

DEMETRIUS VIKELAS HONOURED BY SCOTTISH UNIVERSITY IN 1893

Don Anthony

In 1893 Demetrius Vikelas was awarded an Hon. D. Litt by the Scottish University at St. Andrews; it is thought this is the only degree won by Vikelas. It was awarded him for translations into Greek of the works of Shakespeare and Robbie Burns (the Scottish national poet). On the same platform the ex-Prime Minister of the UK, William Ewart Gladstone was given the same degree. One year later Vikelas found himself President of the first International Olympic Committee established by Pierre de Coubertin. Both Coubertin and Brookes (founder Wenlock Olympian Society 1850) had sought the advice of Gladstone who was a noted Hellenist as well as politician.

Gladstone felt that sport was not just restricted to the Anglo-Saxon mentality but that different peoples would interpret the principles of sport in different ways – wres-

tlings for example. Gladstone's son, Herbert, was an MP but also president of the National Physical Recreation Society (NPRS). This body founded in 1886 took over from the dying National Olympian Association (NOA) and adopted its same motto. Brookes – a sterling founder of the NOA – was coopted immediately on to the Executive of the NPRS. The NPRS was represented in Coubertin's "Comite Britannique" in 1902 and a founder supporter of the British Olympic association in 1905. It had a seat on the BOA into the 1920's.

St. Andrews is not far from the seat of Lord Kinaird who was also a leading NPRS dignitary and listed as a member of the Comite Britannique. Today there is a Shakespeare Society and a Robbie Burns Society which could both be interested in this ISOH initiative. ■