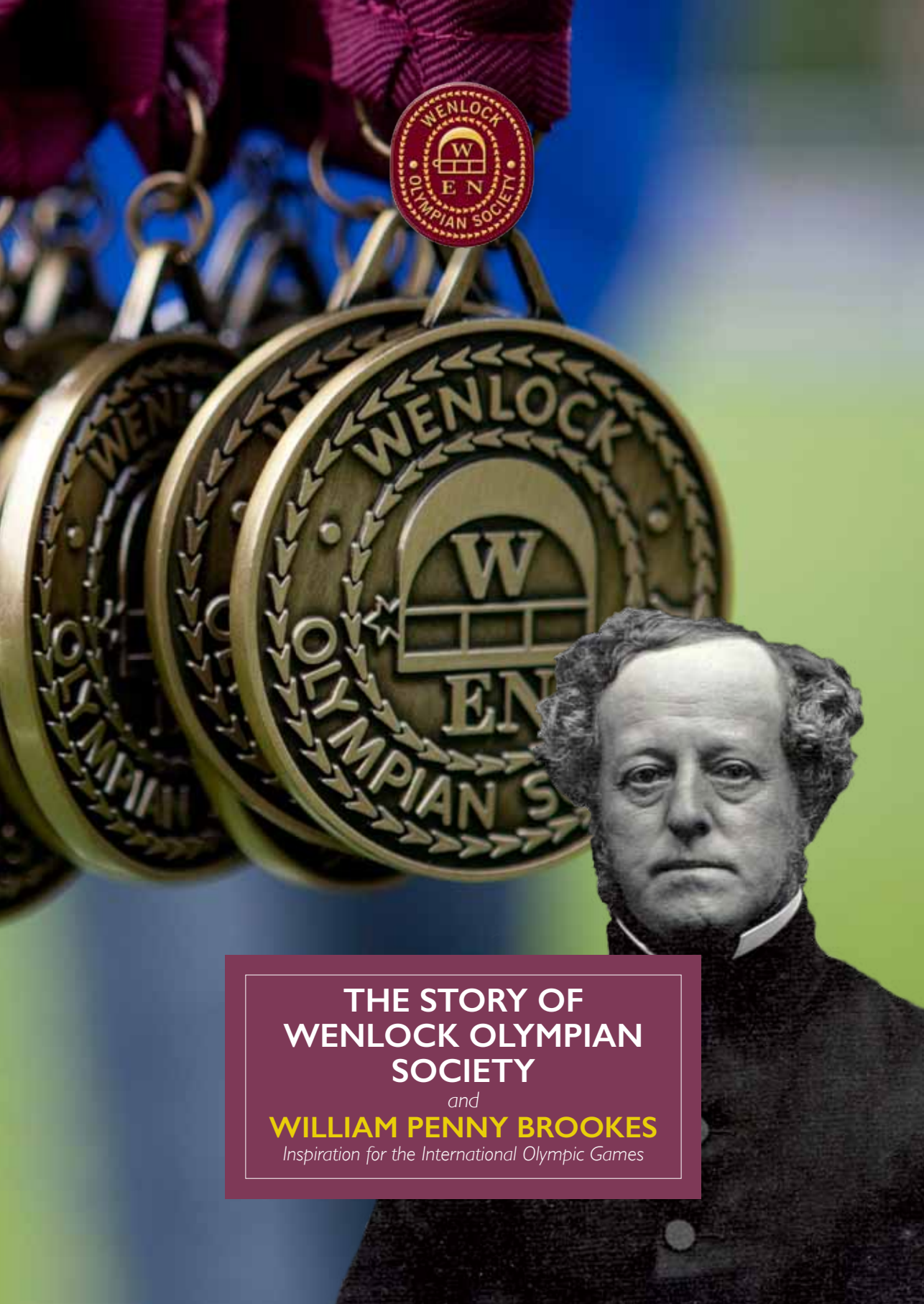




THE STORY OF WENLOCK OLYMPIAN SOCIETY

and

WILLIAM PENNY BROOKES

Inspiration for the International Olympic Games



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Our Olympic partners

2009

"The London 2012 Organising Committee acknowledges that the roots of the Olympic Movement lie here in this Shropshire town. The Wenlock Olympian Games, founded by Dr William Penny Brookes, were attended in 1890 by Baron Pierre de Coubertin – who credited Brookes for inspiring him in founding the International Olympic Committee."



Lord Sebastian Coe
Chairman, London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG).

"Wenlock" – the mascot for the London 2012 Olympic Games, was named after the home town of the Wenlock Olympian Games.



Bill Morris

Bill Morris

Director of Culture, Ceremonies and Education, London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG).

2010

"It is always a personal pleasure to return to Much Wenlock. Both Jonathan Edwards and I also shared a wonderful evening with the Wenlock Olympian Society as we introduced our eagerly anticipated London 2012 mascots to the world. It was a special moment for all of us to share the unveiling of the London 2012 Olympic Mascot, Wenlock, in particular with you – inspired by the unique place of Much Wenlock in the heritage of the Olympic movement. I know they will be visiting shortly on their journey to London 2012."



2011

"It is 21 years since I came to Much Wenlock in my capacity as President of the British Olympic Association (BOA). This was to mark the centenary of Baron Pierre de Coubertin's historic meeting in 1890 with William Penny Brookes and his visit to the Wenlock Olympian Games. Although those Games have developed considerably since their early beginnings in 1850 and now take place on six venues across Shropshire, a full day of track and field events continue to be held on what was once called 'Linden Field'. It is reassuring to know that Brookes's heritage is still maintained by the volunteer workforce of his Wenlock Olympian Society (WOS)."



HRH the Princess Royal,
President of the British Olympic Association.



Jacques Rogge

Jacques Rogge

President of the International Olympic Committee 2001-2013.

2013

"Of course, the Wenlock Games have been promoting the moral, physical and intellectual improvement of participants for an impressive 163 years already. And it is no secret that the founder of the modern Olympic Movement, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, drew a great deal of inspiration from the Wenlock Olympian Games, having shared many of the same values and ambitions as the founder of the Wenlock Olympian Society, Dr William Penny Brookes."





Dimitrios Eforakopoulos from Greece, home of the Ancient Olympic Games, carries the Olympic torch through the town of Much Wenlock with thousands lining the streets.

INSET

1 As the Olympic Games were handed over from Beijing to London in 2008 the Wenlock Olympian Society were proud to raise the flag of London 2012 in Much Wenlock.

2 In May 2012 the Olympic Torch arrived in Much Wenlock.

3 WOS Vice President, John Simpson, carried the torch in the town on its way to the 2012 London Games.

Much Wenlock and the London Olympic Games 2012

In 2005 the **Olympic Games of 2012** was awarded to London. The attention of the world then turned to Much Wenlock, a small town in Shropshire where, in 1850, a local doctor named William Penny Brookes created the Wenlock Olympian Society which proved to be the inspiration for the revival of the international Olympics.

In 2010 the mascot for the London 2012 Olympics was launched in Much Wenlock. Its name "Wenlock" was in recognition of the history of the Wenlock Olympian Society and its links to the origins of the international Olympics. Mascot sales around the world totalled 9,000,000.

In 2012 Much Wenlock was one of the most visited places in Britain by the world's media. Images of the town and its remarkable Olympic story were seen around the world - from Russia to China, Mexico to Japan, a truly worldwide phenomenon!

On 30th May 2012 the London 2012 Olympic Torch came to the place where it first flickered in 1850.

*"one of the greatest days for
Much Wenlock in living memory"*

At the Opening Ceremony of London 2012 the world saw in Danny Boyle's "Isle of Wonder" the industrial chimneys rise, billowing smoke. As Boyle wrote: "Out of Abraham Darby's Shropshire furnace flowed molten metal. Out of his genius flowed the mills, the looms, engines, weapons, railways, ships, cities, conflicts and prosperity that built the world we live in."

This was the world of Brookes and the Wenlock Olympian Games, Ironbridge and its furnaces being part of the ancient Wenlock Borough.



©
IOC

"Wenlock", the mascot for the London 2012 Olympic Games, was named after the home town of the Wenlock Olympian Games.



2012

*“victory is having
done your best”*

The Wenlock Olympian Games of 2012

involved 2,385 competitors, aged 8 to 80, taking part in 26 events ranging from music and archery through to dance and gliding. International competitors included four young athletes aspiring to compete in Rio 2016 who travelled from Brazil to win Wenlock Olympian medals.



2012



archery
athletics
badminton
biathlon
bowls
clay pigeon
creative writing
cricket
dance
equestrian
fencing
football
gliding
golf
hockey
marathon
music
netball
swimming
road race
tennis
triathlon
volleyball
walk



1809

William Penny Brookes
Born 16 August

The story begins

William Penny Brookes was born in 1809 in Much Wenlock Shropshire, England where his father was one of the local doctors. The Brookes family house, still used as a private residence, is situated opposite the parish church.

As a young man, he left Much Wenlock to study at Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospital in London. Later he travelled with his brother, John, to study at Padua in Italy, where there was a world-famous school of medicine attached to the university and the world-renowned mediaeval botanical gardens.

In 1830 Brookes was in Paris to further his education in medicine, when he learned that his father had died of typhoid.

After qualifying (MRCS and LSA) in 1831, he returned to Much Wenlock to take over his father's practice. All three Brookes brothers qualified as doctors. The middle brother, John, was killed in a riding accident when he was twenty-four. William and the youngest brother Andrew went on to become Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons.



Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospital 1820.



Padua medieval Botanical Gardens.



William Penny Brookes's son William.



Birthplace of William Penny Brookes
7 Wilmore Street Much Wenlock.

1841

Soon Brookes was involved in local affairs.

At the age of thirty-two, he became a Justice of the Peace, and shortly afterwards, Commissioner for Roads and Taxes. Later he played an important role in the renovation of the impressive Council Chamber in the Guildhall to be followed by the building of the Corn Exchange a decade later.

Brookes was also instrumental in the formation of the Wenlock Gas Company and both the Much Wenlock and Severn Junction and the Wenlock Railway Companies.



The Guildhall viewed from the Church Green.



The Guildhall Council Chamber.

The Agricultural Reading Society

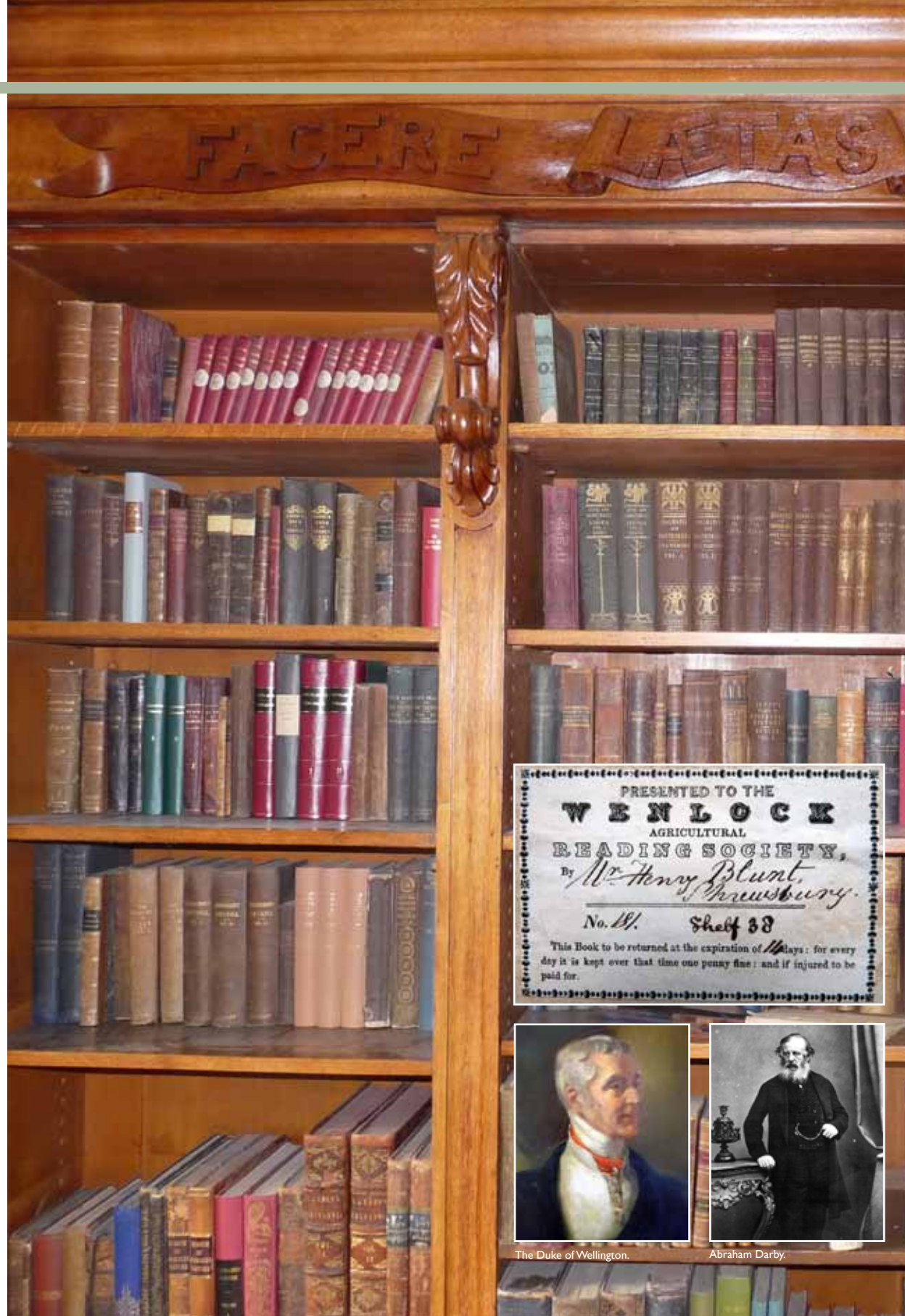
In 1841 Brookes set up the **Agricultural Reading Society**. This early example of a lending library was established

"for the promotion and diffusion of useful information."

He wrote to many titled and famous people, such as the Duke of Wellington, Abraham Darby and the poet Tennyson, most of whom responded by sending donations and books. From the Society evolved various classes including the Art, Philharmonic and Botany Classes and significantly, the Wenlock Olympian Class.



Brookes was a respected botanist. Hundreds of examples from his herbarium and some fossil exhibits from the original museum that he set up in 1843 still survive, although not all of these collections are held in Much Wenlock.



The Duke of Wellington.



Abraham Darby.

The Wenlock Olympian Class



In 1850 Brookes formed the **Wenlock Olympian Class**. The original objective of the Olympian Class was to hold annual Games to

"promote the moral, physical and intellectual improvement of the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Wenlock, and especially of the working classes, by the encouragement of out-door recreation and by the award of prizes annually at public meetings for skill in athletic exercises, and proficiency in intellectual and industrial attainments."



Society Minute Book 1850.

The first Wenlock Olympian Games

The first Wenlock Olympian Games, held in October 1850, were a mixture of classical athletic events and traditional country sports such as quoits, football and cricket. The early Games sometimes included a 'fun' event to entertain the crowds - once a blindfolded wheelbarrow race and another year an old women's race for a pound of tea. Pageantry was an important element from the outset. The Games were preceded by a procession of flag bearers, competitors and officials led by a band as they marched through the decorated streets of the town to where the Games were to be held - first at the Racecourse and then the Windmill Meadow, the latter eventually becoming known as the Linden Field and now the current Games's permanent home.

Wenlock Olympian Games on Linden Field June 1867. The oldest known photograph of a sports meeting.



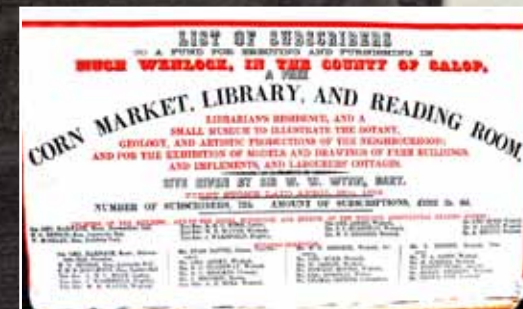
From the beginning most events were open to all-comers.

In the much expanded 1851 Games, for example, *Eddowes's Journal* reported that Poyner of Albrighton won three events, Badger of Wolverhampton came second in the half-mile foot race, while Mainwaring of Birmingham won the 'leaping in distance' event. There was always at least one event restricted to residents of Wenlock Borough - which kept the locals happy! In later years, there were competitors from as far away as London in the south and Liverpool in the north.



Newspaper cutting, Shrewsbury Chronicle, 1851.

William Penny Brookes 1852.



The Corn Exchange. The first stone was laid in 1852. Brookes proposed there should be "a large and handsome room for lectures or public meetings with an additional room for your library and a house for the Librarian."



William Penny Brookes with two of his children, Isabella and John in 1853.

The Athens Olympian Games

In 1859 the Athens Olympian Games were held for the first time. These were funded by Evangelis Zappas, a wealthy Albanian living in exile in Romania. On hearing about the Games, Brookes sent £10 on behalf of the Wenlock Olympian Committee. The Greek Committee decided to award the Wenlock Prize to the winner of the 'Long' or 'Sevenfold' race which was "numerously and warmly contested." This was Brookes's first contact with Greece.

Zappas's Games, open to subjects of the Greek nation, were held in some form with varying degrees of success. They continued intermittently until the revived International Games in 1896.

Evangelis Zappas.



A ticket to the Athens Games 1859.



Translation from Greek to English of the original programme - almost certainly by Brookes.

LIST

THE OLYMPIAN GAMES

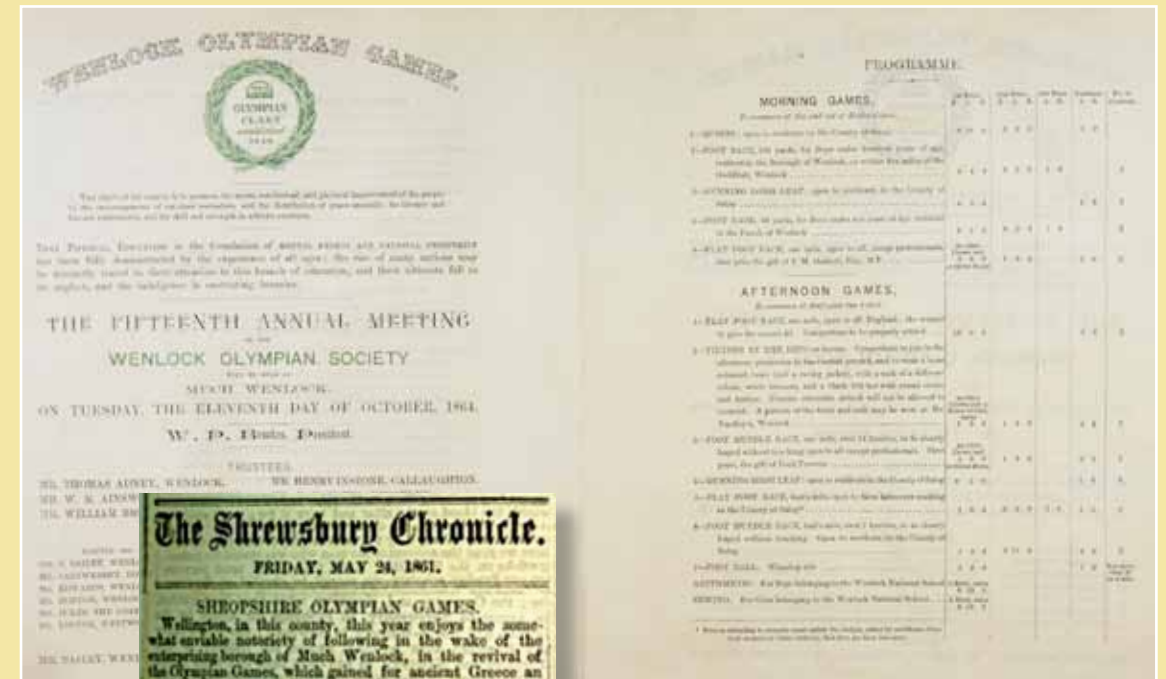
Which took place at Athens on the 27th of November, 1859.

Kind of Game.	Class.	Prizes.		Number of Competitors	Name of Winner.	Country of Winner.
		Olive Crown or Branch.	Money value, Drachmas.			
1 Long, or seven-fold foot-race, 4,200 feet. The Wenlock Prize of £10	a	Crown	281	14	Petros Velissarios	Smyrna.
2 Double foot-race, 1,200 feet ..	b	Branch	100	6	George Arsenis	Triopolitza.
3 Short foot-race, 600 feet ..	c	Branch	50	17	Demetrius Athanasion ..	Aspropotamon.

Wenlock Olympian Society

The Olympic Class separated from the Agricultural Reading Society, changing its name to the Wenlock Olympian Society in 1860 (as it

continues to be known today), and elected its first honorary member, Petros Velissarios, winner of the Wenlock Prize in Athens.



Also in 1860 came another first - the Shropshire Olympian Games took place in Shrewsbury through the initiative of Brookes.

Significantly, these Games were held at different towns within the county, with the host town responsible for both staging and financing the event. This model was adopted by Brookes for his National Olympian Games, and also by Coubertin when he revived the modern Olympic Games, and is continued to this day.

Wenlock Railway

Always keen to utilise innovations Dr Brookes, with his brother Andrew, set up the **Wenlock and Severn Junction Railway Company**. Construction of the railway was completed in 1861 but the line was not officially inspected in time for the Wenlock Olympian Games of that year. Nevertheless, Brookes was permitted to run special trains to carry the many competitors and spectators to the Games - at their own risk. It was reported that a 'great concourse' of spectators arrived in the town.

Extract from the *Wellington Journal* - December 1895

"During the railway mania the heart of Dr. Brookes was stirred to the very depths. He saw lines after lines projected and schemes of railways propounded in all sorts of directions, some merely speculative, others 'bona fide', and he wooed in vain the great companies to look in the direction of Wenlock, but the most reckless stood aghast at the steep gradients and the abrupt curves to be encountered in climbing the hill; besides, several companies gave the project the greatest opposition. Ultimately these efforts were crowned with success, and the hitherto isolated town of Much Wenlock found itself in communication with the productive district of Corvedale and Ludlow on one side, and Coalbrookdale, Wellington and Birmingham on the other. If anyone travelling that way is struck with the beauty of Wenlock station, its rocky pile on the Abbey side, studded with flowers, rare plants and shrubs, asks, as many do, who was the author of so much beauty, he is told - Dr. Brookes."

Much Wenlock railway station.



The National Olympian Association

Brookes, along with John Hulley of Liverpool and Ernst Ravenstein of the German Gymnasium in London, were the principal movers in establishing the National Olympian Association (NOA), as a 'union for different Olympian, Athletic and Gymnastic, Boating, Swimming, Cricket and other similar societies' with its headquarters in Liverpool. Their first Festival, a three-day event held in 1866 at Crystal Palace, was an astonishing success attracting 10,000 spectators and competitors. Interestingly, the winner of the 440 yard hurdle race was the eighteen-year-old W.G. Grace, who had been excused fielding for the England XI versus Surrey cricket match at the Oval in order to compete.

In response, the Amateur Athletic Club (AAC), later to become the Amateur Athletic Association (AAA), was hastily formed by the elite of society to thwart the NOA. The AAC was determined that British sport should be restricted to their definition of 'amateurs and gentlemen' - in other words, athletes from public schools and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. They determined that a sport's regulatory body should be under their control with its base in London. The NOA faced powerful opposition, but by its very existence, forced the AAA to open its doors to what Brookes termed 'every grade of man'.

The National Olympian Games, similar to the Shropshire Games, were to be held in different cities around the country - later of great significance to the model for the modern Olympic Games.

"MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO."

1867.  1867.

PROSPECTUS
FOR THE
ATHLETIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN'S
Sixth Annual Olympic Festival,
TO BE HELD AT LIVERPOOL,
ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, 28TH AND 29TH JUNE, 1867.
WRESTLING, BOXING, AND OTHER GAMES, PRESENTED BY THE
LADIES OF LIVERPOOL,
Will be offered for competition; together with a Champion's Gold Medal, which will be awarded to the competitor showing the greatest general proficiency in Athletic Exercises.

PROGRAMME FOR FRIDAY, 28th JUNE.

No.	Event	Gold	Silver	Bronze
1.	Gymnastics, Men under 20. Yrs.	1	1	1
2.	Do. Do. over 20. Yrs.	1	1	1
3.	Fencing	1	1	1
4.	Boxing, heavy, middle, and light weights	1	1	1
5.	Wrestling, heavy, middle, and light weights	1	1	1
6.	Volleying	1	1	1
7.	Singletouch	1	1	1
8.	Indian Club Exercises	1	1	1
9.	Football Do.	1	1	1

The above competition will come off in The Gymnasium on the Evening of Friday, 28th June, commencing at Seven o'clock.

PROGRAMME FOR SATURDAY, THE 29th JUNE.

No.	Event	Gold	Silver	Bronze
10.	120 Yards Flat Race (on horse)	1	1	1
11.	220 Yards Flat Race (on horse)	1	1	1
12.	220 Yards Hurdle Race, over Ten Flights of Hurdles	1	1	1
13.	One Quarter-Mile Flat Race	1	1	1
14.	Five Voluntary Quarter-Mile Flat Race	1	1	1
15.	One Quarter-Mile Hurdle Race, over Twelve Flights of Hurdles	1	1	1
16.	Half-Mile Flat Race	1	1	1
17.	One Mile Flat Race	1	1	1
18.	Two Mile Flat Race	1	1	1
19.	Four Mile Flat Race	1	1	1
20.	Four Mile Walking Match	1	1	1
21.	High Jumping, Running and Standing	1	1	1
22.	Wide Jumping, Running and Standing	1	1	1
23.	Putting 16lb. Shot	1	1	1
24.	Throwing 16lb. Hammer	1	1	1
25.	Throwing Cricket Ball	1	1	1
26.	Pole Leaping	1	1	1

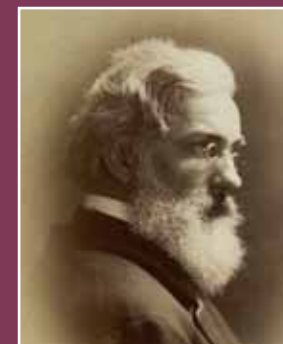
These contests will come off in the Nearn. Park Athletic Grounds, on Saturday, 29th June, commencing at Three o'clock. Also the final competition in Boxing, Wrestling, Fencing, and Singletouch.

CONTESTS FOR YOUTHS UNDER SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

No.	Event	First Prize	Second Prize
27.	Quarter-Mile Flat Race	Silver Medal	Bronze Medal
28.	Indian Club and Football Exercises	Silver Medal	Bronze Medal
29.	220 Yards Hurdle Race, over Six Flights	Silver Medal	Bronze Medal

Programme of the 1867 Athletic Society of Great Britain Olympic Festival organised by John Hulley in Liverpool, held on the same dates as the second NOA Games in Birmingham.

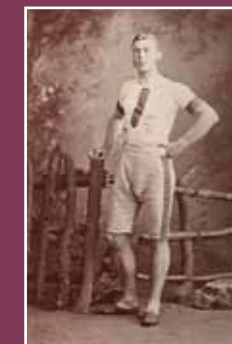
Ernst Ravenstein.



Medal presented by WOS to John Hulley in 1864 for his talented and valuable services in the cause of physical education.



William Oldfield, winner of NOA Pentathlon Silver Cup 1874.



National Games Medal.



Crystal Palace, London.



German Gymnasium.



Liverpool Gymnasium.



National Olympian Games Pentathlon Cup.



Wenlock Olympian Games

"Numbers unprecedented upon the grounds and the adjacent hill, from which an excellent view of the sports is to be obtained, there were in the afternoon some 10,000 spectators and a very interesting scene was presented."

PROGRAMME				
Order of	COMPETITIONS	First Prize	Second Prize	Third Prize
1.	FOOT RACE, one yard, boys 14 years of age, resident in the Parish of Wenlock	0 0 0	0 2 0	0 1 0
2.	FOOT RACE, six yards, boys, for boys under 10 years of age, resident in the Parish of Wenlock	0 0 0	0 2 0	0 1 0
3.	FOOT RACE, 1 mile. Prizes presented by R. Jasper Moss, Esq., M.P.	2 0 0	0 30 0	0 1 0
4.	RUNNING HIGH LEAP. Prizes presented by the Litchell Company	0 7 0	0 2 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 12 flights, hurdles 4 feet high. Prizes presented by J. M. Gaskell, Esq., M.P.	2 0 0	0 30 0	0 1 0
9.	FOOT RACE, one yard. Prizes presented by R. Jasper Moss, Esq., M.P.	2 0 0	0 30 0	0 1 0
10.	TILTING AT THE RING on horse. First prize, the Silver Cup and a Silver Gilted	2 0 0	0 30 0	0 1 0
11.	Second prize, a Silver-mounted Hunting Whip, with richly carved handle	2 0 0	0 30 0	0 1 0
12.	FOOT HURDLE RACE, 1 mile, over 12 flights, hurdles 4 feet high. First prize presented by Lord Forester	2 0 0	0 30 0	0 1 0
13.	FOOT RACE, half a mile, for Farm Labourers, resident in the County of Salop. Prizes presented by J. M. Gaskell, Esq., M.P.	1 15 0	0 30 0	0 1 0
14.	GENERAL COMPETITION IN GYMNASTIC FEATS, on parallel bars, horizontal bars, and trapeze. Open only to Men born and Associates of the Wenlock Olympian Society	1 0 0	0 30 0	0 2 0
15.	THROWING THE HAMMER. Prizes presented by the Cannon & Chase Company. Open only to line-throwers, quarry-men and their sons, in the Parish of Wenlock	0 30 0	0 2 0	0 1 0
16.	PUTTING THE STONE, 56lb. Prizes presented by the Cannon & Chase Company. Open to all	0 30 0	0 2 0	0 1 0
17.	FOOT RACE, one yard. Prizes presented by the Cannon & Chase Company. Open to all	0 30 0	0 2 0	0 1 0
18.	POLE LEAPING	0 30 0	0 2 0	0 1 0
19.	THREE-LEGGED RACE, 50 yards	0 7 0	0 2 0	0 1 0
20.	SACK RACE, 50 yards	0 7 0	0 2 0	0 1 0

As this programme for the Wenlock Olympian Games of 1867 shows, a variety of athletic events were held. The leading athletes of the day from across the country came to take part winning substantial cash prizes. Men like H.W. Brooke from the German Gymnasium in London, while a William Snook won 14 guineas (£14.70) on one day.

Over time, silver cups, medals and prizes 'to the value of' replaced all money prizes to reflect the amateur status of the events, although there were some events for 'professionals'.

Events were held for local competitors, like 'Putting the Stone' where a 56lb (25kg) stone was first tossed using one hand and then the other, with the distances combined to find the winner.

The Ancient Olympic Games of Greece inspired William Penny Brookes to not only improve the body but also the mind. Alongside competitions in running, jumping and throwing the Wenlock Olympian Games held competitions in the arts - prizes were awarded for the best poem, painting, handwriting and music. Special prizes were also given to children for writing, reading and number, as well as for sporting events.

The Wenlock Olympian Games attracted considerable crowds of spectators, growing from a few hundred at the early Games to thousands by the 1860s.



Master Thomas Yates, age 10. Herald of the Games 1867.



William Snook.



Medal awarded to Adeline Brookes (daughter of William Penny Brookes) for first prize in crayon drawing 1864.



Pentathlon Medal

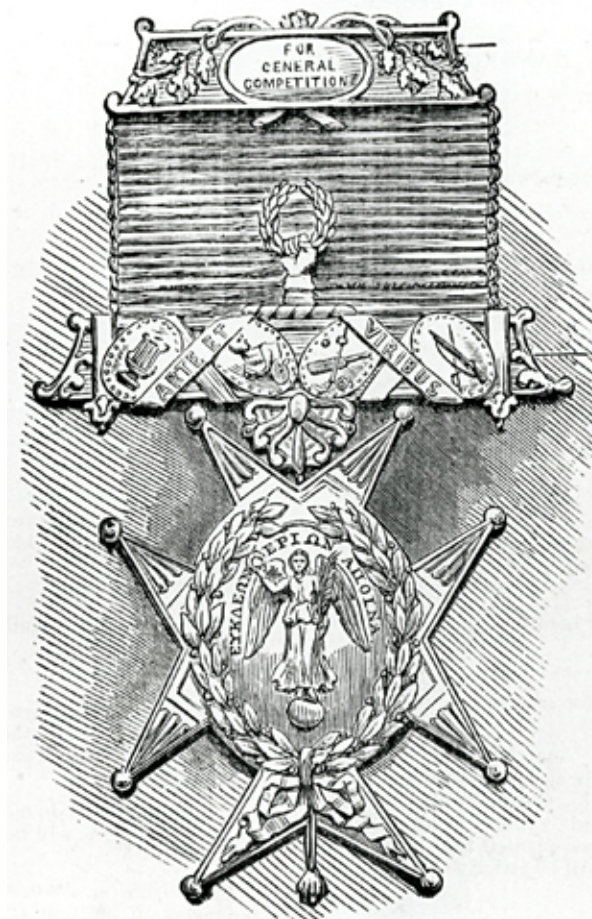
A Pentathlon was added to the Wenlock Games in 1868, with a prize of a handsome 'first class silver medal to be awarded for General Competition' in five contests, valued at £14. Initially, the five disciplines were:

Climbing a 55-foot rope
Running high leap
Putting a stone of 35lb
Running long leap
Foot hurdle race

It was an elaborate design which encompassed every aspect of Wenlock Olympian Games competitions and honours: an oval medallion on a Maltese Cross bears the winged figure of 'Nike', Goddess of Victory, standing on an orb and holding a tiny crown of olive leaves and surrounded by a further crown of olive leaves with an inscription from Pindar's Olympic Ode: "there are rewards for glorious deeds."

The cross is suspended from an Emblematic Bar decorated with the motto 'Arte et Viribus' (skill and strength) across four shields. The first shield has a scroll and lyre representing literature and music; the second a bust and palette representing sculpture and painting; the third a tilting ring and lance, a quoit and a cricket bat and ball representing sporting skills; and the fourth a rifle and sword for military skills.

The medal was made by Queen Victoria's Silversmith, Hunt & Roskell, emphasising its importance to the Games. The medal dies were purchased at the considerable cost of £84.4shillings in 1865/66.



H.W. Brooke medal winner 1869.



C. G. Smythe the medal winner 1875.



Fred d'Escofet medal winner 1881.



Physical Education

In 1871 Brookes carried out a simple experiment - to prove his theory regarding the importance of physical education for schoolchildren.

Most schools at the time practised repetitive and boring Drill Training. One of Brookes's ambitions (and a significant factor in the Olympic story) was to have Physical Education made a compulsory subject in the National Schools' curriculum - either as a replacement for Drill or to be used alongside the exercise. So, on behalf of the WOS in 1868, Brookes sent a strongly-worded petition to Parliament. It was not successful.

A second strongly-worded petition was sent to Parliament in 1870. Then, to support his petition, the following year Brookes set up the simple experiment. He recorded the chest, forearm and upper arm measurements of two groups of six boys from the Much Wenlock National School.

The first group trained in Drill while the second group trained in Drill and Gymnastic exercises - including wielding an Indian club, horse vaulting and horizontal and parallel barwork. At the end of twelve months, the boy's measurements were taken again and the results showed a marked improvement in the physical development of the second group. Brookes was right!

Much Wenlock National School was built in 1848 by public subscription for £1000. Brookes served as a manager of the school.

b. "Left foot astride to the left — stand! Right hand on hip — place! Left arm sideways horizontally — raise! Circular motion of left arm in front, upwards — swing! one! two! etc. Halt!" (see fig. 5).

c. "Both arms sideways horizontally — raise! Circular motion of both arms in front, downwards, three times, then clap behind — swing! one! two! three! clap! one!" etc.

The arms are swung round in front, and must cross each other close to the body. The arms, before beginning the second set of circular motions must again be raised horizontally. Fig. 6.

d. "Arms sidew. horizontally — raise! Narrow circular motion, forwards or backwards, — round!" This exercise is shown in fig. 7. It might be called appropriate Funnelling exercise from movement of the arm, the joint fixed point. The figure of an exercise in which the arms, extended sideways, move in unison, as to describe the figure of an "eight" ∞ on a vertical point of intersection being right opposite the shoulders. The arms can bend and stretch our arms. When we stretch the upper arm perfectly steady, we speak of it as being out. Cuts 8 to 10 shew the principal modes of

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

Fig. 8.

Fig. 9.

Fig. 10.

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

Fig. 8.

Fig. 9.

Fig. 10.

Fig. 5.

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Fig. 10.

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

Fig. 8.

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Tilting at the Ring

Introduced for the first time in 1858, Tilting at the Ring proved to be the most popular and exciting event at the Games. It required skill and expert horsemanship for the rider to unhook a small ring hanging down from the crossbar, with his lance. Ten years later, to increase the level of difficulty, Tilting on Horseback over Hurdles, shown below, was added to the list of events.

Background photograph - John Webster.

Silver cups awarded to Charles Ainsworth, Champion Tilter.



1859 Winners medal awarded to Charles Thomas.



Left. The Procession 1887. In the foreground in the centre of the line of officials is the Herald wearing a tudor costume, seated on a small grey pony. Dr Brookes stands to the right of the official holding the pony's head. In the background to the right of the photograph is the band. Towards the middle are the tilters on horseback with decorations trailing from their lances.

Charles Ainsworth Champion Tilter 1887 is crowned with olive leaves by Miss Serjeantson, daughter of the Rector of Acton Burnell. William Penny Brookes stands to her right.



Charles Edward Ainsworth.



William Braithwaite.



Richard Preece.



Champion Tilter with the Herald of the Games.



Charles Ainsworth Champion Tilter 1887.



Baron de Coubertin & the Olympic dream

In 1889 Baron de Coubertin, organiser of the International Congress on Physical Education, was in England seeking information on sports education practised in schools. Brookes wrote to the young Frenchman and invited him to come and see his Games the following year. So began a dialogue between the two men who were to set the Modern Olympic flame alight. The Wenlock Olympian Games had taken place in the May of 1890, and in July, Brookes had met with fellow committee members, including the Earl of Neath and H.J. Gladstone MP to discuss a Physical Education curriculum for National Schools. Intrigued, Baron de Coubertin came to Wenlock in October 1890 to see the Wenlock Olympian Games. This was the same year in which, once again, Brookes petitioned Parliament, this time successfully, to make Physical Education a compulsory part of the curriculum in National Schools.

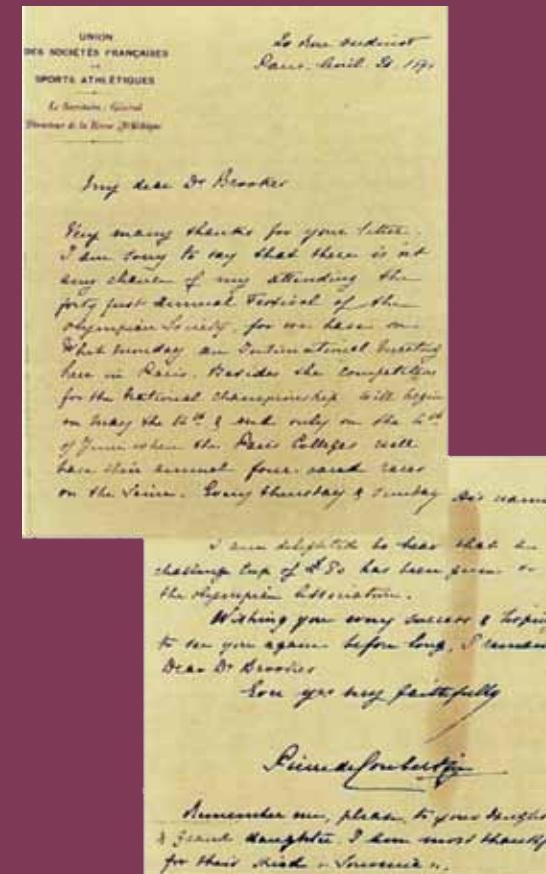
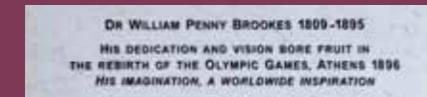
Baron Pierre de Coubertin.



At this time, the two men discussed their similar ambitions and the eighty-one-year-old Brookes shared with the twenty-seven-year-old Baron de Coubertin his dream to stage an international Olympic revival to be held in Athens. On his return to France, Coubertin gave a glowing account in the "La Revue Athlétique" journal of his stay in Much Wenlock and referred to his host's efforts to revive the Olympic Games.



William Penny Brookes
died 19 December



Letter to William Penny Brookes from Baron de Coubertin dated 1891.



Although Brookes was listed as an honorary member of the 1894 Congress he was unable to attend because of ill health. Sadly, he died in December 1895, and so did not see his dream - an international Olympic Games - come to fruition just four months later in April 1896. In his obituary to Brookes Baron de Coubertin wrote:

"If the Olympic Games that Modern Greece has not yet been able to revive still survives today, it is due, not to a Greek, but to Dr William Penny Brookes."

1896 Olympic International Olympic Games. Image courtesy IOC Allsport.



Wenlock Olympian Games 1920s

- Harold Langley 1923

Following Brookes's death, the Wenlock Olympian Society kept the tradition going, although the loss of the old doctor's driving enthusiasm was greatly missed. From 1896 onwards, there have been some gaps in staging the Games, notably during the two World Wars.

The model for the Wenlock Olympian Games inspired other sporting events in the town. Initially the Memorial Games helped to raise funds after the First World War. During the Second World War similar Games were held to raise funds for the war effort and these continued after the war up to 1949. The revenue raised was used by the Town Council for the upkeep of the Wenlock Olympian Games ground (Gaskell Field formerly Linden Field).

One of the highlights between the wars was the 67th Wenlock Olympian Games in 1923 when 3,000 spectators attended. Of particular note was the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* report:

"The chief event of the day was the competition for the much-coveted Wenlock Pentathlon Gold medal, the winner of which has to prove superior ability in five distinct and separate events, won by H.A. Langley of Sparkhill Harriers, a young fellow and a fine all rounded athlete, for whom a great future can be predicted."

That great future for Harold Langley included representing Great Britain in the Paris Olympics of 1924 alongside Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddle, immortalised in the film *Chariots of Fire*. He then went on to be a Field Judge at the London Olympics of 1948.



Wenlock Pentathlon Gold Medal 1923.



Linden Field with Tilting the Ring frame visible.



Harold Langley.



Cartoon produced for local Midlands newspaper.



The 1950s revival of the Wenlock Olympian Games

The Games's revival after the Second World War was in 1950. These celebrated the centenary of the first Games, and were a great success. Quite unlike the Games we have today, it was a spectacular one-day event which began with the crowning of a carnival queen, followed by a carnival procession, the judging of the carnival participants followed by an afternoon of sport - which attracted nationwide competitors.

A horticulture and handicrafts event was held alongside the sporting events. This format of Games continued intermittently for the next twenty-five years with varying success.

Carnival Queen float. Date unknown.



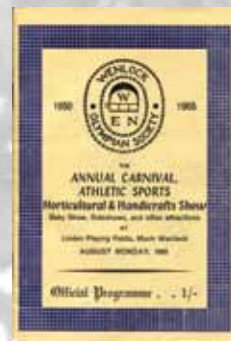
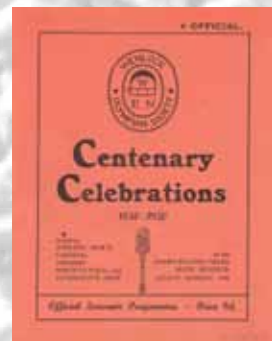
Harry Lloyd winning a race in the 1953 Pentathlon.



The 1948 Much Wenlock town Games carnival float celebrates the London Olympics with Harry Lloyd holding the torch.



Wenlock Olympian Society Committee 1955.



Gymnastic display at the Games in the 50s.



Wenlock Olympian Games in the 1970s and 80s

After a gap of ten years, the Queen's Jubilee year of 1977 saw the latest revival under the influence of the then WOS President, Ernest Higgs, Secretary, Norman Wood and Mayor of Much Wenlock, John Simpson. Both John Simpson and Norman Wood went on to become Presidents of WOS. Since this time, the Society has gone from strength to strength with the good doctor's objectives first and foremost.

In 1980 a special Festival was held to celebrate the founding of the Amateur Athletic Association in 1880. Then in 1986, the Society celebrated its own 100th Games with distinguished visitors from the British Olympic Association and the International Olympic Committee.

The grand-nephew of Baron de Coubertin, Geoffrey de Navacelle, also attended the 100th anniversary Games - as guest of honour.

At the 1981 Wenlock Olympian Games ten-year-old Alison Williamson entered the archery competition. She won silver. This was to be the beginning of an illustrious sporting career as, nineteen years later, Alison represented Great Britain at the millennium Olympic Games held in Sydney. She went on to win a bronze medal at the following Games in Athens 2004, fulfilling Brookes's dream of a Wenlock Olympian winning an Olympic medal at an Olympics held in Athens.



Alison Williamson.



Norman Wood.



WOS participation medal.



Athens Olympic Games medal.



WOS centenary Games medal.

Recognition in the 1990s

1990 marked the centenary of the visit of Baron de Coubertin to the Wenlock Games

when the Guest of Honour was the President of the British Olympic Association, HRH the Princess Royal, Princess Anne. She led representatives from the BOA, including their Chairman, Sir Arthur Gold.

The centenary of the Congress of the Sorbonne, when the International Olympic Games was officially founded, was in 1994.

His Excellency, Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the IOC came to lay a wreath at the Brookes family grave and stated to the world's press,

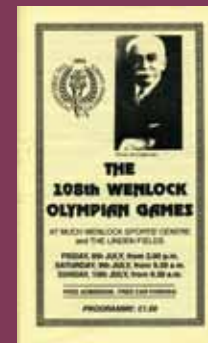
"I came to pay tribute and homage to Dr Brookes who really was the founder of the Modern Olympic Games."



HRH the Princess Royal and Sir Arthur Gold.



Craig Reddie (left) Chairman of the BOA, His Excellency Juan Antonio Samaranch (centre) and Norman Wood, Secretary of the Wenlock Olympian Society, at the grave of William Brookes in 1994.



The Coubertin Medal

When he visited Much Wenlock in 1890 Coubertin promised that he would donate a medal as a prize for the following year's Wenlock Olympian Games. This medal of the Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques engraved with the words "Presented by Baron Pierre de Coubertin Paris" is thought to be the only personal award ever made by Coubertin.

During Samaranch's visit, Miss Joyce Farmer, then aged ninety-two, presented the Wenlock Olympian Society with the original Coubertin Medal which was won by her father, Edward Marston Farmer, in 1891 for Tilting at the Ring.



Baron Pierre de Coubertin.



Edward Marston Farmer winner of the Coubertin Medal in 1891 for Tilting at the Ring.



The Coubertin Medal.



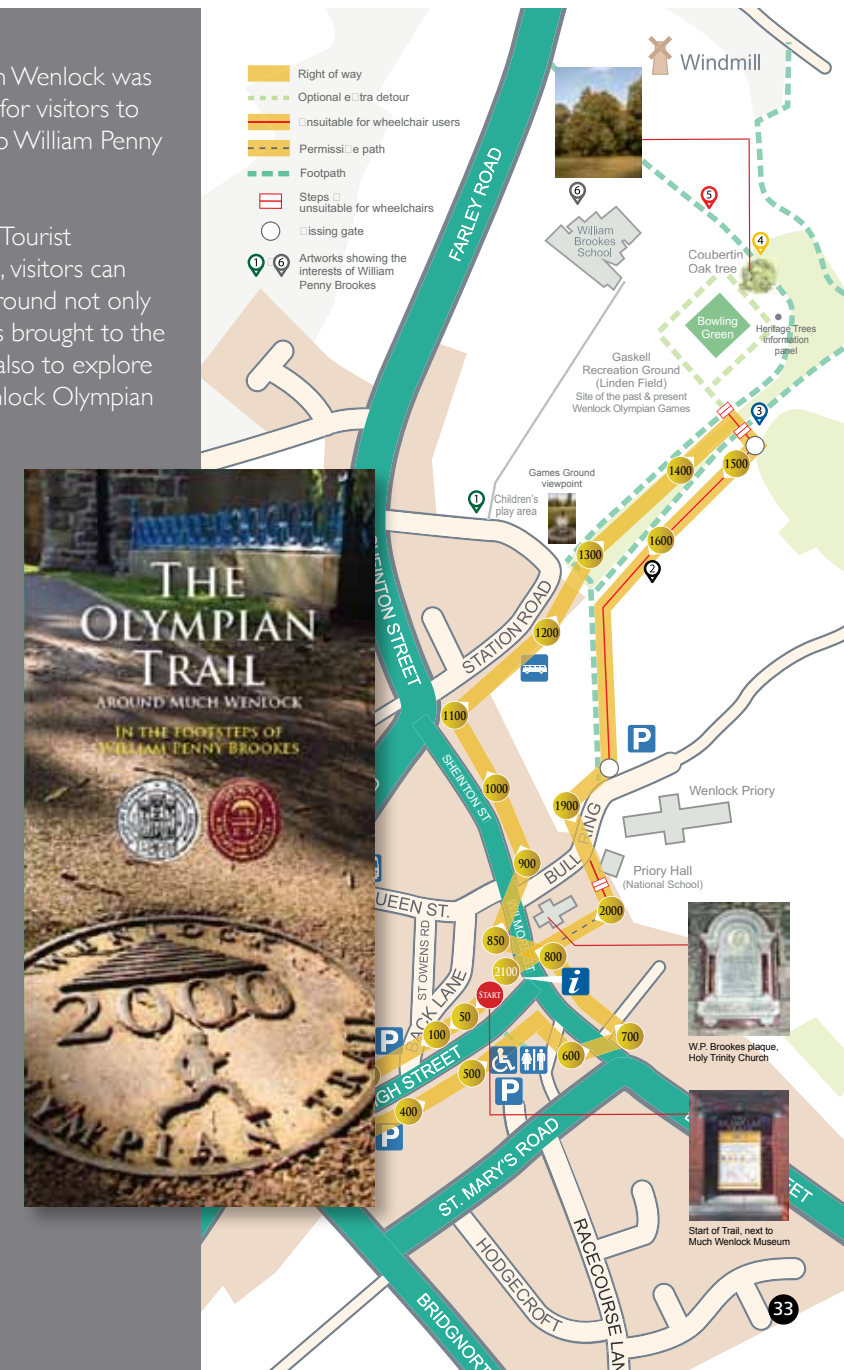
The Olympian Trail

The Olympian Trail around Much Wenlock was opened in 2001 and was designed for visitors to explore places of interest related to William Penny Brookes and the Olympian Games.

Using Trail maps, available from the Tourist Information Centre in the Museum, visitors can follow bronze markers set in the ground not only to learn of the benefits Dr Brookes brought to the town during the 19th century, but also to explore the places associated with the Wenlock Olympian Society and its Games.



Schoolchildren on the Olympian Trail.



Wenlock Olympian Society honoured

In 2003 the Society was honoured when HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh visited the Wenlock Olympian Games ground.

Her Majesty recognised the Society's contribution to sport and the arts by awarding them The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2008.



The London Olympics 2012 Roadshow.



Sir Philip Craven MBE President of the International Paralympic Committee.

In 2006 the London Olympics 2012 Roadshow came to Much Wenlock bringing special guests Jonathan Edwards CBE, Triple Jump Olympic Gold Medallist and World Record Holder; and Sir Philip Craven MBE, President of the International Paralympic Committee. On that occasion the British Olympic Association presented WOS with a trophy in honour of Norman Wood in recognition of his life-long contribution to sport. The trophy is awarded by WOS annually to the person who has contributed the most to that year's Wenlock Olympian Games.



Presentation of Norman Wood trophy by Jonathan Edwards to WOS President Roy Rogers.



The Norman Wood trophy.

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A birthday celebration - William Penny Brookes 1809-2009

In 2009 the Wenlock Olympian Society celebrated 200 years since the birth of William Penny Brookes, the founder of the Wenlock Olympian Society in 1850.

The doctor worked tirelessly throughout his life to promote physical education, sport and the arts to improve the lives of people of "every grade". He brought Olympian Games to Much Wenlock, Shropshire and across the country, linking with Greece to revive the Olympic movement. He then worked internationally to help inspire the revival of the modern Olympic Games as they are enjoyed today.





**123RD ANNUAL
WENLOCK
OLYMPIAN GAMES 2009**

CELEBRATING THE BICENTENARY OF
THE BIRTH OF WILLIAM PENNY BROOKES
Founding father of the Modern International Olympic Games



maintaining a tradition



**FRIDAY 10TH JULY FROM 4.30PM
SATURDAY 11TH JULY FROM 9.30PM
SUNDAY 12TH JULY FROM 9.30PM
MONDAY 13TH JULY**

at various locations in and around Much Wenlock



Sir Philip Craven President of the International Paralympian Committee, and Jonathan Edwards, Triple Jump World Record Holder and Olympic Gold Medallist, came to honour his memory.

Jonathan Edwards CBE

In 2011 **Jonathan Edwards** CBE agreed to become the President of the Society, proudly wearing his President's medal at the Opening Ceremony of London 2012.

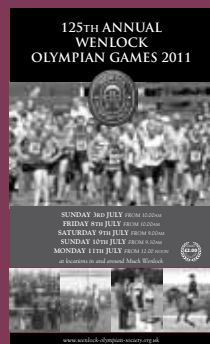
Jonathan competed in the triple jump, and in 1995 he became the World Record Holder and was voted BBC's Sports Personality of the Year. He won an Olympic Gold Medal at the 2000 Games in Sydney, Australia and later the same year was awarded a CBE.

"It is extraordinary that a modest Games held one bright day in October 1850, should still be continued today. Even more extraordinary is that its founder, William Penny Brookes, and the work of the Society should have inspired an Olympic movement. Wenlock Olympian Games has come a long way since its humble beginnings and as participants and spectators we can all enjoy and celebrate being part of the ongoing journey."

Jonathan Edwards CBE.



Jonathan Edwards wore his President's medal to the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics.



Global recognition



The story of the inspiration of the modern Olympic Games by Brookes and WOS has been celebrated around the world, with exhibitions in Norway, the United States, Qatar and China.

In 2012 the British Museum hosted an exhibition visited by over a million people where the medals of the Wenlock Olympian Society were displayed alongside those for the London 2012 Olympic Games. The London 2012 medal displayed the Greek Goddess of Victory 'Nike' - an image first seen on the Wenlock Olympian Society medal in 1868 and found on all Olympic Games medals presented since the first Athens Games of 1896.

In 1890, on his visit to Much Wenlock Baron de Coubertin planted a golden oak tree, pouring champagne over its roots. To mark the London 2012 Games students from the William Brookes School collected acorns from that tree; saplings grown from these were nurtured at Kew Gardens before being planted in London, Much Wenlock and sites between. A long term tribute to the work of Coubertin and the Wenlock Olympian Society.

British Museum.



Exhibition in Qatar.





The story continues



2016 Rio de Janeiro



2020 Tokyo

William Penny Brookes is increasingly recognised for his inspirational work, not only regarding the Olympic movement, but for his work in the development of physical education. For example in 2014 Wolverhampton University named its Institute of Sport Building after the founder of WOS.

After London 2012 the eyes of the world moved on but the work of the Wenlock Olympic Society has continued. Since 1850 the Society has supported the development of sport and the arts and held annual Wenlock Olympic Games. Perhaps the most important Games for the Society were the 127th Wenlock Olympic Game held in 2013 demonstrating that Brookes's vision and passion for participation in sport, the arts and physical education could still be found in Much Wenlock and beyond.

The story of the Society and its founder William Penny Brookes continues to inspire. After visiting the Wenlock Olympic Games Professor Sanada, Counsellor to the CEO, The Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games wrote:

"The Olympic Movement began with the ancient Olympic Games and was revived by Coubertin following his visit to the Wenlock Olympic Games. We have found that the moral, physical and intellectual improvements promoted by Dr Brookes are still alive today in Much Wenlock. The vision of Tokyo 2020 involves sport, education and culture and we in Japan recognise the importance of the legacy of Brookes and the Wenlock Olympic Society."

Making true what Pierre de Coubertin himself said:

"The Wenlock people alone have preserved and followed the true Olympic traditions."

Pierre de Coubertin 1897.

Take the Olympic Trail and find out more.

...beginning with the fascinating exhibition of Wenlock Olympic artefacts and memorabilia in Much Wenlock Museum.

The Olympic Trail is open all day and every day.



Would you like to be an Olympic competitor or Games Maker? Go to

www.wenlock-olympian-society.org.uk

Memorial to William Penny Brookes in Holy Trinity Church,
Much Wenlock



DR WILLIAM PENNY BROOKES 1809-1895
HIS DEDICATION AND VISION BORE FRUIT IN
THE REBIRTH OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES, ATHENS 1896
HIS IMAGINATION, A WORLDWIDE INSPIRATION
IN THANKSGIVING 2012 - XXX OLYMPIAD



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