

AUSTRALIA

by Ian Jobling

When Athens held the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in mid-2004 almost a century had passed since the last occasion when Athens hosted an Olympic Games. It has long been stated that the athletic festival held in Athens two years after the disappointing 1904 St. Louis Games¹ was not an 'official' Olympics but were staged to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the revival of the modern Olympic Games.² This is not so. Certainly, the 1906 Games³ are now regarded as a 'one-off', but it was intended and desired by many, not only Greeks, that from that time there be Olympic Games held in Greece every four years. Indeed, some advocates expressed a desire for the modern Olympic Games to be held, not on a four yearly cycle as in Greek antiquity, but biennially

Although there is reference in the Australian press to the 1906 Olympic Games, there is no mention of them in the press or documents within this country as being held as a 'tenth anniversary'. Why is this so? Is the 'tenth anniversary' something that is an anachronism? Did the IOC, other countries, especially Greece and Australia - consider them as the 'tenth anniversary'? This chapter considers issues associated with the 'Olympic Games' held in Athens in both 1896 and 1906, especially as they relate to Australia's understanding and participation in the Games of those Olympiads, and those proposed for Athens in 1910. It is promulgated that the presence of Australian athletes at those 'unofficial' Olympics in 1906 impacted profoundly and positively on the development of the Olympic Movement in Australia and New Zealand.

Another series of key questions relate to the understanding, or misunderstanding, of the ongoing nature of subsequent 'Olympic Games' to be held in Athens. From where did such a notion come? What was the IOC's opinions, and did they change after the Athens 1906 Games? What were the impressions of sporting associations and columnists in Australia and from where did they glean those impressions? How supportive were athletic associations to ensuring participation, and were the best athletes selected to represent Australia?

This chapter attempts to answer the questions above. Many of the 'answers' have been based on information gleaned from research undertaken at the *International Studies Centre at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne* utilising correspondence, minutes of congresses, and other materials and publi-

cations. In addition, major daily newspapers and weekly sporting periodicals both in Australia and overseas during the period 1896 to 1910 have been utilised.⁴ This methodology has been undertaken deliberately and unapologetically because of the need to ascertain and convey the extent and level of understanding in Australia of the development and notions of the Olympic Movement.

The chapter will be presented within the following sections: Athens 1896 - Australian participation and Greek post-Olympics expectations; Athens 1906 - Australian anticipation and participation; and post Athens 1906 and pre 1910 - Australian anticipation.

Athens 1896 - Australian Participation and Greek post-Olympics expectations

The sole competitor from Australia at the Athens 1896 Olympics was Edwin FLACK. His story has been told in other articles by Ian JOBLING.⁵ In brief, FLACK won the 800 and 1.500 metres track events, led the Marathon for several kilometres but subsequently became exhausted and withdrew from the race, and partnered an Englishman in tennis. What is significant is that FLACK'S exploits were published in the Australasian press thereby highlighting to the Australian public the success of this inaugural multi-sport, multi-nation event known as the Olympic Games.⁶ FLACK commented in a letter to his father:

*"They [the Greeks] have made a tremendous fuss of me. I don't know they should have singled me out but they have although I say it myself. They tell me that I have become the Lion of Athens. [...] I could hear people talk Greek and hear my name mentioned."*⁷

FLACK'S enthusiasm for these Games, which seems to have been supported by influential persons associated with sport in Australia, especially Richard COOMBES, established the concept that the Olympic Games was to be an ongoing event. It was, in 1896, less established that the IOC's vision was that the Games move to the 'major cities of the world'. What happened when the Greeks began to postulate the idea of future Olympics in Athens?

FLACK'S personal opinion of whether the Games should remain in Athens is not known. However, he would have been aware of the following declaration made by athletes from the United States in 1896:

* The article was awarded the ISOH Award 2006 for the best article on Olympic history. The original article was published by the author under the title "The Last Time Australia was in Athens: the 1906 Olympic Games", in: BUSCHMANN, J./ WASSONG, St., *Langlauf durch die Olympische Geschichte. Festschrift Karl Lennartz*. Cologne 2005, vol. 1, pp. 81-104.

"Athens 14 April 1896

To His Royal Highness, Constantine, Crown Prince of Greece. We, the American participants in the International Olympic Games of Athens, [...] express [...] heartfelt appreciation of the great kindness, warm hospitality [...] express entire satisfaction with all the arrangements for the conduct of the games.

*The existence of the stadium as a structure so uniquely adapted to its purpose; the proved ability of Greece to competently administer the ages; and above all, the fact that Greece is the original home of the Olympic Games; all of these considerations force upon us the conviction that these games should never be removed from their native soil."*⁸

With such comments, it is not surprising that soon after the inaugural Olympic Games in Athens in 1896, King GIORGIOS (GEORGE) I of Greece expressed his support for holding future Olympic Games in Greece, beginning as early as 1898. However, the movement was disrupted by the outbreak of war between Greece and Turkey in 1897.⁹ One of the problems associated with the staging of the inaugural Olympic Games was that many Greeks wanted the site to be permanently in Athens.¹⁰ Indeed, King GIORGIOS expressed hope that Greece would be nominated as the 'permanent and continuous arena of the Olympic Games'.

Baron Pierre de COUBERTIN, acknowledged 'renovateur' of the modern Olympic Games and, although not President of the *International Olympic Committee* (IOC) at the time, the driving force and most influential figure of the newly fledged Olympic Movement, negotiated a compromise with the Greek king.¹¹ It was agreed there would be 'Pan-Hellenic Games' held in Athens, every four years alternating with the Olympic Games, which would be held in different cities of the world. Of course, the city of Paris had already been chosen to host the Olympic Games of 1900 so that issue had been settled.

Olympic historian, Bill MALLON, has stated that as relative peace settled in the Greek-Turkey region at the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea of 'Intercalated Games' received support from three IOC members in Germany.¹² Their proposal was put forward at the IOC Session held in Paris, May 21-23, 1901.

*"... The international competitions will take place every two years, alternating between Athens and other large cities of the cultured states, such that every four years these Olympic Games will be celebrated in the Greek capital. In the year 1906 the second Olympic games will take place in Athens, the third in 1910, etc."*¹³

The Olympic Games held in association with 'world expositions' in Paris and St. Louis in 1900 and 1904, respectively, were relative failures and the practical manifestations of the Olympic Movement and ideals were floundering. Despite assuming the presidency of the IOC in 1900, COUBERTIN'S level of autocratic power decreased¹⁴, and against his real wishes, the efforts of the King of Greece and some IOC members resulted in Olympic Games being awarded to Athens in 1906.¹⁵

Athens 1906 - Australian anticipation and participation

The 1906 Olympic Games in Athens have subsequently become regarded in the following terms: the Tenth Anniversary Games; the Intercalatic Games, the Pan-Hellenic Games, the Interim Games, the Intermediate Games;¹⁶ the Olympian Games¹⁷; the Unofficial Olympic Games; Athenian Games; the Intercalated Games¹⁸, and Special Olympic Games.¹⁹ However, some commentators and writers about the Olympic Games, including Great Britain's gold medallist, and a 'Chariot of Fire' of the 1924 Paris Olympics, Harold ABRAHAMS, make no mention of the 1906 Athens Games at all.²⁰

At the 41st Session of IOC in London in 1948, Hungarian IOC member, Ferenc MEZÖ, proposed that the 'Intermediate Games' should be accepted as the IIIb Olympic Games.²¹ This proposal was referred to the Brundage Commission,²² which concluded,

*"It is not considered that any special recognition that the IOC might give to participants at these games at this late date would add any prestige, and the danger of establishing an embarrassing precedent would more than offset any advantage."*²³

However, when 'Acceptance of the Intermediate Games 1906' was presented along with thirty-one others of the Brundage Commission at the 49th IOC session in Rome it was rejected.

Within Australia, mention of the 1906 Olympic Games was made in the Sydney-based weekly sporting newspaper, *The Referee*, in December 1905²⁴ in a reprinted article from the *London Sporting Life* of October 27, 1905. This article stated: that the 'historic national games of Greece are to be revived next spring'; that they were to be 'international', and would be 'looked upon first and foremost as a Greek affair - an act of Greek hospitality to the civilised world'.²⁵ It seems no other Australian newspapers referred to the Athens games at this time, but the sporting public's interest was generated through the pages of the *Referee*, which provided further details in December 13, 1905. It was clearly stated that these games were to be perceived as separate from the previous three Olympic Games (Athens 1896, Paris 1900, and St Louis 1904):

*"The executive officers of the AA union of Australasia²⁶, have completed their labours in the matter of inquiry in connection with the Olympic Games at Athens next year. It is definitely known that the games are to take place at Athens every four years commencing in April, 1906 and that they are quite independent of although not quite antagonistic to, the Olympian games run by an international committee, of which series the next are to be held in Rome in 1908."*²⁷

A report in the *Referee* in early 1906 attempted to convey the 'exact position of affairs so far as the international games and the Greek games are concerned'. Citing the January issue of the *Revue Olympique*, readers learned:

*"According to the agreement between the International (Olympic) Committee and the Greek Committee, the latter will be called the Committee of the Olympic games of Athens, and the new series of the Athenian Olympiads will take place alternatively with the International Olympiads. The International Committee urges all the societies with which it is connected in every country to take part in the Olympic Games of 1906, which will be the first of the new series."*²⁸

Other Australian newspapers provide little explanation about the significance of the 1906 Games but do report who would be sent from Australia to compete. An interesting letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* was published on 6 January 1906; it stated that *"it is hoped one Australian, at least, will take part in the coming Olympian Games in Athens next April"*.²⁹ The author of the letter is, again, Richard COOMBES - probably the person most aware of developments in Athens and that organising committee's relationship to the IOC because he succeeded New Zealander Leonard CUFF as the member in the Australasian region in 1905.

"Harrier", in *The Australasian*, wrote a background article on the previous Olympic Games and noted that at St Louis in 1904 the *"absence of international entries³⁰ [...] robbed the games of their proper character. [...] There was a feeling in many quarters that to separate the Olympic Games from the ancient trysting place was like a divorce"*.³¹ It was these sentiments, which further encouraged the Greek government to provide funds, along with money raised in the USA, France, Germany and Britain, to bring the Games back to Athens. "Harrier" iterated *"the athletic premiership of the world is at stake"*. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether "Harrier" was referring to the Athens Games, or the Olympic Games held in international cities.

From these two reports it would seem the Australian sporting public had the opportunity to become aware there were two series of 'Olympic' Games. Clearly, those that had already been re-

vived following the formation of the IOC in 1894 and had been conducted in 1896, 1900, and 1904, with the next to be conducted in Rome in 1908. And, vaguely, the "Athens Games" which were to be organised by the Greek government and held in the Panathenaic Stadium, the same venue as for the 1896 Olympics. Perhaps the strongest reaction to the Athens Games was expressed in an article in *The Referee* in January 1907 which stated that the Athens' games was a 'selfish act' by the Greek government and against the ideals of the spirit of the Olympic revival'.³²

In relation to Australia's participation in the 1906 Athens Olympics, reports in the *Australasian* intimated the American, French and German athletes would be supported by their respective governments; *"America has voted 25.000 dollars, Trance 10.000 francs, and Germany 12.000 marks"*. The support in Australia was made clear: *"The Australian Governments get off with nothing to pay and good representation."*³³ However, some government ministers were known to support the movement for Australian athletes to participate.³⁴ An early acknowledgment of overseas opinion about Australians being 'sporty' was utilised in a comment by a columnist (identity not known) in the *Australasian* to highlight the lack of support for the Australians in Athens:

*"What has Australia done? An American writer, Mr Hawthorne, a few weeks ago gave it as his opinion that Australia was the greatest sporting country in the world today? We can be modes about that sweeping statement, but it finds at least some substantial basis in the consistent success of our cricketers, swimmers, rifle-shots and boxers, and the tennis victories of Mr (sic) N. E. Brookes, Dunlop, Murphy, Eaves and Parker in Europe last year. The athletic premiership of the world is at stake, and even from the most utilitarian aspect, Australian prominence at such a gathering would well repay the cost of representation. Yet our Governments and the public stand by, and it is due to the efforts of a few enthusiasts and a generous gift of (Pound sign) 100 from the Greek Government, that we are represented at all."*³⁵

The readers of *The Referee* who made donations to support Nigel BARKER'S efforts to attend the Games were advised they would be acknowledged when they added to the columnist's 'little list'.³⁶

Only four Australian athletes competed at the 1906 Athens Games: Nigel BARKER and Cecil HEALY³⁷ from NSW, and George BLAKE and Gregory WHEATLEY from Victoria.³⁸ They travelled on the steamer, *Mongolia*, and, unlike most of the other competitors who were accommodated in the Zappeion, they joined the Canadian team at



Nigel Barker

a boarding house run by a Mrs. MCTAGGART.³⁹ At the Opening Ceremony, with an excess of 60,000 spectators packed into the Panathenaic Stadium, it would appear that the Australians were linked with Great Britain in what was the first "March of Nations" at Olympic Games.

Twenty-four year old Sydney University student, Nigel BARKER, was the first selected to go to Athens at a public meeting of the *New South Wales Amateur Athletic Association* (NSWAAA) in January 1906.⁴⁰ BARKER had won the NSW State Championships in 1903 and 1904 but could not compete at the 1904 St. Louis Olympic Games because of an injury incurred playing football. His performances at Australasian championships were outstanding: in 1905 he won the 220 and 440 yards race in the record times of 21,8 and 48,5 seconds, respectively, and won the 100 yards championship and the long jump.⁴¹ Unfortunately, there was no 200 metre event at the 1906 Athens Games but *The Referee* reported that BARKER "would be entered for the 100 metres, 400 metres and 800 metres events, also some of the jumping contests" - a formidable program.⁴² However, in Athens he competed in only the 100 and 400 metres, coming third in both.⁴³ Many of BARKER'S letters from Athens were reprinted in *The Referee*, thereby providing a fascinating insight into this festival.

Cecil HEALY came second in the NSW 880 yards swimming championships in 1903 but it was the shorter-distance events that brought him prominence. After gaining second place in the 100 yards freestyle at the Australasian championships in 1904, he won that event in 1905 in a world record time of 58 seconds.⁴⁴ Despite his efforts, HEALY was only provided the opportunity to go to Athens after the Greek government offered 50 pounds to the States of Victoria and New South Wales to subsidise sending athletes to the Games.⁴⁵ Initially, because Nigel BARKER'S expenses were fully funded by the NSWAAA, the money was going to be returned to the Greek government. However, the treasurer of the Barker Fund stated at a public meeting that "they would not be studying the interests of the Olympian Games Committee if they did not send Healy".⁴⁶ Subsequently, another public meeting was called to send HEALY to Athens and it was proposed that the Consul General of Greece [Mr J. R. LOVE] would "hand over the 50 pounds to any Committee formed for that object".⁴⁷

HEALY was considered to be most worthy to accompany NSW's top track sprinter to Athens: "In his particular class he stood alone, and from all points of view he would be a creditable representative and a fit companion for Barker."⁴⁸ He was - coming third in the 100 metres freestyle, and sixth in the 400 metres freestyle. He also swam in the one-mile race where

competitors swam "half a mile out (to sea) and home along a staked course". HEALY withdrew as he was 'very cold' and the "final of the 100 was to come off that day."⁴⁹

Funds to support Victorian athletes, Gregory WHEATLEY and George BLAKE, to travel to Athens were sought in late January 1906 after money had been raised in NSW for Nigel BARKER.⁵⁰ WHEATLEY was the 1.5-mile champion of Australasia in 1906. He had run the mile in 4 min. 23 secs - only one second outside the Australasian record, and was also the 880 yards Australasian record holder.⁵¹ In Athens in 1906 he was unplaced in the finals of both the 800 and 1,500 metres.⁵²

George BLAKE, aged twenty-five when he competed in Athens, only began racing seven years earlier. Although he had not run at school, he won the Victorian 10-mile cross-country championship in 1900. Additionally, he not only won the three- and ten-mile Victorian track championships that year but also broke all records from five to ten miles, inclusively. In 1901 he injured a foot, which became a recurring injury and was later blamed for the mild rheumatism he suffered. In 1905 he won the 10-mile cross-country championship races in both Victoria and Tasmania.

BLAKE was entered in the 5-mile and Marathon events in Athens in 1906 and, although he was the Australasian 10-mile champion and had the support of the public, a journalist of *The Australasian* was only mildly optimistic of his chances:

*"Although one can hardly prophesy success against such splendid distance runners as England, France and America will put against him in the big 24 mile race from Marathon to Athens⁵³, the local champion is of the mettle to give one hope that he will do well."*⁵⁴

BLAKE⁵⁵ ran seventh in the 5-mile race. "At the crack of the starter's pistol Blake jumped to the lead" for the first four miles in the Marathon. He led again from about the seventh to the fifteenth mile⁵⁶, before he 'fell off exhausted', finishing in sixth place in the time of 3 hours 9 minutes, 35 seconds. This was about 18 minutes after the winner, William SHERRING from Canada. An interesting sidelight of the Marathon was, as in 1896, the fervent desire of the Greek spectators that one of their own should win. American James E. SULLIVAN wrote that, when the spectators on the stadium heard that a Canadian was in the lead by only a kilometre from a Greek, 'hope came back again':

*"Courage, boys" shouted the crowds; "It may be that he will fall down like Flak (sic)." "Yes, oh yes; he will fall going up the hill," said others.*⁵⁷

Alas, for the Greeks, unlike in 1896 when Australian Edwin FLACK withdrew from the race, SHERRING continued, and won in a time of 2 hours, 51 minutes, 23 3/5 seconds. It is noteworthy, however, that FLACK'S efforts a decade ago were recalled by some of the crowd.

An interesting sidelight that is helpful in ascertaining the significance Australian athletes and organizations had towards the 1906 Athens Games is to consider whether Australia had its best representatives in Athens. It is acknowledged it is difficult to compare accurately results between different stadiums and venues and events that took place in both Australia and Athens in 1906. For example, whereas the Australasian track championships were measured in yards, the Olympics used metres; Australian track events were held on grass and the Athens track was cinders. Of greatest significance though was the shape of the renovated Pan-Athenian track, which had a very tight turn at one end and right angles at the other.⁵⁸

The 1906 Australian Swimming Championships were held in the Brisbane Dry-dock but the Athens events were held in the open sea at Piraeus. There were also the problems associated with the long sea journey for the Australian swimmer and runners, as they could not undertake adequate or appropriate training because of space constraints, bad weather and illness.⁵⁹ Despite these differences and inconsistencies, an attempt has been made to ascertain whether there were other athletes who might have represented Australia in swimming and track and field as well or better. There were not. BARKER, WHEATLEY, BLAKE and HEALY were all Australasian champions for their specialist events, and in some events they held Australasian records. Although BLAKE had not run a competitive Marathon race before, it is not known who else had, apart from Edwin FLACK in 1896 - and he did not finish.

Nigel BARKER completely dominated the sprint events in 1905; he won the 100, 220, and 440 yards, and the running broad (long) jump events⁶⁰. He may also been competitive had he competed in the long jump at the 1906 Olympics, which was won by Myer PRINSTEIN of the USA with a jump of 7,2 metres (23ft 7,5in). BARKER jumped 21ft 2in at the Australasian championships.

WHEATLEY and BLAKE had dominated the longer distance events in Australasia. Their closest opponent was Hector Burk of New Zealand. BURK had provided keen competition for WHEATLEY, especially in the 880 yards and 3-mile events, and it had been proposed he should travel to Athens. However, he suffered a foot problem and financial difficulties and did not attend.⁶¹

Swimmer Cecil HEALY was a clear choice of competitor for Australia having set a new world record

in December 1905 of 57 secs for the 100-yard freestyle. However, according to the *Referee*, two other swimmers, N.E. BROOKES and Bernard ('Barney') KIERAN, had been prominent.⁶² However, BROOKES did not place in any event at the 1905 Australasian swimming championships and was not considered for selection. 'Barney' KIERAN, though, would have been a great prospect at Athens. He had held all the world records from 220 yards to one mile⁶³, and at the 1905 Australasian championships he won the 440 and 880, and set a new record for the 220 yards.⁶⁴ Gary LESTER, in *Australians at the Olympics*, compares the winning time of American Charles DANIELS in the 400 metres event to that of KIERAN: "Even allowing for the conditions (open sea), the time was more than a minute slower than Kieran's 400 yard time in 1905".⁶⁵ Tragically, KIERAN became ill with appendicitis on December 7, 1905 and died a few days later in St Clair Private Hospital in Brisbane. Bill MALLON has stated that KIERAN left his mark on the 1906 Olympics through Charles DANIELS:

*"In 1905 Daniels faced Kieran at a meet in London, in which Kieran defeated Daniels easily. Kieran gave Daniels several pointers concerning his stroke and Daniels improved greatly after that, enabling him to win the 100-metre freestyle at Athens in 1906."*⁶⁶

"*Harrier*" in the *Australasian* of 11 November 1905 suggested the following athletes "might evoke public support to enable this country to be represented worthily and with every prospect of success': swimmer Barney Kieran, runners Nigel Barker and A Wheatley, and tennis player Norman Brookes".⁶⁷ BROOKES had gained recognition in London when he went through the Challenge Round at Wimbledon without losing a set. Although BROOKES was mentioned as possibly attending the Athens Games, he did not participate because of other commitments.⁶⁸

The manner and extent of reporting about the Athens Olympics in the Australian press is discussed in order to consider the significance and role of those 'special' Olympic Games on the Olympic Movement in Australia. The major sporting weekly in Australia, the *Referee*, provided the most detail in terms of results, information about the athletes, and other general background about the 1906 Games. Although cable messages were received, often the news was printed up to a month after the event. A significant feature of the *Referee* was that it published lengthy, if not all the content of letters from the athletes, especially those of Nigel BARKER. The popular weekly also utilised segments from overseas periodicals, such as London's *Sporting Life*. The main journalists of the *Referee* were 'Prodigal' (who, as stated previously, was Richard COOMBES) for track and field and 'Natator' for swimming.⁶⁹ The *Referee* was published in Sydney so it, along with

the *Sydney Morning Herald*, reported extensively on the 'hometown' athletes, BARKER and Cecil HEALY. Both periodicals encouraged discussion about the Games through letters to the editor, with some correspondents signing their names, and sometimes their qualifications, while others used pen names such as 'Australian' and 'Athletic'. Lengthy explanations and editorials were also used to explain issues or facets of the Games in the *Referee*, but, generally, articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald* were concise and seemingly only utilising information received by cable.

Two periodicals published in Victoria, the daily *Argus* and the weekly *Australasian*, also covered the Games extensively. Most reports in the *Argus* were brief and, again, relied on the cablegrams from Athens. A specific sports section was a feature of the *Australasian* and the feature writers were "Harrier" (track and field) and "Unda" (swimming). The *Australasian* also published letters, especially from BLAKE, and other Australians in Athens whom they did not specifically name. Only a few cabled items on the 1906 Games were included in the *Brisbane Courier*; perhaps this sparseness was because no Queensland athletes competed in Athens. The national weekly, *The Bulletin*, consistent with much of its editorial style, published some information that read more like 'gossip'.

The role and relationship of role of the IOC and the *Australasian Amateur Athletic Union* (AAAU) towards the 1906 Athens Games is also of interest. The *Australasian* reported in November 1905 that at a meeting the AAAU in Sydney their executive officers (E.S. MARKS and Richard COOMBES) were "instructed to take steps with a view of having Australasia represented at the Olympian Games". Subsequently, they met at the NSW Government House with the Earl of Jersey, a member of the Athens Games organising committee.⁷⁰

As stated previously, COUBERTIN had an 'antipathy' to the rival 1906 Athens 'Olympics'; he did not attend, preferring instead to remain in Paris and focus on the development of the Olympics and fine arts. He hurriedly convened - the information was not circulated until 2 April, 1906 - and chaired the session 'Incorporation of the Fine Arts in the Olympic Games and in the Daily Life of Sport' at the Fourth Olympic Congress Advisory Conference held in Paris, 23-25 May⁷¹ MALLON has suggested that the rushed nature of COUBERTIN'S planning and timing of this Congress was to show that he was still in control of the Olympic Movement, and not the Greek organisers of the 'renegade games being held in Athens'⁷².

Athens Post 1906 and Pre 1910: Australian Anticipation

Clearly, some IOC members were critical of the 1906 Games and, presumably, were concerned that another one was planned for 1910 and quadrennially after that. Australians knew about it because an article in *The Referee* of December 1906 cites comments of an IOC member in Great Britain, Robert de COURCY LAFFAN, who was also Honorary Secretary of the *British Olympic Association*:

"... if the wider purpose of the International Committee is to be fulfilled," explained Mr Laffan, "it is to essential that the Olympic games should be held in different centres, and in places more generally accessible than Athens."⁷³

There was no official Olympic organisation in existence in Australia at the time of the 1906 Athens Olympic Games⁷⁴ but the Olympic Movement was alive and well largely because of the efforts of Richard COOMBES, editor of *The Referee*, President of the *Australasian Amateur Athletic Union* and, most pertinently, the IOC member in Australasia.⁷⁵ During the lead up to the Games, the *Referee* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* published correspondence between IOC President Pierre de COUBERTIN and COOMBES,⁷⁶ along with the ideals of the Olympic Movement.⁷⁷ It seems most of the organisational and fundraising activities to select and send athletes to the 1906 Games were primarily the responsibility of the State amateur athletic associations, especially NSW and Victoria.

Conclusion

Bill MALLON in his book on the 1906 Games has stated that (they)

"[...] should maintain their designation as Olympic Games, for they deserve it; they were very important games. After the problems that occurred in Paris in 1900 and St Louis in 1904, with the Olympic Idea reeling, these successful Athens Games of 1906 helped resurrect the flagging Olympic Movement. The Games were the most international to date, they were the best managed to date, and they had the most international media attention of any of the Games since the 1896 in Athens. In fact all of the international newspapers termed this sporting festival of 1906 as "Olympic Games" using their native language for the appellation."⁷⁸

At a reception in the evening of the closing ceremonies of the 1906 Games, King GIORGIOS' included an invitation to meet again in Athens in 1910:

"I beg you to transmit this from my part to all the governments, committees, clubs and societies that you may represent, that the Royal family of Greece and the Greek nation have been exceedingly happy in having you with them these beau-

tiful days. Also, they will feel the same pleasure every four years, when according to the laws of the Greek kingdom, Greece will have an opportunity to renew the bonds of peace with all the nations with whom she is happy to cooperate for the good of civilisation and of progress."⁷⁹

American, James E. SULLIVAN had believed and advocated that Athens should be the permanent Olympic Games site, as long as athletics remained the core of the program. The Crown Prince of Greece called upon him to bring Americans to Athens in 1910, and SULLIVAN talked to his friend, President ROOSEVELT, into once again serving as honorary president of the team.⁸⁰

A contemporary article, published in *The Nation* a few months after the Athens 1906 Olympics depicted the enthusiasm for the Athens Olympics to continue.

*"With the institution of quadrennial Olympic Games on Greek soil, let us hope that the ancient Greek traditions and ideals will infuse themselves in the world's athletic life, and raise its moral tone and standards, so as to make athletics once more a great and noble power for what is good and beautiful."*⁸¹

In Australia, there was much less enthusiasm. Clearly, the 1906 Athens Games were not considered as important or significant. Perhaps this is because, unlike Edwin FLACK in 1896 and Freddie LANE in 1900, there were no winners. "Harrier" of the *Australasian* had written in November 1905 that "one or other of these two Olympic 'meetings' will probably expire."⁸² As we know now, only one did; but the other flourished with both explicit and implicit Greek history, meaning and sentiment somewhat consistent with what KARPOTHADES desired.

Appendix

Performances of Australian athletes at the 1906 Athens Games

TRACK

Medal tally: 3 bronze

Nigel Barker

100 metres [Total number of competitors: 46]

2nd in 9th heat (time: winner's time 11 2-5secs)

Semi-Finals: 2nd in 3rd heat (winner's time 11 1-5secs)

Final: 3rd (winner's time 11 1-5 secs)

*"F R Moulton (the American, and Nigel Barker, the Australian 'had a great fight for second place, Moulton winning on the tape."*⁸³

400 metres: [Total number of competitors: 24]

1st in 3rd heat (time: 53 secs)

3rd in Final (winner's time 53 1-5 secs)

George Blake:

Five-Mile Run (27 competitors)

6th in Final (no heats) (winner's time: 26m 26 1-5secs)

Marathon (53 competitors)

6th (winner's time: 2 hours 51 m 23 3-5 secs)

BLAKE led for the first 4 miles, and again from the 7th to the 15th mile. At this point Sherring, who was running quite easily and with no effort whatever, took the lead and was never headed.⁸⁴

Each contestant was entitled to be followed by one handler on a bicycle, bearing on his chest the same number as the contestant. He was permitted to offer the contestant medicines or refreshments at any time during the race. If the runner was attended by two or more handlers he was immediately disqualified, and each entry had to declare the number of his handler before the race was started. It was not necessary however for one handler to follow a man the entire distance. The runner could declare separate handlers at various points of the road. They would have to bear the same number as the contestant, however, but of different colours, each section of the road being designated by a certain colour. Immediately on reaching the arch in front of the stadium the handler must leave the runner and enter by a different gate. Each contestant before being allowed starting was examined as to his physical condition.

The start of the race was witnessed by about 300 peasants who took great interest in it.⁸⁵

Harold Healy

100 metres [Total number of competitors: 46]

1st in 8th Heat (time: 12 1-5 secs)

6th in 3rd Heat of Semi-final (winner's time 11 3-5secs)

110 metres Hurdles [Total number of competitors: 15]

1st in 3rd heat (time: 16 1-2 secs)

2nd in Final (winner's time 16 1-5 secs)

*"The final heat between Leavitt and Healy, was as pretty a race as one could wish to look at. They raced neck and neck until the last jump, Leavitt winning by a foot in 16 1-5s."*⁸⁶

George A. Wheatley

800 metres [Total number of competitors: 23]

3rd in 4th heat (winner's time: 2m 6 3-5 secs)

1.500 metres [Total number of competitors: 20]

4th in 1st heat (winner's time: 4 m 19 2-5 secs)

4th in Final (winner's time: 4m 12 secs)

SWIMMING

1 Bronze medal

Cecil Healy

100 metre Freestyle⁸⁷ (total number of competitors: 17)

2nd in 1st heat in time of 1m 17 4-5 secs (winner's time 1min. 17-3-5secs)

3rd in Final (winner's time 1m 13secs (Healy 20 yards behind winner)

400 metre Freestyle (total number of competitors: 13)
6th (winner's time 6m 24 secs)

One mile (1609 metres) Freestyle (total number of competitors: 24)

Did not finish

Notes

- 1 Most of Europe stayed home and there were a handful of athletes from other countries relative to the number of American competitors.
- 2 LUCAS, J.A., *The Modern Olympic Games*, London 1980.
- 3 The term 'Intercalated' was probably not used 'contemporaneously' to describe the 1906 Athens Games. However, it has been used by several authors, including HUGMAN, B./ ARNOLD, P., *The Olympic Games: Complete Track and Field Results 1896-1988*, London 1988.
- 4 Dr. Ian Jobling would like to acknowledge the involvement of Michael MAYFIELD and Betty ELLIS, students who undertook collaborative Directed Studies on the topic of the 1906 Athens Olympic Games utilising newspaper under his supervision at the University of Queensland in the mid-1980s.
- 5 See JOBLING, I., „Australien: Nur Edwin Flack, aber zwei Siege“, in: LENNARTZ, K. et al., *Die Olympischen Spiele 1896 in Athen*, Kassel 1996, pp. 75-77.
- 6 Much of the reporting was 'first-hand' because *The Referee*, in particular, published several of Flack's letters to his family in detail.
- 7 JOBLING, "Australien"; JOBLING, I., "In pursuit of stature, respectability and idealism: pioneers of the Olympic Movement in Australasia", in: MANGAN, J.A./NAURIGHT, J. (eds.): *Sport in Australasian Society: Past and Present*, London 2000, pp. 142-163.
- 8 MALLON, B.: *The 1906 Olympic Games: Results for All Competitors in All Events, with commentary*, Jefferson North Carolina 2000.
- 9 MALLON, *Games*, p. 3.
- 10 This notion had been encouraged, or reinforced, following an 'open letter' published in the *New York Times* (3.5.1896) to His Royal Highness, KONSTANTINOS (CONSTANTINE) the Crown Prince of Greece by members of the American team which competed at the 1896 Athens Olympics. The letter, in part, stated:
"We also desire to acknowledge our entire satisfaction with all the arrangements for the conduct of the Games. The existence of the Stadium as a structure so uniquely adapted to its purpose; the proved ability of Greece to competently administer the Games, and, above all, the fact that Greece is the original home of the Olympic games; all these conditions force upon us the conviction that these games should never be removed from their native soil."
 For further information, see MALLON: *Games*, p. 2-3. However, readers should note that MALLON is incorrect when he states, *"Technically, Australia should have been termed Australasia in 1906, as New Zealand was then part of Australia"*. [p. xi] New Zealand has never been 'part of Australia' in any formal or political sense. However, the principal body for track and field during this period was the *Amateur Athletic Union of Australasia*. MALLON points out correctly, athletes at



Cecil Healy

- both the 1908 London and 1912 Stockholm Olympics athletes from Australia and New Zealand were part of a 'combined' team known as Australasia (it included swimming in 1912). There is also further confusion in some reports of the 1906 Olympics when it is Australian competitors are recorded as representatives from Great Britain with the word in 'Australia' in parentheses, [viz Nigel BARKER (Australia), Great Britain]. See, SULLIVAN, J.E., *Olympic Games of 1906*, New South Wales, Australia, p. 73, [Spalding Athletic Library, located in the E.S. Marks Collection, Mitchell Library]. WEBSTER states: "There were a number of men whose birth entitled them to represent either Great Britain or the dominions". It is interesting to note that WEBSTER refers to 'England' in the table of track and field results and not 'Great Britain', p. 49.
- 11 It is interesting to note that the only reference COUBERTIN makes to the 1906 Games in his published memoirs states: "the Athens Games which, although more brilliant and better organised than the first, had nevertheless left an impression of uncertainty and confusion because they were without stable foundations". COUBERTIN makes no further reference to the Games themselves although, as alluded to in the previous sentence, he does discuss the 'difficulties' that arose during those Games with respect to the power of the IOC. With respect to the compromise with King GEORGE of Greece, some of the matters are alluded to in the following extract from his memoirs:
The nine or ten (IOC) members who had gone to Athens momentarily lost their heads at one of their meetings and Brunetta d'USSAUX had been powerless to stop them. They had voted a resolution advocating an early reorganisation of the IOC and had even offered the Honorary Presidency to the Crown Prince. The latter had been somewhat embarrassed by the offer. An absurd gesture on their part for, by Hellenising the committee in this way, they were depriving it of all international independence. Furthermore, except for the last resolution, all this remained subject to the President's approval. The President naturally rejected it all, including the honorary title offered to the Crown Prince. Shortly afterwards, the Prince and I had a long talk in Paris about the matter. It was not very agreeable, either for him or for me, but the situation was so ridiculous that we both ended up laughing. I had decided to speak completely freely and frankly and our talk followed this pattern right till the end. Therefore the 'session' in Athens, in which neither LAFFAN, BAILLET-LATOUR, BLONAY or SLOANE had taken part, so could not be considered properly representative of Olympic doctrine. See COUBERTIN, P. de, *Olympic Memoirs*, Lausanne 1989, p. 53, [IOC, Reprinted].
- 12 MALLON, *Games*, p. 3.
- 13 The IOC members in Germany who presented the proposal were Willibald GEBHARDT, Duke de TALLEYRAND-PERIGORD, and Edouard de SALM-HORSTMAR. See MALLON, *Games*, p. 3, citing Doku, p. 20 referenced in LENNARTZ, p. 26.
- 14 Although President of the IOC, COUBERTIN was no longer the dominant figure in the early years of the first decade of the twentieth century.
- 15 "Harrier" reported in the *Australasian* (November 9, 1905), Melbourne, p. 1404:
"Whether it be that the ambulating festival has failed to give satisfaction, or merely that sentiment has once again gained away, it is now a fact that the efforts of the King of Greece to have Athens as the fixed meeting-place have so far succeeded that a meeting is to be held there in 1906 and thereafter every four years."
- 16 COUBERTIN, *Memoirs*, p. 53.
- 17 *Referee* (January 31, 1906), p. 8; LUCAS, G.H., "The recent Olympian Games", in: *The Bostonian* (July 4, 1896), pp. 215-216.
- 18 HUGMAN/ARNOLD, *Games*; David YOUNG, uses the term in his book, *The Modern Olympics: A Struggle for Survival*, Baltimore 1996, when he states that:
"They wanted to intercalate their own Games with Coubertin's; that is, in between each Olympiad in other cities of the world would come the Athens Olympics, so that there would be Olympic Games every two years, not every four. Coubertin did not oppose Greece's holding additional Games in between his. But he insisted they could not be called "Olympic", that he had somehow had, now, a monopoly on the name. He told Greeks to call their games "Athenians", so they would not be confused with his own "Olympic Games." (p. 163).
- 19 RUNGE, J., "From Athens to Berlin - Athens 1906", in: German Organising Committee (ed.), *Olympic Games 1936*, Berlin, (No. 7, October, 1935), p. 15.
- 20 ABRAHAMS, H., *The Olympic Games Book*, London 1956.
- 21 See MALLON, *Games*, pp. 4-5.
- 22 The Brundage Commission comprised Avery BRUNDAGE (chair), Sidney DAWES (Canada) and Miguel Angel MOENCK (Cuba).
- 23 Brundage Commission Report - IOC Archives 1948, as cited MALLON, *Games*, p. 5.
- 24 *Referee* (6 December 1905), p. 6.
- 25 *Referee* (6 December 1905), p. 6. Note that the games are referred to in this report as 'Olympic Games'.
- 26 The term 'Australasia' refers to the countries of Australia and New Zealand. It is interesting to note the cooperation in sport between these two countries in the latter decades of the 19th and early decades of the 20th century. This cooperation had ramifications for the development of Olympic movement in both Australia and New Zealand. For example, the gold-medal winning men's 4 x 200 m relay team at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics comprised three Australians and one New Zealander. The initial IOC member appointed by COUBERTIN in 1894 to represent 'Australasia' was a New Zealander, Leonard CUFF. CUFF was succeeded by Richard COOMBES in 1905, who was the founding president of the *Australasian Amateur Athletic Union* (see LETTERS, M./JOBBLING, I., "Forgotten Links: Leonard Cuff and the Olympic Movement in Australasia, 1894-1905", in: *Olympika - International Journal of Olympic Studies*, 5(1996), pp. 91-110).
- 27 *Referee* (13 December 1905), p. 6. The 20 December 1905 issue of this periodical refers to these games, stating that April 13 is the starting date; that the games will last ten days; and that it is expected there will be 'larger participation than in the past games of 1896 (p. 5). Note that the Games are referred to as the 'Olympian Games'.
- 28 The article concluded, "Although the Australasian representative on the International Committee cannot be present as desired at Athens next month, we shall be represented by runners and a swimmer." It is most likely Richard COOMBES, who replaced Leonard CUFF on the IOC in 1905, wrote the article. COOMBES was editor of the *Referee* and its chief writer on athletics. For further information, refer to HENNIKER, G./JOBBLING, I., "Richard Coombes and the Olympic Movement in Australia: imperialism and nationalism in action", in: *Sporting Traditions: Journal of the Australian Society for Sports History*, 6(November 1989)1, pp. 1-15.
- 29 Note that the games are referred to as the 'Olympian Games' in this report.
- 30 The absence of 'international entries' was not literal, but there were very few Europeans and most of the athletes were from the USA. [For specific details, MALLON, *Games*.]
- 31 *Australasian* (April 28, 1906), p. 983.
- 32 *Referee* (January 16, 1907), p. 8. Richard COOMBES was the IOC member in Australasia at this time, and the editor of the *Referee*, so he probably felt the need to support the stance of the IOC.
- 33 *Australasian* (February 1906), no specific date, or page (from a scrap book).
- 34 The *Referee* (January 10, 1906) mentioned that the Honourable James ASHTON, Minister for Lands in the NSW government, 'strongly supports the movement'. Others mentioned in this report who also supported the movement include the

- Honourable J.A. HOGUE, Chief Secretary; Brigadier General GORDON; and Sir Francis SUTTON.
- 35 *Australasian* (April 28, 1906).
- 36 *Referee* (January 24, 1906).
- 37 In a letter (February 19, 1906), which was published in the *Referee* (February 21, 1906), IOC member COOMBES informed COUBERTIN that BARKER, WHEATLEY and BLAKE would be participating in the Athens Games; no mention was made of Cecil HEALY. It is also of interest that COOMBES should write, "it is certainly hoped and expected that in due course the Olympic Games will be allotted to this part of the world".
- 38 LESTER, G., *Australians at the Olympics*, Sydney 1984, states there were five Australia representatives: Nigel BARKER (100m & 400m track); G A WHEATLEY (800m & 1500m track); George BLAKE (1500m, 5 miles and marathon); Harold HEALY (100m & 100m hurdles); and Cecil HEALY (100m freestyle). Harold HEALY, Cecil's brother, did not compete. It is likely Lester is referring to Harold HEALEY (sometimes spelt with an 'e'), who, according to the official results from 1906, was a competitor for Great Britain. [*Australasian* (June 9, 1906), p. 1348; *Referee* (June 13, 1906), p. 8; Wallechinsky, 1988). Harold HEALY is mentioned by a 'correspondent' to *The Referee* of 4 July 1906 who, with reference to the re-run of the 110m hurdles states '... and the American was well behind Healy of England'.
This matter is further complicated when one reads the 'official report' of America's Olympic team. James E. SULLIVAN's lists state that 'H. Healy (Australia) Great Britain', in the 110 metres Hurdles won the third heat and came second in the final; (SULLIVAN, *Games*, p. 73) and in the 100 metre sprint won the eighth heat (p. 63).
To add further to the confusion, MALLON refers to this runner as 'Alfred Healey' (pp. 38, 39, 46) but in his discussion about whether this person is Cecil HEALY'S brother, refers to an 'Albert Healey' (p.61) when citing British Olympic historian, Ian BUCHANAN'S research of records of his athletic career and birth certificate. [See MALLON, *Games*].
- 39 MALLON: *Games*, p. 5 citing Roxburgh, p. 31.
- 40 The meeting of the NSWAAA was held on 11 January 1906; BARKER'S career is described in considerable detail in *The Referee* (January 24, 1906), p. 8. In 1900, running for his school, Newton College, he won the Greater Public School Amateur Athletic Association (GPSAAA) 100, 220 and 440 yards events. He dominated university athletics from 1902.
- 41 *Sydney Morning Herald* (February 17, 1906), p. 16.
- 42 *Referee* (January 17, 1906), p. 6.
- 43 *Referee* (June 13, 1906), p. 8.
- 44 In February 1906 he broke the 120 yards world record in a time of 1 min. 13 secs. *Sydney Morning Herald* (March 2, 1906), p. 7.
- 45 The subsidy from the Greek government came in response to a letter from the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association (VAAA). [For further details, see *Referee* (February 28, 1906), p. 8]
- 46 *Sydney Morning Herald* (February 27, 1906), p. 6.
- 47 *Sydney Morning Herald* (February 27, 1906) p. 6.
- 48 *Sydney Morning Herald* (February 24, 1906)
- 49 Like BARKER, HEALY'S letters from Athens reprinted in newspaper reports from March until August 1906 are helpful in ascertaining the conditions and atmosphere of three Athens Games. See, *Sydney Morning Herald* (May 7), p. 10; (June 8), p. 11; (July 20), p. 10; (August 11), p. 5; *Referee* (July 11), p. 4; *Argus* (June 13), p. 6, 9.
- 50 *The Argus* (February 2, 1906) p. 9 reported: '... it would be a decided reflection on amateur sport in Victoria if for lack of enthusiasm, the money was not forthcoming here'.
- 51 *Argus*, (January 31, 1906), p. 9.
- 52 *Referee* (June 13, 1906), p. 8.
- 53 The reference to the distance being 24 miles is either a misunderstanding, or that the actual distance had the
- marathon race was not widely known in Australia at the time.
- 54 *Australasian* (April 7, 1906), p. 8.
- 55 *Referee* (June 13, 1906), p. 8.
- 56 SULLIVAN, *Games*, p. 99. In what is obviously a typographical error, this source records BLAKE as coming from 'Austria' in the list of places (p. 99).
- 57 SULLIVAN, *Games*, p. 41.
- 58 See criticism of the Athens track, *Referee* (June 13, 1906), p. 8.
- 59 *Referee* (March 28, 1906), p. 8; (May 2, 1906), p. 8.
- 60 *Australasian* (November 18, 1905), p. 1224.
- 61 The *Referee* (January 24, 1906), p. 8 reported 'Hector Burk had made a straight out announcement that he is unable to take part in the Olympian Games at Athens if chosen to be one of Australasia's representatives'
- 62 *Referee* (December 13, 1905), p. 6.
- 63 *Australasian* (December 30, 1905), p. 1585.
- 64 *Courier* (December 7, 1905), p. 5.
- 65 LESTER, G., *Australia at the Olympics*, Sydney 1984, p. 40.
- 66 MALLON, *Games*.
- 67 *Australasian* (November 9, 1905), p. 1404. Harrier added: As a mere advertisement, it would, no doubt, pay for the venture, but if anything is to be done it must be done quickly, for to be in Athens by April 16 means leaving Australia in February'.
- 68 *Daily Mirror* (January 3, 1982), p. 10.
- 69 Richard COOMBES, although editor of *The Referee*, also wrote the athletics column.
- 70 *Australasian* (November 16, 1905), p. 4. The Earl advised them that the Games had the 'support of both Oxford and Cambridge universities and athletics generally in London'.
- 71 COUBERTIN called this congress and 'advisory conference' and he called upon IOC members to name artists and writers of their respective countries who were to be invited to the conference to discuss the questions, 'To what extent and in what form can we call upon the arts and literature to take part in the Olympic Games?'
- 72 MALLON, *Games*, p. 15.
- 73 *Referee* (December 5, 1906), p. 8.
- 74 The *Australian Olympic Federation* (now the *Australian Olympic Committee*) was not established until after the 1912 Stockholm Olympics.
- 75 See HENNIKER, G./JOBBLING, I., *Richard Coombes and the Olympic Movement in Australia*, 1989.; LETTERS, M./JOBBLING, I., *Forgotten Links: Leonard Cuff and the Olympic Movement in Australasia*, 1996.
- 76 COOMBES was editor of *The Referee* and, as previously stated, also wrote the athletics column under the pseudonym, "Prodigal".
- 77 *Referee* (February 7, 1906), p. 8; and *Sydney Morning Herald* - letter from Coombes, (January 6, 1906), p. 9 and editorials (January 10, 1906, p. 8 and April 28, 1906, p. 10).
- 78 MALLON, *Games*, p. 5.
- 79 MALLON, *Games*, p.15.
- 80 LUCAS, J., "American involvement in the Athens Olympian Games of 1906", in: *Stadion* 6(1980), p. 225.
- 81 KARPOTHALES, D., "The Olympic Games", in: *The Nation*, 82(June 7, 1906)2136, p. 467.
- 82 *Australasian* (November 9, 1905), p. 1404. 'Harrier' also wrote: The English AAA, lukewarm to the original gatherings, appears to have thrown its weight in favour of the Athens festivals.
- 83 SULLIVAN, *Games*, p. 63.
- 84 SULLIVAN, *Games*, p. 99.
- 85 SULLIVAN, *Games*, p. 101.
- 86 SULLIVAN, *Games*, p. 73.
- 87 It should be noted that the results of the heats for the 100 metres freestyle, although recorded in the newspapers of the time were not included in the *Official Results* of the 1906 Olympic Games. See MALLON, *Games*, p. 127-128.