

The Study of Medieval Sports and Pastimes: The NASSH Generation

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This paper organizes the contributions to the study of medieval sports and pastimes into three chronological areas: 1) Before B.N. (Before NASSH, the North American Society for Sport History), 2) Before NASSH, and 3) A.N. (The NASSH Generation), and lists and describes briefly some of the most important works on medieval sports history. In this historiographical paper, sports refers to the activities that took medieval people outside of their daily work routines and possibly provided them with entertainment or pleasure.

In the first chronological section of the paper, scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are highlighted, especially the Englishman Joseph Strutt and the Frenchman J.J. Jusserand. Charles

Homer Haskins' seminal essay "The Latin Literature of Sport" is the central part of the second part of the paper. Haskins and other medievalists during the period 1927-1950 are seen as the pioneers of medieval sports history.

The third part of the paper is devoted to the contributions made during the period of the existence of NASSH, 1974-1989. An especially interesting feature of this period was the work done on medieval sports studies by scholars in fields other than medieval history, particularly during the years 1960-1980. Indeed, the contributions made by these non-medievalists, many of whom were members of NASSH gave an impetus to the study of medieval sports at a time when few, medievalists were interested in studying sports and pastimes.

During the NASSH Generation, some medievalists have turned their attention to the study of sports and pastimes of the Middle Ages. Notable among this group are Juliet R.V. Barker, whose work on the English medieval tournament updated older studies from the time of the First World War, Nicholas Orme, who has done much to illuminate our understanding of swimming in the Middle Ages and whose research has given us a better look at the physical education of English medieval monarchs, Heiner Gillmeister, a Chaucerian scholar who has focused his attention on medieval ball games, J.M. Carter, who has sought information about medieval sports in artistic and legal evidence, and Joachim Ruehl, a scholar at the University of Cologne who has uncovered sports records in the tournaments of Tudor England. These historians and others, medievalists and those trained in other fields, have added significantly to our better understanding of medieval sports and pastimes.

Although scholars trained as medievalists have begun to enter the growing subdiscipline of medieval sports studies, the work of non-medievalists associated with NASSH provided the field with a continuity that was sorely needed. Their efforts have been a catalyst to a newly emerging field.