

Much Wenlock, UK, from 1850

The modern Olympics have their roots – you may be surprised to hear – in Shropshire. Dr William Penny Brookes started the Wenlock Olympian Games in 1850, inspiring the visiting Baron de Coubertin to export the idea to Athens. So now the Olympics are coming home, it seemed like the ideal time to explore the pretty market town where it all began.

We started with a stroll along the town's Olympian Trail. Picking up a Wenlock soft toy (one of the two London 2012 mascots) for our daughter Ava along the way, we rambled along the high street, finishing near the romantically ruined 12th-century Wenlock Priory (pictured, right).

Our base for the weekend was a four-star self-catering apartment at Bourton Manor,

the former home of Lord Wenlock, where we enjoyed a complimentary pre-dinner drink in our own private garden while watching racehorses being led into their stables for the night.

Next day, after exploring scenic Wenlock Edge and the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site in nearby Telford, we were back in Wenlock for the Olympian Games. A fun international amateur event held over five days, this is proof that the Olympian spirit is still flourishing in Shropshire – and we could see all the events we wanted without applying for tickets.

Neil Porter

See www.shropshiretourism.co.uk. The 2012 Wenlock Olympian Games are from July 8-15. Apartments at Bourton Manor start at £350 for three nights (01746 785377, www.bourtonmanor.co.uk).

