

# BOOK REVIEW

by Mark Maestrone

## **The 1908 Olympic Games, the Great Stadium and the Marathon – A Pictorial Record.**

*By Bob Wilcock.*

*128 pp., Society of Olympic Collectors.*

*\$32 postpaid worldwide.*

Did Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, famed creator of the Sherlock Holmes stories, really assist the little Italian, Pietri Dorando, across the finish line of the 1908 Olympic Marathon race as many have claimed?

Was there really a 1908 “Stadium” postmark used to cancel mail during the Olympic Games at the Great “White City” Stadium?

How did motorboat racing end up as an Olympic event at the 1908 Games?

Answers to these and so many more questions are clearly presented in this handsome, soft-cover study of these final so-called “Exposition Olympics.”

“The Edwardian era” (first decade of the 1900's), as longtime Olympic collector and member of SPI, Bob Wilcock, points out, was “the heyday of the postcard.” It comes as no surprise, then, that a presentation of postcards relating to the 1908 London Olympic Games – over 400 in all – are the stars of this book.

While we know that there were no stamps issued for these Games, philatelists need not fret. Wilcock has provided what appears to be a very thorough compilation of the many stamps, cancels, and meters issued during the ensuing century. Yes, that's right, this year marks the centennial of the Games of the IV<sup>th</sup> Olympiad!

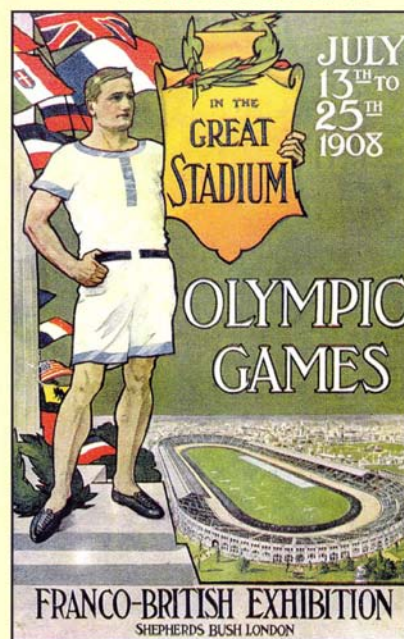
The book is laid out in a very logical and convenient fashion. First, the history of the stadium, its construction, inauguration, Olympic trials and Opening Ceremony are examined. This section alone features no fewer than 75 postcards, reproduced at about 65% of original size.

This is followed by individual chapters on each sport beginning with the telling of the famous Marathon Race. In each case, every known postcard is illustrated and described along with dates of the competitions and names of the medalists.

Wilcock concludes with chapters on the philately of the Games (primarily stamps issued for the various medalists), postal history (postmarks), a bit of ephemera, and the well-known Franco-British Exposition vignettes (labels).

While most cards of the period were published in either black & white or sepia tones, the book is printed

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in full color, lending itself well to reproducing the many tinted postcards and philatelic material. Because the book relies heavily on the illustrations to tell the story of the Games, crisp reproduction is a must, a requirement that the slick paper stock admirably fulfills.

Bob Wilcock's well-researched *tour de force* on these often misunderstood early Olympic Games makes this book a must-have for any serious Olympic scholar, enthusiast or collector.

Three cheers for this new addition to our Olympic libraries! 🍷

*The special \$32 price for SPI members includes four SOC centenary postcards along with the first supplement to the book. Orders may be sent to Bob Wilcock, 24 Hamilton Crescent, Brentwood, Essex, CM14 5ES, Great Britain. Email queries should be sent to Bob at: [marathon@societyofolympiccollectors.org](mailto:marathon@societyofolympiccollectors.org). The preferred payment method is by PayPal (to the above email address) or by US\$ cash.*