

Pierre de Coubertin- Founder of the Modern Olympic Games

The Idea

Since the Renaissance there were attempts in many European countries to revive the Olympic Games of Antiquity. The German excavations of antique Olympia in 1875-81 formed a turning-point. Inspired by his strong interest in the Greek model - especially the unity of body and mind-, and journeys to Great Britain and to America, Pierre de Coubertin had the idea to revive the Olympic Games.

Dr. William Penny Brookes - a country doctor of the English town Much Wenlock with manifold interests - who had already been organizing the Wenlock Olympian Games in regional standard since 1850, had an especially important influence on Coubertin .



The young baron

The Greek Model:

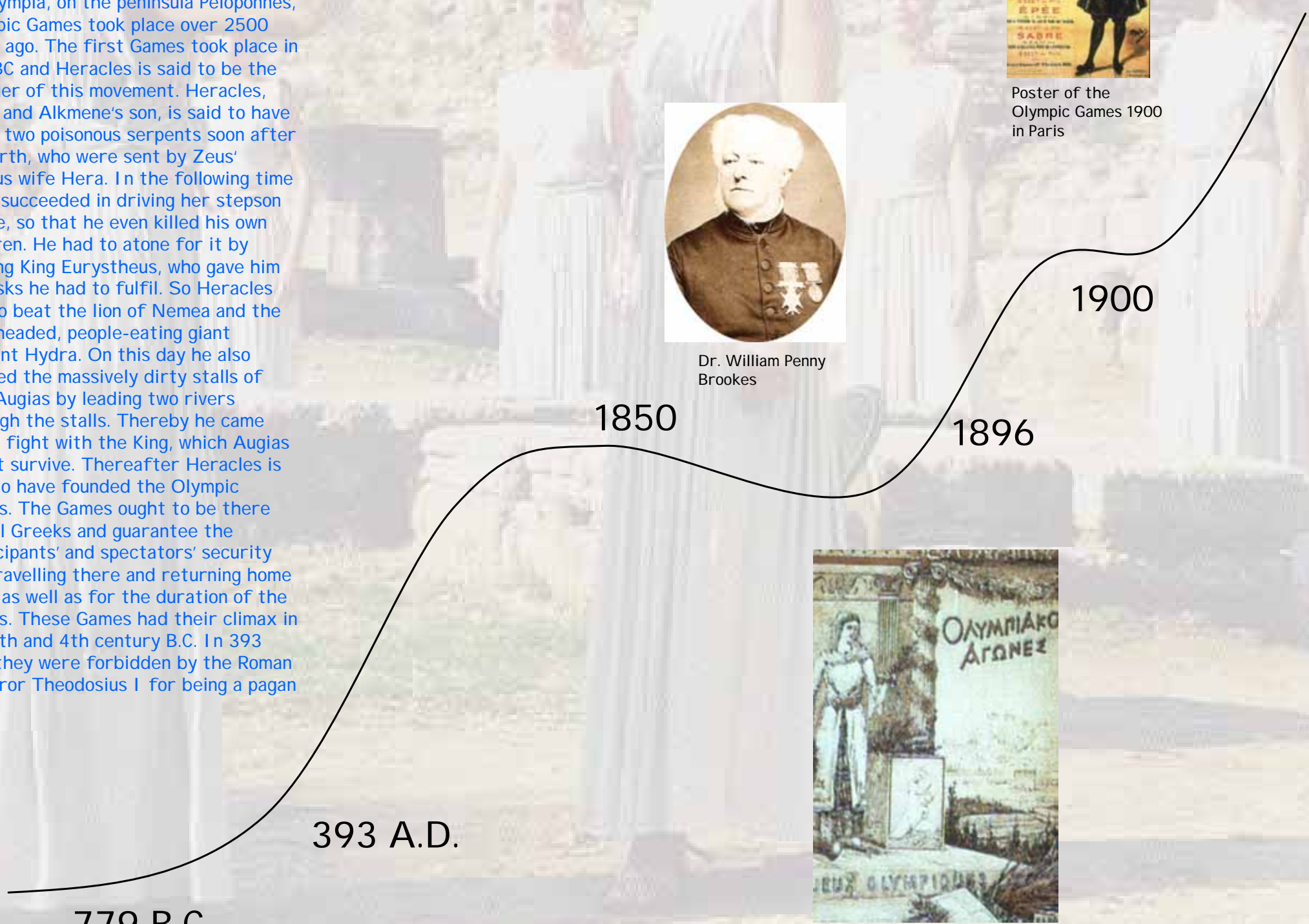
In Olympia, on the peninsula Peloponnes, Olympic Games took place over 2500 years ago. The first Games took place in 776 BC and Heracles is said to be the founder of this movement. Heracles, Zeus' and Alkmene's son, is said to have killed two poisonous serpents soon after his birth, who were sent by Zeus' jealous wife Hera. In the following time Hera succeeded in driving her stepson insane, so that he even killed his own children. He had to atone for it by serving King Eurystheus, who gave him 12 tasks he had to fulfil. So Heracles had to beat the lion of Nemea and the nine-headed, people-eating giant serpent Hydra. On this day he also cleaned the massively dirty stalls of King Augias by leading two rivers through the stalls. Thereby he came into a fight with the King, which Augias didn't survive. Thereafter Heracles is said to have founded the Olympic Games. The Games ought to be there for all Greeks and guarantee the participants' and spectators' security for travelling there and returning home again as well as for the duration of the Games. These Games had their climax in the 5th and 4th century B.C. In 393 A.D. they were forbidden by the Roman Emperor Theodosius I for being a pagan cult.



Poster of the Olympic Games 1900 in Paris



Dr. William Penny Brookes



779 B.C.

393 A.D.

1850

1896

1900



Poster of the first Olympic Games of modernity