

Where Have All the Winter Cauldrons Gone?

By Myles A. Garcia

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It's a good time to travel down memory lane and look back at cauldrons of past Winter Games, where have they gone to? What has become of them? What do they look like today?

Almost all of them, except for Garmisch-Partenkirchen and St. Moritz, are still around. The cauldrons are either in place, alongside the stadia where they were first lit or have been moved to a park nearby or some sports museum.

Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1936



After Amsterdam 1928 and Los Angeles 1932, there appeared in Garmisch-Partenkirchen the first cauldron for a Winter Games and was lit on February 6, 1936. After those Games and the intervening world war, the cauldron was lost its whereabouts unknown.

The trapezoidal box-like container, which should not have been too difficult to miss, resurfaced sometime in 1975 as, of all things, a cattle watering trough. Apparently, the cauldron had been sitting out for many years by a remote rural church, the Daxkapelle in Esterbergalm,

barely recognizable 40 years later because the outer tin skin bearing the Olympic rings, had been stripped away.

It was made of the wrong kind of metal to be of use to the German war effort, but it did not escape the indignity of being used as a common agricultural item. It wasn't quite on the same scale as the story of the fabled Amber room in St Petersburg after the fall of the Tsars, but the story of this cauldron also took some strange turns. It disappeared before it resurfaced in 1975.

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St. Moritz 1948



One of the few surviving photos of the St. Moritz 1948 cauldron. Like the Garmisch-Partenkirchen cauldron, the St. Moritz-2 cauldron, the first post-WW2 cauldron was also a victim of time; presently missing in action. St. Moritz-2 has a fascinating, storied provenance including a failed start at what could possibly have been the earliest known Olympic cauldron of the modern era Games. If the project had borne fruition in 1928, it would have predated Amsterdam's summer tower cauldron by one season.

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The status of the following caldera are best expressed in contemporary photographs.

Oslo 1952



The first Winter Olympic cauldron lit from the first Winter Torch Relay (which began in Morgedal, the village where legendary Norwegian skier Sondre Nordheim lived). This 1952 cauldron was lost for some 37 years until it was found again in the basement of the Grorud Jernvarfabrikk factory in Oslo. Today, it occupies a prominent place of honor in the Norwegian Olympic Museum in Lillehammer.'

Cortina d'Ampezzo 1956



Cortina's cauldron today. The oldest Olympic winter cauldron still in its original place and the first one whose lighting was shown live on Italian television even though the final runner, figure skater Guido Caroli, tripped on a cable but kept the torch upright. The 1956 winter torch relay began in Rome.

Squaw Valley 1960



Still there. Because the Squaw Valley organisers failed to inform the Hellenic Olympic Committee in time for them to prepare a proper torch relay, Squaw Valley then reached out instead to the Norwegian Olympic Committee. Thus, a winter flame was lit for a second time in Morgedal, Norway in 1960.

The Innsbruck caldera – 1964, 1976 and 2012



A rare photograph showing three Olympic caldera all lit, side by side in February 2012. Left to right – most recent to oldest: 1st one for the 2012 Winter YOGs; middle one for 1976; and rightmost for Innsbruck 1964. This shot was taken by Philip Barker on the night of the Opening Ceremony of the 2012 Youth Olympic Games.

A new Olympic tradition was born with IXth Olympic Winter Games in 1964. Like the Summer Games, a winter torch relay was begun in Olympia – and the first one was for Innsbruck 1964. Those Olympic Games also saw the strange practice of having a second indoor cauldron being lit inside the arena hosting

the closing ceremony which was coupled with the Figure Skating Gala performance. For 20 years, from 1964 to Sarajevo 1984, this “indoor” closing ceremony tradition continued, uninterrupted.

Grenoble 1968



Grenoble 1968, of course, has the sole distinction of being the only Olympic Games to have both its opening and closing ceremony flames lit indoors. The flame in Olympia was lit indoors at the old Museum due to a storm raging outside. When that flame finally got to Grenoble, Alain Calmat used it to open the Games. For the closing held at the Palais des Sports, local wrestling champion Daniel Robin relit a cauldron inside (from the outside cauldron flame) only for it to be extinguished at the end of the evening. After the Games, the opening ceremony cauldron was moved to the Paul Mistral Park in downtown Grenoble.

Sapporo 1972



Google street view of Sapporo 1972 cauldron still standing today on the SE hillock of the Makomanai Open Stadium. There were stands built over the grassy areas in 1972.

Lake Placid 1980



The winter 1980 cauldron at its original site in the North Elba Horse Show Grounds. It was the first Olympic cauldron to have full movement. Per my correspondence with Lake Placid 1980's executive producer of Ceremonies, George Christian Ortloff, this was achieved by cables and pulleys rather by hydraulic means which he had been advised against, as in the case of St. Moritz 1928, gummed up the whole endeavor. The cauldron was extensively refurbished in 2008 when the bowl was permanently welded at the top, although it can still be lit when the occasion demands it.

Sarajevo 1984



... still at the Zetra Arena.

Calgary 1988



Still there at MacMahon Stadium. With Calgary 1988, the Closing Ceremony returned to its outdoor

setting, the same as its opening – thus not requiring the need for a secondary, substitute “inside” cauldron.

Albertville 1992



Sits by a corner of the figure skating arena lot. This Albertville cauldron was also the first Olympic winter cauldron to double as the Paralympic cauldron in the same city. There is a smaller, secondary winter 1992 cauldron (possibly the one from Tignes) which now resides at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne.

Lillehammer 1994



Still in the same place, at the bottom of the Lysgårdsbakkene ski jump bowl. It's the only Olympic cauldron in history lit by a member of the ruling royal family. This time the Norwegians used the Olympic Flame for the opening but saved the flame from Morgedal for the Paralympics.

Nagano 1998



In the shadow of the Big Hat stadium. The bird's nest look of this cauldron may have inspired the Birds Nest design for Beijing 2008's main stadium.

Salt Lake 2002



The 2002 cauldron as it sits today on the ground, a few feet away from where the 22 metres shaft was raised 17 metres above the Athletes' stand. The small wall on the left contains the names of all the 2002 medal winners. The cauldron was designed by Tim Hunter of the WetDesign firm. There was a second, smaller cauldron on the stage of the Victory Plaza where the medal ceremonies were held nightly.

Torino 2006



Still there, looking out over the Stadio Olimpico. Standing at 57 m high, the 2006 cauldron is the tallest winter Olympic cauldron; and the second highest in history after Helsinki 1952's.

Vancouver 2010



The bigger, outdoor cauldron at its quayside setting. The smaller “show” cauldron inside B.C. Place which the world saw malfunction, was lit by four Olympians; while this outdoor one was lit by just one of them. That does raise the question: how legitimate and authentic an Olympic cauldron can this one be when the “show” cauldron was eventually touched by four Olympics (including Catrina LeMay-Doan's successful attempt at the closing), whereas the outdoor one was lit by one non-medalist, albeit of legendary status.



The “show” cauldron modified for the Paralympics opening (above). The problematic four spokes were not used for the Paralympic OC; thus it is the first (Paralympic) cauldron not looking anything like the permanent (Olympic) cauldron sitting outside at Cold Harbour dock. This brazier eventually joined the four “show” spokes in the scrap heap.

Sochi 2014

Some strange notes as the Sochi 2014 torch relay got underway:

Two days before the Olympic Flame arrived in Moscow a second time, Russian basketball star Sergey Belov died on October 3, 2013, at age 69. Belov led the Russian team in the controversial 1972 gold medal match with the USA; and he lit the cauldron for Moscow 1980.

The flame arrived in Moscow in October 5, 2013. Hardly had the relay set out when the flame went out whilst it was being carried by the second runner. This happened within the Kremlin grounds when the flame was hastily relit by an onlooker's cigarette lighter.

Within the first week alone, the flame continued to die out, at least 16 times in Moscow alone by one account² – thus creating an odd Olympic record of sorts.

So that statistic together with the scheduled stop at the International Space Station does pose a dubious conundrum: does the mere fact of just carrying a flameless torch into space (which it will be) constitute a “valid” part of an Olympic torch relay? Any more than say, transporting the Athens 2004 torches in their boxes from Australia (where they were manufactured) to Greece before the first lighting, just to add up the miles? That fact does play tricks on one's mind which may lead one to conclude that for the numerous times the Sochi flame has gone out on its first week alone on terra firma (not even counting the possible times it may have gone on the Greek leg), was practice all along for the flameless space walk? After all, practice makes perfect.

Nameless mascots: Flameless torch relay legs. What does it all add up to?

Finally, within the first ten days of the relay, once the flame was safely out of Greece, another record of sorts was set in Olympic memorabilia commerce. An *unused* 2014 torch with an original runner's suit sold for



US\$16,100 on eBay³, from Olympia, Greece – the highest, quickest sale ever for any Olympic memorabilia.

Scoop: a prototype of what the Sochi cauldron will look like in the Medals plaza.

The framework for the cauldron rises 90+ feet into the air. It will dominate the Medals Plaza located between the Fisht Stadium to one side and the Bolshoi Ice Arena the main ice hockey venue, to the other.

Fisht Stadium is being enclosed just for the 2014 ceremonies. So like Vancouver, before B.C. Place was demolished, Sochi will use a ceremonial cauldron inside the main stadium while having the permanent cauldron sitting outside for all to see. Fisht Stadium will then be returned to its original open setting after 2014 to prepare for being a World Cup 2018 venue.

Like the scroll theme and the Phoenix theme, later discarded, for Beijing's torch and cauldron, indications are Sochi will stick to its Firebird theme, if the 2014 torch is anything to go by. Sochi's troubled torch is crafted in the shape of a “feather” from the Firebird of Russian legend. One can already hear the strains of Stravinsky's Firebird suite in the air.

New Paralympic Tradition: Finally, a new Paralympic lighting tradition will also start for Sochi 2014. Henceforth, for every winter and summer Paralympic lighting, one flame will always be lit at Stoke Mandeville in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, the birthplace of the Paralympic movement. It will then join other

flames from wherever they are lit in the respective host country. So a few days before the opening ceremony, a flame from Stoke Mandeville in the UK will fly to Russia, there to join flames lit in 46 Russian cities⁴. Thus, 47 flames will then converge in Sochi for the March 5⁵ Paralympic Opening Ceremony, ending up in the main Olympic cauldron. This new twist will not mirror the “made-in-Greece-only” lighting of the Olympic Flame but will become the one consistent and international leg of future multi-originated relays/lightings.⁶ At presstime, it was not yet revealed whether the lighting in Stoke Mandeville would take place at the hospital or the stadium grounds. ■

The cauldron for Sochi 2014. Notice the cup-like structure on top, necessitated by the notorious winds in the area. Taken first week of November 2013.

- 1 Thanks to ISOH member, Åge Dalby for this photo and info.
- 2 From one of the Russian contributors on www.skyscrapercity.com
- 3 <http://www.ebay.com/itm/Original-and-Unused-Sochi-2014-Olympic-Torch-with-the-Original-Torchbearer-Suit-/261303249859?hash=item3cd6e32bc3>.
- 4 There are at least ten Russian cities with eternal flames at Fallen Soldiers' memorials. Those most probably would be starting points for at least 10 of the cities.
- 5 From a 22/10/2013 email from Christiane Schoettler, IPC COO assistant, to author.
- 6 There were 15 towns and cities in Utah which formed the 2002 Winter Paralympic Flame in Salt Lake City; and four last summer for London.

Six want Winter Games 2022

After expiry of the time limit to apply for the 2022 Olympic Winter Games on 14 November, the following six cities and regions have put their names forward: Almaty, Kazakhstan; Beijing (in combination with Zhangjiakou), China; Krakow (with the Polish and Slovakian mountains of the High Tatra), Poland; Lviv, Ukraine; Oslo, Norway and Stockholm, Sweden.

On the other hand Munich, which lost the vote for the 2018 Winter Games to PyeongChang, will not put in another candidature. All four citizen surveys in the participating areas produced a negative result.