

English Shinty Association NEWSLETTER

summer 2020.



The best-laid schemes o' mice an' shinty, Gang aft agley.

Not for the first time the best laid plans of the English Shinty Association don't always work out

As I plough my way through the third English shinty newsletter, it will be four months since I last swung my caman, adding another furrow into the pitch. This inconvenience is nothing compared to the grief and pain felt by those touched by the coronavirus, and its consequences, physically, mentally, and financially. Around a year ago English shinty was halfway through our first League season, the teams entered into the Bullough cup and WCA Challenge cup had both won first round games for the first time. By the end of the year, the league was complete, and competition in the south west would enter its 8th season. Our community would welcome our sixth team, Bristol Camanachd, to the draft.



Some ESA players at the end of 2019

Now 4 months of isolation and social distancing have put a stop to all shinty activity. Competitions are cancelled, social gatherings and their refreshments are but a memory. Training is now taking place through virtual means, and showing a three-year-old how to play has had a negative effect on my garden. All amateur contact sports, I fear, will not be the same after the passing of the virus, especially my other love rugby, given the close and cuddly nature. With the right enthusiasm and forethought English shinty, I feel, should get through the pandemic stronger and with any luck be able to string a couple of passes together before getting into the usual bùrach. After all, this wouldn't be the first time the ESA has had its ambitions go awry, and I'm sure it won't be the last.

It would be very easy to pity our situation seeing the pitches lying bare and empty, unable to play our beloved pastime, but I believe we have a bright future ahead of us, after all we are neither mice nor mere men but shinty players.

choiceinsight

Choice Insight delivers insight and market research on free time activities including culture, leisure and travel. They have been a proud sponsor of London Camanachd since 2012 providing strips and support for the team to exist and develop.

Toad in the hole

ESA CAPTAIN MATT MOSSOP GIVES THE LOWDOWN ON ESA MEN'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2019

England Senior Men's ESA Player of the Year 2019: Adrian Roberts. Originally from Jersey, Adrian Roberts, or Toad as he is better known, was introduced to shinty at St Andrews University in 1995, in the glory years of shinty's whipping boys. He contributed magnificently to their 1.5 year spell without a win. His prowess picking the ball out of the net did not go unnoticed, gaining his University of St Andrews AU colours, Captaincy and a Shinty Blue in successive seasons as St Andrews' fortunes improved. As St Andrews Captain he famously kept a clean sheet in the semi-finals penalty shoot-out at the Littlejohn, to knock out the favourites Aberdeen. He played goalkeeper for Scottish Universities v Irish Universities in 1999, before spreading the flame of shinty to Nepal in 2000. He has starred in numerous St Andrews' 6s teams, including the very first England Shinty Team in 2006. Adrian signed for Cornwall in 2012 in time for their first match v Caithness to win the Natural Retreats Challenge Cup. He moved to London Camanachd in 2017, enjoying the freedom outfield, but was recalled to the England net for their historic first Bullough Cup Win in May 2019, and then winning the Fingal Shield with London Camanachd the next day. His subsequent ESA performance against the eventual Bulloch Cup winners Lochside Rovers, where he modestly claimed to have made 22 significant saves (actually more than 60 stops) rightly brought him the accolade of ESA player of the season 2019.



What are your first memories of playing shinty? "Learning to hit forehand and backhand with Trotter in Sept '95 in St Andrews and smashing a policeman's hand to send him to hospital in my first match..."

Who was your first role model when you were younger and why? Ronald Ross...obviously... eclipsed only by Rick Booth's , aka Lola's, relentless battle savagery

in the Saint's centreline.

What does it mean to you to play for ESA? Pride, honour, best of the best...top guns...

What advice would you give to younger players who are maybe on the fringes of a senior team? Learn the shinty grip!

SHINTY CHAPLAINCY + CLUB HEALTH & WELLBEING AMBASSADORS

The Camanachd Association and Sports Chaplaincy Scotland would like to invite Clubs to join the Shinty Chaplaincy and Club Health & Wellbeing Ambassador programmes.

The role of club chaplains is to be a help, support and encouragement to everyone connected with a sports club and they **are available to people of all faiths and all individual beliefs**. They are pastoral safety nets, able to provide counsel and advice on a range of issues which potentially can have an effect on everyone's performance, and more importantly, their personal wellbeing. They are confidantes, a friend to all at the club: Player – Coach – Manager – Committee member. Their goal is through regular, natural interaction to become known, liked, trusted and approachable.

Full details can be found at <https://www.shinty.com/about-us/shinty-club-health-wellbeing-ambassadors>

Expressions of interest should be registered with National Development Manager Graham Cormack on graham.cormack@shinty.com



English Ladies during Lockdown

WOMEN'S CAPTAIN HEATHER TEWNION WRITE ABOUT WHAT THE ESA WOMAN HAVE BEEN UP TO DURING THE LOCKDOWN

While many people are jumping on the “Zoom quiz” bandwagon, Cornwall Ladies have a slightly different approach to keeping each other going through lockdown. Vicky Lipscombe, Cornwall Ladies captain, set up the Ladies Lockdown Sanity Challenge to encourage the ladies of Cornwall (and friends) to continue regular exercise in a fun, supportive and slightly competitive way, for those so inclined. Each week there are exercise and social challenges that can be completed with proof in the form of a video or photo; we've all seen each other in worse states than feeling a bit sweaty! With the prize for the winner at the end of June, this group has been a source of inspiration and motivation, sharing tips and videos; while the social challenges, such as the childhood photo recreation from week 4, provide hours of entertainment. It's not only about the exercise and challenges, as Libby Walters, Ladies Chieftain, hosts the weekly Zoom chats to add a sprinkle of social interaction when training would normally take place. For those of the team that have moved back home or are in lockdown alone or with a small number of people, being able to see other people, albeit virtually, is refreshing and sometimes a good way to have a moan or natter. Vicky says “I wanted to create something that had the same kind of balance of fitness and socialising (and stupidity) as training and the post-training pub trip. It's going way better than expected! People have really gotten on board with it and are engaging with it more than I expected, and I think (hope) enjoying it. I am so proud of all the ladies taking part and their dedication and motivation to keep fit and funny in this weird time – I could not be prouder.” Well Vicky, as someone still on furlough, I can tell you I definitely enjoy taking part as it has given me a bit of structure and something to work towards. Meanwhile, our Ladies in the East took part in the London Camanachd “pass the ball” video, which often isn't as easy as it looks when you might not have picked up a caman for quite a while. Where possible they have been taking their camans on walks, just to feel the weight in their hands and imagine they are on a pitch, and having household hit abouts in their gardens. Hopefully with the easing of restrictions more of us will be able to pick up our camans again and this is the dream many of us are clinging to!

Oxford get their colours

Oxford Shinty Club managed to get in one game in their new strip before the lockdown. Although it ended in a loss for the team in a home game vs London Camanachd in early March, spirits were still high as the team put away the old strip and donned the new strip. The team have moved from just a basic gold top to gold, green and black hoops supplied by Azzurri.

Lockdown also saw the postponement of the Oxford 6s until 2021. Usually held at the start of June, past events have welcomed university teams from Dundee, Glasgow and Camborne School of Mines, as well as non-university teams from all over England.

Any teams interest in taking part next year should contact Oxford Shinty at oxfordshinty@gmail.com



1845 and all that – the Club of True Highlanders on Blackheath

HUGH DAN MACLENNAN

When the Club of True Highlanders met for their game of shinty (“this ancient Scottish game”) on Blackheath in 1845 – 175 years ago on June 30 – they had already been playing shinty in London since at least 1815.

The members of the Club held their usual meetings at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, the Strand’. The spot selected for the sport was Blackheath, and the mustering-place the “Princess of Wales”. The Illustrated London news reported:

“A considerable party of the members, accompanied by their friends and numerous visitors, numbering several ladies, were early at the appointed spot. The game, which is played with a hard ball and curved sticks, (the merit of which consists in sending the ball beyond a given boundary,) then commenced, and was kept up with much spirit until near five o’clock, during which time many clever hits were made, and many a blow on the shin both given and received; all the players being in full Highland costume. The piper, too, was in attendance, and kept up the hilarity of the day by performances of celebrated Scotch airs. After the game was concluded, the party retired to the “Princess of Wales”, where a sumptuous repast was provided, and passed the remainder of the evening in mirth and good fellowship: -

*“And sure and a’ they’re nae to blame
For sounding out each hero’s fame,
Wi’ kilt well buckled round his wame,
Wha played wi’ `em at shintie.”*

It could be argued that very little has changed since 1845! The Club of True Highlanders was established in the year 1815, for the relief of distressed natives of Scotland, and the preservation of the music, costume, and sports of the Gael. Considerable funding was available to enable them more effectively to alleviate the distresses of those whom misfortune had overtaken. The Club continued to play a huge part in Highland society in London for many years, culminating with the publication, of their famous Book of the Club of True Highlanders in 1881, which is worthy of further comment at some other time.

A few years later, in 1893 the year that the Camanachd Association was formed, it was reported in the Inverness Courier that a caman, or shinty-club, could apparently conceal its identity in a London shop window for months. Just as the game was being set on an apparently sound footing in its heartland, in 1893, the unknown author of “An English View of Shinty” declared that “real shinty, robust, rollicking, three-star shinty, so to speak” was “becoming yearly more limited in the area of its popularity.” England had what he referred to as “an innocent, innocuous apology for camanachd in the game of hockey.” Shinty, he railed, was losing many of the more striking features which made it pre-eminently the outdoor sport of the fiery, fleet-footed Celt.

“Insidious innovations are having their way, and a ridiculously new-fangled “Shinty” Association, has framed rules limiting teams to twelve-a-side, and the duration of the game to ninety minutes. There are even some absurd restrictions on the player’s liberty to trip up an opponent or hack him over the head in the enthusiastic spirit of the traditional game. If these rules were rigorously insisted upon, Shinty might as well give place to Draughts or The Minister’s Cat. “

The English view that a proposal “had been set on foot to send a shinty combination to Chicago to show the Americans one face of British athletics of no recent institution”, remains to be confirmed, as does the view that shinty had been retained by “the Scotch aliens of the North-West of America, who, it is said, retain the old game of *camanachd* with all its pristine verve.” The author then concluded:

“It is, indeed, perhaps on the alien Scot more than on the native land that the survival of the game may depend in the future. He plays it on the Banks of the Red River and the Fraser; there is at least one Camanachd Club at the Cape, and the breezy expanse of Wimbledon Common periodically finds the London Celt following the flying ball.”

The idiosyncrasies and exaggeration of the author inevitably lead to the conclusion that there was some satirical or other motive for his ranting.

1845 and all that continued,

However, there is more than a grain of truth in the contents. The fourth annual Highland Gathering of London Highland Athletic Club took place on Whit Monday, at Stamford Bridge in 1897. In every respect, this was the most successful held under the auspices of the club with by far the largest attendance of spectators ever. Needless to say, the kilt was very much in evidence, "the various tartans and the summer toilettes of the ladies lending brightness and colour to the scene."

Not the least exciting event in the day's proceedings was "the shinty match" between the representatives of the London Camanachd Club and the Gaelic Athletic Association (Irish team), indicating that links with the Irish were very much part of the London agenda at the time.



Harry Lauder was a famous music hall performer of the early 20th century

For a time, it looked as if the latter were to score an easy victory. At half time they had succeeded in running up four hails to one. When play resumed, however, the Scotsmen set determinedly to work

to retrieve the position, and before time was finally up, they succeeded in reaching their opponents' score. The match ending, therefore, in a draw. The play throughout was excellent on both sides and was followed with the closest interest by the spectators, although presumably they saw the game for the first time. After the athletics competition and "International Tug of War", the crowd were entertained to "An exhibition game of HIGHLAND SHINTY" by the Beaulieu Shinty Club who played the London Highland Athletic Club shinty team. Beaulieu, the holders of the Camanachd Cup at the time, were introduced as "the champions of Scotland."

The game was somewhat one-sided, and Beaulieu ran out the victors by six goals to one. This consolation goal for the London club (apparently out of respect for exiled friends) encouraged the London club for they argued that they put one in against a club who had conceded only three goals in the entire season.

It was held "only natural" that the natives of Beaulieu should be good players and they went on to establish their credentials as one of the powers of the game by winning the Camanachd Cup in 1897 and 1898. It was held that Beaulieu had learned their "scientific" play from football. Their victory in London enabled them to take on themselves the mantle of "Champions of the World," a title perpetuated to this day on the cover of their Centenary history. It was not a title which was universally acclaimed the length and breadth of Scotland.

Beaulieu never returned to defend their honour in London. In fact, few teams ever returned, although two years after the Stamford Bridge occasion, London Camanachd recorded the first and only victory over a Scottish based team in the late-Victorian era when Edinburgh Camanachd were put to the sword on Muswell Hill.

The formation of a bewildering array of clubs in London in the last two decades of the nineteenth century is a key element in the development of shinty. What has not been fully understood hitherto, however, has been the massive contribution made to shinty in terms of the indigenous stick and ball games which are to be found throughout England and, on an organised basis, by areas outwith London, particularly in the industrial heartlands of the north. Shinty play in England not only made a crucial contribution to the survival of the game in its loosest form, but also to the organised manifestation of the game through key individuals and several organisations.

That shinty has survived at all in England has long been considered remarkable. For many years there has been no critical mass of players to support the infrastructure needed to maintain a modern club.

Perhaps the most regrettable aspect of the game's presence in England is that the game's role as a social cement and cultural anchor, and a significant and valuable element of that country's sporting tradition, has been under-estimated for so long.

It has been a matter of considerable satisfaction that the resurgence of shinty in England, in its various forms and across all the different areas of the country, has continued in recent years and all success to everyone involved. The Highlanders on Blackheath didn't know what they were starting – and perhaps it's just as well!

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Joy takes the reigns

As Jo Claridge the incumbent ESA Chair returns to New Zealand, and with the AGM postponed, Joy Elliott-Bowman Takes temporary charge.

I am privileged to have been selected by the ESA Committee to take on the interim-President role from Jo Claridge when he returns to New Zealand this summer. I have been part of shinty in England since the beginning of its most recent incarnation in 2012, having left Scotland and my home club of Aberdour shortly after our Womens' Valerie Fraser Cup win that year. I don't think the 40 people making up teams with a random assortment of kit on a GAA pitch in West London back in 2012 ever thought we would be where we are now. As Womens' Development Officer, and former London Camanachd Captain I am proud to have been a part of all we have achieved.



No one would argue that it is not a difficult time to step into this role, and that is why the committee made the decision to postpone the AGM and elections until the ESA members can meet and discuss future plans for shinty in England with more certainty than is on offer just now.

Our caretaker committee will look to rally the shinty community in England from a safe social distance. We are a strong and close-knit group of teams, despite the physical distance between us. Already teams have worked together to support our communities, mental health and well-being, physical wellbeing and the continued development of our shinty skills. Many of our members are on the front-line, as nurses, doctors, police officers, teachers, and others. We applaud their efforts to keep us all safe, and will be there for them when they need us with video chat, a socially distant beer, or just a funny video of keepy-ups.

The committee have already published an action plan to bring shinty back in England in-line with government advice and the advice of our governing sport bodies. We are committed to ensuring we can continue the recent initiatives of our new National League, increasing the number of teams playing in local leagues, and growing the women's game – but only when it is safe to do so. We look forward to electing a new committee and a new President as soon as we can, who I am sure will bring new ideas and a fresh perspective on shinty in England. In the meantime we encourage members, and the broader Scottish and sport communities in England to keep in touch and look for ways to support each other in these difficult times.

Committee looking to celebrate 10years

In 2023 the English Shinty Association (ESA) will be 10 years old, and to celebrate the latest incarnation of shinty in England the ESA are planning a number of events, to complement our usual range of competitions and tournaments.

The ESA would love to hear from current and former players and contributors for ideas and memories. We would also like to hear of any proposals for fixtures from teams interested in visiting us. The ESA can be contacted at englishshintyassociation@gmail.com, or through the current secretary on 07940294562.



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A game for all seasons

Pre season freindly Tayforth vs ESA

In the days leading up to this friendly match, there was much worry the weather would make the game impossible. Yet despite the obstacles ahead of us a squad of 17 ESA players rocked up to the 3G pitch outside of Edinburgh to take on an experienced Tayforth team.

Nothing could prepare the teams for the icy tempest that battered the pitch for the first 15 minutes of the game. Nevertheless, both teams fought through as the sky cleared into sunshine and the shinty revealed itself. The play was well matched for the first 30 minutes of the game with both teams making incursions into each other's penalty areas. Shots from Chris Holley kept the Tayforth keeper on his toes and David MacLean's defence along with Jamie Goodship's goalkeeping kept the scoreline level. As half time neared, Tayforth unleashed a quick succession of goals in a matter of minutes, with pinpoint strikes and effective set plays gave the home side a 4-0 lead by halftime.

After a brief haltime respite ESA returned to the pitch hopeful to prove their worth. The skies above Scotland had different ideas as snow, hail and shots of lightning lashed the pitch. Simply looking in the direction of the ball brought painful whips from hailstones. Once again the skies cleared, with improved visibility, and a long shot by Chris Holley from the left wing managed to whistle past the Tayforth keeper to put ESA on the scoreboard. Tayforth managed to squeeze one more shot past the ESA goalkeeper cementing the outcome. Final Score 5-1.

A massive thank you to Tayforth Shinty Club for all the efforts in making this game happen and remaining in good spirits despite the brutal conditions. A big thanks to the whole ESA squad that travelled up for the match.



As they say in Scotland, if you're not happy with the weather wait 5 minutes

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ESA South West Shinty League Grand Finals Day 2020



Back in March, Mylor Cons, CSM Gold, Mabe Shinty Club & Bristol Camanachd squared off in a playoff format to decide the champions of the South West League.

In the 1st semi final (1st place vs 4th place in the league) Mylor Cons played Bristol Camanachd in a scrappy game.

Having lead the league table for the whole season, it was this game that saw Mylor Cons lose to Bristol

In the 2nd semi-final CSM Gold played Mabe Shinty Club (2nd and 3rd) to determine who would play Bristol in the final. The first half was fiercely fought by both teams, but the youthful energy for the CSM students finally won through. In the 3rd place playoff, Mabe hammered a shocked Mylor.

In the final, the midfield presence of Rouse, with Brown & Best in defence kept the score-line in Bristol's favour. Big hits from Brown up the pitch and attacking runs from Rouse allowed former Ardnamurchan Camanachd player Maclver, and Noakes free reign to take their chances. 2 shots from Maclver found the back of the net in the first half to give Bristol the win and their first competition title

Match Results:

1st semi final-**Mylor Cons** 0 vs 2 **Bristol Camanachd** (Adrian x1, Rouse x1)

2nd semi-final-**CSM Gold**: 6 (Feeney 5', White 30', 36', 41', Ross 45', White 47'), **Mabe**: 2 (Birkett 17', Gardner 49')

3rd place playoff -**Mabe Shinty Club** 5 (Cranston x3, Johnson x2) vs **Mylor Cons** 1 (Mossop)

Final -**Bristol Camanachd** 2 (2x Maclver) vs 0 **CSM Gold**

Editorial team-

Neil Sutherland
Jo Claridge
George Wickenden
Heather Tewnton

Submissions -We would love to receive your shinty related articles from individuals and reports from clubs. Anything from simple training tips to exciting events that are coming up. We will try to include them as much as we can, some editing may be needed to the articles submitted.

Those submitting photographs should ensure that they have the permission to publish of any individuals pictured or, in the case of children, their parents. Articles and pictures as well as any advertising enquiries should be sent to

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