Early Modern Sport

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The 'early modern' has always suffered problems of periodization. Its beginnings overlap with the late middle ages, when 'sport' and athletic exercise were moving away from military training. It encompasses the Renaissance, Reformation, and counter-Reformation and the scientific shifts of the Age of Enlightenment, movements which were diverse chronologically, geographically, culturally and intellectually. Some historians link its beginnings to block-printing, the beginning of the Tudor period or the rediscovery of America in the late fifteenth century; others to the early sixteenth century and the Reformation. Its end dates are equally problematic. The French Revolution is sometimes used, or the nebulous beginnings of the industrial revolution.

Its sporting source material is likewise challenging: simultaneously rich yet also fragmentary and patchy with many silences and biases. Sport was rarely a main focus of discussion. Even so, different discourses indicate that sporting and other leisure activities, in complex cultural combinations, were becoming more apparent across the period. Such sources reflected the intellectual interests of the male leisured elite, helping to legitimate their leisure time and practices.

The new medium of print reflected and helped to shape new forms of sporting lifestyle, disseminating rules, playing skills and expected behaviour patterns. Recreational guidebooks and manuals focused on the sports popular with their dominant readership. This was usually in sports with military connections such as wrestling or swordsmanship, horse riding, archery or

swimming. During the Renaissance educators, surgeons and military theorists all stressed sporting leisure was necessary and utilitarian, beneficial psychologically, and vital for battle training, guiding appropriate social behaviour and *healthy* exercise. Moral discourses stressed moderation, not excess. Pedagogic discourses and educational programmes written for courtiers, university students and children stressed the importance of recreational physical exercise to develop strength, suppleness, physical appearance or mental and moral wellbeing and to gain status and respect. Renaissance humanists such as Castiglione looked back to the classical past, and stressed the hygienic values of exercise to improve the capacity to study. Medical discourse stressed the positive, psychological health-preserving roles of moderate sporting exercise to keep genteel bodies in balance. Juristic literature, especially from Italy and Spain, debated the economic relationship between profits and gambling games, adding to the published moral, religious and political debates about sport. Sport increasingly appeared in fiction. Rabelais's *Gargantua* (1534), for example, made 218 mentions of sports and games, and sport assumed literal and metaphorical centrality in popular works of literature such as Shakespeare's histories. Diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, journals and other personal documents show that some rulers and many of the elite enthusiastically enjoyed playing or watching physical sports, seeing them as legitimate outlets for their physical energies. The diaries and chronicles of P.H Mair (1517-1579), an Augsburg official and sports fan, for example, reveal fascinating data on fencing and the rules, prizes, participants, winners, expenses and dates of various competitive target shooting events in German cities. [1]

If sources for elite (learned) culture are good, sources for the study of popular (often illiterate) culture are more scattered. The boundaries between

work and leisure activities were drawn differently in different regions and at different times in ways which are not yet clear. The multifaceted and fragmented micro-cultures that made up commoners ('the lower sort') and their recreational experiences and ideological sporting involvements were rarely worthy of notice unless deemed problematic. Even in 1801 when the antiquarian Joseph Strutt wrote on English sport he concentrated on the rural exercises practiced by persons of rank. However he also covered those more generally practiced, alongside pastimes enjoyed in towns and domestically.[2]

From the late seventeenth century competitive sport events, prize money and results were more widely publicised. This was first through pamphlets, broadsides, woodcuts, posters or copperplate engravings and then by weekly newspapers. These appeared first in mainland Europe and then in Britain, where there were twelve London newspapers and twenty-four provincial papers by the 1720s. This new coverage stimulated interest and aided sport's growth.

Can we use the word 'sport' for these various callisthenic, competitive or recreational physically participative games, activities and pleasurably enjoyable sporting recreations, often associated with refreshment and regeneration in terms of mind, body or soul?[3] Specialists in modern sport usually think not, making technical distinctions between 'play', 'game', 'contest' and 'sport'. Historians of early-modern sports, recognising sport's complex, multi-layered contemporary status, and functional and political roles in exercising and disciplining people and individuals, have been happier to use the term to explore the extent to which such 'sport' developed across Europe in its various physical, material and ideological entities. Cultural historians have variously utilized early modern concepts of 'recreation', 'sport', 'refreshment', 'diversion' or 'exercise' in order to do so.

Social consciousness was elusive, with varied, fluid, and complex social identities, driven by context. It was linked to wealth and income, administrative power and prestige, and to deferential hierarchies such as order and degree, not to modern notions of 'social class'. Most recreation was undertaken with people of similar status. Early modern society's perceptions, descriptions and representations of economic function and societal position indicate a sense more of 'sorts' of people. They lived in highly differentiated communities which were far from uniform, rigid or unchanging in their patterns of inequality. Marks of gentility separated perhaps four or five per cent of the population from the common people.   The experiences and relationships formed around sport were important for the predominantly male political and ruling elite, the 'gentlemen', the small numbers of tight-knit nobility, plus land-owning gentry, leading churchmen and very wealthy, socially-prominent urban bourgeoisie, with their honour code. Enthusiasm for sport was widespread even in the sixteenth century in the courts of France, England, Spain, Italy, Germany and elsewhere. And open-air public sporting events attracted participants and spectators of all sorts, even if social contexts and structures of power which included wealth, age and marital status shaped culture and sporting experiences.

The moral, religious and political battleground of sport

Early modern sport has to be set in its moral, religious and political context. Both ecclesiastical and civil authorities periodically attempted to exert some discipline, control and direction over popular sports, festivities, and 'carnival' activities that only just contained potentially dangerous counter-moralities. Mendicant preachers preached against sport even in Renaissance Italy but Puritanism, in its multiple manifestations across the larger cities of Europe,

Britain and America, found it most problematical. Reformist and radical Puritans were austere, sincere, purposeful, militant, zealous, egalitarian and moralist, wanting to assertively repress all non-spiritual forms of recreation. They were suspicious of sport's frivolity, pleasure, occasional violence, passionate feelings and cruelty, its links to gambling, self-destructive indulgence and 'mere idleness' rather than proper purpose.   A pleasure-loving, sinful people needed to be policed and purified to create a holy, 'saved' community. Sunday was for worship, quiet contemplation, good works and reflective spirituality, not skittles or wrestling.

Puritanism probably retarded rather than furthered modern sport, though it effected some reformation of manners amongst the 'middling sort'. Puritans showed little opposition to callisthenic-style healthy exercises, despite occasional offensives against traditional rural pastimes. Some commended, in moderation, 'innocent' amusements and 'honest' and 'sober' recreations such as archery, shooting, running and wrestling or hunting, hawking and wild-fowling, though with limited enthusiasm, agonizing over their moral appropriateness. In colonial America, such activities had instrumental functions. There was limited concern for animal suffering, despite Biblical support for the belief that animals should not suffer unnecessarily. As Keith Thomas has noted, in early modern England 'exploitation [of animals], not stewardship, was the dominant theme.'[4] In the later eighteenth century evangelical Methodism began preaching against the cruelty of more plebeian sports such as throwing sticks at cocks, bull-baiting and bull-running, alongside the gambling and prostitution found on racecourses, and this marked a further shift in Nonconformist attitudes. Tory squires, uninterested in Enlightenment philosophies, continued to enjoy hunting, fishing and shooting, unmolested.

Many simply regarded Puritans as 'killjoys', and moved away from religious ideas, emphasising individual consciousness and choice.

The state already played a role in sports debate. In the fifteenth century, state proclamations were more likely to condemn Sunday sports such as bowling or bull-baiting only as unlawful distractions from important military exercises. In Tudor England, urban authorities sought to compel men to develop their military skills. Coroners' reports between 1500 and 1576 indicate that at least fifty-six English individuals died in the context of archery practice.[5] In European Catholic cities in the sixteenth century sports such as tournaments, target shooting, fencing or horseracing took place on Sundays. Protestant rulers were less convinced. In Britain growing Puritan power in some counties meant that ritual festivities and sports were faced with increasing opposition. This produced a royal reaction, a 'cultural counter-offensive'.[6] In *The King's Declaration of Sports* (1617), James I attempted to distinguish between lawful and unlawful sports. He stressed moderate 'lawful recreation' for his 'good people', emphasising the need for military preparedness, promoting games and sports on Sundays and holy days, though condemning interference with religious services. Charles I took a similar stand though he banned Sunday bull and bear baiting, wrestling and bowling. Sport became increasingly ambivalent, a focus of moral discourse and contestation concerning its salutary and harmful societal characteristics, especially if done to excess.[7] Robert Dover's Cotswold Games, valorised in *Annalia Dubrensia* (1636), supported Charles in celebrating poetry and sport as communal competitions but made concessions to Puritanism by renouncing gambling. The Cromwellian period saw edicts against all Sunday sports activities, represented as popish and disreputable, a view critiqued in Isaac Walton's *Compleat Angler* (1653). In 1654 a Protectorate Ordinance banned cockfighting

because fights disturbed the peace and were 'commonly accompanied with Gaming, Drinking, Swearing, Quarreling, and other dissolute Practices, to the Dishonor of God'.[8] Puritan controversialist Philip Stubbes made exaggerated complaint of the Sabbath being used for 'bowling, tennis playing; in bear-baiting, cock-fighting, hawking, hunting and such like…. wicked and ungodly pastimes and vain pleasures of the flesh'.[9] Horseracing was banned lest it provided a pretext for plotting, and other gambling sports almost disappeared until Charles II on his return reaffirmed the place of sport and play.

The characteristics of early modern sport

In an often insightful, scholarly and impressively wide-ranging study, Allen Guttmann provided a highly influential categorising, systematising typology. He suggested that the formal-structural characteristics of early modern sports were very different from modern sport. The latter had seven key characteristics: secularism, equality, specialisation, bureaucratisation, rationalisation, quantification and obsession with records. Modern sport, he argued, stemmed from the intellectual revolution associated with the 'Enlightenment' alongside industrial capitalism and Protestantism. [10]

Most importantly, Guttmann accepted that all these characteristics appeared, if sometimes sporadically, in earlier periods, including the early modern. His point was that by comparison 'the characteristics of modern sports interact systematically'.[11] In other words, they fitted together. In pre-modern times examples were more isolated, not widespread. Not all scholars noted this critical caveat. This led some to represent early modern sports in over-simplistic, essentially *negative* ways, implying that they entirely lacked such attributes, a view exacerbated since Guttmann had sometimes contrasted modern sport with 'primitive', 'preliterate', 'ancient' or 'traditional'

sports. Such binary divisions made differences stark. They were convenient but potentially misleading. And there is still debate about how far back we can push 'modernity', however defined.

Like Guttman, Henning Eichberg seemed to imply that sport's emergence was part of broader processes of modernisation. [12] Sociologists have also linked the rise of modern sport to what Norbert Elias called the 'civilising process', in which people began to internalise values that reduced the levels of expressive interpersonal violence, and Michel Foucault called the rise of 'discipline'.

Another important debate has concerned the extent of fundamental discontinuity, how far there was a 'great divide' between early modern and industrial society, a distinct phase of rupture rather than an evolutionary continuum. More recent research suggests that by 1700 Britain was already deemed a modernizing society, and becoming more secular, individualistic and economically successful. [13] It was beginning to quantify its sport and create sporting records, although even the later early nineteenth century sporting changes accompanied large elements of continuity.

Guttmann's model attracted some criticism.[14] Scholars of the early modern period were quick to respond, with a collection of essays edited by Carter and Kruger on early sports records and quantification.[15] Recent work on the Renaissance has likewise challenged Guttmann's work.[16] Most specialists now agree that from the late-fifteenth century onwards distinctive, situationally-specific forms of physical culture were being elaborated in Europe. John McClelland has argued for a distinct period of 'Renaissance' sport

lasting until the late seventeenth century, and suggested that even by the sixteenth century,

> 'the athletic activities that were amply practiced…were not the formless, unproblematic, ritually dominated, violent folk or noble games that most sports historiography described. They displayed organisation, purposeful motivation, structure, rules, professionalism, i.e. many of the characteristics of sport today. They just did so in a way that now seems unfamiliar'. [17]

In England, likewise, argued Kruger, 'many elements of modern sports [had] been there a long time' before the industrial revolution.[18] Cultural historian Peter Burke suggested something like modern leisure first emerged in the late fifteenth century as an analogous word, 'pastime', came into use. This led, in the sixteenth through the eighteenth century to a broader European 'leisure system', well predating the industrial revolution, albeit with multiple and uneven paths of change.[19] More recently, Behringer has conceptualised the early modern period as 'a distinct epoch in the history of sport', due to the high levels of institutionalisation and standardisation sport underwent in many Western European countries. He sees the Renaissance era as witnessing the sportification of tournaments, military exercises and popular games, followed by the emergence of important new sports, increasingly associated with 'modern' characteristics.[20] Increasingly the early modern period is being presented as an independent era in the history of sport, and also as the formative, anticipatory period of modern sport. Tomlinson and Young, for example, follow Behringer in suggesting that modern sports emerged from developments in the early modern era, rather than from industrialisation.[21]

To take just one example of modern sport's characteristics, sporting rules, in the early modern period these were clearly developing institutional forms, but were never uniform even within countries. Even without any national sporting authorities, printed rules and instructions were widely disseminated though books, court culture, peripatetic university students and staff and elite trans-national tourism. Rules offered orderly instructions and advice for playing, written down in printed, itemized or numerical form, and reflected the social and world-views of the rule-makers. Even in the late fifteenth century, for example, jousting rules had certain commonalities, as Ruhl has noted in comparisons between those of Francesco Sforza Visconti (1465), John Tiptoft (1466) or the tournament regulations of Heilebron (1485).[22]

Italians between 1450 and 1650 produced various scoring systems for jousting, and rules and tactics for tennis, as well as fencing, team ball sports, horsemanship, and even gymnastics. The Italian priest Antonio Scaino provided his readers with regulations for *calcio* (a goal-scoring game using a kicked or batted ball), *pallacorda* (indoor tennis) and *pallone* (handball/rackets) in 1555.[23] Florentine count Giovanni Bardi (1534-1612) further codified *calcio* in 1580, providing advice for foreigners on roles, rule specialisation, and quantification.[24] In France various rulebooks for *jeu de paume* began appearing in the later sixteenth century, and quite detailed rules for indoor tennis with stringed racquets were provided by a tennis professional Forbet l'Aisne in 1599, by which time many Parisian courts were separate commercial units. Over time rules slowly became more complex. By 1655, for example there were eighty-three rules for pall-mall, a precursor to croquet.

The need for formation and development of rules was given further boost by betting since betting on head-to-head results needed common

features. By the mid-eighteenth century, written rules relating to betting often formed part of the contractual 'articles of agreement' common to most stake-money contests, aimed at removing ambiguities. Contracts tried to regularise the times, places, playing practices and amounts staked. Whilst initially specific to the individual match, over time repetition and usage helped further standardisation. Gamblers might wish the odds to be twisted in their favour, so rules attempted to create 'fair play' for the contest. Sports like duelling had provided an informal means of achieving justice and defending honour. If equality was a manifestation of the modern, then the language of 'fair play', the notion of equity, a measured spirit of fairness, was being increasingly taken up by wider society from the late sixteenth century onwards. [25] Thereafter it was increasingly applied to sport, along with another key sporting idea, often applied to cock-fighting or horseracing, that of competitors being 'properly' or 'fairly matched' so that gentlemen could be sure of 'fair' battles and 'excellent sport'. Alongside this went 'fair gaming' and avoidance of betting disputes, so rules often set up means of arbitration in order to arrive at more reliable, agreed, unbiased verdicts. So in horseracing, the twenty rules laid down by Charles II for the running of the Newmarket Town Plate in 1665, and rules of racing for a course at Newton Heath, Lancashire, laid out in 1678 by the local lord of the manor, both focus largely on betting aspects, as do other local rules of the period. Cockfighting rules first appeared in print in Cheny's *Racing Calendar* for 1743, but they were clearly of earlier origin, and its rules increasingly travelled. In South Carolina in 1768, cockfights 'adhered to the rules of cocking in England'. The first printed (thirteen) rules of golf were issued by the Gentlemen Golfers of Leith in 1744, for a competition usually played on Saturdays, instituted when the city presented them with a silver club as a prize, with the winner made captain for the year. A newly founded coastal

golf club at St Andrews, the Society of St Andrews Golfers, specified that they related to the game as played on St Andrews links but otherwise copied these rules almost verbatim for their own silver club competition. But in all sports, whilst there might be overlap, there was rarely wider agreement across regions. In hare-coursing, 'Laws of the Leash' were laid down by Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, in the sixteenth century to govern competitive matches between two hounds, and were commonly drawn on thereafter, but as late as 1828 it was common to find that 'the principle upon which courses are decided vary in different countries and over different grounds'.[26]

Cricket had been played for a century under various generally understood but unwritten rules before they were written down in the articles of agreement for a match in 1727 between teams organised by the Second Duke of Richmond and Mr. Alan Broderick, heir to Viscount Middleton, which specified time, place, stakes, numbers on each side, and how to settle disputes. A published version of the rules in 1744 by the 'Cricket Club' which played at the Artillery Ground in London showed that the game had taken on many of its permanent features such as the length of the pitch, the size of the wickets, and the forms of dismissal. These cricket 'laws' as they were symbolically labelled, were clearly intended to be more universally applied. Boxing rules were written down by pugilist-turned-boxing-promoter, Jack Broughton in August 1743 to control the conduct of fights on stage in his London amphitheatre, where he had introduced more social exclusivity to further encourage upper-class attendance. As such rules spread they contributed to future national standardization and to the emergence of national and sometimes international sporting culture.

Alongside such factors as rule development or the growth of sports architecture, the growing institutionalisation of sport can be seen in many

other dimensions, from the still relatively small production of and international trade in sporting goods and equipment, to the many specialised teachers of sporting skills, coaches, trainers, referees, judges and grounds-men (another manifestation of the modern) and the growth of early forms of sports reporting and advertisement. And though many sports had their roots in religious festivals, Sundays and other holy days, popular sports were often held then merely because this was traditionally time free from work.

Associativity

Until recently relatively little attention has been paid to concepts of associativity, despite Johan Huizinga's early emphasis on the links between the play and associational elements of culture, and this provides a complementary way of looking at the period to that of Guttmann. [27] Early modern sport was institutionally connected to associational forms such as courts, municipal governments, academies and universities, since participants often gained social capital through playing sports together. In courts, for example, royal ball games and riding and shooting contests fostered socialisation and smoothed the negotiations of diplomacy. Hunting helped cement social relationships, and gifts of rabbit, venison, boar meat, fish or fowl were highly prized. As the eighteenth century private packs of fox-hounds hunted more regularly, they attracted followers, although in a social context where roles, performances and relationships were tacit but very clear. Highly formalised and regulated team games such as the Florentine *calcio*, played in Lent by two well-advertised named teams of twenty-seven men (gentlemen, *signori* and princes), dressed in coloured silk, helped build associational bonds.

In towns, an early example of sporting associativity was provided by the societies associated with military training, such as fencing clubs, or the archer and crossbow guilds of Flanders, popular in society and encouraged by the dukes of Burgundy. There was stress on associational life as much or more than sport, and their annual meals strengthened their unity through commensality. These guilds were an important part of regional festive networks, holding competitions across the Low Countries and northern Germany. They could last weeks and involve hundreds of fully armed competitors. The shift to handguns saw similar shooting confraternities, such as the Guild of St George in London. Such societies and clubs wrote their own rules and ensured members followed them. Brotherhoods, fraternities, corporations, and clubs practicing elements of equality in organization and in sport were common in much of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

From the late seventeenth century onwards it was a new form of associativity, the voluntary associations and clubs formed by the elite and upper middling groups, which slowly aided the construction of sporting culture. Indeed, Szymanski locates the origin of English sports, for example, in eighteenth-century associativity, not in nineteenth-century industrialization. [28] British historiography on club formation has tended to under-emphasise the eighteenth-century growth of sports associativity, partly through using inappropriate modern notions of the sports 'club'. Staying at taverns and inns, town or country house or hunting lodge for annual race weeks, or for hunting, cockfights or coursing, for example, was common and fostered shared sporting interest. Such association was informal, seasonal or short-lived and left little historical trace. The few *formal* eighteenth century 'clubs' doing more 'modern' sports were largely but not entirely organised by the better, not the

middling sort. Unlike the French nobility who spent their time at court, the British nobility divided their time between country estates, county towns for assize attendances and the metropolis, so had more opportunity for different sporting involvements. London, with its dynamic economy, stimulated sport's growth. In cricket, popular in London, surrounding towns and the rural south, there are teasing references to club formation from early in the eighteenth century. A team from the Punch Club Society were playing by 1718; the Duke of Duke of Richmond had 'his club' in 1728, by 1744 the 'Cricket Club' played at the Artillery Ground, the Star and Garter Club had the Prince of Wales, and in the 1750s the famous Hambledon Club was formed. The Marylebone Cricket Club emerged in 1787 out of White's Conduit Club, a meeting place for aristocratic players and supporters of the game, and issued its first set of cricket rules in 1788.

In horseracing, though historians have conventionally dated the formation of the Jockey Club to circa 1750 at London's Star and Garter Club, there are several references to a Jockey Club with meetings in William's Coffee and Chocolate House in St James in the 1730s. As early as 1729 'the Jockey Club' which consisted 'of several noblemen and gentlemen' were invited 'to meet one day next week at Hackwood, the Duke of Bolton's seat in Hampshire, to consider of methods of the better keeping of their respective strings of horses at Newmarket'.[29] The Maryland Jockey Club, founded in Annapolis in 1743, a club dedicated to horse racing, and the oldest known sports club in America, was presumably emulating the English model, and similar clubs developed in South Carolina, Virginia, and New York around the same time.

Coursing clubs only emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century. Swaffham Coursing Club in Norfolk was formed by George Walpole, 3rd Lord Orford, in 1776, initially with twenty-six members, each naming their

greyhounds after a different alphabet letter. Ashdown Park Club was founded by Lord Craven in 1780 and Yorkshire's Malton Club in 1781, initially with twenty members.

Sometimes associativity formed round a club, but more commonly round an occasion at a particular place. During the Renaissance the evidence of decoration, paintings, maps and guides all show that specialist areas for sporting play had been created in and around major cities. There were tiltyards for jousting; central, nearly rectangular Italian public squares; more irregular playing spaces alongside rivers or outside the walls; churchyards, racecourses, training areas and shooting ranges. Specialist sporting architecture was also being created: indoor riding arenas, temporary bull rings in Spain, bear and bull baiting arenas in London ball courts, cockpits, bowling greens, inns and taverns, while it has been argued that sports buildings erected specifically for ball games at this period 'represented a genuine innovation' .[30] There were game parks, chases and forests in the countryside, which required high-maintenance, expensive game management; kennels and stables at country houses and hunting lodges. Access to such space marked out and maintained the hierarchy sustaining social and gender order, as enclosure put pressure on common land.

Change and continuity

Elite court sport changed over time. Tennis was the dominant indoor elite game in the seventeenth century, spreading right across Europe, and especially popular in France, but by the early eighteenth century was starting to seem too strenuous. *Calcio* remained popular in Florence through the seventeenth century but thereafter the elite participated less and events were held more

irregularly. Other activities such as dressage, epee fencing and military exercise were also becoming minority pursuits. In part this may have been due to increasing reluctance by gentlemen to subject themselves to physical danger, or perhaps simply to changes in fashion.

Certainly hunting continued for those with forest available. There were substantial elements of continuity in hunting across *Ancien Regime* France, Britain and elsewhere, at least until the French Revolution took land away. Hunting provided a rite de passage into elite culture, and offered pleasure, mental stimulation, exercise or relaxation depending on the activity, close links to nature, dogs and horses, sacrificial and ritual elements, as well as food for the table. At the same time there were changes. Some are relatively easy to explain, others less so. For example, as deer in Britain became hunted out and stocks more difficult to maintain there was a decline in deer hunting and a shift towards fox hunting, formerly a more functional plebeian pastime. Propertied society was often devoted to falconry until the late seventeenth century, but then declined in Britain though not in Holland and Germany, from some combination perhaps of loss of social cache, increased costs, a shortage of hawks, gentlemen's shift to use of sporting guns or competing sports.

By the eighteenth century less strenuous sports such as cricket, horseracing or golf became increasingly popular in Britain. They offered entertaining, enjoyable open-air opportunities for socialisation, and for social and political rivalries to be enacted peacefully. For much of the early modern period golf remained largely a sport for Lowland Scottish nobility and gentry, though by the mid-eighteenth century bankers, physicians, merchants and others from the urban elite of Edinburgh were also playing. Cricket's heartland was largely around London and in areas of pasture, cloth-making and dairying

in the south-east, but it was becoming a major sport by the mid-eighteenth century and spreading north.

Activities such as horse racing, cock-fighting, hunting or hare-coursing were all sports where greater wealth and access to greater expertise, either personal or bought in, could help assert hierarchical position, gain reputation or win substantial sums of money without being in any personal danger. Gambling on animals took away the personal risks associated with jousting, a duel or warfare, but still entailed powerful vocabularies of emotion and sentiment: the thrill of risking one's money, the exhilaration of a win, the despair of a loss, especially when 'deep play' was involved. Towns such as Chester, York, Salisbury or Lanark were already organising race meetings in the later sixteenth century. James I established Newmarket as a hunting and racing retreat, and Charles I made it Britain's turf centre, making racing socially popular. By the eighteenth century many towns in Scotland, England and America were raising funding to encourage greater attendance of the better sort.

Elite sporting life changed fastest in Britain, largely because of the eighteenth-century consumer revolution and commercialization of material life. Sport offered extensive opportunities to make money. The 'better sort' was becoming rapidly wealthier, variously through mercantile, industrial, military or overseas investments, stock-market speculation, or income from agricultural and mineral holdings. Investment was risky but potentially highly profitable. Unsurprisingly, betting soon developed a competitive market economy on a smaller scale. For some of the better off, betting, like emergent capitalism, demonstrated competitive skills, ruthlessness, self-interest, chauvinism, confidence in judgement, and enjoyment of risk. Gambling

became a symbol of excessive consumption, wealth and time for leisure. Sporting events like horse-racing, pugilism and cricket were among the first leisure activities to encourage such betting. This in turn helped change these sports into more specialized, complex commercial enterprises. Poorer working men were increasingly paid to act as jockeys, pugilists or cricketers to help win the bets of the better sort.

Magisterial social control over lower order games such as football or bowls might be exercised when longbow practice at butts was still taken seriously in some but not all English towns in the early 1500s but these games expanded again as archery declined by the 1560s, whether from bow supply problems, alternative sports, opposition to its Sunday use, longer working hours, poorer diets or the shift to handguns (all contemporary explanations) is unclear. Continental town organisations shifted to handguns even earlier.

Popular sport continued to have substantial regional and national differences, which often remained part of communal or festive culture: hurling in Cornwall, *cnapen* in Wales, shinty in the Scottish Highlands. Activities such as football, foot-racing, various ball sports, hunting, throwing stones or quoits, wresting or boxing, might well be found in various forms across Europe.[31]

The impact of social control was clearly sometimes a factor in change, a view strongly stressed by some historians. [32] In Picardy popular culture was largely suppressed by an absolutist state and reformed Catholic Church between 1600 and 1789. In Britain, in the later 1700s, in many market towns, magistrates were intent on improving public order, reduce uninhibited behaviour and damage to property and facilitate commercial trade and street passage. They tried, often with much success, to suppress town centre sports formerly central to popular culture, such as bull and bear baiting, annual street

football matches, or throwing at cocks. In many towns these disappeared, in others they moved to the outskirts.

Combat sports brought together rich and poor to watch. In early eighteenth century London wrestling fell from favour and was replaced by more commercial forms of sword, staff and cudgel fighting displayed in amphitheatres. As elite tastes changed, leisure entrepreneurs like Broughton increasingly foregrounded working-class pugilists, encouraging elite patronage and betting. Cockfighting was a cross-class sport across England through the seventeenth century and beyond, but by the later eighteenth century it remained popular largely in northern England. Owners gained vicarious self-validation and gambling thrills, while large, largely male crowds, of mature age and across the social scale usually paid 'pit money' for entrance, with prices varying with distance from the pit.

There is much we still do not know about early modern sport and exercise. We know little about the 'middling sorts of people' and their affinities and behaviour in sporting terms. There are difficulties in defining their membership and identity, even in terms of wealth distribution, local office-holding and material culture. In England, outside London, for example, there was little concept of a middling group before 1700, and it only then spread slowly to the major towns. Women's sport likewise largely remains an unknown quantity. As when sport reflected martial skills, elite women's role was still often that of spectator. However aristocratic women could take part in tennis, and female monarchs and their companions often rode with little apparent difficulty. Queen Elizabeth 1, for example, reputedly enjoyed coursing and rode out deer hunting with a few friends. She also was a noted archer. Noble women took up falconry too, using merlins flown at snipe and

larks. For plebeian women, festivals, times of carnival, with their inversions of the power structure, and commercial sport sometimes offered opportunities for them to participate. Currently our knowledge is largely confined to the later eighteenth century. [33] We still lack a comprehensive study of the sporting life and culture of the various social groups, contextualised in terms of social, economic, political, and urban developments. Different societies moved in different ways and in different trajectories to take up more consistently *some* of the major characteristics of modern sport, which might be praised or reviled in different contexts. It is already clear however, that recreational and competitive physical pursuits were ubiquitous amongst all social groups and in all countries despite minority opposition. Sport was a key part of cultural life, and the early modern period played a crucial role in its growth.

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[1] Kasuhiko Kusodo, 'PH Mair (1517-79): A Sports Chronicler in Germany', in *Sport and Culture in Early Modern Europe* ed. John McClelland and Brian Nerrilees, Toronto: CRRS publications 2009 pp.339-355.

[2] See Joseph Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (London: Methuen, 1801). For a perceptive critical review, see Agata Mackow*, Joseph Strutt as a Writer on the History and Folklore of Sports* (Poznan, Poland: Wydawcy, 2008).

[3] Elaine McKay ''For refreshment and preservinge health': the definition and function of recreation in early modern England' *Historical Research*, vol. 81, no. 211 (February 2008) pp52-74.

[4] See Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500 – 1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983) 25.

[5] Simon Gunn, 'Archery Practice in Early Tudor England', *Past and Present* 209, (2011), pp, 53-81

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