



Behind the Scenes at London 2012

The Olympics and Paralympics were special, magical and simply unforgettable.

But you know all that...

"My moment to shine"



The Olympic Torchbearer's Story

On Thursday 8th December 2011 I received a box from Coca Cola saying "we think you have got what it takes to be an Olympic Torchbearer" and a badge which said "Future Flame" on it – I just burst into tears when I opened it, as I could not believe I had been selected. It was the beginning of an amazing journey which is still going on.

The journey started back in June 2011 when I sent an e-mail around telling everyone how much I had raised by running the London Marathon in aid of Breakthrough Breast Cancer, as my mum had died from breast cancer. I had a reply from Jackie Fishleigh saying "I'd like to nominate you to carry the Olympic torch. Christine Creese, Amanda Kirkpatrick and I were chatting about this earlier and we all think you are an inspirational figure who fits the bill for this important task!". I was delighted and shocked that someone felt I was an inspiration and that I should be nominated. Jackie had to write a short article on why she wanted to nominate me and I had to write a short article about myself on how I could inspire other people (which I



Christine Webb

found extremely difficult to do). In October I found out I had made the short list and the final judging panel was going to be The Wanted, Dizzee Rascal, Eliza Doolittle and many important people in the community. Well I thought I did not stand a chance,

and I thought well at least I have made the final short list.

Once I been told I had been selected I had to wait an agonising couple of months while security checks were done on all the torchbearers who had been selected. On 16th March 2012 I got the all-important e-mail telling me I would be part of the Olympic Torch Relay. I also found out I was going to be doing it in Harrietsham on 19th July.

The next couple of months just flew by, Coca Cola set up a Facebook page, so all their Future Flames could keep in touch, ask any questions we might have and enjoy each other's experiences of carrying the torch. Coca Cola also organised a Cheer Kit for all their Future Flames, which consisted of a banner, two beater pads, drawstring bag and another badge. You could design a message to go on the banner and the beater pads - my message simply said "This is for you mum. Love Chris xx".

On Saturday 19th May 2012, Ben Ainslie started the 70 day torch relay down at Land's End. I was not carrying the torch until Day 62 – so I

had a long wait ahead of me. Like the whole of the UK I watched with excitement as the torch made its journey up and down the country. While I was waiting for my big day to come, Coca Cola invited me to the evening celebrations in Birmingham to see the Torch arrive and to meet up with other Future Flames. The headline band that night was The Wanted. Two weeks before I was due to do it, a huge box arrived at my house. It was my Cheer Kit - it felt like Christmas had come early, and the excitement of my big day started to take momentum. A week later my uniform arrived by special delivery at work, along with final instructions for the day. I tried it on and paraded around the top floor of number 10 showing it off - I either needed to grow longer arms and legs in a week (which seemed highly unlikely!) or I had to do some needle work over the weekend. Unfortunately despite my best efforts I did not grow over the weekend - so the needle and cotton came out of over the weekend!

Day 62 of the torch relay finally arrive and it was my "Moment to Shine". It had seemed like it had taken forever to arrive down in Kent! I still had a long day ahead of me, as I was not due to be doing my slot until 6.26 pm. I was leg 129 on that day.

I had to meet up at Leeds Castle at 4.15 pm with other torchbearers who were doing the leg from Harrietsham to the lighting of the cauldron at Leeds Castle. It was nice to see the torchbearers who were going to share my "Moment to Shine". It was my first opportunity to hold a torch and we got shown how to do the famous kiss with the torches - which is when the flame is passed from one torch to another. We shared each other's stories as to why we had been chosen - some of the people on the bus were - a guy who had won a Medal in the Barcelona Olympic in Judo, two guys who were hoping to take part in the next Olympics in Brazil, a lady who had won medals in Winter Olympics, a lady who had fostered lots of children over the years, a guy who had served in Afghanistan and was now helping children in the community and a couple of other people.

We finally left Leeds Castle and took the route the torch would be taken, so it was our first opportunity to drive

through Harrietsham and to see the people who had started lining the route; it was starting to get busy. The coach parked up outside Harrietsham village, as we waited for the convoy to arrive which consisted of the police escort, the Olympic flame, the Torch Support Team ('TST'), Coca Cola truck and Samsung truck. The convoy finally arrived and the first torchbearer got off to start her leg of the relay and the other torchbearers gave her a big cheer. Then the coach slowly moved off and the next person was dropped off at their leg. I was going to be next as I was the third part of the relay. They handed me my torch and the torchbearer gave me a big cheer. I was greeted by a TST member and walked off the coach to be greeted by my whole family and friends who had my banner. Cameras were flashing from every direction so I felt like a celebrity. The Coca Cola truck passed, they announced my name, and lots of Coca Cola staff came up and hugged me and told me to enjoy my moment. Next the Samsung truck passed and they gave me a big cheer and came and gave me a big hug. I could see the torchbearer approaching me and I knew this was going to be my "Moment to Shine". I "high fived" the torchbearer and we got the torches into the kiss so the flame could be passed over.

My torch was alight and it was my turn to carry the flame on the next part of the journey, the crowd was cheering as I ran along the road with TST around me. It was truly amazing, and the cameras were going off in all different directions, I kept the torch high in the air as I wanted as many people as possible to see it. Before I knew it, I could see the guy I was going to hand the flame over to. The torches did the famous kiss and my moment was over. I got back onto a different coach, which was at the rear of the convoy. We had to hand our torches back so the gas bottle could be removed. Everyone was excited on the coach talking about their "moment to shine". We slowly headed back to Leeds Castle and people were coming up to the coach and taking pictures of us and the torches. Once the gas bottle was taken out, we were handed back our torch to keep. I was very lucky because my sponsors had kindly said they would buy my torch,

unfortunately if your sponsors were Samsung or Lloyds you had to pay £200 to keep it.

That evening I met up with a couple of friends in the local pub to celebrate my amazing day. I was still in my uniform and I certainly was not going to leave the torch in the car so I took it in with me. As you can imagine, I suddenly became a celebrity. Everyone wanted to hold the torch and have their photo taken with me. When I went to leave the pub the landlord gave me a bottle of champagne to say congratulations on being a torchbearer, which was really nice.

In October I went to an "Afterburner Ball" up in Leicester which was organised by some of the Coca Cola torchbearers. Approximately 70 torchbearers and their partners turned up from all over the country. We had a group photo taken before the ball, in which we all dressed up in our uniform and had our torches with us. The ball was obviously an Olympic theme and the tables were named after countries which had been in the Olympics. Every torchbearer had been asked to submit a couple of photos of their special day, which were shown while we were eating our meal. We were also lucky enough to have one of the Paralympic Basketball players Judith Hamer come and talk to us about her experience of the Paralympics. Coca Cola had kindly donated goody bags for all the torchbearers. It was a wonderful weekend, meeting and chatting with other torchbearers and enjoying their experiences and finding out why they were chosen.

Since doing the relay I have been to numerous schools, a nursery, a care home, local pubs, a supermarket and a fete so that people can get an opportunity to see and touch the torch. I have also been invited to a "Sport Achievement of Year" award ceremony in January 2013 organised by Maidstone County Council.

I would personally like to say a BIG THANK YOU to three people - Jackie Fishleigh for nominating me, Coca Cola for being an amazing sponsor and for seeing something in what I wrote, and last but no means least my mum, because if it had not been for her I would not have been given this opportunity.

