentathlon

Heather Fell is one of Britain's top modern pentathletes.

Fell grew up in Tavistock, Devon, where she was taught to ride and shoot, both disciplines in the pentathlon, by the parents of the 2000 Olympic pentathlon bronze medallist Kate Allenby. Whilst training, Heather earned herself a degree in Physiotherapy from Brunel University.

Heather enjoyed success at junior level, including two gold and one silver medal in the 2003 World Junior Championships in Athens. Despite this Heather nearly gave up the sport she loved in 2006 when, due to a series of shin splint injuries, her funding was cut by UK Sport.

Heather had to wait until 2007 to get her first major tournament medal, with bronze in Moscow and an individual silver medal at the 2007 European Championships in Riga, reaching the Olympic qualifying standard in doing so. She also won a gold medal as part of the relay team, with Katy Livingston and Georgina Harland.

2008 saw Heather record perhaps her most successful medal haul to date with a gold at the World Cup and a silver at the Olympics in Beijing where Heather was catapulted into the public eye. Another silver medal at the 2010 World Championships has set Heather up with a great chance to claim a second Olympic medal at the London 2012 Games, something she is certainly capable of doing.

Hoping to pursue a career in broadcasting after she retires, Heather occasionally works for BBC South West as a commentator. She also writes a monthly column for the Tavistock Times Gazette about her life on and off the track.
Dame Mary Peters was born in Lancashire but moved to Northern Ireland at a very young age, the place that she was to become most associated with.

Mary represented Northern Ireland at every Commonwealth Games between 1958 and 1974, where she won two gold medals for the pentathlon, plus a gold and silver medal for the shot put. But it was representing Great Britain in Munich 1972 that she brought home gold.

It was even suggested that when the troubles were at their worst, Mary Peters’ unexpected 1972 Olympic pentathlon victory brought a temporary calmness to Northern Ireland with rival factions celebrating together the Province’s greatest ever sporting success.

Mary was appointed CBE in 1990, having been appointed MBE in 1972 and in 2000 she was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. She has also been honoured in Northern Ireland, where the premier athletics track, on the outskirts of Belfast, is called the Mary Peters Track. In April 2009, it was announced that she will become the next Lord Lieutenant of the City of Belfast.
Marion Coakes - Show Jumping

Marion Coakes earned her place in riding history when she and her horse Stroller won the silver medal at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico for show jumping.

Marion was born in Hampshire in 1947. Her father, Ralph, was a farmer and her elder brothers, John and Douglas, were also keen show jumpers. Marion began riding at the age of three, learning on a donkey, but in 1960 her father imported Stroller, an eight-year-old pony, from Ireland. At the age of 16 Marion was coming to the end of her junior career and her father wanted to replace Stroller with a horse, as was customary. Marion was not willing to let him go through, and continued showing on the pony.

This proved a shrewd move as her partnership with Stroller proved to be a great success. In her second season as a senior Marion won the Queen Elizabeth II Cup - a former international ladies class event - that took place at the Royal International Horse Show. That year she won three Nations Cup events, helping to win the Presidents Cup.

In 1964 Marion won the Hickstead Derby Trial and was placed second to Seamus Hayes in the Hickstead Derby itself. The following year Marion rode Stroller to a gold medal in the Ladies World Championship at Hickstead.

From there Marion went on to compete at the 1968 Summer Olympics in both the team and the individual jumping events. It was in the individual jumping that she won a silver medal, something that not many had expected her to do. She triumphantly returned from Mexico to win the BBC Sports Personality of the Year for 1968 and Stroller became a celebrity himself.
Tina Fletcher - Show Jumping

Tina is one of Britain's leading show jumpers with over 30 years competition experience and will be part of Team GB this summer in London.

Born on 12 June 1965, she is now married to former Olympic silver medallist Graham Fletcher. They have two sons, William and Oliver, and run a yard near Wantage in Oxon.

Tina began her riding career in the Pony Club at the age of four and was very successful throughout the 1990s, winning the National Grade C Championship at Horse Of The Year Show in 1996 with her horse Sparticus II and then had a repeat victory the following year with McCoist.

Having regularly represented Britain in the Nations Cup competitions during her career, Tina is now back competing at the highest level with a stable of top class horses.

Tina has won The Queen Elizabeth II Cup three times (1992, 1993, 2007) and narrowly missed out on becoming the first woman to win the Hickstead Jumping Derby since 1973 when riding Promised Land in a tense jump-off against Guy Williams in 2010.

She achieved her lifetime ambition in 2011 when Promised Land jumped a second clear round in the Hickstead Jumping Derby in succession to lift the famous Boomerang Trophy.

She may not go into this summer's events as the favourite but her skills and experience should give everyone reason to be hopeful.
Anita Lonsbrough won gold for Great Britain at the Rome Olympics 1960. It would be another 48 years until another Briton would match her spectacular achievement, when Rebecca Adlington swam to victory in Beijing.

Not only did Anita win gold in Rome for the 200m breaststroke, she also broke the world record with a time of 2min 49.5 seconds. Her win was ranked 44th by the Daily Mail in its top 50 Olympic moments. Her illustrious career also saw her take home medals from several European and Commonwealth Championships.

Anita was considered to be one of the 1960’s golden girls of sport, alongside Dorothy Hyman, Anne Packer and Mary Rand. In 1962 she was the first woman to be awarded the BBC sports personality of the year award. A year later she was awarded an MBE for her services to swimming. At the Tokyo games of 1964 Anita had the honour of being the first ever British woman to carry the Union Jack at an Olympic opening ceremony.

Anita’s star shone in a time when swimming was considered to be an amateur sport, and before sponsorship deals allowed sports stars to compete professionally. In order to represent Great Britain, Anita combined her swimming career with a full time job working for Huddersfield Council. To go to the Rome games she even had to save up her holiday entitlement in order to take time off work.

Today Anita is a sports writer for the Daily Telegraph.
Rebecca Adlington - Swimming

Rebecca Adlington has achieved so much in her career already and she goes in to London 2012 as one of our greatest hopes for gold.

Rebecca was born in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire in 1989. She started her swimming career with Sherwood Colliery Swimming Club. Rebecca continues to compete in local swimming leagues for Nottingham Leander Swimming Club, and took part in the National Speedo 'B' Final in May 2010.

Rebecca competed in her first Olympics in Beijing 2008, swimming the 400m and 800m freestyle. She was also chosen to swim in the 4×200m freestyle relay team but did not take part in the heat as she was being rested and the team failed to qualify for the final. In what has to be one of the greatest moments in British Olympic history, Rebecca beat Katie Hoff of the US in the last 20 meters of the race to take the gold. She was the first woman to win gold in swimming for Great Britain since Anita Lonsbrough in 1960. She was also the first British swimmer to win more than one gold medal at a single Olympic Games since Henry Taylor, who won three in 1908.

Rebecca is strong supporter of local swimming pools and has said still uses them regularly. Last year she came out in support of a campaign to stop them being shut, saying: “I've been swimming in local pools since I can remember and there's no doubt those pools helped me win two Olympic gold medals.

“Without the access I had, which was available to everyone, I would not be able to do what I do. But it's not just about the elite level, it's really important to have as many pools as possible for everyone to use. Swimming is not only fun, but a great way for the whole family to exercise. More and more pools around the country seem to be closing down and we have to fight it before it’s too late.”
Heather Frederiksen - Swimming

Heather is already a very successful British Paralympian and is expected to carry on that success at this summer's games in London.

After a serious accident in 2004 that left Helen with limited use of her right arm and leg it was clear that she would need to use a wheelchair. At the time, the doctors had told Helen that she would never swim again. Before that point, Helen had won both the British 10 km Open Water Championship and 4.5 km British Grand Prix on the same day.

Despite this in 2006, while watching television coverage of the swimming events at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Helen decided she wanted to swim again. After her Paralympic success she said of the experience, “I saw Joanne Jackson win the gold in the 400m and I just said to myself, I’m not ready to finish. I’ll finish when I want to finish, not when someone else tells me to.”

Helen now competes in the S8 (backstroke and freestyle), SB7 (breaststroke) and SM8 (medley) classifications. Her first senior swim meet came at the 2007 German Open, in Berlin.

In her first appearance at the British Championships in 2008 Helen won two gold and two silver medals from her six events and set a number of national records. At the 2008 Summer Paralympics, in Beijing, she competed in five events and won four medals. Her first medal, a silver in the women's 100 m freestyle – S8 final on 8 September, was followed two days later by gold in the women's 100 m backstroke – S8 in a new IPC world record time of one minute 16.74 seconds. Helen won bronze in the 200m individual medley and her final medal of the games came with a silver in the 400m freestyle. In her final event, the 50 m freestyle, she reached the final but finished in 7th position.

Helen holds a number of different records in addition to her 100m backstroke world record. She is also the current holder of the 50m freestyle world record, the 100m freestyle world record, the 200m freestyle world record and the 400m freestyle world record, European records in the 50m, 100m, 200m, 400m freestyle, 100m butterfly, 100m backstroke S8 classifications, and holds the British record in a total of six different events.
Davina Ingrams - Swimming

Davina Ingrams not only holds a gold medal for swimming, but has used her position of influence as a member of the House of Lords to help start the Paralympics.

Davina was born in 1938, the daughter of Mervyn Herbert, 17th Baron Darcy de Knayth. She inherited the Barony in 1943, when her father was killed in action during the Second World War, flying in the RAF.

Davina was educated at St Mary’s School, Wantage, and later in Florence and the Sorbonne. She married publisher Rupert Ingrams in 1960 and had three children.

Tragedy struck only a few years later when Davina and her husband were involved in a serious accident, returning from a dance, when their car hit a tree. Rupert Ingrams was killed outright, and she was paralysed from the neck down. She was treated at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, and later recovered some movement in her upper body.

Davina became a wheelchair user, and took up table tennis and archery. She decided to become involved in campaigning for disabled rights and was soon one of the leading voices in the campaign that led to the creation of the Paralympic Games.

Not only did she help create the Paralympics, but she successfully competed in them. She won a gold medal in swimming at the 1968 Summer Paralympics in Israel, and a bronze for table tennis at the 1972 Games in West Germany.

Davina continued to be a pioneer away from the sporting arena when she became one of the first 16 hereditary peeresses' admitted to the House of Lords in 1963. She used her position within the House of Lords to speak on disabled rights. This led in 1996 to her being made a Dame (DBE) for her services to disabled people in 1996.
Nyree Kindred - Swimming

Nyree Kindred, née Lewis, is one of Britain’s most successful paralympians and will be competing again at this summer’s games.

Nyree took up swimming at the age of 5, after she was taken to a swimming pool by her aunt and encouraged her to give the sport a go. Nyree quickly developed a taste for the fast-pace competition and was soon taking part in elite level races. She was selected for the national team in 1999.

Nyree has a form of cerebral palsy and therefore competes in the S6 (butterfly, backstroke, freestyle), SM6 (medley) and SB5 (breaststroke) classifications.

Nyree began her fantastic Paralympic career at the 2000 Games in Sydney, where she won three medals; two silver and a bronze. She enjoyed further success at the 2004 Summer Paralympics, where she won the gold medal in the S6 100m backstroke event, in a new Paralympic record time of 1:32.03.

She followed this up with another gold in the 4×50m medley 20 pts relay, silver medals in both the 100m breaststroke SB5 and 200m SM6 individual medley, and a bronze in the 400m freestyle S6.

Unfortunately Nyree didn’t enjoy the same level of success at the Beijing Paralympic games. In the 100 metres S6 backstroke she was, surprisingly, beaten into second place by Dutch swimmer Mirjam de Koning-Peper. She later explained her defeat by saying: “My legs were spasming, but to be honest, there are no excuses for that, … I should have gone quicker but it just wasn’t there tonight”.

In addition to this medal winning performance Kindred also reached the finals of the 100m breaststroke SB5 (finishing 4th), 200m SM6 individual medley (finishing 6th) and 400m freestyle S6 (finishing 6th).

Nyree's husband is fellow British Paralympic- the gold medal winning swimmer Sascha Kindred. Together the pair are known as the ‘golden couple’ of British disability swimming.
Eleanor Simmonds - Swimming

It seems wrong to call Eleanor Simmonds a hopeful given her achievements already, which include winning two gold medals in swimming at the Beijing Paralympics when only 13-years-old.

Eleanor began swimming at age four and entered her first competition just four years later. After watching the 2004 Paralympic Games on television, Eleanor was inspired to take her sport to an elite level and stepped up her training with the aim of qualifying for Beijing 2008.

She achieved this and, competing in S6 disability category, Eleanor swam in the 50m, 100m and 400m freestyle, 50m butterfly, and 200 m individual medley. Despite Beijing being her first games and, at 13, being the youngest athlete in the competition, she went on to win gold in both the 100 m freestyle and 400m freestyle.

This incredible achievement gained wide recognition and in 2008 Eleanor was awarded the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year. Not only that, but a year later she made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE). At 14 she was the youngest person to have ever received this honour.

Eleanor has not rested much since winning in Beijing and has gone on to take ten gold medals at the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Swimming World Championships in 2009 and 2010, five golds at the IPC European Championships, and a gold at the Paralympic world cup.

Eleanor might be one of Britain’s best hopes of winning not just one but a number of gold medals at this summer’s games.
Charlotte Cooper - Tennis

Charlotte Cooper may not be at all familiar to you. She is, however, an unsung British Olympic legend from the early part of the last century. Born in Ealing she was a member of the Ealing Tennis Club and won her first Wimbledon Championship in 1895. She would go on to win four more.

Charlotte won the Olympic tennis title (there weren’t medals in 1904) in Paris in 1900, becoming the first woman to win anything at an Olympics. She followed this up with a second gold medal, winning the mixed doubles with partner Reginald Doherty.

These extraordinary achievements are made all the more impressive when you consider that the kit for female tennis in those days was an ankle length dress and shirt.

On 12 January 1901 she married Alfred Sterry with who she had a son, Rex, in 1903 and a daughter, Gwynn, in 1905. Her daughter also went on to compete at Wimbledon. That year she captured the Wimbledon championship for the fourth time. After time off for family, she returned to active tennis, winning her fifth Wimbledon singles title in 1908 at the age of 37 years 282 days, an age record that still stands. In 1912, at age 41 she was still one of the best players in the game and that year once again made it to the Wimbledon finals.
Laura Robson - Tennis

Laura was born on 21 January 1994 in Melbourne, Australia and moved to the UK when she was six. According to her parents, she began playing tennis "as soon as she could hold a tennis racquet", and after being encouraged by them, she entered a junior tennis academy at the age of 7. She signed with an agent when she was only 10 years old.

Laura competed in her first junior grand slam as an unseeded player at the Wimbledon girls’ event. As the youngest player in the tournament, she beat first seed Melanie Oudin on her way to the finals, where she defeated third seed Noppawan Lertcheewakarn. Her victory made her the first British player to win the girls’ event since Annabel Croft in 1984, and the British media described her as the “new darling” of British tennis, and the “Queen of Wimbledon”.

In the Australian Open this year Laura sported a rainbow headband after tennis legend and evangelical pastor Margaret Court had made inflammatory comments about gay marriage. She was playing on the very court that was named after the grand doyenne of tennis who had made the comments against equal marriage rights. When Laura was questioned about the head band afterwards she said that she didn’t see it as a protest, but she wanted to show that she believed in equal rights for everyone.

This young star has shown time and again that she has real promise and is certainly one of Team GB’s most exciting prospects for this summer where she will compete in the women’s doubles.