



SHINTY

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Shinty is a very old game and actually predates Christianity in Scotland.

The Irish sport, hurling, which is around 2000 years old is very similar to shinty and is derived from a game which was common to both the Irish and the Scots. **Shinty and hurling feature in the legend of Cù Chulainn, the hero of Celtic mythology.** Shinty has strong connections to the Celts and to the Gaels, and in Gaelic is known as ‘camanachd’ or ‘iomain’.

The game was traditionally played through the winter months, with New Year's Day being the day when whole villages would gather together to play games. Players often using any piece of wood with a hook as a caman (shinty stick). In Uist, stalks of seaweed were put to use due to a lack of trees. Modern camans are made from several laminates of ash or hickory, which are glued and cut into shape. The ball was traditionally a round piece of wood or bone, sometimes called a cnapag, but soon developed into the worsted leather balls used today.

The objective of the game is to play a small ball into a goal, or "hail", erected at the ends of a 140 to 170-yard-long pitch. The game is traditionally played on grass, although as of 2009 the sport may be played on artificial turf. A player can play the ball in the air and is allowed to use both sides of the stick. The stick may also be used to block and to tackle, although a player may not come down on an opponent's stick, this is defined as hacking. A player may tackle using the body as long as this is shoulder-to-shoulder as in Association Football (soccer).

A player may only stop the ball with the stick, the chest, two feet together or one foot on the ground. Only the goalkeeper may use his hands and then only with an open palm. He may not catch it. Playing the ball with the head constitutes a foul whether intentional or not as it is considered dangerous play. Other examples of dangerous play, which will be penalised, are players, while grounded, playing the ball and reckless swinging of the caman in the air, which might endanger another player.

In the present day, shinty is very strong in the highlands, with Kingussie and Newtonmore among the leading clubs in Scotland. Skye, Lochaber and Argyll also have strong clubs and a long tradition of shinty playing. Shinty teams can also be found in the major cities, and outwith Scotland as in London Camanachd. In addition, an annual international match is held between Scotland and Ireland, drawing on the shared history of shinty and hurling, and using a composite set of rules.

Shinty is regulated and run by the Camanachd Association, based in Inverness. They run the leagues and cup competitions and help with coaching and funding. As well as the men's game, shinty is also played by women, with youth, school and university teams also playing and competing.

HISTORY OF LEWIS CAMANACHD

The Lewis Camanachd Club shows how shinty is regaining popularity in Scotland. Shinty had all but died out in Lewis with the popularity of football in the 20th century. However, the shinty club was re-constituted on Thursday 7th December 2006 and entered into national Cup competition for the first time in 2007. The club established the Hebridean Celtic Festival Trophy in 2007, played initially against Hebrides All-Stars, and in subsequent years against Uist. The club has won the trophy four times in all. In 2011, the club applied for and was granted entry to the Camanachd Association's league system. This was initially on a trial basis for the 2011 season.

Lewis played their first ever league match at Beaulieu on March 5th 2011. Although they lost 5-1, they opened the scoring in the first minute of the game and held the lead for an hour.

The first ever official game in Lewis was played against Lochbroom at Sgoil Shiaboist on Saturday 14th May 2011. The game was attended by over 200 people who saw history being made.

GAMES

ACTIVITIES

1. Research the history of shinty.
2. Find out about its links with games played in Ireland, Wales and the Isle of Man.
3. Find out about shinty clubs and competitions through the Camanachd Association.



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