

The State of British Sport History

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Prior to the early 1970s, a compact little volume by Peter McIntosh and a monograph by Dennis Brailsford stood as glaring exceptions to the rule that British sport was ignored by serious historians.¹ The story of sports, games, and recreation was largely left to amateurs. They told a colorful story, of course, but tended always toward an antiquarian accumulation of facts and anecdotes unrelated to the larger historical framework. Two histories of English sports and pastimes, both published in 1949, illustrate the problem. Both were lively, pleasant depictions of *homo ludens* in Britain, but neither dealt with sport in relation to economic determinants, social structures, or political implications.² Even more narrow in vision and lax in critical judgment were the enthusiastic chroniclers of specific sports and games such as horse racing, cricket, and football,³

Academic historians attended to British sports only in small isolated sections of the Oxford history of England,⁴ or as information related to larger themes such as pre-industrial patterns of leisure and work, plebeian recreational activities instrumental in "the making of the English working class." Victorian recreation as it was shaped by religious reformers, and boy cricketers, rowers, and footballers exemplifying the public-school ideal of "godliness and good learning."⁵ "One of the paradoxes of the growing academic interest in sport is the unwillingness of scholars to actually inquire into sport *per se*," lamented an Australian participant in a sports studies conference in 1977. "Rather," he added, "sport is used as a vehicle through which insights into other, apparently more relevant, phenomena can be gained."⁶ Of dubious

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1. Peter C. McIntosh, *Sport in Society* (London: C. A. Watts, 1963); Dennis Brailsford, *Sport and Society Elizabeth to Anne* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

2. Norman Wymer, *Sport in England: A History of Two Thousand Years of Games and Pastimes* (London Harrap, 1949); Christina Hole, *English Sports and Pastimes* (London Batsford, 1949).

3. See, for examples, Morris Marples, *A History of Football* (London Seeker and Warburg, 1954), and Percy M. Young, *A History of British Football* (London: Stanley Paul, 1968).

4. And in only two of the thirteen volumes of the Oxford History is more than a page devoted to sport Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform 1815-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 626-29; R. C. K. Ensor, *England 1870-1914* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 164-67.

5. Keith Thomas, "Work and Leisure in Pre-Industrial Society," *Past & Present*, 29 (December, 1964), 50-62; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963); Brian Harrison, "Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth-Century England," *Past & Present*, 38 (December, 1967), 98-125; David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal* (London: John Murray, 1961). For exceptions to this truncated use of sport history prior to 1972, see Charles Tennyson, "They Taught the World to Play," *Victorian Studies*, 2 (March, 1959), 211-22, and Bruce Haley, "Sports and the Victorian World," *Western Humanities Review*, 22 (Spring, 1968), 115-25.

6. Braham Dabscheck, "'Defensive Manchester': A History of the Professional Footballers Association,"

accuracy by 1977, this judgment most certainly would have been valid ten years earlier.

Within the past decade the academy has come to see that the history of sport is far too important to be left in the hands of sportsmen and journalists *cum* amateur historians, or even to be relegated to the role of illustrative material for the more "weighty" issues of economic, social, and political history. An integral part of social history, British sport history now thrives as a self-conscious discipline attuned to economic causation, to class distinctions and conflicts, to the masses as well as the elites, to cultural continuity and change, and to sociological and anthropological insights as well as traditional modes of research and analysis. The recent birth of the *British Journal of Sport History* adds to the family of the *Journal of Sport History*, the *Canadian Journal of History of Sport*, and *Stadion*, representing a happy union of history and sport.⁷

What is the best means of making sense of this historiography of the past ten years? One obvious route is a comprehensive survey of the numerous articles and books published on the subject. Another method is the "subtler strategy" proposed by Lytton Strachey as he embarked upon his *Eminent Victorians* years ago: to "row out over that great ocean of material, and lower down into it, here and there, a little bucket, which will bring up to the light of day some characteristic specimen, from those far depths, to be examined with a careful scrutiny."⁸ Strachey's is the more feasible course to take. Extending his maritime metaphor, we can profitably identify those areas where the "characteristic specimen" are clustered, chart the shallows as well as sample the depths, and thus suggest some routes inviting further exploration.

Students of ancient history are familiar with the work of the late H. A. Harris, whose research on Greek athletics and Roman games usefully complements the earlier labors of E. Norman Gardiner.⁹ Not so familiar, perhaps, is Harris's recent survey of the history of sport in Britain.¹⁰ A marked improvement on the narratives of Norman Wymer, Christina Hole and their kind, *Sport in Britain* nevertheless lacks substance and analytical verve. It serves to remind us of the need that still exists for a balanced, thorough survey of the history of British sports based on the many theses, articles, and monographs of the past ten years.¹¹

Yet that full story cannot now be written, for the research is especially thin on the medieval and twentieth-century periods of British sport. No doubt the latter deficiency will soon be rectified by industrious historians of modern Bri-

in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan, eds., *Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979), pp. 227-57.

7. Edited by J. A. Mangan, Jordanhill College of Education, Glasgow: published by Frank Cass, Ltd., London.

8. Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1918), p. vii.

9. H. A. Harris, *Greek Athletes and Athletics* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), and *Sport in Greece and Rome* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972); E. Norman Gardiner, *Athletics of the Ancient World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), and *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* (London: Macmillan, 1910).

10. H. A. Harris, *Sport in Britain: Its Origins and Development* (London: Stanley Paul, 1975).

11. An even more pertinent reminder is another popular survey: John Armitage, *Man at Play: Nine Centuries of Pleasure Making* (London, Frederick Warne, 1977).

tain, who must struggle for a balanced judgment on a recent era while wrestling with monstrous amounts of published, archival, and oral information. The problems of the medievalist, of course, are just the opposite: the era is distant in assumptions, social relationships, and attitudes, and the evidence is uneven at best.¹² Of the half dozen or so scholarly articles published within the past ten years on medieval sport in Britain, three have been concerned with the usefulness of primary sources such as public records, the Bayeux tapestry, and the chronicler William Fitzstephen.¹³ From the larger pool of sport in relation to the structure of medieval society, only a trickle of scholarly concern is recently evident.¹⁴

The era from the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution is better, if unevenly, documented. Proposals for healthy recreation infused utopian and educational schemes alike in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁵ Nor can we any longer dismiss the Puritans as mere spoilsports. Abuses in modern sports make us all the more sympathetic to the Puritans' ambivalence, their consistent ideological and practical grounds of opposition to various pastimes, and their dogged insistence on asking fundamental questions about the nature, role, and purpose of physical recreation.¹⁶

As one might expect, English gentlemen continued in their sporting habits largely disregarding Puritan prohibitions. A monograph by Marcia Vale documents a wide range of gentlemanly sports and leisure activities, but unfortunately sets each topic in separate chapters without any integrated sense of change or continuity against the larger historical tapestry.¹⁷ For the long view—from late-medieval origins to very recent developments—of upper-class sport, a popular survey by Roger Longrigg illustrates the sporting life of the English squire, and more specifically the history of horse racing and fox hunting.¹⁸

Perhaps the most fruitful direction taken in the recent study of pre-industrial sport has to do with the commercialization of leisure in the seventeenth and

12. See John M. Carter, "All Work and No Play? A Review of the Literature of Medieval Sport," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, 11 (December, 1980), 67-72.

13. John M. Carter, "The Public Records as Indirect Sources for Medieval Sport: England in the Thirteenth Century," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport*, 12 (May, 1981), 17-23, and "Sport in the Bayeux Tapestry," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, 11 (May, 1980), 36-40; Antonia Granden, "Realistic Observation in Twelfth-Century England," *Speculum*, 44 (January, 1972), 29-51.

14. Thomas S. Hendricks, "Sport and Social Hierarchy in Medieval England," *Journal of Sport History*, 9 (Summer, 1982), 20-37; cf. Stephen Jeffreys, *Tourney and Joust* (London: Wayland Publishers, 1973); Michael W. McConahey, "Notes on Some Later Medieval Peasant Ball Games," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, 7 (December, 1976), 70-73; John M. Carter, "Perspectives on Medieval Sport in Twelfth and Thirteenth Century England," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport*, 12 (May, 1981), 10-16.

15. Roberta J. Park, "Strong Bodies, Healthful Regimens, and Playful Recreations as Viewed by Utopian Authors of the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Research Quarterly*, 49 (December, 1978), 498-511. "The Advancement of Learning, Expressions of Concern for Health and Exercise in English Proposals for Educational Reform, 1640-1660," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, 8 (December, 1977), 51-61.

16. Dennis Brailsford, "Puritanism and Sport in Seventeenth Century England," *Stadion*, 1:2 (1975), 316-30; J. Thomas Jable, "The English Puritans—Suppression of Sports and Amusements?" *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, 7 (May, 1976), 33-40.

17. Marcia Vale, *The Gentleman's Recreations: Accomplishments and Pastimes of the English Gentleman 1580-1630* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1977).

18. Roger Longrigg, *The English Squire and His Sport* (London: Michael Joseph, 1977); *The History of Horse Racing* (London: Macmillan, 1972); *The History of Foxhunting* (London: Macmillan, 1975).

eighteenth centuries, long before the supposed "leisure revolution" brought on by the Industrial Revolution. In 1973 an eminent Cambridge historian, John Plumb, first noted the eagerness of the "town gentry" to arrange, promote, and benefit economically from spectator sports such as horse races, boxing contests, and cricket matches. Peter Borsay confirms that scene in his study of the pre-industrial "urban renaissance," and Dennis Brailsford informatively documents the popularity of Monday and Tuesday as prime sporting days in the commercialization of leisure in the late-eighteenth century.¹⁹

On the rural scene, fox hunting became especially popular as a badge of class distinction on the one hand, and a convivial mingling of the classes on the other, according to the substantial accounts of Raymond Carr and David C. Itzkowitz.²⁰ First hand descriptions and comments on rural blood sports, equestrian events, and miscellaneous games from the *Sporting Magazine*, 1792-1836, are available in a useful volume edited by Carl B. Cone.²¹ Two new collections of English paintings, watercolors, and prints feature upper-class rural pleasures such as coursing, hawking, fishing, steeplechasing, and bird hunting in addition to fox hunting and thoroughbred horseracing.²² Academic historians might wish for more introductory text and analysis of the pictures, but David Coombs at least takes the time to identify the artists, comment upon the style and meaning of their work, and set them firmly against the background of gentlemanly interest in landscape, agriculture, and natural history. Despite (or because of) the growth of cities and the coming of the railways, rural upper-class sports continued to flourish until late in the nineteenth century, as David Cannadine observes in a pertinent bibliographical essay on "the leisure classes."²³

For the pastimes enjoyed by the masses of English people, Robert W. Malcolmson documents a transition from the rural, agrarian world of the Georges to the urban, industrialized society of the Victorians. Trained at the hand of E. P. Thompson, Malcolmson presents a lively scene of popular holidays, games, and sociable occasions that gave color and order to rural villagers prior to the dolorous effects of modernization that coincided with the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in the second half of the eighteenth century. Enclosures, the growth of cities, a new emphasis on labor discipline, and the moral crusade of the Evangelicals all combined to deprive the masses of their

19. John Plumb, *The Commercialisation of Leisure in Eighteenth Century England* (Reading: University of Reading Press, 1973); Peter Borsay, "The English Urban Renaissance: The Development of Provincial Urban Culture, 1680-1760," *Social History*, 5 (1977), 581-603; Dennis Brailsford, "Sporting Days in Eighteenth Century England," *Journal of Sport History*, 9, (Winter, 1982), 41-54; cf. C. Jane Gregory, "The Rise of Sport in Britain: An Interpretive Analysis of Inn Signs and Sporting Emblems," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, 7 (May, 1976), 22-32.

20. Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976); David C. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of English Fox-Hunting, 1753-1885* (New York: Humanities Press, 1972).

21. Carl B. Cone, ed., *Hounds in the Morning: Sundry Sports of Merry England* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981).

22. F. L. Wilder, *English Sporting Prints* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974); David Coombs, *Sport and the Countryside in English Paintings, Watercolours and Prints* (New York: Dutton, 1978).

23. David Cannadine, "The Theory and Practice of the English Leisure Classes," *Historical Journal*, 21 (June, 1978), 445-67.

traditional pleasures. According to Malcolmson, the lack of physical space and the loss of aristocratic patronage virtually brought the old peasant game of football to an end. Simultaneously, the reformist zeal of Evangelical moralists made the old blood sports—cockfights, bear baits, and bull running especially, not to mention prize-fighting—utterly disreputable and illegal. Reflecting the “pessimistic” view of the effects of industrialism espoused by E. P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, Malcolmson concludes that by 1850 a “vacuum” existed in the recreations and leisurely pleasures available to the great mass of Englishmen, making them easy prey to escapist libations and sociability offered by the pub.²⁴

In opposition to Malcolmson’s pessimism is the assertion of Hugh Cunningham that the concept of “vacuum” is a misreading of the evidence. In Cunningham’s judgment, there was a steady growth of popular recreations from 1780 to 1850, as traditional sports and customs survived long after their demise was celebrated by opponents and lamented by supporters. Throughout this revisionism is a reluctance to make too sharp a distinction between old agrarian and new industrial patterns of life. More important, Cunningham argues *against* the pessimism of E. P. Thompson by insisting *with* Thompson that the English working class was an active, imaginative body of people, not a group of workers passively manipulated by their masters or merely swamped by the impersonal forces of economic change. Once aristocratic patronage was removed from popular recreations, working-class Englishmen found pleasures of their own in the form of drama, pantomime, and circuses, and in the end even diffused their recreations “upwards” to appeal to those very people who had earlier been their patrons. The popular success of the music halls and professional football in the late-nineteenth century represent, for Cunningham, the end results of a vigorous working-class culture that made the best of the commercial opportunities afforded by industrialism.²⁵

Victorian leisure is undoubtedly the most lively topic in all of English sport history at the moment. Recently no less than five books,²⁶ numerous articles, four bibliographical essays,²⁷ and an entire issue of *Victorian Studies*,²⁸ have underscored the importance of what Malcolmson called the “reconstruction” of recreational life “to accord with the novel conditions of non-agrarian, cap-

24. Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); cf. Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971).

25. Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c. 1780-c. 1880* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1980).

26. In addition to Cunningham are H. E. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870-1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976); John Lowerson and John Myerscough, *Time to Spare in Victorian England* (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester, 1977); Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); and James Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950* (London: Longman, 1978). For Victorian upper-class leisure, see Stella Margetson, *Leisure and Pleasure in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Coward, McCann, 1969).

27. In addition to Cannadine, “Theory and Practice,” see John Myerscough, “The Recent History of the Use of Leisure Time,” in Ian Appleton, ed., *Leisure Research and Policy* (Edinburgh, 1974), pp. 3-16; William J. Baker, “The Leisure Revolution in Victorian England: A Review of Recent Literature,” *Journal of Sport History*, 6 (Winter, 1979), 76-87; Keith A. P. Sandiford, “The Victorians at Play: Problems in Historical Methodology,” *Journal of Social History*, 15 (Winter, 1981), 271-88.

28. *Victorian Studies*, 21 (Autumn, 1977).

italistic society.”²⁹ Most scholars agree that the second half of the nineteenth century was the crucial era: that around 1850 the history of leisure entered a new phase, and that by 1900 leisure had, in Cunningham’s words, “acquired a new definition and role, and developed forms which have proved to be remarkably durable.”³⁰

In no neat way did the forms follow the definitions, especially not for the working classes who tended first to find appropriately pleasant activities, then to reflect upon them later, if at all. For the Victorian middle class, the matter was much more complex. As Peter Bailey has shown in his study of Bolton, the middle-class work ethic manifested itself in a concern for “improvement” and respectability to such an extent that all prospects for leisure had to be weighed over against the perceived need for personal discipline and social conformity. Uneasy about the effects of leisure on the values of their own class, middle-class Victorians were all the more fearful of the indulgence, corruption, and insubordination that might result if the laboring masses were left free to choose their own leisure activities. The middle class therefore took upon their own shoulders the mantle of patronage for urban leisure, much as the aristocracy had assumed that role in the rural, pre-industrial age.³¹

The question of “social control” is of paramount importance in the study of Victorian leisure.³² The provision of museums, libraries, public lectures, cheap concerts, public parks, and railway excursions all came with strings attached. Crudely put, the middle class attempted to impose its own norms of sobriety, discipline, and respectability on English workers. In a more subtle sense, however, the assertion of middle-class patronage was itself the most insidious form of social control.³³

In her study of leisure in late-Victorian and Edwardian Bristol, Helen Meller provides further evidence of the determination of the urban middle class to provide wholesome leisure and cultural facilities. Bristol’s public parks and swimming pools, YMCA, temperance societies, and adult education programs all worked in tandem to create a pleasant city, and not incidentally to encourage the transformation of the tastes of the Bristol masses in the image of their elite masters.³⁴

29. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, p. 171.

30. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 28; cf. Douglas A. Reid, “The Decline of Saint Monday 1766-1876.” *Past & Present*, 71 (May, 1976), 76-101. But for the process whereby “older forms of leisure and entertainment have begun to falter” in the twentieth century, see Walvin, *Leisure and Society*, pp. 128-63.

31. Bailey, *Leisure and Class*. For a condensed version of this thesis, see Bailey’s “‘A Mingled Mass of Perfectly Legitimate Pleasures’: The Victorian Middle Class and the Problem of Leisure,” *Victorian Studies*, 21 (Autumn, 1977), 7-28; cf. R. D. Storch, “The Problem of Working-Class Leisure: Some Roots of Middle-Class Moral Reform in the Industrial North, 1825-50,” in A. P. Donajrodzki, ed., *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977).

32. See “The Working Class and Leisure: Class Expression and/or Social Control: Conference Report,” *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 32 (Spring, 1976), 5-18; Hugh Cunningham, “The Metropolitan Fairs: A Case Study in the Social Control of Leisure,” in Donajrodzki, ed., *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain*, pp. 163-84; Gareth Stedman Jones, “Class Expression versus Social Control” A Critique of Recent Trends in the Social History of ‘Leisure’,” *History Workshop*, 4 (Autumn, 1977), 163-70.

33. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 91.

34. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City*.

Although historians are eager to draw generalizations from several specific case studies, Meller's portrayal of Bristol and Bailey's study of Bolton reveal that despite the similarities, each scene is unique in traditions, social structures, and leisure opportunities. A lightweight study of leisure in Sussex, by John Lowerson and John Myerscough, presents yet another configuration. Sussex villages and small towns, southern and mostly rural, had a minimum of industry, and Brighton especially was altogether different from commercial Bristol and all the more from industrial Bolton.³⁵

For a still greater contrast, Alan Metcalfe's excellent article on the emergence of organized sport in the mining communities of Northumberland is valuable.³⁶ As elsewhere, cockfighting and other blood sports declined and virtually became extinct in the collieries during the course of the nineteenth century, but other local favorites such as bowling, quoits, rabbit coursing, dog racing, and pigeon flying remained popular. More to the point of contrast, middle-class patrons (and even middle-class values) intruded little on the sporting life of the miners. Largely ignored by churches, educational institutions, and private athletic clubs, most miners persisted in their sporting pleasures in gardens, fields, and roads adjacent to public houses ("sporting inns"). The innkeeper often organized competitive events, took bets, and served as referee. Whether the contest was a bowling match, a pigeon shoot, or a pedestrian race, gambling flourished. Except for a brief era of rowing, no team sports became popular until the organization of soccer football teams in the 1880s. Geographically remote and bullishly individualistic. Northumbrian miners pursued their sports blissfully free of middle-class ideology, and even largely oblivious to the socially homogenizing effects of the railway, newspapers, schools, and churches.

Late in the nineteenth century, soccer football was one of the major attractions that brought the Northumbrians into sustained contact with the outside world. And understandably so, as professional soccer was the rage throughout England by 1900. Within the past ten years historians have given much attention to the football story: to the various versions of the game played in the public schools prior to 1850, to its division into Association and Rugby styles by mid-century, to the geographical diffusion of both games in the North, and to the commercialization of Association football during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.³⁷ A simple, inexpensive game, soccer football was made to order for mass participation and spectatorship. According to Tony Mason, the "working class" element to which the game first appealed were

35. Lowerson and Myerscough, *Time to Spare*.

36. Alan Metcalfe, "Organized Sport in the Mining Communities of South Northumberland, 1800-1889." *Victorian Studies*, 25 (Summer, 1982), 469-95.

37. James Walvin, *The People's Game: The Social History of British Football* (London: Allen Lane, 1974); Eric Dunning, "Industrialization and the Incipient Modernization of Football: A Study in Historical Sociology," *Stadion*, 1:1 (1975), 103-39, and "The Development of Modern Football," in Eric Dunning, ed., *Sport Reading from a Sociological Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 133-51; J. R. Bale, "Geographical Diffusion and the Adoption of Professionalism in Football in England and Wales," *Geography*, 63 (July, 1978), 188-97; William J. Baker, "The Making of a Working-Class Football Culture in Victorian England," *Journal of Sport History*, 13 (Winter, 1979), 245-51.

those regularly employed, skilled workers whose higher wages and more predictable working schedules allowed them both to play and to watch the game.³⁸

Professional football was organized and promoted by middle-class businessmen, but not primarily for profit. Mason, Steven Tischler, and Charles P. Korr all agree that athletic interests, civic pride, and a kind of bourgeois paternalism far outweighed any ledger-sheet mentality in the directors' boardrooms.³⁹ Even for the teams that made money, dividends on investments were pitifully small. By the same token, professional players were poorly paid on the average.⁴⁰ As soon as Korr finishes his case study of West Ham United, we will know much more about the inner workings of the game in its infancy.

Football's early crowd appeal, on the other hand, is already attracting much scrutiny, requiring historians to don the hats of sociologists and social psychologists.⁴¹ What social, psychological functions did professional soccer fulfill for the urban masses? Why were crowd riots and spectator violence so common? How did the earliest promoters of the game attempt to control crowd behavior? Obviously these late-Victorian and Edwardian issues have relevance to the modern problem of "hooliganism," giving a sense of timeliness to the historian's effort.⁴²

Football's only serious rival as a mass spectator sport was horse racing. As Wray Vamplew explains fully and well, the coming of the railway revolutionized the turf, enabling owners to transport their thoroughbreds quickly from one race to another. By train the urban masses also made their way to the tracks, which were enclosed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in order to charge admission. More races and larger cash prizes transformed the turf from a gentlemanly pastime to a commercial enterprise.⁴³ Gambling continued to flourish, both on and off the track, becoming all the more controversial and legally circumscribed because of the new mass market to which it appealed.⁴⁴

38. Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980).

39. *Ibid.*, 21-137; Steven Tischler, *Footballers and Businessmen: The Origins of Professional Soccer in England* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981); Charles P. Korr, "West Ham United Football Club and the Beginnings of Professional Football in East London, 1895-1914," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (April, 1978), 211-32; cf. R. Day, "The Motivation of Some Football Club Directors: An Aspect of the Social History of Association Football, 1890-1914." University of Warwick M.A. thesis, 1976.

40. See Dabscheck, " 'Defensive Manchester' "; cf. Derek Dougan and Percy M. Young, *On the Spot: Football as a Profession* (Newton Abbot: Readers Union, 1975).

41. Mason, *Association Football*, pp. 138-74; Tischler, *Footballers and Businessmen*, pp. 123-41; Wray Vamplew, "Ungentlemanly Conduct: The Control of Soccer Crowd Behaviour in England, 1888-1914," in T. C. Smout, ed., *The Search for Wealth and Stability* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 139-54; Vamplew, "Sports Crowd Disorder in Britain, 1870-1914: Causes and Controls," *Journal of Sport History*, 7 (Spring, 1980), 5-20.

42. See a publication of the Sports Council, *Disorder and Sporting Events* (London, 1978); Peter Marsh et al., *The Rules of Disorder* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); R. Ingham et al., *Football Hooliganism* (London Inter-Action, 1978); Eugene Trivizas, "Offenses and Offenders in Football Crowd Disorders" *British Journal of Criminology*, 20 (July, 1980), 276-88.

43. Wray Vamplew, *The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing* (London: Allen Lane, 1976).

44. *Ibid.*, 199-233; Ross McKibbin, "Working Class Gambling in Britain 1880-1939," *Past & Present*, 82 (February, 1979), 147-78; cf. D. M. Douwnes et al., *Gambling, Work and Leisure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976).

Prior to the commercialization of the turf and football pitch, prize-fights and pedestrian races were the events most commonly associated with gambling.⁴⁵ What happened to these sports and their “fancy” patrons during the second half of the nineteenth century? One suspects that the mania for respectable, “rational” amusements largely relegated them to the byways (if not the bygones) of British sport, but since we have only a recent journalistic account of the Sayers-Heenan fight of 1860 to add to earlier popular narratives, we cannot say for sure.⁴⁶

More curious is our lack of a solid interpretative account of the important game of cricket in the Victorian era. Within the past decade two new serious surveys as well as a popular coffee-table history of cricket have appeared, adding more color than substance to the standard histories of the game.⁴⁷ But we are still without a closely-woven analysis of the organization, patrons, crowds, and social significance of cricket at its popular apex in the age of William Gilbert Grace.⁴⁸ Without doubt, Grace was the most notable athletic hero of his day.⁴⁹ That he, a “gentleman” (amateur) rather than a “player” (professional), probably made more money from sport than did any of his contemporaries suggests that cricket is of all sports the most revealing of Victorian middle-class snobbery, ambivalence, and hypocrisy in relation to professional sport.⁵⁰

Outright disagreement rather than ambivalence characterized the devotees of rugby football as they grappled with the question of professionalism in the late nineteenth century. Sociologists Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard document the refusal of the public school and university enthusiasts for the rugby game to go the route of the soccer crowd in allowing professionalism within their ranks. The result was a split between the Rugby Football Union and a northern professional faction that was to become known as the Rugby Football League. By 1900 the Rugby Union game was inseparably identified with

45. See J. C. Reid, *Bucks and Bruisers: Pierce Egan and Regency England* (London Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), and John Ford, *Prizefighting: The Age of Regency Boximania* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971); Earl R. Anderson, “Footnotes More Pedestrian than Sublime.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 14, (Fall, 1980), 56-68; Arthur Sherbo, “Addenda to ‘Footnotes More Pedestrian than Sublime.’” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 14 (Spring, 1981), 313-16.

46. Alan Lloyd, *The Great Prize Fight* (New, York: Coward, McCann, and Groghegan, 1977); and see D. A. Jamieson, *Powderhall and Pedestrianism: The History of Famous Sports Enclosure, 1870-1943* (Edinburgh W. & A. K. Johnston, 1943).

47. Robin Marler, *The Story of Cricket* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles 1981); Christopher Brookes, *English Cricket: The Game and Its Players through the Ages* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974); Trevor Bailey, *A History of Cricket* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1978); for the older histories, see H. S. Altham and E. W. Swanton, *A History of Cricket*, 2 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948; originally published in 1926); and Rowland Bowen, *Cricket: A History of Its Growth and Development throughout the World* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970).

48. For a beginning in this direction, see Keith A. P. Sandiford, “Cricket Crowds during the Victorian Age,” *Journal of Sport History*, 9 (Winter, 1982), 5-22.

49. See W. F. Mandle, “W. G. Grace as a Victorian Hero,” *Historical Studies*, 9 (April, 1981), 353-68. and Eric Midwinter, *W. G. Grace: His Life and Times* (London:).

50. Sandiford, “The Victorians at Play,” p. 280; W. F. Mandle, “The Professional Cricketer in England in the Nineteenth Century.” *Labour History*, 23 (1972); Lincoln Allison, “Batsman and Bowler. The Key Relation of Victorian England,” *Journal of Sport History*, 7 (Summer, 1980), 5-20.

the amateur code and status consciousness of Oxford, Cambridge, and the public schools.⁵¹

General and thematic histories of the public schools have long stressed the importance of sports and games as means of discipline and the inculcation of "manly" virtues.⁵² But now J. A. Mangan masterfully explains why, how, and to what effects athleticism became the rage in the late-Victorian and Edwardian public schools.⁵³ Mangan destroys the myths that the zeal for athletics came largely from the boys rather than the masters, that the older schools merely followed the newer, more aggressive ones who led the charge, and that the whole process was virtually complete by 1880 with little or no opposition thereafter. The reverse was true in each of these assumptions, according to Mangan. Making much of sociological and anthropological categories such as emulation and distancing, symbol and ritual, and ideological rhetoric that fostered cohesion and identity, Mangan has produced a gem of evidence and sustained analytical argument. He has now effectively demolished David Newsome's influential evolutionary model of upper-class education in the nineteenth century, placing the "games ethic" at the center of that complex story.⁵⁴

From the public schools the games ethic weighed heavily in the diffusion of British culture throughout the world: to India,⁵⁵ Africa,⁵⁶ Canada,⁵⁷ and Australia⁵⁸ especially. Athletic skills and interests were important factors in the selection of British imperial administrators, and in turn influenced the manner in which they served.⁵⁹ Yet the early emergence of Australian Rules Football

51. Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players: A Sociological Study of the Development of Rugby Football* (New York: New York University Press, 1979); cf. Dunning and Sheard, "The Bifurcation of Rugby Union and Rugby League: A Case Study of Organizational Conflict and Change," *International Review of Sport Sociology*, 2 (1976), 31-72; and William J. Baker, "William Webb Ellis and the Origins of Rugby Football: The Life and Death of a Victorian Myth," *Albion*, 13 (Summer, 1981), 117-30.

52. For examples, see Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning*; Brian Smith and Ian Bradley, eds., *The Victorian Public School: Studies in the Development of an Educational Institution* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975); Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie: The Phenomenon of the English Public School* (New York: Viking, 1978).

53. J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

54. See J. A. Mangan, "Social Darwinism, Sport and English Upper Class Education," *Stadion*, 6 (1982), 92-116.

55. J. A. Mangan, "Eton in India: The Imperial Diffusion of a Victorian Educational Ethic," *History of Education*, 7 (1978), 105-18; Richard Cashman, "The Phenomenon of Indian Cricket," in Cashman and McKernan, eds., *Sport in History*, pp. 180-204.

56. J. A. Mangan, "Gentlemen Galore—Imperial Education for Tropical Africa; Lugard the Ideologist," *Immigrants and Minorities*, 1 (July, 1982), 149-68; William J. Baker and J. A. Mangan, eds., *Sport in Africa: Essays in African History* (New York: Holmes & Meier, forthcoming in 1985) explores more fully the British impact on African sports.

57. Morris Mott, "The British Protestant Pioneers and the Establishment of Manly Sports in Manitoba, 1870-1886," *Journal of Sport History*, 7 (Winter, 1980), 25-36; cf. Gerald Redmond, *The Sporting Scots of Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982), and Alan Metcalfe, "Some Background Influences on Nineteenth-Century Canadian Sport and Physical Education," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, 5 (May, 1974), 62-73.

58. W. F. Mandle, "Games People Played: Cricket and Football in England and Victoria in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Historical Studies*, 15 (April, 1973), 511-35.

59. A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, "The Sudan Political Service: A Profile in the Sociology of Imperialism," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 15:1 (1982), 21-48; J. A. Mangan, "The Education of an Imperial Elite: The Sudan Political Service and the British Public School System," *Ibid.*, 15:4 (1982), 60-91; J. A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Idea* (London: Allen Lane: Penguin, forthcoming)

and professional Rugby League football in New South Wales illustrates the impossibility of upper-class British sports being duplicated, in carbon-copy fashion, in the colonies.⁶⁰ Australian nationalism endowed the first Test matches between England and Australia with a political significance that has scarcely waned in the twentieth century.⁶¹

Organized British sports and games also made their way to South America in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, but except for a thin comparison of football in Manchester and São Paulo, and scattered references in John Arlott's impressive *Oxford Companion to Sports and Games*, we have hardly any account of that story.⁶² Surely some historian equipped with the languages, grounded in Latin American history, and interested in the social significance of sports will soon come forward with the evidence to fill out that important saga of global diffusion, local adaptations, and nationalistic reactions to British sports.

A notable beginning has been made on the Irish response to English sports.⁶³ Nine years before Douglas Hyde founded the Gaelic League in 1893 as a means of de-Anglicizing Ireland, Irish nationalists formed the Gaelic Athletic Association to preserve and encourage traditional Irish games as an antidote to the intrusion of organized British sports. Catholic churchmen and the Irish Republican Brotherhood joined forces to promote distinctive Irish games such as hurling, Gaelic football, and hammer-throwing as a part of a much larger nationalistic rejection of what the Archbishop of Cashel called "England's stuffs and broadcloths, her masher habits and such other effeminate follies as she may recommend." Compared to the fast, rough games of hurling and Gaelic football, even soccer and rugby might be considered English "effeminate follies." We need to know more about the history of the struggle between native and imported sports for dominance in Ireland.

Our paucity of knowledge is scarcely less apparent for the rest of the so-called "Celtic fringe." A recent antiquarian treatment of the Highland Games and journalistic accounts of curling and golf do little to integrate the history of sports in Scotland.⁶⁴ Even more cloudy is the story of Welsh sports, except for

60. Ian Turner, "The Emergence of 'Aussie Rules'," in Cashman and McKernan, eds., *Sport in History*, pp. 258-71; Chris Cunneen, "The Rugby War: The Early History of Rugby League in New South Wales, 1907-15," *Ibid.*, pp. 293-306. For a journalistic account of the varieties of football spinning off the original English games of soccer and rugby, see Nicholas Mason, *Football! The Story of All the World's Football Games* (London: Temple Smith, 1974).

61. K. S. Inglis, "Imperial Cricket: Test Matches between Australia and England, 1877-1900," in Cashman and McKernan, eds., *Sport in History*, pp. 148-79; Brian Stoddart, "Cricket's Imperial Crisis: The 1932-33 MCC Tour of Australia," *Ibid.*, pp. 124-47; W. F. Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 59 (December, 1973), 225-46; cf. E. W. Swanton, *Swanton in Australia with M.C.C., 1946-1975* (London: Fontana, 1976).

62. Lincoln Allison, "Association Football and the Urban Ethos," *Stanford Journal of International Studies*, 13 (Spring, 1978), reprinted in John D. Wirth and Robert L. Jones, eds., *Manchester and São Paulo: Problems of Rapid Urban Growth* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1978), pp. 203-228; John Arlott, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Sports and Games* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

63. W. F. Mandle, "The I.R.B. and the Beginnings of the Gaelic Athletic Association," *Irish Historical Studies*, 20 (September, 1977), 418-38, slightly revised as "Sport as Politics: The Gaelic Athletic Association 1884-1916," in Cashman and McKernan, eds., *Sport in History*, pp. 99-123; cf. Herman Smulders, "Sports and Politics: The Irish Scene, 1884-1921," *Review of Sport and Leisure*, 2:2 (1977), 116-29.

64. David Webster, *Scottish Highland Games* (Edinburgh: Reprographia, 1973); David B. Smith, *Curling:*

some brief explanations of the popularity of Rugby Union football in Wales.⁶⁵ One can assume, and hope, that the recent upsurge of Scottish and Welsh nationalism will result in some serious research into the Celtic sporting heritage.

The history of British women in sports, too, stands high on the agenda of work to be done. From the 1890s on, *Punch* is filled with cartoons of female cyclists, golfers, and tennis players. But beyond the commonplace observations that these activities provided respectable recreation, physical exercise, and escape from long dresses and chaperones for middle-class women,⁶⁶ we still know little about the extent of participation (especially outside the middle class), rationales and their critics, and the larger social significance of sporting women. For all her literary ambitions and political intensity, the young Vera Brittain enthusiastically took to the tennis court.⁶⁷ How common was her enthusiasm? Whence came even Virginia Wade? Why has Britain produced so few female Olympic track-and-field medalists? Numerous are the gaps in our knowledge of the British sportswoman.

No doubt a large part of that story lies embedded in the history of sports in schools other than the elite public (male) schools—the grammar schools whose riches are just now beginning to be uncovered.⁶⁸ At the opposite end of the educational spectrum, university sports are also a *terra incognita* at the moment, despite some scholarly papers delivered at sports history conference.⁶⁹ The competitive zeal, amateur attitudes, and public adoration of Cambridge athletes in the popular film *Chariots of Fire* invite historical explanations and analysis.

The Muscular Christian athlete in *Chariots of Fire* is a stock figure in both British and North American sports since the mid-nineteenth century. Yet no full, concentrated study of the origins and evolution of Muscular Christianity is available. Scholars have explored the Tom Brown prototype in literature and educational philosophies prior to 1857,⁷⁰ and the qualified meaning of

An Illustrated History (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981); Geoffrey Cousins, *Golf in Britain: A Social History from the Beginnings to the Present Day* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

65. Dunning and Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players*, pp. 223-28; David Smith, "People's Theatre—A Century of Welsh Rugby," *History Today*, 31 (March, 1981), 31-36.

66. See David Rubinstein, "Cycling in the 1890s," *Victorian Studies*, 21 (Autumn, 1977), 47-71. For popular histories of cycling, see John Woodforde, *The Story of the Bicycle* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), and Andrew Ritchie, *King of the Road: An Illustrated History of Cycling* (London: Wildwood House, 1975).

67. Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (New York: Seaview Books, 1978; originally published in 1933), pp. 94, 152, 478, 484. The lack of any serious history of the beginnings and development of lawn tennis is one of the most baffling gaps in the entire literature of British sport history. Only coffee-table "history" is available: Lance Tingay, *History of Lawn Tennis in Pictures* (London: Stacey, 1973); Gianni Clerici, *Tennis* (London: Octopus, 1976); Allison Danzig and Peter Schared, eds. *The Fireside Book of Tennis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972); and, Max Robertson, *Wimbledon 1877-1977* (London: Gresham, 1977).

68. J. A. Mangan, "Imitating their Betters and Dissociating from their Inferiors: Grammar Schools and the Games Ethic in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the History of Education Society*, 1982 (forthcoming).

69. William J. Baker, "University Sports in England, 1870-1914," a paper delivered at the Clemson University Symposium on Sport and Society, March, 1982; J. A. Mangan, "Non Est Vivere, Sed Valere Vita: Jesus College, Cambridge, in the Late-Victorian and Edwardian Eras," to be delivered at HISPA Conference, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in July, 1983.

70. Gerald Redmond, "The First Tom Brown's Schooldays: Origins and Evolution of 'Muscular Christianity' in Children's Literature 1762-1857," *Quest*, 30 (Spring, 1978), 4-18; C. J. Wright, "Before Tom Brown:

“manliness” for Charles Kingsley,”⁷¹ but only Bruce Haley comes anywhere close to giving a comprehensive assessment of the subject. A masterpiece of literary history, Haley’s *Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* links Victorian religion, philosophy, physiology, and sport. Haley is indispensable reading for any student trying to make sense of Victorian athleticism, but he pays scant attention to historical antecedents, class distinctions, the social matrix and the larger political and imperial implications of the Victorian obsession with health and bodily strength.⁷² The future historian of the Muscular Christian phenomenon will need the scope of a Gibbon, to include institutional as well as ideological expressions, twentieth-century developments as well as nineteenth-century origins; and an Anglo-American perspective that includes American and Canadian as well as English devotees to the cult.⁷³

The cynicism of a Gibbon might even be useful. John Henry Newman, confronted with a plethora of pietistic histories of Christianity, said more than he intended when he once suggested that “the chief, perhaps the only English writer who has any claim to be considered an ecclesiastical historian, is the unbeliever Gibbon.”⁷⁴ For the history of Muscular Christianity, too, we need an “unbeliever”: an irreverent critic who is willing to expose the dominant biases of gender, class, and race, not to mention the mindless rhetoric of much of the original Muscular Christian mentality. The temptation to debunk must be resisted, but probably only an “unbeliever” can analyze rather than worship at the altar, finally to give a full critical assessment of a movement that quickly spawned muscular moralists who were (and are), in fact, non-Christian. Like the Victorians Leslie Stephen and Edward Bowen, much of the Anglo-American sporting community has outgrown its Christianity, leaving us with only its moralistic muscularity.⁷⁵

Highly valuable for the American side of the story is a recent bevy of books on the sporting ethos in American literature,⁷⁶ which merely serves to underscore the lack of any similar body of information for British sports history. Perhaps Bruce Haley’s literary treatment of Victorian sports is a good omen for the future, wherein American scholars who are not bound to Oxford or Cambridge schools of criticism will pioneer in the study of sports in English

Education and the Sporting Ethos in the Early 19th Century,” *Journal of Educational, Administration and History*, (1977), 7-15.

71. Henry R. Harrington, “Charles Kingsley’s Fallen Athlete,” *Victorian Studies*, 21 (Autumn, 1977), 73-86; cf. Harrington’s Stanford University dissertation, “Muscular Christianity A Study of the Development of a Victorian Ideal” (1971); but see William J. Baker, “Charles Kingsley on the Crimean War: A Study in Chauvinism,” *Southern Humanities Reviews*, 4 (Summer, 1970), 247-56.

72. Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

73. See Gerald Redmond, “The Gospel in the Colony: ‘Muscular Christianity in Nineteenth-Century Canada.” *Proceedings of the IX International HISPA Congress* (Lisbon, 1981), pp. 259-74.

74. John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London, Longmans, (1878), p. 8.

75. See J. A. Mangan, “Philathlete Extraordinary A Portrait of the Victorian Moralist Edward Bowen,” *Journal of Sport History*, 9 (Winter, 1982), 23-40, especially pp. 32-34.

76. In addition to the several books on sports in American literature listed in William J. Baker, *Sports in the Western World* (Totowa, N. J.; Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), p. 354, see Michael Oriard, *Dreaming of Heroes: American Sports Fiction, 1868-1980* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982), and Christian K. Messenger, *Sport and the Spirit of Play in American Fiction. Hawthorne to Faulkner* (New York Columbia University Press, 1982).

literature. As the matter now stands, only a recent book by Patrick Howarth causes one to hesitate before suggesting that apparently the British literary establishment is too conservative a lot to attend seriously to the unconventional theme of sports.⁷⁷

Less apparent is the reason for no comprehensive history of the sporting press in Britain. What Tony Mason did briefly but perceptively for the late-Victorian and Edwardian football press⁷⁸ needs expansion in both subject and time—to the economic base, the entrepreneurial techniques, and the varied readership of the entire spectrum of the sporting press as it attended to games other than football; to the relation of the older sporting press such as the *Sporting Magazine* and *Bell's Life* to newer, vastly different papers such as the *Athletic News* (begun in 1875); and to the dramatic growth of sports coverage in provincial as well as metropolitan dailies during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Otherwise we are left with the nonsense that the British press at the turn of the twentieth century gives “the impression that cricket was the *only* game” because *The Times* was then “still reporting Football League games with only one line while cricket was given long and eloquent coverage.”⁷⁹ *The Times*, of course, was utterly unrepresentative even of the daily press in general, much less of the weekly sporting press that thrived in the Midlands. How long must we wait for clarification?

Lest we wring our hands over our deficiencies of knowledge, however, in summary we must applaud the massive amount of work done in British sports history during the past ten years. Many of the best books and articles derive from doctoral dissertations, raising our expectations that the academic community will expand still further into areas of geographical, thematic, and methodological significance. Although British literary scholars remain timidly on the sidelines, historians trained in economics, anthropology, and sociology romp up and down the field, promising more sophisticated assessments of Britain's sporting heritage than anyone could have imagined ten years ago. Soon, no doubt, the pre-industrial and post-Edwardian story will be documented more fully.

The experience of Peter Bailey, of the University of Manitoba, stands as one of the great symbols of the past decade. The writing of his *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*, he tells us, was “a protracted and mostly solitary endeavour” because he “had no readily available group of fellow social historians of the period to use as a sounding board” for his work.⁸⁰ Presumably his sense of loneliness stemmed from the unorthodox nature of his topic rather than from personal reclusive tendencies. How quickly the unorthodox has become acceptable; the unusual, commonplace. Today the historian of British sports and pastimes has scant reason for suffering the loneliness of the long-distance researcher.

77. Patrick Howarth, *Play Up and Play the Game: The Heroes of Popular Fiction* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973).

78. Mason, *Association Football and English Society*, pp. 187-95.

79. Allison, “Batsmen and Bowler,” p. 20. For a more valid perspective, see the variety of Edwardian sports popularly covered in Brian Dobbs, *Edwardians Play: Sport 1890-1914* (London: Pelham, 1973).

80. Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, p. ix.