CELTS AND THEIR GAMES AND PASTIMES

BY SEAN J. EGAN

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Preface

This book is the first comprehensive study of Celtic games and pastimes. It closely examines the Celtic psyche and culture and it lays the foundation for the work of future scholars. This is an avowedly historic book with extensive references. It gathers into one compilation the games and pastimes that are indigenous to all the Celtic nations.

This is an action filled book. The author has succeeded in inviting the reader to ride with him through time and space while he observes the Celtic way of life. The reader, in a vicarious way, experiences the simple farming life, the fierce battles, the artistic life, the lively music, the dancing, the games, the bonfires and the joie de vivre of the Celts. The reader is also exposed to the spiritual life of the Celts and to their philosophy of life. The idea of fair-play is omnipresent throughout the book. The reader is constantly experiencing and comparing new games with older ones as one travels through the different Celtic nations. The origins of many of our modern games are carefully examined. The intellectual and the peasant ride side by side observing, studying, analysing and experiencing the action filled life of the Celts. The author draws information from many sources, from archaeological findings, from the Greek and Roman classical writers, from folklore, from historians, from many modern writers, from field studies as well as from his own Celtic background.

The origin of many of the Celtic games and pastimes is steeped in history. The games are indelibly stamped with the culture, experience and psyche of its people. The author of this book has achieved the objective set out in the introduction where he states... "the goal of this book is to give the reader a glimpse of the Celts, their way of life, their philosophy of life, their character, their psyche, their skills, their pastimes and their games".

Pat Scott, M.A., Chairperson of Celtic Development Committee, University of Ottawa, 2001.

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Acknowledgement

Introduction

To the reader, I say, open up your imagination, mount your horse and let's ride back in time, thousands of years, to a place on the Indo-European border. Here we will meet a fascinating people roaming the plains. They are nomads. These people will eventually be called Celts. Let's follow these people westwards. As we follow them westwards, we will discover how they live, where they live, what they eat and what they do for excitement. We will eat like the Celts, we will fight like the Celts, and we will play and pray like the Celts. As we move westwards we will visit areas such as the Balkans, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia. We will settle down in these areas for hundreds of years. While there we will live off farming and trading. On the move again we will continue westwards to areas such as Greece, Switzerland, Italy, Germany and France. As we move into these areas we will have to fight in order to conquer these areas. Have no fear, not even of death. Death is just the beginning of a new life. We will conquer Rome in 390 BC. We will tell the Romans that "everything belongs to the brave." Even after conquering the Romans we will leave Rome after six months. We will attack Delphi in 279 BC but through a lot of bad luck we will be forced, by the Greeks, to retreat. In Asia-Minor, we come across the Apostle Paul who tries to convert us to Christianity. We turn westwards again and we follow a few groups of Celts who have already settled down in Spain and Portugal. Other Celtic groups have previously settled in Britain. We cross the English Channel and land in Britain around 55 BC. Shortly after we arrive in Britain, the Romans invade. We manage to keep them at bay for a while by our fierce resistance. Due to too much infighting amongst ourselves (the Celts), the Romans get the upper-hand. As time goes on things get worse. Continual attacks on us from the Romans, the Irish, the Picts and the Angles make life miserable for us. Finally we will move north to Scotland and west to Wales. Next we cross the Irish sea to Ireland. We meet other Celtic tribes who had arrived in Ireland at various dates. Eventually, we, the Celts, are forced to settle down in six distinctive areas in Western Europe: Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man, Wales, Brittany and Cornwall. In

these areas, as Celts, we make our last stand. We fight for our rights and for the freedom to speak our own tongue, to play our own music and games and to dance our own dances. We work hard to preserve our own principles and philosophy of life despite the invasion of Christianity. As we move into the second millennium we are still continuing to fight, in a constructive fashion, for the advancement of the Celtic way of life.

As we travel through space and time we play a variety of games. We find many ways to pass our leisure time. For many Celts, life is a game. Games and pastimes are an important part of our culture. For us they are symbols of joy and effort. Games are a celebration of life for us. Games stimulate courage, effort and aggression in us. The constructive and destructive energies of humans, as theorized by Sigmund Freud, are expressed in many of our games. They bring out the best and the worst in us. Games are also social events. When the Celts get together they play games. Pastimes help fill the vacuum of life and help us to cope with the daily stresses of life.

We have had a variety of games: ball games; stick games; water games; festivity games; funeral games; pre-war games; winter games; summer games; indoor games; outdoor games and board games to name but a few. We play to have fun, to pass the time, to express ourselves and to win. As Celts we love to play games, to compete and to show off our physical prowess and courage. We play ball games and stick games which are sometimes more like war games. However, most of these Celtic games have evolved over time, from warfare to imitative warfare, from destruction to harmlessness, from the courtly amusement to rustic pastimes and finally to a spectacle of scientific sport that sometimes resembles the primitive battle.

To the reader, I say, as we journey through time, take note of the personality, the character, the psyche, and the philosophy of life of the Celts. Examine what is important to them in life, how they relate to others, to the environment and to their gods. The goal of this book is to give the reader a glimpse of the Celts, their way of life, their philosophy of life, their character, their psyche, their skills, their pastimes and their games.

Chapter I

Who Were the Celts?

The name Keltoi (Celts) first appears in Greek texts dating back to 500 BC. The name referred to people living in areas on the Northern fringes of the Mediterranean world. The Greek word Keltoi means "Barbarian". These people spoke Celtic languages and referred to themselves as Celts (James, 1993). They are believed to have been an Indo-European people who expanded westward and southward (Ross, 1986).

The Celts were a group of related tribes, linked by language, religion, and culture, that gave rise to the first civilization north of the Alps. They emerged as a distinct people in the 8th century BC. This was about the time Homer was composing his Iliad and Odyssey, the Olympics were starting and legendary Romulus and Remus were founding Rome (Severy, 1977, p.585).

Evans (1986) states that it seems likely that the Celts emerged some time after the breakdown of the Agean civilization, c. 1200 BC, following which a distinctive Late Bronze Age culture developed in central Europe. This period is known in archaeological terms as the Urnfield period. This period was followed by the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures. The Celts fit into these periods around the 8th century BC. These Celtic communities were led by an immensely rich and powerful aristocracy, warring and marauding and developing and spreading a refined and distinctive culture of their own the length and breadth of Europe.

Szabo (1992) notes that between the 5th and 3rd century BC, the Celts began to migrate from Southern Germany and Switzerland into the Po valley in Italy and on to Rome. Those living in the Rhine valley moved into Gaul (France) while other Celtic groups moved into the Balkans and on to Greece, Turkey and Asia Minor. The peak of their expansion is believed to be between the fourth and third centuries BC. At that time Celts occupied most of Europe. The Celtic World reached its greatest

territorial extent in the third century BC, with the establishment of Galatian (Celtic) power in Asia Minor. By the end of the century, decline was under way, and by 100 BC, Celtic Italy had ceased to exist; the Celtiberians of Spain were virtually broken, and the Galatians of Turkey were about to receive fatal blows (James, 1993). In the fifth century BC the Celts were in Southern Germany, Switzerland, Italy and France.

Much of the early knowledge we have of the Celts comes to us from archaeological findings and from the Greek and Roman writers of the time. Raferty (1964) summarises the classical writers' views of the Celts: Hecateus of Miletus, writing in 500 BC mentions Narbonne as a Celtic town in modern day France. Herodotus writing in 450 BC notes that the Celts were living on the Upper Danube, near the Pyrenees and in Spain. In 400 BC Xenophen noted that the Celts were mercenary soldiers. Plato talked about the barbarian people who engage in drunkenness and Aristotle (330 BC) talks about the Celts who openly esteem homosexuality. He also talks about the Celtic bravery and their absolute lack of fear of any danger. Historians like Hieronymus of Cardia and Demetrios of Byzantium wrote about the Celts' attack on Greece, their retreat from Delphi and their advance into Asia Minor. They note that the Celts fought with blind fury and to the death. The Druids were first mentioned about 200 BC as barbarian philosophers. About 200 BC Polyius examines the Celtic way of life and states that the Celts slept in beds of straw and that they were a meat-eating people. He also mentions their pursuit of war and agriculture and the simple lifestyle. In connection with the battle of Telamon in 225 BC we read of the Celtic breeches and cloaks, necklaces and bracelets, vanity and bravado of warriors in fighting naked, their head-hunting, their use of trumpets, their reckless courage and self-sacrifice in battle and their mass suicide when defeated. They preferred death to slavery. Poseidonis, who lived in the first century BC, was an astute psychologist who gave us some insights into the Celtic ways. Three other writers Diodorus Siculus, Strabo and Caesar later used Poseidonis's writings. He described the Celtic food: a small number of loaves of bread, large amounts of meat, some fish, wine and corma (beer). He goes on to say that the Celts

love to fight and that they challenge the bravest to single combat. They have two-horse chariots. Physically, Poseidonis saw the Celts as terrifying in appearance with deep-sounding and harsh voices. They exaggerate and speak in riddles. They are given to bombastic self-dramatization but they are quick of mind.

The history of the Celts is complex and varied. The whole Celtic period as a political "unity" is believed to be about 2000 years from the beginning of the Celts as a distinct people to their eventual assimilation. Even after their assimilation, there were pockets of resistance. It is in these pockets of resistance that the Celts fought hard to keep their identity, their language, their philosophy, their music, dance and games. These areas of resistance were: Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, the Isle of Man and Ireland. How the Celts got to these areas and when they actually arrived in these areas are questions that historians, archaeologists and linguists continue to debate. (It is not the scope of this book to make any personal affirmations on these questions).

What we do believe, based on the current literature, is that the Celts came from the population of scattered hunting tribes that roamed Europe after the Ice age (Rankin, 1987). Based on archaeological findings in two different areas, one in Hallstatt (Hungary) and the other in La Tène (Switzerland), researchers have come up with two different eras in the Celtic civilization (Chadwick, 1991; James, 1993 & Szabo, 1992). The Hallstatt discovery was made in 1846 and the La Tène discovery was made in 1858. Artifacts found in the Hallstatt salt mine consisted of swords, daggers and vessels. These findings revealed a picture of the Celts as a farming people who traded with others, including the Greeks and the Romans. They indicated that they had mastered the use of iron. In the La Tène findings, the objects were mostly metal and were frequently embellished. The La Tène style art has been described as one of the greatest glories of prehistoric Europe (James 1993). This La Tène art totally contradicted the classical writer Polybius's statement "... their lives were very simple, and they had no knowledge whatsoever of any art or science" (Polybius, 2, 17, 8, on the Gauls of Northern Italy).

The main distinction between the two cultures is that the Hallstatt was the beginning of a drive towards civilization and La Tène was a time of luxury. The La Tène artifacts indicated the Celts were a sophisticated and gifted people. Celtic art, like all aspects of their culture, was centered around the natural world. Their early artwork defied accurate representations and was more abstract. It consisted of great variations of patterns and geometric shapes. At a later stage small creatures and man began to appear in their works. La Tène art was introduced to Britain by 300 BC, and by 200 BC to Ireland. Celtic art underwent a remarkable revival in post-Roman centuries, notably through the medium of the Irish church (James, 1993, p.105).

When did the Celts come to Britain and Ireland?

More recent archaeological findings in Co. Mayo indicate that there was a thriving farm community in that area of Ireland, as early as 3000 BC (Caulfield, 1992). One might ask, were these people Celts? Some experts say "definitely not" while others say "maybe yes".

The Britain that Caesar raided in 55 and 54 BC was somewhat similar to Gaul in many respects. It had tribal units and a dominant warrior aristocracy. The people were as sophisticated and as well dressed as the Gauls (James, 1993, p.48). The Book of Invasions gives accounts of waves of invaders to Ireland. However, a large invasion of Celts to Ireland and Britain in the Iron Age, is not substantiated by archaeological evidence (James, 1993, p.49). Hallstatt C swords reached Ireland, but late Hallstatt and early La Tène material is almost non-existent. La Tène metalwork appears by 250 BC in Ireland. Spear butts and seven scabbards have been found in Ireland. James (1993) states that by early centuries AD Ireland was fully a part of the Celtic world.

By the end of the second century AD, most of the Celtic lands, in England, were under the control of the Romans except for Scotland and Ireland. On the departure of the Romans from Britain the Celts entered into a Celtic revival. The Celts (Britons), after the Romans left, had to defend themselves on three fronts: from the Angles, Saxons and Jutes on the east, the Picts on the North and the Irish on the

West. Eventually the Saxons took over Britain. Ireland was still safe from advancing invaders except from one St.Patrick. He arrived in Ireland around 432 AD. His real conquest was the conversion of the people of Ireland to Christianity. The religious influence led to a diluting of Celtic power and tradition. For the next several hundred years Ireland would enjoy a relative state of peace and prosperity. This allowed the people to evolve in art, literature, learning and language. However, in Britain this time period was one of strife and destruction. A group of Britons moved across the sea to Armorica (Brittany) in the fifth century AD. They brought with them their language which was close to the developing Cornish (James, 1993, p.167). Wales evolved during this period of strife thanks to a strong resistance against British-speaking monarchs. Their superman was Arthur who was a legend in his own time. Arthur is associated with many victories.

In talking about the Celts we are talking about a people who travelled miles from the Indo-European borders to Western Europe. On the long road west they mingled with others, fought them, and conquered them or were conquered by them. The entire process created a situation where the Celts were influenced by others in many ways, in religion, in art, in fighting, in farming, in daily lifestyle, in games and in pastimes.

Religion

The Celts had about 400 names of local deities (Raferty, 1964). The Celts believed in an afterlife; the soul, they believed, passes on to an other body. The Irish believed in another world known as Tir na nOg (Land of eternal youth). The gods were supernatural. The most important figure in Celtic society was certainly the Druid (James, 1993). The literal translation of the word Druid is the man by the sacred oak tree who knew the truth. The oak was considered sacred in Celtic belief. The Druids possessed great control over the people and they retained most of the oral records of the people. Celtic worship, like their art and music, relied on sources from nature. Various creatures were used to represent gods or messages. For example, the raven was both the goddess of war and a messenger of doom. Celtic

worship was never organized into a single religion. When Christianity was introduced to the Celts, there was never great opposition to it. In fact the two beliefs for the most part, blended quite nicely together (Chadwick, 1991). The strengths of both beliefs were drawn upon to create a combined belief. Christianity supplied many needed aspects for the Celts, a sense of immortality and a well constructed hierarchical religious organization. Christ offered a private relationship to God. In fact Christ himself was greatly accepted as a moral warrior who suffered in the crucifixion and was both divine and human. The arrival of Christianity did however reduce the power of the Druids. The monks would now record the word of God as well as the epic cycles found in the Celtic belief. In Ireland, the saints' exploits could be more believable to the Celts since they endured human hardships and sacrifices rather than being glorified like the heroes of epic tales of greatness. The replacement of the Celtic heroes with saints led to a complete assimilation of the Celts (Raferty, 1964).

Fair Play (fir fer)

Even though the Celts were regarded by the Greeks and Romans, as barbarian, they were also known for their love of justice and equity (fir fer). Their system of law was sophisticated, complex and judiciously administered throughout their society by the Brehons (attorneys/judges). Their precepts were quite fair and sensible. If for instance, one Celt injured an other, he would be required to nurse the injured person back to health, house and feed him during his convalescence and even pay his doctor's fees. He would also have to do the injured person's work or hire someone to do it. Fir fer (fair play) was the single most powerful element in the early Irish honour code (O'Leary, 1987). It was a moral standard that was internalized and compelled compliance in both private and public combat. The idea of fair play has permeated all Celtic games and lifestyle even to this day. The ancient Celts had no written rules for their every day behavior, for their games or for combat. They were guided by the internalized moral code of fir fer (fair play). This concept was the basis of the Celtic code of honour.

Although valued this code of honour was not always adhered to. O'Leary (1987) writes that in early Irish literature, if a hero could win by a victory, preferably in public, he gained honour at the expense of his vanquished foe. In fact, all that mattered was triumph. How one played the game was irrelevant. Treachery was an acceptable means to the all-important end of fame. O'Leary (1987) notes that several of Cu Chulainn's advances in the heroic hierarchy were the direct result of treachery and deceit. On the other hand, Conall Cearnach binds one hand prior to fighting the one-handed Lugaid Mac Con Roi. In ancient literature, unequal fights were regularly condemned. In the Tain Bo Cuailgne, Cu Chulainn is repeatedly faced with superior numbers, but he killed them all because they had violated "fir fer" against him.

O'Leary (1987) goes on to say that single combat seemed to be an occasion for demonstrating "fir fer". There are several expressions in the Irish literature to express the idea of fair play such as "complann oerfir" (one man's fight), "comrac deise" (the combat of a pair), "ar galaib oerfir" (according to the deeds of a single man), "comlann comardae na fer" (an equal combat of men), comnert (equal strength) and "comrac fir re fer" (man to man combat). Equality among the players in shinty is expressed in the following phrase: "On the turf, as under the turf, all men are equal".

Assimilation

Throughout history the Celts have been influenced by many other cultures and philosophies of life. Ireland, due to its geographical location, was safe from the Roman invaders. The Celtic culture remained very strong on the island due to the lack of outside influences. In Wales the Welsh Language board has helped give Welsh its rightful place. It is estimated that 19% of the Welsh people can speak Welsh and that one in every three children can speak Welsh. Bilingual registration has also become legal in recent years in Wales.

Ireland is the only Celtic republic. Scotland, Wales, Brittany and the Isle of Man have achieved a certain autonomy in recent years. The only real conquest of the Irish was by Saint Patrick, who converted the people of Ireland to Christianity. The Celts readily adopted the new belief. This religious influence led to a diluting of Celtic

power and tradition. Ireland was free from invasion for many centuries and was ideal in its blend of Celtic and Christian influences. In the 800's the Vikings began raiding the coast of Ireland. They had total disrespect for all beliefs and proceeded to plunder and destroy all the churches and monasteries they found. Immense amounts of gold and silver artifacts and invaluable manuscripts were stolen. These invasions definitely changed the face of Ireland and Britain. The Vikings not only left destruction in their wake, but themselves as well. They settled down and built towns where they gained ground. In Scotland, the people began offering allegiance to the Vikings rather than to the Scottish king. In Ireland they established a shipping trade and made grave injections into the Celtic culture. In England they established substantial communities. The Celts did fight back and did defeat the Danes (Vikings) at the Battle of Clontarf in Dublin in 1014, but the Celtic culture by this time was beyond repair. By this date in Europe the Celts were almost non-existent. The final invading blow came from the Normans whose system of feudalism cut through any existing structures of Celtic society that were left. Through much inter-marriage, cultural decay and submission the Celts became part of the society and culture that conquered them. Their inability to join together as one powerful force never allowed them the chance to defend themselves against the invaders. Their most heralded characteristics of individuality and lack of organization and cooperation left them naked against the outside world.

Do the Celts still exist today? Unfortunately, due to invading armies and cultures the people known as the Celts have been all but assimilated (Delaney, 1986). Today, those people who are descended from the Celts live mainly on the Western Atlantic seaboard, in Ireland, in Brittany, in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, in Wales and more fragmentarily in Cornwall and on the Isle of Man. The fight to keep Celtic culture and traditions alive is a passionate one for those living in these areas. Although only pockets of these Celtic "fighters" exist, they do serve to keep the love of the Celtic civilization alive. In Ireland and Scotland some people still speak Gaelic, which is one of the main branches of the Celtic language. Road signs

in the Highlands of Scotland and in Ireland have the Gaelic name first and then the English translation. The other Celtic areas have not been as fortunate in retaining their Celtic tongues. Cornish is undergoing a minor revival whereas Manx has not been spoken for many years. Welsh and Breton are undergoing a dramatic revival in their language. Culturally, the artworks of the Celts are admired worldwide with interest and awe. The Book of Kells located in Trinity College Dublin, comprises the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John with beautiful Celtic designs on each of its pages. This attraction is visited by many tourists every year. The Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Breton traditional dances are still very much alive. Celtic music, art, song and sport are alive throughout the world. The interest in the Celts today is a nostalgic and a passionate embrace by those who can trace their roots back to the Celts or are merely fascinated by these people.

Celtic and Pre-Celtic Irish Dates

The following timeline outlines dates linked to the Celts, from their Indo-European origin to their final settlements in the west coast of Europe. Ireland and Scotland, according to archaeological findings, were inhabited for many years prior to the arrival of the Celts. The Celts were invaded by the Romans, the Franks, the Angles, the Saxons, the Vikings, the Normans and the English. In all these invasions there was intermarriage, intermingling and conquest. The purity of the Celts as Celts slowly dwindled. In the veins of the Celts the blood was no longer pure. The Celts had become a mixture of many races. Then, as now, many non-Celts learned the Celtic languages, songs, music and dances; they played Celtic games and read Celtic literature. On St.Patrick's day everyone is Irish and during the Highland Games thousands of people throughout Europe, N. America and Australia turn out to watch the athletes throw the stone and toss the caber. Eighty percent of those who go to see "Lord of the dance" or "River dance" are non-Celts. Many of today's modern games had their origin in the Celtic games. The spirit of the Celt is still very much alive throughout the world. Like Celtic blood, some of the so called Celtic games may not be one hundred percent pure. The Celts did adopt the games of others and in many cases made them their own. The following timeline will offer clues to the origins of many Celtic games.

Pre- and Post-Celtic Irish Dates

Middle Stone Age People Around 7500 BC	New Stone Age Around 3500 BC	Bronze Age Around 2000 BC	Iron Age Tailteann Game 600-250 BC
• First inhabitants to Ireland. Probably from Scotland. Hunters & fishermen o Mostly inhabited N. Ireland o Archaeological site found in Co. Derry, dated around 5935 BC confirming the existence of inhabitants in Ireland pre-Celtic arrival o A recent archaelogical find in Co Mayo (Céide fields) reveals a 5000 year old farming countryside	o New wave of settlers to Ireland. o Probably from Scotland. o Had new skills: farming - thus the beginning of civilized life in Ireland. • Archaeological finds discovered links to these people. • Funeral rituals were important for them. • Dolmens & graves indicate a spiritual element in their lives. • Skilled in building.	• Many metal objects of great beauty still survive from this time. • Irish bronze age metal work was the finest in Europe. o Gold was also popular. • Gold mining was an important economic activity.	• Ireland saw the beginning of a new era with the arrival of the Celts. • The Celts came in waves to Ireland and settled in different parts of the country. o The last major group to land in Ireland were the Gaels. They gradually took over the whole island. By 400 AD the Gael's conquest was total

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Important Names, Locations, and Dates in the Early History of the Celts

Pre-700 BC	700-500 BC	600-250 BC	450-250 BC	390 BC	82BC-150AD	Circa 54 BC
The Celts were Indo-European nomadic tribes.	Lived in Central Europe where Czech & Slovak Republics, Hungary, Austria & Switzerland and S. Germany are today.	Expansion into France Spain-Portugal Italy Greece Turkey Britain/ Ireland Scotland Wales	Celts were the most powerful people in Europe	Celts capture Rome	Romans gradually control Gaul & the Celts	Roman navy defeats the expert navy of the Veneti (Celts) who lived in area where Brittany now exists.

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Important Names, Locations & Dates in the Early History of the Celts

52 BC	43 AD	43 AD- Circa 410 AD	Circa 410 AD	Early Modern History 400-600 AD
• Battle of Alexia • Caesar defeats Celts under the leadership of Vercingetorix • About 70% of the British population were Celts in 55 BC	• Claudius invades Britain with intent to conquer. • He met strong and consistent opposition from the Britons (Celts)	• Romans continue to conquer as far north as southern Scotland. • Boudicca, a female Celtic warrior united and motivated the Celts to fight a fierce battle against the Romans but was defeated by the Romans in 60 AD	• Romans abandon Britain • Franks attack Gaul • Saxons appear in Britain • Rome was sacked by the Goths • The Britons (Celts) were attacked on 3 fronts by the Picts in the North, the Saxons in the South and the Irish in the West	• In Ireland two powerful tribes; the Eoghanacht (South) & the Ui Neill (North) controlled the country • About 150 smaller kingdoms existed • Truly Gaelic culture • Common language • Common legal system • Common currency (cattle & gold)

Important Names, Locations & Dates in the Early History of the Celts

Christian Era 432 AD	Circa 500 AD	500 AD - 700 AD	795-1014 AD
• St. Patrick arrives in Ireland • With a blending of old and new beliefs the Celts become Christians • Christianity spreads to Scotland with the help of St. Columba (an Irish monk and a descendant of and possible heir to the Ui Neill political dynasty) around 500 AD	• Irish invade Scotland • Establish the Dalriada Kingdom (with a section in both countries) • Brendan the navigator (an Irish monk) is believed to have crossed the Atlantic in a small boat and reached the new World before the Vikings or Christopher Columbus	• A Celtic army recaptured Brittany from the Franks. They came from Devon, Cornwall & Wales. • In Scotland the Irish control the Highlands. • The Anglians control the Low lands • St. Columba of Ireland settles in Scotland (Iona) • The Irish monasteries become centres of learning for all Europe	• Vikings attack Ireland and plunder many monasteries. They steal or destroy valuable books and art works. • 1014 Brian Boru defeats the Vikings near Dublin at the battle of Clontarf.

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Important Names, Locations & Dates in the Early History of the Celts

1066-1171	Anglo-Nórman Ireland 1169-1922	1846	1858	1884 and 1893
• 1066 Normans conquered most of Britain at the battle of Hastings • Anglo Norman invasion of Ireland - The Normans were descendants of the Vikings who had settled in Normandy in France • 1171 Henry II, Norman King conquered Ireland	• The Celts of Ireland fought a long and tedious battle against the Norman and the British armies • 1603 - the battle of Kinsale. The British win gives them control over the entire Island of Ireland • In Scotland & Wales Britain controls Celtic areas	Discovery of the Hallstatt artifacts in Hungary depicting the Celtic culture around 700-800 BC	Discovery of the "La Tene" artifacts indicating a sophisticated Celtic culture that existed around 500 BC	1884 Foundation of the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.) In Ireland 1893 Foundation of the Camanachd (Shinty) Association in Scotland

Chapter II

Psyche of the Celts

In my analysis of the Celts, I will look at many aspects of their daily life as it is painted by the classical writers of Rome and Greece. Archaeological findings will also be taken into consideration as will more modern literature on the Celts and their times. The reader must remember that when studying the Celts one must look at them in a longitudinal fashion, over time, going back to seven, eight and maybe nine hundred BC. These people lived in different places, under different circumstances, sometimes as dominators and sometimes being dominated. There were many common links among the early and later day Celts and between different Celtic groups at the time. Such links were, language, spirituality, philosophy and games. In this chapter I will examine certain traits of the Celts such as their physical make-up, their psyche, their philosophy of life, what motivated them and their typical and sometimes deviant behaviors. In the classical writings and in some of the modern writings on the Celts, there is a tendency to address only the males. I will examine both sexes.

Physical make-up

The Celts were, according to the Greeks and Romans, a fine looking people. They were tall, fair-skinned and fair haired like the Irish and the Scots. They were also small, dark, stocky and a little swarthy like the Welsh. The women vied with the men in size and comeliness. The hair of both sexes, was blond and long like a horse's mane. According to the Irish tales, the Celts had fair hair, oval faces and light skin. The Gauls (Celts) had very moist and white flesh and were tall in stature. According to the Tain Bo Cuailgne, the Celts had flowing hair, fair-yellow golden streaming manes. Many dyed their hair. The Celts were preoccupied with their hair. Men as well as women plaited their hair. They did not wear helmets in battle because they did not want to spoil or hide their elaborate hair-do. The ultimate beauty of the Celtic woman was dependent on her tresses and the color quality of her hair.

Physically, according to Diodorus Siculus, the Celts were terrifying in appearance, with deep sounding and very harsh voices. The Gallic women were equal to their husbands in stature and rivalled them in strength. In the following description of the men and women we find more details about their physical make-up. "The Gauls were tall, fair and ruddy, terrible for the fierceness of their eyes, fond of quarrelling, and with overbearing insolence. A whole band of foreigners would be unable to cope with one of them in a fight, and if he called in his wife, stronger than he by far and with flashing eyes when she swelled her neck and gnashed her teeth, and poising her huge white arms, began to rain blows mingled with kicks like shots discharged by the twisted cords of a catapult" (Loeb, 195: M.A., XV, 12-1). The Celts (in Gaul, in Britain and in Ireland) were tall, fair-skinned, fair or red hair, having blue eyes, powerful bodies, faces broad on top and narrow below. They took great pains to decorate themselves with ornaments, and to enhance by artificial means their already long and abundant hair.

The Celtic women of Ireland were known to dye their brows black with berry juice and color their cheeks with an herb called ruam. Personal hygiene was important to them and they used soap and water to wash. They also used oil and sweet herbs for anointing their bodies.

Diodorus saw the Celts as "terrifying... tall in stature... with rippling muscles... with bleach blond hair... they look like wood-demons... with thick hair like a horse's mane... some shave their cheeks but leave the moustache that covers the whole mouth... they wear brightly coloured and embroidered shirts with trousers called bracae and cloaks fastened at the shoulder with a broach... and they go naked into battle..."(Rankin, 1987).

According to Ammianus Marcellus, the Gauls (Celts) were "exceedingly careful of cleanliness and neatness". Pliny notes the niceties of their toilettes "a nice soap, a special preparation for the complexion used by women, and a special perfume"... It is true that the Celts valued above everything else beauty of person and courage in battle (O'Connor, 1981).

Philosophy of Life and Spirituality

The Celts lived very close to nature. They were noted for their hardiness (Aristotle). They hardened their children to the cold by allowing them very little clothing in face of the harsh climate (Eth.Nic, 133 G.a.) The Celts were spiritual people. When they were made aware of the Christian beliefs they accepted many of them, especially those relating to death and immortality. The Druids were their high-priests. They believed in earth gods, various woodland spirits and sun deities. The Celtic teaching consisted of such subjects as the stars and their motions; the nature and greatness of the earth; the power and majesty of the immortal gods and natural and moral philosophy. One of their most important beliefs was the immortality of the soul. Philosophically, the Celts differed from the Greeks, the Romans and the Germans. They had an individual approach to life, to religion and to art. They believed in god, in many gods, thousands of gods. Everything had a spirit; the trees, the wells, the rivers, the hills etc. They worshipped in woods without temples. Sacrifices were made to the gods, sometimes human sacrifices. It is believed that those who were sacrificed often volunteered to die. The Celts had no fear of death. They believed in a better life after death. The Celts also devoted much time praising the dead heroes. Strabo (Jones, 1916) describes some of the similarities that existed between the Celts and others such as the Thracians and the Phrygians: ceremonial use of drink in religious and quasi-religious group bonding; wakes; funeral games; rejoicing at death as the beginning of a better life and worship of rivers and wells. Poseidonius criticised the Celts for their boasting, drunkenness, human sacrifice, head-hunting and excessive faith in divination.

The Celts believed in quality rather than quantity in living. Strabo (Jones, 1916) notes they disregarded safety and longevity for quality living. They were "madly fond of war" and they loved single combat. Fighting was more a sport for them than a necessity.

A description of the military Celts in Wales is as follows:..."they were

powerful, savage, brave, unstable, obsessed with individual glory, and bent on the success of their own tribe or faction (Ross, 1970). Aristotle comments on the Celtic bravery; they had absolutely no fear of any danger. Hieronymus and Demetrios describe the Celts attack on Delphi... the Celts fought with blind fury and they fought to the death. Polyius talks about their reckless courage and self-sacrifice in battle, and their mass suicide when defeated. They preferred death to slavery.

The Celts had about 400 names for local deities. They worshipped Appolls, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva. Their three main gods were Esus, Taranis and Teutates. The Irish Celts had Lug the god of fertility. There were the animal gods, like the bull, Taruos (in Gaul), the mare (Epona) and the bear (Artos). The druids were the all powerful link between the gods and the people. They and only they offered the sacrifices (animal or human) to the gods.

They believed in the afterlife. The soul of the dead passes on to another body and continues on living. The Irish believed in an other world in "Tír na nOg" (land of eternal youth). For the Irish Celt the gods were supernatural and one was expected to be on their "right" side. The ancient Celtic Irish had four special feast days: Imbolg (1st February), Bealtaine (1st May), Lugnasa (1st August) and Samain (1st November). Lugnasa had as patron the god Lug. It was during the Lugnasa feast that games were played, laws were passed and disputes were settled.

Two other important concepts in the Celtic Irish spiritual life were the "gessa" and fasting. The "gessa" was a prohibition imposed on an individual by an other individual. If one violated one's "gessa" that person was punished, sometimes by death. Fasting was a means of redress or penance, (common also in India). If, for example, a man wronged you, you went to his house with witnesses and remained there fasting (on hunger strike) until you obtained redress. Such a practice was an important part of the Brehon laws of Ireland. There are many examples of this approach throughout history in Ireland. Terence McSweeney (the mayor of Cork) fasted for 80 days before dying under British rule and eleven I.R.A. prisoners starved themselves to death in Belfast prison in recent years. The Celts were devoted to

ideals rather than to material gains. They had an unsurmountable will to survive beyond all odds. St.Patrick once asked Caoilte what it was that maintained them so in their lives? He replied: "truth in our hearts, and strength in our arms, and fulfilment in our tongues" (Raftery, 1964).

The Celts feared only one thing and that was the gods. Alexander the Great asked the Celts what it was that they most feared, thinking they would say himself, but they replied they feared no one, unless it were that Heaven might fall on them.

At the gates of Rome, when asked why they wanted to attack Rome, the reply of the Celts was: "everything belongs to the brave".

Lifestyle of the Celts

The Celts of the past lived the rural life. They were country folk. The earlier Celts were nomads, whereas the later-day Celts were farmers. There seems to have been an elite group who did nothing but fight, feast, and play games. The others were support groups; they were the farmers and the hunters. Some were fishermen. There were also the artists. Diodorus Siculus reported that the Celts in conversation use few words and speak in riddles, for the most part hinting at things and leaving a great deal to be understood. They frequently exaggerate, with the aim of extolling themselves and diminishing the status of others. They are boasters and threateners, and given to bombastic self-dramatisation, and yet they are quick of mind and with good natural ability for learning.

Polyius, about 200 BC recorded that the Celts sleep on beds of straw, they are meat eaters, they love to fight and they pursue agriculture and the simple lifestyle. In connection with the battle of Telamon in 225 BC, we read of Celtic breeches, cloaks, necklaces and bracelets; we read of their vanity and bravado in fighting naked, their head-hunting, their use of trumpets, their reckless courage and self-sacrifice in battle.

Similar to certain Indians who drink a cup of their own urine daily, the Celts had a habit of using urine to bathe their body and wash their teeth, thinking that such a behavior healed the body. Athenaeus talks about Celtic food. Their food consists

of loaves of bread, large amounts of meat, fish, wine and corma (beer). They also ate wild-game, sea-weed, carrigeenan, and porridge.

The Celts were hunters.

Strabo (Jones, 1916) describes a wooden weapon resembling the "grosphus", which was thrown by hand and not by means of a strap, with a range greater than that of an arrow and which they use mostly for bird-hunting as well as in battle. The Celts hunted wild pigs, birds and deer. They hunted with dogs and they also used slings.

Music and Vocal Entertainment

The most widespread entertainment for the Celts was derived from story-telling and talking, accompanied by feasting and drinking. All levels of society among the Celts, rich and poor alike, enjoyed the "pub-style" entertainment of eating, drinking, talking and dancing to lively music around a blazing fire. The Celtic musical instruments of the past were the : harp, the lyre, the timpan, bagpipes and trumpets. Poets delivered eulogies and songs at the bonfire parties. At wakes, women performed an eerie mourning chant for the deceased.

Mode of Transport

Their mode of transport was either on foot, on horse-back or in horse-drawn chariots. They also used curraghs and sail boats.

Slavery

According to Xenophen, the Celts often worked as mercenary soldiers. Some did cross over to Alexandria in Egypt to fight with Alexander the Great of Greece.

Slavery was common among the Celts. The slaves had no rights. Usually they were spoils of battles. They were forced to fight for the Celts in their front lines. Often, they were traded for wine. In the La Tene archaeological finds slave chains and slave gang-chains were found. At one time, St.Patrick, as a boy, was a slave in Ireland. The Irish Brehon laws had special names for slaves: mug (male slave) and cumal (female slave). Strabo (Jones, 1916) comments on the fighting female slaves. Slaves were also used for labor on the Celtic farms.

The prohibition of female fighting slaves in the wars was credited to a Celtic leader by the name of Adomnan who acted at the request of his mother, after seeing some pitiful sights on the battle field of beheaded women and one beheaded woman with her child still sucking at the breast: "a stream of milk on one of its cheeks, and a stream of blood on the other" (Meyer, 1905:71).

Sexual Behaviors

Strabo (Jones, 1916) talks about the inhabitants of Ireland, in the period 200 BC..."they openly have intercourse, not only with other women (not their wives) but also with their mothers and their sisters...".

Aristotle, Poseidonius and Diodorus remark on the prevalence of homosexuality among Celtic men. Homosexuality was openly accepted between males. Athenaeus Deipnosophistae describes pedophelia among the Celts: "...and among the barbarian Celts also, though they have beautiful women, enjoy boys more, so that some of them often have two lovers to sleep with on their beds of animal skins". The Greek writers commented on the promiscuity of the Celts in sexual relations. Caesar and Cassius refer to communal marriage among Celts and the polyandry that was practised by the Britons and the Caledonians.

It is true that in old Irish law three classes of legitimate wife existed and the Welsh system recognized eight or nine categories of union (Rankin, 1987, p. 249). Prior to battle the Celts abstained from sex with their females.

Bestiality was also prevalent among the Celts. A ritual that was common in Ireland among the Celtic kings was having sex with a white mare. The leader, once chosen, had sex with the white mare in front of his subjects. The mare was subsequently killed and cooked and the king drank the soup while bathing in the same. This fertility ritual lasted in Ireland up to the twelvth century AD (Giraldus Cambrensis, 1881).

Women in Celtic Life

There seems to have been two distinct types of women among the Celts, those who were empowered (the leaders) and those who were totally disempowered (the

slaves). Despite the apparent equality among the Celtic women, Caesar notes that the men had power of life and death over their wives. According to Diodorus Siculus (5, 28), the women of the Gauls matched the men in courage. The Greeks admired the outstanding qualities of mind and spirit of the Celtic women. The Classical writers also noted that some of the women of the Celtic people were quite independent. There were many powerful female Celtic leaders such as Queen Tailte, Boudicca & Mebh.

Hospitality

The Celts invited strangers to their feasts and did not inquire until after the meal who they are and of what things they stand in need (Diodorus Siculus 5, 28).

Arts

In art the Celts were masters. They were masters in metal work. They were free spirited in their art as they were in their fighting. Their art was abstract and decorative. They did their art for the sake of art. The La Tène archaeological findings exposed their art and philosophy of life. It expressed the belief: "I am a free individual... I am not locked into any rules, structures or dogmas. I do my own thing".

Dwellings

The Celts lived in villages and in houses made of wood and thatch. They had a main building called the roundhouse (like a community or parish hall) for feasting. The Celts had many passions, among them fighting, eating and drinking. The eating and drinking took place in the roundhouse. At the feast a select portion of meat was given to the hero. Sometimes, the hero was challenged by another Celt. A duel followed. The winner got the trophy (select portion of meat). Sometimes the duelling parties fought to the death.

Early Pastimes and Games of the Celts

The Celts loved to play games. The following pages will describe a variety of ball games, stick and ball games, strength contests and board games that the Celts participated in. Those who played games in the early years, were normally from the

upper-class in Celtic society. At a later stage in history, games were also played by the lower-classes.

If we examine the lifestyle of the ancient Celts, we find very few of our everyday pastimes played by these nomads. This may be due to the lack of written information on the early Celts. Pastimes and games suggest that people have free-time. Most of the early Celts were living a survival lifestyles. They frequently engaged in battle. It is logical to think that much of their time was spent in training for battle. War was a show for the Celts. It was their moment in time. Before battles, they would boast about their strength, agility and courage. They would taunt the enemy and they would verbally degrade them (similar to many of our professional sports today). Their battle cries were fierce and frightening. Before battle, it is believed they took stimulants in order to psyche themselves up for battle. The loud war horns and (later) bagpipes were used in a ritual preparation for battle. The purpose of the pre-battle (pre-game) ritual was to strike fear into the opponents. These types of behaviors are similar to the behaviors of modern day athletes. Stimulants are still frequently used. Sport psychologists are hired to prepare the athletes for "battle". The Celts were superbly fit for battle. It was against the law to be fat or overweight. This law would suggest that the Celts trained in order to keep in shape. In battle they did not play by the rules of the Romans and the Greeks. For the Celts war was more like a competitive game. The Celts wanted to show others, including their colleagues in their own narcissistic way, how strong, how courageous, and what fierce fighters they were. They fought as individuals. They had very little team spirit. They had no fear. Death was for them the culmination of a great life and the will of the gods.

Winning trophies was not the important thing for the Celts. The glory and the joy was in the winning and in convincing themselves and others of their individual ability. For example, the Celts conquered, sacked, and pillaged Rome for six months. Rome was for them a huge trophy but they turned around six months later, (much to the surprise of the Romans) they left. Their philosophy of life is expressed in this

act. They were not interested in becoming rich but in becoming famous. Their attitude was somewhat like this: "well, we have won this trophy (Rome)let's move on to the next game and win another trophy".

In the early history of the Celts, the only semblance of games and pastimes that we find is hunting, fishing, drinking and fighting. Fighting for them was a sport. Strabo (Jones, 1916) records that the Celtiberians danced in chorus in front of the doors of their houses. The archaeological findings reveal the artistic skills of the Celts. The metalsmiths produced wonderful art work in gold, silver and bronze. The Celts were great cavalry and infantry fighters. It is logical to assume that the soldiers passed many hours of the day perfecting their fighting skills. We must also remember that leisure time is a relatively new concept and unknown to many until the nineteenth century. Only among the rich were games and pastimes a common behavior. The poor were too busy earning a survival existence. Many of the early Celts were professional soldiers, even as far back as the fourth century BC. Alexander the Great hired Celtic soldiers to fight for him in places as far south as Egypt. The Celts hunted. The hunt consisted of the use of bows and arrows, slings and trained dogs. They hunted birds, wild boars, deer, hare, wolves and foxes. They were great sailors. Aviens (Jones, 1916) in his poem speaks about a people and their boats:

"These people do not build their boats with pine wood nor do they use any other kind of wood; instead they do something quite astonishing; they make their ships out of skins joined together; and rush the vast salt sea on leather hides."

This reference is to curraghs, still used in this century by people in the west coast of Ireland, in particular, in Co.Clare, in Connemara and in the Aran Islands. The Veneti of Brittany were also great sailors. They tried to prevent Caesar from sailing to Britain. Using sail boats they attacked Caesar's navy. They were no match for the Roman boats. The Veneti boats were made of oak. Their sails were made of leather and were hoisted by chains (instead of ropes). Their boats were made with broad bottoms, high stern, and high bows. The joints of the planks were not brought

together thus leaving gaps which they stuffed with sea-weed to keep the oak from drying out too much while in dry dock.

Fighting

The Celts were better as cavalry men than as infantry men. The best cavalry force of the Romans (at one time) came from the Celts (mercenaries). It is conceivable that the Celtic cavalry had mock battles and real races on horseback. In the early lifestyle of the Celts we do find activities which were conceivably a medium of sport and pastimes. Such activities were; fishing, hunting, fighting, horseback riding, sailing, boating and sculpting. If the Tailteann games (see next page) are a reflection of the early Celtic pastimes and competitive sports, there was no lack of activities. They had such events as: hunting, athletics, gymnastics, equestrian contests, quoit throwing, spear throwing, wrestling, boxing, swimming, chariot races, bow and arrow exhibitions, etc (Aonach Tailteann, 1924).

In the classics we also read that some of the cultural traits of the Celts resembled those of the Thracians, the Phrygians and, the Scythians. These traits were; ceremonial use of drink, raiding habits, wakes, funeral games and rejoicing at death as the inception of a better afterlife. The funeral games mentioned in the classics were without a doubt similar to the Tailteann games. The first games of the Celts were perhaps fighting and wrestling. Fighting took on many shapes and forms. The Celts fought with their hands (boxing or wrestling) with swords, spears, slings and catapults. Some fighting skills were transferable to hurling, a game that was played for hundreds of years by the Celts. The swinging and blocking and feints used in sword fighting could also be used in hurling and vice versa. The same muscles of the upper-body are involved in both. The footwork utilized in attack and defence is also quite similar.

Spear throwing, bow and arrow shooting, sling shooting, and boating were other activities engaged in by the Celts. They had the curragh style boat which was propelled with oars and the Veneti style boat which was propelled using sails and possibly oars.

Tailteann Games

Reference to the Tailteann games is made in many old Irish history books (O'Donovan, 1851; Keating, 1857; and Murphy, 1894). The games were associated with the death and burial of the renowned Queen Tailte, wife of King Eocaidh Mac Erc, the last Firbolg monarch of Ireland. He was killed at the battle of Moytura in 1896 BC (O'Donavan, 1851). According to legend, the battle was preceded by a fierce hurling match between two teams of 27 aside from the opposing forces; the casualties were buried under a huge cairn (Eriu, 1915). Richardson (1974) dates the Tailteann games as the "year of the world 3370", the meaning of which is in doubt. According to Richardson, a U.S. historian of athletics, the true date is 1829 BC which would make the games the oldest on record. This would mean that these games were celebrated more than 2,000 years before Romulus founded Rome and 700 years before the siege of Troy. The Olympic games were not celebrated in ancient Greece until more than 400 years after King Lughaidh Lamhfhada summoned "All the men of Eirinn" to celebrate the Tailteann games on the plains of royal Meath (Keating, 1857).

These games were known as funeral games and were part of a bigger gathering known as the Aonach Tailteann. The function of the games was first, to do honour to the illustrious dead; secondly to promote laws and thirdly to entertain the people. In addition to athletic contests, there were competitions for craftsmen, jewellers, goldsmiths, weavers, dyers, spinners and makers of shields and implements of war. It was also a time for trading and commercial transactions (Nally, 1922). The games consisted of athletic, gymnastic and equestrian contests of various kinds, and included running, long-jumping, high-jumping, hurling, quoit throwing, spear casting, spear or pole vaulting, sword and shield contests, wrestling, boxing, swimming, horse racing, chariot racing, sling contests and bow and arrow exhibitions. In addition, there were literary, musical, oratorical and story-telling competitions; singing and dancing competitions (MacAuliffe, 1928; Murphy, 1894).

There were prescribed by-laws for the games (Nally, 1922). Similar by-laws were instituted and enforced at Olympia (Drees, 1968). All feuds, fights, quarrels and such disturbances were strictly forbidden. It was a fair without sin, fraud, insult, theft, contention or rude hostility (Metrical Dindseanchas, 1924). A universal truce was proclaimed in the High King's name, and "woe betide the man who broke it" (O'Donavan, 1851). Women were not excluded from the assembly (as was the case at Olympia). Special features were provided to attract women to the gathering, such as a match-making mart and marriage ceremony. A particular enclosure called the Cot or Cotha was provided for the exclusive use of women.

In Ireland, learning and physical exercise went hand-in-hand from times long beyond chronological history (Nally, 1924). Each province, in Ireland, had its own battalion of selected warriors. They were all tested champions. Each one had to pass fourteen tests in order to be accepted into the Fianna Eireann. Fionn Mac Cool often visited the Tailteann Games in order to recruit warriors for his army. They first had to pass the fourteen tests. It was no disgrace to fail, as few athletes could reach such a high standard of athletic proficiency. The fourteen tests were Fionn's requirements. Prior to Fionn's arrival as commander of the Fianna there was only one requirement. It was as follows: the candidate had to defend himself, in real earnest, from the simultaneous attack of no less than nine warriors, the aspirant being armed with spears and a sword in addition to his heavy shield. Fionn lived around 300 AD. He was one of the greatest athletic figures of Irish history (MacManus, 1922). The fourteen tests were as follows:

Fourteen Tests for entrance into the Fianna Eireann:

1st No officer of the Fianna shall accept any fortune with his wife, but shall select her for her moral conduct and accomplishments.

2nd No member of the legion shall, under any circumstances, insult a woman.

3rd No member shall refuse any person for trinkets or food.

4th No member shall turn his back on or fly from nine champions.

5th No man shall be admitted into the Fianna... until his father and his mother, his tribe and his relatives, give security that they shall not avenge his death. So that he shall not expect anyone to avenge him but himself.

6th No man shall be admitted until he has accomplished and has mastered "The Twelve Books of Poetry".

7th No man shall be admitted until, standing knee-deep in a wide pit, he has shown that he can protect himself, without receiving a scratch, with his shield and a hazel stake no
longer than a man's arm, from the attack of nine warriors, simultaneously hurling their nine spears at him, from a distance of nine ridges.

8th No man shall be admitted until, his hair being plaited, he has been chased, at a starting distance of one intervening tree, through several forests with a host of Fianna in pursuit and with full intent to wound him, and he has proved himself competent to escape capture or a wound.

9th No man shall be received in whose hands shall tremble a champion's arms.

10th No man shall be admitted if a single braid of his hair be loosened out of its plait in his flight through a tangled wood.

11th No man shall be admitted whose foot shall break a single withered branch in his flight through a forest.

12th No man shall be admitted unless he is able to jump over a branch of a tree as high as his forehead, and step under one as low as his knee, without delay in his speed, to show his agility.

13th   No man shall be admitted unless he can pluck a protruding thorn from his heel with his hand without hindrance to his speed.

14th   No man shall be admitted until he has first sworn fidelity to the Commander of the Fianna.

The Welsh had similar requirements for the education of a gentleman. The accomplishment of a gentleman came to be summed up in the traditional "twenty-four feats of skill" (see p. 94).

The last celebration of the Tailteann games took place in 1169 AD (MacManus, 1922; MacAuliffe, 1928). Joyce (MacManus, 1922) sums up the spirit of the games in the following phrase: "...these beautiful days of jubilee provided for a highly sociable and gregarious, but clannish and quick-tempered people, who equally loved sporting and battling, the matching of power in games, civil or warlike". It was almost 800 years later that the Tailteann games were once again celebrated in Dublin in August 1924. These games were spread over a 16-day period. They celebrated not only the most popular pastimes but also literature, sculpture, music, several forms of aquatic and equine sport, chess, dancing, golf, tennis, billiards and even air racing (de Burca, 1980). The second Tailteann games were played in Dublin in 1928. Some American teams participated. The third and last modern Tailteann games were held in 1932. A south African hurling team participated in these games. A youth version of the games was revived in 1963 (McKernan 1981). The Tailteann games preceded the arrival of the Celts to Ireland. In reality, if the dates are correct, the Tailteann games were in vogue long before the arrival of the Celts. It was however, the Celts who kept these games alive until their demise in 1169 AD. It was also the Celts who kept the games of hurling, Gaelic football and handball alive in Ireland up to 1884, when they were revived by the foundation of the G.A.A.

Chapter III

Celtic Games

The Celtic games we are about to examine are divided into six major groups and a seventh complimentary group made up of Basque games. (We include the Basque games because of their close resemblance to the Celtic games). These are the games of Cornwall, Brittany, Ireland, Isle of Man, Scotland and Wales. Some of these games are no longer played, some are flourishing throughout the world and some are played just locally. Celtic games are precursors of many modern Olympic games. Prior to the organization of the Olympic games, the best known organized games were the Tailteann games of Ireland. These were played as far back as 1829 BC (Richardson, 1974). Celtic games were divided into various categories such as stick games (hurling, shinty, bando, and pirli), ball games (football, handball and la soule); strength games (putting the stone, sheaf toss, tug o' war, l'arraché du sac, and les jeux de batons); skill games (wrestling, archery, road bowls, kayles, le jeu des boules, and le jeu de galoche) and novelty games (climbing the greasy pole, la décapitation du coq and the stone lift). There were also Celtic activities in which horses were used, such as chariot races, horse races and Welsh Cnapan. There were animal games such as; bull-baiting, dog-fighting and cock-fighting. Some of the games were played only by children and some activities were played predominantly by men, especially the strength activities. In modern times, with more equity in our society there is "virtually" no sex discrimination in participation in Celtic games.

As to the authenticity of the Celtic games, one has to rely on existing information of experts in the field of games and on historical facts. In some cases the Celts absorbed the games of the areas they invaded. This may be the situation in Ireland where well organized competitions in games were held prior to the arrival of the Celts.

Classifying a group of people or a game as truly Celtic is difficult to do. The Celts were and are a collection of many tribes and their games have had many outside

influences. The following information gives us a brief insight into the origin and spread of Celtic games throughout the world. Prior to examining the structure of each game, we will examine the origin, evolution and spread of the Celtic games. Each Celtic area has had its own specific style of games.

(In April 2001, the European Traditional Sports and Games Association was created. The Federation of Indigenous Scottish Sports and Games was created in May 2001).

Games of Scotland

The Highland games, sometimes referred to as the Highland Gatherings, date back to 1080 AD (Solberg, 1974). King Malcom III organized a contest at Braemar Castle to find "a man fleet of foot and of good stamina to convey the royal dispatches safely to Edinburgh". The race was run uphill to the summit of Craig Choinnich., and so began the Highland games. This event lasted until 1380, when the Black Death emptied Braemar of its population. The games were later revived, only to be banned after the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charles in 1746.

The ancient Highland gatherings consisted of dancing, piping and athletic events (Webster, 1973). Much pomp and ritual were attached to the games. Officials were often Druids, so that a solemnity and auspicious sanction prevailed in the early contests (Fales, 1982). Competitors marched through the arena to the sound of music. For many the Scottish Games begin with marshalled pipe bands... and end with the tossing of a long wooden pole called a caber (Fales, 1982). According to Webster (1973) the first event of the program was a game of shinty. Twenty-four strapping warriors with carved sticks took to the field and began to chase a horse hair ball. They were divided into two teams and were intent on beating the ball over the line on their opponents part of the field. This was followed by a chariot race. The ground was divided into sections, while the wrestlers and jumpers competed at one side of the arena, hammer throwers and stone putters threw in another section. Archery and sling shooting were also part of the games. The old folk were not forgotten and for them, harpists played, sang and recited stories of days gone by (Webster, 1973). Legend has it that the clan chiefs would hold competitions to pick the strongest male bodyguards and the fastest couriers, thus giving the games a military function.

The modern games were revived in 1832, with five heavy events and a prize of five pounds for the winner of each event (Webster, 1973). In 1865, the Prince of Wales visited Braemar. The events contested were "tossing the caber, the hill race, throwing the hammer, putting the stone, sword dancing, bagpipe music, translating

Gaelic, flat racing, the high leaps, the long jump, the sack race, and the hurdle race" (Powell, 1970). The athletic events of the modern games often consisted of heavy, light and novelty competitions. The heavy events were: putting the stone for distance; weight throw for distance (12.7kg); weight throw for distance (25.4kg); hammer throw for distance; weight toss for height, over a bar (25.4kg); sheaf toss for height, over a bar; caber toss for accuracy (no standard size). The light events consisted of running and jumping contests, whereas the novelty items changed from place to place and from year to year. Some of the common novelty events were tug o'war, pillow fights, lifting heavy stones and climbing greasy poles.

Emigration was responsible for the spread of the games to other countries, in particular the U.S.A. and Canada (Redmond, 1971). In Scotland there are 78 games yearly and there is an upsurge of the games in Japan, Hawaii, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Greece, Sweden's Isle of Gotland, Iceland and of course the U.S.A. and Canada (Fales, 1982).

Marxville Highland Games of Canada

In Ontario, the Highlanders settled in Middlesex, Bruce and in particular Glengarry Counties. Glengarry county takes its name from a famous glen in Invernesshire, Scotland. The first settlers were mainly Scottish Highlanders. Some arrived in 1784, after the American revolutionary war, while others arrived later. The 1852 census indicated the population of Glengarry county to be over 10,000 (with 3,228 McDonells and McDonalds and 30 representatives of 30 other clans). War, greedy landlords and famine forced many to leave Scotland and settle in Canada between 1746-1846. Maxville is a small town of about 800 people in Glengarry county surrounded by rich farm land, some 60 km east of Ottawa on the way to Montreal, Quebec, a village formally incorporated in 1891. Today, the people of Maxville are mostly of Irish, French and Scottish ancestry. The name "Maxville" owes its origin to the many inhabitants whose name started with "Mac" or "Mc" (MacDougalls, MacEwens, MacRaes, MacGregors, MacIntoshs, etc.). It was initially known as "Macksville" but later became "Maxville".

The early settlers brought with them religion, nationalism, music, song, dance and athletic competitions. In 1947, the Maxville games were organized by two local people, Peter McInnes and Donald Gamble. The first games were both a pleasant surprise and an organizational headache. The town of Maxville had a population of only 800; the grandstand could hold only 750 people but the avid spectators peaked at about 20,000. There was a shortage of food, parking space, sitting space, garbage containers and toilet facilities. Eight bands competed that first year; athletes from Montreal and Toronto competed in track and field, caber toss, tug o'war etc. As time went on these games got bigger and better. The largest crowd was 30,000 in 1973. There were over forty pipe bands competing. As for the spectators who came from far and wide, all were "Scottish for the day". In 1997, the 50th anniversary of the Maxville games, a special stamp was issued by Canada Post to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Maxville games. At these special games, there were 25,000 people in attendance. There were 60 pipe bands, 1,400 pipers and 220 dancers (Pilon, 1997).

Close to Maxville, in the home town of Dr. James Naismith (founder of basketball) Almonte has an annual Highland games, as do many other towns throughout Canada and the U.S.A.

According to Webster (1973) the Highland games have been incorporated into international athletics. Redmond (1971) notes that the Scottish pastimes were a significant influence in the development of American track & field. The hammer throw, the pole-vault and shot-putting are Caledonian in origin.

Putting the Stone

Stone putting was the most popular informal activity of an athletic type practised in the farmlands and villages of Scotland. The only equipment that was necessary was easily obtained without any cost. The activity could also be played on the roughest ground. The best stones were actually never touched by tools, but came from river beds where the action of the water over the years had worn the stones to the shape and texture required for putting. The land of the highlands lends to the belief that during the cultivation of fields the clearing of the stones could have developed into a contest.

Participants threw the stone much like the event of shot-putt today although the technique has varied over the years. Today's participants use an iron ball whereas in earlier times a stone of equal weight was used. Competitors approached the trig/marker using a similar technique to modern shot-putt. A competitor placed one's weight on the right foot while one supported the putt with the fingers of one's right hand. One rested the stone against one's neck. The competitor then hopped on the right foot towards the mark and stepped forward with the left as the stone is released. One must abide by the following rules:

1. Each participant is allowed three attempts.

2. The best distance achieved from the three attempts is judged.

3. Each athlete is allowed a 7.5 foot (2.28 m) approach.

4. If a competitor crosses the trig/marker the throw is invalid and is counted as an attempt.

The objective of the activity was to putt the stone or iron ball the greatest distance possible. Strength, power, agility and balance were important skills in putting the stone. The only material needed was an iron ball or rounded stone (16 lbs/7.3 kg)

Throwing the Hammer

Hammer-throwing was actually derived from throwing a long shafted hammer that was not made for sport but for work. It would have provided a much needed diversion from mundane chores. The competitions were banned by King Edward II. This ban didn't last long. The ban was forgotten and throwing the hammer became very popular again. Throwers developed a style of turning the body to gain more momentum and thus speed when the hammer was released. However, this style was soon banned due to the danger to spectators.

This event is thought to have evolved into the modern version of the hammer throw which requires the same technique. Competitors grasp the handle with both hands. The participant approaches the trig/marker by turning and pivoting on one foot. The implement is then released at optimum speed. The following rules are in place:

1. Each participant is allowed three attempts.
2. The best distance achieved from the three attempts is judged.
3. Each athlete is allowed a 7.5 ft (2.28 m) approach.
4. If a competitor crosses the trig/marker the throw is invalid and is counted as an attempt.
5. The distance is measured from the trig/marker to where the weight has landed and dented the ground (measured to the inside edge of the dent).
6. Throwers may improve their grip by using a sticky substance (Venice turpentine).

The main goal is to throw the hammer the greatest distance possible.

Strength, power, agility and balance are important skills for this activity.

One needs a hammer (7.27-10kg) with a shaft of wood varying in length (100-105 cm) and in diameter (3.8-6.3 cm).

Throwing the Weight (for Distance)

When this event was first introduced to the games, a commercial block weight was used. In the beginning, no foot movements were allowed. Then in the latter half of the 19th century a half turn was introduced in order to get a better swing; a short chain was added to the handle of the block. Later a complete turn was allowed and eventually the rules allowed a run or turn as long as it did not exceed 9 feet (2.74 m).

In early times competitors threw block weights with a ring attached, from a standing position. This event progressed with a short chain being added to the ring and weight. A half turn was incorporated in the delivery and eventually a full turn was permitted before releasing the weight. The following rules are in place:

1. Each participant is allowed three attempts.
2. The best distance achieved from the three attempts is judged.
3. Each participant is allowed a turn no more than nine feet (2.74 m) in diameter.
4. If a competitor crosses the trig/marker the throw is invalid and is counted as an attempt.
5. The distance is measured from the trig/marker to where the weight has landed and dented the ground (measured to the inside edge of the dent).
6. Throwers may improve their grip by using a sticky substance (Venice turpentine).

The main goal is to throw the weight the greatest distance possible. Strength, power, agility and balance are the important skills needed. A block of 28 lbs (12.7kg) or 56 lbs (25.5kg)) with a chain and a ring is needed for this activity.

Throwing the Weight (for Height)

The athlete picks up the block and with a well timed effort the weight is heaved into the air over a bar and comes down to the ground, usually just missing the thrower. This event was a great crowd pleaser because of the apparent nonchalance

of athletes about their performance.

From a standing position the competitor attempts to throw the weight over a bar. The competitor uses one hand to throw the weight and starts with the weight between the legs.

The following rules are in place:

1.   Each participant is allowed three attempts.

2.   The greatest height achieved from the three attempts is judged.

3.   A bar similar to that used by pole vaulters is used to measure the height of the throws.

4.   If a competitor knocks the bar the throw is invalid and is counted as an attempt.

The goal is to throw the weight over the bar at the greatest height. Strength, power, agility and balance are the qualities needed to excell in this activity.

Tossing the Caber

The caber toss is one of the most spectacular events at the Highland gatherings. It was a part of the very earliest Highland Games. It is believed that this competition originated with woodsmen trying to cast their logs into the deepest parts of the river and in some cases right over the water. The event is recorded as far back as the 16th century. Tossing the caber may have been developed by: (1) woodsmen during their leisure; (2) the army using this technique to allow the movement of troops over streams or, (3) by people building log cabins. The idea is not to throw the caber as far as possible but to toss it as straight as possible. This event was also played in other countries including Sweden, Italy, France and Germany. In warfare, in the past, it was used to create a rude bridge to cross rivers as quickly and as safely as possible to escape the enemy.

Competitors grasp the log "caber" by it's thinner end, holding it straight upwards. The participant runs towards a trig/marker and releases the caber attempting to throw the log in as straight a line as possible (a perfect throw has the competitor standing at 6 o'clock and the caber pointing to 12 o'clock). The heavier

end lands and the other end flips over and away from the thrower.

The following rules are in place:

1. Each participant is allowed three attempts.

2. The perfect throw is judged when the competitor is standing at 6 o'clock and the caber is pointing to 12 o'clock.

3. If a competitor crosses the trig/marker the throw is invalid and is counted as an attempt.

The main goal is to throw the caber in as close a line as possible to the 12 o'clock position. Strength, power, agility and balance are the qualities needed for success. One needs a caber 15-19 ft (4.6 - 5.8m) long and 132-154 lbs (60 - 70kg) with one end thinner than the other.

Sheaf Toss

The sheaf toss is one of the lesser known heavy events of the Highland Gatherings. It finds its origin in farm activities, such as pitching hay or straw. Competitors attempt to pitch a bale of hay over a bar for height, using a pitchfork. The pitchfork may vary from two to three prongs. The following rules are in place:

1. Each competitor is allowed three attempts.

2. The greatest height achieved from the three attempts is judged.

3. A bar similar to a high jump bar is used which can be raised or lowered.

4. If a competitor fails to throw the bale over the bar, the pitch is invalid and is counted as an attempt.

The goal is to pitch the bale the greatest height over a crossbar (on two poles) with the help of a pitchfork.

Strength, power and eye-hand coordination are the skills needed to excell in this activity. All one needs is a bale of hay or straw (16-25 lbs/7.3-11.4 Kg), a crossbar on two poles and a pitchfork.

Stone Lift

The strength of the competitors was much admired in this event. A stone called the `manhood stone' had to be lifted by the participant and placed on a nearby wall which was at least waist high. The stone could weigh anywhere from 100 to 300 lbs (45.5 - 136.4 Kg). This activity was carried out in many farms during rest or recreation periods; more commonly known as the "Stone of Manhood". Each competitor attempts to raise the stone using one arm to a predetermined height, which is dependent upon the weight used.

The following rules are in place:

1. Each competitor is allowed three attempts with each attempt progressively increasing in weight and height.

2. The greatest height lifted with the heaviest weight is judged the winner.

The goal is to lift the heaviest stone the greatest height.

Strength and power are the essential qualities needed for success. All one needs is a block 200-400 lbs (90.9 - 181.8 Kg) with a handle for gripping.

Wrestling

The `Cumberland' (Back-Hold) style of wrestling has been accepted as one of the most popular styles for competition. The `catch' style is also popular in Scotland. The Back-Hold style was practised in the early 1800's in Cumberland, Westmorland and Scotland.

The most popular style of wrestling used in Scotland was the Cumberland style in which competitors were always locked up with one arm over the shoulder and one arm under the arm of their opponent. Each wrestler attempts to throw their opponent to the ground.

The following rules are in place:

1. When one competitor touches the ground a fall is awarded to the other wrestler.

2. The competitor falling must have some body part touch the ground before the feet touch, otherwise the fall does not count.

The wrestler awarded three falls is declared the winner.

Strength, power, agility, balance, endurance and flexibility are physical qualities needed for success.

A flat, safe surface is all that is needed for the activity.

This event may be played during any season in and out of doors on a safe surface.

Donald Dinnie introduced the "Scottish" style which allowed anything from armwork, legwork and struggling on the ground, attempting to hold an opponent down for thirty seconds (introduced because he said the Cumberland style enabled weaker men with a better technique to win matches). The Scottish style was modified into the "Catch as Catch, First Down to Lose" style in which a fall is awarded when both shoulders of an opponent contact the ground simultaneously.

Tug of War

Tug of War provides one of the great spectacles at the Highland gatherings. It is considered a novelty game. The best and most popular battles in modern times were between servicemen. It is also used as a ritual activity among the Inuit and among Indian people. One "pulled" in spring and "pulled" out winter.

The event is useful because it enables groups to exercise rivalries through non-combative forms of competition. Each team has an equal number of members who grasp the rope at opposing ends. Each team is equidistant from a specific line on the ground and attempts to pull the other team towards their side until a marker attached to the rope crosses the line on the ground.

The following rules are in place:

1. Each team must have an equal number of players.

2. A marker (ribbon) is attached to the rope.

3. Two ribbons equidistant (90-120 cm) from the marker are drawn on both sides of the marker.

4.   The team that pulls the opposing team over the marker is the winner.

The goal is to pull opponents across the marker.

Cooperation, coordination, strength, power and endurance are qualities needed for success. The only material needed is a long rope with three markers.

Swee Tree

This very old event provided lots of fun for the crowds. It is believed to have Lithuanian origins. It is also popular at the Gotland Games in Sweden. It is considered a novelty game at the Highland Gatherings. In the Inuit Games of Canada the event is also very popular.

It is a game of strength. Similar to Tug of War, two competitors sit on the ground facing one another with their feet touching. They both grasp a short stick. At a signal each competitor attempts to pull the stick towards themselves and raise their opponent to his/her feet.
The following rules were in place:

1.   Twisting of the stick is forbidden.

2.   If a competitor loses their grip the opponent is given the win.

The goal was to raise one's opponent to their feet. The qualities needed are strength, power and flexibility. A short, thick stick is all that is needed.

Pole Vault

It is believed that medieval soldiers practised pole vaulting for clearing moats and mounting walls. It originated as a Highland Games event and was spread by immigrants to Canada, the United States and eventually throughout the world. The pole has changed over the years. At one time it was an ordinary piece of straight pine, that was unfortunately subject to frequent breaking. Later bamboo and fibreglass poles were introduced. The pole was used either to add height to a jump or length to the jump. The Dutch have a similar activity in which they jumped across canals using a pole.

The development of this activity can be traced to soldiers of the Middle ages who utilized the pole as a means of crossing moats and scaling high walls. Vaulters

approach a supported bar at a specific height and running with the pole, plant it and travel over the bar without knocking it off its supports. The following rules are in place:

1. Every competitor is allowed three attempts at each height.
2. If the bar is knocked off its standings the jump is invalid and considered an attempt.
3. There is no restriction on what technique each jumper may perform.
4. The height of the bar is increased after each competitor has had three attempts.
5. A competitor is disqualified if one is not successful at jumping a height after 3 attempts.

The goal of this activity is to vault the greatest height or length. Power, speed, coordination, and agility are the important qualities for this activity. The materials needed are a pole vaulting apparatus (bar with two supports) and a vaulting pole (made of wood, bamboo or fibreglass).

High Jump

Originally few places had safe landing pits for this jumping event. This caused injury to many competitors. One of the first styles of jumping was the scissors. With the use of landing pits (sand, hay, sawdust, foam mats, etc.) athletic injuries were reduced and athletes jumped higher. Techniques like the Western Roll and the Fosbury Flop also helped to improve performances. High jumping is a very popular event in most sport events, including the Olympics.

Competitors must jump over a stationary bar attempting to achieve the greatest height. A variety of techniques was used.

The following rules are in place:

1. Every competitor is allowed three attempts at each height.
2. If the bar is knocked off its standings the jump is invalid and considered an attempt.
3. There is no restriction on what technique the jumper may perform.

4.   The height of the bar is increased after each competitor has had three attempts.

5.   A competitor is disqualified if he/she is not successful at jumping a height after three attempts.

6.   The athlete must have one foot in contact with the ground on take-off.

The goal is to jump the greatest height. Power, coordination and agility are the important qualities for the high jump. The high jump apparatus (bar with two supports) is very simple.

Long Jump

This event most likely was developed by people attempting to jump across bodies of water. Most competitors of running and hurdling events would also take part in this event. With the introduction of safe landing pits athletes performed better and reduced the number of injuries sustained.

Competitors run approaching a pit and take off on one foot and land attempting to jump the furthest distance possible from the take-off line.

The following rules are in place:

1.   Each competitor is allowed three attempts.

2.   There is no take-off board.

3.   The distance is measured from where the person took off and where the back of the body landed.

The main goal is to jump the longest distance possible.

Power, speed, strength and coordination are the physical qualities needed. All that is needed for this event is a jumping pit (sand/sawdust) for this event.

Triple Jump

This activity is also known as the hop, step and leap. It has Celtic origins. The introduction of landing pits has helped minimize injuries. This activity is similar to the long jump except that in the approach competitors are required to take three specific steps before take off. Variations of the step include:

1.   A hop, step, leap and take off;

2.   Hop, hop, leap and take off;

3.   Step, step, leap and take off.

The following rules are in place:

1.   Every competitor is allowed three attempts.

2.   There is no take off board.

3.   The distance jumped is measured from where the toe left off and where the back of the body landed.

The goal is to jump the greatest distance.

Power, speed, strength and coordination are the physical qualities needed in this event. A jumping pit (sand/sawdust) is all that is needed to perform this activity.

Running Events

They are an essential component of any traditional Highland games. Many of the highland games athletes perform with much success in international competitions. The hill race was one of several unusual running events that started in 1040.

The running events are a natural extension of this event. Competitors line up and upon hearing a signal race to the finish line. Any number of competitors may participate. Events may cover varied distances and levels of land, such as the hill race.

The goal is to be the first competitor to the finish line.

Endurance, speed and agility are the important qualities needed in order to perform well in this activity.

Hill Race

The first record of this event was made in 1040, and it is recognized as one of the earliest athletic events at the Highland Games. The story begins with King Malcolm needing a messenger. In order to choose a suitable one he organized a hill race to the summit of Craig Choinnich. The prizes for the winner of this event were extremely valuable.

Runners begin at the foot of a hill and at a signal race to the summit. Upon reaching the summit the first competitor pulls out a designated stick or flag.

These are the rules for this event:

1.   Any number of competitors may participate.

2.   Competitors may choose their own path to the summit (there is no official course).

3.   The hills vary in height and slope.

The main goal is to reach the summit first and to pull out a stick or flag.

Endurance, speed and agility are important qualities for this race.

Chariot Races

The horse played an important part in Celtic life. Horse races or chariot races were an important part of the Highland Games. There would be 20 to 30 chariots racing at once, much to the excitement of the crowd. Chuck wagon racing of Canada may have originated in Scotland.

Charioteers enter a stadium and line up beside one another. At a signal, each chariot races towards a finish line with the charioteer attempting to be the first to disembark from his chariot after crossing the line. As many as 40 chariots may be involved. No chariot may begin moving before the start signal is sounded.

The goal is to be the first to cross the finish line and disembark from the chariot. Riding skills, strength and endurance are important qualities for this race.

Sling Shooting

This event was part of many Highland games. It is believed that it was used originally in hunting and possibly in combat. A pouch attached to two strings was used to propel a stone to a target. Much practice was needed in order to refine shooting skills. Each competitor swung the sling in a circular motion to gain momentum. At top speed one released one's string allowing the stone in the pouch to exit on its way towards a target.

The rules were simple:

1.   Each competitor was allowed three attempts.

2.   Each competitor had to shoot from a designated distance.

The competitor to hit the target the greatest number of times was declared the winner. Eye- hand coordination was an important skill for this event. This event is not part of modern Highland games.

Archery

This event had been a part of the Highland games since their inception. Archery dates back to primitive times when hunters used a bow and arrow to hunt. As a weapon the bow and arrow was used approximately 50,000 years ago. Archery is rarely seen in the present Highland games.although it is still a sport in Scotland.

Competitors attempt to hit a desired spot on a target from a certain distance with an arrow launched from a bow.

The rules are as follows:

1.   Each competitor is allowed three attempts.

2.   Each competitor must shoot from a designated distance.

3.   The rules may vary.

The competitor who is the most consistent and accurate of the shooters from the greatest distance is declared the winner.

Strength and eye-hand coordination are essential qualities for this activity.

Curling

Curling is a popular sport worldwide that originated in Scotland. It was played by everyone: clergymen, farmers, tradesmen, women and children. It began with the throwing of a rock on the ice in winter to see how far it would go or to attempt to hit someone else's rock.

There is some speculation that the organized game in its present form originated in Scotland between 1520 and 1550. The game is played by two teams of four players. Each player is given two stones to curl towards a circular set of rings. One attempts to place the stones as close to the centre of the rings as possible. A team may choose to knock their opponent's stone out of the circles thereby eliminating him/her from receiving any points. Brooms are used by the curler's

teammates to control the speed of the stones by sweeping the ice in front of the travelling stone.

The rules are as follows:

1. Each team receives eight stones.

2. Curling may vary in that one team may curl four stones at once and then their opponents attempt to knock them out of the circle or a team may curl one stone and then their opponents may curl one stone.

3. Stones within various rings receive a certain number of points with the centre being worth the greatest number of points.

The team with the highest score after all of the stones have been curled is declared the winner. Accuracy, strength and strategy/tactics are important skills for this activity. The materials needed are: 16 stones (40-50 lbs/18-22.7 kg) and brooms. This event may be played during any season, provided there is a large ice surface, either indoors or out of doors.

Shinty

Shinty is one of the fastest and most exciting of games. Shinty (camanachd), known as hurling in Ireland, shinny in Canada and la crosse in Brittany, is thought to be the fore-runner of ice-hockey. The game was first introduced to Scotland from Ireland some 1500 years ago. Shinty is Scotland's national game. Shinty has recently gained a great revival. In 1987, Scotland celebrated the centenary of the Camanachd (Shinty) Association. Frequent competitions between the Irish hurlers and the Scottish shinty players have taken place in the last decade.

The expression "camanachd" has as its root "Cam", meaning a turn or a twist. Shinty has been called other names in different districts: cammock, cammack, camac, camok, camog, camag, etc. The game has also been called hockey, hockie, hanky, etc. In the statutes of Galway (see p. 87) in 1527 we read "...the horlinge of the litill balle with hockie stickes or staves". The game was also called Bandy or bandy-ball and in Norfolk and Suffolk, "bandy-hoshoe". Gaelic speakers in Scotland continue to use the term "camanachd" and in older writings the term "ag iomain" was most

frequent (Mac Donald, 1932).

Bando was played in Wales. It was similar to shinty and hurling. The bando stick was a bent stick made of ash or other wood. The ball was made of yew, box or crab apple. Bando did not survive the industrial era. Little is known about the exact structure of the game. It would seem that there were two types of shinty in Scotland. The following description by Sir Aenas MacKintosh describes two types of shinty (MacLennan, 1993):

One: "playing at shiney is thus performed - an equal number of men ran up on opposite sides, having clubs in their hands, each party has a goal, and which party drives a wooden ball to their adversary's goal, wins the game, which is rewarded by a share of a cask of whiskey on which both parties get drunk. The game is often played upon the ice, by one parish against another, when they come to blows if intoxicated, the players legs being frequently broke, may give it the name of shiney".

Two: "many people remember their fathers' stories of this rather ferocious game. In Strathdearn, at the time of the New Year, the ball was hit off the High Road, at the old boundary between Moy and Dalarossie, it was then played over walls and fields and ditches until it got too dark to see, or until it ended in a free fight; almost the entire male population joining in the fray. The celebrations that took place after the game were far from pussy-foot".

The first description describes a game with the same format as hurling to the goal, whereas the second describes a game similar in format to hurling to the country.

It is also believed that golf was born out of shinty players practising alone or in pairs. Again we may be looking at a game similar to hurling to the hole, as practised in ancient Ireland or in Brittany.

The earliest mention of an organised club seems to be that of the Roverness Courier in 1849.

In 1993, the Camanachd Association of Scotland celebrated its 100 years in existence. In order to celebrate this special event, Hugh Dan MacLennan wrote an excellent book entitled "Shinty". This book highlights the special milestones of the

Camanachd Association of Scotland.

As we compare shinty with hurling we notice many similarities but also some differences. For example, one cannot kick the ball or handle the ball in shinty; both are permitted in modern hurling. In shinty one scores under the cross-bar only whereas in hurling one can score over and under the cross-bar. In shinty, the game is started by throwing up the ball a minimum height of 12 feet (4 meters) between players. In a hurling team the number of players is 15; in the shinty team the number is 12. The duration of the game varies a little, 45 minute periods for shinty and 30-35 minutes for hurling. The general rules are as follows:

1. Each team must have an equal number of players.

2. The game is played within a designated area and goals are made with uprights and a crossbar at opposite ends of field.

3. There is a predetermined time limit for the game.

The team to score the greatest number of goals is declared the winner.

Golf

Golf is now one of the most popular games in Scotland. It is beyond a doubt a game that originated in Scotland. The golfing community of Leith New Edinburgh held a competition in 1744 from which developed the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers. A similar club was established in St.Andrews in 1754 and these famous clubs were the beginnings of organized golf. Golf however, is not a part of the Highland Games. Hitting a ground ball in shinty or hurling is a similar motion to striking a golf ball.

Golf is one of the most popular games in Scotland. It was developed in the fourteenth century. It has spread across the world. Competitors hit a ball with a club from certain points in as few strokes as possible. There are usually eighteen holes on a course, each having a predetermined number of strokes with which the average person should be able to sink a ball. The following rules apply to golf:

1. The final score is determined by counting the number of shots taken for the eighteen holes.

2.   Par - the number of strokes designated for each hole.

Bogey - the number of extra strokes above par required to sink the ball.

Birdle - one less stroke than par.

Eagle - two less strokes than par.

The player to complete the course with the least number of strokes is declared the winner.

The earlier ball was made of tightly packed feathers encased in leather and the clubs were made of wooden shafts with wood or stone heads. A scenic course included obstacles such as sand traps, water traps, trees and long grass.

This game is usually played during the dry months on an outdoor course. Golf seems to have had its origin in some form of hurling.

Tilting the bucket

Tilting the bucket is a novelty event played at the Highland Games.

It was used for the entertainment and amusement of the competitors and spectators. A water bucket is set up in the air, on a plank. Participants travel under the water bucket in a wheel barrow and using a stick, attempt to poke the bucket and knock it over on top of themselves. A similar activity exists in the Breton games called "Le Banquet Russe".

1.   Any number of competitors may participate.

2.   Both men and women may participate.

Climbing the Greasy Pole

This is a novelty event played in the Highland Games, mostly for the entertainment of the crowd. Participants attempt to climb to the top of the greasy pole and collect a prize of mutton, ham or money. An individual has to attempt the climb alone, with no mechanical help. Strength, agility and coordination are important skills for this feat

Games of Ireland

The modern Gaelic games were revived and organized by Michael Cusack when he founded the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.) in 1884 (de Burca, 1980). The G.A.A. is the largest and most popular association in Irish sport today. It concentrates its energies in the promotion of Gaelic football and hurling. The purpose of the G.A.A. is to preserve and promote native Irish games (Carroll, 1979). Hurling, Gaelic football and handball (since 1924) along with women's camogie (since 1904) and rounders are the games that come within the scope of the G.A.A.'s influence. Rounders, believed to be the precursor of such games as baseball, softball and possibly cricket, is also played in Ireland. It's origin is not clear. Road bowls, a game unique to Ireland is played in parts of the country. There are over 2,000 clubs for the games of hurling and football scattered throughout the country. The overseas membership consists almost exclusively of Irish emigrants mainly in England, Australia, Canada, U.S.A., Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and France.

Hurling is Ireland's national game. It is a game of skill and speed, one of the fastest team games in the world. It is played by a fifteen-a-side team using hurling sticks and a small leather ball called a sliothar. Scoring is either by a goal or a point. A goal equals 3 points. When the sliothar is hit over the crossbar and between the goal posts, a point is scored. When the ball goes under the crossbar it's a goal.

Hurling is the Game of All Games

It is only fitting that we devote a little extra space to the game of all games. Many other games are derived from hurling. Hurling is the game of the Gael. O'Curry (MacEagan, 1901) believed the game was played almost 2000 years before the birth of Christ. In Scotland the Highlanders fortified themselves by "running, fencing with swords in the barresse". This statement is believed to indicate playing shinty (a form of hurling).

On the field of hurling or shinty everyone was equal, king or pauper. The hurling stick of the son of the king of Erin was ornamented with brass rings, while the sticks of his chieftains had the same decorations (Senchus Mor, 11. 145). There

are some references to games in the early Irish literature which may be regarded as the ancestors to hurling and shinty.

In the Tain bo Cuailgne (O'Rahilly, 1967), written in the early seventh century, we read of Cuchulainn... the mythical superstar... "who comes upon youths, thrice fifty in number, hurling on the green. He joins them. He got the ball between his legs and held it there, not suffering it to travel higher than his knees or lower than his ankle-joints, pressing it between his legs, and so making it impossible for them to point or blow or strike or thrust at it. And he carried it across the brink of the goal from them, so that they all together do not see... they thought it a marvel and a wonder".

At first, Cuchulainn would seem like Georgie Best dribbling in a magnificent goal. If we look more closely at the wording we see words like "to point", or "to blow", or "to thrust"; all suggest the opposition has a stick (weapon) of some type, thus suggesting a hurling game.

It is possible also, that Cuchulainn held his hurley stick between his legs, dribbled through the players protecting the ball on either side with his knees as he strode forward. In an other reference in the Book of Leinster version of the same story we read: "thrice fifty boys at one end of the green and one boy at the other. The one boy would carry off the victory of goal. At another time they would play the game of the hole, which was played upon the green of Emain. And when it was their turn to hurl and his to defend, he would keep the thrice fifty boys balls outside the hole and nothing went past him into the hole. When it was their turn to defend and his to hurl, he would send the thrice fifty balls into the hole without a miss". This game played by Cuchulainn and his friends resembles the Breton game of Bazh Dotu where one player tries to put his ball into an other player's hole with the help of a stick. The other players defend their hole with a stick. In a similar Breton team game called Bazhig Kamm a team of players try to put a ball into a hole with the help of sticks. This may be one of the games that was played by Cuchulainn.

To many Celts, hurling in its many shapes and forms is the game of all games.

O'Caithnia (1980) in his book "Sceal na hIomana" (the story of hurling) traces the origin of hurling and its development prior to 1884 when the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.) was founded. The G.A.A. standardized hurling, gave it rules and made it as it is today. But hurling was not always as we know it. In fact very little was known about the development of hurling prior to O'Caithnia's book. The history of hurling in Ireland can be traced only as far back as the 17th century. There are many references to hurling in the earlier documents in the Irish language but in no case can the game be identified clearly. The references are too vague to give a clear picture of the game. The word "hurling" has had many meanings over the past centuries. In Cornwall, in the 16th century it meant a ball-game but not one played with a stick, a hurley or a bat.

Hurling has five main characteristics: 1) two teams are in bodily contact; 2) a ball is struck with a stick; 3) the ball is struck towards a target; 4) the game is played in a field with fixed boundaries; 5) victory or some advantage is sought by the two teams. Shinty, field-hockey and ice-hockey have all five characteristics (O'Caithnia, 1980).

Other games that seem like hurling are golf, tennis, rounders, squash, cricket and pirli. These games lack body contact. Bandy (in Wales) is also a form of hurling. Hurling or goaling, according to Joyce (1913) has been a favourite game among the Irish from the earliest ages. Joyce (1913) goes on to describe the game of hurling:

Each player has a wooden hurley to strike the ball, generally of ash about 3 feet long, carefully shaped and smoothed, with the lower end flat and curved. This was called a caman, from the word cam (curved). In old writings we find another name, lorg (i.e., staff), also used. Now it is called caman, from the caman or hurley. It was played on a level field by two equal teams. At the end of the field was a narrow gap (berna) or goal, formed by two poles or bushes, or it might be a gap in the fence.

The play was commenced by throwing up the ball in the middle of the field;

the players struck at it with their hurleys, the two parties in opposite directions towards the gaps; and the game, or part of it, was ended when one party succeeded in driving it (ball) through their opponents' gap. It was usual for each party to station one of their most skilled men beside their own gap to intercept the ball in case it should be sent flying directly towards it: this man was said to stand cul, or cul-baire, "rearguard": cul meaning back. He was the goal keeper.

John Dunton, an English tourist to Ireland (around 1699) noted that "one exercise that they use much is their hurling which has something in it not unlike the game called Mall". Strutt did research on the game in 1834. He thought hurling had a resemblance to golf. Jeanne Cooper Foster noted in the 19th century that youth in Ulster played a wild game called "caman", a primitive type of game from which, perhaps, hurling has been developed. Settlers to Ireland in the 14th century began to take so much interest in the game of hurling that in 1367 the government banned the game in the Statutes of Kilkenny (see p. 70). Many English settlers who may have had played field hockey had no difficulty playing hurling. Hockey was similar to ground hurling which was played in Ulster. Hockey did not get its name until 1880. Prior to that hockey was probably seen as an other variation of hurling. Two distinct types of hurling did exist in Ireland. In the North of Ireland one played ground hurling, similar to field hockey, whereas in the South one played air hurling. The type of hurling played depended on the hurley used and this was not finally regulated until January 1884 by the G.A.A.

Foreign writers in general gave excellent descriptions of hurling. Such writers were Dunton, Young, Strutt, de Montbret, the Halls and Devereux (O'Caithnia, 1980). In 1779, Devereux wrote a poem on hurling in which he gives us some details of the game structure: Twenty one players were in each team. There were seven backs, seven midfielders and seven forwards. There was no goal keeper. The ball was a fast moving ball called a roansheen, unlike the wooden ball. In the oldest Irish stories there are two kinds of hurling, the hole-game and the loop-game. Cuchulainn played a game in which he scored by driving a ball into a hole. This

sounds like golf. MacDonald (MacLennan, 1994) author of a book on "Shinty" thought that shinty was a form of golf.

The loop game is just as old as the hole game. O'Rahilly (1967) thought the game was so called because the stick used in this game was curved or "looped". In old Irish literature there are at least seven references to this game (O'Caithnia, 1980). The loop or bow (goals) was about 4 feet (1.65m.) wide. Young saw the same type of loop in the 18th century. He saw a similarity between the loop game and cricket. In cricket, a wicket is knocked by a ball and in the loop game a ball was passed through a loop set in the ground. In the Senchus Mor, there is reference to the toys which relieve the boredom of little boys, which are "hurleys, balls and little loops" (Hancock, 1865).

A description of the hole game in the book of Leinster, about the 12th century, reads as follows: Connor went to the game and what he saw amazed him: 150 boys at one end of the green and one boy at the other. The boy was both winning the match and out-hurling the others. When they played the hole-game, which they often did on the green at Emain, they lashed the ball and he defended. He took each of the 150 balls outside the hole and not one went by him. When he was lashing on the ball and they defending, he put each ball in the hole without missing. (O'Rahilly, 1967).

This author found a similar game among the Cree Indians of James Bay, Canada. In the Indian game, the object was for each team to put a stone into a small hole in the ground. The stone was carried in the hand as in rugby. This game may have originated in Brittany, France, as many of the early missionaries to the James Bay area were from Brittany France. It is not quite clear if the hole in the Irish game was in the ground (like in golf) or in the fence (like in hurling). The hole-game does seem to be quite different from hurling. The scoring targets were a loop, a bow, a gap and a hole. Sometimes, one used two stones, two jackets, or two oars to designate the scoring area or goals. One used what was available. The modern goals evolved from the above mentioned goals. Today one has two 7m. (approx.) poles,

6.5m. apart with a cross-bar 2.5m. from the ground.

O'Caithnia (1980) goes on to say that the goals, in the past, were only about three feet wide. Similar gaols are used for both hurling and football.

A hurling game was often played as a warm-up for battle in the old Irish tales. The hurley was the "mimic sword of war". Cuchulainn and Fionn McCool, (old Irish heroes) were often presented in the early Irish sagas playing hurling. Teams could engage in a bout of wrestling during the game. Specific rules existed for wrestling during the game. The fiercest play was in front of the bow (goals). A goal could be scored by a direct clean shot into the goals, on a break away or it could be scored by sweeping the ball in. In Gaelic the word "scuabadh" means sweeping. This word gives its name to an other form of hurling called "scubeen". The information in the Devereaux poem (O'Caithnia, 1980) could be summarized in the following lines:

1. He saw a field game and not a game where the ball was taken from parish to parish.
2. There was a great crowd there which included women.
3. Twenty-one were in each team.
4. There was a special position for each player.
5. It sufficed for victory to score one goal through a narrow space and there was no goalkeeper.
6. The game was played barefooted.
7. A fast moving ball was used.
8. The game was fiercest before the mouth of the bow or loop (goals).
9. The ball was not out of play when it went over the side or end lines.
10. Wrestling was allowed i.e. rough play, but neither fouls or fighting are mentioned.
11. One could score from behind or in front of the goals.

Strutt, in 1775, states that Irishmen often played "hurling to goals". They used a "bat" to strike the ball, which was even on both sides but had a wide curved lower part. Strutt marvelled at the skill and ease with which the ball was lifted on the "bat"

and taken at a run for quite a distance and was hopped at times on the "bat".

Young likens hurling to cricket. He says that instead of driving a ball towards a wicket, it was driven towards a curved stick, which had its extremities set in the ground (goals).

De Montbret, a Frenchman, touring Ireland, and a contemporary of Young, reported: "hurling" starts in August. Each team is divided in three. The backs defend the bow and they aim to prevent the ball from going through it. Another group is forward to keep the ball away from the enemy. "Sur le terrain" (in the middle of the field) is the last third that is called the whip. The ball is made of down with a leather covering. The teams are recognisable by the colour of their caps. The foray that they make to drive the ball through the bow is terrifying.

Mandeville's poem of 1798 notes that each player held a "polished hurly", which was a "bossy weapon" that is, bossed. One might ask, where did the division of the teams into thirds originate? It may have originated in the strategy used by the military for battle. Philip II of Macedonia (382-336 BC) and his son Alexander the Great divided their army for battle into three divisions. It is possible that this idea was picked up by Celtic mercenaries, who fought in the armies of Alexander the Great. They later applied it to hurling. One of the thirds was the phalanx where the king stood in command. Hurling is in a way, as Mandeville put it, a "mimic warfare". The fast-moving roansheen (ball) and the bossed hurley are the two distinctive features of today's modern hurling. However, as the game developed different forms evolved. We end up with Irish hurling, Scottish shinty and English field-hockey. One feature that was common to all three pre-1884 was the prohibition of picking up the ball in one's hand.

Hurling Teams

There were three types of teams: teams of hundreds of men; teams of 50-60 and teams of 20 plus the captain. The very large teams usually played the wild cross country game as played in Cornwall. The 50-60 was generally for occasional games, which is in itself another category of hurling. Little is known about substitutes but

in all situations an equal number of players (be it 16, 21 or more) was the rule. A report from Quinn, Co. Clare indicated that sometimes there were hardly any of the original players left on the field, when all who were injured, had been replaced.

Referee

In the past the game was controlled by the captain. In those early days the captain was either a landlord or a man of prominence. He alone chose the members of the team and assigned them their positions on the field. He trained the team, provided playing fields, equipped them with hurleys and ball and taught them to play to the rules. The captain was the goal defender so that he was seen to be defeated when a score was made. People did not see two teams but two captains. The captain was an important hurler in the old days. He was manager, trainer, motivator, referee and player in the team all at the same time. In Thomas O'Crohan's book (An tOileanach) he states "in the old days there was no one who had a better future than he who was best at running and jumping, as well as he who was best at wielding a hurley...". The title captain followed a man all his life. By 1870, hurling had declined into brawling. There was need for rules. Here is a summary of the old rules:

1. 21 men were allowed in each team.
2. The loop or bow (goal) was 3 or 4 feet (0.91m. or 1.21m.) wide and 10 feet (3.04m.) high. A score was achieved by striking a ball through the bow from front or behind.
3. The team who scored once was the winner.
4. Each player wore coloured attire.
5. Wagers were laid on the results of the games and rewards were given to players.
6. The sidelines were to keep out spectators and to limit the area of play.
7. The captain was solely responsible for the team in every respect.
8. Only right-handed stance and right-pulling in the bulc was allowed. This applied to the bulc alone. For contravention of this rule, a hurley-

blow in the shins was given.

9. Standing between ball and the opponents' bow was forbidden. Also forbidden was passing the ball to anyone nearer to the bow than oneself (offside).

10. Every player was allowed to shoulder and wrestle another but striking a player with a hurley was forbidden except in the case of a breach of rule 8.

11. Handling the ball was forbidden in all cases.

12. Running with the ball on the hurley or hopping it on the hurley was allowed.

13. If there is no score, the side nearest to the opponents' bow is the victor.

14. Lying on the ball was forbidden.

15. At all times the judgement of the umpire(s) must be obeyed.

Tripping was allowed in both Gaelic football and hurling.

Wrestling was also part of hurling games prior to the foundation of the G.A.A. in 1884.

The Hurling Ball

The fast-moving ball seems to be the main style of ball used in hurling throughout the ages. It was the speed of the ball that distinguished Irish hurling from all other games. Up to 1884 there were five types of balls in use. They were made of cow-hair, thread, cork, wood and gutta percha. There were also combinations of various materials in use. John Dunton saw the cow-hair ball in the 17th century. The cow-hair ball was called the roansheen (ruainnsin = little thing of hair). Horse hair was also used in the making of the roansheen. In 1791 de Montbret saw a ball in Galway "which is made of cow-hair, compact and covered by leather". Sheep leather or rabbit leather was frequently used to cover the hair ball. "Sliotoar" (slitter) was one name used for the leather-covered roansheen. The word sliotar in Irish meant a ram's or a small bull's scrotum.

Wooden balls, known as crags or creys were used in the northern part of the

country. Between 1660 and 1860 the only type of ball used in the north of Ireland was the "crig" or "crick", which according to Rushe was made of wood. The wooden balls were often covered with thread and leather. The trilshag was an other type of ball. It was a ball with a braided cover. The braiding was made of horse hair. Some have been found buried in bogs. It is estimated they existed as far back as 1000 AD.

Hurley Sticks

The bossed hurley is the most celebrated type of hurley and has been the official type of stick used in modern hurling since 1884. Prior to the 13th century, there were references in ancient storytelling and folklore to hurleys of bronze, silver and other metals. It is possible that the reference may have to do with the metal bands around the hurley used to reinforce the stick and prevent it from breaking. In the early history of hurling, there were about six types of hurleys. They were bossed, crooks, two-part hurleys, sticks made from sea rods, straight sticks and hurleys for one-hand hurling. The bossed one was the most significant of all the six. In Northern Ireland and Scotland the hurley was curved but had no boss. They were still called a "boss". These northern hurleys were narrow whereas the southern hurleys were "large, flat, carpenter-made cudgels". The wide-bossed hurley and the narrow-bossed existed together, as also did hooks, spocks, crooks, stumps, roots and so on. The timbers in Ireland for hurleys were: furze, willow, mountain ash, oak, hazel, holly, elder, whitethorn, black willow, blackthorn, larch, yew, cherry and apple tree. Ash seemed to be the best.

Playing Fields

There were nine types of playing fields:

1. Those mentioned in the old Irish sagas and stories.
2. Town-pitches or fair greens.
3. River-holms, summer meadows and dried up winter wetlands.
4. Beaches.
5. Level areas or plains.
6. Upland level areas on the hillsides.

7.   Fields loaned for special occasions by farmers.

8.   Private pitches set aside by the gentry for hurling.

9.   On the roads.

Length of the games

Today a match can last 60, 70 or 80 minutes. Up to the end of the 19th century there was no fixed time. One goal score ("sudden death") decided the length of the game. Frequently, a match was called a "goal". Sometimes there was a series of games played in order to determine the winner. It was usually three games. If one team won two games it was all over. Some games might last half a day, or "till nightfall or till they were tired and exhausted".

Decline of Hurling Pre-1884

One of the main events that speeded up the decline of hurling in Ireland was the Great Famine of 1845-47. However, the famine was not the only event. Prior to the famine there was also a decline in participation in hurling. Unrestrained wildness and fighting were also responsible for this decline. Between 1800-1850 era, uncontrolled, undisciplined, disorderly spectators, violence, barbarity and drunkenness at hurling games was noted by many authors. This chaos worsened after the Famine. Newspapers began to ignore hurling games. The gentry no longer supported hurling after 1800 and the clergy strongly condemned the violence and drunkenness that went with the hurling matches. In Northern Ireland the Presbyterians renounced all the Sunday games. Hurling disappeared more quickly in the North than in the South. The game of hurling was still strong around 1820 according to Holmes (Shaw Mason, 1819), both in Ireland and in the Scottish Highlands.

Cricket was played in Ireland for the first time in 1800, first by the military but later by the gentry. Cricket was now replacing hurling among the gentry. Workers worked longer hours during the week and the landlords respected the Sabbath. Both helped to speed the decline of hurling. Various laws (see p. 70) were passed forbidding participation in hurling and football because it was believed by

those in power that such events were being used for political reasons. However, such laws did little to prevent Irish games. The decline of the Irish games, in particular hurling, was due primarily to laws promoting archery, the preservation of woodlands and fences and the safeguarding of the players from death and injury on the pitch and laws prohibiting assemblies. Legislation was never enacted against hurling as a game but for other reasons (violence, disturbances, political assemblies).

Gaelic Football

Gaelic football is Ireland's most popular game. It is a unique game in that it seems to have no connection in its formation with similar football games (Carroll, 1979). The earliest reference to ball games (aside from hurling) in Ireland is in the Statutes of Galway 1527 (see p. 70): "at no tyme to use ne occupye the hurling of the litill balle with the hookie stickes or staves, nor use no hande balle to play without the walls, but only the great foot balle". The poet MacCurta, writing in 1660, describes a game that clearly included snatching and carrying of a ball (Carroll, 1979).

Gaelic football as played today, looks (to the outsiders) like a mixture of soccer, basketball, volleyball and rugby skills. Players are allowed to handle the ball but are not allowed to pick it off the ground by hand. The ball must be collected from the ground using the tip of the toe, (in women's football this rule does not exist). Carrying the ball is allowed when one bounces, hops, or passes it from toe back to hand. One can also pass the ball with a hand pass. Scoring is similar to hurling. Tripping, tackling above the knee and wrestling, features of the old game, are no longer permitted. The old style kick and rush football game has given way to the catch and kick style, which is the basis of the modern Gaelic football game.

Irish Handball

The Irish Handball Council, with the support of the G.A.A., was set up in 1924 (de Burca, 1980). Irish handball is a game played by individuals or doubles in a four-walled court similar to a squash court or against a simple wall. The game is terminated when one player scores 21 points. Two types of

ball are used, a soft-ball and a hard-ball. The soft-ball games are more popular and are played extensively in Ireland and abroad. The hard-ball game is played only in Ireland (see handball).

Rounders

Rounders is a bat and ball game similar to the soft-ball version of baseball. There are two teams of nine-a-side. Runs are scored as in baseball. The ball used is generally a hurling ball. The bat is similar to a baseball bat. The first official match in modern times of this ancient game was played in 1958 in Cargin, G.A.A. Club in Toome, Co. Antrim. Today national competitions are held yearly among 18 clubs. The game is popular in schools in Ulster (Carroll, 1979). There is a paucity of information on the origin of the game. It is possible that the game was brought to Ireland from England where it is also played. Peadar O'Tuathain, through his tireless efforts has revived and promoted the game of Rounders in Ulster.

Road Bowls

Road Bowls is another game unique to Ireland (Carroll, 1979). It is played by two players who throw a bowl (a solid iron ball weighing 800 grams) along a public road. The player who covers a set distance with the least throws is the winner. The bowl can be thrown using an over-arm or an under-arm delivery. The game is played mostly in Co. Armagh and Co. Cork. It is played on side-roads only. National and international championships are held each year. Holland and Germany have a similar game called kloot schien (Carroll, 1979).

Laws Prohibiting Irish Games

The Gaelic games of Ireland did not always flourish as they have since 1884. During the 800 years of British rule in Ireland laws were passed prohibiting the practice of Gaelic games.

1.   Extracts from laws relating to Gaelic games, 1367-1695.
(a) Statue of Kilkenny, 1367: This law was passed at a parliament convened by the Viceroy, Lionel, Duke of Clarence. It was concerned with maintaining the racial identity of the Anglo-Normans in Ireland. It prohibited the Normans and the Irish living among them, that is mainly within the area of the pale, from practising Irish customs or sports.

The facsimile is from a contemporary manuscript in Norman French (Lambeth Palace Library, Carew Ms.603). The following is a published translation of the paragraph relating to games:

Also, whereas a land, which is at war, requires that every person do render himself able to defend himself, it is ordained and established, that the commons of the said land of Ireland, who are in divers marches of war, use not henceforth the games which men call hurlings, with great clubs at ball upon the ground, from which great evils and maims have arisen, to the weakening of the defence of the said land, and other games which men call quoits, but that they apply and accustom themselves to use and draw bows and throw lances, and other gentle games which appertain to arms, whereby the Irish enemies may be the better checked by the liege commons of these parts; and if any do or practice the contrary, and of this be attaint, that he be taken and imprisoned, and fined at the will of our lord the King.

(b) Statutes of Galway, 1527: The Common Council of Galway was empowered by Royal Charter to enact laws for the citizens. The Statute Book from which the extract is taken covers the period 1485 to 1710. It is now in the Library of University College, Galway.

A modernised text of the statute relating to games is as follows:

1. Item: It is ordered, enacted and statute that whatsoever man is found, of what degree or condition so ever he be of, playing at quoits or stones (except shooting with long bows, short crossbows or hurling darts and spears) to pay every time so found doing eight pence; and also at no time to engage in the hurling of the little ball with hockey sticks or staves, or use the handball for playing outside the walls, but only to play with the great football on pain of the penalty noted above.
(c) Sunday Observance Act, 1695: This act of the Irish Parliament issued in the reign of William III prohibited hurling, communing (ground hurling) and football on the Lord's Day with a penalty of twelve pence for each offence.

Hurling

Hurling is the true grandfather of shinty, hockey and many other stick and ball games. The game goes back into the dim past of Irish history and even appears in early legends. It was played in pre-Christian times, long before St.Patrick arrived in Ireland in 432AD. The forceful hurling of the ball makes it clear how the sport got its English name of hurling. Hurling is perhaps the oldest game on record. Reference is made to a game of hurling, prior to a battle, in Moytura, Co Mayo in 1829 BC (Richardson, 1974). Many question the authenticity of this date.

Hurling is Ireland's national game and is thought to be one of the fastest team games in the world. It has some similarities to field hockey. Two teams on a field attempt to knock a ball through each other's goal (three points) or hit the ball over the crossbar (one point). Competitors use their hands or hurling sticks to move the ball from one end of the field to the other end.

The general rules are:

1. Each team must have the same number of players.
2. In the past the number of players was unlimited but in modern games there are fifteen players on each team.
3. The ball may be held in the hand if it is caught in the air or picked off the ground with the hurley stick.
4. The ball may be carried for a maximum of three steps before it must be hit/released.
5. Knocking the ball through the goal is worth three points.
6. Knocking the ball over the crossbar is worth one point.
7. Games last for 80 minutes.

Speed, endurance, accuracy, strength, power, cooperation and strategy/tactics are useful skills in playing the game of hurling.

Camogie

This is basically the female version of hurling. It was developed early this century by women members of the Gaelic League in Dublin. It is played in Ireland, England and the USA. The first game was played in Navan in County Meath, in 1904. The traditional dress was a sleeveless gymslip, blouse, black tights with light studded boots. This dress has given way to more modern dress. Camogie, like hurling, is closely related to field hockey. Teams attempt to knock the ball through their opponent's goal or over the crossbar. Competitors use their hands or hurley sticks to accomplish this. Some of the general rules are:

1. Only females may participate.
2. Each team must have 12 players. Since the year 2000, 15 players per team, is the norm.
3. The ball may be held in the hand if it is caught in the air or picked up with the hurley stick.
4. The ball may be carried for a maximum of three steps before it must be hit/released.
5. Knocking the ball through the goal is worth three points.
6. Knocking the ball over the crossbar is worth one point.
7. Games last 50 minutes.

The team to score the greatest number of points is declared the winner.

Speed, endurance, accuracy, strength, power, cooperation and strategy/tactics are important skills in this game.

Gaelic Football

This is Ireland's most popular game. It is original to Ireland. The earliest reference to it is in the Statutes of Galway in 1527 (see p.70), which forbade 'hurling of the little ball but allowed one to play with the great football'. It was also described by the poet MacCurta in 1660. It was the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1884 that brought new order and purpose to the sport. It is still an amateur sport. The game is very popular throughout the world where Irish people live, especially in the U.S.A., Canada, England and Australia.

To those unfamiliar with the game it looks like a mixture of rugby, basketball, soccer and volley ball. A form of Gaelic Football was developed in Australia known as Australian Rules Football. Two teams attempt to score on one another's goal by kicking, hopping and passing the ball. The general rules are as follows:

1.   Each team must have the same number of players.
2.   Players may carry the ball after it has been caught or picked up with the toe.
3.   Players must not pick the ball with the hands directly off the ground (exception for women's Gaelic football).
4.   Passing to teammates may be accomplished by a direct kick or hand pass.
5.   Players must not carry the ball for more than four steps without bouncing it or hopping it or passing it from their toe to their hand.
6.   Knocking the ball through the goal is worth three points.
7.   Knocking the ball over the crossbar is worth one point.

The team to score the greatest number of points is declared the winner.

Rounders

In 1650 an English tourist to Ireland made a written reference to a "type of rounders". The game was popular in Ireland prior to 1884. This game is possibly the forerunner of baseball and not English rounders, as thought by many historians. The

first official game was played in June, 1958 when the Erin's Own Gaelic Athletic Association Club of Cargin, Toome, County Antrim organized a mixed tournament with medals for winners, in their annual Gaelic games festival. Up to that time, the game was mostly popular among school children.

It is quite likely that Rounders was the original version of the game of baseball and that Irish immigrants brought the game to America where it was refined into baseball. Two teams of nine players each, including a pitcher, make up a team. Similar to baseball, the pitcher throws the ball to the batter and he/she attempts to hit the ball and run as many bases as possible and score a run. Some of the general rules are:

1. Each team must have nine players including a pitcher.

2. After three strikes a batter is out.

3. Three balls for a walk-on.

4. If a batter is tagged with the ball before he/she reaches a base, he/she is out.

5. Each team is allowed to have three players out and then the next team is up to bat.

6. Each team must have an equal number of turns to bat.

7. The team to score the most runs is declared the winner.

Wrestling

Over the years, with the foundation of the International Federation of Celtic Wrestling (I.F.C.U.), rules have been adjusted and adapted to suit a wider audience. Celtic wrestling has many styles. There is the back-hold style, the Cornish style and the Gouren (Breton) style. The back-hold style is practised in Scotland, Cumberland, West Moreland, Ireland and Iceland. This style was practised in Ireland in the 10th century and was taken to Iceland by the Vikings who captured slaves from the Irish coast.

Wrestling was a popular sport in Ireland. Ireland did introduce the 'Irish Whip' throw into wrestling. The event is still an amateur sport.

Two styles of wrestling were practised in Ireland. Ireland's national style was known as the "collar and elbow style". Competitors grasp their opponent's collar and elbow and force their opponent to touch the ground with a hand, knee, back or side, thereby getting a fall. The second style was a typical over the shoulder, under the arm technique, similar to the style used in the other Celtic regions. The general rules are:

1. When one competitor forces his/her opponent to touch the ground with his/her hand, knee, back or side he/she is awarded a fall.

2. Three out of five falls is considered a win.

Flat Races

These races were popular at athletic meetings. The first great Irish international runner was Tom Malone, whose running career began in 1879 and who ran 100 yards in 9.6 sec.

Competitors begin upon hearing a signal and race to a finish line. A variation includes the hurdles in which gates are placed along a course and the runners must jump them as they travel over the course.

1. Both males and females may participate.

2. Any number of competitors may participate.

3. Distances may include: 100 m, 200 m, 400 m, 800 m, hurdles, marathon and cross-country.

4. The competitor to reach the finish line first is declared the winner.

Horse-Racing and Chariot Racing

Horse-racing has always been a popular pastime in Ireland. Tradition and the songs of the past are full of racing steeds and marvellous riders, contesting for wonderful trophies of unheard beauty (Nally, 1924). In pagan times the greatest pleasure of Tir na nOg (Land of Eternal Youth) was horse racing on the shore, in contest with golden curraghs on the silver sea (Nally, 1924).

At the Aonach (fair) Colmain (100 BC) the King of Ireland went with four chariots to the games. The famous Curragh race-course was called "Cuirreach" (race-course). The Aonach Colmain was held as an annual assembly at the Curragh, and it was attended then, as it is still, by people from all parts of Ireland. The games lasted for several days. One of the most exciting events of the games was the chariot-race. These contests were conducted under strict rules, sometimes with two horses, sometimes with four horses. The owners sat in their chariots beside their standing charioteers. These charioteers were the most daring and reckless drivers, but capable of accomplishing wonderful achievements with their splendid horses.

Horse-racing was much like it is today in Ireland, except in the past no saddles were used, and a single rein passing back between the horse's ears sufficed,

with a guiding whip, to pilot them on the course.

Chariot racing was a popular event at the Tailteann Games that existed about 2000 BC. Horse racing among the Celts dates back to pre-Christian times. They used cavalry and war-chariots in battle. The first reference to horse racing in Irish historical manuscripts dates back to the 14th century. The sport developed along similar lines in Britain. Chariot racing was somewhat similar to the chariot race in the film Ben-Hur (depicting roman charioteers) or to the Calgary stampede.

Charioteers line up beside one another. At a signal, each chariot races towards a finish line. The general rules were:

1. Any number of chariots may race.

2. No one chariot may begin moving before the signal is sounded.

3. To cross the finish line first was the goal.

Archery

Archery dates back to primitive hunters, approximately 50,000 years ago. Today, there are many archery clubs in Ireland. Ireland has also an Irish National Archery Federation. In archery, competitors attempt to hit a desired spot on a target from a certain distance with an arrow launched from a bow. The rules are simple:

1. Each competitor is allowed three attempts.

2. Each competitor must shoot from a designated distance.

The goal is to be the most consistent and accurate in shooting.

Accuracy, strength and eye-hand coordination are important skills in archery.

In the past wooden bows with a leather string and wooden arrows were used. Today, high powered modern bows are available on the market.

Sling Throw

This event can be traced to the ancient Tailteann Games. It was an activity used both for hunting and in the battle field by the Celts. In this activity, competitors stand at a designated distance from a target and attempt to hit the target with stones

from a sling. The main rules are:

1.   Each competitor is allowed three attempts.

2.   Each competitor must shoot from a designated distance.

The goal is to be the most consistent and accurate in shooting.

Accuracy, strength and eye-hand coordination are important skills in this sport.

The slings are made of a leather patch with two leather strings attached to it. Small circular stones are used as ammunition.

Spear Throw

The spear shaft was made of wood and the blade was made of iron.

This warrior type skill was always a well known Celtic activity. It was an activity in the Tailteann Games. Soldiers and hunters used the spear as a weapon with which to kill. In peace time, it was used in sporting competitions. The Inuit also used the spear with great skill in hunting and in sport competitions.

In ancient times, this activity was used to test and refine the throwing technique of soldiers. The spear throw later developed into the javelin throw. Competitors stand at a designated distance from a target and attempt to hit the target with their spear. The target may be simply a circle in the ground. The general rules are:

1.   Each competitor is allowed three attempts.

2.   Each competitor must shoot from a designated distance.

3.   Each competitor throws in an over hand fashion

The goal is to be the most consistent and accurate of the shooters.

Road Bowls

Road bowls are unique to Ireland. The game is played on an ordinary public road. Most games are played on winding country roads. There is great skill involved in negotiating the bends in these roads. This game was more popular in a time when traffic was less and large crowds could follow the game along the road. There was much betting on the outcome of these games. All-Ireland championships are held

each year, with some international matches with Holland and Germany where a similar game is played. Competitors attempt to bowl a ball over a designated distance in as few throws as possible, without knocking it off the roadway. The general rules are:

1. Both males and females may participate.

2. May be played individually or in teams.

3. The bowl may be delivered with an underhand or overhand throw.

4. Penalties are assessed if the ball travels off the roadway.

The goal is to reach the designated distance in the fewest bowls.

Strength and eye-hand coordination are the important skills in this game.

All that is needed is a solid steel ball (28 oz/ 1 kg) and an open roadway.

Quoits

This is a typical Celtic game. It was also played in other Celtic regions besides Ireland. Quoits are probably a precursor to horseshoe throwing and skittles. Competitors take pitches at a standing stone (prop) with small flat stones, attempting to knock the prop over or land the small stone closest to the prop. Brittany has a similar game called la galoche or les palets. Variations of quoits did exist in Ireland, such as steel ring quoits, ground quoits (solid disc) and board quoits using a solid disc. The general rules were as follows:

1. If a prop is knocked down the competitor receives three points.

2. If a player's stone lands closest to the prop one point is awarded.

3. If a player's stone is closer to the prop than his opponent's he receives another point.

4. Games go up to 21 points.

5. Games may be played individually or with two teams.

6. Both males and females may participate.

Hunting

Celtic lords and lesser folk undoubtedly indulged in hunting, to keep down pests and for sport. Dogs were bred for hunting. Slings, although used in war, were

primarily weapons of the chase. Caesar mentions a special wooden projectile (possibly a boomerang) used by the Gauls for bird-hunting. The boar, an important Celtic symbol of ferocious power, was hunted . Archaeological findings indicate that red and roe deer and hare were popular. Wolves, foxes and badgers were also hunted both for food and for pelts. However, hunting made a limited contribution to the table (James, 1993) indicating that the activity may have been a pastime rather than a necessity.

Handball

Under this title I will examine a variety of activities resembling handball.

A Roman fresco shows several young men playing at ball. It is from an underground tomb in Rome in the first century AD. Ball-playing was very popular among the Romans. The Romans enjoyed a variety of ball games, including handball, trigon, soccer, field hockey, harpasta, phaininda, episkyros and catch. Pliny (a Roman) describes a ball-court in his house. The Romans had rule books for many of their ball games, but no copies survived. Six types of balls did exist. Some bounced and others did not. The balls were made of inflated pig's bladder, cat gut, deer skin and leather.

There was much social and commercial intercourse between the Celts and the Romans. In these types of relationships it is only logical to conclude that the Celts picked up some of the Roman games.

Handball is one of the oldest ball games. It was played in ancient Greece. In the late 1800's any reasonably smooth surface qualified as a handball alley. Local custom often decided the side to which the ball was to be served and if it were to be allowed to bounce more than once. Even the number of aces or points which constituted a game differed; some players favouring a 15-ace game and others a 21-ace game. Handball is a game for the individual. No special dress is needed. When the Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in 1884, handball was included in its charter. Prize money was no longer a factor in handball competitions as was the case prior to 1884.

A Roman poet of the Augustan age speaks of "skilled performers who played ball with their hands". In ancient Greece, it was played by both sexes, with the females proving the more adroit performers. The earliest reference in Ireland, to handball, was in the town statutes of Galway (see p. 70) in 1527 ordering people "to stop playing with little balls against the walls". Pelota, played in the Basque country and Fives, played in England (and Wales) are similar to handball and may have a common origin. Handball, in one form or other, is played in at least 45 countries throughout the world.

The formation of the Gaelic Athletic Association, in 1884 in Ireland, played a very significant part in the future of handball. The inaugural meeting of the Irish Amateur Handball Association was held in Croke Park, Dublin on 27th January, 1924. In 1925, All-Ireland Championships were played. In 1928, at the Tailteann games, international matches were played between England, Scotland and Ireland. In 1929, teams from the Basque district of Spain played exhibition matches in Ireland.

Of the few written records on the existence of the game before the nineteenth century, that of William Farrell of Carlow is by far the most detailed. He was born in 1772. He wrote: "... if anything was wanting to show the easy circumstances of the people, it would be found in the numbers in every town and in every part of the country that could afford time to practise all the manly exercises so well known to Irishmen as hurling, football, cudgelling, tennis or handball, leaping, wrestling, vaulting, throwing the sledge or bar or grinding-stone; and at every outlet of Carlow there were fields like commons, free to everyone that chose to amuse themselves, and one of the best ball courts in Ireland within..." (Carlow in '98, Roger J. McHugh, London, 1949).

Handball was, and still is, a very popular sport in Ireland. Many colleges and boarding schools had handball alleys in the 1950s onward. Blacrock College in Dublin had a handball alley in 1860. Handball was also very popular in the Basque country and in the U.S.A.

In 1840 the first Eton Fives courts were built by Dr. Hawtrey; four courts were built. Eight more were built in 1847 and 12 more in 1871. The origin of the game "Eton Fives handball" is similar to that of the other forms of handball i.e., "jeu de paume" tennis played with the hand. Fives and racket games are both derived from "jeu de paume". The name "Five" may be derived from the game "jeu de paume" in which five a side played, or from the five fingers, or from the fact that five points had to be made by the winner. In "jeu de paume" one palmed the ball, similar to tennis using, the hand instead of a racket.

The first real handball was played against church walls. In the initial handball there were no side-walls. In Wales, handball is also alive and well. The Finns play a form of handball called Fistball in squash courts but they also play One Wall during their short summer.

Spanish handball "Pelota" is associated usually with the Basque provinces but the Valencians on the east coast play a handball game in three wall courts which is much closer to Irish handball.

English Fives is played in Nigeria and South Africa; Pelota in Spain and Latin America; balle-au-mur in France and Belgium and "jeux de paume" in Holland, Spain, Sweden and Italy. There is an active trend to standardize (compromise) the game of handball in order to involve more countries in international competition.

A report in the National Geographic (O'Connor, 1996) indicated that the one-wall handball game had been played in the central Mexican state of Zacatechas for almost 5,000 years. They originally played with balls made from the natural rubber of the region and now there are 400 courts in the state. The ball used in these games is a golf ball covered in animal hair and sown into a leather cover.

Handball in the Olympics

Jeux de paume was a demonstration sport at the Stockholm (1912) and Amsterdam (1924) Olympics. The Basque game of hand pelota was a demonstration sport at the Paris Olympics in 1900 and 1920, in Mexico in 1968 and Barcelona in 1992.

Handball in the Commonwealth Games

The top English and Welsh players have become interested in and play Irish handball. They are exploring the possibility of having handball played in the next Commonwealth Games. This would be a major step towards Olympic recognition.

Irish soldiers serving in the French army some 200 years ago brought with them an important pastime to France: Irish handball. The game took root in the Ardennes region of Northern France and Southern Belgium. The game is still played in these regions. They play a one-wall (pelote fronton) against a wooden screen using a low bouncing ball, which as in squash, must be kept above a "tell" line. The French players came to Dublin for the World Championships in 1994 and the Belgian players took part in the First European One-Wall Championships in Nelson, Wales, in 1995.

The Irish emigrants who went to North America carried with them their language, culture and sport. These took root in cities like New York, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco. Branches of the Gaelic Athletic Association were formed in those cities. Butte, the capital of Montana was a mining town that attracted a lot of Irish people. By the year 1900 the city had become almost an Irish town. The sports of the citizens were Gaelic football and handball. After the 1920s, the football faded away but handball became the most popular sport and it is still played widely in Montana, the state with the greatest percentage of handball players in America.

Fives (England)

The name "fives" is derived possibly from the five fingers of the hand but also might arise from the old practice (still in Ireland) of score keeping by putting marks in groups of five. It has been mentioned in books and manuscripts as early as the 17th century, both in England and Ireland. Now played in a 4 wall court 28' x 18', black walls and red concrete floor and like all other fives codes uses a hard leather ball and a tell line. It is played in over 50 schools and 30 clubs in England and has

a few centers overseas e.g., in U.S. and South Africa. The main competition is for the Jester's Cup.

Winchester Fives is similar to Rugby Fives except for a narrow buttress of the left side.

Eton Fives is different from all other varieties of handball and is faithfully modelled on the original courts, which were the steps outside the Eton college Chapel. The floor is on two levels, the wall has a ledge and a large buttress and there is no back wall. Doubles only are played. Thirty six schools and about twenty clubs play the game. Overseas centres include Nigeria and Switzerland. The main competition is for the Kinnaird Cup.

Balle-au-Mur (Belgium and France)

Balle-au-mur is a one wall game played indoors against a wooden screen. A low hopping leather or plastic ball is used in what is usually a doubles game. It is played as a winter game to maintain fitness for their more extensively played "Jeu de Paume". This hand tennis game is the oldest of all handball games. It was played by Egyptians, Greeks and Romans and uses a hard ball and reinforced leather gloves. It is played in the Ardennes region of North France and South Belgium. Both the Belgium and French Handball Federations have adopted Irish one wall rules for international play.

Kaatsen is a field handball game played for over 200 years in the Friesland province of Northern Holland. The Dutch originally played handball against the walls of churches but were forced by the church authorities to play in open spaces. The game is actively promoted among women and youths. The Dutch were to the forefront in establishing an International Federation and annual competitions of a compromise game of the (1997) European Games held in August in Holland. They also included an exhibition of the one wall game based on the Basque Fronton game, which uses a hard leather ball. There are a number of 40' x 20' courts in Holland. A team from Friesland toured Ireland in 1996. They have built in Franaker a magnificent museum for the game and an archival section, which records the history

of handball.

Fronton Pilota (Valencia, Spain)

Fronton Pilota is not to be confused with pelota mano, the handball game played by the Basques. Handball has been extensively played in the province of Valencia for hundreds of years, sometimes against one wall but mostly in a 45' x 25' three wall court (no right hand side wall) using a hard ball. As in most of the continental and English handball codes, the traditional leather ball is still preferred and it is hoped to set up regular internationals between the Valencians and Irish hard ball players. The Valencians were primarily responsible for setting up contacts between the different handball codes and promoting strongly the idea of a compromise game between the different types. A team from the Basques country toured Ireland in 1924 and in March 1997 a Club from Valencia went to Ireland and played in Roscommon and Croke Park.

Originally, handball was not played off a wall, instead, the ball was tossed from hand to hand. Later on, the use of walls was adopted and specialized facilities were introduced. Today each competitor attempts to hit the ball with the palm of the hand off a wall so that one's opponent is unable to successfully return it.

Here are some general rules for handball:

1. Games may be played by two players or by two teams consisting of two players each.

2. Males and females participate.

3. The ball must be struck only with the player's palm.

4. If a player is unable to successfully return the ball one's opponent is awarded a point.

5. Games go up to 21 points.

Speed, accuracy, eye-hand coordination, cooperation, agility, endurance and strategy/tactics are important skills used in handball.

The equipment needed is a soft rubber ball, which makes for a slightly slower and less demanding game, or a hard rubber ball which is used by experienced players,

for a quicker and more demanding game and a playing court which consists of a front wall 30 ft high (9.1 m) and 60-65 ft long (18-20 m). Today, courts similar to squash courts are used for playing handball. All four walls are used in the game.

In 1994, the Valencian Pelota Federation organised a Congress of hand played ball games and promoted the idea of a compromise game that would be inexpensive to set up, have simple rules, be appealing to children so as to form a pool of players from which the interested and talented could move into the formal court game. Further, this play should involve a "level playing field" where meaningful international competition could take place. The one-wall handball game, which has been played in New York for almost a hundred years, seemed to meet these requirements. Any smooth surface indoors or outdoors can be used. An area 16' high and 20' wide is outlined with paint, tape or even chalk. In front of this a playing area 20' wide by 34' long is drawn out. A windball, such as a racquetball, or even shaved down tennis ball, is used. The game can be played as Singles or Doubles.

These are the rules and procedure:

1. Server hops the ball and strikes it on to the wall so as to bounce outside the short line but inside the long line.

2. Receiver returns the ball on the volley or before it hops twice, onto the wall.

3. Rally continues until one of the players fails to make a legal return.

4. If server fails result is a side out. If receiver fails the server gains a point.

5. Game is to 15 points and match is the best of three games.

Pastimes Requiring Fine Motor Skills:

Spinning Tops

The author recalls two types of spinning top games that he played as a child in West Clare Ireland.

Game No.1

Two or more players could play this game. Each player had his own spinning top (usually, only boys played the top games). First, the players got their tops spinning, on a smooth surface, with their bare hands. Then, with the help of their

whips, the players whipped (or flogged) their tops forward. The goal was to whip the top forward as far as possible before it stopped spinning.

Game No.2

Five or six or so players participated in this game. Each one had a spinning top and a string. A small circle was made on the ground and a designated area was chosen on which one could spin one's top. Each one took their turn to spin their top. Each player (while their top was spinning) proceeded to deftly pick the spinning top into the palm of their hand. This was done by quickly sliding the palm of the hand under the spinning top. The player then carried the spinning top in the palm of his hand and dropped it into the circle. The player who failed to carry the top, still spinning in the palm of his hand, had to drop his top (dead top) in a spot outside the circle. The latter player was no longer in the game. There were now two objectives in the game, one was to stay in the game and the other to put the top that was placed outside the circle into the circle (punishment).

To stay in the game, each player had to touch the top on the ground, directly or indirectly, when he spun his top. A player, who failed to touch the top on the ground, had to place his top in the place of the original top on the ground.

The second objective was achieved by gradually pushing the top on the ground towards the circle or by doing it in one move. The one move was carried out as follows: one spun one's top in the designated area; one lifted one's spinning top into the palm of one's hand; with the spinning top on one's palm, one lifted the dead top by the pointed end by grabbing it and holding it between two of the fingers of the hand that was holding the spinning top. Next, one attempted to drop both tops into the circle. If one succeeded, the dead top was punished by all the players. The punishment was carried out in the following manner: the dead top was partially buried in the earthen fence and each player struck the top of the buried top with the pointed part of his top. The play resumed after the punishment ritual.

Cat and Bat

This is a game similar to pirli (Brittany) or speilean (Scotland) that was played in parts of Ireland. Two or more people could play the game. One person has a short stick of wood about 8" (20cm)long, called the cat. The second player has a longer stick (bat) about 3 feet long (90cm). A small circle is made on a flat surface. The player with the bat stands close to the circle. The other person holds the short stick while standing at a distance of 10-15 metres (11-16 ft) from the circle. A marker (first base) is placed on the ground where the player with the short stick stands. The first player throws the short piece of wood towards the circle. The second player attempts to bat the cat (short stick) and drive it away as far as possible. The batter then runs back and forth from his/her base to his/her opponent's base as many times as possible before the opponent catches the cat and brings it back to his/her base. The person with the most runs is the winner. If player No.1 succeeds in getting the cat into the circle, he/she now becomes the batter.

Rothchless (Wheel Feat)

Rothchless consisted of throwing a heavy circular disc or quoit upwards beside the wall of a large house. The idea was to throw it as high as possible even over the house.

Stone Throwing

This involved throwing a heavy stone forward from hand and shoulder; it was similar to shot-putting.

Juggling

Juggling was a very common way of entertaining in ancient Ireland. From the most remote times, kings kept fools, jesters and jugglers in their courts. They were called "druth" which could be used as a collective name for all three. The Brehon Law fixed seven years as the age when it was to be decided whether a young person was or was not to become a druth. The druth had many skills: power to amuse, music skills and a particular type of shout. They earned their livelihood going from place to place amusing people. They were also known as "aes ceirdd" i.e., men of art.

A recent painting by Joe O'Kane (no date) depicts a series of Irish traditional games. These traditional games and pastimes were as follows: Gaelic football, hurling/camogie, tug of war, running and jumping, fishing, swimming, hunting, horse riding, tossing the sheaf, pitch and toss, cards, dancing, dog fighting*, cock fighting*, bull baiting*, marbles, road bowls or "Bullets", shoulder stone, weight throwing (for distance), weight throwing (for height), handball, horse shoe throwing (into clay), horse shoe throwing (on to grass), steel ring quoits, ground quoits (solid disc), board quoits (solid disc), skittles (logs) and skittles (sticks).

 * not practised any more.

Early Irish Board Games

Fidchell

Three Irish board games are mentioned throughout the Irish literature. These games were fidchell, brandub and buanfach. According to Mac White (1943), it is a popular fallacy to identify fidchell and brandub with chess and draughts. Both fichell and brandub are mentioned in the saga literature of the Ulster cycle and fidchell is also mentionned in the Brehon Laws (Old Irish laws), which date back to the seventh century. The Irish fidchell and Welsh gwyddwyll have the same roots (White, 1943). Draughts cannot be traced back beyond the thirteenth century and some of its characteristics seem to have been borrowed from chess. However, brandub and fidchell were current in Ireland some five centuries before the introduction of chess into Europe and for a longer period before the invention of draughts.

In ancient Ireland "chess-playing" was a favourite pastime among the upper classes. "Chess" furniture was indeed considered in a manner a necessity, so much so that in this respect it is classified in the Brehon Laws with food. The game demanded "ciall" and "fath" (attention and judgement). The chess-board was divided into black and white compartments by straight lines, i.e., into squares. The game was called fidchell. The board was called dar-fidchilli and the chessmen were called fir-fidchilli. Sometimes the chessmen were ornamental with gold and silver. The chess-board and chessmen were treasured by their owners. Many ancient chessmen have been found in bogs in Scotland but only one in Ireland, which was found in 1817 in a bog in Co., Meath. It is now in the National Museum in Dublin. The Irish saw the chess game as a mimic battle. The chessmen represented soldiers. Cuchulainn refers to them as fianfidchella (chess-warriors). One man and sometimes two, had charge of the king's chessboard and chessmen. Mac White (1943), examines three board games fidchell, brandub and buanfach. He explores the ancient Irish literature and he finds in the tale of "Mac da Cherda and Cummaine" some evidence as to how the game was played: "Good", says Guaire, "let's play fidchell". "How are the men

slain?" said Cummaine. "Not hard, a black pair of mine about one white man of yours on the same line, disputing the approach on the far side(?)". "My conscience, indeed!" said Cummaine, "I cannot do the other thing(?), but I shall not slay (your men)". For a whole day Guaire was pursuing him and he could not slay one of his men. "That is champion-like, o cleric", said Guaire.

In the poem "Serglige Con Chulaind" one finds an element of the game, i.e, "captive by enclosure".

In the Tain Bo Fraich one finds a description of the board "...a board of thinned bronze with four corners (lit.ears and elbows) of gold. The men on the board were of gold and silver. It seems the same number of players were on each side. The exact number of pieces used in the game was not revealed. The main object of the game seems to have been the capturing of one's opponent's men, if not his complete annihilation.

Brandub (Brannamh)

In his "Tree shafts of death", Keating (1631) makes an allusion to a game, which he calls brannamh. He says that life is like a brannamh game. Just as the king, queen, and all the other pieces, have their proper places, so also is it with human beings in the brannamh game of life. When death comes all these distinctions are levelled and a piece when taken is cast into the bag regardless of rank. Mac White (1943), sees this description as one of modern chess. We are also given an idea of how many pieces were used in the game. Thirteen pieces were used, five on one side and eight on the other, as evidenced by Acallam na Senorach: "... my famed brandub is in the mountain above leitir Bhroin, five voiceless men of white silver and eight of red gold".

Buanfach

We read about this game in the Tain in which Cuchulain played buanfach with Loeg, his charioteer. And despite keeping his eye on the plain below him, Loeg won every other game.

Mac White (1943), suggests that the games of fidchell and brandub cannot

be completely reconstructed from the existing information. He goes on to say that board games can be classified under three headings, race games, chase games and battle games. In the race game, the object is to reach the terminal point as quickly as possible with moves which are controlled by the casting of a die. Nowhere are dice mentioned in descriptions of fidchell or brandub. This would exclude a race game like backgammon. In the chase game, a single piece tries to break through a formation of opposing pieces and reach the edge of the board; thus escaping the hunters.

A more complicated variant, according to Mac White (1943), is that in which the quarry is protected by a number of defenders usually half of the number of the attacking party. In such cases, capture is by enclosure, i.e., one man is taken when two pieces of the opposite side occupy the squares adjacent to it and in the same straight line.

What we know about fidchell from the Irish literary sources as explained by Mac White (1943) is: 1. fidchell was played on a four-sided board between two individuals; 2. It seems to have been won by alternative players; 3. The lines of the board were straight; 4. The pieces were black and white; 5. Capture was by enclosure; 6. The normal move was that of the Rook in chess; 7. The pieces of the opposing sides were of different color or material; 8. There was an equal number of pieces on both sides; 9. The object of the game was the capturing of one's opponent's pieces, if not his annihilation; 10. There seems to have been a move called "a move of banishment".

Buanfach, according to Mac White (1943), may have resembled a Laplander game called Tablut or a Norse game called Hnefatafl. Tablut is played on a board of eighty-one squares with the king in the central square. All pieces have the same move, that of the rook in chess. Play is by alternative moves, and one player tries to bring his king to the edge of the board, while the other tries to confine him so that he has no power of moving. In either case, the game comes to an end. The king cannot be taken; any other man is taken when two of the opposing men occupy two squares

adjacent to it and in the same straight line with it. No piece other than the king can ever play to the central square. (The Welsh game tawlbwrdd also belongs to this family. It was played on an 11 x 11 board with the centre square marked). The sides were 16 men against 8 defenders (plus the king), according to the laws and 24 against 12 according to the Pensiarth MS.

A gaming board was discovered in the course of excavations at Ballinderry. This board is shown by its decoration to be of Manx origin and to date c. 950-75 AD. Instead of squares, peg-holes were used (Hencken, 1933). It is a 7 x 7 board, with the centre peg-hole surrounded by two concentric circles. The four corners are also marked. Hencken (1933), strongly believes that it was a fox and geese board but others believe it belongs to the Tablut series. Brandub, according to Mac White (1943), belongs to the tablut family. There is a king whose proper place is the central square. So, it is four men, plus the king against eight. Mac White (1943), notes that the most suitable board for such numbers is a 7 x 7 board, like the one found in Ballinderry. The game of the Ballinderry board was played both in Ireland and in Viking Man.

In the game of fidchell, Mac White (1943), notes that there were two incompatible pieces of evidence. On the one hand, the game was won by alternate players and on the other hand the sides were equal. In all chase games the attacker is stronger and more often than not will win. Thus for fair-play purposes, the players changed sides after each game in fidchell. Fidchell also seems to have been regarded as being on a higher plane than brandub and was thus a more complicated variant than brandub.

If we regard fidchell as a game with equal sides, it seems, according to Mac White (1943), that fidchell was a battle game like ludus latrunculorum. The main object of the game was capturing one's opponent's men.

Games of Wales

Wales has had many games and pastimes similar to other Celtic areas of Europe. They played bando, a stick game, similar to Irish hurling. They also have cnapan (similar to hurling to country in Cornwall); handball and fives (similar to Irish handball); baseball (like rounders); and cad (like Gaelic football or rugby). Wales also had such games as wrestling, archery, bowls, tennis, fencing, horsemanship, kayles, quoits, throwing the sledge (hammer), feat stone, hurling the bar, tossing the pike, jousting with lance on horse back, hunting, fishing and falconry. They also had indoor board games like chess, fox and geese and gwyddwyll (like chess). Other past times were cock-fighting, bull-baiting and bear-baiting.

Similar to the 14 tests for entrance into the Fianna Eireann, the Welsh had 24 feats of skill that a gentleman needed to achieve. In these feats, the mind and body were taken into consideration. Anyone who excelled in all these twenty-four feats was deemed to have reached an ideal state of a healthy mind in a healthy body. None of these games were open to women. These feats were divided up in the following manner:

24 Feats of Skill Needed to Become a Welsh Gentleman

Six feats of activity: Running, leaping, swimming, wrestling, riding, or feats in chariots of war, display of strength (in supporting and hurling weights, such as pitching the bar, or a large stone, throwing the sledge or quoits).

Four exercises of weapons: Archery, throwing the javelin, and to hurl with a sling. Fencing with a sword and buckler. Fencing with the two-handed sword. Playing with the quarter staff.

Three rural sports: Hunting, Fishing and Hawking.

Seven domestic and literary games: Poetry, singing a song with the harp or crith. Singing an Ode in four parts with accentuation. Heraldry. Embassy. Playing the harp. Reading Welsh.

Four indoor games: Chess, draughts, and shuffle board. Dice or

backgammon. Tuning the harp.

Cnapan (like Rugby)

According to Brian John (1985), the ancient game of cnapan has fascinated
local historians, and students of the history of sport, for many generations. It has a
strong claim to being the precursor of rugby union football, although in some respects
it seems to have been more akin to modern American football. George Owen (1603),
believed the game to have been invented by the Trojans or ancient Britons (Celts).
It is known that the Romans played a ball game called "Harpastum" which involved
both carrying and scrimmaging. They also invented a game called la "Soule" which
survived in Brittany until 1870. It is therefore not beyond the bounds of possibility
that the origins of Cnapan go back 2,000 years or more.

The following is a description of capan by George Owen in 1603:

The companies being come together about one or two of the clock after noon,
beginneth the play in this sort. After a cry made, both parties draw together into
some plain, all stripped bare saving a light pair of breeches, bare headed, bare bodied,
bare legs, and feet, their clothing being laid together in great heaps under the charge
of certain keepers appointed for the purpose, for if he leave but his shirt on his back
in the fury of the game it is most commonly torn to pieces... there is a round ball
prepared of a reasonable quantity so as a man may hold it in his hand and no more.
This ball is of some massy wood as box, yew, crab or holly tree, and should be boiled
in tallow for to make it slippery and hard to be held. This ball is called cnapan... he
that catcheth it hurleth it towards the country he playeth for. For goal or appointed
place there is none, neither needeth any, for the play is not given over until the
cnapan be so far carried that there is no hope to return it back that night...

The cnapan being once cast forth you shall see the same tossed backward and
forward by hurling throws in strange sort, for in three or four throws you shall see the
whole body of the game removed half a mile and more, and in this sort it is a strange
sight to see a thousand or fifteen hundred naked men to concur together in a cluster
in following the cnapan as the same is hurled backwards and forwards.   There is

besides the corps or main body of the play certain scouts or fore-runners whose charge is always to keep before the cnapan which way soever it pass.... If the cnapan happen to come to the hands of a lusty hurler he throweth the same in a wonderful sort towards his country, further than any man would judge the strength of the arm were able. If it happen to the hands of a good footman he presently singleth himself and runneth and breaketh out of the body of the game into some plain ground in the swiftest sort he can which, being perceived, all the company followeth, where the good footmanship of all the company is plainly discerned, being a comfortable sight to see five or six hundred good footmen to follow in chase a mile or two as greyhounds after a hare....It is strange to behold with what eagerness this play is followed, for in the fury of the chase they respect neither hedge, ditch, pale or wall, hill, dale, bushes, river or rock or any other passable impediment, but all seemeth plain unto them wherein also they show such agility in running, such activity in leaping, such strength and skilful deliverance in hurling, such boldness in assaulting, such stoutness in resisting, such policy in inventing, such skill in preventing, as taking them out of their game they are not able to perform or invent half the prowess or devices shown in the same, a thing much noted of men of judgement....The horsemen have monstrous cudgels of three foot and a half long, as big as the party is well able to wield, and he that thinketh himself well horsed maketh means to his friends of the footmen to have the capan delivered him, which being gotten he putteth spurs and away as fast as the legs will carry. After him runneth the rest of the horsemen, and if they can overtake him he summoneth a delivery of the capan, which should be thrice by law of the game, but now they scarce give it once till he be struck. And if he hold the cnapan it is lawful for the assailant to beat him with his cudgel till he deliver it.... This exercise, if due orders were observed and the abuses reformed, were a most warlike exercise both for horse and foot, but the disorders are so increased that the play is banished and almost forsaken. Cnapan was truly an amateur game. The players would strive to the death for glory and fame (like true Celts) which they esteemed dearer than any worldly wealth. A variation of the game

of cnapan was a contest in throwing a wooden ball for the farthest distance. The rules for the main game were as follows:

1. Each side shall be made up of three parts. Of the first part there shall be sturdy gamesmen who shall remain in the throng or main body of the game. Of the second part there shall be scouts or fore-runners who shall be exceedingly fleet of foot and who shall always strive to keep before the cnapan. Of the third part there shall be borderers who shall remain at the edges of the play. These borderers shall seek by surreption to snatch the cnapan from the contrary party, and shall hinder those who would transport the cnapan towards the cnapan post.

2. It is said that the gamesmen of the main throng shall be men of strength in disputing, boldness in assaulting, and stoutness in resisting; the scouts or forerunners shall be lusty hurlers of the cnapan and also men of agility and good footmanship, able to fly swift as an arrow and be able to show skilful deliverance of the cnapan to those that be with them; and the borderers shall with wondrous invention prevent those who run against them, leaping upon them without fear to take them out of the game.

3. The judge shall begin play in this sort. After a cry made to draw the parties together in the middle of the plain, he shall hurl the cnapan upright into the air. At the fall, he that catcheth it hurleth it away from his own country, and the play shall so continue.

4. If the cnapan shall be set down at a cnapan post the judge shall cry "Cnapan" and shall record the victors in that play. After ten minutes the judge shall commence the play again in the middle of the plain in the aforesaid manner, and so the game shall continue until the end of the third hour. At five of the clock after noon, the company that won the greatest number of plays shall be declared the victor.

5. If any gamesman shall weary of the play and if his breath or legs shall fail him, he shall rest awhile away from the field of play, where his confederates and handmaidens shall minister to his needs until he be well enough to continue the play.

6. No horsemen shall henceforth be permitted to come among the footmen for in past time horsemen with cudgels did occasion great annoyance to the foot troops, harming and hurting them in the play. Neither shall there be henceforth any bastinado, nor hurling of stones, nor taking up of any cudgels. Neither shall there be any warlike disorder, neither shall any private grudges be revenged in the play, lest the game shall again be brought into disrepute.

7. In resisting and assaulting, and in taking out the players of the other country, and in striving for possession of the cnapan, the footmen shall neither strike with their fists or heads, neither shall they use their knees or feet, nor any other parts of their bodies, in such a way as shall cause annoyance or injury. The game shall be free of all fury and anger; indeed such abuses have caused the game to be forsaken and banished in past times.

The object of the game shall be for each side to set the cnapan down past one or other cnapan post. There shall be a cnapan post at each end of the Berry Sands, and each side shall defend its own country and make play towards the post belonging to the other side.

Cnapan was not only a game, it was a true test of fitness for those who wished to engage in battle.

Bando (Bandy or Chaware Bando)

This game is similar to English hockey, Irish hurling, Scottish shinty or Brittany lacrosse, which, until the end of the 19th century was popular throughout Wales. Villages and parishes would compete against each other. Rules used to be set just before a game since they tended to vary between regions. The game is now obsolete. It was usually played on Shrove Tuesday. Two teams of equal numbers carrying Bando sticks attempted to hit a small ball through their opponent's goal. The rules were as follows:

1.   each team must have an equal number of players.

2.   the number of players may vary from 10 to 40 players per team.

3.   the game was played within a designated area and goals were marked

by wooden posts at both ends.

4.   new rules had to be voiced before the game began and agreed upon by both teams.

The main objective was to score the greatest number of goals.

Handball (Chwarae Pel)

This was a very popular outdoor pastime, especially in the latter half of the 19th century. However, in this century it has seen a decline in popularity. It is identical to the game played in Ireland or the Basque pelota or the English Fives. Handball seems to have had its hay day in Walesduring the second half of the 1800's. In recent years there has been a revival of the sport of handball in Wales. Fives was usually played in church yards by hitting a ball with the hand against the wall. There are three types of fives each one reflected the type of wall used. In the 1800's the game of handball was carried out on the same lines as prize-fighting with champions competing for the purses awarded, while large sums were wagered by the spectators. In the 1900's there was a decline in the game, although it enjoyed a revival during the depression years of the 1930's.

Handball is also known as "chwarae pel". The game was developed from a pastime of playing ball against the walls of buildings, especially churches. The game was played on a court similar to a squash court without a back wall. Each competitor attempts to hit the ball with the palm of the hand off a wall so that the opponent is unable to successfully return it to the wall. The rules were as follows:

1.   games may be played by two players or by teams consisting of two players per side.

2.   the ball must be struck with only the palm of a player's hand.

3.   if a player is unable to successfully return the ball the opponent is awarded a point.

4.   court dimensions, scoring and length of games vary.

Archery

Archery is one of the earliest games practised by the Welsh people. It was also popular because of its military applications. As a game, Archery was used to promote good shooting techniques and accuracy for the military. Competitors attempt to hit a desired spot on a target from a certain distance with an arrow launched from a bow.

Each competitor must shoot from a designated distance (rules may vary).

The goal is to be the most consistent and accurate shooter of an arrow from the greatest distance. This activity was common in most of the Celtic areas of Western Europe.

Kayles (Bowling)

Kayles was formerly played in the open air on greens as well as in bowling alleys. By the middle ages, despite numerous attempts to prohibit it, the game was widespread and popular among the common people. During the 19th century, it was banned by local magistrates because of the betting that was associated with the game. It is now obsolete in its older form.

Kayles as a game is probably a precursor to lawn bowling and the indoor bowling games of today. Competitors attempt to throw an object, a ball or a metal-edged wooden disc at an upright set of pegs known as "kayles/skittles" and knock down as many as possible. The rules are simple:

1. men, women and children may participate.
2. each participant has the same number of chances to knock down the same number of pegs.

The goal is to knock down all of the pegs in the least number of throws.

Wrestling

Wrestling was very popular in most Celtic regions. Welsh wrestlers were particularly renowned for their wrestling skills. The rules and techniques were similar to Cornish wrestling. A match involved two participants wrestling in a sandpit/ring. Referees/"sticklers" officiated and a victory was called when a

competitor obtained a fall (forcing the opponent to touch the ground with a part of the body other than the feet). Preference in style was a "kicking and tripping" approach. The rules were as follows:

1.   a fall is awarded a competitor when their opponent touches the ground with a part of the body other than the feet.

2.   there is no time limit for matches.

Chariot Races

The use of horses was very important in the Celtic culture. The chariot race was a popular event during festivals and celebrations. The use of the chariot as a vehicle for games competition occurred as a result of its military importance and a need to develop proficient and skilled drivers. Charioteers lined up side by side and upon hearing a signal raced toward a finish line.

1.   the number of charioteers may vary.

2.   the distances travelled may vary.

3.   The goal is to cross the finish line first.

Welsh Baseball

This is a 11-a-side team game played with a wooden bat and hard ball, mainly in South Wales and parts of north-west England. It differs in several respects, and notably in the matter of equipment, from the more widely-known form of baseball played in the U.S.A. The clothing worn by the players is much simpler: ordinary football-style shirts and shorts, and either spiked running shoes or lightweight football boots. Catching gloves and other protective gear are not used.

The Welsh baseball bat resembles more a cricket bat than it does a baseball bat. Made of willow, it has a flat striking surface. It may be 3ft. (91 cm.) long, and 3 ½ in. (8-9 cm.) broad at the base. Unlike that of a cricket bat, the face tapers evenly into the handle, a maximum breadth of 2 ½ in. (6.4 cm.) being allowed at a point 19 in. (48.3 cm.) above the base.

The ball is of approximately the same size and weight as a cricket ball, but

covered in white chrome leather. It is delivered underarm by a bowler (not a pitcher) from a rectangle 10ft. (3m.) long and 2 ft. 6 in. (76 cm.) wide, the front edge of which is 50 ft. (15 m.) from the batting point. Behind the rectangle stands a referee. A fair ball must reach the batsman above his knee and below his chin, and in striking it his rear foot may not move beyond the centre line of the small batting diamond in which he stands. Behind the batsman stands a backstop, equivalent of the American baseball catcher.

The inner field of play is also shaped, as in American Baseball, like a diamond, the four points of which are the four bases to which the batsman runs. The batting area (known as the centre peg) is 15 ft. (4.6 m.) in front of the fourth, or home, base, which is 100 ft. (30.5 m.) from the second base, at the opposite point of the diamond. The first and third bases are 86 ft. (26.2 m.) apart. Each base is represented not by a plate but by a pole stuck in the ground, which must be touched by the batsman reaching or passing it. All 11 members of a team bat before the inning is completed.

Supporters of this form of the sport claim that the American game grew from Welsh baseball. The ancient game of Rounders flourished in the west of England. It spread to isolated pockets in England, notably around Liverpool. Internationals have been played between the two countries since 1908. The first such match, after the Second World War, drew 16,000 spectators to the grounds of Cardiff Castle, and though its appeal has since waned, the B.B.C televised a match from Cardiff in the summer of 1971. Presently, the game is scarcely played in Wales beyond the areas of Cardiff and Newport, but enthusiasm for it is as intense there during the summer as it is for Association Football during the winter. The Welsh National Baseball League has eight divisions, more than 60 clubs and about 1,400 adult players. Many thousands of children play it in schools in those areas and also in Liverpool. The great advantage of the Welsh baseball diamond is that it can be easily pitched on in comparatively rough ground. Even the adult game is played almost exclusively on common parkland and not in specially-prepared sports fields.

The Game of Cad

The carrying ball game called Cad was played by all branches of the Celtic race. The form of the game varied from place to place. In Ireland, they talked about "ag imirt caid" (playing football). There are two varieties of Cad, according to Father Ferris (Irish Times, 23 Jan. 1968): cross-country Cad (inter-parish) and field Cad (definite space and number of players). In Britain, during the 18th century, the carrying game of cad was dropped and was replaced by the kicking game, later called soccer. The word Cad means the scrotum of the bull (the shape of a rugby ball). Up to 1885 the football game played in Ireland was Cad. Michael Cusack introduced the kicking game in 1885 and called it Gaelic football. He modified the soccer rules of 1867 by allowing the use of the hands. According to Fr. Ferris, Cusack with the stroke of a pen, killed the thousand year old game of Cad in Ireland.

The cross-country version of Cad was similar to hurling to country in Cornwall or la Soule in Brittany. The field version of Cad is similar to hurling to goal in Cornwall, or rugby as we now know it.

In the early half of the eighteen century the most popular game in Wales was a form of "football" where the ball was thrown instead of being kicked; the game resembled Cnapan. The game referred to here is most likely Cad. This game of football was often played in the streets.

Feat Stone

A feat stone was a smooth, oval stone used in contests of strength. Usually weighing between seventy-five and a hundred pounds, it could be lifted or else lifted and thrown, either by raising it with both hands and hurling it backwards over the head or between the legs. The game, which usually took place in churchyards on Sundays and feast-days, is mentioned in the *Pedair Camp ar Hugain* ("The Twenty-four Feats" p.94), which every gentleman in Wales in the Middle Ages was expected to achieve in order to keep his status in society. The game has been revived in local folk festivals.

Playing at Base

In this game the players used a bat or a piece of stick about two feet (60 cm) long, and a ball, and ran round a base, that has a circular enclosure marked out with stones. This was a game similar to rounders as played in Ireland.

Gwyddbwyll (Wood-Sense)

This game is identified with chess. There are numerous references to board-games in Welsh and Irish literature. We know that they were played on lavishly fabricated boards. In the Dream of Macsen, for example, the hero has a vision in which he sees two auburn-haired youths playing the game with golden pieces on a silver board. The game takes on supernatural qualities in Y Tair Rhamant; Peredur, in the Castle of Wonders, sees two sets of Gwyddbwyll playing against each other with no human hand to move them. The set he supports loses the game, the other raises a shout, 'as if they were men' and he hurls the board angrily into a lake. A third reference is that in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy: Arthur and Owain sit before a silver board playing one game of gwyddbwyll after another but their play is interrupted by a succession of young men who ask Owain why he allows his ravens to be harassed by the Emperor's men. It has been suggested that this is an allegorical representation of the battle of Mount Badon and it may be compared with the incident in the Icelandic sage in which Frithiof and Bjorn play at *hnefataft*, a medieval hunt-game. The game is still played.

Fox and Geese (Stol Ganddo)

Fox and geese is a game involving the strategic manoeuvre of pegs fitting into a series of holes in a wooden board. One player's object is to immobilize the "fox" by moving his thirteen "geese" to pen him in; the other player, moving alternately, tries to move his "fox" through the net to the other end of the board. This ancient game is mentioned in the Icelandic Grettis Saga (c.1300) and was popular in Wales from the fourteenth century onwards. Although there is now a standard version, the form of play known in Wales varied according to locality. The game is still played in parts of Wales.

Animal Games

Cock-fighting was very common in Wales in the 17th century. Landlords expected their tenants to rear cocks for them. These cocks were used in the cock fights. The clergy supported cock fighting. They frequently announced from the pulpit that there would be a cock-fight after the service. The aftermath of a cock fight was often no better than a drunken orgy. However, the clergy eventually intervened and tried to wean the people away from their delight in the cockpits.

Bull and bear-baiting

Little information is given in the literature relating to bull or bear-baiting. The bull-baiting was similar to the bull-fight in the Basque areas of Spain and France. King James I issued his book of sports in 1618 in which he authorized the people of Wales to enjoy their traditional pastimes on Sundays, except bull and bear-baiting.

Games of Cornwall

According to Roger Holmes (field notes), Cornish wrestling (omdowl) is a very popular sport in Cornwall. The sport is alive and well and thriving with much interplay with their neighbors in Brittany.

According to Holmes, Cornish "hurling to goal" has not been played for at least a century or more. Rugby may have had its real origin in Cornish "hurling to goal". In both games the ball may only be passed backwards. Disputed possession of the ball in "hurling to goal" was settled by a "wrestle". The "wrestle" has been replaced by a scrum in rugby. In rugby a "hand-off" on the attacker is permitted. Likewise in "hurling to goal" one was allowed to push off the attacker with the hand by giving a blow on the chest of the opponent with the flat of the hand.

Horseracing has also been a popular sport in Cornwall as it has been in Ireland, Scotland, Brittany and Wales. Rowing gigs,according to Holmes, is a thriving sport in Cornwall. The gig is a long, lean, light sea boat rowed by oars and steered by a coxswain. The faster it is rowed the more it rises out of the water. These boats were originally used to put pilots on ships and for life saving. The boat is typically thirty two feet (10m. approx.) long by four to four and one half feet (1 ½ m) in the beam. The gigs were a common mode of transport in Cornwall in past centuries. At the beginning of this century they faded away. More recently, many new gigs have been built. They are now used for racing. This popular sport in Cornwall has now been introduced to Brittany, England, Holland, and the U.S.A. The oldest surviving boat was built in 1812.

Kayles or keels (in Wales) a form of bowling, is played in Cornwall. It is called "quilles" in Brittany. Tug o'war is also a thriving sport in Cornwall. It is very popular among farmers.

Sheaf-tossing is a part of the Cornish games. Hurling to country, like cnapan (Wales) or Cad in Ireland (a type of medieval football) and wrestling are still played in Cornwall.

Gavin Dickson (2001), our Cornish connection in Australia, sends us the

following information about Celtic games down under. Gaelic football, he states, influenced the development of Aussie Rules Football. There is now, he notes, a hybrid game played internationally. Irish handball was popular in Colonial times. There were three types of Celtic wrestling practised in Australia:

Irish Scuffling

Scottish Backhold

Cornish Omdowl/Wrasslin

It was the Cornish style that became the most popular. It was contested at a professional level with Interstate Championships attracting crowds of over 10 thousand spectators. However, Celtic wrestling peaked in popularity in Australia in the 1890's. It lingered on until 1920 when it was completely replaced by professional "catch as catch can" wrestling. There is currently a revival of Celtic sports in Australia. Last May (2001), the Australian Champioships for Cornish Wrasslin, was held in Moonta, South Australia.

"Hurling"

The traditional Celtic game played in Cornwall is hurling. According to Ken George (field notes), this game is not at all like hurling as played in Ireland. It consists of a struggle between two groups of inhabitants in a parish; the townsfolk versus the country folk. Anyone may join in, but because it is very rough, it tends to be confined to virile young men. Each group has a specific boundary over which they must attempt to carry a small ball. This ball is made of hard wood covered in silver. It is thrown into the crowd by the Mayor with the words in Cornish: "Tre ha pow, gwrewgh agas gwella" (town and country, do your best). The game, which has been described as a cross between medieval football and all-in wrestling, lasts one to two hours. Today, this game is played only in two parishes in Cornwall, St-Columb and St-Ives. The rules are a little different in each parish.

According to Roger Holmes (1990), there are two versions of hurling in Cornwall: hurling to the country and hurling to the goal. In both games the ball could only be passed backward and a disputed ball was settled by a wrestle. The game was similar to rugby. It even may be the true origin of rugby. The wrestle is now replaced in rugby with the scrum.

Hurling - "to Country"

Hurling to the country was popular in the west of Cornwall. No sticks were used. Players carried the ball across the countryside through bogs, rivers, forests, hills and fields. Each team attempted to carry a ball over their opponent's predetermined goal (usually one's own parish) which may be two or three miles from the game starting point. The game began with a toss up when the ball was thrown into the air. The players attempted to throw or carry the ball back to their own parish. The general rules are:

1. Each team must have an equal number of players.

2. Players may be stopped by tackling them.

3. Once the ball has become stationary it is rethrown and play begins again.

4.   Forward passes were not allowed.

The main goal is to carry the ball to one's own parish.

Speed, endurance, strength, agility, coordination and cooperation are important qualities for this game.

Hurling "to Goal"

This game has not been played seriously in Cornwall for more than a century. Hurling to goal was popular in east Cornwall. Matches were often played at weddings where guests would participate. Some believe that this game was the origin of rugby.

Players attempted to carry the ball to a predetermined goal which might be a building, a fence or a tree. The area of play was about 500 square yards (459 square metres). Two teams faced each other. A small ball was tossed into the air between the teams. Players tried to carry the ball over the predetermined goal. Only backward passes were allowed. Disputed possession was settled by a wrestle. In modern rugby the "wrestle" has been replaced by the scrum. In today's rugby it is also permitted to "hand-off" an attacker. In hurling "to goal" one was permitted to push off an attacker with the hand by giving a blow to the chest of the opponent with the flat of the hand. The following rules were generally adhered to:

1.   Each team must have an equal number of players.

2.   Players may be stopped by tackling them.

3.   Once the ball has become stationary it is rethrown and play begins again.

4.   The playing field is 500 yards (459.0 m) in length.

5.   Disputed possession of the ball could be settled by a wrestle.

6.   No forward throws were allowed.

The main goal of the game was to cross one's opponent's goal with the ball.

Wrestling or Omdowl

Cornish wrestling was performed upright. Ground play was not allowed. Originally, one played with little or no rules. During the 18th century professional

promoters came into play. In 1923 the Cornish Wrestling Association was formed in order to standardize rules and promote championships and sport generally.

Cornish wrestling was probably developed initially as a training exercise for soldiers in preparation for war. A match involved two participants wrestling in a sandpit/ring. Referees/"sticklers" officiated and a victory was called when a competitor obtained a "Lamm". Preference in style was a "hugging and heaving" style. The general rules are:

1. Lamm is a backfall with both shoulders touching the ground simultaneously.

2. There was no time limit (matches last until a Lamm is obtained).

The main goal is to be the first to obtain a Lamm (fall).

Strength, power, agility, endurance, flexibility, balance and quick reaction time are important skills in this activity.

A thick jacket (similar to Judo Kimono) and shorts are worn during the wrestling match. No shoes are worn.

Gigs

We have very little solid information on the history of gigs. These boats (according to Roger Holmes), were in use in the 17th-18th century in Cornwall and perhaps before that. The last surviving one is the "Newqug" built in 1812. These boats were originally used to put pilots on ships and for life-saving. They fell out of use in the first half of this century. With the building of new boats, the sport has become very popular.

The gig is a long, lean, light, sea-boat rowed by oars and steered by a cockswain. The faster it is rowed the more it rises out of the water. The boat is typically 32 feet (10 m. approx) long and about 4 feet (1.23m.) wide. The following rules are in vogue:

1. The boats have to be standardized for weight and size.

2. An equal number of oarspersons are on each boat.

3. The first boat to cross the finish line is the winner.

The main goal is to row as fast as possible and to cross the finish line first.

Horse Racing

Horse racing is a very popular sport in Cornwall. The Celts were always great horse lovers.

Kayles (Bowls)

Kayles (bowls) was a game played by the Cornish people in similar fashion to other Celtic areas.

Tug of War

This sport is popular in Cornwall as it is in Scotland, Ireland and Brittany. It is a sport very popular among young farmers.

Sheaf Tossing

This popular activity among farmers in Ireland, Scotland and Brittany is also very popular in Cornwall.

Games of the Isle of Man

The Isle of Man had Celtic games known as the Manx games. Little information exists on these games. They were similar to games played in Scotland, such as shinty. Archaeological discoveries in the Isle of Man found a board game known as merles, which was once prominent in the Isle of Man. The later game may be Viking or it may be Celtic in origin.

Folk Life Survey in the Isle of Man

In 1948 a survey was carried out on the island as a response to the rapid disappearance of the Manx language and traditional culture. The survey revealed very little on games.

The last native speakers of Manx died in the 1950's/1960's aged in their 80's and 90's. Manx as a spoken language of the people began to decline from the 1880's/1890's as English became the teaching language in the schools. The Manx museum has photographs of a wooden cammag ball, a cammag stick made from gorse bons, a mills (or merellos) board and nine men's morris.

In the mid 19th century, hardy immigrants from the Isle of Man settled in Laxley near Mineral Point, Wisconsin, USA. They built a church in Laxley. It became the hub of their community life. No traces of traditional Celtic games were found in this area. All that now remains of these Celtic pioneers is a stone monument, erected in 1855.

Cammag

In the Isle of Man cammag (similar to shinty and hurling) had many variations. It was a game played using sticks made from gorse bons, ash, sycamore, elm or blackthorn with a crook on the end (similar to shinty or hockey sticks). The ball was a lump of cork, old tin, rag covered ball, round wooden ball, goose egg shaped ball of holly wood, old spool, ball of cork covered in stocking thread and then sewn up in leather. The ball was called a crig, a crick or cluggan.

Variations of the game:

1. Variation one (looked like golf): it was played by a group travelling from one village to the next along the lanes. Each person took turns in hitting the ball along the route. Golf used to be seen on the Island as a "polite" form of cammag and this style of the game may be related to golf.

2. Variation two (similar to field hockey or shinty): this was an organized team game between two villages. There was a referee and spectators lining the hedge banks of the lane. The lane was marked with a line down the middle and at either end. The goal was for a team to carry the ball to the opposite teams' line and to cross it. One was not allowed to kick the ball or to raise it above two feet while passing. Eight players were in each team.

3. Variation three: The game was played in a grass field with a course marked across it with sticks, 40 yards apart. A referee ensured that the ball did not go outside the sticks and that players stayed within their own area. The goal of the game was to pass the ball along the length of the field and to be the first team to reach a designated number of runs.

4. Variation Four (similar to Cornish hurling to country): This was a free for all game in which two teams participated. The size of the teams could vary from 12 a side up to 150/200 on the field. It was frequently referred to as a rough game or "real war declared" with no fixed number on each side. It was called, "just a meeting of sailors in their ganseys and whiskers, the able bodied men in their prime. An impetuous game". (It sounded like a virtual clash of male hormones, or

an expression of male macho). Two posts were set up. Each team tried to drive the ball the length of the field without being offside or handling the ball. The teams wore their own colours. This variation of the game could also be played in the village streets, with goals at either end.

Cammag was compared to golf, shinny or field hockey. According, to the local informants it varied from being a rough free for all with hardly any rules to a highly disciplined game for village teams. The game was associated with the major religious festivals such as Good Friday, St-Stephen's day, the Old Christmas day and Christmas sports (Cloie yu Ullick). It seems to have been a particular custom to have been played at Christmas and generally through the winter. The fishermen frequently played cammag.

One specific custom was for Arbory and Rushen parishes/villages to play cammag on St-Stephen's days, starting at Colby bridge and ending at Rushen Church. This variation of cammag resembles Cornish hurling to country. Cammag, according to the informants, was the only particularly Celtic game played on the Island. The game varied in how it was played, from knocking stones along the road with a stick to large village games during the religious festivals.

None of the games are now played. In 1940, golf and field hockey were seen as the more "polite" if not correct successors to cammag.

Nine Men's Morris

The aim was to roll small balls into nine holes made in the ground. Each hole had a separate scoring value. The game can also be played on a board having nine holes/arches. In the 1880's, a place on old Red Pier on the Island was still known as "The Nine Holes". A presentment to the ecclesiastical court in November, 1765 shows the game was popular and being played: "they present William Arthur for having idle meetings of people in his house and playing at Nine Holes on the Lord's Day", Malew, Isle of Man.

Newman - Mond (1964), states that the 3,300 year old game was first publicised and immortalized by Shakespeare in Midsummer Night's Dream. The game was found in the excavation of a Viking settlement in the Isle of Man in 1958. When the game is played on a board with nine men a-side, the board is empty at the beginning of the game and the counters (white and black) are placed in turn. Captures are made by forming rows of three a mill, as in tic-tac-toe or noughts and crosses. In Nine Men's Morris, one needs three-men-in-a-row seven times, unless you win by blockading your opponent so that he cannot move. It is a highly skilled game with countless variations. Sterckx (1972), notes that one found a game of merelles at Wicklow, Ireland in 1879. The game of merelles was called caislean cam (crooked castle) in Ireland.

"Kit", "Kit-Kat", "Thit" or "Kitty" (similar to Breton Pirli)

One has a small piece of wood 3"-6" long, which is pointed at both ends and numbered 1-4 on the sides. One hits the Kit or Thit with a long stick (18" by 2") and either let it fall to the ground or drive it forward as it bounces up. The number on the top side of the kit either equals the number of points won or the number of hits one was then allowed. The game could either be played competitively with teams or by a single person.

Kiels, Quoits, Kites

This game could be played with horse shoes. The goal was to throw the shoe on to a stick that was standing upright in the ground. The distance between the

thrower and the stick varied.

Another variation of this game was to throw flat stones at a marker, such as a post in the ground or a tall stone in the ground. This game was played by men and boys. In 1709, a presentment was made of two young boys playing quoits during Divine Service.

During the last century, the story goes, emigrants from Patrick to the United States introduced the "Old Manx Game" of quoits to one area where it was renamed "horse shoe".

Shammy

One child is in the "den" and has to catch the other children before they can reach the den.

Other games played on the island were: marbles, rounders, jacks and iron hoops (from the blacksmith).

Games of Brittany

Brittany on the West Coast of France is a country rich in many Celtic traditions and games.

The Breton games have many similarities with the games played in the other Celtic areas. The names may vary and the rules of the game may vary but the basic structure of the game is similar. Brittany has la soule (cad, hurling to country) and la crosse (hurling or shinty). It also has wrestling and tug o'war as well as strength events, similar to the Highland games events. They have la gerbe (sheaf-toss), weight throwing, le lever de perche (lifting the caber without the toss), the axle lift, and the sack lift. They also have foot-races and horse races. They have jousting and jeu de paume (tennis, handball). They have a variety of bowling games and jeu de galoche et de palet. They also have a variety of novelty games (le banquet russe, le casse pot, la poutre, climbing the greasy pole etc.).

Breton Wrestling

Breton and Cornish wrestling are similar.

Wrestlers stand with arms locked to their opponent's shoulders and attempt to wrestle their opponent's shoulders to the ground and obtain a Lamm (a fall). The rules are simple:

1. A lamm is a backfall with both shoulders touching the ground at the same time.

2. There is no time limit (matches last until a Lamm is obtained).

The main object is to obtain the first Lamm.

Strength, power, agility, balance, endurance and flexibility are important qualities for this sport.

Shorts and a long sleeve cotton shirts are worn by the competitors.

This event may be played during any season in or out of doors within a ring.

Breton tug of War

Many traditional games have a rural origin. Tug of war in Brittany would seem to have originated on the west coast. Tug-of-war is of course found everywhere. Like many traditional games, it copies a universal maritime practice. One needs a rope about 25 metres long and about 40 mm in diameter, and a long stick. The pitch should be grassy, since the tug-of-war is played bare-foot. The game needs a space about 50 metres long, by 10 to 15 metres wide.

Each team has 7 members, 6 players and a "hucheur" or caller. The "hucheur" is a player who neither pulls nor touches the rope, but is there to encourage and direct his/her team, a vital role similar to (the role of the cox of a rowing-8). One is allowed to change the "hucheur" between pulls. A line is drawn in the middle of the pitch at right-angles to the direction of the pull. The central mark on the rope is placed on this line. The referee puts a stick in the ground at the exact place where the rope crosses the median line. The set-up procedure is as follows: the two teams get into place, either behind the lateral marks on the rope, 3.5 metres on both sides of the central mark or anywhere in front of these lateral marks, as long as they do not cross

the central line.

The players take hold of the rope. It is forbidden to wind the rope around any part of the body. It is also forbidden to dig the feet into the earth. At a signal from the referee (whistle...) they begin to pull. The referee leaves his/her stick in the original position while moving with the vertical movement of the rope. The tug is won by the team that manages to pull either the marker on the rope or a part of the first player's body (if placed in front of this marker) over the median line. A tug must not take more than three minutes. If, at the end of this time, neither team has managed to win, the heat is declared a draw.

A game is played in three heats. A win in two heats produces a winning team. Lots are drawn at the beginning to choose which team pulls on which side. The teams change sides for the second heat, and re-draw for positions for the third. There can also be a drawing of lots to make up the teams, which should be as balanced as possible.

Short Stick Tug of War

It is said that the Bretons had a special fondness for stick games. This particular game, which is found in various forms in Brittany, has its origins in the chore of cooking the mash for the animals for which one had to use these "baz-yod" or "mash-sticks".

In Eastern Brittany, sticks used for the transport of wheat sacks were used. The obsession with challenges to compare one's strength with someone else's did the rest!

The set-up is as follows:

A solid plank to support the feet;

Four iron spikes to keep, the plank on the trench;

A "mash-stick" or short stick.

The pitch can be grassy or bare earth, as long as one can put the spikes in deep enough. The game doesn't need a lot of room, at the most two metres by three metres.

The procedure is as follows:

The two players sit on the ground facing each other, one on each side of the plank, with their feet wedged against it. They take hold of the stick, given to them by a referee. At a given signal, each one pulls the stick towards them. The one who first lets go of the stick, or who is lifted off the ground and pulled over one's adversary is the loser.

Each player has a possible three tries. If one player wins the first two, that player is considered the winner. The position of the hands (in the middle or on the outside of the stick) is determined by drawing lots. The position is reversed for the second round and lots drawn again for the third round (if any).

It's obvious that each player should try to choose an opponent of the same weight and strength! A similar activity is performed by the Inuit of Canada.

Le Jeu de Baton-Style Two ("ar vazh a benn")

This is an ancient ritual activity that is performed in other countries like Korea and Burma. It symbolises the confrontation of good and evil, rain and drought. It was also a popular activity in the Pardon games. This is a very popular contest throughout Trégor in Brittany. Two contestants lying flat, facing each other and carried by four strong people, grab the ends of a wooden stick. The object is to force one's opponent to loose their grip by pulling on the stick. One needs strong wrists, good muscle endurance and a strong back in order to compete in this game. The following rules are in place:

1. The stick is about 50 cm long.
2. One pulls the stick gripping it at the ends.
3. The carriers are allowed to help the contestants by pulling their feet.
4. The winner has to keep the stick in his/her hands.

The main goal is to force one's opponent to loose their grip of the stick.

La Civière (Weight Pull)

Participants attempt to pull a sled or wheel barrow (without wheels), which is weighted down with sand and rocks. The rules are as follows:

1.   If a competitor is unsuccessful in pulling the weight the predetermined distance one is eliminated.

2.   If a competitor is successful in pulling the weight the predetermined distance, more weight is added.

3.   Distances vary.

The main goal of the activity is to pull the greatest weight over the longest distance.

La Gerbe (Sheaf Toss)

The sheaf toss as a sport was an extension of one of the everyday jobs done on the farms. It is similar to the sheaf toss in the Highland games. Competitors attempt to throw a sheaf of hay/straw over a bar using a pitchfork. The rules are as follows:

1.   Each participant is allowed three attempts.

2.   After three unsuccessful attempts a competitor is eliminated.

3.   A bar similar to that in high jump is used which can be raised or lowered.

4.   If a competitor fails to throw the sheaf over the bar the pitch is invalid and counted as an attempt.

The goal is to pitch the sheaf of hay or straw over the greatest height.

Lifting a Wooden Pole

This "test of strength" has its origins in the lifting of the great parish banners or standards by their bearers at the beginning of the processions in the "Pardons" or great religious festivals in Brittany. During the festivities, which followed the Pardon, the banner pole became a simple wooden pole which could be lightened simply by cutting off the top as the competition went on, or made heavier by adding on iron weights.

Today, this "game" has become one of the disciplines practised in the "Breton Athletic Sports", as codified by the National Federation of Breton Athletic Sports (FNSAB). It is now played with a metal pole and a sliding weight.

The rules are as follows:

1. Wooden poles, which can vary in length between 4.5 and 7 metres, are used.

2. A way of attaching weights to the broader, i.e., the heavier end is devised.

3. The pitch must be grassy or of earth, which is not too hard, and large enough for the pole to be manipulated without risk to the public. The playing area must be surrounded by crowd barriers for the security and safety of the public. It is essential that there should only be two people in the playing area (the player and an

   assistant) and that only one pole should be lifted at any one time.

4. The game consists of lifting the pole to a vertical position and maintaining it in that position for a few seconds, without the bottom touching the ground during that time.

5. Each player has three tries for each pole or each different weight attached. He/she may choose to begin at any weight, but he/she may not afterwards diminish the weights (in the case of a competition between several players).

6. The player who fails after three tries is eliminated from the competition.

7. The winner, in the case of a competition, is the person not eliminated at the end. In the case of a draw, it is the number of tries on the heaviest weight used which is the tie-breaker.

The Hanging Bowl

Contrary to what one might imagine from the installation of the game, the hanging bowl does not originate in the ancient custom of hanging people. It is, it seems, a pale imitation of the jousting games, in particular "la quintaine", the exercise which served to train knights for tournaments. This involved charging with a raised lance against a dummy on a pivot representing an opponent. If the spear

touched the right part of the dummy, so much the better, but if the knight missed, the dummy turned, and hit the knight as he passed by. The country folk with the "boule pendante" vaguely imitated this exercise. Another imitation of this game is the "Banquet Russe", also played in Brittany.

The equipment consists of a post planted in the ground, from which hangs a wooden bowl. Another wooden bowl of the same size is to be thrown at the hanging bowl.

The pitch may be grassy or bare earth, 4 to 5 metres wide and an indefinite length (see rules) but which should be at least 15 to 20 metres long. It is most important to fence off the playing area to avoid accidents.

The aim of the game is to hit the bowl from the greatest possible distance. This is therefore an individual competition. The champion is announced at the end of the afternoon of the competition.

The rules are as follows:

1. Each player is allowed three throws.

2. One can have three tries for each new distance that he/she attempts.

3. At the first distance which one chooses, one tries, three times at the most, to hit the hanging bowl. If one succeeds, one has the right to choose a new distance obviously further away from the bowl. If one misses, one must throw from 5 metres, which is the minimum distance possible.

4. After each successful throw, one has the right to choose any distance one likes for the following throw, knowing that each failed throw sends him/her back to 5 metres.

5. If one fails on the third throw, one's best performance is the one that counts.

Old Style Skittles

The universally known skittle family of games was particularly popular in Brittany. This is shown by the numerous old photos and postcards that show such

games in the Breton countryside. There are numerous versions that still exist and are regularly played.

The old style skittles consisted of nine different-sized, shell shaped skittles (four small, four medium, one large) and one small wooden ball, which can be replaced by a small river-pebble or a small rounded stone. The pitch must be grassy or bare earth and should be about eight metres long by five metres wide. The area where the skittles stand should have the grass cut so that they can more easily stand upright. The middle skittle is called "La Vieille" (the old woman);it is worth nine points. The medium skittles are worth five points, and the small one is worth one point. The player stands six metres away from the skittles.

The aim of the game is to score a maximum number of points in five throws. Each skittle should be knocked down separately in order to be a score. If several skittles fall at the same time, they are counted each as one point. The fallen skittles are set up again after each throw. In the case of a draw after five throws, play is begun again until the draw is broken. The winner is the player with the highest score. The maximum score is 45 points.

Le Pitao

The origin of this game is not known. It could be a derivative of the game of "palets", just as much as it could be the original game. In any case, it is shown to have been played for a very long time in the greater part of Brittany. Better known as "galoches" in the Breton speaking part of the country; it is today much played around Pont-l'Abbé. The version given here is from the "Pays Gallo", the non-Breton-speaking Eastern part of Brittany.

The following materials are needed for this game:

Un "pitao" is a wooden cylinder about 11 cm high and 3.5 cm in diameter; three round, flattened, palets made of iron, weighing about 850 gm, 14 mm thick, and the same diameter as the pitao is high; a few coins (of little value) of about the same diameter as the pitao. The throwing field must be hard and flat, about 10 metres by 5 metres.

The procedure is as follows:

The pitao is placed in the middle of a 40 cm circle, the only function of the circle is to make it easier to see the pitao. A throwing line is drawn nine paces from the pitao. A coin is placed on the pitao.

At the beginning of the game, each player throws a single "palet" to determine who is to begin. The nearest player to the pitao begins. Afterwards, the first throw alternates between the players. The first player throws a palet to try and knock over the pitao and the coin. If one succeeds, two things can happen:

1.   The coin falls nearer to the pitao than to the palet.

2.   The coin falls nearer to the palet than the pitao.

In the first case, the player throws a second palet to try to get a palet closer to the coin, either by pushing the pitao away, or by pushing the first palet closer, or by placing the second palet closer to the coin. In the second case, the second player throws, to try to take back the coin, either by pushing the first players palets, or in placing one's own nearer. If the first player doesn't manage to knock the pitao over, it is the second who must try and therefore finds himself/herself in the situation of the former player. The first player then takes back his/her palets to find themselves in the situation of the second player. The palet nearest to the coin has the point, if the pitao is the object closest to the coin, it keeps the points to itself, and the coin is then worth two points. The game is played to a maximum of 11 points.

Marsac Skittles

Information on this game comes from M. Claude Barbier of Marsac sur Don in Loire (Atlantic Department). It has recently been played again in this locality where the old people remembered it being played in the (unspecified) past. The similarity of the game and some of its rules to the "Muel Skittles" is striking.

The following materials are needed:

Nine skittles of three different sizes: one large skittle, four medium sized skittles, and four small skittles; one bowl, of the same form as in the Muel game, i.e. oval, weighing about 3.5 kg and with indentations for the thumb and the four fingers.

The pitch must be grassy, about five metres wide and 15 to 20 metres long. It is very important to have enough space available behind the location of the skittles.

The procedure is as follows:

The skittles are laid out in a square, the largest one is in the middle. The medium sized ones are at the four corners, and the smallest ones are in the intervening spaces. The distance between each skittle is calculated in relation to one length of the largest skittle. The largest skittle is worth 9 points; the medium ones 5 points and the small ones 1 point. The game is played for 36 points. Any number of players can participate. The throwing distance is 9 metres, calculated from the nearest skittle in the front. Each player is allowed two throws. The first is from the 9 metre line, the second is from the place where the bowl falls. However, the player loses the right to the second throw if no skittle was knocked down on the first throw or if the bowl stopped in the playing area.

There is a difference in the manner of calculating the score between the two throws. For the first throw, all the skittles knocked over count for their normal value. On the other hand, for the second throw, a skittle is counted only if it is the only skittle knocked over. If several fall they are counted as one point each.

Special case: if the large skittle is knocked out of the playing area, without the other skittles being knocked over, the strike is worth 18 points. The first player to reach 36 points is declared the winner. One has to reach this figure exactly and not go past it; should this happen, the player is "fined" 18 points! The game is normally a "singles" game, but it can also be played in pairs.

Le Birinic

This is a smaller version of the game of skittles. It's an ancestor of the pinball machine since it was originally intended to be placed on the end of the bar counter in cafés. One played for rounds of drinks as stakes. This game also exists in Flanders. A bigger version of this game also exists.

Birinic is a "ready to play" game: it's made up of a sort of square case with a little mast mounted on one side. A string is fixed to the top of the mast with a

wooden ball attached to the end of it. A small, slightly raised central area carries nine skittles or "pins", which have to be knocked over. The game is placed on a table.

The game is played in three rounds, with any number of players. Each player can play three turns one after the other, or alternate with the other players (a more sociable formula).

One has to knock down as many of the ninepins as possible in no more than three throws of the ball. The player must stand behind the mast and must throw the ball around it. During the three consecutive throws, the ninepins are obviously not set up after each throw, the count being established after the third throw. On the other hand, at the end of each round, the ninepins are set up again and each player's score for the round is added up. The player having knocked down the greatest number of ninepins after three rounds wins. The player who knocked down the lowest number buys the next round of drinks.

Muel Skittles or Ninepins

The game was "discovered" at MUEL in Ile et Vilaine, where it is played at the annual town festival. Its originality with regard to other skittle games, is the shape of the "bowls", which are not round but oval, and look more like mallet-heads. The following materials are used in this game:

Nine skittles of different sizes, each has a number corresponding to their value written on them; nine "bowls" with a "finger-hole" and a "thumb-hole" on each.

The pitch must be grassy or bare earth, and be about eight metres long by five metres wide. One needs to trim the grass on the spot where one places the skittles, so that they can remain upright and in the same places.
The procedure is as follows:

The player stands six metres from the skittles. One throws nine bowls one after the other. The person running the game counts the points by adding them up as one sets up the fallen skittle or skittles. The points are counted as follows:

A single skittle is worth as many points as the number written on it. Several skittles knocked down at the same time are only worth one point each (only the

number of skittles is counted). The skittle that is worth only one point (the smallest one) counts for ten points if it is pushed out of the game without making any of the others fall.

The aim of the game is to get as many points as possible in nine throws of the bowls. The winner is the person who has the best score. The maximum score is 90 points.

The Cat Hole

It's easy to guess the origin of the game: the reference is to the "cat holes" that one finds at the bottom of doors to allow cats to go in and out of a building at night. The materials needed for this game are:

A fairly large, solid plank (since a large wooden bowl thrown from a distance of 8 or 10 metres can do a lot of damage when it hits the plank instead of going through the hole), and a hard-wooden bowl about 140 mm in diameter for adults or 90 mm for children.

Four solid "pegs" to hold the plank, are firmly stuck in the ground. The plank mustn't move when hit by the bowls. One needs a flat pitch, grassy or of bare earth, about 15 metres long by 2 or 3 metres wide. It is best to put another plank 1 or 2 metres behind the cat-hole to stop the bowl when it goes through the hole. The procedure is as follows:

Starting at a distance of 3 metres from the hole, lines are drawn across the pitch 1 metre apart up to the 10 metres mark. The player throws the bowl from the first line so as to pass it through the hole. Each player is allowed 10 throws. One steps back one line each time one succeeds in a throw or stays at the same line as long as one has not succeeded.

The game can be played with several players: each player throws in turn, and the appropriate distance is marked by putting a stick in the ground at the level of the appropriate line. The winner is the one who is furthest from the plank after ten throws.

It is also possible to compete as a team in this game. In this case, the rules

are the same but the game is played in teams of 2, 3, or 4 players or more, and the maximum number of points to be reached is fixed (40, 60, 80, or more, it depends on the time available). The score is calculated on the basis of the distance reached when all the teams have finished their throws on the following scale:

3m = 1pt/ 4m = 2 pts/ 5m = 4 pts/ 6m = 6 pts / 7m = 8 pts/ 8m = 10 pts/ 9m = 15 pts/ 10m = 20 pts.

The winning team is the one that is the first to reach the agreed total.

Le Jeu de Quilles (Bowling)

The competitors attempt to knock down nine pins with five balls from a designated distance. The rules are as follows:

1. Both males and females may participate.
2. Each competitor has five balls in which to knock the pins down.
3. The ball may be delivered underhand or overhand.
4. There are three sizes of pins: Large pin - called the "old woman" worth nine points if knocked down separately. Medium pin - worth five points if knocked down separately and pins worth one point
5. The "old woman" pin is placed in the middle of the pins to make it difficult to hit.
6. If a mixture of pins is knocked down they are worth only one point each.

The goal is to gain the greatest number of points by knocking down the most pins.

Le Jeu de Boules (imilar to Lawn Bowling)

This games is similar to lawn bowling. Competitors attempt to gain points by rolling a number of balls as close as possible to a small colored ball, "small master". Participants may use their balls to knock their opponent's balls out of position or to knock the "master" away from their opponent's balls. The rules are as follows:

1. Each competitor has the same number of balls.

2.	The participant with the closest ball to the "master" receives two points.

3.	If any other balls are closer to the "master" than an opponent's ball one receives one point per ball.

4.	Participants may knock an opponent out of position or knock the "master" away from ones opponent's ball.

Accuracy, coordination and strategy/tactics are important skills for this game.

This game may be played during any season in and out of doors on a court or a roadway.

The goal of the game is to achieve the greatest number of points.

The balls can be made of wood, iron or stone.

Le Jeu de Galoche et de Palet

There are many variations to the game depending in which region of Brittany it is played. Competitors throw metal discs (pallets) attempting to knock down or land close to a wooden cylinder (galoche) and thereby receive a certain number of points. Another variation has competitors attempting to knock a galoche off a block of wood. The game varies depending on the region in which it is played. The goal of the game is to gain the greatest number of points.

Le Lancer du Poids (Weight Throw)

Competitors throw a weight from within a circle using only one hand and staying within the circle. Throwers may gain momentum by turning but must release the weight while facing the field.

The following rules are in place:

1.	each participant is allowed three attempts.

2.	the thrower must use only one hand.

3.	the thrower must remain within the circle throughout the throw or that throw is invalid and counted as an attempt.

4.	the competitor must be facing the field when the weight is released.

5.	the weight must land within a designated boundary on the field or the

throw is invalid.

6.   the greatest distance achieved from the three attempts is judged.

7.   the distance is measured from the circle to where the weight has landed (measured to the inside edge of the dent).

The main goal is to throw the weight the greatest distance.

Le Lever de l'Essieu (Axle Lift)

Two styles exist in the Axle Lift. In the first style, the axle is lifted above the head with one arm. The competitor attempts to perform as many push-ups as possible in three minutes. In the second style, the axle begins on the ground. The competitor attempts to lift the axle over one's head with both hands and return it to the ground as many times as possible in three minutes.

The rules are as follows:

1.   Each competitor is allotted three minutes to perform as many lifts as possible.

2.   If two or more competitors perform an equal number of lifts more weight is added and the competition begins again.

The main goal is to lift the axle over the head the greatest number of times in three minutes.

L'Arraché du Sac (Sack Lift)

The "Sac" Lift is still a popular game in Brittany. Competitors attempt to lift a heavy sack to their shoulder.

The rules are as follows:

1.   each competitor is allowed three attempts to lift the weight.

2.   if a competitor is not successful in three attempts one is eliminated.

3.   if a competitor is successful more sand is added to make the lift more difficult.

The main goal is to lift the greatest amount of weight.

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Horse Racing

The horse races were truly obstacle races. Women as well as men could compete in these races. The women rode side-saddle. In some races a man and a woman rode the same horse; the woman rode on the rump of the horse. The length of the race was one "lieue"(= 2,5 miles/4km). The prize for the winner was usually a sheep or a bull.

The rules were simple:

On hearing a signal competitors on horseback, ran a race to the finish line.

The distances varied according to the race. The goal was for the horse and rider(s) to race as fast as possible over a series of obstacles.

La Course de Relais (Heavy Sack Relay)

This is a team event. Each team consists of six participants. The first person runs 60 m carrying a heavy sack and returns to the start passing the sack to the next person, who then begins running. All six participants run the race. Obstacles may be added to the course to make it more difficult.

The rules are as follows:

1. Each team consists of six participants.
2. Each participant in the team must complete the race.
3. The course is 60 m long.
4. A participant must be past the start line before one passes the "sac" to the next teammate.

The goal is to be the first to have all of its members finish the course.

Speed, strength, agility and coordination are the required skills for this event. This event may take place during any season, in and out of doors, provided there is a lot of space. The sacks are usually filled with sand. Bales of hay can be used as obstacles. The sacks weigh about 50 kilos.

Le Quintaine ("Jousting")

This activity was first used to develop skills in war and was introduced to take the monotony out of practising one's jousting skills. Participants on horseback carry

a lance and spear. They try to spear a mannequin which pivots on an axis. Each participant attempts to hit the mannequin directly. If the "quintaine" is not hit directly, it swings on its pivot and knocks the rider off the horse. Few rules exist. The main goal is to hit the quintaine (mannequin) successfully the greatest number of times.

Le Jeu de Paume (Tennis, Handball)

This may have been an early form of modern tennis or handball. Competitors hit a ball back and forth to each other (with or without a net) using the palm of the hand to hit the ball. Originally, competitors hit the ball with their hands and later racquets were implemented. This may have been the origin of handball, tennis and racket games.

The rules were as follow:

1. A point is awarded if a competitor hits the ball into their opponent's side of the court and he/she is unable to return it successfully.

2. The rules are similar to the rules of tennis.

Bazig kamm (la Crosse, Hurling, Shinty)

The oldest evidence of a hurling stick or a caman or "la crosse" is found on an engraving on a rock in Locmariaquer in Brittany. The engraving dates go back to about 4000 BC. In 1557, the first written information on the game of la crosse (bazig kamm) appeared in the Mystère de Sainte Barbe (Peru, 1987). The bazig kamm is no longer played in its original format in Brittany. A similar game to bazig kamm is played in Ireland (hurling) and Scotland (shinty). Reference in the Tain bo Cuailgne, an Irish epic written as early as the seventh century, describes a game in which Cuchulainn with his hurling stick defended his goal. "He would keep the thrice fifty boys balls outside the hole, and nothing went past him into the hole".

"La crosse" is a game similar to Irish hurling and Scottish shinty. Two teams, of ten players each, confront each other in a field. The dimensions of the field are agreed upon by both teams. At each end of the field a hole is dug into the ground to receive a ball.

At the beginning of the game the ball is placed at the centre of the field at equal distance from the holes. At a signal from the starter, the two teams armed with sticks, start to play.

The goal of the game is to put the ball into the hole. The team that scores is declared the winner. The game could last the entire day.

Sometimes the games became very violent, especially when old rivalries resurrected during a game between two neighboring villages.

The rules were as follows:

1. Each team must have an equal number of players.

2. The game is played within a designated area with a hole at each end of the field.

3. There is a predetermined time limit for the game.

4. One scores into one's own hole.

The main goal is to score the greatest number of goals.

Two other variations of la crosse existed in Brittany. They are described here as bazh dotu game one and bazh dotu game two.

Bazh Dotu (Golf?)

Game 1

In this game, there is a circle of holes in the ground and one hole in the centre. The players armed with lacrosse sticks stand a short distance from their individual hole. The game starts when one player shouts "everyone to his hole". All the players rush to take possession of a hole. Possession is achieved when a player puts his stick in the hole. The player who fails to possess one of the holes in the circle has to take the hole in the middle. He is called "the man in the middle, the dotu man, or paotr dotu". This person in the middle chases the ball and taps the ball towards one of the holes controlled by the other players. He tries to put the ball into a circle (that surrounds each hole). Each player tries to defend his hole by attempting to hit the advancing ball and drive it as far away as possible. If, however, the attacker succeeds in putting his stick into the hole of the defender while the defender is attempting to

strike the ball, he then wins the defender's hole. The defender now becomes the attacker. He attacks the next hole. And so the game continues in a clockwise manner.

Game 2

In game 2, the exact same set-up as in game one exists at the start of the game. The player who fails to possess a hole at the beginning of the game puts his stick in the hole in the centre of the circle. The player who plays the ball attempts to hit the boot or shoe of the player, in the middle, with the ball. The player in the middle tries to avoid getting hit with the ball by jumping into the air with the help of his stick. While the centre player's legs are in the air, the other players try to force him to the ground by hitting him with their sticks. If the ball fails to hit the boot/shoe of the centre player, the player, directly opposite the ball striker stops the ball or follows it in order to strike it towards the centre hole. This later player must act quickly as he risks loosing his hole to the centre player. And so the game continues.

La Soule (similar to Cad)

The "soule" could be a wooden ball or a leather ball. Two parishes played against each other. Both teams started the game at the line that divided the two parishes. A very aggressive and sometimes violent play took place in this game of soule. It resembled the Cornish game of hurling to country and may, as some believe, be the precursor of rugby football. At the start of the game the ball was thrown up between the two teams. The team that caught the ball tried to bring the ball home to a predetermined spot in its own parish. The other team did what it could to retrieve the ball and carry it home to its own spot in the parish. The team that succeeded in bringing the ball home and dropping it in the predetermined spot was the winner. The "soule" game was an activity carried out as part of the solar cult. Sul (la soule) means sun in Breton. The round ball symbolised the sun. Players carried the ball through bogs, rivers, fields, and forests. Players passed the ball back and forth among their teammates. Due to the violent episodes that took place during this game, la "soule" has not been played for many many years. At one time 50

people drowned in the swamp of Pont L'Abbé during a game of la "soule". The game was banned after such a tragic event.

Le Papegaut

This game develops the skill of Archery used in hunting and combat. Competitors attempt to hit a target, placed on the limb of a tree high above the ground, with an arrow. There are few rules.

The goal is to be the most consistent and accurate in shooting with a bow and arrow. The target is shaped like a bird and is made of wood or iron.

Le Banquet Russe

This game was played for the entertainment and humour of the competitors and spectators. A bucket of water is placed on a piece of wood with a hole in it. Participants travel under the bucket on a cart and attempt to stick a long pole through the hole in the wood. If the participant misses the hole and hits the wood the bucket will tip over spilling water on them. Any number of contestants may participate. The goal is to stick a pole through the hole in the wood and not to knock the bucket over.

Le Casse-Pot (Break the Pot)

This is a novelty type game played for the entertainment of the spectators and participants and is not competitive. Participants are blind folded and attempt to hit and break pots, which are suspended above them. When a pot breaks, the participant receives what is hidden inside of it. It is usually a prize. Any number of people may participate. The goal is to break a pot suspended in the air above them. Luck plays a part in this contest.

Leche Poele (Lick the Frying Pan)

This game was played for the entertainment of spectators and participants and was not competitive in nature. Participants attempt to remove coins stuck in lard in a frying pan, using only their tongues/noses. The rules are as follows:

1.   any number of people may participate.

2.   participants must use only their tongues/noses to remove the coins.

3.   participants must keep their hands behind their backs.

The goal is to remove coins from a frying pan using either the tongue or the nose. Luck plays an important role in this activity.

La Poutre (Plank Walk)

This game was played for the amusement and entertainment of the spectators and participants. Participants attempt to walk across a body of water on a narrow greased plank towards a prize. There are few rules. The goal is to successfully cross the greased plank and gain a prize.

Balance and agility play an important part in this activity.

Décapitation du Coq (Decapitating the Cock)

This is a ritualistic game known since the Middle Ages in Europe. Live birds were used in the past but today the birds are killed before the game begins. A chicken is hung by its feet. Participants attempt to cut off the head of the bird with a sword/sabre while riding under the bird on a bicycle or a horse.

There are few rules. The goal is to successfully cut the head off the chicken.

Le Mât de Cocagne (Climbing the Greasy Pole)

This event was performed mainly for the entertainment and humour of the competitors and the spectators. Participants attempt to climb to the top of a greasy pole and collect a prize from the top. One climbs the pole with no material or outside help. The main goal is to climb to the top of the pole and claim the prize.

Strength, agility and coordination are important skills in this activity.

Pirli

The pirli is a small round stick about 20 cm in length with pointed ends. One end is more pointed than the other. It is called the little wood (petit bois) and the other end is called the big wood (gross bois). Another piece of wood, called the "tapette" or bat, is used by the players to propel the pirli. A hole, about 5 cm in circumference and 3 or 4 cm in depth, is dug in the ground. The hole is called the

"pot". The player who wins the draw balances the pirli on the rim of the hole (pot). The little wood is pointed inwards and over the hole. One hits the end of the little wood with the bat in order to get the pirli airborne. Before the pirli drops to the ground one hits it again with the bat in order to drive it as far away as possible from the hole (pot).

The player in question guesses the distance he/she batted the pirli. The distance is measured using the length of the bat as the measuring tool. One estimates the distance between the hole and where the pirli landed. Each bat length is worth 5 points. If the distance guessed is incorrect the player in question gets no points. Next, the opponent takes over the play. The player with the most points, after an agreed upon number of shots, is the winner.

Games of the Basque Regions

The Basque areas of Spain and France seem to have been strongly influenced by the Celtic culture, especially by the Celtic games and pastimes. The Basque strength activities resemble those of the Highlanders of Scotland and those of their neighbours in Brittany. They play similar skill games such as skittles and bowling. Handball, in its many variation, is played in the Basque areas of both Spain and France. Competitions with rowing boats are popular in the Basque country. Animals, such as dogs, bulls and chickens were used as part of the Basque entertainment. The Basque dancing resembled the Irish and Scottish dancing in many ways.

The Basque people live in an area that is located in Northern Spain and Southern France. Records of their games have existed for at least 150 years.

Ramfighting

The best age for a fighting ram is between four and five years old. The rams are placed eight metres apart. Their male instinct urges them to attack each other. The rams can head-butt each other 20-80 times before one gives up. The winner is the ram that forces the other to submit. Much betting went on at such spectacles.

Sheep-dog Competitions

In this competition the dog obeys his master. The master stays on one spot while giving directions to the dog. The dog's job is to round-up about 20 sheep as quickly as possible. On signals from his master, the dog must stop working, lie down, wait for a new order, direct the sheep through a doorway, put them into an enclosure and get them out again. Each effort is timed. The jury chooses the winner.

Bull Strength Competition

A pair of bulls pull enormous stones a certain distance as fast as possible. Strength and speed are the key skills in this competition.

Bull Fighting

A bull is confronted by a human. The human is armed with a sword. Each one tries to destroy the other. In most situations the human kills the bull.

L'Autzara Joko (Decapitation of the Goose)

This activity, which is rather primitive has now disappeared. Riding on horse-back, the competitor tried to pull off the head of a live goose, which was hanging up by the legs over the route of the rider. In the later competitions the goose was not alive.

L'Ailasko Joko (Decapitation of the Chicken)

In this activity a chicken is buried , with only his head sticking out of the ground. The chicken (male) symbolized evil. Girls danced around the head. One of the girls was given a sword. She tried to cut off the chicken's head with the sword. Frequently, she did not succeed the first time, which gave the whole ritual a barbaric tone. After 10 or so chickens had been sacrificed, the girls got together next day to eat them. The last time such an activity was "officially" carried out was in 1924.

Tree-Trunk Cutting with an Axe

Two individuals compete against each other. The object is to cut down the trunks of standing trees in specific chunks as fast as possible. In order to create equality, due to the hardness of the trees, each competitor alternates cutting chunks of his opponent's trunk. Speed and muscular endurance are the qualities being tested.

Latasa (Cutting a Large Trunk of a Tree)

One competitor cut a large Eucalyptus tree, 5.15m in circumference in 3 hours 17 minutes 49 seconds.

Cutting Hay with a Scythe/Sickle

Farmers competed against each other cutting a certain area of a field with a scythe or a sickle. Due to the fact that the areas of the field cut may not be exactly the same, the hay was collected and weighed. A jury choses the winner. He who cut the most hay in the allotted time was the winner.

Stone Lifting

The stones are smooth with holes to grip

a) In one competition the athlete has to lift a heavy stone (ex., 225 kg) a certain height once.

b) In an other competition a lighter stone (ex., 50 kg) is lifted as many times as possible (in 1958, Orio lifted a 50 kg stone 431 times in 30 minutes).

Hatchet Throwing

Hatchet throwing was an other activity engaged in by the Basques. A target was set up at which the hatchet was thrown. Points were awarded for accuracy.

Palanda (Throwing the Bar)

The palanda is a heavy bar. It resembles the javelin throw. This is a very popular Basque sport. It is almost as popular as pelote. It has its origins in the stone pits. The bar was used in the quarries to break the stones. There are different ways for throwing the bar:

1. A pecho or bularrez

   The thrower, with one foot anchored to the ground, takes off using upper body rotation and holding the bar at chest level, throws it as far as possible.

2. Biraka: the thrower turns like a discus thrower, holding the bar at one end with both hands rotates about 10 m before releasing the bar. The bar is held vertically until the moment of release. The distance travelled and how the bar enters the ground are judged.

Le Soka Tira (tug of war).

Two teams of eight men oppose each other. Each team has a coach. A strong rope is used. The rope is gripped with both hands. The rope cannot go on the shoulders except for the anchor man. A marker is placed on the ground equal distance from both teams at the start of the competition. On the signal of the referee both teams pull. If at the end of two minutes there is no winner, the distance between the marker and each team is measured. The team furthest away from the marker line is the winner.

Sack Race

Competitors run a certain distance with a bag of grain on their back or their shoulder. This race is similar to the Brittany sack race.

Lifting heavy bags of grain

In this competition, the goal was to lift the heaviest bag from the ground and place it on a surface a certain height from the ground.

Orga-joko (Lifting the wheelbarrow)

This is exactly the same lift as "la civière" (ar chravazh) in Brittany. One grasps the handles of the wheelbarrow and lifts a heavy weight. It is like the dead lift in power-lifting.

Lasto altxatze (Lifting bails of hay)

This was an activity similar to the Scottish Sheaf-Toss.

Boat Racing

Large rowing boats, which were used in the past for fishing, were used in these races. Prior to 1919 these boats were very heavy. In 1919, lighter boats (400 kg) were built. These were to be the competition boats. They carried a team of 13 rowers and a skipper. The distance to be rowed was about three miles (5,556 m). Prior to 1892, in San Sebastian, the official distance was four miles. As competitions increased in number the boat sizes changed. There were boats with 6 rowers and a skipper as well as boats with 4 rowers and a skipper. The skipper's job was to provide the rowers with a certain rhythm. Competitions were held both at sea and in the rivers. The teams usually represented a fishing village or a port.

Games of Skill

Skittles

There were many versions of skittles played in the Basque country. There were games of 3, 6 or 9 skittles. These games exacted a certain amount of strength as the bowls weighed as much as 7 or 8 kilos (15-17 lbs). Skill was the most important quality needed from the player.

The Toka (similar to the "Le Pitao" in Brittany): this game consisted of throwing pallets, made of iron, to a target on the ground, that was 11-20 m from the thrower. The goal was to touch the target. The distance between thrower and target varied over time.

Pistol Shooting

This was a team sport. Each area had its own pistol team and referee. A circular or rectangular target was set up a distance of 30 m or more from the competitors. A maximum of 6 points could be achieved by each competitor. The guns used were the very old style. The ammunition for the guns was made by the competitors. The referee's job was to measure and establish the scores. The trophy would be a lamb, which would be eaten at the end of the competition.

Hill Race

The Basque hill race differed from the Scottish Highland hill race in that the competitors when they reached the top of the hill had to return to the bottom in order to finish the race. The down hill distance was about one kilometre.

Jumping Competitions

There was a variety of jumps: running jump; standing jump; long jump; running triple jump; triple jump and, legs tied together jump.

La Pelote Basque (variations of handball)

La pelote is the Basque national sport. It is a game similar to Irish handball or Welsh Fives. It requires many skills such as strength, speed and agility. There are seven different versions of la pelote basque. Initially the game was played like "jeu de paume", (palm ball) as played by the Celts in Gaul, where one passed a ball to one's opponent by hitting it with the bare hands. It was a game frequently played by the shepherds. The ball was made of linen or cotton and covered with leather. Since these balls did not bounce, the idea was to volley them from one player to the next like volleyball. The game evolved into 7 different variations, some using the bare hand, others a leather glove of varying length and finally using different types of rackets.

Pelote is a very old game. The Greeks and Romans played it, as did the Mayans. The Romans brought the game to Gaul (France). The Celts knew it under the name "pila" (palm). It was in the Basque country that the game evolved to what it is today. It evolved from palm ball played with the bare hands to handball against a wall with bare hands, to handball against a wall wearing leather gloves, to using an instrument like a long basket (chistera) to hit the ball against the wall. Different variations of the chistera were developed. Each time they got longer or shallower. The chistera was adopted in the 1860s. The chistera looks like a shortened lacrosse stick (N. American Indian game).

Handball (jeu de paume), as played in the Basque country, went through many changes over time. There was the introduction of the handball alley (one main wall in front) which was modified; there was the introduction of the leather glove which was modified; there was the introduction of the chistera which was also modified; the ball was modified over time and the playing surface evolved to a cement base. We have two types of games some with direct play and some with indirect (using a wall) play. The wall was introduced around 1839. La pelote has been introduced twice as a demonstration sport at the Olympics in 1924 (Paris) and in 1968 (Mexico). The pelote variations resemble many of our modern games such as handball, volleyball, tennis, fives, racketball and lacrosse.

Croquet

The Basque croquet described in the "Tablettes de Bela" is a game that resembles modern day croquet.

Ralika and Arrabilaka (Variations of Hurling)

These two games were precisely two different versions of hurling. They resembled hockey or golf but they have totally disappeared.

Icelandic Connection

According to Sveinsson (1959), the first men who stepped on to Icelandic soil were Irish monks. They were hermits who sought solitude to worship God. There were less than 100 in all. They fled the pagan Norsemen who arrived in Ireland in the second half of the 9th century. They left behind bells, croziers and Irish books. Iceland was not settled by Norsemen alone but also by Swedes, Danes, Irish and Scottish settlers. Many of the Norsemen who settled in Iceland came by way of the Orkneys, Hebrides, Ireland and Scotland. They brought with them "servants" (slaves) who were of Celtic origin.

There are a few Celtic words in the Icelandic language. A few Irish Christian names appear as elements of Icelandic place names. Irish art objects have also been found in Iceland. Some Icelandic poetry has Irish characteristics and some of its prose has Celtic motifs such as that of Ossian in the land of youth. Many of the Icelandic sagas have Celtic motifs, from both Irish and Welsh literature. Icelandic wrestling is similar to Celtic wrestling. Iceland has a style of wrestling (Glima) similar to Irish wrestling. It is believed that the Vikings captured many slaves, during their raids on Ireland, and took them to Iceland. It is these slaves who took the Irish wrestling to Iceland. Highland games are very popular in Iceland.

13. Hammer Throw at the Maxville Highland Games, Canada
Courtesy of George Chiappa

14. Caber Toss at Almonte 1993
Courtesy of George Chiappa

15. 28 pound Weight Throw for distance
Courtesy of George Chiappa
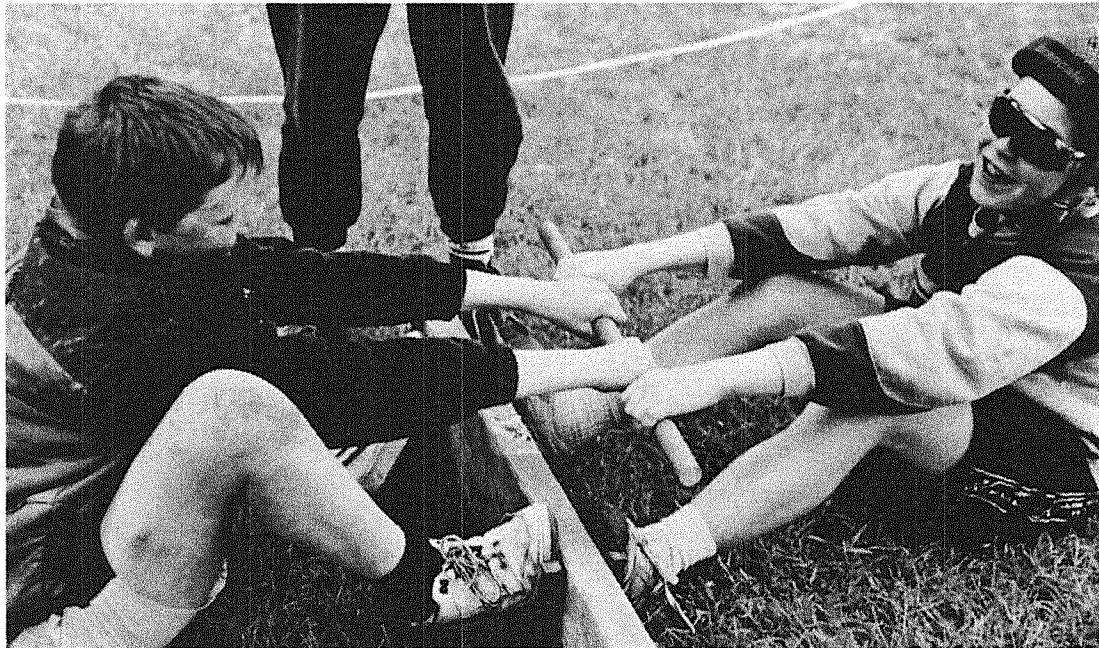
16. Short Stick Tug of War for children
Courtesy of D. Ferre (1993)

17. Stone Put
Courtesy of George Chiappa

18. Lifting a wooden pole
Courtesy of D. Ferre (1993)

19. One of the oldest pictures of la crosse (hurling, bazhig Kamm)
on the Church of la Martyre in France, 16th century
Courtesy of Guy Jaouen
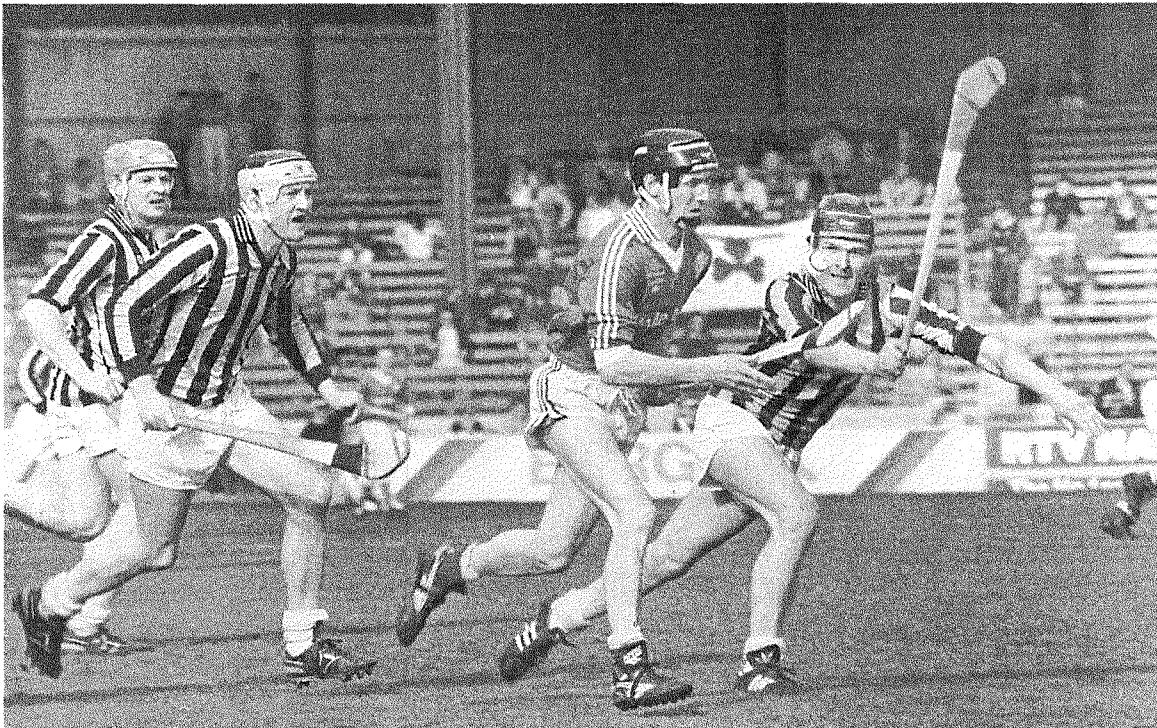
20. Four Irish hurlers in action
Courtesy of Ray McManus, September 2001
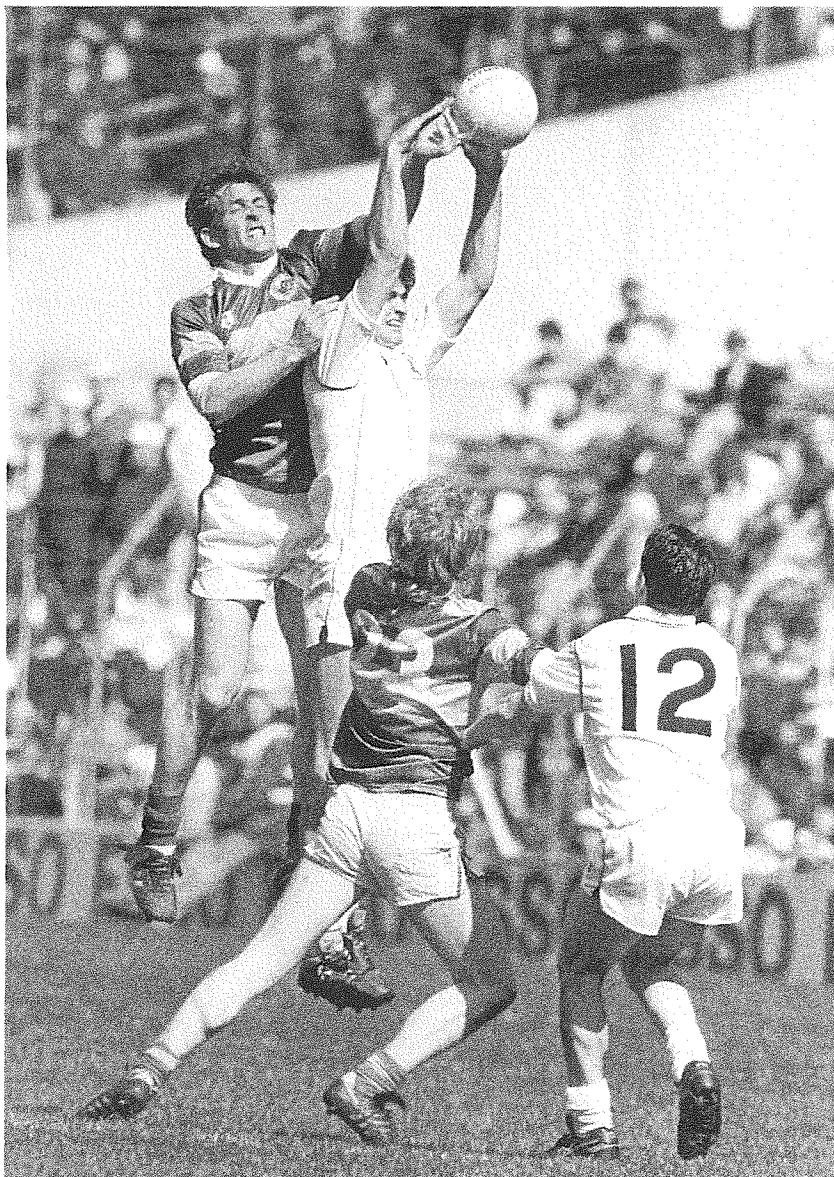
21. Gaelic football
Courtesy of Billy Strickland (Info Photography)

Chapter IV

Children's Celtic Games

In modern society, in most countries, games that were normally played exclusively by adults have been adapted for children. This is also the case for Celtic games. Children play hurling and shinty. Handball and football are played by children in all Celtic societies. Children participate in all forms of combat sports, team sports and even such events as the Highland games.

There is a multiplicity of games which are typically children's games. Many of these games have a universal flavour and are played throughout the world. Other games are less universal and are often localized to Celtic areas. Some are no longer played in these Celtic areas. Descriptions of these games can be found in collections such as the Uist Games of Scotland (Morrison, 1908), Children's Games From Offaly (O'Conchubhair, 1947) and Cluichi Leanbh sa Gaeltacht (An Seabhac, 1942).

O'Conchubhair (1947), collected 44 children's games in Offaly. In some of these games the imagination comes into play as the children simulate, in a drama form, the adult lifestyle and behaviors they see about them. For example, in "the Ghost in the Garden", one player acts as the "mother" while an other is the "Ghost" and the rest are the "children". The "ghost" chases the children while the "mother" tries to protect them.

Some of these recorded games are "running and hiding games". In one game (Hares and Dogs,) one group of boys (dogs) chase an other group of boys (hares). The idea is to escape the dogs by reaching a safe area. "Tig" is a game of chasing. One child is chosen to be "Tig". The child touched, becomes the chaser.

O'Conchubhair (1947), also describes guessing games, search games (an object is hidden), games of skill (hop scotch & marbles) and Hollow Eve Games (snap apple, money in the basin and "The Clay, The Water & The Ring"). In the snap apple game, an apple is hung from the ceiling and all the players try to get a bite out of it. The first to take the bite gets the apple. There are also the traditional games of

England, Scotland, and Ireland (Gomme, 1884). Many of these games have a universal theme.

Other games were played locally. At Halloween, diving for an apple in a bucket of water was a lot of fun in many rural Irish communities. The "bull-roar" was a thin lath of wood with serrated edges which was swung around on a string so as to produce a buzzing noise. The toy was known in Co. Carlow as "whee-doodle" and in Co. Down as a "boomer". It's Irish name was "Clairin Buirthe".

In the "spear" game a stick was often used as a "spear". Boys usually threw the "spear" either for accuracy or for distance.

The "buzz" was a rectangular piece of wood or a circular disc of metal, which was rotated on a twisted string, by drawing the hands apart, to produce a buzzing sound.

Skittles were played in Ireland on country roads especially on Sundays. Similar games were played in Brittany, Wales and Scotland. Races of all types were practised by children and adults. There were curragh races in the sea and boat races in the rivers; there were horse races and donkey races in the fields or on the strand, when the tide was out; there was grey-hound racing, where the hounds chased a hare; and of course there were all types of foot races for children and adults.

Stone throwing was also a very popular sport among the Celtic children. Sometimes one threw a stone for distance and sometimes one slid a stone on top of the water across the river, lake or sea. Children also threw stones at targets like a jam jar or a tin can. Children did target practice using slings or catapults to throw the stones. Sickle throwing was a popular activity in Northern Ireland. When the harvesters had finished cutting the corn with their sickles and when there was only one last bunch of corn left standing, the harvesters threw their sickles at it. This activity was called various names such as "neck", "churn", "hare", granny or cailleach. A good deal of skill was required to cut this last bunch of corn, from a distance, by throwing the sickle. When the "cailleach" (old hag) was eventually "cut and dead" she was "waked", carried into the house or barn and was generally kept

until the following year.

In areas of Ireland where turf was cut for the fire, the turf-cutters would often race each other to see who was the fastest turf-cutter.

Many new coaching manuals (Daly, 1993) have been developed by the various athletic associations to teach the basic skills of the more popular games to children. These manuals are excellent in their approach. They take into account the intellectual, physical, psychological and skill levels of the children at various ages. Children learn the rules and the concept of fair play (fir fer) is introduced to the children at an early age.

The Uist Games of Scotland

The Uist games are a collection of children's games played on the island of Uist in the Highlands of Scotland. These are a selection of games less known today than the official highland games. The references used in describing these games date back to 1908 when they had already disappeared. These games are less competitive and are more fun games or pastimes. The following are a selection of the Uist games:

Speilean or Cat and Bat (Pirli)

This is a very old game. It is a variation of a game played in Brittany called pirli. Two sides of equal numbers are picked, one side takes the first batting, the other side takes the field (according to a toss). A hole is made in the ground with the heel. A small flat piece of wood is put into it. A ball rests in the hole on the inner end of the speil (flat piece of wood/cat). The first batter strikes the end of the flat piece of wood which protrudes from the hole, with the driver (bat), sending the ball into the air. The other team tries to catch the ball before it hits the ground (like in baseball). The following rules are in place:

1. If any of the opposing side catches the ball before it touches the ground the striker is out. If no catch is made the first fielder to reach the ball gives a hand to the batsman.

2. The batsman (striker) again drives the ball as far as possible, and if a catch is made he\she is out. If no catch is made the first player of the opposing side

to reach the ball throws it into or as near as he can to the hole called piceadh.

3. If the ball goes into the hole the striker is out. If not, he or she measures the length the ball is from the hole with the bat, if it is not one bat's length he or she is out. If it is one or more he/she plays until he/she is out, and another team member comes up to take his/her place. A certain number of points is gained for out points.

4. This continues until one side counts 100 or until all are out. Next, the opposing side comes in to bat. The main idea is to drive the ball as far away from the hole as possible.

Strength, accuracy, power, cooperation and eye-hand coordination are important skills in this game.

Cluichan Tighe (Rounders)

Two sides of equal numbers (teams) are picked, one fielding, one batting. Three circles are drawn in a triangle. The sides of the triangle are about 50 yards (45.8 m) each. One side takes its stand inside the first circle, all the other side fielding round about, with the exception of a bowler who stands in the centre of the triangle. The batsman in the first circle receives a bowl or faireag and after striking the ball runs to circle number 2.

1. If the ball is caught, the batter is out. If while running he/she is struck by the ball or the circle is struck he/she is out.

2. Another batter takes his/her place, he/she runs to circle number 2 and the first player runs to circle number 3.

3. If either of them is struck or either circle is struck by the ball, the player struck or the player running to the circle struck is out.

4. Batsman number 3, player in circle number 3 runs to circle number one and this goes on until the whole side is out and the teams switch places.

5. Any number of players may play, usually 50 to 100 to a side.

6. Each time a player runs right round and back to the first circle counts one point.

The main goal is to go fully around the bases as many times as possible to accumulate points.

Strength, accuracy, power, cooperation and eye-hand coordination are important skills in this game.

Spidean (Pitch and Toss)

A small stick is set up as a spid (target) and a line drawn at a distance of about 10 ft (3.04 m) from the target. Players stand at the line. Any number of players can play. Each player tosses his button at the spid (target).

1. The player whose button lies nearest the spid gathers up the buttons, shakes them and finally tosses them into the air.

2. All those that fall face down he/she keeps, the rest are lifted by the player

who was second and are tossed by him/her. Those that fall upwards are claimed by him/her.

3. This continues until the buttons have all been won.

The goal is to win as many buttons as possible.

Propataireachd (Quoits or Pitchers)

Two large stones or props are set upon end at a distance from each other of 20 yards (18.3 m). A flat stone is used to toss, similar to pitch and toss. Points are allotted to those who hit the target (large stone) or who are close to it. Teams of two or more or individuals can play. The rules are as follows:

1. 21 points a game.
2. 3 points if one knocks the prop down.
3. 1 point to the pitcher who lies nearest to the prop.
4. 1 point if your other pitcher lies closer to the prop than any of your opponents.
5. Two players, both stand at the same prop and toss at the opposite prop trying to out do the other.

Accuracy and eye-hand coordination are important skills in this game.

Falach Fait or Fead (Hide and Seek)

One player covers his/her eyes with his/her hands while all the other players hide. On a signal, the player takes his/her hands off his/her eyes and tries to find all the hidden players. When a player is caught, that player is out of the game until all the other players are found. The first one found becomes the seeker in the next game.

Sgipteach (Tig)

One player is "it". "It" runs after other players and tries to touch them. The person touched becomes "it". "It" continues on and tries to touch another player. And so goes the game.

Mireag nan Cruach (Chasing)

This game is played in harvest time round the hay and corn stacks. A signal is given. The chaser comes round the stacks after the other players. As each one is

found he/she is out of the game until the rest are discovered.

The first caught is made the chaser for the next game. He/she must not only find them, but must touch them as well. We played this game on the farms on the West Coast of Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s.

Dheandair or Yenter (King)

Any number of players can play. One is king. Two lines are drawn facing each other at a distance of 55 m. All players are expecting the king (righ). They take up their position on one line. Their object is to reach the other line without being crowned. The king stands between the two lines and calls out, A dheandair, co'n duine bhi's agam bidh e air a chrunadh! Then everyone runs. The king tries to touch someone on the head. Then two kings try to get everyone else until all are caught.

Buaileadh Nam Boisean (Clapping of the Hands)

This is an indoor game. The chosen person puts his/her face on someone's knee. At the same time holding hands, palms upward, behind his/her back. Someone from the group approaches and touches the hands. The "blind" person has to guess who touched his/her hands. If the guess is incorrect, the "blind" person stays on until a correct guess is made.

Bodachan an Doille Bhodaich (Blind Man's Bluff)

A blindfolded player tries to catch someone else in the group of players. Once a player is caught, that player then wears the blindfold. The game continues until most people in the group have had a turn to play the "blind" player.

An Lar Mhaide (Wooden Horse)

This game is played indoors or out of doors. A trapeze was made with two pieces of rope tied to a rafter and let down from the ceiling. A pole was tied to the ropes at a distance of about 3 feet (0.91 m) from the ground. On this pole a player had to balance himself/herself sitting astride. He/she also held another pole in his/her hands. With this second pole the player tried to strike the ground on both sides without falling off the pole attached to the ropes.

The object of the game was to strike the ground on both sides with the pole as many times as possible, without falling to the ground.

Mac Cruslaig s'na Mucan
(Mac Cruslaig and the Pigs)

One player is chosen the parent pig, and has his/her little piglets follow behind in single file composed of all the little children. Each player grasps the coat of the player in front. Mac Cruslaig tries to steal each of the piglets from the parent. The parent jumps out of the way of Mac Cruslaig and the piglets holding on try to stay with the parent. Those lost, i.e. who are unable to hold on to their partner, are caught by Mac Cruslaig. The parent pig keeps running around in a circle. The piglets try to hold on. Mac Cruslaig tries to catch all the piglets.

Celtic Origins of Some Modern Games

In analysing the 130 or so Celtic games detailed in this book, we see therein the evolution of many of our modern games and athletic activities. The ancient Celtic games of Cad, La Soule, Cnapan and Hurling to the country gave birth to such modern games as soccer, rugby, and Gaelic football. Australian rules football could be regarded as a grandchild of Cad, whereas soccer, rugby and Gaelic football were Cad's "true children". The style of play differed but the general concept of play was the same. In soccer one played the "kicking" style. The catch and carry style of la soule and hurling to the country was utilized in rugby. In Gaelic football it was the catch and kick style that predominated. Australian rules football is a mixture of catch, carry and kick.

Hurling in its old formats was the grandfather of many stick and ball games. It gave us modern Irish hurling, Scottish Shinty, golf, camogie, ice hockey and field hockey. All these games have close links to the ancient Celtic stick games. The ancient Celtic stick game was played in many styles. We had la crosse, bazig kamm and bazig dotu in Brittany. In Wales we had bando. The Basques had ralika and arrabilaka. Cammag in its many variations was played in the Isle of Man. Shinty was played in Scotland and Cu Chulaimn played two styles of a stick and ball game in Ireland that were similar to the bazig kamm and bazig dotu played by the Bretons. Cu Chulainn was not only a brilliant hurler but he was also a skilled golfer. Stick and ball games differing from the above games include rounders as played in Ireland and cluichan tighe as played in Scotland. Playing at base and Welsh baseball as played in Wales, were stick and ball games, regarded by many as the precursors of baseball and softball. Pirli (Brittany), cat and bat (Ireland), kit-kat (in Isle of Man) and playing at base (Wales) were games similar in format to rounders. In all four games there was hitting with a stick, catching and running to bases. Some of these games seem to have vanished, whereas rounders and playing at base are still played in parts of England, Ireland and Wales.

Jeu de paume as played in ancient Gaul (France) by the Celts is perhaps the

grandmother of many of our handball and racket games. The game evolved from passing a ball by hand from one player to the next by hitting it with the palm of the hand ("paume"). The striking of the ball with the hand gave way to striking the ball with a racket. This gave us tennis and squash. An other change that took place over time was the introduction of a wall. Instead of striking a ball directly to an other player, one struck the ball indirectly to the other player via a wall. This gave us the many variations of the game of handball. Handball evolved over time (especially in the Basque country) with the introduction of a leather glove and finally the chistera.

Curling has evolved, from its very modest origins of sliding or throwing big rocks at targets on the ice, during winter, in Scotland into a winter Olympic sport. The Celts of Scotland entertained themselves for many hours with this simple activity.

Celtic wrestling is a very popular activity throughout many European countries especially in Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, England and Iceland. It is similar to Greco-Roman style wrestling. Both activities may have had one and the same origin. Some of the Highland games activities are found at the Olympic, Commonwealth, European and PanAm games. These activities are putting the stone for distance (shot-putt), throwing the hammer and stone lifting (weight lifting). The pole-vault may also be Caledonian (Scottish) in origin.

Tug-of-war and Swee tree are included in the games of many countries throughout the world. Tug-of-war is a popular strength team event. Amateur and professional teams exist in many countries. Swee tree is an individual strength activity. It is a very popular activity among the Indians and Inuit of North America.

Spear throwing (Ireland), pitching the bar (Wales) and palanda (Basque areas) may be precursors of the modern day javelin throw. Only the style of throwing has changed from underhand to overhand throwing. Archery was an activity used for both hunting and battle by the Celts. It is a popular sport in many countries throughout the world. It is also an Olympic event. Quoits (Ireland), propataireachd (Scotland), la galoche (Brittany) and kiels (Isle of Man) were played and still are

played in their old format in many parts of the world. Kiels was transported to North America and was changed to a game we now know as "horse-shoes".

Chariot racing still takes place today in a few places throughout the world. The Calgary Stampede of Canada is a well known chariot race. The horse was first domesticated by the Celts and played an important place in their lifestyle. The chariot was used as a means of transport in Celtic daily life and in battle. The chariot race was popular at festivals in Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Today's chariot racing owes its origin to the Celts. The popular sport of horse racing also owes its origin to the Celts.

Activities such as "la civière" (weight pull), "l'arraché du sac" (sack lift), lifting a wooden pole are similar to activities used in the modern day strong-man competitions. Bowling and skittles are popular modern sports played throughout the world. The Celts had "le jeu de quilles", "le pitao", marsac skittles, "le birinic", "le jeu de boules", the cat hole (Brittany), road bowls (Ireland), nine men's Morris (Isle of Man) and Kayles (Wales/Cornwall). It would be safe to suggest that our many modern versions of bowling and skittles had links to these Celtic activities.

The modern day greyhound racing had its roots in the Celtic activity of hunting hares and rabbits. Today an "electric" hare is used to entice the greyhounds to run at their top speeds.

Not all the modern games that I have linked to the old Celtic games have "definite" links to them. However, due to the lack of "concrete" evidence it is a fair assumption to link many of our modern activities and games to the old Celtic games and pastimes.

Chapter V

Celtic Dance and Music

Some may see dance as totally independent from games and pastimes. It would however be incomplete to talk about the games and pastimes of the Celts and not to mention their dances. A simple definition of dance might be: "rhythmic exercise to music", but we all know that dance is much more than that. Dance is also an expression of our emotions (joy and sorrow), an expression of our culture and a spiritual experience. It is a ritual and an art form. Emmerson (1972), saw dance in the following manner... "dance draws energy from something deep in the human spirit or psyche and shares the mystical powers of all the arts, music, poetry, and sculpture in particular. It is a vehicle of ecstasy, liberating the body from the mind, the body's mass from gravity, and inspiring with ritualistic power".

Dance in the Old Celtic World

The modern history of Celtic dance is poorly documented as is the history of dance in the old Celtic world. Few references do exist, describing dance in the ancient world. Strabo (Jones, 1916), says the Celtiberians worshipped an unnamed god at the full moon; they perform their devotions in company with all their families in front of the gates of their townships and held dances lasting throughout the night.

Clarke & Clement (1981), make reference to paintings depicting dancing of exceptional variety and richness among the Etruscans in the sixth and fifth century BC. Some were funerary chain dances while others portrayed men and women prancing and twisting, suggesting the most lively muscular display. These dances were the expression of joy, the fullness of life and the sadness of death. The Etruscans and the Celts were closely linked. Both originated from Asia Minor and both settled in Italy. Some Etruscan cities were attacked and subdued by the Celts. It is only logical to believe that the Celts were influenced by and adopted the Etruscan dances. This reference may be one of the earliest to dance we can find among the Celts. There is

also a picture of a dancer on a Hallstatt piece of pottery ornament found in Hungary, which dates back to about 700 BC (Ross, 1970).

There are two other examples of dance among the Celts (Gauls), found in France. These are two bronze depictions of dancers. One is that of a naked woman dancing and the other is that of a naked man dancing. They were found in Neuvy-en-Sullias (Loiret). Both date back to the Gallo-Roman period.

Dance In The More Recent Celtic World

One of the favorite pastimes and medium of expression of the Celts was dancing to lively music. Through dance, they expressed their joy to the beat of new and old melodies. Many of us are familiar with the music of the fiddle, the flute, the bagpipes and the harp. We also have seen dances or heard the music of jigs, reels and hornpipes. Many are familiar with Highland dancing, Brittany dancing, Irish step dancing and Basque dancing. These dances have many common traits. They have spread throughout the world wherever the Celts have settled down. Nowhere in the world has step dancing evolved more than in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and in the Ottawa Valley of Canada and in Irish communities in the U.S.A. The blend of Irish and French immigrants (both with Celtic origins) who worked in the logging camps in Canada revelled in step dancing. Immigrants from Ireland and Scotland kept Irish and Scottish dance alive in North America.

Recent history (Haurin & Richens, 1997), indicates that Brian Boru's victory at the battle of Clontarf in 1014 AD over the Vikings prepared the ground work and freedom for the Irish to express their true Celtic culture. Feiseanna(s) were established throughout the country. These festivals were a combination of trade fairs, political gatherings, cultural events with music, dance, sport, storytelling and crafts. Over time, the cultural aspect came to dominate the feiseanna(s). Music, dance and crafts dominated. The Celtic traditions declined in Ireland with the Anglo-Norman conquest that occurred around 1170. However, the conquerors became closely associated with traditional Irish culture. To counteract their assimilation, the Anglo-Irish Parliament passed a law (the Statute of Kilkenny, p.70) decreeing

excommunication and heavy penalties against all those who followed the customs of, or allied themselves with, the native Irish. It took 128 years before they enforced the law.

Dancing had been a popular activity among the Celts for many many years. Little precise information exists on the early dances (i.e., dances done "fadó fadó fadó" - long, long, long time ago). History records a variety of dances done by the Irish in the mid 1500s. These include Rinnce Fada (two lines with partners facing each other), Irish Hey (possibly a round or figure dance), jigs (likely in a group), Trenchmores (free form of country dance), and sword dances. It is not clear whose dances influenced whom among the Irish, English, Scottish and French. It is clear that Irish dances had a faster tempo and included side steps.

English suppression of Irish culture continued with the banning of piping. However, Queen Elizabeth I was "exceedingly pleased" with Irish tunes and country dances. The Penal laws enacted in the late 1600s tried in vain for 100 years to suppress Irish culture. Country dances continued. Dancing continued during the 1700s at weddings, christenings and wakes. The church, at times, did condemn the dances. Their condemnation was for abuses related to boozing or to the types of carry-on that went on during some of the dances. Due to the many taboos on sexual behavior, many of the dances (set-dances) were a prime example of "dirty-dancing", i.e., a permissible expression of repressed sexual emotions.

A major influence on Irish dance and Irish culture was the advent of the dance masters, around 1750. The dance masters travelled from village to village teaching dancing. They taught in kitchens, farm outbuildings, crossroads, or hedge schools. Students first learned the jig and the reel. Each dance master had a repertoire of dance steps and he created new steps over time. Sometimes, the masters danced professionally at feisianna(s). The winner was usually the one who knew the most steps, not the one with the best execution. These masters were the creators of the set and ceili dances and they carefully guarded their art of step creation. Dance masters created the first schools of dancing. One dance master described himself as "an

artificial rhythmical walker and instructor of youth in the Terpsichorean art".

During the 1800s a popular event was the cake dance. A cake was placed on a stand in the middle of the field; the cake was the prize for the best dancer. Attempts by the parish priests to suppress dancing were frequent, but appear to have been mostly ineffective.

History of Modern Irish dance

The Gaelic League was founded in 1893. This group encouraged the revival of Irish culture, a culture that the English had suppressed for centuries. In 1929, the Irish Dancing Commission was founded to establish rules regarding teaching, judging, and competitions. Prior to 1929, many variations in dances, music, costumes and the rules of feiseanna(s) existed. The commission tried to standardize the competitions.

During the 20th century Irish dancing has evolved in terms of locations, costumes, and dance technique. During the period of the dance masters, stages were much smaller, such as table tops, half-doors and sometimes the crossroad. Dancing competitions frequently took place on the top of a barrel or on a soaped table. As the dance stage grew larger the dance itself changed in two ways. There was more lateral movement across the stage and steps that required more space (e.g., "flying jumps") became possible. The location of competitions changed over time from barns or outdoors, where flat bed trucks were (and still are) used as stages, to predominately indoor, in hotels, schools, or fairgrounds. Instruction has also changed. The instruction is beginning at a younger age. Before the 1920s, mostly males learned to dance but around the 1930s that changed from mostly males to mostly females. Dance styles also changed. Arms and hands were not always held rigid during solo dances. Previously, the arms and hands were more relaxed and were even placed on the hips. The parish priests were responsible for the rigid arm stance. The stiff arms, it was believed, were less provocative. The church was also trying to increase dancers' self-control. Hand movements did and still do occur in figure (group) dances.

The dance costume has changed from traditional garb. In the 1800s, the dance masters wore hats, swallowtail coats, knee breeches, white stockings, and black shoes with silver buckles. After 1893, the typical costume consisted of a hooded cloak over a white dress with a sash. An alternative to the cloak was a shawl. By the 1930s, the cloak was dropped and the shawl evolved into the current "shawl" worn on the back of costumes; this shawl was like the traditional Irish "brath", which was rectangular and attached to the outfit by broaches or pins. Embroidery was relatively minimal on costumes in the 1900s. Designs were originally of traditional Irish origin, obtained from the book of Kells, from Irish stone crosses and chalices. The interlocking and continuous lines in the patterns on the costumes symbolized the continuity of life and mankind's eternity. Today, silver and gold thread is used in the embroidery, replicating women's clothing in pre-Norman Ireland. Early dancers were barefoot. Soft shoes were introduced around 1924 for girls dancing reels, jigs and slip jigs. Boys adopted these shoes also until 1970. Hard shoes were next introduced. These too evolved over time to fibreglass toe tips and hollow heels. These heels allowed the dancers' "clicks".

The Irish Dance Teachers Association was founded in 1964 and the North American Feis Commission was founded in 1968. It regulates competitions in the U.S.A. & Canada. There are more than 300 certified instructors in North America.

Celtic Dances

The four types of Irish music associated with dances are the jig, the reel, the hornpipe, and the set-dance. The dances have also evolved to give us the butterfly and toe stands. There is a movement to retain the old traditional dances as they were rather than evolve into the more modern style such as we now see in shows like River Dance and Lord of the Dance.

Jigs:

O'Sullivan (1969), notes that Turlough Carolan's book, published in 1721 appears to be the oldest book, in which the word "jig" is applied to an Irish dance tune. He believes that the word was derived from Italy. Townsend (1971), examined

the same question and agrees with O'Sullivan. The jig is a very old dance. There are a number of variations of the jig such as the single, the double, the treble, and the slip jig. The slip jig is danced with soft shoes. It is a graceful dance featuring light hopping, sliding, skipping and pointing. Only women dance the slip jig. The music is 6/8 time for the first three and 9/8 time for the slip jig. Emphasis is on the first beat.

Reel:

The reel originated in Scotland, and the jig originated in England (Hamilton, 1986). The first dateable Irish jig was in 1684. The hornpipe and slip-jig are also thought to have originated in England. Ireland adopted the dances but the Irish dance-music was completely Irish. It is hard to imagine that there was no dancing in Ireland prior to 1200 AD.

Hornpipe:

The hornpipe began around 1760, evolving from English stage acts. It was originally danced by males in hard shoes. Now both males and females dance the hornpipe. A notable feature is the frequent use of rocking motion with the ankles.

Set Dances

A set dance is performed to a tune that has remained set over time. Both males and females dance sets in hard shoes. Some of the tunes are more than 250 years old.

Frank Griffin (field notes), a musician and dancer, from Co. Clare gave us the following insight into traditional dancing in West Clare in the early part of the 20th century: ... "a plain jig was danced to traditional music and the tempo was according to the music played. It was a simple dance. The slip jig is a more complicated version of the plain jig. There is more dancing in it; one steps out and back and sideways. Reel: it was usually danced from side to side. There were four parts to it, two short and two long. One finishes the dance with a hornpipe step. It was lively and quick. Heels and toes were used in this dance.

Sets: you had the Caledonian set. Four men and four women danced this set.

Two couples danced first, then they chained (joined) hands and wheeled. The second four then danced, then they chained and wheeled around the floor. Then the four couples hold hands and wheel around the floor. There are a variety of sets such as: the plain set, the orange and green set, the Mezerk's plain set etc. In the Mezerk's set the male dances with his own girl first, then he dances with each of the other girls (change partners). On the fifth change one kisses the girl and the dance ends".

Frank goes on to talk about some step dances:

"Hornpipe: one can dance it in one spot or one can go around the house.

Blackbird: is like a hornpipe... the steps are longer.

Bonaparte's Retreat: this dance is like the blackbird.

Garden of Daisies: this dance is slightly different in steps from the blackbird or Bonaparte.

Mount famous Hunt: like the hornpipe steps. . ."

Rodney's Glory: according to Frank "this dance is a very active dance. One needs two active feet with no corns or arthritis to do it". Frank goes on to say:

"Then you had the waltz, the fox trot, bum's daisies and the suicín bán. In the fox trot, one throws the girl over one's shoulders. In the bum's daisies one bumps bums and bellies together".

Willie Keane of Doonbeg, Co. Clare (Hurley, 1995), was a great exponent of traditional dancing. He came to prominence with the Mullagh Set which won numerous competitions throughout Ireland. He frequently exhibited on R.T.E. television dancing the West Clare Set.

As to the antiquity of Irish dancing, few records go back far enough to indicate that it existed in Ireland in ancient times. Mac Fionnlaoich (founder member of An Comisiun le Rinci Gaelacha) states that, "In the Irish literature there is not one paragraph, not even one sentence, not even a word of reference to dancing in Ireland". Dancing did exist in Ireland and it was so common that writers never bothered to mention it. The social life of the Irish during the 800 years of British occupation was almost a closed book. After 1601, harpers, poets and pipers were

out-lawed. Harps and war pipes were destroyed by the thousands. Manuscripts of music and poems were piled upon a bonfire. The Irish people were so fond of music that they made whistles from the woody centre of a stalk of corn. They cut holes in it and played it like a tin whistle. Around 1700, the modern Uillean Pipes were invented. Music and poetry were banned in Ireland but dance was not. The references we have about Irish dancing were written by Scottish and English writers. The first reference we have is found in 1569 by Henry Sydney. He describes the dancing of a jig in Galway. Two other references to dancing were made by Englishmen around 1570-1571. About 1680, Vallency, an English visitor to Ireland wrote, "wherever I went, I travelled around three of the four provinces, I found the vulgar Irish were dancing not alone, Long Dances, but also Circular or Round Dances. These vulgar Irish are no mean dancers, and they put much more life into their dances than do the English dancers". Young studied the Irish over a three year period (1776-1779). He notes that he attended many céilís in Ireland, and everywhere he went he saw young and old alike, dancing Long and Circular dances. He also notes that many of the young men were proficient in "solo" Jigs, and "solo" reels. According to Mac Fionnlaoich, this is the very first mention of solo dancing in Ireland. There was no mention of solo hornpipe, solo slip-jig or solo set dance before 1779, indicating their evolution at a later date.

A poem written by O'Neachtain about 1700 used the expression "ag rinnce" (dancing) in the 7th verse and later on in the 13th verse he changes the expression to "ag damhsa" (dancing). In the first verse he gives a picture of the Blackbird and the thrush "ag rinnce" and in the later verse he gives a picture of the deer "ag damhsa" joyfully in the meadow. The source of O'Neachtain's imagery was, no doubt, something he saw at a ceili, according to Mac Fionnlaoich. By the end of the 18th century, there were professional dance teachers of Irish dancing, in particular in Munster, Connaught, Mid-Leinster and West Leinster. Young confirms the existence of the dance masters and notes that dancing was very popular among all classes of people. Many of the Irish dances were created by the dance masters (Cullinane,

1990).

Two other visitors to Ireland, both of Scottish extraction (living in England), wrote about Irish dancing. Rev. Dr. Campbell who visited Ireland in 1775 wrote, "I was at a dance in Cashel, Co. Tipperary and I must truthfully say that those Irish boys and girls are passionately fond of dancing. They dance most gracefully and beautifully. There is a sweet affability and sparkling vivacity in the young ladies which is most captivating. We frog-blooded English dance as if the practice is not congenial to us; but here in Ireland they dance as if dancing was the one and only business in life". The other visitor was Dr. John Forbes. He visited Ireland in 1853. He went to a local pub in Leenane, Co. Galway and this is what he saw: "At the Inn door was a blind old Irish piper doing his best to amuse the company, standing around, with some of the melodies of his country, of which he was no mean exponent. After a time he began playing Jigs and Reels and a dance was immediately got up; first by a beautiful young woman partnered by a much older woman, and it was delightful to see them dancing so gracefully on the hard uneven surface. Then my driver, a Galway man, and a most active young fellow, requested a young lady who was standing around watching the dancing and listening to the music, to dance with him. Nothing loathe as she discarded her coat and the comely pair took to the floor. My driver danced zealously and well, but I must give credit to his lady partner, as, to my mind she acquitted herself incomparably" (Cullinane, 1990).

Sword Dance

The sword dance seemed to be a widespread dance in Europe. It had religious significances. The sword dance was part of the funeral ritual. The sword dance and the clog dance were popular in Northern England. The most brilliant dances of the 18th and pre-18th century were to be found in the Highlands of Scotland. The dancing of the sword dance of the Highlanders was not just a dance it was a method of asserting a racial identity. This can also be said of the Irish, Breton or Basque dances.

In Ireland there are traces of the ancient rites of fire worship in folk dances.

Such traces survived into the 18th century and may be seen in such dances as the rince fada which is one form of the Irish reel. As a child (1950s), I attended many a dance around the bonfire at the cross-roads in Co. Clare. These festivities go back to rituals of sun worship. In the middle ages there was a rich tradition of dance associated with church feast days. Even more fascinating was a tradition related to the playing of ball games by the clergy and their deacons. The most notable was the playing of pelota at Auxerre, France. The dean led his deacons in a dance, holding a large ball. He threw the ball to one cannon and then to another as he danced. The canons' dance of Auxerre was a dance that reflected the hope of resurrection. Its origins seem to pre-date the Christian faith. The Council of Avignon in the 12th century forbade "leaping, obscene movements and dances" in church on the eves of saints.

Central to life in many Celtic areas was the church. Christianity and pagan beliefs blended. Many of the dances were ritualistic in form. The dancers often disguised themselves. The Morris dances were known throughout Europe. They may be derived from sword dances in which the sword gave way to sticks and the sticks to handkerchiefs. It is possible that these dances had a Celtic origin. Remnants of such dances could be found in Ireland, Cornwall and Wales. The Morris and Sword dances existed in Scotland. They were performed by a select band in the village. The social dances (during the renaissance period) were communal and consisted of rounds and ring dances and human-chain processionals and were associated with pagan ritual.

Scottish Country Dances

In books 1-36, the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society examine the traditional dances of Scotland over the last 200 years. The dances are grouped under three categories: jigs, reels and strathspey. The booklets describe variations of these three dances as they evolved over time.

In this brief glimpse at dance among the Celts one perceives a people expressing themselves in an artistic way through rhythmic movement. Through

dance, the Celts were able to express their emotions (joys and sorrows), their philosophy of life, their gregarious nature, their spirituality and their physical skills and rhythm. The earlier dances expressed rhythm and skilled foot-work in a confined area. The upper-body was rigid. Masters of rhythmic footwork, like Donnie Gilchrist and Gilles Roy of the Ottawa Valley, danced from the knees down. They danced close to the floor and paid more attention to emotions and rhythm than to strict technique. Throughout history Celtic dance has evolved and is still evolving, from the rigid upper-body to a more fluid upper-body style Modern dancers, like Flatley, combine many styles of dance in his creations. The new breed of dancers use more space and more variety in their movements. There is a combination of the Scottish style ("in the air") and the Irish and Basque style ("on the floor") in the modern dances. The dances, be they old or be they modern, convey an expression of a determined people, a happy people and above all a proud people.

Celtic Music and Instruments

The Celtic music and Celtic dance are closely intertwined. The lively and quick rhythmic music determines the tempo of the dances. Similarities do exist between the music and dance of the Celts and their descendants throughout the world. Celtic music is probably the one aspect of the Celtic culture that has outlasted outside influences. The Celtic music, though it has evolved, has retained its purity more than any other aspect of the Celtic culture. Irish music, which was somewhat dormant for hundreds of years under British rule was revived in the early 1940's and 50's. One individual among many was responsible for the revival of Irish music. That man was Sean O Riada.

According to Hamilton (1986), the oldest dateable Irish tune is only 400 years old. Many other tunes may be older but one cannot prove it. The said tune is a version of the "Croppy Boy". It is preserved in Trinity College Dublin. Early music was often linked to religion. The earliest Irish composer seems to have been a certain Tuathal, who died in 915 AD. He was an Irish monk in the Benedictine Abbey of St.Gall, in Switzerland. References to chanting are quite numerous in the Irish

manuscripts. Religious chanting, of Latin hymns was introduced to Ireland shortly after the introduction of Christianity to Ireland.

Syllabic poetry was popular in Ireland from C 650 AD to 1650 AD and it is possible it was chanted to a harp accompaniment. The Irish "caoinead" or death - lament represents the oldest kind of Irish music still to be heard.

Musical Instruments

The Irish timpan seems to have been a lyre. It was a small bowed instrument. It was similar to the Welsh erwth. The Irish harp was developed about the 11th century and the horn/trumpet were used more for hunting and warring rather than for tunes. The feadog was a type of musical pipe held to the mouth. The warpipes were not native to Ireland. It was only at the beginning of the 18th century that the Irish type of pipes, the Uillean pipes, evolved. The term Uillean (elbow) pipes was first used in 1903. The earliest reference to bagpipes in Ireland is in an 11th century poem in the Book of Leinster.

In spite of the paucity of information in the literature pertaining to the existence and origins of Celtic dances and music, there is little doubt that both were popular among the Celts for many many centuries.

Conclusion

With the help of the Greek and Roman classical writers, archaeological findings, historians, folklorists and researchers in the field of games and pastimes, the goal of this book has been realized. The reader is provided with "a glimpse of the Celts, their way of life, their philosophy of life, their character, their psyche, their skills, their games and their pastimes". The travel through time and space was an exciting experience with a fascinating people.

The Celts can be seen through many eyes. They are a people with many qualities and idiosyncrasies. They are a complex people with many contradictions. From a psychological perspective, I see the behavior of the Celts throughout history as being similar to that of other races with perhaps a little more emphasis on the "joie de vivre" (eating, drinking, fighting and dancing). From a psychiatric point of view, I would say that the Celts were not totally "crazy". They were extroverted, promiscuous, pompous, quick tempered, but kind. As a philosopher, I like their approach to life. "Quality not quantity" was and is of prime importance to them. They were staunch believers in the power of destiny. They had an individual approach to life, to religion and to art. They were a spiritual people. They were a proud people who would sooner die than be taken captive by their enemies. As an artist, I see the Celts as being superb artists, in sculpting, in painting, in music, in dance, in literature and in sport. The Celtic artists responded to the world around them and expressed it in abstract but simple forms.

As a politician, I find the Celts a real "headache". For them to agree on a political issue, and to establish a sound political structure, or to unite for the greater good of the race, was almost an impossible task to achieve. As a soldier, I find the Celts exceptional fighters. They were fit and courageous, with excessive bravery, loving the challenge and absolutely void of any fear of death. Prior to battle, they would psyche themselves by taunting the enemy and by boasting and expressing fierce battle cries. As an athlete, I find the Celts very skilled, very fit and motivated solely by the challenge. In sports like, cam, la soule, cnapan, hurling, shinty, gouren

and hurling to the country, they would strive to the death for glory and for fame, which they esteemed beyond any worldly wealth. They were true amateur athletes. As a spiritual leader, I see the Celts as true spiritual beings who paid homage to the gods, to thousands of spirits. Their art depicted an inner-life and meaning that went beyond the concrete world. The Celts saw no contradiction in accepting both the pagan and the Christian beliefs. They praised their dead, after battle, as much as they praised the victorious heroes.

From a sociological point of view, I see the Celts as a clannish, tribal, familial and hierarchial people with fixed roles and duties for men and for women. The women took their place alongside the men in battle, in the workplace and in the family home. There was a semblance of equality between men and women, which was not totally true.

As a hedonist, I see the Celts as a fun-loving, pleasure seeking people, who valued personal beauty. They spent much time feasting, playing games and decorating their bodies. They were exhibitionists, going into battle with painted bodies, in the nude. As a nudist, I see the Celts as people who loved the sensual feeling of fighting naked. They were proud of their physique and were eager to show their beauty and skills to the rest of the world.

As a sailor, I admire their skills in sailboats and their ability as "riders of the sea" in mid-ocean in little boats, called curraghs.

As a beautician, I see the Celts as people who took great care of their bodies. They kept fit through sport and fighting. They dyed their brows black with berry juice and colored their cheeks with an herb, called ruam. They used soap and water to clean their skin and they used oil and sweet herbs to anoint their bodies. Next to bravery, physical beauty was admired by the Celts. As a dietician, I see the Celts as heavy meat eaters with a little grain, vegetables and sea food all washed down with generous helpings of brew.

As a musician, I see the Celts as people with rhythm and a love of music. In the past they went into battle to the sound of horns and the rhythmical beat of their

swords against their shields. Later on in their history, they went into battle and into the sport arena to the rhythmic sound of the bagpipes. After the contest, be it on the battle field or the sport's field, the Celts danced to the sound of the fiddle, the harp, the flute or the bagpipes around the bonfire or in the pub.

As a sex educator, I see the Celts as healthy sexual beings with the usual sexual deviancies such as homosexuality, adultery, pedophelia, incest and beastiality. Today some of these behaviors are tolerated, condoned or accepted, whereas others are strongly condemned. As an educator, I see the early Celts as illiterate but intelligent and very creative. They had an awareness and knowledge of astronomy; they understood and respected the nature and greatness of the earth; they believed in the power of the gods and the immortality of the soul; they impressed the Romans with their high degree of excellence in the art of eloquence. Diodorus Siculus commented on the succinct and figurative nature of their speech, their use of allusion, hyperbole and grandiloquent language. The literate Celts have also excelled in prose, drama and poetry. As a dancer, I see the Celts as lovers of dancing to quick lively music. Dancing has been one of the relics passed down to us through the ages from the original Celts. In their final resting places, the Celts, be they in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Brittany, Cornwall, Isle of Man or scattered throughout the new world, still dance jigs, reels and hornpipes to lively music.

As a linguist, I see that the Celts left us a rich legacy of Celtic languages. Some of these languages are still alive, whereas others are struggling for survival or are virtually dead. These languages include: Gaulish, Irish, Scottish and Manx Gaelic, Breton, Welsh and Cornish. As a demographist, I see the Celts as nomads in the past, in the present and also in the future. The Indo-European people known as the Celts have roamed across Europe and settled in Western Europe, for a wee while. Next, we find them in the new world in the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and in many other countries throughout the world. They have conquered the world with their music, their dance, their songs, their literature, their games, their pastimes, and their philosophy of living. They are a people who love a short exciting life as

opposed to a long and dull life.

As a pastime expert, I see that the Celts created or adopted a multiplicity of pastimes. There were pastimes for the young and for the old alike, for males as well as for females, for the fit as well as for the more sedentary folk. For those who liked to play "ball battle", there was "la soule", cam, cnapan, hurling, shinty and hurling to the country. For those who liked stick games, they had rounders, golf, bando, la crosse and pirli. For those who liked to test their strength, there were such activities as the sheaf toss, stone lift, tug of war, swee tree, le lever de la perche, the caber toss, la civière and more. For those interested in skill games, there was wrestling, boxing, handball, pole vaulting, archery, curling, kayles and so on. There were running and jumping activities, as well as spectacular chariot racing, horse racing, bull fighting, and cock fighting. There were boat races with gigs, curraghs and sail boats. For the more pensive type, there were board games such as fidchell brandub and buanfach. There was also story telling, poetry, music and dancing. And finally, there was a little uisce beatha (whiskey) or wine to add fuel to the spirits of the Celts. All this made for a gregarious and fun loving evening around the bonfires as the Celts danced to the lively sounds of the bagpipes, the fiddle, the harp or the flute. A modern replication of the night around the bonfires, is the modern Irish pub concept, which we find in many cities throughout the world. For the children, there were also many games and pastimes, such as the stick and ball games, spinning tops, tig, skittles, bowling, running, jumping, dance, croquet, hide and seek and many more.

There are many adjectives used in the literature to describe the Celts. They were a complex people; contradictory in their ways; always seeking a high quality of living and excessively brave in battle. They were boastful, extroverted and hedonistic in their ways. They were a free spirited people. They were rural people who loved nature. They believed that "everything belonged to the brave". They were clannish. They believed that everything belonged to those who were willing to pay the price and they had absolutely no fear of death. They were spiritual people who believed that death was the beginning of a new life. When they were not fighting, the

Celts were farming, feasting or creating. The Celts were skilled farmers, using the plough in Britain at the end of the first millennium. They were skilled artists in sculpture, in building, in making tools for war, in music, in dance, in literature, in story telling, in sport and in fighting. The Celts were real artists in the sense that they did "art for the sake of art". They fought and played games just for the love and the thrill of the contest.

For the Celts, a game (or a pastime) was more than a game. It was part of life, a very important part of life. Through their games and pastimes, the Celts expressed their inner feelings, their ambitions, their artistic skills, their "joie de vivre", their personality and their philosophy of life. The game, for them, was a true laboratory for the realization of the all important concept of fair-play. Be it in dance, in music, in art, in games or in fighting, the Celt was totally committed and was totally willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in the pursuit of a personal goal. The collective spirit and philosophy of life of those nomads that we met on the Indo-European plains, over 2500 years ago, is expressed in the games and pastimes of the Celts. Their personality traits, over time, shaped their games and pastimes.

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