

STUDIES IN PHYSICAL CULTURE AND TOURISM
Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007

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JOSEPH STRUTT – A FORGOTTEN ETHNOGRAPHER AND HISTORIAN OF SPORT

Key words: Strutt, sports ethnography, sports history, English attitudes to sport.

ABSTRACT

Joseph Strutt is one of the greatest scholars of the eighteenth century England who was almost completely forgotten in the following centuries. He was probably the first person to be seriously interested in describing the English sports and pastimes and through that laying the foundations for the future historic and ethnographic research in this field. His literary achievements included the descriptions of the habits, manners and most importantly sports and pastimes of the English people. Such exceptional research should be considered as pioneering in general ethnography, at its European beginnings, and sports history, however his achievements have not been recognized by scholars. There are only a few who acknowledge his existence but still they seem not to value his input in the development of English sports studies. Therefore, what the following article aims at is focusing on his biography and research and, by doing that, bringing his greatest achievement *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* to life.

“Such are the men, indefatigable in work, heroic in disinterestedness, whose labour the country never recognises or rewards. Joseph Strutt, the father of English antiquaries, has never yet received from his native land one single token of its grateful appreciation, though all its libraries, and those of Europe, are enriched by his works” [14, p. 71].

These were the words of Joseph Strutt’s grandson, spoken over ninety years after his grandfather’s death, in a book dedicated to his life. It seems that even now this statement is still accurate, as Joseph Strutt continues to be treated as a rather neglected eighteenth century English scholar. He was probably the first person to be genuinely and seriously interested in describing the English sports and pastimes, and hence laying the foundations for future historic and ethnographic research in this field. His literary achievements include the descriptions of the habits, manners and,

most importantly, sports and pastimes of the English people. Moreover, his exceptional research should be considered as pioneering in general ethnography, at its European beginnings. Also Strutt was the first writer and erudite interested in gathering detailed information about the characteristics of the English and presenting them to the reading public. In his studies he not only sat in the reading-room of the British Museum going through manuscripts in search of relevant descriptions, he also collected data from every-day observations and from letters from his friends who also described the most popular sports to him.

The research planned, on an enormous scale, resulted in the publication of many volumes and, moreover, it created the necessary basis for future reference and for future ethnographic and anthropological studies concentrated on human play. According to the American anthropologist

Paul Radin “the history of civilization is largely the history of the diminution of the role played by our compulsive activities, the record of the enlargement of the sphere of awareness of the nature of our actions” [12, p. 267]. Following this view the beginnings of our civilization were marked by some unconscious and compulsive activities which later developed into more sophisticated actions. Johan Huizinga observed that culture is created in a playful form, at the very beginning it is only a game, only after some time specific forms of culture e.g., music, dance, sport or poetry start to appear. From these observations stems the belief that the foundations of our nature are connected with the underestimated notion of play, while sport, the subject of Strutt’s main work, for which he is best remembered, is in fact a sub-system of play.

Playing a game in any form is a part of human existence. These spontaneous activities bring pleasure, give their participants an opportunity to test and improve themselves and also are a means of entertainment. There is, of course, some disagreement concerning the extent of this influence as play is not always connected with a specific purpose, however, the main assumption may be summarized as follows:

... sports are a kind of 'deep play' in which the innermost values of a culture may be expressed. Sport is not just a gratuitous expenditure of energy determined by the immediate physical environment; sports have a heroic and mythical dimension; they are, in a sense, 'a story we tell ourselves about ourselves'... [7, p. 3].

Having stated that, it is no wonder that many cultural anthropologists were led to believe that through play people not only express themselves but also learn to appreciate and understand others. In their mundane existence people try to imitate the behavior of others for various reasons: they want to be treated differently, they want to show off, they strive to feel better or they simply want to keep up appearances. However, when they participate in any kind of competition people cannot control their emotions and therefore they stop pretending. And this is not a new observation – such behavior was already noticed by Strutt in the eighteenth century and forcefully expressed in the introduction to his *Sports and Pastimes*...

... in order to form a just estimation of the character of any particular people, it is absolutely necessary to investigate the Sports and Pastimes most generally prevalent

among them. War, policy, and other contingent circumstances, may effectually place men, at different times, in different points of view, but, when we follow them into their retirements, where no disguise is necessary, we are most likely to see them in their true state, and may best judge of their natural dispositions [13].

In the words of Joseph Strutt, while politics and diplomacy hide the true nature of a nation, sports and pastimes reveal it, and to follow and study those “retirements” is the job of an ethnographer, i.e. the person who desires to discover rudimentary behaviors. By doing this the ethnographer is able to describe the individual characteristics of any particular society. Moreover, he or she is able to unravel the mystery of human nature and to pinpoint the differences between cultures and hence between societies. In that way, therefore, the ethnographer would be justified in appreciating the differences and he or she would be less likely to despise others. Knowledge, in this sense, means disposing of prejudices and false judgments about the cultures of the world.

Joseph Strutt can be treated as an example of the ethnographer also in the latter sense of this word, as a harbinger of the development of a certain school or method of anthropological research and as a person who first set a brilliant and noteworthy scholarly example. He was simultaneously an ethnographer, a historian and an anthropologist. However, his works are not widely known and often ignored in British literature. Owing to that, his achievements were underestimated and his existence was consequently forgotten. The reasons which would explain this situation are also unknown.

Yet another aspect which might be useful in explaining Strutt’s situation may be the intellectual value of the book itself. Despite being brilliantly descriptive and detailed, one of the probable faults of this work lies in the lack of acute generalization. This weakness might have been caused by the inexistence, in Strutt’s times, of an appropriate method: “the method consists of all the practices and operations which the researcher uses to make observations, and of the rules by which these observations can be modified and interpreted in order to assess their meaning as clues” [1, p. 41]. As mentioned, he was a pioneer in this field and therefore he had no theoretical framework to rely on and he was, moreover, incapable of inventing the entire necessary theory by himself. Additio-

nally, the other possible explanation lies in Strutt's intellectual abilities – he was skillful enough to collect and describe the material but he was unable to analyze it more thoroughly.

Notwithstanding his literary abilities, the amount of research itself should already place him among the most conspicuous English scholars, “to be ranked among the distinguished literary men of the close of the eighteenth century” [5]. Unfortunately, the name of Joseph Strutt surprisingly disappeared from later scholarly work. The general, as well as the sporting encyclopedias, do not mention Strutt at all: the famous *Oxford Companion to World Sports and Games* by John Arlott or the recently published (2000) *Encyclopaedia of British Sport* by Cox, Jarvie and Vamplew both fail to recognize his existence and his services in the field of sport, and especially English sporting history. In the last encyclopedia Strutt is, in fact, mentioned twice in an occasional context but not in the context of his main work and achievement. After, however, a very critical review of the aforementioned *Encyclopaedia* by Wojciech Lipoński a short notice on Strutt appeared in *Encyclopedia of Traditional British Rural Sports* (2005). Yet again Strutt was briefly described as: “antiquary, author, artist and engraver” [4, p. 253] and not as a pioneer historian and ethnographer of English sport. It seems that the authors of such works still fail to recognize his main achievements in the field of sport and games.

Not mentioning Strutt in various English sources concerning sport becomes even more surprising when the long and noteworthy British, and especially English, sporting traditions are taken into consideration. English authors, e.g. P. McBride (1932) boasted about English sporting traditions being praised by German authors “English games have developed spontaneously and freely through the urge to play (...) The cult of the natural is the deeper sense of all English life. The balance of mind and body is the highest English aim” [8: 39]. The same author pompously claimed that “our sport, just like our religion, has become a tradition generally accepted (...) We have, so to speak, been brought up to them, they are generally accepted by those we associate with” [8, p. 85]. The nation which is proud of having developed specific disciplines and rules concerning them, maintaining the traditions and encouraging playing sport in schools, seems to have completely excluded one of its most outstanding personalities in this field from the ethnographic and anthropological sources.

Contemporary scholars definitely chose to ignore the fact that he had achieved something spectacular. It is also difficult to understand why scholars underestimate his accomplishments and his unquestionable input into researching English culture, of which sport is a vital part. Anyone who wants to study his life and his achievements faces a few fundamental problems.

Firstly, there is one reliable and complete biography of Joseph Strutt by Christy written in 1912 (*Joseph Strutt. Author, artist, engraver, & antiquary, 1749–1802: a biography*) but, unfortunately, it is an unpublished and virtually inaccessible book. Secondly, another reliable source of information about his life, the work of his grandson entitled *A memoir of the life of Joseph Strutt, 1749–1802*, was printed for private circulation only. The only available copies of these works are found in the British Library in London. Additionally, only a few scholars and ethnographers mention Strutt in their works. Among these brave men are: Richard Holt, John Marshall Carter and the editors of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Yet these works usually settle for referring to the much-used quote about the importance of sports and pastimes in the study of national characteristics. Some sources use Strutt's engravings and do not mention their source (e.g. J.A.R. Pimlott [9]), which nowadays would be recognized and stigmatized as plagiarism. This only proves how little is known about Joseph Strutt and how surprisingly insignificant the interest in his achievement is. Such a situation is unforgivable.

To achieve a full understanding of Joseph Strutt's works, especially *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, the readers should study them against the wider context of their author's life, the age he lived in and conditions that influenced him. Considering the scarcity of data available, this seemingly easy task proves almost impossible. Nevertheless, the following account will address the issues of the life of Joseph Strutt in the fullest possible detail.

Joseph Strutt was the youngest son of Thomas Strutt and his wife Elizabeth, born on 27th October 1749 in Springfield Mill, Chelmsford. The town is situated in Essex, not very far from London. A year after Joseph was born his father embarked on a journey to the Mediterranean. Being a wealthy miller and rather well-read person he wanted to experience the Middle East adventure, to visit the countries which were so different than England. He also hoped to improve his health. However, his

plans were thwarted by something he did not predict – after visiting Constantinople he contracted small pox and died in 1751 on a ship almost reaching the English shore [14, p. 2]. After his father's death Joseph Strutt's mother was left with two children, Joseph and his older brother John, and quite a wealthy estate to manage by herself. She decided to educate her children, an idea not that common at a time when a system of general education was non-existent and the schools which were founded differed in the level of education they provided. Joseph's brother was sent to study medicine and Joseph himself attended local grammar school and continued his education in King Edward's school in Chelmsford: "the education which Strutt received at the Grammar School at Chelmsford, though sound and satisfactory of its kind, can hardly be credited with having taken a large share in specially equipping him for those artistic, literary, and antiquarian labours in which the greater part of his life was spent" [2, III, p. 9]. It seems that much of his later interests and achievements were developed through these early stages of learning. He was an eager reader and observer of the surrounding reality, he took pleasure in improving his own abilities and therefore strived to acquire the education which would enable him to pursue these aims. He also had a talent for painting, and therefore the choice of further studies was not difficult for him. At the age of fourteen, he was apprenticed to William Wynne Ryland, a famous engraver, which cost his mother £100; £50 was paid at the beginning of the studies and the rest was agreed to be paid in annual instalments [14, p. 6].

Apprenticeship in the workshop of a popular and successful craftsman was a career very much desired in eighteenth century England as it provided a stable income, "a successful master craftsman might own a few hundred pounds' worth of property" [10, p. 148], and it taught skills which might prove useful in future life. And as for the choice of profession, we again may only assume that Joseph Strutt had already exhibited some talent in that field. Moreover, an additional incentive to follow such a career was that engraving was becoming profitable as there appeared the need to publish books containing high quality pictures, e.g. catalogues presenting the products of companies like Chippendale's.

As for the age of Enlightenment, as it is often called, it had one crucial achievement, namely the enlargement and popularization of scientific disco-

veries among the populace and the introduction of those findings to the study of man: "...in the first place to individual psychology, and then to social life" [3, p. 92]. At that time scholars began to be genuinely interested in the social aspect of life. Additionally, the philosophical systems which developed in the eighteenth century, facilitated the aforementioned research – it was a widely held belief that the world was organized and all the diverse creatures, including men, had their place in the system; therefore it was the responsibility of a scholar to present this system. The interests varied – there were antiquaries who described the British geography and history, e.g. John Aubrey (*Monumenta Britannica*), Peter Roberts (*Sketch of the Early History of the Cymry*) or John Britton (*The Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain*); writers, apart from Strutt, who dealt with customs, say, Henry Bourne (*The Antiquities of the Common People*). The most outstanding scholar of the early eighteenth century was Samuel Johnson whose writings included poetry, essays and the most famous study of the English language – *Dictionary of the English Language* (1721). Johnson's aim in publishing it was consistent with the general attitudes of the age – "it was to discover, define, classify, and standardize" [6, p. 779]. Following his example the scientists of the eighteenth century started to collect all the material available: "all facts, or supposed facts, were welcome..." [3, p. 93]. People were observing everything, mainly their mundane lives, in order to gather all the information and maybe in an attempt to understand their own behavior. Cobban notes: "a study of the writings of the Enlightenment on the social sciences and history soon reveals, behind the apparent determination to seize on objective facts and base the argument on these alone, the existence of theoretical presuppositions" [6, p. 95]. The urge to try to interpret and comment on them was common to almost every eighteenth century scholar. It is no wonder that Joseph Strutt was among them.

But before he was able to pursue his aim he found himself alone, at the age of fourteen, in a city as big and as overwhelming as London. The city was like a drug for many – the variety of things to do and see was something that many could not live without, they were attracted by the thrill and excitement of the metropolis; a foretaste of the activities available was given by Strutt in his last book. However, there was also the dark side of living in London, it was "all disease and violence, filth, noise, falling buildings and fallen women,

chaos, poverty, drunkenness, suicide, distress, disarray, infidelity and insanity” (Porter 1994: 164). Among all these we find a teenager from the country, Joseph Strutt, learning to be an engraver. His life then was full of sorrow: “the youngest apprentice, whether in the studio of an artist or the workshop of a craftsman, has, as a rule, much to bear. In young Strutt’s case, his rusticity, his patched clothing, and his scarcity of money, all helped to make him the butt of his fellow students” [2, IV, p. 3]. However, as we follow his professional career we can observe that he had enough sense to survive there.

Strutt, after a few years of apprenticeship, became a student of the Royal Academy where he continued his education in the art of engraving where he most avidly learned the art of line-engraving but also some new methods called “chalk” or “stipple”. Founded in 1768, the Academy was one of the eighteenth century artistic institutions which promoted the urge for knowledge. Its aim was twofold: first to provide free training for talented artists in the fields of drawing, painting, and sculpture and second to promote art and organize exhibitions of the members' works. It also provided scholarships for those young artists who were in need of money. In the course of his learning, in 1770, Joseph Strutt was awarded one of the first silver medals and (a year later) a gold medal. The Gold Medal was awarded to him for his “sketch of “Hercules and Autæus”, and a historical painting “Æneas stopped on the Threshold of the Door by Creaza”” [2, IV, p. 8]. These were the words of gratitude he sent to his mother after receiving the Gold Medal from the hands of Joshua Reynolds:

“I thank you, Madam, for the joy you express at this your son’s first-gained laurels; and also those, our worthy friends, for the interest they take in my welfare; as also for every obligation they have so generously laid upon me. And, though I know it is not in my power to repay their kindness, yet I have a heart that is thoroughly sensible of all these things, overflows with gratitude and acknowledgments, which I am sure will never be forgotten; nor can I deviate from that respect which I owe to their goodwill. I will strive, at least, to the uttermost, to give my benefactors no reason to think their pains thrown away. If I should not be able to abound in riches, yet, by God’s help, I will strive to pluck that palm

which the greatest artists of foregoing ages have done before me.

‘ I will strive to leave my name behind me in the world, it not the splendour that some have, at least with some marks of assiduity and study; which, I can assure you, shall never be wanting in me. What though the path to honour is rough and hard to gain, yet so it is ordained: the honour gained comes so much the sweeter for the trouble, and thoroughly repays the assiduity and labour of the artist” [14, p. 9-10].

Having achieved so much, in summer 1771, he was employed in the reading-room of the British Museum – he was supposed to make some drawings from the Museum’s collection of manuscripts. We might assume at this point that the task which was offered to him was no ordinary one. First of all it was the first commission he had received and therefore he had to make every endeavor to ensure his employers that he was the right person for the job. Secondly, he had to live up to his reputation as a fine and award-winning artist. The drawings he was supposed to make were ordered by his friend and antiquarian Rev. Dr. Foote Gower: “Strutt and Dr. Gower went to the Museum and selected a number of drawings, there preserved, which represented objects and places of interest in connection with the history of the County of Chester” [2, V, p. 6]. However, this job unexpectedly proved to be something more – it aroused and intensified Strutt’s fascination with history. Owing to his study of the manuscripts and other works collected in the British Museum, Strutt was able to draw the materials for all his later works and he also became acquainted with the authorities of other libraries such as the Bodleian Library, the Bennet Library and the Corpus Christi College Library [14, p. 11]. These proved to be useful in his further studies.

He also developed a keen interest in the history and mundane life of the English people. The first result of this interest and the studies conducted in the British Museum was the book entitled *The Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of England (The Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of England: containing in a compleat series the representations of all the English monarchs, from Edward the Confessor to Henry the Eighth, together with many of the great persons that were eminent under their several reigns ... The whole carefully collected from ancient illuminated manuscripts)* which appeared in 1773. It was a

collection of pictures of kings, costumes, armor, seals and other interesting objects and a first attempt to grasp a part of English heritage using the engraving skills he had mastered. He outlined the idea for the book in his letter to his brother John:

“In the first number, I shall give a regular series of Historical Illuminations of the Kings and other great personages, under the several reigns, from Edgar to Richard the Second; and, in the second, complete that series from Richard the Second to Henry the Eighth.

“In the third, I shall give all the Monuments of the Kings and great men represented in the series, with whatever else may be found necessary to illustrate the several modes of architecture, and different taste of sculpture, with the helmets, swords, crowns, etc., of the several periods; and in the fourth number will be a series of Antiquities, with whatever I may find in the course of the work, and may not be able to put in the former numbers” [14, p. 17].

The engravings were black-and-white but the book contained detailed information about the color and other interesting features of the illustrations. Yet there was another aspect of this particular publication: “... the book broke new ground. (...) Strutt’s researches related, for the most part (...), to the history of the English people, rather than to that of English potentates” [2, XII, p. 11].

The next volumes, on which he was working for at least the two following years (1774–1776), depicted a similar area but explored the subject even further: three volumes of *Manners, Customs, Arms, Habits, & c., of the People of England (Fu Angel-cynnan: or a compleat view of the manners, customs, arms, habits, etc. of the inhabitants of England, from the arrival of the Saxons till the reign of Henry the Eighth (-to the present time). With a short account of the Britons during the government of the Romans)*. He explained his interest in the topic in the following way:

The thing that first moved me to take some pains in this study was the very natural affection which generally is in all men to heare of the worthinesse of their ancestors, which they should indeed bee as desirous to imitate as delighted to understand.

Secondly, was I hereunto moved, be seeing hoe divers of divers nations did labour to revive the old honour and glory of their owne beginnings and ancestors, and how in so

doing they shewed themselves the most kinde lovers of their naturall friends and countrymen [12].

The book was so popular that an attempt was made to translate it into French and Strutt even lent his plates for the engravings to the French publisher but the book was never published and the plates never returned.

After finishing this topic he turned his attention towards history, consequently publishing two volumes of *Chronicle of England (The Chronicle of England ... From the arrival of Julius Cæsar ... (to the Norman Conquest))* throughout the years 1777–1778.

On 16th August 1774 after three years of exchanging letters he married Ann Blower and chose a place to live. The available information about his addresses in London sheds some light on Strutt’s status in London society. As far as can be seen from these facts, his first place of residence was Duke Street, Portland Place which was close both to Oxford Street and Regent’s Street and to Regent’s Park, and more importantly, to the British Museum where he spent most of his time. This part of London was a district inhabited by rather wealthy people, therefore we can presume that he earned enough money to rent a flat or even a house there. It was also the place of birth for his two eldest sons: Joseph on 28th May 1775 and William Thomas on 7th March 1777.

In 1778 his family suffered a great loss: after giving birth to their first daughter, Elizabeth Anne in August, Strutt’s wife died only a few weeks later and, unfortunately, the little girl survived her by little more than eight months. Strutt was devastated after this: “The loss of my wife, in whom my soul was wrapped up, made me nearly frantic, and nothing but living for my children made life endurable” [14, p. 28]. He also wrote a poem expressing his feelings:

No more, thou woe-foreboding bird, no more,
With baleful screams, disturb this lonely dale:
But, winging hence thy flight, deep darkness seek,
And Night, thy patroness! (...)
But where, beloved spirit, where art thou,
In search of whom I tread these dreary paths?
Oh, fruitless search! For, if indeed she hear
My fond complaint, or stand before my eyes,
I see her not (...)
Unhappy Babes! no more shall ye behold

Your tender parent! From the caves of Death
 There's no return; but in the dark confines
 The senseless body sleeps, and moulders into
 dust!
 No more for me those transient scenes of joy;
 When, as with fond embrace, repeated oft,
 She pressed you to her bosom; then when
 first
 She taught your infant lips to lisp my name!
 Those happy hours, like visions of the night,
 Are fled away! Your mother comes no more
 To kiss and bless you! Do ye smile, my
 Babes?
 Alas! alas! Ye are as yet too young
 To feel your grief, or mourn a mother's loss.
 (...)
 Return! return! O, vain, delusive hope!
 She hears me not! The frozen hand of Death
 Has close her ears, and on her lovely lips
 Impressed his heavy seal! All my complaints
 In empty air, unnoticed float away
 [15, p. 31-35].

Strutt's literary work was constantly growing: within the space of two years (1785–1786) he published *Biographical Dictionary of Engravers (A biographical dictionary; containing an historical account of all the engravers, from the earliest period of the art of engraving to the present time; and a ... list of their most esteemed works; with the cyphers, monograms, and particular marks used by each master ... To which is prefixed, an essay on the rise and progress of the art of engraving, etc.)* paying his respect to the environment he originated from.

Finally, in 1783 the family settled at 21, Charlton Street, Marylebone. This particular district was popular among well-off Londoners, and it also offered numerous opportunities, e.g. it was the place where a famous cricket club was established, which not much later became the world headquarters of that sport. The readers must also bear in mind that the inhabitants of the capital were extremely fond of entertainment of various kinds, including playing sports or watching performances. Joseph Strutt and his two teenage sons seized these opportunities as often as possible. For Strutt himself, the location had two advantages: it offered interesting ways to spend free time as well as opportunities to gather some first-hand accounts for his last book. Unfortunately for him and his family the standard of living to which they were accustomed had to change.

In 1790 they left London mainly due to health and money problems: he suffered from asthma and intended to lessen his expenses [14, p. 47]. They moved to the country, to Bramfield, Hertfordshire. One can only guess how big that change was. Certainly it was not easy to abandon the extravagancies and the liveliness of the capital and move to the country, where the only entertainment available was the local fair. It must have been a shock to Strutt's sons who did not know any other life than the life of London and they must have found it difficult to adapt to their new situation. Moreover, they had to change schools, which created additional problems. On the other hand, for Joseph Strutt the situation created new room to display his talents. Immediately after his arrival he became interested in the local schools and their development. As sources tell us, many wealthy people living at the time were encouraged to sponsor the creation of schools at different levels. And Joseph Strutt was no exception – during the five years of his stay he was an ardent supporter of the idea of promoting education in his neighborhood and his interest resulted in the foundation of Sunday and evening schools which provided education to nearly one hundred poor children [14, p. 59].

In 1795 he returned to London and his literary work. Between 1796 and 1799 he published his next to last book entitled *Dresses and Habits of the English People (A complete view of the dress and habits of the people of England, from the establishment of the Saxons in Britain to the present time, illustrated by engravings taken from the most authentic remains of antiquity; to which is prefixed an Introduction containing a general description of the ancient habits in use among mankind, from the earliest period of time to the conclusion of the seventh century)* which was later described as “far more superior to any previous work, more specialised, dealing with single subject (...) the first thorough work of its kind in English” [2, XVII, p. 3]. A year before he died he finished his last and later the most famous of all his works, i.e. *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England (Glig-Gamena Angel-Deod., or the Sports and Pastimes of the People of England ... from the earliest period to the present time, illustrated by engravings selected from ancient paintings, etc.)* This last work was his lifetime's achievement. It presented the results of the research conducted during his whole life, whether it was collected through his own observations or through letters

from friends or through careful reading of the manuscripts and other materials found in the British Museum Reading Room. Throughout his life Joseph Strutt's main aim was to describe the English, their history and their mundane life. Certainly *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* was a book which could fully complete this task and, apart from being a great personal achievement of the author, it was also a very important tool for further studies of sports and games.

Joseph Strutt died on 16th October 1802. His works, however, especially *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* continued to be published and remain among the leading examples of eighteenth century antiquarian interests.

At this point readers could perhaps turn their attention to the history of the English people's attitudes to sport and entertainment presented in *Sports and Pastimes*.... Such a discussion will help to see the subject through the eyes of the book's author, whereas contemporary studies of English sport, the results of which are briefly presented below, provide a wider context for the issue.

In Strutt's age, the eighteenth century, games were ubiquitous – the towns and the villages were full of keen participants of various sports. Since everyday work was strenuous and demanded much effort, the time devoted to leisure was cherished – sports provided a relief from this routine and by being engaged in play they could lose themselves in pure entertainment, forgetting about the problems in their lives. The age of Enlightenment witnessed a development of a keen interest in folk customs and a new approach towards folk culture in general. As many of the games were important elements of popular culture, so deeply rooted in tradition, gambling and violence were tolerated, moreover, the wealthy began to support those traditional pastimes. Cricket is one example of the games that were influenced by that patronage – professional cricket players played in teams run by upper-class gamblers who enjoyed betting high stakes on their teams' success. Such behavior had, naturally, an ulterior motif, namely it served to affirm the special position and prestige of the wealthy supporter, especially at a local level. From the point of view of the team, on the other hand, such assistance strengthened the bonds between teammates and gave their play a clear aim – to win games. As can be seen from the above, sport not only was a means of escape from mundane drudgery but also reinforced team loyalties and created a group

coherence which in the succeeding years became a symbol of the English dominance in the world.

Strutt's train of thought in presenting the attitudes towards common pastimes was the following: first he illustrated the attitudes and sports of the nobility and other groups of the society and secondly he proceeded to the description of the manners of entertainment of these social groups. The description, nevertheless, shows only what Strutt imagined to be ideal and what he could find in the early manuscripts, which sometimes presented a somewhat distorted portrait of reality. Certain other oversights were unfortunately unavoidable, for example those concerning the importance of sport in education.

Strutt started his description with the earliest accounts of the attitudes towards sport and he traced them to the Saxon times and the early Middle Ages – one of the most popular forms of entertainment then, which might be treated as a perfect example of the changing attitudes towards sport, was the tournament. For a long time the participation in various jousts and tournaments was encouraged by royalty because it strengthened the aristocratic conviction of being a unique part of society and because it simply prepared the people for battle, which was not uncommon in those insecure times. However, gradually the interest in violent sports such as tournaments declined as they became associated with the vulgar. Strutt explained this decline by the fact that, with time, tournaments started to provide simple entertainment devoid of any romantic and chivalric background and being that they ceased to be interesting for the main participants, namely the knights. The kings, Henry VII and his son Henry VIII, were concerned to revive the popularity of such exercises in order to avoid idleness “the ground of all vice” [13] and therefore Henry VII was often a patron of the games and Henry VIII set an example taking part in archery or tilting competitions. By outlining briefly the history of jousts and tournaments Strutt was capable of acute observation of the political motives in promoting them, despite the fact they had lost their early splendor. Strutt justly pointed out that during a period of unrest and war, the populace forgot about their misfortunes by being entertained, therefore he said about the royal support for the tournaments: “the sanction of royalty (...) was perfectly political” [13].

When describing popular games, on the other hand, Joseph Strutt first pointed out the common origin of these sports, i.e. the sports most popular

among the citizens of towns and country were, in their beginnings, the ones prevailing among the nobility. Whenever it was possible, the people copied these games, sometimes changed the rules and adapted them to the changing weather conditions. Thus different forms of tilting developed (e.g. running at the quintain, human quintain, water quintain), which originally were a part of a tournament and therefore were prohibited to the lower classes. In the country, apart from the already mentioned Robert Dover's Games, other annual meetings involving games were popular, e.g. May-games, feasts, fairs, wakes and Whitsun games. Moreover, the citizens of England found pleasure especially in various kinds of gambling and baiting of animals. Thus the need for constant amusement emerged, which was clearly visible in the love of show characteristic to the English.

As usual the fondness of the English concerning the extravaganza began with the upper classes:

the English nobility at all times affected great parade, seldom appearing abroad without large trains of servitors and retainers; and the lower classes of the people delighted in gaudy shows, pageants, and processions. (...) In the middle ages, the love of show was carried to an extravagant length (...) the courts of princes and the castles of the great barons were daily crowded with numerous retainers (...) whole companies of minstrels, mimics, jugglers, tumblers, rope-dancers, and players [13].

However, this extravagant behavior had its hidden political aims and reflected a change in aristocratic attitudes towards their own role in medieval society. With the beginning of the fifteenth century the general perception of the knight was very close to the chivalric ideal. Nevertheless, an interesting transition took place: "transition from the warrior to the courtier or administrator" [15, p. 316]. With this development the craving for elegance and lavishness gained a new meaning: "it was an expression of aristocratic pride but also an instrument of policy. Far from being simply a sign of decadent chivalry and of a ruling class quite divorced from reality, it was also intended to win friends and adherents by advertising generosity and wealth" [15, p. 316]. This is probably one of the most likely interpretations of this phenomenon but certainly one which Strutt, unfortunately, failed to notice.

Moreover, the noblemen and the lower classes were accustomed to the displays of the so called civic shows, which were performed in times of annual festivals, coronation processions, royal weddings etc. where: "were exhibited variety of entertainments, according to the taste of the times, but in which propriety had very little share; the whole forming a scene of pompous confusion, where feasting, drinking, music, dancing, tumbling, singing, and buffoonery, were jumbled together, and mirth excited too often at the expense of common decency" [13]. The celebrations consisted of various theatrical performances of mythology or chivalric legends, the staging of pageants or musical performances combined with dancing.

Sometimes people's attitudes towards various pastimes coincided with the prevailing attitudes of the society as in the case of baiting of animals. Strutt strongly criticized these forms of entertainment: "pastimes which equally attracted their attention, and manifested a great degree of barbarism" [13]. However, this opinion can be fully appreciated only in its full context. There is no denying that these pastimes enjoyed enormous popularity, and moreover, they proved to be lucrative. Strutt's open criticism was not an exception – he was one of many who tried to protect the animals.

From the sixteenth century through to the late eighteenth century the ancient notion that animals existed only for their usefulness to man or for the pleasure they might afford was increasingly called into question. Scientists began to investigate the natural world in its own right and to consider how animal biology differed from human biology. From theological and philosophical viewpoint it became less acceptable to view the world as made purely for man [7, p. 32].

Sport, as McBride claimed, was a universally acknowledged tradition among the English. Games which were played at schools served to popularize discipline and regard for authority. Additionally, playing in teams promoted group work, taught cooperation and created a sense of belonging. Common pastimes, like football or bear-baiting enjoyed great popularity as they provided an escape and were a source of entertainment. It seems that the English, no matter their social status, took great pleasure in being a part of any game. Its historical development towards the eighteenth century shows how it influenced the society and culture:

firstly, the importance of sports as an element in a festive culture that was orally transmitted and had a high customary tolerance for violent behaviour of all kinds along with a good deal of gambling, eating, and drinking. (...) However, there was a second level too. This was the more organized world of pugilism, rowing, racing, and cricket where written rules were established, challenges were issued and advertised in the press, and large crowds gathered to watch and to wager [7, p. 28].

Joseph Strutt, when presenting his account of sports and pastimes took the above mentioned structure into consideration. Moreover, he relied on his extensive reading background, and therefore took advantage of quotations: “this I have done for his satisfaction, as well as my own, judging it much fairer to stand upon the authority of others than to arrogate myself the least degree of penetration to which I have no claim” [13]. The final decision to be made while preparing his material was the method of organization, the division of the material collected into chapters and the basis of such division. And again for Joseph Strutt the situation was clear: “I shall proceed to arrange them under their proper heads, and allot to each of them a separate elucidation” [13]. The division, additionally, points to the ethnographic rather than historical approach towards the subject matter. The whole work consists of four Books, each having separate chapters to describe particular groups of sports; Book I portrays the rural exercises of the aristocracy, Book II – the rural exercises of the common people, Book III – the games of the city dwellers and Book IV – domestic entertainment and seasonal games. Almost every game or sport is presented in its historical development throughout the ages, the details of the presentation depending on the availability of sources and on the logical conclusions of the author drawn from the reading of the existing material. The definitions of the games, the rules and the ways in which the games were played and the shows performed are explained in such a way that a layperson could understand them, e.g. “the Forest Charter, insisting that no man should forfeit his life, or his limbs, for killing the king’s deer; – but, if he was taken in the fact of stealing venison belonging to the king, he should be subjected to a heavy fine” [13], “the performer stands upon a ladder, which he shifts from place to place, and ascends or descends without losing the equilibrium, or permitting it to fall” [13, p. 204],

“every kind of military combat made in conformity to certain rules, and practised by the knights and their esquires for diversion or gallantry, was anciently called a tournament” [13, p. 103]. Moreover, whenever possible a proper anecdote or a short story appeared, e.g. a story of a Danish chieftain and his hawk and their adventures or “Gaston earl of Foix, a foreign nobleman contemporary with king Edward, kept upwards of six hundred dogs in his castle for the purpose of hunting. He had four greyhounds called by the romantic names of Tristram, Hector, Brute, and Roland” [13, p. 6]. Strutt’s method, therefore, was based on two principles: reading and then quoting the descriptions of different games and pastimes he could find in the British Museum collections of manuscripts, in collections of plays, in chronicles, in documents and in works of fiction available, e.g. “I remember also a story recorded in a manuscript, written about the reign of Edward III, of a young man of family, who came to a feast, where many of the nobility were present, in a vesture called a coat hardy, cut short in the German fashion, and resembling the dress of a minstrel” [13, p. 171]. Moreover, he participated in the social life of London, he probably observed his sons playing and from these observations he drew conclusions and descriptions for his work: “I remember in my youth to have seen several persons expert in slinging of stones” [13, p. 67], “about thirty years back, I saw a grand match at base played in the fields behind Montague House, now the British Museum” [13, p. 72], “towards the end of last summer I saw three itinerant musicians parading the streets of London” [13, p. 209], “I have frequently seen the boys for want of both perform it with stones” [13, p. 340].

In his earlier work *A compleat view of the manners, customs, arms, habits, etc. of the inhabitants of England* Strutt explained his motives for dealing with historical subjects: “the very natural affection which generally is in all men to heare of the worthinesse of their ancestors, which they should indeed bee as desirous to imitate as delighted to understand” [12; “was I hereunto moved, by seeing how divers of divers nations did labour to revive the old honour and glory of their owne beginnings and ancestors, and how in so doing they shewed themselves the most kinde lovers of their natural friends and countrymen” [12]. Such a standpoint was further developed in the *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* where the author added an aim of establishing the truth about the character of the English through one

of their most essential features, i.e. sport. The result exceeded his expectations – not only did he manage to collect the material needed for his study and assemble it into a book but also he unconsciously succeeded in providing the first valuable English ethnographic work of such a scale, which provided a pattern for later ethnographic work not only in the field of sport. When we look closely at what Strutt managed to describe we can be surprised by the discovery of how diverse the world of the past was and we realize how little we know about these amusements. It would take scholars, e.g. Johann Huizinga, another 150 years to notice that games were essential in the development of man – Strutt was the first to acknowledge this fact in a very practical sense by describing the world around him. Sports and games constituted a vital element of culture of all social classes and also proved to be inherently bound with art and literature. The scope of his research makes him a conscious writer, a writer who was deeply aware of his responsibilities towards his readers although he was unable to formulate his ideas in a definitive scientific shape. But maybe it would be worthwhile to consider him to be more than a writer – a culture historian, a Renaissance man who was interested in many disciplines, a scholar and additionally, a very good teacher but most importantly an ethnographer of sport, a discipline which badly needs to be noticed and appreciated.

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