To mark the 100th anniversary of the Olympic Games Antwerp 1920, the Olympic Foundation for Culture and Heritage presents a free exhibition at The Olympic Museum, from 25 June until the end of 2020, which takes a look at both the past and the present.

The 1920 edition has, of course, been chosen for a reason: a century ago, the Games in Antwerp were the first to be organised after World War I, the cancellation of the 1916 Games due to be held in Berlin, and the Spanish flu pandemic. These Games in Antwerp also saw the first appearance of the rituals that would go on to express the Olympic values: strong messages of hope in a fragile world. Today, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the Tokyo 2020 Games to be postponed and called into question much of our modern way of life. The similarities between these two periods thus led the Museum team to delve into the archives!

Antwerp 1920 was a turning point, as this was the first time the Olympic flag was flown in a stadium. It was also the first time that an athlete took the Olympic oath and doves were released. All united under the same flag, respecting the rules and in a spirit of peace: these were the values that drowned out the noise of warfare. The athletes took centre stage, and their achievements were a source of inspiration.

Photographs, film extracts and other documents tell the story of those whose resilience gave rise to new hope and confidence in the future. These archives resonate with the stories of today’s athletes, affected by the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Games and involved in one way or another in combatting the virus. The exhibition also encourages visitors to share their own experience and contribute to the #StayStrong #StayActive #StayHealthy #OlympicMuseum digital campaign.

While the introduction of the Olympic flag was particularly significant in the context of those post-war Games, the symbolism of this flag is still as strong today. Because it is only by “standing in solidarity, united under the same flag” that we can work together towards the same goal: helping to build a better world through sport.