



**INSIDE:** HOSTING ATHLETES FROM 14 NATIONS // VOLUNTEERING AT THE GAMES // DANCING AT THE OPENING CEREMONY // SUPPORTING THE BROWNLEE BROTHERS IN HYDE PARK // CARRYING THE TORCH

LONDON 2012  
SPECIAL



EDITOR'S CORNER

## Amazing London

After all the doom-laden media fears in the run-up to July, the **reality of the Games** has been both a relief and utterly fantastic. From the thousands who flocked to support the torch bearer relay and our renewed **love of Bond and Mr Bean** to the pride of our Olympic champions, the good feeling that has swept the capital has been incredible. Although I didn't manage to get any tickets myself I have been vicariously experiencing London 2012 from all the **event write-ups** you have sent in for *Reporter online* and I've also been lucky enough to interview some of the amazing Olympic athletes from the 14 nations training at Imperial. The highlight of this for me was getting to watch the Brownlee brothers sprint their way through the *Ethos* pool the day before they smashed the triathlon in Hyde Park. I hope you enjoy this summary of the many ways staff and students have been involved with the Olympics and thanks so much for all your help to **capture the memories** of this summer.

EMILY ROSS-JOANNOU, EDITOR

Reporter is published every three weeks during term time in print and online. The next publication day is 20 September. Contact Emily Ross-Joannou: [reporter@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:reporter@imperial.ac.uk)



## The blistering pace of the Brownlees

Tim Porter, Senior Research Executive (Communications and Development), was among the 200,000 spectators who witnessed the Brownlee brothers in action in Hyde Park on 7 August shares his experiences:

"The Twittersphere was filled with pre-race buzz – spectators tweeted about six to ten-deep crowds and thousands tried to reserve a piece of the action over two hours before. Alistair and Jonny Brownlee, from Bramhope in Yorkshire, have been burning up the triathlon circuit over the last few years. Less known than Ennis, Hoy, etc. they have risen to the top of their discipline aged 24 and 22.

I completed a couple of triathlons a few years back. For me it is one of the toughest and most exciting sports, so catching a glimpse near to Imperial was a great Olympic moment.

We attempted to catch the 1,500-metre swim but, as non-ticketed viewers and despite being tall, saw only a flailing arm or two. Trees, periscopes and stepladders were well-used. The cycle leg travelled down to Buckingham Palace via Constitution Hill, and was the most viewed section with seven loops of the park. Although they raced past at close on 30mph, we got good views of the Brownlees fighting out the lead, chased by a larger peloton. The run seemed out of reach for us, but Hyde Park had two large screens for the Games, so we joined thousands of others to witness the 10-kilometre jog.

Finishing the cycle in the lead group, Alistair took the start of the run by storm, setting a blistering pace, with only Jonny and former world champion Javier Gomez (Spain) staying with him. This was brilliant running, taking the race to the others, in blunt Yorkshire terms. Jonny drifted back into bronze, not helped by a 15-second penalty for a transition infringement. But Alistair stretched Gomez on the penultimate lap and cruised to the win – walking over the line draped in the Union Jack. It was inspiring, thrilling and relentless."

Lorenz Gruber (Electrical and Electronic Engineering) on **volunteering at the handball:**

"You might know that in order to have better control over the ball the players put resin on their hands which inevitably ends up on the balls. Of course, with this glue-like resin, you don't just turn on a tap, hold the balls under the water and they look clean again. Instead, we had to use a special resin cleaner that does not smell particularly nice and, to clean it off, we had to use old towels. On my first shift we had to clean about 40 balls, which took us from 23.00 to midnight. Needless to say, it did not take me long to fall asleep that night!"



## Well done to Mel and Adam

Congratulations to Melanie Wilson and Adam Scholefield who competed in the Olympic Games. Head of Sport, Neil Mosley, was incredibly proud to see Imperial students take part. "Watching Adam score a goal in water polo was absolutely brilliant and with Melanie, the way she rowed in the repechage was really gritty – they weren't intimidated at all."

# How did it feel to carry the flame?

*Imperial staff and students share their experiences*

—EMILY ROSS-JOANNOU (COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT)



“I had a policewoman alongside me on a bicycle guarding the torch as it was lit, who told me not hand it to anyone. Once I started running, there were familiar faces everywhere – loads of students from my research team, friends and family, as well as strangers in their front gardens and along the road waving and cheering!”

PROFESSOR ALISON MCGREGOR (SURGERY AND CANCER) CARRIED THE FLAME THROUGH GREENWICH.



“We had to wait six minutes next to the track for the flame to come. It was carried by a guy called Ed who did lots of voluntary work too. He arrived with this glowing face and an expression that I will never forget. Seeing all the crowds made me realise how important the Games are to people.”

THIRD YEAR MATHEMATICS STUDENT FRANCA HOFFMANN ALSO CARRIED THE FLAME THROUGH GREENWICH.



“The bus dropped me off and suddenly all my friends and family came and gave me a massive hug. It was really really nice to see them all there. What I really hadn’t expected is that a big piece of shiny metal seems to attract people; I had strangers from every direction asking to take pictures of me and the torch, which was really overwhelming!”

FIFTH YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT KAUSHALI TRIVEDI RAN WITH THE TORCH THROUGH WALTHAM FOREST.



“I had lots of texts from friends in the last couple of days warning me not to set fire to the maze! I was a bit worried to be honest – there was one archway that was quite low, so I had to put the flame in front of me to get through.”

FIRST YEAR MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATE KLARA WEAVER CARRIED THE FLAME THROUGH HAMPTON COURT MAZE.



“The Gloriana picked up the torch at 7.30. The whole river was lined with thousands of people. There were heaps of children from my son’s school and their parents. When we rowed past them it was the same time as the bells were ringing across London at 8.12 – with that and the cheering there was a huge racket!”

PROFESSOR CHRIS PHILLIPS (PHYSICS) ROWED IN ONE OF THE BOATS THAT ESCORTED THE FLAME FROM HAMPTON COURT TO PUTNEY.



## Brilliant, bonkers and lots of fun – the opening ceremony

Emma Chesterman, Digital and Creative Media Manager (Communications and Development), pictured centre, on going to see the Olympic opening ceremony on 27 July:

“I was really lucky as my boyfriend’s folks managed to get hold of some tickets a week before the opening ceremony and they were lovely enough to give one to me.

I knew that it was going to be an amazing spectacle as two of my mates were taking part – one was a dancing NHS nurse in roller boots and the other was playing the drums.

The stories they told in the run-up of secret mass rehearsals on special grid systems left my mind boggling!

The entire event was thrilling. We danced and sang and clapped until our

hands were sore. The sound system was truly spectacular. I held back a tear as the Red Arrows flew overhead. It was all gobsmacking – idyllic English countryside transformed into industrial Britain in a smoulder of bleak smoke, iron Olympic rings suspended above our heads and thousands upon thousands of dancers.

It took ages before the GB team paraded around the arena but when they stepped out the whole stadium went mental. That must have been a truly amazing experience for our top athletes.

Bikes with wings, a giant Voldemort, oversized glowing NHS beds, an ode to rave, Dizzee Rascal, the Queen, Daniel Craig, Sir Kenneth Branagh, Mr Bean... I can’t imagine not having been there to see it all and join in with the joy of everyone around me. I even forgive Danny Boyle for wheeling out Sir Paul for another tired rendition of Hey Jude!”

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# Olympic tales

Five members of Imperial's community who volunteered for the London 2012 Games share their stories with *Reporter*.



Rob Millwood normally works as a Senior Grants Administrator for the Department of Medicine but grew his best beard to play a forger and an 'industrial man' in the opening ceremony.

Steve Matthews' job in the catering, cleaning and waste team at the Olympic Park was a world away from his day job as a Professor of Chemical and Structural Biology.

Annette Woods was cast as a weaver from Brighton in the opening ceremony, but can normally be found at the Royal Brompton Hospital where she works as a coordinator for the Sleep and Ventilation Unit.

Maria Healy works in *Ethos* as a Sports and Remedial Massage Therapist, and was in a similar role in the medical services team to support the fencers.

Mary Morrell is a Professor of Sleep and Respiratory Physiology, but was in both the opening and closing ceremonies as a 'mechanical', which involved working with the audiences.

Most of us mere spectators won't be forgetting the London 2012 Olympic Games in a hurry but, for the volunteers who put in hours of work to make the Games happen, the memories of their hands-on experiences will linger even longer. Tales from Imperial's volunteers are a bit like the host city London; sometimes challenging and occasionally a bit crazy but undeniably colourful. There was one Olympics, but many stories.

### STARTING BLOCKS

The selection process for becoming a volunteer is where the stories start and for many these tales resemble a normal job application process: fill in a few forms, attend an interview or two, get offered a place. Not so for Rob Millwood (Medicine), a performer in the opening ceremony, whose audition resembled a giant game of human battleships.

"There were 250 people in a room, with grid sections laid out on the floor," he recounts. "We had to remember which grid references we were supposed to move to, as well as dance movements, in addition to a series of numbers which they'd randomly ask you to shout out. It was pretty crazy!"

### RUBBING SHOULDERS

Once they'd secured a place and completed their training, for many volunteers the fun really began once the athletes arrived. There were few who had such a hands-on role as Maria Healy (Commercial Services), who worked as a sports and remedial massage therapist for the fencing teams.

During one of her shifts Maria noticed that her patients seemed anxious, and offered to put on some of the athlete's favourite music to calm their pre-competition nerves. It's not something Maria always does, but the athlete seemed to relax to the English rapper Tinie Tempah's quick-fire beats. "You have to be mindful of where the athletes are in the competition phase and their psychology at the time," Maria says. "Even small things like music can make a big difference."

Some interactions with athletes were a bit more challenging, especially if, like Mary, you were tasked with making sure that the more boisterous ones behaved during the opening ceremony. "It didn't all go to plan," she admits. "Part of the problem was that the athletes got slightly over-excited. At one point they were trying to climb on the flowerbeds, which we knew were going to explode with white confetti and we just had to say, 'I don't think you should climb on those!'"

One of the biggest perks of being close to some of the world's top sports people was the chance to meet both old and new Olympic heroes. Professor Steve Matthews (Life Sciences), who worked in the Olympic Park in the catering, cleaning and waste team, says, "I think I was 14 when Daley Thompson won his first gold medal at the 1980 Moscow Olympics, so meeting my childhood hero and getting a photo with him was definitely a highlight."

### UNDER PRESSURE

The polished version of the Olympics seen on TV didn't always match the day-to-day experiences of many volunteers. Instead lots found themselves in dull or demanding situations. Rob chuckles as he remembers Danny Boyle's words to some of the cast who performed in the opening ceremony: "I've put you through hell because that's what the industrial revolution was like." It's clear from Rob's face that the sentiment rang true at times.

"There were some rehearsals when we used to sit for hours wondering what was going to happen next while the producers debated over the show," says Annette Woods (NHLI), another performer at the opening ceremony, recounting the constant changes. "There were even minor alterations on the night."

Many volunteers felt a responsibility to show London at its best, recalls Mary. "I stopped listening to the news in the run-up to the opening ceremony because I didn't want to hear one more person say, 'the eyes of the world will be on London'. I knew it wouldn't be a disaster if I stood up in the wrong bit or didn't put my arm up in the right place, but I wanted to do my best for everybody."

For others, the downsides to volunteering were more practical, like Rob who discovered that his fireproof suit wasn't necessarily guaranteed to do the job. This was a bit worrying as he was one of the forgers responsible for creating the Olympic rings that rose up from the centre of the stadium. Rob says: "The organisers were saying, 'if you feel anything on fire just brush it off, you'll be fine,' but we didn't know if we were on fire. We couldn't see because of our hoods which covered our faces!"

### BACK TO REALITY

Now that the Olympics are over, do any of the volunteers feel they learnt anything which might translate into their real lives? For those in the opening ceremony the answer was easy. "Patience," they chimed in unison, reflecting on the hours spent

in the rain, waiting for instructions.

Steve, whose mainly manual job of managing Coca-Cola supplies around the Olympic Park was a far cry from his academic position at Imperial, revealed that he would have more empathy

for the people whose job it is to fill fridges in the future. "I worked with a huge mix of people from all over the place and that really helps to open your eyes. Hopefully I'll bring some of that back to my job here," he adds.

Unlike the other Imperial volunteers, Maria's role for the Olympics was the same as her day job. She says: "My experience during these three weeks will continue to enrich my practice as a therapist. Working in such an intense, high-level environment really inspires you to be your best, to develop and perform at your peak."

### QUIET MOMENTS

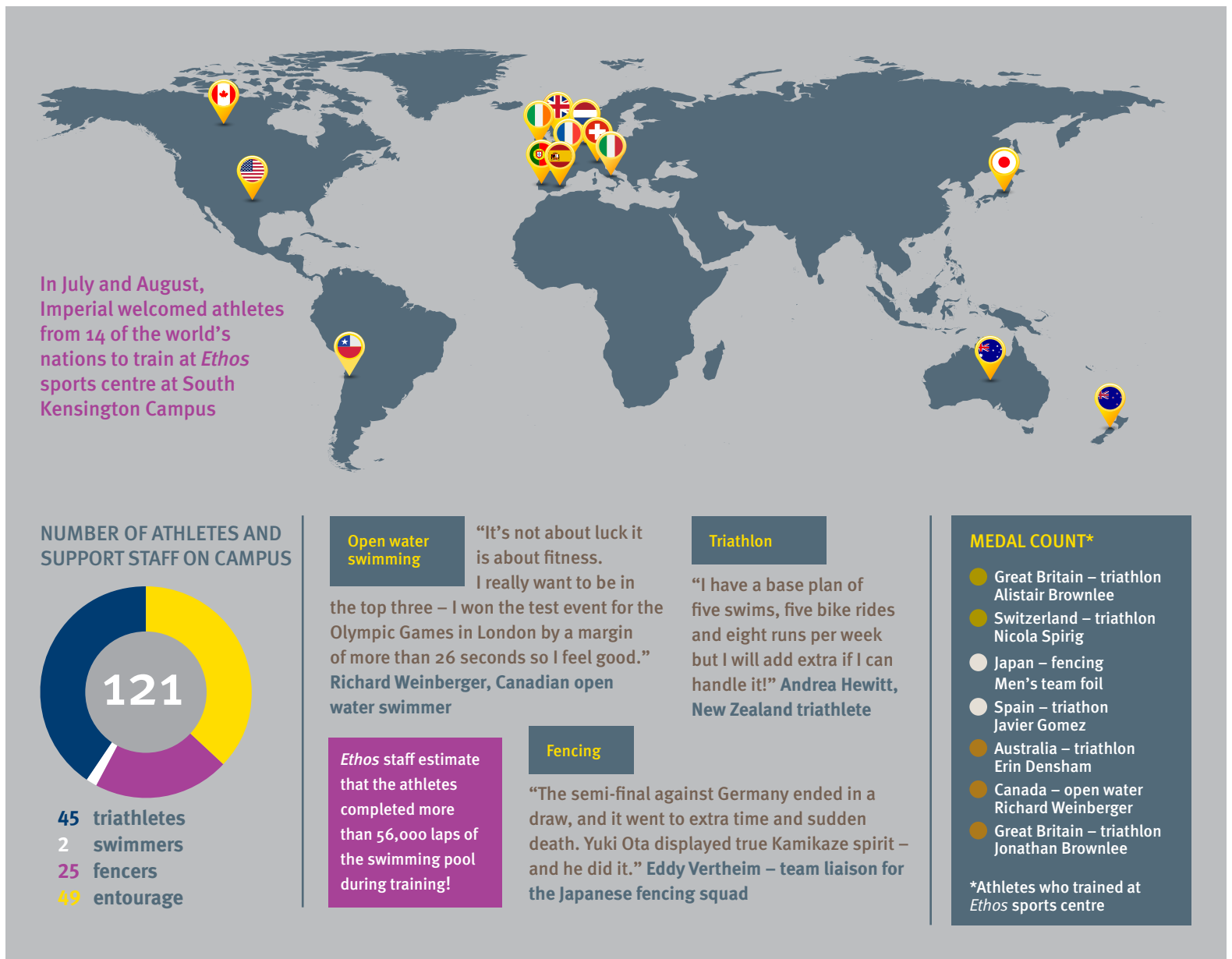
From meeting your hero to worrying about how fireproof you are, the London 2012 Olympics are going to leave indelible memories in the minds of many, especially the volunteers. But it wasn't always the big moments which had the most impact.

Mary recounts: "At the dress rehearsal they did a mock-up of the flame coming in, the stadium was lit up and all the pixels twinkled like flames. You couldn't see it so well on the night because the audience stood up, but for me it was these moments, the quiet moments, as well as the hoorah moments, which I'll treasure."

—JESSICA ADAMS, COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

“Working in such an intense, high-level environment really inspires you to be your best”

# Imperial hosts the world's athletes



## Breakfast of champions



Behind every gold-medal-winning athlete is a support team of trainers, physiotherapists and, crucially, chefs. During the London 2012 games, with the Swiss triathlete team staying in Imperial halls of residence, one of the Southside kitchens was taken over by top Swiss chef, Bruno Rossignol.

"It's a great privilege to work so closely with the athletes and know you're contributing to their success," he says. "They're actually not very demanding. The main thing is to ensure a healthy diet that keeps up

with the amount of energy they have to use, but fortunately I'm also a trained nutritionist, so know the best dishes to prepare for them," he adds.

"I'm also a trained nutritionist so know the best dishes to prepare for the athletes"

Bruno was also at Hyde Park and saw Swiss triathlete Nicola Spirig claim gold on 4 August. He said he would be preparing his own culinary reward for the winner – the national speciality of rösti, a potato dish he tops with cheese.

national speciality of rösti, a potato dish he tops with cheese.

—JOHN-PAUL JONES, COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT



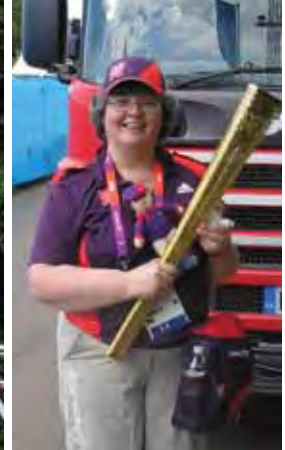
## Worth the wait... the Olympics buzz

Grant Danskine, Operations Manager, Sport Imperial, shares his experience of watching the men's synchronised diving at the Aquatics Centre on 1 August:

"Having been in Trafalgar Square on 6 July 2005, when Jacques Rogge of the International Olympic Committee uttered the magical words: "The games of the 30th Olympiad 2012 are awarded to the city of ... London," the celebrations for 2012 began there and then for me and the last seven years have flown by.

I applied for tickets on the 2012 website and did not manage to get any the first or second time around, but luckily my friend in Switzerland managed to get some so I was able to go along.

The Aquatic Centre is very impressive and despite the distance from the diving pool the view was fairly good. The competition was great with some unbelievable dives involving twists, somersaults, tucks, pikes and other mind-boggling contortions taking place with minimal splashes on entering the water. Peter Kay and the John Smith's diving board advert came to mind once or twice but the competitors were taking it seriously, and no bombing took place."



## When Sir Steve Redgrave met his knitted twin

Marion Watson, pictured above right, is the Quality Assurance Manager at the Wellcome Trust-McMichael Clinical Research Facility at the Hammersmith Campus. She describes her highlights of volunteering at the Games.

"As a Games Maker I was based at the rowing in Eton Dorney near Windsor, working in press operations. The problem was I had no relevant experience! They recruited experienced rowers (not me) plus teachers and lecturers, with the expectation of our being good communicators (only my past students can comment on that).

I worked in one of the areas where the rowers met the press, so I saw most of the athletes but we

rarely spoke to them. Journalists are under pressure to get reports out quickly, so it was fairly hectic at times – passing messages, keeping authorised journalists in the press zone and keeping others out.

In recent months, along with other Games Makers, I have been making 'knitteds' – unique woven Olympic mascots – to raise money for charities, including Get Kids Going, which gives disabled children and young people the opportunity of participating in sport. My knitted Sir Steve Redgrave went on eBay to raise money for Sport Relief and sold for £62! Big Sir Steve was amused and happy to pose for a photo and I was sad to give the knitted up!"

## Olympic tennis and the magic of Federer

Sam Wong, Research Media Officer (Communications and Development), reports on going to see tennis at Wimbledon on Monday 30 July.

"The unfathomable gods of the Olympic ballot had been kind and brought forth Centre Court tickets, affording a first trip to the All England Club for me and my dad – both long-time armchair viewers.



Decked out in London 2012 mauve, the place looked a little different from usual but not even a topiaried figure of the mascot Wenlock could detract from the history and gravitas of the venue

Centre Court somehow combines the grandeur of a big football stadium with the intimacy of a small jazz club, and even our seats in the back row had a great view.

Unseeded Romanian Irina-Camelia Begu gave top seed Victoria Azarenka a good scare in a very entertaining first match, but the second was what we had been looking forward to. Zeus with a

racquet. The self-styled President & Rector of Tennis, Roger Federer.

For one magical hour, he sauntered around the court, making tennis balls fly in improbable directions while appearing to expend as much effort as I do when I tie shoe-laces. It was dazzling to watch, no doubt more so for his poor opponent, Julien Benneteau, but it was all over so fast.

There were plenty more matches to enjoy involving Juan Martin del Potro and Caroline Wozniacki later on, but it was this brief glimpse of the master that will linger in my memory."



In wrestling, speed and agility are just as important as pure strength.

Emma Caseley (College Headquarters)



Meeting Jess Ennis was amazing - she was so lovely!

Nigel Tyndale (Communications and Development)



First year medical undergraduate Klara Weaver

I was really surprised how many people there were lining Hampton Court Maze before seven in the morning - it was overwhelming!



Head of Sport Neil Mosley congratulating Swiss triathlete Nicola Spirig

It's been the most enjoyable two weeks of my Imperial career.



Being amongst 12,000 people cheering on your home side was an incredible experience.

PhD student James Lewis (Earth Science and Engineering)



I'm a torch-bearer too!

Former sabbatical officer Jason Parmar (Chemistry) enjoying the Olympic Park.



Martin Sayers, Communications and Development

I still can't believe we won tickets to the opening ceremony - the whole experience was jaw-dropping.



A group of young dancers from Canada at the Exhibition Road Festival.

Meilin Sancho, Technician (Physics)

**Thanks** to everyone who sent in their Olympic stories, photos and comments over the last few weeks. We have really enjoyed publishing them in this issue. To see the full set, visit: [www.imperial.ac.uk/reporter](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/reporter)

### This is Reporter's 250th issue!

Reporter was first published in 1995 as a four-page black and white newsletter. It has developed over the years to a full colour 16-page newspaper that captures all the news and stories of Imperial's 20,000 strong community and is published every three weeks during term time.

Curious about the contents of Reporter's first ever issue? see [www.imperial.ac.uk/reporter](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/reporter) to find out more.

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