Household & Family Session 7 – Recreation

Alehouses and Inns

As well as being a place for drinking, the inn or the alehouse was the main source of news and gossip, a place to conduct business, a venue for sports and games, and the scene for courtship and celebration.

IMAGE – ALEHOUSE EXTERIOR

Inns were business premises, usually offering overnight lodgings as well as food and drink, while alehouses were private residences. They were generally small: one Essex house was only twelve feet square! Often there was no glass in the windows and the family living quarters overlapped with the public drinking area.

Customers were generally tradesmen or craftsmen, husbandmen or labourers. Yeomen were less likely to frequent the alehouse, usually only on their visits to market, as many had their own brew-house while others were Puritans. Gentlemen preferred to drink wine in the taverns or inns rather than beer in the alehouse.

Women rarely visited alehouses, except perhaps to celebrate events like christenings.

IMAGE – ALE-BUSH

From the late 16th century temporary signs such as a stake with a leafy bush or a wooden hand attached, began to be replaced by painted boards illustrating the name of the alehouse.

IMAGE – ALE SIGN

Until the 1640s, an alehouse was usually a secondary occupation, or a temporarily arrangement to tide a person or a family over a particularly difficult time.

Many alehouse keepers were labourers or husbandmen, who operated only in late autumn and winter after the harvest had provided ample grain and there was no other work to do. In the towns, it was poor tradesmen such as tailors or shoemakers took up ale-selling to add to their income.

About 10% of the ale-sellers, or "tipplers", were women, often widows.

IMAGE - ALEWIFE

Brewing and selling ale to benefit the needy was a long-standing custom in England. Help-ales or church-ales were held to raise money for worthy causes until Puritan-inspired local elites began to condemn or even ban them. In times of dearth, such as the 1590s and the 1630s, the “middling sort” feared that drinking added to the social distress by directing too much grain to brewing.

IMAGE – ALEHOUSE INTERIOR

Some alehouses provided simple food such as buns, cakes and pies. Baking could provide a side-line for alehouse keepers, or vice versa if bakers had a surplus of fuel and grain. Tobacco was also popular.

IMAGE – TOBACCO PIPE SMOKING

After the Reformation, communal entertainment such as music, dancing and plays that were once held in the churchyard, often took place at inns or alehouses and games were played outside like:

IMAGE – NINEPINS and

IMAGE – KNUR & SPELL

From the mid-17th century, less communal sports and entertainments took place at the alehouse and more indoor games were played, such as shuffleboard, dice and cards.

IMAGE – SHUFFLEBOARD

IMAGE – INN SCENE WITH VIOLIN AND CARD PLAYERS, 1685

From 1552, alehouses were required to hold a licence from a Justice of the Peace, and the trade provided a useful source of local tax revenue.

The number of alehouses grew between 1570 and 1640. In 1577, the average, including unlicensed houses, was probably about one per 140 inhabitants. In the 1580s, the Midlands had one licensed inn, tavern or alehouse for every 50 inhabitants, the North perhaps one per 100, and the South and East Anglia approximately one per 200.

IMAGE – 16th CENTURY ALEHOUSE

There were perhaps ten times as many alehouses as there were inns.

The introduction of beer

Until the mid-16th century, the English drank ale brewed from barley. . Hops were introduced from Flanders and added to the brewing process to make beer. By the end of the 16th century beer was being drunk increasingly in preference to traditional ale.

Bottled beer became widely available after 1630, and local beers gained a reputation outside their home area. Herbs and spices were sometimes added. Competition was growing among alehouses so they vied with choices of drinks and strength.

Decreasing numbers of victuallers brewed their own ale or beer as the price of barley increased six-fold between 1500 and 1600... Those who did often brewed very little, perhaps only 12 gallons per week. Ale-brewing needed little skill, but beer-making was more complicated and required more sophisticated equipment and more fuel.

Small brewers found it impossible to meet the growing demand for beer and the market was exploited by larger, urban-based wholesale brewers. Wholesale purchase had benefits such as extended credit, free delivery and continuity of supply.

IMAGE – BREWING BEER

Beer was an important element in the diet, particularly in times of dearth. Water was often undrinkable and three pints of small beer provide a quarter of the necessary daily calories for a boy. Food prices increased quicker than the price of beer which was regulated by the local Justices of the Peace, so ale or beer was a cheaper source of nutrition.

Consumption for an adult man was perhaps about 1 quart per day.

Alehouses - An increasing problem?

From the 1540s until the time of the Civil Wars there was an increasing hostility towards alehouses among the parish elite in many parts of the country. Puritan-inspired officials feared they were centres of crime and disorder, and disrupted family life.

There were complaints that youths and servants spent time and money in alehouses without supervision and that alehouses separated husbands from wives and provided opportunities for casual sexual liaisons

There were also fears that alehouses were the headquarters for criminal gangs and radical forces, and hives of religious non-conformity, notably of Papistry. Above all, alehouses were the cause of absenteeism from the churches on Sundays, with men preferring to spend the day drinking and playing games and sports such as cards, football or skittles.

IMAGE - THE ALEHOUSE DEVIL: DRUNKENESS

(Quote 1) William Keithe, rector of Cholde Okeford, Dorset, exclaimed in a sermon in 1571:

"Where God calleth it his Holy Sabbath, the multitude call it their revelling day, which day is spent in bull-baitings, bear baitings, bowlings, dicing, carding, dancings, drunkenness and whoredom"

Parish elites became increasingly concerned with the problem of excessive drinking. Between 1604 and 1625 Parliament passed four statutes against heavy drinkers and drunkenness.

As the number of living-in servants and servants-in-husbandry dropped, it became less common for employers to provide free food and drink to employees. Instead, labourers were allowed to visit the alehouse at lunch-time and unemployed labourers and artisans gathered at alehouses to while away the time.

Concern grew among the parish elite that alehouses were centres of disorder and immorality, and engines of impoverishment that diverted much-needed grain and money from the hands of the poor.

The result was increasing regulation of the alehouses, culminating in 1643 with the introduction of excise duty on ale and beer.

Though the anxiety of the middling and better sort became more muted following the Restoration of the Monarchy in the 1660s, there was a continuing belief until the end of our period that alehouses and taverns were responsible for worsening the condition of the poor.

By the 18th century, it was the availability of cheap gin that brought ruin to many a man and woman, as illustrated in Hogarth's famous "Gin Lane".

IMAGE - "GIN LANE"

Sober gentlemen and merchants discussed their business in the new fashionable coffee houses,

IMAGE – COFFEE HOUSE

Plays

The earliest plays were produced by the craft guilds in towns such as York, Chester and Coventry in pageants that extended over several days.

The biblical scenes were divided amongst those guilds that could most readily furnish the desired "properties." So, the shipwrights built Noah's ark, the plasterers represented the creation of the earth, the goldsmiths presented the Adoration of the Magi, the vintners the turning of water into wine, and the bakers the Last Supper.

IMAGE – GUILD PAGEANT AT CHESTER

(Quote 2) The term pageant originally applied to the mobile platform that served as a stage. **Archdeacon Rogers** described the plays performed in Chester at Whitsuntide in 1594:

"The manner of these plays were, every company had his pageant, a high scaffold with 2 rooms, a higher and a lower, upon 4 wheels. In the lower they apparelled themselves, and in the higher room they played, being all open on the top, that all beholders might hear and see them. The places where they played them was in every street. They began first at the Abbey gates, and when the first pageant was played, it was wheeled to the high cross before the Mayor, and so to every street, and so every street had a pageant playing before them at one time, till all the pageants for the day appointed were played."

After the Reformation, groups of actors toured the country performing 'morality' plays with characters with names such as "Jealousy", "Greed" and "Faith". Plays about Robin Hood were also popular.

However, people increasingly preferred to watch plays for entertainment rather than being given moral messages.

Strolling players were banned in 1572, but Queen Elizabeth I gave permission for four noblemen to employ companies of actors.

The first real theatre in England was built in 1577 by the Earl of Leicester and others soon followed, though plays were often staged in the yards of inns.

The performance of a play had to be licensed by the mayor of a borough, or the lord lieutenant or two justices of the peace in a shire county.

By 1595, 15,000 people a week attended plays in London. Shakespeare's first play, "Henry VI", was performed in 1592, and he continued to produce plays over the next eleven years.

IMAGE – SWAN THEATRE

Elizabethan theatres were designed to allow everybody a view of what was going on. Most theatres had no roof.

The most expensive seats were on the stage itself. The middle-price seats were arranged in covered galleries which ran around the theatre. The poorest people paid a penny to stand in the pit.

As the stage had no scenery, one of the actors would tell the audience what the scene looked like.

Women were forbidden to act, so young boys played the part of women.

(Quote 3) Naturally, the puritans considered plays to be a dangerous distraction for poor folk. In 1578, the puritan preacher **John Stockwood** complained: *"The blast of the trumpet will call a thousand people to see a filthy play. An hour's tolling of a bell would only bring a hundred people to a sermon."*

(Quote 4) In the following year, **John Northbrooke** wrote: *"Many can tarry at a vain play two or three hours, when as they will not abide scarce one hour at a sermon."*

Dancing and Maypoles

The puritans were also concerned with the continuing attachment to some of the old festivals and the activities that went along with them.

(Quote 5) In 1579, **John Northbrooke** described mixed dancing as: *"most unseemly and intolerable, the storehouse and nursery of bastardy."*

May Day was a particular target for the puritans, who considered it an excuse for sexual license. They disapproved of the morris dancers, the feasting, music and drinking, and young men and maids staying out to greet the May sunrise and bringing back boughs of flowers and garlands to decorate the village the next morning.

IMAGE - MAYPOLE

(Quote 6) In 1583 the puritan **Phillip Stubbes** reported dramatically: *"There is a great Lord present amongst them, as superintendent and Lord over their pastimes and sports, namely Satan, prince of hell. But the chiefest jewel they bring from thence is their Maypole, which they bring home with great veneration, as thus: They have twenty or forty yoke of oxen, every ox having a sweet nose-gay of flowers placed on the tip of his horns, and the oxen draw home this Maypole (this stinking idol, rather) which is covered all over with flowers and herbs, bound round about with strings, from the top to the bottom, and sometimes painted with variable colours, with two or three hundred men, women and children following it with great devotion. And thus being reared up with handkerchiefs and flags hovering on the top, they strew the ground round about, bind green boughs about it, set up summer halls, bowers and arbours hard by. And then fall they to dance about it, like as the heathen people did at the dedication of the Idols, whereof this is a perfect pattern, or rather the thing itself. I have heard it credibly reported by men of great gravity and reputation, that of forty, three-score, or a hundred maids going to the wood over night, there have scarcely the third part of them returned home again undefiled. These be the fruits which these cursed pastimes bring forth."*

IMAGE – MAYPOLE AND PURITAN

In April, 1644, the Long Parliament ordered all Maypoles to be taken down as "a heathenish vanity" and constables and churchwardens were to be fined 5s. a week until the poles were removed. At Stratford-upon-Avon, the maypoles were turned into firemen's ladders!

Fairs

Most boroughs had the right to hold an annual fair, which was accompanied by various revelries, games and sports.

IMAGE – COUNTRY SPORTS

(Quote 7) In 1708, **Addison** wrote in "The Spectator" about one of the more gentle contests taking place at a typical local fair - a whistling match: *"The prize was one guinea, to be conferred upon the ablest whistler; that is, he that could whistle clearest, and go through his tune without laughing, to which at the same time he was provoked by the antic postures of a merry-andrew, who was to stand upon the stage, and play his tricks in the eye of the performer. There were three competitors; the two first failed, but the third, in defiance of the zany and all his arts, whistled through two tunes with so settled a countenance that he bore away the prize, to the great admiration of the spectators."*

(Quote 8) Not all the events at fairs were so charming. The **Reading Mercury** of 19th June 1782 publicised a variety of activities on offer at a local festival: *"This is to give notice that Yattenden Revel will be kept as usual, on Wednesday, the 1st of July, and for the encouragement of gentlemen and gamesters and others, there will be given an exceedingly good Gold-laced Hat of 27s value, to be played for at cudgels; the man that breaks most heads to have the prize; 2s will be given to each man that positively breaks a head, for the first ten heads that are broken; the blood to run an inch, or to be deemed no head.*

Also will be given a very good Hat of 15s value to be wrestled for; the man that throws most men to have the prize; no dispute about falls, but three go-downs.

Likewise an exceeding good Gold-laced Hat at 27s value to be bowled for; the man that gets most pins at three bowls to have the prize.

On Thursday, the 11th, will be given Half-a-Guinea to be run for by jack asses; the best of three heats. Also will be given a fine Holland Smock to be run for by women; the best of three heats.

Likewise a Jingling Match by eleven blindfolded women and one unmasked with bells, for a very good Petticoat.

Also a Gold-laced Hat of 27s value to be played at cudgels for by young gamesters, the same rules to be observed as the first day. Likewise an exceeding good Gold-laced Hat at 27s value, to be bowled for."

(Quote 9) Cudgels, or "backswords" was a popular sport in market towns and villages. A **writer in the "Spectator"** visited a typical country fair where:

"I found a ring of cudgel-players, who were breaking one another's heads in order to make some impression on their mistresses' hearts."

(Quote 10) A Notice in the **Gloucester Journal** of 15th June 1778, advertised:

"On Friday the 19th of June will be played for at backswords, at Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire, a Prize of ten Guineas, by nine or eleven a Side, to appear on the Stage in the Market Place, in Stow aforesaid, by 11 o'clock in the forenoon, and in each case no side by 12 o' clock. Half a Guinea will be given to each man breaking a head, and Half a Guinea to each man having his head broken."

The "jingling match" mentioned in the quote was a common feature of wakes and fairs. Nine to a dozen players entered a large ring encircled by ropes. All, except the "jingler" had their eyes blindfolded with handkerchiefs. The "jingler's" eyes were not covered, but he held a small bell in each hand. His purpose was to keep moving to avoid the other players, who pursued him, following the sound of the bells. A time was set for the duration of the game, perhaps 20 minutes, and a prize was offered for the first to catch the "jingler". If the other players failed to take him, the "jingler" claimed the prize.

"Throwing at cocks" was another attraction at country fairs. Fortunately, by the end of the 18th century living birds had been replaced by pottery cocks, or piles of apples or oranges.

Cock-fighting, Bear-baiting and Bull-baiting

Cockfighting, bull-baiting and other cruel sports remained popular among all levels of society throughout our period.

IMAGE – COCK-FIGHTING POSTER FROM FELTON, 1816

IMAGE – COCK-FIGHTING

(Quote 11) In the 16th century, the organising of animal fights was a royal monopoly. In 1561, Queen Elizabeth granted a patent to Sir Saunders Duncombe:

"for the sole practice and profit of the fighting and combating of wild and domestic beasts within the realm of England for the space of fourteen years."

IMAGE – BULL BAITING

(Quote 12) At the end of the 16th century, **a foreign visitor named Hentzner** described the English sports of bear and bull-baiting:

"There is a place built in the form of a theatre, which serves for baiting of bulls and bears; they are fastened behind, and then worried by great English bull-dogs; but not without risk to the dogs, from the horns of the one and the teeth of the other; and it sometimes happens they are killed on the spot; fresh ones are immediately supplied in the places of those that are wounded or tired. To this entertainment there often follows that of whipping a blinded bear, which is performed by five or six men standing circularly with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy, as he cannot escape because of his chain; he defends himself with all his force and skill, throwing down all that come within his reach, and are not active enough to get out of it, and tearing the whips out of their hands, and breaking them."

IMAGE – BEAR BAITING, 16th CENTURY

(Quote 13) In 1670, **John Evelyn** wrote:

"I went with some friends to the Bear Garden, where was cock-fighting, dog-fighting, and bear and bull-baiting, it being a famous day for all these butcherly sports, or rather barbarous cruelties. The bulls did exceeding well, but the Irish wolf- dog exceeded, which was a tall greyhound, a stately creature indeed, who beat a cruel mastiff. One of the bulls tossed a dog full into a lady's lap, as she sat in one of the boxes at a considerable height from the arena. Two poor dogs were killed, and so all ended with the ape on horseback, and I most heartily weary of the rude and dirty pastime, which I had not seen, I think, in twenty years before."

The noise from the fighting animals and the cheering spectators gave rise to the term "bear-garden".

(Quote 14) These barbarous sports had fallen out of favour by 1801 when **Joseph Strutt** wrote:

"Bull and bear-baiting is not encouraged by persons of rank and opulence in the present day; and when practised, which rarely happens, it is attended only by the lowest and most despicable part of the people; which plainly indicates a general refinement of manners and prevalency of humanity among the moderns; on the contrary, this barbarous pastime was highly relished by the nobility in former ages, and countenanced by persons of the most exalted rank, without exception even of the fair sex."

Bull-baiting was finally made illegal in 1835, but bull-baiting rings can still be seen in some towns and, locally, in the market place at Kelso.

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

Martial Origins

At the beginning of our period sports were considered as preparation for noble or gentleman's role as military officer or royal counsellor.

In 1575, the Earl of Leicester entertained Queen Elizabeth I at Kenilworth Castle with a recreation of a medieval jousting tournament.

The use of the quintain survived in many parts of rural England into the eighteenth century, particularly as a wedding sport.

Swordplay was another martial art essential for the English gentleman. While the sons of the gentry and aristocrats engaged in practice fencing, professional swordsmen engaged in the bloody sport of prize-fencing.

IMAGE - FENCING

(Quote 15) Samuel Pepys' diary entry for June 1, 1663 reads:

"I with Sir John Minnes to the Strand Maypole, and there light of his coach, and walked to the New Theatre, which, since the King's players are gone to the Royal one, is this day begun to be employed for the fencers to play prizes at. And here I came and saw the first prize I ever saw in my life: and it was between one Matthews, who did beat at all points, and one Westwick, who was soundly cut both in the head and legs, that he was all over blood; and other deadly blows did they give and take in very good earnest.... Strange to see what a deal of money is flung to them both upon the stage between every bout."

The taste for prize-fencing waned in the 18th century, to be replaced by boxing.

Archery

Archery is probably the oldest of our national sports.

IMAGE - ARCHERS

To preserve a trained force of bowmen for military service, Henry VIII introduced an Act requiring all his male subjects from 7 to 60 years of age to practise with the longbow. Butts, or batts, were erected in every town (e.g. - Green Batts in Alnwick). Parents had to provide every boy aged between 7 and 17 with a bow and two arrows. Adults had to provide themselves with a bow and four arrows.

(Quote 16) In order to prevent other pastimes from interfering with archery practice, a penalty of 40s. a day was imposed on every person: *"who shall for his gain, lucre, or living keep any common house, alley, or place of bowling, coiting, tennis, dicing tables, or carding, or any other game prohibited by any statute heretofore made or any unlawful new game."*

Archery practice was included in the statutes of 16th century grammar schools.

(Quote 17) The boys of Kepyer School at Houghton-le-Spring were allowed:

"some time of recreation when the master shall think it meet for the scholars to exercise their bows in matching either with themselves or with strangers in the ox pasture or in Houghton Moor".

A bequest to Harrow School established annual archery contests, with the prize of a silver arrow. The contests continued until 1771.

By the 18th century, archery had become a sport reserved for young gentlemen.

(Quote 18) A Notice in the **Newcastle Chronicle** of 20th October 1764 read:

"To all Gentlemen archers of the long bow that on Thursday the 11th of October next, the Golden Arrow will be shot for at Darlington; the Dinner will be at Widow Heslop's, the sign of the Three Tuns, where the favour of your company will greatly oblige,

Gentlemen, Your very humble servants

Robert Hall, Captain and George Bickerby, Lieutenant"

The Royal Toxophilite Society, the oldest and most important of English archery clubs, was established in 1780.

Hunting and Fishing

Hunting on horseback was one of the few exercises considered suitable for ladies as well as gentlemen.

(Quote 19) According to **"A Jewell for Gentrie",** published in 1614*: "hunting, hawking, fowling and fishing are the absolute parts of musick which make perfect the harmony of a true gentleman".*

IMAGE – COMPLEAT ANGLER COVER

In 1653, English angler Izaak Walton published "The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation", describing the craftsmanship involved in making fishing tackle and the methods anglers must use to catch game fish.

Even in the early days, some anglers were less sporting than others. "The booke of fishing with hooks and line, etc.", written in 1590, complained of the methods used by some disreputable fishermen, which included casting into the water *"oyles, ointments, pouders and pellets"* to stun or poison fish.

Horse-racing

Horse races for wagers had been held since the Middle Ages. Chester is home to England's oldest racecourse, The Roodee.

IMAGE – ROODEE RACECOURSE, 1753

(Quote 20) An antiquarian in Chester wrote in 1540:

"It had been customary time out of mind, upon Shrove Tuesday, for the company of saddlers belonging to the city of Chester, to present to the drapers a wooden ball, embellished with flowers, and placed upon the point of a lance; this ceremony was performed in the presence of the mayor, at the cross in the Roody, an open place near the city; but this year the ball was changed into a bell of silver, valued at three shillings and sixpence, or more, to be given to him who shall run the best and the farthest on horseback, before them upon the same day."

The first recorded race at Newmarket took place in 1622, a match race between a horse belonging to Lord Salisbury and a horse of the Marquis of Buckingham. Buckingham's horse won the prize of the then enormous sum of £100. Charles II made Newmarket fashionable and caused horse racing to be styled "the Sport of Kings".

IMAGE – EPSOM RACES

Bowls

The first reference to bowls occurs in the Statute Book in 1511, when Henry VIII made laws against a variety of games in favour of archery.

An Act of 1541 forbade every labourer, artisan, apprentice, or servant playing bowls and a number of other games, except at Christmas *"in their master's houses or in their master's presence."* Only persons who possessed land worth £100 a year could apply for a license to play bowls within their own gardens or orchards. For those who broke these laws, there was a penalty of 6s 8d.

By the 17th century, bowls had become a popular games played by both gentlemen and ladies and many great houses, and the universities, possessed bowling alleys.

Tennis

The oldest tennis court in England was erected by Henry VIII at Hampton Court, between 1515 and 1520.

IMAGE - REAL TENNIS

(Quote 21) In 1626, **Lady Katherine Paston** wrote to her son, a student at Cambridge, warning of the dangers of playing too much tennis:

"If thou lovest my life let me entreat thee to be very careful of thyself for overheating thy blood."

Tennis was a sport particularly favoured by English kings and princes.

IMAGE - Duke of York playing tennis, 1633

(Quote 22) In 1751, the **royal physicians** were of the opinion that the death of the Prince of Wales: ***"had not been occasioned by the fall, but from the blow of a tennis ball three years before."***

Cricket

Cricket developed from a medieval game called stoolball, played with a curved bat, or staff, shaped like a hockey-stick, and a hard ball that was bowled underarm at the wicket.

In 1611 two men of Sidlesham in Sussex were prosecuted for playing cricket instead of attending church on Easter Sunday. They were fined 12d each and made to do penance.

By the end of the 17th century, cricket matches were attracting substantial wagers. A match played in Sussex in 1697 was played for stakes of 50 guineas a side.

The first inter-county match took place between Kent and Surrey in 1709.

IMAGE - CRICKET AT THE ARTILLERY GROUND, FINSBURY, 1743

(Quote 23) Some early matches bore little resemblance to today's game, as illustrated by this report in the **Adams Weekly Courant** of August 1773:

"Wednesday last was played on Guildford Downs a very extraordinary Match of Cricket, between a Carpenter on one Side, and a Company of nine Tailors on the other, for a Quarter of lamb and cabbage, which was decided in favour of the Carpenter by 64 notches."

The Laws of the modern game were first drawn up by members of the London Cricket Club in 1744.

Football

Football was an ages-old game that often involved most of the village community and usually took place in the streets. Surviving examples of the old-style football games include the Shrove Tuesday matches played each year in Alnwick and some other towns.

Football was never popular with the better sort as it was considered too violent and accidents were frequent.

(Quote 24) Sir Thomas Elyot, in his book entitled "*The Governour"*, published in 1531, declares that football:

"is nothing but beastly fury and extreme violence, whereof proceedeth hurt, and consequently rancour and malice do remain with them that be wounded, wherefore it is to be put in perpetual silence."

(Quote 25) In Phillip Stubbes' "Anatomie of Abuses" of 1583, football is described as:

"a devilish pastime . . . and hereof groweth envy, rancour, and malice, and sometimes brawling, murder, homicide, and great effusion of blood, as experience daily teacheth."

Until the late 18th century, the game was forbidden and it was an offence to keep a football. However, a blind eye was often turned, and sometimes matches were organised by the local gentry for the amusement of their neighbours and tenants.

IMAGE – BLOWING UP A FOOTBALL

Football was also used for political purposes.

(Quote 26) The following Notice appeared in the **Northampton Mercury** on 29th July 1765:

"West Haddon, Northamptonshire - This is to give Notice to all Gentlemen Gamesters and well-wishers to the cause now in hand that there will be a foot-ball play in the Fields of Haddon aforesaid, on Thursday the 1st day of August, for a Prize of considerable value, and another good prize to be played for on Friday the 2nd. All Gentlemen Players are desired to appear at any of the public houses in Haddon aforesaid each day between the hours of 10 and 12 in the forenoon, where they will be joyfully received and kindly entertained etc."

On 5th August, **the Mercury** reported:

"We hear from West Haddon, in this County, that on Thursday and Friday last, a great number of people being assembled there in order to play a foot-ball match, soon after many formed themselves into a tumultuous mob, and pulled up and burnt the fences designed for the enclosure of that field, and did other considerable damage, many of whom are since taken up for the same by a party of General Mordaunt's Dragoons sent from this town."

Two weeks later, this Notice appeared in **the same newspaper**:

"Whereas Francis Butterell, of East Haddon , in the County of Northampton, wool comber, stands charged upon Oath before John Bateman, Esq., one of his majesty's Justices of the Peace of the said County, with preparing and causing to be published in the Northampton Mercury of the 29th July last, an Advertisement, inviting persons at West Haddon aforesaid, on the 1st of August following, for the purpose of pretending a foot ball match, in consequence of which a great number of persons assembled on the said 1st of August at West Haddon aforesaid, in a very riotous manner, and tore up and destroyed great part of the enclosures of the Common Fields of the said Parish (which had been made in pursuance of an Act of Parliament obtained for that purpose) and burnt and destroyed large quantities of posts and rails, which had been made into stacks by the Proprietor of the said Field for the purpose of the same enclosure: Now, for the better and more effectual discovery of and bringing to Justice the said Francis Butterell, the Proprietors of the said Fields of West Haddon do hereby promise a Reward of Twenty Pounds, to be paid to any person or persons who shall apprehend, or cause to be apprehended, the said Francis Butterell, upon the commitment of the said Francis Butterell to any of his majesty's Gaols

Foot Races

In our period, a number of men made their living as professional foot-racers, or "pedestrians". Gentlemen wagered on quite ludicrous races.

IMAGE – WILL KEMP, 1600

Most famous was Will Kemp, an actor and contemporary of Shakespeare, who morris-danced over 100 miles from London to Norwich over nine days in 1600.

In 1788, a young gentleman, with a booted and spurred jockey on his back, ran against an elderly fat man named Bullock, who ran without a rider. A fish-merchant ran 7 miles from Hyde Park Corner to Brentford, in 45 minutes, carrying 56 lbs of fish on his head!

Foot races were a popular part of wedding festivities in the north of England.

Pleasure Gardens

Pleasure Gardens became a fashionable feature of the social scene from the mid 17th to the end of the 18th century.

IMAGE - VAUXHALL GARDENS

Spring Gardens, better known by the name of Vauxhall Gardens, were the most famous.

The season ran from the beginning of May till the end of August. The Gardens opened from five o'clock every evening, Sundays excepted and after dark they were illuminated with fifteen hundred glass lamps.

IMAGE – THE ORCHESTRA, VAUXHALL GARDENS

(Quote 27) A Guide to Vauxhall Gardens was issued in 1760:

"In that part of the grove which fronts the orchestra a considerable number of tables and benches are placed for the company; and at a small distance from them, fronting the orchestra, is a large pavilion, which particularly attracts the eye by its size, beauty, and ornaments."

The guide included a price list of provisions. Burgundy was 6s. a bottle; claret, 5s.; champagne 8s.; red port and sherry, 2s.; table beer, a quart mug, 4d.; two pound of ice, 6d.; a dish of ham or beef, 1s.; and an orange or a lemon, 3d.

IMAGE – VAUXHALL GARDENS TEMPLE OF COMUS

Vauxhall Gardens attracted average crowds of 1,000 people a week. Fireworks were exhibited there as early as 1780 and, in 1802, Vauxhall was the scene of a famous ascent by the French balloonist Andre Garnerin, who then parachuted into the Gardens from a height of some 8,000 feet.

Similar gardens were opened in 1742 at Ranelagh, which became specially celebrated for its masquerade balls.

IMAGE - RANELAGH

The usual evening admission to the music and fireworks was 2s. 6d. It cost 1s. to walk in the gardens during the daytime.

(Quote 28) By 1788, the attendance had dropped from thousands to hundreds. **A daily paper of April 22nd of that year**, stated:

"Ranelagh has been voted a bore with the fashionable circles. The distance from town, the total want of attendance and accommodation, the want of a respectable band of vocal and instrumental music--with a variety of other wants too numerous for description--render this once gay circle the dullest of all dull public amusements."

Ranelagh enjoyed something of a revival in the 1790s, but closed in 1805.

Foreign Travel

In the 16th century, only diplomats, merchants and seafarers travelled overseas.

The Earl of Oxford ventured abroad for 7 years during Queen Elizabeth's reign for more politic reasons, because he *"was ashamed because he had farted in bowing to the Queen"*.

By the end of the 18th century, the sons of the better sort were being encouraged to take the “Grand Tour” in Europe to learn geography, law and military matters, as well as foreign arts and manners.

(Quote 29) Many books of advice were written for the gentleman traveller. James Clelland, for instance, warned against *"admiring fine marble in Italy or being rowed about in gondolas in Venice"*.