



HALF- HIDDEN HISTORY - THE MODERN OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

[Gaskell Arms Hotel](#), Much Wenlock, Shropshire, TF13 6AQ

Saturday 25th May 2024

“Much Wenlock is the real birthplace of the modern Olympic movement.”

This contentious statement is suppressed or ignored by too many mainstream Olympic historians. Baron Pierre de Coubertin is usually credited as sole reviver of the Olympic Games. Yet, before October 1890, the young Frenchman had shown minimal interest in the Ancient Olympic Games, let alone reviving them. Then he was hosted in Much Wenlock by William Penny Brookes and, for almost 48 hours, was immersed in Brookes’ experiences of four decades. Brookes had created and sustained the local Wenlock Olympian Games, promoted regional and national multi-sport games named Olympian, and maintained contacts with Greeks at the highest levels, trying to encourage them to create a modern international Olympic movement. Francophone influences will ensure that you hear little or nothing of this true provenance during the upcoming Olympic summer in Paris.

This is a day not to be missed. But, because of the size of the dining room, we have only 32 places, **so please BOOK NOW if you would like to join us.**



Photo courtesy of Wenlock Olympian Society

Three experts will introduce you to this remarkable story and indicate how and why Coubertin, himself, chose to conceal it.

- Brian Robinson – one of our members for eight years, who has studied this topic intermittently for three decades;
- Chris Cannon – Archivist of the [Wenlock Olympians](#) since 2007;
- Catherine Beale – our newest member from Herefordshire, author of *Born out of Wenlock*, the most comprehensive book on Brookes & the Wenlock Games.

This is a complete spring day-out in Much Wenlock, Shropshire:

- 10.30 Gather at the Gaskell Arms with opportunity for coffee / drink
The hotel car park is accessed off the A458.
- 11.00 Introduction to William Penny Brookes
- 11.30 After a 300 yard walk down the High Street, a 10-minute visit in two separate groups to the tiny Wenlock Museum which displays fascinating Olympic artifacts
- 12.00 3 different options for a guided walk of parts of the Olympian Trail in the Town, a route which Coubertin walked with Brookes in 1890 (These options are described on the booking form.)
- 13.00 Lunch at the Gaskell Arms, where Games processions usually started
- A 20-minute talk after lunch taking the story forward from 1890
- A short question and answer session with all three experts.

Three Nations? Find out why on the day



Greek flag 1863 - 1924



Second Union Flag 1801 - today



Tricolore 1794 - today
With a few interruptions

Musical Interlude

Whether or not you are able to join us on 25th May, why not spend four minutes listening to "**Hymne à Apollon**" by **Gabriel Fauré** on *YouTube*, [here](#).

This piece was first performed in England on 6th June 1894 at the Cambridge University Musical Club. The significance of what happened ten days later will be explained as part of the Much Wenlock day.