

# THE OLYMPIAN DREAM

THE STORY OF

WILLIAM PENNY BROOKES



*W.P. Brookes.*





Thomas Yates, age 10, Herald of the Wenlock Olympic Games.

Chris Cannon, Wenlock Olympic Society



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William Penny Brookes 1809-1895



## What is your favourite lesson at school?

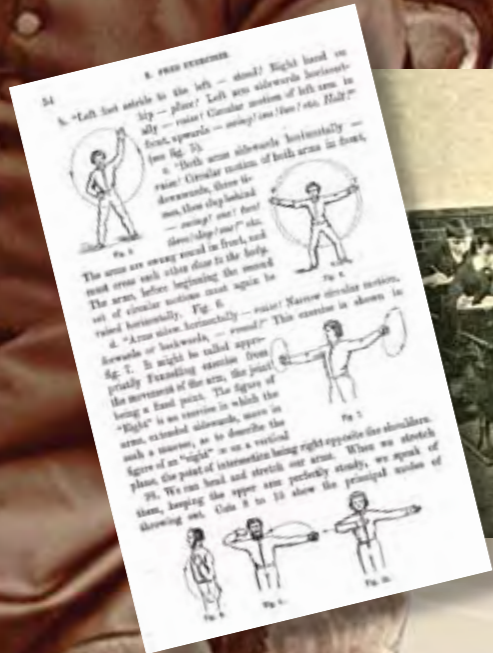
Many childrens favourite lesson is PE.

This man, William Penny Brookes, was a doctor and he found out that taking exercise was good for children. So he spent his life telling everybody that children in school should do Physical Education (P.E.).

As a result of all his hard work, each school was given money for P.E. lessons. This happened just before he died in 1895.

**Remember William Penny Brookes next time you enjoy P.E.!**

Dr. Brookes 1876

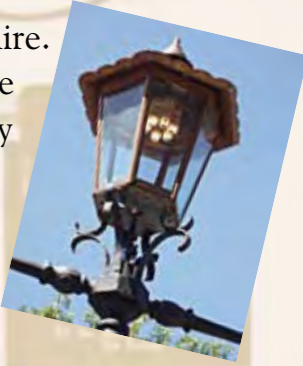


This is the house in Much Wenlock where Dr. Brookes was born, lived, worked and died.



William Penny Brookes was born in 1809. Here he is with Adeline and John, two of his five children.

Dr. Brookes was born, lived, worked and died in Much Wenlock, Shropshire. He spent his life helping others as the Doctor of the town. He built a library and museum, a gas works for light, improved the roads and brought the railway to Much Wenlock. He also opened a school where P.E. was very important.



Dr. Brookes helped the poor and punished those who broke the law as a Justice of the Peace.





Thomas Yates, age 10, Herald of the Games, pictured with a Wenlock Olympian champion.

As well as keeping the children healthy Dr. Brookes wanted to help everybody enjoy exercise and have fun. So in 1850 he started the Wenlock Olympian Games. The procession through the town was led by a Herald on a white horse followed by a band.

**Which man in the picture below do you think is William Penny Brookes?**

Clue, he never ran in the Games but he was given lots of medals.

**Can you see the Herald?**



**PROGRAMME**

Order of COMPETITIONS.	Prizes				
	First Prize	Second Prize	Third Prize	Fourth Prize	Fifth Prize
1. FOOT RACE, 100 yards, heats, for boys under 14 years of age, resident in the Parish of Wenlock	1 0 0	0 5 0	0 2 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
2. FOOT RACE, 60 yards, heats, for boys under 10 years of age, resident in the Parish of Wenlock	0 5 0	0 2 0	0 1 0		
3. FOOT RACE, 1 mile. Prizes presented by R. Jasper Mares, Esq., M.P.	0 5 0	0 2 0	0 1 0		
4. RUNNING HIGH LEAP. Prizes presented by the Liffordell Company	2 0 0	0 10 0			0 1 0
5. RUNNING LONG LEAP ditto	0 7 0	0 2 0			0 1 0
6. STANDING LONG LEAP ditto	0 7 0	0 2 0			0 1 0
7. THROWING THE CRICKET BALL ditto	0 7 0	0 2 0			0 1 0
8. FOOT-HURDLE RACE, half a mile, over 10 flights, hurdles 4 feet high. Prizes presented by J. M. Goskell, Esq., M.P.	2 0 0	0 10 0			0 1 0
9. FOOT RACE, 200 yards. Prizes presented by R. Jasper Mares, Esq., M.P.	2 0 0	0 10 0			0 1 0
10. TILTING AT THE RING on horses. First prize, the Olive Crown and a Silver Goblet. Second prize, a Silver-mounted Hunting Whip, with richly chased handle	7 0 0				0 2 0
11. FOOT HURDLE RACE, 1 mile, over 15 flights, hurdles 4 feet high. First prize presented by Lord Forester. Previous winners of Lord Forester's prize to be excluded from this contest.	5 0 0	1 0 0			0 2 0
12. FOOT RACE, half a mile, for Farm Labourers, resident in the County of Salop. Prizes presented by J. M. Goskell, Esq., M.P. Competitors must satisfy the Judges, either by certificates from their masters or by other evidence, that they are Farm Labourers.	1 15 0	0 10 0	0 5 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
13. FOOT STEEPLE-CHASE, half a mile, with water leaps. Prizes presented by Colonel The Hon. Percy Herbert, M.P.	2 0 0	0 10 0	0 5 0	0 1 0	0 1 0
14. GENERAL COMPETITION IN GYMNASTIC FEATS, on parallel bars, horizontal bars, and trapeze. Open only to Members and Associates of the Wenlock Olympian Class.					0 1 0
15. THROWING THE HAMMER. Prizes presented by the Wenlock Chase Company. Open only to the Members and Associates of the Wenlock Olympian Class.					0 1 0
16. PUTTING THE STONE, 28 lbs. Prizes presented by the Wenlock Chase Company. Open as above.					0 1 0
17. FOOT RACE, 400 yards. Prizes presented by the Wenlock Chase Company. Open as above.					0 1 0
18. POLE LEAPING					0 1 0
19. THREE-LEGGED RACE, 50 yards					0 1 0
20. SACK RACE, 50 yards					0 1 0

**SHREWSBURY CHRONICLE,**  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1851.

**OLYMPIC CLASS OF THE WENLOCK AGRICULTURAL READING SOCIETY.**

The second annual meeting of the above class was held on the Race-course, Much-Wenlock, on Tuesday and Wednesday week. The morning of Tuesday was ushered in by firing of cannon and a merry peal from the old church tower. The members of the class assembled at the Guild-hall at ten o'clock precisely, and proceeded thence through the principal streets, headed by a splendid brass band, with flags belonging respectively to the Members for the Borough, to the Corporation, and the different Friendly Societies in the town. The order of procession was as follows:—

The band, with flags and banners.

A large and tastefully grouped standard, borne by two men, and consisting of flowers, intermingled with laurel boughs, branches of wheat, barley and oats, gracefully entwined with blossoms of the hop-blind, and the whole surmounted by a crown of flowers.

Two little boys bearing the olive crowns for the victors in the juvenile races.

Two men carrying the target.

Two little boys, in Forester's costume, bearing bows and arrows.

Four men, two abreast, bearing bows and arrows.

Bearers of the implements of cricket, two abreast.

Bearers of the foot-ball, quoits, stone and hammer for throwing, two abreast, followed by the members of the class.

William Penny Brookes's Wenlock Olympian Games were held each year. The races had different names to the races we have today.

**What do you think we now call**

A foot race?

A running high leap?

A running long leap?

**How big do you think the stone was in Throwing the Stone?**

Dr. Brookes always had fun events for everybody to join in. There was climb a greasy pole and chasing a piglet! One year there was an old ladies race for a pound of tea.

**Do you think a blindfolded wheel barrow race would be fun?**





The one event everybody wanted to see was called Tilting at the Ring. This event was very exciting, men dressed in bright colours rode on horseback with a long wooden pole called a lance. They had to use the lance to unhook a small ring that was hanging down from a crossbar.

Look at the crowd watching it, it was hard to do and many riders fell off and hurt themselves. The winner was given the title of "Champion Tilter of England".

**Can you see the crown of leaves the lady is putting on the head of the winner of the Tilting at the Ring?**

**Can you see Dr. Brookes and the Herald?**

**Can you see a man with a cup for the winner?**



Competitors came from all over England to take part in the Wenlock Olympian Games. Here are some of the winners.

Thomas Sabin is stood by his old bicycle, it is called a Penny Farthing. He fell off twice in the bicycle race.

All the winners were men and boys, Dr. Brookes would not let women and girls race.

**Do you think that was fair?**





The winners at the Wenlock Olympian Games sometimes won money or a gift, such as a book, as prizes.

The prize everybody wanted to win was the medal given to the winner of the five events competition, called the pentathlon.

The medal was made in London by Queen Victoria's jeweller. First of all it was made in silver and then in gold.

Look carefully at the drawing of the medal

**Can you see:**

**A hand holding a crown of leaves?  
A cricket bat?**

**What else can  
you see?**



Medal for a crayon drawing



A winning ode

At the Wenlock Olympian Games as well as events for running, jumping and throwing there were also events that all men, women, boys and girls could take part in.

Each Games had competitions for painting, drawing, sewing, spelling, handwriting, best poem and for making music.

Dr. Brookes looked after the children, he had special competitions for those at school. There were events for children under 7 years as well as for older children. Children won prizes for writing, reading and numbers as well as running.

**Do you think you would win a prize for your**

- handwriting?
- spelling?
- drawing?
- numbers
- running?

**What events  
would you enter?**



An entry in the sewing competition



# Much Wenlock London Paris Athens



William Penny Brookes was a special man.

He did not stop with the Games at Much Wenlock where he lived. He helped start Olympic Games in other places.

In 1866 10,000 people watched the National Olympic Games which Brookes helped organise at the Crystal Palace in London.

Dr. Brookes wanted everybody in the world to enjoy Olympic Games.

To help the first modern Olympic Games in Athens, Greece in 1859 he sent £10 as a prize, it was called the Wenlock Prize.

The King and Queen of Greece sent a silver cup as a prize at Dr. Brookes's Olympic Games here in 1877.

**THE OLYMPIAN GAMES**  
Which took place at Athens on the 28th of November, 1859.

Kind of Game.	Class.	Prizes.		Number of Competitors.	Name of Winner.	Country of Winner.
		Office Crown or Branch.	Money value. Deobanns.			
1 Long, or seven-fold foot-race, 4,200 feet. The Wenlock Prize of £10	2	Crown	281	14	Petros Velousarios	Smyrna.



King and Queen of Greece



Baron Pierre Coubertin.

In 1890 Dr. Brookes invited a special visitor to the Wenlock Olympic Games. He came from France and was called Baron Pierre Coubertin.

He wanted to know about PE and the Olympic Games. He called Dr. Brookes his "oldest friend" and invited him to help start the first Modern Olympic Games in 1896.

Sadly Dr. Brookes was very old and died a few months before the first Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.



Coubertin sent this medal for the Champion Tilter at the Wenlock Olympic Games 1891.



A race at the first Olympic Games in Athens, Greece 1896.





Harold Langley winning the Pentathlon Medal in 1923.

After William Penny Brookes died the Wenlock Olympian Society carried on holding the Games.

Here are some pictures of the Wenlock Olympian Games in 1923 and 1953.

**Do they look more like the runners we see today?**

**They are running on a grass track, what do modern athletes run on?**



Harry Lloyd winning a race in the 1953 Pentathlon.



Even though Dr. William Penny Brookes died more than a hundred years ago the Wenlock Olympian Games are still held each year.

The modern games held each July have athletics events for boys and girls, men and women as well as football, cricket, tennis, golf, archery and many more events. There is even a Penny Farthing bicycle race just like in the old days!

**What were your favourite events in the Wenlock Olympian Games?**

**If you were Dr. Brookes what events would you put in your Olympian Games?**

**Would you just have running and jumping or would you have things like drawing and writing in your Games?**

**What would your medal look like?**



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# Timeline

- 1809 William Penny Brookes born in Much Wenlock, Shropshire.
- 1831 William Penny Brookes became the Doctor for Much Wenlock.
- 1850 The first Wenlock Olympian Games were held.
- 1859 The Wenlock Prize was presented at the Athens Olympian Games.
- 1866 The first National Olympian Association Games held at the Crystal Palace in London.
- 1877 King George of Greece sent a silver cup to be presented at the National Olympian Games.
- 1890 Baron Pierre Coubertin visited Much Wenlock and watched the Wenlock Olympian Games.
- 1895 William Penny Brookes died at Much Wenlock.
- 1896 The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece.
- 1908 The first London Olympic Games held.
- 1948 The second London Olympic Games held.
- 1986 The 100th Wenlock Olympian Games held.
- 2009 The 123rd Wenlock Olympian Games celebrated 200 years since William Penny Brookes was born.
- 2012 The third London Olympic Games.



# Glossary

## Brookes, William Penny

Doctor who started the Wenlock Olympian Games and helped start the modern Olympic Games.

## Coubertin, Baron Pierre de

The Frenchman who started the modern Olympic Games in Athens 1896 and who visited Much Wenlock to meet Dr. Brookes in 1890.

## Herald

The boy who led the procession at the start of the Wenlock Olympian Games.

## Much Wenlock

A small town in Shropshire, England, home of Dr. Brookes and the Wenlock Olympian Society.

## National Olympian Games

Dr. Brookes helped organise the first Olympic Games in this country at the Crystal Palace in London in 1866.

## Olympic Games

Every country in the world can take part in the Olympic Games. They are held every four years in different parts of the world. In 2012 they will be held in London.

## Penny Farthing

One of the first bicycles, it has a very large wheel at the front and a small wheel at the back. It gets its name from old fashioned money, a large old penny and a small farthing or quarter of a penny.

## Pentathlon

An athletic event made up of five events including running, throwing and jumping.

## Physical Education (P.E.)

A school lesson where you take exercise and learn to play games.

## Tilting at the Ring

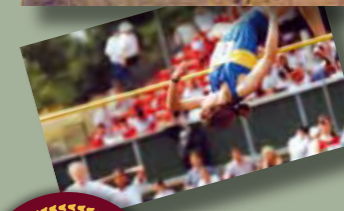
A competition on a horse to see who could unhook a small ring hanging down from a crossbar with a long piece of wood called a lance.

## Wenlock Olympian Games

Athletics, football, archery and other events held in Much Wenlock since 1850.

## Wenlock Olympian Society

The name of the Society that runs the games at Much Wenlock.







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