ARE you enjoying the Olympic Games in Tokyo? We are, so much so that we decided we had to produce a special edition of The Wonder Weekly devoted to the Olympics and its history.

When people talk about the Olympics they generally mean the modern Olympics; the first of which was held in Athens, Greece, in 1896.

That might not sound that modern, but the original Olympics was an Ancient Greek festival which celebrated Zeus, the Greek God of sky and weather.

In fact, the Ancient Olympic Games were actually just part of a four event festival called the Panhellenic Games. The Pythian Games, Nemean Games and Isthmian Games were the other events. The first of these Olympics was held in 776 BC, almost 3000 years ago.

To compete in the Olympics you had to be a free man (not a slave) who spoke Greek.

The first 13 Olympics had only one event, a running race the length of stadium, which was about 190 metres. In 776 BC the winner was a cook and baker named Coreobus, and he received an olive branch for his efforts. There were no medals at the Ancient Olympics, but winners were treated like heroes in their home cities and towns.

At the 14th Olympics the Greeks added a second event - a running race over a distance of about 400 metres around the stadium. Eventually though other events were added, such as wrestling, boxing, chariot racing, other running races and the pentathlon.

The pentathlon combined long jump, discus, javelin, wrestling and a stadium race.

Ancient Greek sportsman competed in the nude. Nudity was a bit of a Greek tradition.

The word gymnasium came from the Greek word gymos, which means naked.

The Ancient Olympics came to an abrupt end in 393 AD, after the Romans conquered Greece.

Frenchman Baron Pierre de Coubertin led the revival of the Olympics. A strong believer in the value of sport, he founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Continued Page 2
Baron Pierre de Coubertin also designed the Olympic rings, and won a gold medal himself - for literature at the 1912 Olympics for his poem Ode to Sport, which he entered under a pseudonym (not his real name).

That's right - literature. There was a time when painters, sculptors, architects, writers and musicians competed at the Olympics. The IOC chose Athens for the first Summer Olympics in 1896, and 14 countries took part. The main venue was the Panathenaic Stadium, the only stadium in the world built entirely of marble, and it was filled to the brim by the largest crowds to ever attend a sporting event. Most of the athletes were from Greece, and there was only one Australian at the Games, Edwin Flack.

Flack won two running events, the 800 metres and 1500 metres. He was leading the marathon well into the race, before collapsing with exhaustion. Flack also competed in tennis, and was awarded a bronze medal despite not winning a single match.

Anyway, other than during the First and Second World Wars, the Summer Olympics has been held every four years since. Although COVID-19 caused the 2020 Games to be delayed to this year. The Olympics has made its way to Australia twice, and will be hosted by Brisbane 2032.

Challenge yourself by making a list of the Olympic host cities (see below), and research the countries where these cities are located (e.g. Sydney, Australia).

Present your findings in a creative way (perhaps by using the map of the world provided on page 3).

Did you know tug-of-war, motor boat racing and dueling pistols were once Olympic sports?

Is there a sport you think should be introduced at the Brisbane Olympics, or earlier?

Another challenge might be to write a letter to send to the IOC explaining why this sport should be included in the Olympics.

Children’s University Tasmania members can earn stamps in their passports for any of the challenges, at the discretion of their school coordinator.

GOLD: Ariarne Titmus now has four Olympic medals to go with her world title. Picture: iStock/Pierell

Ariarne Titmus now has four Olympic medals to go with her world title. From Page 1

When Tasmanian swimming star Ariarne Titmus spoke to The Wonder Weekly in June last year, she had her sights set on winning a gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

She had to wait another year, when the Olympics were postponed due to COVID-19.

But last week in Tokyo she won not just one gold, but two, by taking out the 200m and 400m freestyle events.

She also claimed a silver medal in the 800m freestyle, and a bronze in the 4X200m freestyle relay.

It is an amazing achievement, and a reward for a lot of hard work.

But as Ariarne told The Wonder Weekly, you don’t have to be a world class athlete to benefit from the fun and good health of sport and exercise.

“I think sport and exercise is a great way to help set you up for life,” she said.