

British Culture 6 - British Sports (Part 2)

Golf

The origin of golf remains unknown but we know that the sport was already popular when the University of St Andrews in Scotland was founded in 1413. People played golf in winter when the grass was at its shortest. The first recorded reference to golf can be found in an act of the Scottish Parliament signed in 1457. In this act, James II of Scotland prohibited golf and football because these two sports were distracting his soldiers. However, golf gradually became popular especially during the 17th century when King James VI of Scotland (and also King James I of England) started to play golf regularly. The second factor that contributed to the growing popularity of golf was the way the ball was manufactured. The third important factor was the opening of the First British Open Championship to amateurs in 1860.



To play golf, you need a ball and a club. The golfer places the ball on a tee before hitting it. The objective of the game is to hit the ball and get it into the hole with as few shots as possible. A golfer is often accompanied by a caddie who carries his/her golf bag and gives advice. When the ball is on the green, the golfer needs a different club called 'putter' to get the ball into the hole. The hole is indicated by a flag stick.

Curling

Curling is not a new sport: the first recorded reference to curling dates back to the 16th century! It was played in Scotland and in the Netherlands. In its early days, curling was played outside, on frozen lochs and ponds. The first Rules were drawn up in 1838 by the Grand Caledonian Curling Club in Edinburgh.

Curling is often compared to chess on ice as it requires a lot of strategy. People generally think that curling is not a very exciting sport but they are wrong! Curling is also a non-violent sport: it is a gentlemen's sport.



In order to play curling, you need special shoes, stretchy pants (trousers), a warm sweater (top), gloves, a broom and a stone.

Shinty

Shinty is not a recent sport: it was played in Athens in the 5th century BC, and then in pre-historic Britain and Ireland. The first shinty players were warriors. The game allowed them to practise and be ready for battle.

Shinty is very similar to hockey. Shinty can be violent and it can turn out like civil war! It is also a risky game: players can break their legs or arms, or get injured.



The Highland Games

The First Highland Games were organised in Scotland in the 11th century. Their objective was to select the best warriors (soldiers) and the best messengers.

There are different events. The most spectacular ones are the shot put (competitors throw a large stone of around 20 - 26lbs in weight as far as they can.), the tug o'war (tug-of-war) (two teams of eight men pull at opposite ends of a rope until one team drags the other over a line on the ground), the caber toss (a long heavy wooden pole is thrown into the air as a test of strength), and the hammer throw (competitors



throw a hammer made from a metal ball which weighs around 22 lb for men or 16 lb for women and which is attached to a wooden pole or handle, as far as they can.).

Finally, the Highland Games would be nothing without competitions in Highland dancing and piping.

