

Conclusion

The article originally came to me, many years (decades actually) ago, in the form of a contemporary typed report in the Dutch language. Much later, I discovered that the whole article had also been printed in the form of a series in the official magazine of the Royal Netherlands Shooting Association [KNSA]: *De Scherpschutter*. This magazine at the time appeared every month and as a consequence the article was split into three parts and was published over a period of three months.

However, the fact that it was published in the 'official magazine' of the KNSA makes the article much more acceptable as an official historical source. The value of the material

can not be fully ascertained, as I know of no other contemporary eye-witness accounts or reports on the 1920 Olympic shooting events, other than the pages dedicated in the Report of the American Olympic Committee – Seventh Olympic Games, Antwerp, Belgium, 1920, pages 109-127, to the participation of the American shooting teams in the Antwerp Olympics. However, the facts mentioned in that report coincides with the results mentioned in the account above.

I found the description of the shooting discipline of the various teams, as recorded by Cornelis van ALTENBURG of particular value. Anyone familiar with this sport will recognize the circumstances he described.

OLYMPIC EXCAVATIONS

by Don Anthony

First Excavation

In early 1892 it was reported that¹ the "*Grecian Games*" took place in the Liverpool Gymnasium. Both the Greek and the French consuls in that city were in attendance. There were many others from the Greek community and from the local populace.

The Greek consul, Mr. E.D. BARFF, opened the proceedings and said that as far as he could see the games were '*done correctly*' and reflected great credit, not only to the young athletes, but also on their instructor Mr. A. ALEXANDER. ALEXANDER was then presented with a "*very rare coin*" minted in the reign of Alexander the Great, "*some 2300 years old*". Alexander presented a remarkable "*athletic novelty*" in the shape of a "*renaissance of the Games by Homer, as practised by the youth of Ancient Greece upwards of 2000 years ago*". It would be remembered that "*while the Greeks were devoted to athletic exercise for the development of the body, they were always evinced of the need to improve the mind*". A procession preceded the several items on the programme:

Throwing the disc;

The Atalanta race (starting and returning from and to a starting point);

Throwing the javelin;

A halter race – feet tied at the ankles – jumps;

Throwing the spear at a target;

Leaping the barrier;

Scaling the heights;

Climbing a long smooth pole;

The Grecian Display – in which all competitors, together, depicted "*grace, speed, strength, boxing, wrestling, fighting, the heroics of Ajax, and the 'dying gladiator' in which the winning gladiator 'carries off on his shoulders his slain adversary'!*".

A chariot race was also included.

The Greek consul reminded the audience that the Olympian Games of antiquity consisted of five contests: the pentathlon: running, boxing, leaping, wrestling and chariot racing. These Grecian Games had seven contests. This was the only fault he could find!

In the gymnastic competitions wreaths for winners were in gold, silver, and bronze

¹ "The Gymnasium", in: *Journal of the National Physical Recreation Society*, IV(March 1892)1.

colouring. The competitors, “a numerous band of young athletes connected with the Young Men’s Christian Association [YMCA], were dressed ‘in a light tunic, uniform as to shape and fabric, but variable as to colour and pattern, worn over skintights’.”

This Grecian effect was heightened by music played by an orchestra.

Mr. Herbert GLADSTONE, President of the *National Physical Recreation Society* [NPRS] presided over part of the display. Alexander was a leading light in the NPRS, one time, even two times its Secretary. Willam Penny BROOKES was coopted on to the NPRS Executive Committee at its beginning in 1886. The NPRS adopted the motto of the *National Olympian Association* [NOA], established by BROOKES [founder of the *Wenlock Olympian Society* in 1850]; John HULLEY, Director of the Liverpool Gymnasium; and Ernst RAVENSTEIN, Honorary Director of the *German Gymnastics Society* in London.

The motto of the NOA was *Civium vires Civitatis vis* [the power of the state lies in the strength of its citizens].

Gladstone was one of several NPRS Executive Members on the welcoming committee for the IOC at their session in London in 1904. He was also one of the few to whom Coubertin wrote seeking guidance on the viability of his international Olympic revival in 1894. His father W. E. GLADSTONE [Prime Minister] was said to be “very impressed” by the literary work of VIKELAS, the first President of the IOC.

The cotton tunic worn by the Grecian Games competitors reminds me that the Chairman of the Liverpool Gymnasium – the man who facilitated the Olympic Festivals organized by John HULLEY in the 1860’s, was one Charles MELLY – Rugby School educated, but from a Swiss family who emigrated to Liverpool in the interests of their cotton trade business – which had Egyptian links!

Second Excavation

Mention of MELLY and his Swiss origins leads me to my second Olympic excavation.

From August 4th to 7th 1894, an “*International*

Gymnastic Festival’ was held in Lugano. It did not bear the title “Olympic”. However, it had several “Olympic – like” elements. Oak or Laurel Wreaths and Certificates were given to every competitor reaching a satisfactory level; in addition to gymnastics the following sports were included: wrestling, weightlifting, putting the shot, long jump, high jump, pole jumping, running and swimming. There were no money prizes. Games such as football – and even cricket – were not excluded.

They had the Olympic ‘multisport’ ethos. It was claimed that 2469 men ‘coming from different parts of the globe and speaking many distinct languages’ competed en masse in ‘wand exercises’. There was a ‘grand parade’ of 6000 gymnasts at the opening ceremony, accompanied by a military band. Afterwards they marched through Lugano.

Certainly English, Scottish, Irish and Italian participants were mentioned in the British report.²

After the Festival a large group went on to Milan to give a display.

The Swiss organizers provided free accommodation to the thousands of gymnasts who took part; this was assessed as 15,000 francs, “quite apart from (the expense of) the fine spacious hall erected for the events, the decorations of the town, and the prizes”. The whole fê te’ atmosphere was conducive to Olympian international friendship.

One delightful innovation was a special competition for ‘veterans’ (Aged 50 and over). These – 80 in number – ‘nearly all men’ had taken part in the *Gymnastic Festival*, held in Lugano, in 1868! There were several ‘father and son’ combinations.

These pre-IOC Olympic-like festivals provided a general platform for the 1894 innovators to launch the Olympic movement, but they did not die a death with the institution of the modern Olympic Games. Two more such Festivals have come to my attention during my ongoing excavations!

And the Third

In 1907, *Physical Education*³ published a fascinating article by Mr A. BELTETTE.

² *The Gymnast and Athletic Review*, September 1st, 1894.

³ In 1908 *Physical Education* had become the new name for the NPRS Journal.

BELTETTE'S name appears on the Editorial Board of the Journal – the only non-British member ever as far as I can ascertain. His short article – full of Gallic life – is as follows:

The Olympic Games at Tourcoing

In spite of the golden opinion the English visitors at Tourcoing for the Fête Fé dé rale of Gymnastics, I am not to set a comparison between Athens and the matter-of-fact smoky city of ours. We had, however, an Athenian day and a grand one on the 4th of October, when the Olympic Games took place in the Exhibition Grounds. This was a fit companion-piece to the Fête Fé dé rale, but we did miss our English friends, whose telling account might have been so much better than the poor attempt I am making.

The Ministers of Trade and of the Fine Arts were present, and, although on a week-day the whole fête went off splendidly. There were athletic competitions, musical performances, and dances by the most renowned artists of the Grand Opera and Le Comédie Française. An exhibition of pictures and carvings on athletic subjects was held in one of the halls of the Exhibition.

The contests began early in the morning, but, owing to the bad weather of the few days before, the grounds were not quite up to the mark, and the performances suffered from it. On the other hand, the crowd proved so much interested in the matter that there was no preventing people from coming in too close a vicinity with the athletes.

The contests were as follows: 100 metres, 400 metres, 1,500 metres, 110 metres (a hurdle race); high, long, pole jumps; disc throwing; a Marathon race (30 kilometres), boxing, wrestling, fencing. The competitors were all well-known athletes, most of them champions in their own country, as the contest was international. I enquired why English competitors were conspicuous by their absence. I was told that owing to lack of time fit arrangements could not be made for calling over English competitors.

England, however, was not altogether "put aside," as I notice a Mr. Lees, who secured the first place in the high jump.

To wind up the athletic part of the gorgeous programme, we had a very fine reconstitution of an "ancient" fight between two gladiators.

Then came the artistic fête. When the due speeches had been delivered by officials and Ministers, we heard a splendid choral song, "The Triumph of the Athlete," given out by about 400 singers and players under the direction of the composer, A. Georges; then poems were beautifully recited by an artist of La Comédie Française; and then, last but not least, Mlle Sandrini, one of the best dancers of the opera, gave out a series of Greek dances, which were most enthusiastically received.

Altogether, it was a splendid day, and the visitors – most of them owned to a complete ignorance of sportive notions – showed themselves very much interested and pleased.

Nor was this all. Of course we had a banquet at the "Crick Sicks," of course, of course again.

I found MM. Manant, Sen. And Jun., and of course we spoke of our English friends, and drank "a cup of kindness yet" in sparkling champagne to England and the English party of our last Fête Fé dé rale.

The day after the Olympic Games, and Olympic Congress began at Tourcoing. Next month I shall tell you about it. I am happy to hear of the possibility of Olympic Games being held in London next year. I am sure it will prove a grand affair, and a considerable success is certain to meet the efforts of the pioneers of the idea.

A. Beltette.

The promised sequel reads:

About an Olympic Congress

I must redeem the rash promise I made last month, when I wrote a few lines for my friends in England, but I feel perplexed, as I should require so much more elbow room than the one which is imparted to me. I am strongly reminded of the fellow who, wanting to sell his house, used to go about carrying a stone as a sample of the article. Billiards!

The article – I should say the articles – to be examined were, of course, very

numerous: several reports dealing with the principles of Body Training, and the various applications thereof with Sports, and their organisation as well as benefit. We went as far as dealing earnestly and seriously with billiards playing, which was given a free entrance in the Olympic Temple. I wonder whether, as history is but an endless repetition, I wonder whether some day we are not to get startled by the unearthing of the billiards records of the Olympiads of yore!

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the President of the International Olympic Committee, was prevented from taking the chair by illness. The head master of the Lycée –my friend and colleague in the University of France – sat at the chair, but when gymnastic questions were come at, he let a captain from Joinville le Pont, our national military training school, expressly sent to represent the Minister of War, assume the Presidency, I must say that a certain number of the oldest –the big” boys of the Lycée had asked for the leave of attending the meeting, and showed themselves much interested.

A Wordy War

First of all, we had a spirited “wordy” bout between an M.D. and M.C. Wachmar, the president of the very important northern section of the Union des Sociétés de Gymnastique de France. The physician was rather hard on any gymnastic system not thorough/y and solely Swedish. The answer was as eager as the attack, and we had a very fine contest, which was wound up by the motion (I am responsible for it, as I tried to put my finger between the bark and the tree, a hot place, mind) that “nobody thought of disparaging Ling’s method but since such method professed to be grounded on scientific principles, and since science was for ever in progress, we could not, by too strict a rule, condemn beforehand the changes which may likely be introduced in the name of science in scientific applications.”

This practically settled the matter; and we went on examining the best means of promoting gymnastic habits and a gymnastic spirit in schools of every grade,

and even among people who have left school. Now came the grand question, and you will at once understand (if referring to the note about Surrey schools in the last number of P.E.) how widely different situations are in England and in France as to gymnastics and the army.

The captain delivered a lecture which may be considered as somewhat official, he stated the present views of the government about promoting the practice of gymnastics throughout the country.

The second part of this article outlines a proposal that ‘schoolmasters’ with some training in gymnastics should do their compulsory two years military service, in a special regiment at Joinville. Thereafter they would be of great help to the NOC’s specially trained for gymnastics. It might also be, it is suggested, that their future teaching in schools would be enhanced, and they might also be motivated to establish gymnastic societies in the communities at large.

Physical Education in 1908 reported on what is titled “Olympic Games – Turnfest”. In July 1908, in addition to the 4th Modern Olympic Games held in London, there was a massive gymnastic festival held in Frankfurt-on-Main. A Mr. H.G. BROWN writing on the “*German Olympia*” had “witnessed something extraordinary and thrilling”. The festival “revealed the strength and vitality of the German nation in general and of its manhood in particular”. It showed how well this ‘modern people’ had “conceived the ancient Greek ideal and how nearly they approached it”. To begin with the festival was, “in every sense and to the fullest degree, national. In spirit it was more like ancient Olympia than the revived Games in London”.

Men from “all parts of the German Empire and from every part of the world where Germans meet”, attended. They were from Melbourne and London, and South West Africa; 700 plus, arrived by specially chartered boat, from the U.S.A. Some 15,000 sang songs of praise to ‘Father Jahn’ in an immense indoor hall. ‘Gymnastics’ was again liberally interpreted. Handball, rounders, tag-ball, football, and prisoners-base were all played. 40 to 60 men were working simultaneously on the parallel

bars and horses. Fencing, wrestling, and swimming, were included. The city itself took fully to the idea. There were no money prizes.

“Only Germans” of course tends to disqualify the pure global Olympic idea, but wait a moment, didn’t the ancient Greeks restrict participation to true-born Greeks?

Not to speak of the Commonwealth Games and those of the French Communauté .

An author of the time in the United States compared the London and the Frankfurt meetings:

Olympic Games – Turnfest

[The following article from “Mind and Body,” Milwaukee, U.S.A. is interesting as a criticism.-Ed.]

The two grand meetings were held during July, i.e., the Olympic Games in London, and the Festival of the German Gymnastic Union in Frankfort on the Main, afford an opportunity for comparison – and for thought.

In Shepherds Bush were assembled the picked men from most countries of the world competing in individual events for the supremacy in that sport in which in his own country each competitor had been proclaimed a master. The first, second and third winners in each event were rewarded with gold, silver

and bronze medals respectively, and in a few instances additional valuable special prizes were awarded. The only mass demonstration made during the games was the opening march on the first day during which the competitors of each country marched into the Stadium, preceded by their flag, and filed before spectators who had paid their admission fee. During the rest of the game the competitors never seemed to have any common interest. It was a fight for individual supremacy, never simply for a good cause. The intense rivalry resulted in protests and withdrawals, in accusations of wilful unfairness, if not deliberate dishonesty. Excepting a few of the most influential papers, the English press (from all reports) took sides with a seemingly unfriendly population against the teams from all foreign countries.

At least one national body claiming jurisdiction over the athletes of its country the Gaelic Amateur Athletic Association of Ireland, forbade its members to enter the Olympic Games. Our own people came home filled with indignation, and newspaper reports from other countries depict similar feelings.

Viewed calmly the London Games instead of bringing the nations of the earth closer together seem to have been the means for creating distrust and suspicion.

On the other hand, what does the international festival at Frankfort show?

Taking the events as they Occurred there was first an imposing parade through the streets of the city in which over 50,000 men took part. The Americans, as foreigners, heading the parade, were greeted with marked respect and enthusiasm, and were overwhelmed with flowers. Visitors from other countries followed and were treated likewise. From the time they landed they were honored guests, for whom nothing was too much.

After the parade came the mass free exercises in which over 12,000 men simultaneously performed the same exercises, the demonstration ending with a national song by this vast chorus of twelve thousand.

The following three days brought a limited number of contests, calling for all-round development (not for specialists) in which thousands took part, and an unlimited number of exhibitions of every phase of gymnastic endeavour (including games and dances) by men, women, boys and girls. The two games

showed by the Americans as well as their other exhibitions were watched and applauded by thousands.

No Olympic records were broken there, but every one who had the privilege of attending this festival was thrilled to the core by the all-pervading joy which emanated from this vast throng of people with but one thought, the thought that they were co-workers in a great educational movement. Our people returning from Frankfort came home with hearts overflowing with gratitude and filled with

high ideals which can only react favorably on the cause we all love.

For those of us reared to believe that the 1908 Olympic Games were a watershed in terms of Olympism and organization, these views are food for thought!

My archeological digs continue. Whilst preparing a journey based on the old "*silk road*" from Istanbul to China, I came across yet another "Olympic Games" staged in the late 1930's. Sven HEDIN⁴ describes his own journey on this famous road. In Sinkiang a group was gathered to witness the "*great Olympic Games of the year*". The crowd was composed of "*White Russians, Red Russians, Chinese, East Turki's, Torguts, Kirgises and others*".

HEDIN continues "*There is not much else to say about these Olympic Games in the heart of Asia. There was an obstacle race, a relay race, wrestling, a marathon and all the usual events, not badly arranged for such a*

barbarous country"! A local dignitary, Sheng TUPAN, took part in a short distance race on the second day of the two-day event; he then made an eloquent speech after the prize-giving, about "*the importance of physical training for the defence of the province*". He, also, did not lose the opportunity of saying "a lot of nice things about Imperialism and Japan"!

Any reader interested in joining me on the *Silk Road* route to Peking in 2008 should get in touch.

I am designing also a replicate historical tour to Athens in 2004, following the Adriatic routes taken by George ROBERTSON, Jack BOLAND and others in 1896. Again I would welcome company!

So much for these "Olympic Excavations". I hope that the objects I have unearthed make interesting subjects and that some bells will be ringing around the world of Olympic history!

⁴ HEDIN, Sven: *The Silk Road*, Routledge, London 1938.

A PART OF HEAVEN

by Rupert Kaiser

65 years ago a Norwegian journalist cabled his newspaper, that the Olympic village in Doeberitz near Berlin was a part of heaven. 65 years later I took part in the monthly tour organised by the busy society *Historia Elstal*. Because I knew what happened to the Olympic village after the war, but especially after the fall of the wall, I was prepared for the worst. But, to tell you the truth, it was not enough!

Training grounds

The tour started in the north-eastern part of the village, on the former athletic grounds. The cinder track, where the heroes of '36, OWENS, LOVELOCK, SALMINEN and Co., prepared them-selves for winning the Gold, is overgrown by grass and weeds. The gym is in a sad situation and the swimming pool burned out in 1993 when children set fire to the roof. The mechanism of the famous lifting windows was destroyed by the Soviets. It is difficult to

imagine that only 12 years ago Soviet Athletes prepared themselves for international competition on these grounds.

Dwelling-houses

During the time when the former Olympic village was in the hands of the Soviets most of the dwelling houses were razed to the ground. Sometimes the visitor sees their foundations or a cellar-window in the high grasses. The demolition of the houses was unnecessary, indeed, but a Soviet commander, who was anti-Germany and anti-Olympics, gave the order. That was too much even for the government of the Soviet Union, the order was cancelled and the commander was removed. (It is said that he was sent back to Moscow in a Zinc coffin). So 25 of the 149 dwelling-houses, where the athletes lived during the Olympics, were saved. (See below.)

But they are in a terrible condition, too. The