

Grant Jarvie and John Burnett (eds.), *Sport, Scotland and the Scots*. Tuckwell Press, East Linton, 2000. 277pp with Index and Illustrations

Where did Don Bradman play his last innings of cricket in Great Britain? Where was the first golf club established? And which country was the first to make golf available to the general public? The answers to these and other questions that you might not even have thought to ask about a country best known to some for its wild football followers and men in kilts throwing hammers and trees are all here in this most readable collection of the histories of various sports in Scotland.

The obvious sports are here: a brief survey of football in Scotland by Alan Bairner. Grant Jarvie bringing us up to date on the Highland Games and how 'those who had been responsible for the destruction of aspects of Highland culture suddenly became the self-appointed guardians of selected traditions and heritage' (p. 133), a richly detailed history of golf by Olive Geddes and an affectionate appreciation of rugby by the journalist Allan Massie. Then there are the sports with a particular affiliation to Scotland: shinty, curling, bowls and golf. If Hugh Dan MacLennan cannot quite convince us that shinty is the national game of Scotland - and we can almost feel his pain at its failure not to do better in recent years - he certainly leaves us with a memorable account of the sport's role since its arrival in Scotland from Ireland at the beginning of the Christian era. So too Neil Tranter with his encyclopedic knowledge of sport at the grass roots, does the same for quoits. This game once claimed a special place in Scotland, among miners and other workers up until the first World War, and Tranter engages in a very interesting discussion as to why the game did not last the pace: the real wonder, however, is that such a simple game managed to reach the level of competitive and spectator interest - 5000 came to see a match in 1870 - that it did. Curling and bowls, somewhat similar games except that

one is played on ice, the other on lawn grass, are Scottish inventions. As such they are treated with historical detail and analysis that fully warrants their place in any Scottish Hall of Famous Games. Curling is now the national game of Canada, and it is a curious irony that it is the Scottish climate - dreich and miserable rather than bitter and cold - that made Canada and its host of Scottish immigrants, more receptive to the game. Bowls, despite being played in England for centuries even before Drake's famous defeat at the game that preceded his more famous victory over the Spanish Armada, was developed in Scotland, which framed the rules as we know them today, perfected the bowls and even exported the turf on which the game is played. The ancestry of golf has been challenged, and in the late fifteenth century Scotland was importing balls from the Netherlands by the "barrel". But it was in Scotland that the first golf club was established, at Leith, in 1744, the first municipal course was opened in Edinburgh in 1891, while Scottish women were reported to be playing the game in the 1810s and went on to found the St Andrews Ladies' Golf Club in 1867. A Scot, John Campbell, formed the first golf club in Australia, in Melbourne in 1864, and it was Scots who took the game to Canada in the 1850s. Only in Scotland, however, did golf remain the game of "people from all walks of life" that was claimed for it in the days before the Union of the Crowns.

Any collection of articles is bound to have its gaps, and in their introduction the editors are careful to try and deflect the fire of carping critics. In particular they spend a few paragraphs explaining the importance of boxing in Scotland and why it did not earn a guernsey in this collection. The absence of boxing, a sport followed with wild fanaticism for many years and in which Scotland has produced the odd world champion or challenger, is underlined by chapters on cricket, hockey and horse-racing, all very interesting in themselves, but none of which has done more than scratch the surface of the sporting body politic in Scotland. Athletics and swimming might also come into this category, but for Powderhall and Eric Liddell on the one hand, along with a few other hardy athletes, and the moving story of Nancy Riach, her coach David Crabb and the exploits of the Motherwell Amateur Swimming and Water Polo Club, and the later success of David Wilkie, on the other. These also happen to be particularly well written articles filled with fascinating information, Jan Thomson on athletics and Peter Bilsborough on swimming. Some would claim that sport dependent on non-human power is not really sport, but John Burnett and Alastair Dodds's article here fully justify the inclusion of the exploits of Scotland's car and motorcycle fanatics, although I would like to have seen more on the dirt-racing/speedway that was once so popular.

The various sports are presented with an easy style and most of them are based on a firm understanding of their historical development, from rules and champions to the refinement of the equipment used. But for reasons that are

never explained, there is no documentation whatsoever. Certainly it is a relief to be spared the in text square bracket documentation that is such a distraction in too many books, and some authors can be rather tedious in their use of footnotes, but the reader is entitled to some indication of the sources the authors base their work on. Most of the time we can rely on the accuracy and reputation of the writers, and the authors of the sources are usually identified in an indeterminate way: but how is one to know, for example, who Thormanby is (p164) - a historian? a contemporary journalist? - especially when there is no reference to this person in the Bibliography. So too there is reference to 'a recent study of the Stirling region' (p205), which some of us will guess is one of the four works by Neil Tranter included in the Bibliography, but any reader unfamiliar with the geography of Scotland or the work of Tranter will be left in the dark. There should at least have been Endnotes to each chapter or an annotated Bibliography at the end. The Bibliography itself is ample, but in view of the absence of footnotes or endnotes or even a discussion of sources, it stands somewhat naked at the end of the book. On a warmer note, the illustrations are excellent, but again undocumented. There is also an excellent chronology prepared by Richard Cox, although it is sad to see once again repeated the wrong date for the foundation of the Rangers Football Club: the club itself is stuck with 1873, but that is no excuse for historians encouraging the club in its flippant regard to historical accuracy - it was founded in 1872.

It was in 1994 that Grant Jarvie and Graham Walker brought out their edited book of articles on *Scottish Sport in the Making of the Nation: Ninety-minute Patriots?* Although like the Jarvie/Burnett book centred around the idea of what makes Scotland, the two books have a different approach and so complement each other well. It was in 1994, too, that Brian Stoddart and Wray Vamplew brought out a similar book of articles on Australian sport; the two make for interesting comparisons. At a time when there is an outpouring of books of collected articles, some of which are of doubtful value and many of which are of suspect scholarship or poor editing, it is a pleasure to recommend this most recent contribution to the history of sport in Scotland. Scotland still awaits a full history of its major sports or even a serious history of sport in general. This collection shows that the path has been well and truly cleared for some Scottish Stoddart, Cashman, Adair/Vamplew or Booth/Tatz to try and catch up on their colonial cousins.

ps Check p62 for the answer to the Bradman question.

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