



Weightlifter: Launceston Elliot

Olympic Gold

Olympic Silver



Launceston Elliot was Great Britain's first Olympic Champion in any sport at the inaugural Athens Olympics in 1896. He won gold in the One-Handed Lift and took silver in the Two-Handed event.

He was born in India to Charles Elliot and his third wife Ann in 1874, but he was named after the Tasmanian city in Australia in which he was conceived.

In 1887, the 13-year-old Launceston began to train under the tutelage of the German weightlifter Eugen Sandow, regarded as the founder of modern-day bodybuilding.

Nearly four years later, aged only 16, Elliot competed in the inaugural British weightlifting championships, held in the International Hall of the Café Monico in west London. Within three years he was crowned British champion.

At the inaugural Olympics Elliot made it to the final of the two-handed lift event and faced off against Denmark's Viggo Jensen. Both men lifted 110kg. The Crown Prince of Greece who chaired the jury decided to award gold to Jensen, who had lifted the weight cleanly, while Elliot had struggled. When it came the one-handed event the following day; Jensen had injured his shoulder and could not compete, with Elliot's lift of 71kg securing gold.

In 1899 he went from strength to strength and set four new British records at the amateur championships.

Despite weightlifting's absence from the programme four years later, The Athens Games was not the end of the Olympic adventure for Elliot either as he claimed tenth place for Britain in the discus at the Paris Olympiad.

Elliot will be remembered as a true internationalist as despite spending most of his life in England and finding fame in Greece his daughter Nancy said "He was called Launceston, as he was conceived in Launceston, the capital of Tasmania. He was born in India, but he was Scottish to the bone.