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***No Horses and Only One Fool:* The Haxey Hood, Its Histories, Its People, and Their Place**

For as long as the people of Haxey, a small village in the Isle of Axholme, Lincolnshire, can remember, January 6th has meant one thing: the Hood. The Haxey Hood is one of those rough loosely regulated, wide-ranging 'folk' games that flourished in pre-industrial, rural England but which largely faded away in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For reasons that have yet to be understood but which can be speculated upon the Haxey game managed to survive and today is a highlight of the year in this part of rural north Lincolnshire. Hundreds of people are drawn to the event from near and far: some play, others spectate, cajole. caution. commentate-but all participate.

Among those attracted to the Haxey Hood are scholars. particularly historians. folklorists. and anthropologists. These people have produced some written histories and accounts of the game though, given its tremendous potential for cultural analysis. the extent and depth of their work is surprisingly limited; and this paper is. in part. a preliminary attempt at a more serious and sustained scholarly examination of the Haxey Hood. The mass media-local, national, and even international-has also crafted representations of and commentaries on the game which, for the local media at least is a staple of mid-winter fare. And the local people themselves, particularly those most centrally involved in the Hood-the Lord, the Fool. the chief and lesser 'Boggins,' their families and forbears, and the game's sponsors-have written their own histories and continue to produce and reproduce the game itself, and its history. in the broadest sense of that word.

In this paper I examine the roles that all three groups-academics, the mass media, and the Haxey people themselves-play in the construction of this particular part of English sport. My central questions are: What is the relative weight that each set of producers' histories of the Hood carry? What are the varying emphases that these producers place upon different aspects of the game, most notably the relationships between people. and between people and place? And, ultimately, what are the connections among the three parties, and what do their connections to the game tell us about making, and more importantly, legitimating, history? I suspect that the people who have greatest 'right' to the Haxey Hood, in and about whose community it is played. and who are most immediately and centrally engaged in its production are those whose history is accorded the least respect, and that the dynamics of the cultural marketplace render the Haxey Hood. its people and their place, in the very moment and act of cultural production. objects for consumption. The major consumers are the mass media and academics, and I will argue that in return for their untrammelled access to and consumption of the Hood

they should relinquish some of the authority their accounts of the game enjoy, accord it to the people upon whose cultural work they depend, and acknowledge that dependence.

This paper, then, is an attempt at a self-reflective cultural analysis of the Haxey Hood, its people, their place, and past; an analysis which attempts to problematize the authority of the professional historian even as it constructs that authority.