**Redefining the Carnivalesque: The Construction of Ritual, Revelry and Spectacle in British Leisure Practices through the Idea and Model of ‘Carnival’, 1870–1939**

**Introduction**

This article demonstrates the growing ubiquity of the word ‘carnival’ in Britain from the Late Victorian through to the interwar period, both as used by journalists and advertisers as a descriptive term for a range of leisure occasions and activities, and subsequently as a more specific type of event designed to raise funds for charity, initially centred primarily on a procession but increasingly incorporating a diverse range of other popular cultural forms, including sport. In doing so, it deliberately deviates from the tendency of some academics to indiscriminately use Mikhail Bakhtin’s delineation of late medieval carnival (as represented in the work of French writer François Rabelais) as a model for analysing various popular cultural forms. Rather, I interpret the dimensions of ‘carnival’ as historically and geographically specific, focusing in this case on Britain between the 1870s and the 1930s. I argue the (formal and informal) labelling of leisure activities as carnivals in this country and period had three particular unifying elements: firstly, an emphasis on ritual and its continuing significance within the temporal configuration of modern capitalism; secondly, a signification of revelry, in a manner reflecting liberalisation of attitudes to usage of spare time; and thirdly, a privileging of the spectacular with a demarcation of watchers and watched derived from the world of commercial entertainment but frequently applied outside that sphere.

Given the theme of the journal this article is published within, it would be remiss not to briefly outline its relationship to sports history as a sub-field and a historiographical corpus, as well as to leisure history more broadly. Since historians began treating popular culture and recreation as a subject worthy of serious scrutiny in the 1970s, the body of work written on this subject has expanded exponentially, but also fragmented. Searching the online Bibliography of British and Irish History for publications on leisure and sport or popular culture in Britain from 1800 to the present results in 1,780 hits for period from 2010 to 2015 alone.[[1]](#endnote-1) Yet the vast majority of these studies focus on one particular cultural form: sport (or individual sports); film; music; theatre; tourism; and so on. By contrast, studies examining particular themes across popular cultural and recreational formats remain comparatively scarce, with the exception of significant recent works by the likes of Brad Beaven, Hugh Cunningham and Robert Snape.[[2]](#endnote-2) This current article strives to demonstrate the value of the latter approach by highlighting, through exploring ideas of carnival in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, the porousness of borders between different leisure forms and their operation within a conceptual framework united by shared imperatives and lexicon.

This research has been conducted using two primary types of source: the British Newspaper Archive (BNA), an online repository of digitised newspapers; and through a trawl of London’s various local borough archives, looking through their files on festivals, generally comprising a combination of press cuttings and paraphernalia such as programmes and flyers, followed up by an examination of local newspapers.[[3]](#endnote-3) Working with these resources has its limitations, in that they offer an insight into the ideas of writers, organisers and providers, rather than participants and audiences. Moreover, in taking a broad, national focus, I accept there is not always the space here to give due consideration to local and regional differences and specificities, as I have done elsewhere in studies with far more localised scopes.[[4]](#endnote-4) Nonetheless, I feel this approach’s shortcomings are outweighed in this instance by the need to shed light on the semantics of carnival from the 1870s through to the 1930s, thereby providing insights not just into events given this particular title, but into the history of leisure in this period more broadly.

**Bakhtin and the Carnivalesque in the Study of Sport**

For *Rabelais and His World*, originally published in 1965 and translated into English in 1984, Mikhail Bakhtin wrote a lengthy introduction discussing the nature of medieval carnival, describing it as mocking the serious rituals with which they often coincided, existing as almost a second world outside of ordinary social and political relations. During carnival time, he argued, hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions were temporarily suspended, replaced by new forms of communication unburdened of etiquette, playful forms, and laughter. Participation was all-encompassing, with no line drawn between spectator and actor.[[5]](#endnote-5)

A number of works within the field of sport studies have drawn on Bakhtin’s interpretation of the carnivalesque, particularly in understanding fandom. Gary Armstrong and Malcolm Young, for example, used it to analyse football chants and the way they both challenge authority and generate communitas.[[6]](#endnote-6) Geoff Pearson has similarly highlighted parallels between Bakhtin’s understanding of early modern carnival, and the experiences of travelling ‘hard core’ football supporters, arguing that following their team away from home functions as a ‘second life’ providing breaks from pressures & oppressions of everyday life.[[7]](#endnote-7) Tim Crabbe and Stephen Wagg likewise have used the concept to analyse the behaviour of Pakistan fans during the 1999 Cricket World Cup in England.[[8]](#endnote-8) Bakhtinian theory has also been applied to the study of other cultural forms too, including tourism, literature and film.[[9]](#endnote-9)

This article, by contrast, takes its cue from the medievalist Chris Humphrey, who has criticised scholars who draw too liberally on Bakhtin's account of carnival when it is not deeply rooted in historical evidence – particularly in studies of modern popular cultural forms, which use carnival-according-to-Bakhtin as a yardstick against which to measure these forms’ transgressiveness, and make careless comparisons across time and place.[[10]](#endnote-10) There are ostensible continuities between medieval and early modern carnival and some modern leisure activities, but similarities of form ought not to be confused with equivalence of function, given the seismic economic, social and cultural changes that have occurred in the interim. Historically and geographically indiscriminate application of Bakhtin’s ideas can therefore only obscure more than they reveal, especially as carnival itself has undergone rapid transformations since its emergence, as the next section demonstrates.

**Carnival in Europe from the Middle Ages to Modernity**

Typically beginning in January and running until Lent, carnival was strongest in Southern European cities and weakest in the north, where weather did not permit outdoor festivals at that time of year.[[11]](#endnote-11) According to Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter, it was probably a 15th century urban invention, promoted by local elites and appropriating existing popular cultural forms, as well as drawing on older festive traditions.[[12]](#endnote-12) Throughout the season, actions such as singing and dancing in street, fancy dress and play-acting, playful assailing of other members of crowd, and attacks on animals were all common. The events of its final few days – usually processions of decorated floats and individuals in fancy dress, competitions (e.g. races, mock battles) and plays – were more structured, with clearer distinction between participants and spectators, and organised by local clubs and societies (often comprised of young upper class men).[[13]](#endnote-13) According to Peter Burke, carnivals were typically marked by themes of excessive eating, sex (both symbols of and actual sexual activity) and aggression (verbal and physical), as well as by the reversal of the normal order.[[14]](#endnote-14) Twycross and Carpenter also argued that the common practice of carnival masking blurred differences between elites and ordinary people and generated a broader sense of community, enabled masqueraders to invert and escape from everyday identity (although much of its pleasure came from the interplay between real and assumed identities), and enhanced their sense of license to engage in comic violence and sexual activity.[[15]](#endnote-15)

Yet elite efforts to curtail popular culture of its excesses were well underway in Catholic Europe from the mid-17th century onwards, while urban expansion and the growth of commercial capitalism also had a transformative impact – particularly upon carnival, which in some cases became as much about performing for visitors as it was a celebration for inhabitants.[[16]](#endnote-16) This process continued into the nineteenth century and beyond. In the case of Cologne and Mainz, carnival remained popular according to Elaine Glovka Spencer because of its promise of annual renewal, appeal to local identity, and longstanding emotional resonance, tapping into childhood memories of a less commercialised and more communal past, while also providing opportunities for transgressive actions such as cross-dressing and mixed-sexed mingling and flirtation.[[17]](#endnote-17) From the late nineteenth century onwards, increasing criticism was voiced in some quarters over these carnivals’ licentiousness and the loss of their original meanings amid commercialisation and urban expansion, while they were also bedevilled by declining participation in their organisation; yet post-First World War, strong efforts were made to revive them once again due to their importance as generators of tourism, as well as continued significance to local identity.[[18]](#endnote-18)

**The Emergence of Modern Leisure in Britain**

By contrast, ‘carnival’ itself did not spread to Britain during the late medieval and early modern periods. However, during this period, play likewise centred on a cycle of festivals rooted in seasonal – and therefore economic – rhythms, the religious calendar and established customs, combined religious ritual with legitimised pleasure and disorder, and was marked by localised variations.[[19]](#endnote-19) With the advent of Protestantism, reformers sought to purge worship of its perceived Catholic excesses and of the popular rituals that accompanied it, aided by elite fears of popular disorder, although in England periods of repression such as the reign of Edward VI and the Interregnum were followed by negotiated partial reversals. Yet by 1700 the link between merrymaking and ecclesiastical sites and rituals had been successfully broken.[[20]](#endnote-20) As well as religious change, economic processes also took effect. Urban expansion and the growth of commercial capitalism also helped to reshape popular culture. In larger towns and cities a sharper schism began to appear between work and leisure time, with annual festivals supplanted by small regular doses of free time.[[21]](#endnote-21)

The Industrial Revolution wreaked further changes, bringing more people into towns and cities to work longer, more strictly enforced hours. Both evangelical revival and fears over social unrest fuelled renewed efforts to expunge popular culture’s excesses. Yet as Emma Griffin argued in a 2002 article reviewing the historiography of popular culture in industrialising England to that date, the view taken in the 1970s by early historians of the subject, that the Industrial Revolution destroyed many traditional pastimes, was tempered in subsequent studies by a recognition that many popular cultural forms survived and adapted to new circumstances.[[22]](#endnote-22) Fairs for example, were repeatedly targeted by the authorities during the early and mid-19th century, yet while some disappeared, others continued to thrive.[[23]](#endnote-23) Wakes too remained hugely popular in parts of the country, thanks to the support of paternalistic employers and the enthusiasm of tight-knit factory town communities.[[24]](#endnote-24) Many workers also continued to observe ‘Saint’ Monday as a day off, as they had traditionally done, again with the pragmatic acceptance of their employers.[[25]](#endnote-25)

Nonetheless, there were underlying changes which coincided with and to a degree facilitated these continuities in popular culture. Firstly, there was the success of organised labour and governments in scaling down the length of the working day and securing a weekly half-holiday.[[26]](#endnote-26) Secondly, assisting this was a growing confidence from the less restless mid-Victorian era that the working classes could use their leisure time wisely, aided by the embrace by middle and working classes alike of the evangelical gospel of rational recreation, although it should be noted that many in both classes rejected respectability in their leisure pursuits.[[27]](#endnote-27) Thirdly, rising real wages and the greater accessibility of spare time fuelled rapid growth in commercial leisure provision, as well as demands for new technologies such as cinema.[[28]](#endnote-28) Fourthly, advancements in communication and the expanding scale and activism of government helped foster the emergence of a more national culture, albeit still marked by local and regional variations.[[29]](#endnote-29)

Hugh Cunningham is surely correct to conclude that capitalism and Christianity together instilled the people of modern England with a stronger sense of the importance of time, and that the perception of time shifted from a recurrent experience based around calendrical customs to a more linear one, but still accompanied by a sense of the cycle of week and year.[[30]](#endnote-30) As Ronald Hutton has stated, with economic change reducing the vast majority of the population’s contact with farming and its rhythms, so the centre of the ritual year shifted from rural communities and seasonal change to the celebration of private relationships and the lifecycle.[[31]](#endnote-31) Thus, traditional festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide were enshrined in the new Bank Holiday calendar introduced by government legislation in 1871.[[32]](#endnote-32) Yet, they and more localised ritualised celebrations had to operate within an ever more competitive market for people’s spare time and money, facing challenges from the round-the-clock leisure provision of industries such as cinema, or from the growing accessibility of seasonal vacations, and had to borrow from those innovations, while commercial leisure providers increasingly harnessed these occasions unto their own ends, as in the case of organisers of sporting events during traditional holidays, or retailers during Christmas.[[33]](#endnote-33)

These trends continued into the first decades of the twentieth century. The interwar era was notable for a further acceleration in the size of Britain’s commercial leisure sector, alongside municipal and voluntary provision, again aided by rising real wages, as new goods such as the radio came onto the market and existing ones such as the motor car became more readily available.[[34]](#endnote-34) While concerns about leisure’s usage persisted, with particular anxieties over commercial forms such as cinema and professional football, nonetheless spare time was now often posited as a positive opportunity in discourse bound up with democratic ideas of citizenship.[[35]](#endnote-35) The campaign for universal access to holidays with pay, which in 1938 entered the statute book, demonstrated the press and politicians’ increasing acceptance that the working class had the same right to a privilege their middle class counterparts had long enjoyed, as well as their recognition of the benefits of recreation.[[36]](#endnote-36)

**The Changing Usage of the Term ‘Carnival’ in Britain, 1870–1939**

Having above outlined the changing model of carnival offered by continental Europe, and long term trends in British leisure up to and through the period from 1870 and 1939, this article will now describe how the former concept flourished in the latter context. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the changing abundance of references to carnival in those newspapers included in the BNA. Figure 1 shows the average number of articles containing the word ‘carnival’ per issue for every year in this period. This is particularly good for illustrating short term changes in the prevalence of this term in the press during this period, but can be misleading as to longer term trends because of the increasing lengthiness of individual issues with the passing of time.[[37]](#endnote-37) For this reason, Figure 2 demonstrates the average number of articles containing the word ‘carnival’ per newspaper page for each decade, so as to provide a more accurate picture of how extensively this word featured in press coverage and how this changed over a 70-year period.[[38]](#endnote-38) Taken together, they suggest that the word became more ubiquitous in press coverage over the final three decades of the nineteenth century, dipped slightly over the first half of the 1900s, revived in the late 1900s and early 1910s, declined again during the First World War, before demonstrating a far sharper upward trajectory (based on both modes of calculation) on the whole during the interwar era.

Before poring over this chronology in greater detail, it is important to firstly sketch out the various ways in which the term carnival was used over this period. Firstly, there were reports on carnivals in European cities including Rome, Florence, Madrid, Basle, Berlin, Naples, Paris, and Nice. These had received coverage in Britain since the birth of its news press in the seventeenth century, and continued to do so in the period covered by this article – especially during the late nineteenth century.[[39]](#endnote-39) By this point, a growing number of Britons could experience the continental carnival first hand for themselves: in 1886, the *London Standard* carried a Thomas Cook advert for a ‘Carnival Tour’ to France and Italy, while in 1894 the *Glasgow Herald* made reference to British attendees at the Nice Carnival.[[40]](#endnote-40)

There were also numerous instances of carnival being used as a more descriptive term, drawing upon the metaphor of continental carnival to indicate the presence of certain shared elements in other leisure forms, such as golf, horse-racing, cricket, water sports, fairs, pantomimes, and musical entertainments, to provide a far from exhaustive list.[[41]](#endnote-41) It was also often used to describe either particular traditional holidays such as Christmas, New Year, Easter, and Shrovetide (the latter called ‘an old English carnival’ by the *Leeds Mercury* in 1882), or in relation to annually recurrent leisure events, such as particular fairs, The Lord Mayor’s Show (The ‘Cockney Carnival’) and long established sporting events like the Henley Regatta and the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race.[[42]](#endnote-42) Horse-racing at Chester was described as ‘time-honoured carnival’ by the *Edinburgh Evening News* in 1898, for example, while the *Hull Daily Mail* called Epsom an ‘annual carnival’ in 1914.[[43]](#endnote-43) In some instances, such as with horse-racing or traditional festivals, this use of the idea of carnival to describe certain recreational practices was hardly new, but it does appear to have significant increased and diversified in line with the late Victorian expansion of leisure provision.[[44]](#endnote-44)

There were also even more abstract usages of the word carnival in the press, sometimes in relation to leisure activities, sometimes even more generally. Dancers at a fancy dress ball in Cheltenham were described as holding ‘high carnival’ by the *Cheltenham Looker-on* in 1873, as were residents of Bradford by the *Northern Echo* during an 1882 Royal Visit, and citizens of Edinburgh on Hogmanay 1902 by the *Evening Post*, to name but a few examples.[[45]](#endnote-45) Again, then, this reflected a conceptualisation of carnival as a sense of levity and accompanying behaviour upon certain occasions that contrasted with the everyday. Yet it was also extremely common for the expression to be used disparagingly, in relation to activities deemed immoral: ‘carnival of drunkenness’; ‘carnival of vice and corruption’; ‘carnival of indulgence’; ‘high carnival of lawlessness and blood’; ‘carnival of rioting’; ‘Through tracts where Hell holds carnival...’; and so forth.[[46]](#endnote-46)

Despite this plurality of meaning, it is clear carnival increasingly came by the end of the nineteenth century to be used above all in relation to a particular type of event: one given this name by its organisers rather than the press; that aspired to the aforementioned combination of spectacle, levity and sense of occasion; that though sometimes arranged by a specific organisation, like a cycling club or a political body, more frequently had its administrative base in the local community, or at least sections in it, and sometimes local government, and aspired to synonymy with the host district, in a similar fashion to carnivals held elsewhere in Europe; and that often had a benevolent goal in mind, usually of raising funds for a particular charity, especially local medical provision, but in some cases was also explicitly designed to promote the district and its businesses. Such facets were more consistent than the actual cultural forms these carnivals comprised, which varied across both time and place.

Returning to the chronology of carnival’s usage, both Figures 1 and 2 indicate a scarcity of references to ‘carnival’ in the 1870s by comparison with later periods. For this period, the term was generally used in relation to overseas carnivals, as a reporter’s metaphor in describing other leisure forms, and as a pejorative description of perceived immorality. At this stage, it would appear that it was rare for events to be organised in Britain with the specific title of carnival. ‘Carnival’ recurred more frequently in newspaper articles during the 1880s. By this stage, the provincial press were capturing a new phenomenon: the marking of Guy Fawkes’ Day with a carnival, which generally consisted of a procession of individuals in fancy dress and decorated vehicles, followed by a bonfire. These appear to have been particularly common in the South West, taking place in towns such as Teignmouth, Bridgwater, Exmouth, Dawlish, Chard and Torquay, for example.[[47]](#endnote-47) However, they also took place in other parts of the south of England, including London and its hinterland. Hampstead had a Bonfire Boys’ Carnival from the mid-1870s through to 1911, while Bonfire Night in 1890 also saw the inauguration of the Camden and Kentish Towns’ and Queen’s Crescent Carnival, and the Enfield Bonfire Carnival as well.[[48]](#endnote-48) All three were held with the aim of supporting local hospitals, as was true of Bonfire Night carnivals elsewhere. Collectors, frequently in fancy dress themselves, solicited donations from those who gathered along the district streets to watch the procession pass, fulfilling the event’s charitable rationale, while also legitimising the celebration of an occasion often frowned upon as disreputable by sections of the middle classes, as well as by the press.

As Figure 2 indicates, the ratio of articles containing the word ‘carnival’ to number of newspaper pages on the BNA escalated during the 1890s. It appears that this largely related to an upsurge at this time in local fundraising entertainments given the title of ‘carnival’ by their organisers. As well as proliferating, such events diversified. Firstly, while Bonfire Night carnivals remained popular, similar events began to be held in spring, summer and early autumn. Secondly, while scanning through the BNA suggests they remained more concentrated in the South, and particularly the South West, during this period, there is also greater evidence of events called carnivals taking place in Northern English towns and cities as well, such as Manchester, Hull and Sunderland.[[49]](#endnote-49) Analysis of London’s local press also illustrates their emergence along its periphery during the late 1890s. On the capital’s north-eastern fringe, 1896 saw the Enfield Tradesmen’s Cycling Club and the Wood Green Cycling Club organise their first parades, while Tottenham’s cycling clubs did likewise in 1898, as did New Southgate Cycling Club in 1899.[[50]](#endnote-50) In suburban South London, meanwhile, processions of costumed individuals and decorated vehicles took place in Croydon, and in Kingston, Surbiton and Teddington, in aid of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution in 1898.[[51]](#endnote-51)

Thirdly, the forms these events took also became more varied. Amid the cycling boom of the 1890s, cycling clubs became more prominent as organisers of carnivals, and cycling parades became increasingly common as a central feature of them. Yet processional forms were often joined and sometimes supplanted by a growing range of other entertainments. Foreshadowing developments to come elsewhere, ‘Carnival Week’ at the Isle of Wight resort of Ventnor in 1892 comprised not only a parade of florally decorated vehicles, but also golf, sports arranged by the local rowing club, illuminations, fireworks, a football match, amateur dramatics, and a ball.[[52]](#endnote-52) Dancing, athletics, fairs and fetes, among other activities, also accompanied processions as part of other carnivals.[[53]](#endnote-53) This trend continued into the 1900s. For example, in the Merseyside town of West Kirby, which held a carnival annually in aid of local charities, the 1906 instalment included a children’s parade, old English sports, an aquatic display, a cyclists’ and harriers’ procession, a cake walk, and a fancy dress ball.[[54]](#endnote-54) In some cases, national events spurred the holding of one-off carnivals across the country, as with a wave of torch-lit processions held across London and its suburbs in 1900 in aid of the *Daily Telegraph’s* fund for the widows and orphans of soldiers and sailors killed in the Boer War, or in celebrating the 1902 coronation of Edward VII.[[55]](#endnote-55)

The ratio of articles containing the word ‘carnival’ to the number of newspaper pages on the BNA was lower for the 1910s, largely due to the outbreak of the First World War. It is likely there was a declining inclination as the death toll on the continent rose to hold events called carnivals, given the high spirits such a term implied, but it is also possible that many potential organisers were otherwise serving in the armed forces, or else using their spare time for other forms of war work. Following the end of the First World War, events entitled carnivals became more ubiquitous than had previously been the case. The annual ratio of articles containing the word ‘carnival’ to the number of newspaper issues in the BNA surpassed pre-war levels during the 1920s and in particular the 1930s, before slipping back as war broke out again in 1939.

This upsurge in press usage of the term ‘carnival’ owed partly to increasing newspaper length, but also to a greater concentration of stories covering charity carnivals and other leisure occasions. It continued to be used by the press as a descriptive term for other types of entertainment, especially sporting ones, although its use to signify immorality appears to have had largely discontinued by the interwar period. Yet above all, perusing the BNA suggests there were a plethora of local events formally titled as ‘carnivals’ in the 1920s. By now, they comprised ever-widening permutations of cultural forms. The 1923 Chelmsford Carnival, for example, included stalls and sideshows, military bands, a grand carnival procession, a flower show in nearby gardens – including a pastoral display and dancing – and a competition to win motor car.[[56]](#endnote-56) The 1925 Willesden Grand Carnival, meanwhile, featured along with two processions, a prize-giving ceremony featuring film star Alma Taylor, ‘Old English Sports’, a pageant of the history of Willesden, episodes in the history of Empire, a comic football match, a turnout by the Willesden Fire Brigade, music and dancing, a balloon race, a treasure hunt, sideshows, a military tattoo, a torch-lit procession, illuminations, and a firework display.[[57]](#endnote-57)

Moreover, in order to accommodate this growing range of events, it became increasingly common for carnivals to last for up to a week, rather than just for a day.[[58]](#endnote-58) While processions generally remained a key component, and often the centrepiece, of these carnivals, other shorter events confined to a single (often indoor) site, and focused entirely around different types of amusement were also given the title of ‘carnival’.[[59]](#endnote-59) In particular, there was a vogue for carnival balls or dances, whereby fancy dress was integrated into a different leisure form.[[60]](#endnote-60) Philanthropy remained a central rationale for holding carnivals, but this was accompanied by a growing number of ‘shopping carnivals’, organised by local traders to promote the district’s retail offering, now entered full swing (although these too tended to promote some charitable cause as well as a marketing one).[[61]](#endnote-61) Moreover, national events were again a particular stimulus for the holding of carnivals – particularly in the 1930s, such as George V’s 1935 Silver Jubilee, or George VI’s 1937 Coronation.[[62]](#endnote-62)

**The Meaning of ‘Carnival’ Part I: Ritual**

The increasing ubiquity of the term ‘Carnival’ in Britain from the late Victorian through to the interwar era was illustrative of changing attitudes to leisure and its usage. Firstly, in temporal terms, ‘carnival’ implied ritualisation, with its promise of repetition in an uncertain, changing world, reflecting the broader tendency to link past and present that Bernhard Rieger and Martin Daunton have argued characterised British efforts to negotiate modernity.[[63]](#endnote-63) Some occasions described as ‘carnivals’ were over a millennium-old, such as Christmas and Easter, whereas by contrast the sporting events given the same sobriquet were comparatively recent, such as the Epsom Derby (which began in 1780) and the Boat Race (first held in 1829, and contested yearly since 1858).

Yet even for the latter category, the term ‘carnival’ still tended to be utilised as part of a broader discourse of longevity and permanence. For example, *The Era’s* report on ‘the Epsom Carnival’ of 1856 was subtitled ‘Seventy-seventh anniversary of the derby’, while in 1882 the *York Herald* reported that York’s August races ‘commenced to-day under gratifying auspices on the time-honoured Knavesmire, which has been the scene of so many past equine struggles…At many of the hives of industry holiday will be kept, and multitudes will travel to our ancient city to inspect its unrivalled antiquities and thereafter participants in the racing carnival.’ [[64]](#endnote-64) This is illustrative of continuities in the interpretation of new leisure practices, that the amusements of an increasingly urbanised, industrialised society might be understood as fulfilling a similar cyclical function to those predating modern temporal structures, partially reflecting the seasonality of the cultural forms being described, from outdoor sporting activities like cricket whose timing was dependent on weather conditions, to entertainments arranged to coincide with traditional festival period, such as pantomime at Christmas.

Moreover, while in some cases the geographies of these ‘carnivals’ were fairly unspecific, referring solely to a particular point within the year, in others they referred to particular events taking place in a more defined site, from horse races at particular courses, or processions within particular localities – connections emphasised in names official and unofficial (the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race being nicknamed ‘the Putney Carnival’, for example), thereby grounding them in a set space as well as time.[[65]](#endnote-65) This conceptualisation, pushed by a still very localised and regionalised press, bears some parallels to the civic identities traditionally promoted by continental carnivals, albeit within a new context of rapid urbanisation and accompanying population movements, changing localities and merging their customs into an increasingly national culture. For example, in 1880s there was annual week-long ‘Cricket Carnival’ organised by local political Lord Londesborough at Scarborough; in 1888 the *York Herald* described it as part of Scarborough’s ‘season’, during which attractions organised for residents and visitors also included a tennis tournament and a masquerade ball – highlighting the way diverse leisure forms old and new interacted with traditional local aristocratic patronage and the emergence of the modern seaside resort.[[66]](#endnote-66)

What was novel about events called carnival – formally and informally – in modern Britain was that they also reflected the temporal arrangements of an industrialised society, being largely bound to respect the strictures and alleviate the monotonies of the working week along with those of the calendar year, as well as to negotiate the tensions between differing local and national temporal schemata. The case of the Enfield Bonfire Boys Carnival in suburban north London offers a good example of this. Commencing in 1890 and organised primarily by local businessmen, the first two of these carnivals took place on 5th November itself, a Wednesday and Thursday respectively, but in 1892 the 5th fell on a Saturday, when the district’s shops would have been at their busiest; that year’s carnival was therefore postponed until the Monday. The 1893 carnival was also moved to Monday 6th, again to suit local traders, while in 1894 Bonfire Night itself fell on a Monday. In 1895 and 1896, the carnival was held on 5th November (which fell on a Tuesday and Thursday respectively), but from 1897 through to 1899 it was again rescheduled for the first Monday after 5th November, while the last Bonfire Carnival took place on Wednesday 6th – Wednesday being early closing day in the district.[[67]](#endnote-67)

The lengthening duration of charity carnivals – particularly during the interwar period – is also illustrative of the complex relationship between leisure activities, temporality and contemporary economic structures. The advent of the ‘carnival week’ during this period would appear to run counter to the logic hitherto underpinning developments in the timing and length of festivals, which had gone from being often quite lengthy occasions during which work was completely abandoned to being curtailed in order to restrict the extent of the potentially transgressive activities and disruption of work they could entail.[[68]](#endnote-68) With some interwar carnivals, particularly those held in holiday resorts, their greater length was facilitated by the greater supply of spare time – in this instance annual vacation time – within a standardised, stricter system of temporal allocation. In other cases, it owed to the growing diversity of events comprised within the charity carnival model (as shall be discussed latterly) and in temporal terms an attempt to better fit the greater availability of spare time on a daily basis throughout the week.

There was also a minority of events branded carnivals that were not annual occasions at all. Some charitable events designated as carnivals by their organisers (or dubbed thus by the press) were one-offs, such as the Boer War processions of 1900, the Coronation carnivals of 1902, 1911 and 1937, and the Jubilee carnivals of 1935 – although Coronation and Jubilee carnivals obeyed the longer, more irregular cycles of monarchical history, and while embodying a sense of temporal linearity emphasised national continuity. Then there were those entertainments labelled carnivals whose timings had little or nothing to do with the calendar year and were rather part of the panoply of leisure options targeting workers’ spare time as it existed on a day-by-day, week-by-week basis. Perhaps their being described in this way sought to encourage their ritualisation as part of the daily and weekly activities of their would-be patrons.

**The Meaning of ‘Carnival’ Part II: Revelry**

What furthermore underpinned the conception of carnival – annual or not – was the implication of a degree of levity beyond the scope of ordinary leisure time. This schism was partially an artificial, rhetorical device, glossing over the sharing of cultural formats, the operation of modern annual ritual events within economies whose processes were arranged largely along daily and weekly schedules, and the ritualisation of daily and weekly leisure practices. In some instances, it genuinely indicated a greater degree of release and license than was true of spare time more generally, and illustrated a difference in the way the activity in question was interpreted by its observers, organisers and participants. In others it was hyperbolic, used to distinguish common entertainments from the competition by emphasising their wildness. What ‘carnival’ implied was a degree of temporary transformation, whether that related to the behaviour of crowds at major sporting events, or to masquerading in costume in processions, fancy dress balls or ice skating rinks.

In the case of charity carnivals, the earnest and the ridiculous sat side by side. Within processions, serious expressions of identity coexisted with more subversive items involving cross-dressing and blackface – reflecting their fusion of the earnest associational and social group identity politics of nineteenth century processional culture, and a more individualised, irreverent contemporary popular culture that in this context also found legitimation in the historic concept of carnival transgression. Similar hybridisation was visible in auxiliary events, which frequently involved both serious and comic sport, as well as activities falling in between these two poles. Sporting events in the 1904 Enfield Tradesmen’s Cycling Club Carnival, for example, included a men versus women cricket match (in which the men had to bowl and bat left-handed), an under-14 boy's race, a girls’ ‘placing the flag’ competition, a gentlemen's obstacle race, a ladies' driving competition, a three-mile walking race, and a donkey race.[[69]](#endnote-69)

The ubiquity of ‘carnival’ in the press from the late nineteenth century onwards partly reflected the proliferation of new leisure activities for them to report upon. Yet it was also demonstrative of changes in attitude to usage of spare time. ‘Carnival’ was still used at times through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to denote overly licentious behaviour, including in relation to leisure activities such as drinking. Nor should it necessarily be assumed the myriad news reports calling horse-racing meets ‘carnivals’ throughout the nineteenth century intended for the term to be understood entirely benevolently: as Mike Huggins’s work has highlighted, racecourse life was marked by gambling, drinking, occasional violence and various forms of petty crime, and although this combination was largely tolerated thanks to its cross-class popularity, horse-racing did face some opposition from groups such as the nonconformist churches.[[70]](#endnote-70)

Yet, as noted earlier, respectability was contested and negotiated, and by the late nineteenth century new accommodations were being reached on what were morally and socially acceptable means of spending one’s leisure time. If this reflected the marginalisation and tempering of evangelical Christianity as a force in public life, so too did the increasing usage of the concept of carnival – both as descriptive term, and as a type of charitable event – in spite of its continental Catholic connotations. Linda Colley has argued that the conversion of Britain from artificial polity to nation in the eighteenth century centred on its Protestantism and anti-Catholicism, specifically its enmity with Catholic France, which was characterised by its ignorance and oppression, but that the strength of this feeling was subsequently weakened by the integration of Ireland into the Union in 1801, France’s defeat at Waterloo in 1815, and the emancipation of Catholics in 1829.[[71]](#endnote-71) According to Andrew Wolffe, while anti-Catholic sentiment nonetheless remained discernible in Britain right through into the twentieth century, its focus shifted from Rome to British Catholics, and then from converting them to Protestantism to preventing Protestants from converting to Catholicism. [[72]](#endnote-72)

Growing usage of the term ‘carnival’ in nineteenth century Britain therefore reflected a greater comfort in appropriating continental Catholic culture, and redefining British culture in these terms. The now much tamed carnivals in France, Italy and Germany played a part in this, absorbed by a minority able to travel to Europe to sample them for themselves, and a greater number who could read about them in the newspapers – demonstrating the role advancements in communications had in this process as well. John Walton’s work on the Blackpool Carnival of the early 1920s shows how this continued into the interwar period, with the Nice Carnival offering its organisers a model for imitation to draw upon.[[73]](#endnote-73)

At the same time, however, British absorption of ‘carnival’ as metaphor and nomenclature required discursive negotiation on the part of the press, categorising their culture within a broader European context on the one hand and emphasising its distinctiveness and superiority on the other. Take, for example, this extract from a *Birmingham Post* article on Christmas in 1860:

Talk of the Carnivals of Venice and Rome, with their glittering street pageants and frothy amusements, what are they to the substantial English Carnival – the Christmas season of in-door feasting and merrymaking, when every holy family tie is closer drawn around the blazing hearth, every good and purifying aspiration strengthened under the genial influence of the hour, and where – to come to the material “justification of the title” – the carnivorous achievements of a respectable “hardware village” during one week would more than equal a twelvemonth’s consumption of food by an ordinarily ravenous Italian principality. [[74]](#endnote-74)

The implicit message of the piece, which also called the Christmas pantomime ‘the peculiarly British substitute for the street masque of the great Italian festival’, was that the English/British (the two conflated so often in nineteenth century England) could more than match the Italians for revelry but that these celebrations should be clothed safely in the language of Protestant morality. The *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* was even more explicit in 1871, calling Christmas the ‘Protestant Carnival’.[[75]](#endnote-75)

Similar language was evident in press coverage of late Victorian and Edwardian carnival processions. These reports often referred to ‘King Carnival’, a figure drawn from continental carnival processions, as a metaphor for the change that took over the host districts during these occasions. Yet the term still required negotiation, being utilised to de-Anglicise and re-Anglicise these events and their settings. *Meyers’s Observer* commentedon the 1898 Enfield Tradesmen’s Cycling Club Carnival that:

The usual staid decorum of Enfield Town seemed to have deserted it last Wednesday evening. Weird figures flitted hither and thither, and King Carnival held riot in the streets. Not but what it was, after all, an orderly riot, and throughout its progress the chief actors therein never lost sight of the main object, which was to cast the net wide and draw in all the shekels possible to the coffers of our Cottage Hospital.[[76]](#endnote-76)

Likewise in 1908, the *Ilford Guardian* said of that year’s Ilford Carnival:

King Carnival "ran riot", although decorously to a degree; there was no excited "Danse de l'ours as might be expected at a Carnival in a remote Pyrenean valley; it varied from any preconceived ideals of what the Carnival would be like in great Roman Catholic communities...It was, in fact, an essentially Ilfordian event, representative of Ilford's life, amusement, business and enthusiasm combined with the moving power of Charity.[[77]](#endnote-77)

In both cases, the possibilities of liberation from suburban social order was offered before being denied, the rational, philanthropic agenda of the carnivals being foregrounded instead. Such language was no doubt intended to pre-emptively dismiss any potential criticisms of these carnival processions and their more transgressive practices; in the case of llford, church and churchgoing remained central to local public life, making it particularly important to demonstrate that carnival was not incompatible with Protestantism.[[78]](#endnote-78) The naming of these charitable events as carnivals during this period, and the press’s coverage of them, enabled the British to take a degree of ownership over carnival as a tradition, which it is possible helps to explain the subsequent increase in the numbers of events held under this title in the 1920s and 30s.

Yet while the idea of carnival was borrowed from continental Europe, the content used to fill this near tabula rasa was often drawn from America too, from borrowings from minstrelsy and Wild West shows in Edwardian carnival processions, to the aforementioned incorporation of aquacades in interwar events.[[79]](#endnote-79) These were generally in keeping with the spirit of pretence and adventurousness that the term ‘carnival’ connoted; they also demonstrated an emphasis on the spectacular and of the appropriation of commercial entertainment formats discussed in the next section of this article.

**The Meaning of ‘Carnival’ Part III: Commerce and Spectacle**

The final defining elements of carnival that facilitated such a variety of cultural forms to be individually and collectively bound together by this term were visuality and commercialisation, or quasi-commercialisation. At the heart of many of the occasions described as ‘carnivals’ – sporting events from boat races to horseracing meets to cricket matches, stage-based entertainments theatrical and musical, and processions – there was a demarcation in the first instance between watchers and watched, with spatial strategies utilised to separate the two, from the erection of stands at sporting grounds and theatres, to in a more temporary sense the usage of marshals and policing to prevent crowds interfering with processions. Underpinning this emphasis on spectacle were the transactional processes of commercial capitalism, within which popular culture increasingly offered opportunities for monetisation.

The language and imagery of carnival was, for example, extensively commodified across cultural industries. Reporters using ‘carnival’ as a metaphor for other leisure forms utilised the historically loaded concept to communicate a sense of excitement about the fast-growing world of entertainment to newspaper buyers. Commercial leisure providers also seized upon the language and forms of carnival, particularly around Christmastime. In 1858, ‘Dykwynkyn’, set and costume designer at the Theatre Royal on Drury Lane, organised a ‘Crystal Palace Grand Christmas Carnival and Revels and Juvenile Holiday Festival’, whose entertainments included Christmas foods, pantomimes, the giving of Christmas presents, dances, a magic show, an electrical display, a chemistry lecture, sports and games for youths, and a magic lantern display; admission was charged at a shilling, for adults and sixpence for children.[[80]](#endnote-80) The event even featured a ‘Lord of Misrule’, in a deliberate evocation of Britain’s own Yuletide traditions.[[81]](#endnote-81) Commercial ‘carnivals’ of disparate types were a feature of later Christmases too. New Star Music Hall in Liverpool held a ‘Christmas Carnival’ in 1879, as did Lusby’s Music Hall in London in 1880.[[82]](#endnote-82) In 1893, meanwhile, there was a‘Christmas Carnival and Yuletide Fair’ at Caledonian House in Glasgow, featuring a toy exhibition and ‘Oriental Courts and Palace of Novelties’, while that same year the Waverley Market ‘Christmas Carnival’ in Edinburgh included displays by ‘the Amazon warriors from Dahomey’, cyclists, tightrope walkers, performing animals, and acrobats, not to mention music.[[83]](#endnote-83) In these two instances, shopping and entertainments were integrated into a multifaceted, electrically lit spectacle. Then there were the ice carnivals that became particularly popular during the interwar era, combining the centuries-old practices of masquerade and ice-skating to provide a hybrid visual form suitable for exploitation within a commercial leisure space.

Commercialisation also influenced activities that ostensibly lay outside the realm of private sector entertainment provision, because they operated within the same wider market. The development of the charity carnival is illustrative of this. The growing inclusiveness of carnival as a description on the one hand, and the model of the continental carnival on the other, guided its progress. The cycling carnivals of the 1890s, for example, combined the longstanding institution of the procession, an integral part of public life in Victorian Britain, with rapidly growing enthusiasm for the bicycle as transport, leisure good and emblem of modernity, aided by an exponential rise in the number of cycling clubs.[[84]](#endnote-84) Meanwhile, vehicles in the larger scale processions of the 1900s, drew their themes from a diverse selection of commercial entertainment forms including sport, theatre, pantomime, children’s fiction, comics, Wild West shows and minstrelsy. The 1901 Tottenham Carnival, for example, included a car entitled ‘Charity and Sport’, bearing the message ‘Bravo Spurs! You won the Cup, the Pride of Tottenham, and you mean to keep it’ – a reference to Tottenham Hotspur's FA Cup win a few months earlier that illustrated how commercial leisure providers had become embedded within the local fabric and integrated into the community’s sense of itself.[[85]](#endnote-85) Procession items likes this were for the most part the work of participating individuals and voluntary organisations, but it illustrated the extent to which both were already borrowing ideas and acquiring items from the for-profit sector.

The expansion of the charity carnival beyond processions to include a broader range of entertainments, highlighted above, owed at least partly to the need to compete for potential contributors’ time and money within expanding local leisure economies, mirroring for example music hall’s cannibalisation of a range of cultural forms in a bid to provide the most up-to-date spectacle possible.[[86]](#endnote-86) Moreover, the shift in the charity carnival’s fundraising model, from attracting individuals to a particular set of streets so donations might be solicited from them, to bringing them to an enclosed space where they could be charged admission, echoed earlier developments in commercial sport provision, whereby of the various means of monetising sport, it was the spectator’s entry fee that ultimately thrived; similarly, the practice of carnival organisers offering prizes as a means of attracting entrants to processions (or in sporting competitions) in order to generate spectacle also echoed earlier models of commercial sporting exhibition. [[87]](#endnote-87)

It is worth here considering the ramifications of commercialism and spectacularisation as embodied in the idea of carnival for how we understand the development of sport. Tony Collins has located the development of competitive sport from pre-modern games within the context of the emergent perception of self-interest as the central rationale within society and the wider growth of the leisure industry from the eighteenth century onwards.[[88]](#endnote-88) As a symbol of the maturation of commercial sport over the second half of the nineteenth century, he contrasted the model of mid-Victorian touring cricket sides, which functioned along the lines of travelling fairs, with late Victorian association football sides that even though they were not necessarily profitable nonetheless functioned as businesses, being run by businessmen, operating within leagues and cups, and encouraging a brand loyalty through an appeal to local identity.[[89]](#endnote-89)

Yet while competitive sport certainly played a key part in the widening panoply of events incorporated under the charity carnival banner, they also supplied countless examples of this competitive element being removed. Display activities like diving, dancing, calisthenics and gymnastics, all of which were incorporated into carnivals at different stages, lay peripheral to a male-oriented British sporting culture focused on contests between individuals or teams with objective means of deciding the winner intrinsic to the rules. In this context, they were one of numerous forms of bodily display on show (others including processions, military exhibitions, the crowning of carnival queen). Moreover, the fusing of sports with other entertainment forms – like the aforementioned cycling tableaux and sporting cars in processions, or auxiliary events like the aquatic musical revue in the 1937 Woolwich Jubilee Carnival – pointed to an alternative conception of sport as semiotic and pre-orchestrated rather than participatory and unpredictable of outcome. As for the comic sports that frequently composed part of carnivals (or were held adjunct to them), it was the competitiveness of sport that was being parodied, with the result mattering less than the amusement provided in the interim. This particular type of entertainment, simultaneously pioneered by music hall artistes like Dan Leno, highlighted that amateur and professional sporting bodies did not possess a monopoly over the potential format and meanings of sport (commercial and non-commercial), even as their version increased its hegemony.[[90]](#endnote-90) There are parallels with other contemporary activities that lay on the margins of sport, as also demonstrated in Robert Snape’s work on interwar all-in wrestling, in which showmanship was paramount and matches frequently fixed according to particular storylines, with the watching crowds generally aware of this.[[91]](#endnote-91) At the same time, it ought to be stressed that the model of sport as spectacular and choreographed did not exist separately from the model of it as participatory and competitive, for the observance and interpretation of the former were no doubt shaped by experience of the latter.

**Conclusion**

By the late nineteenth century, ‘carnival’ had come to connote a ritualistic occasion offering a sense of continuity and annual renewal when change was often drastic and the working day and week now lay at the centre of temporal organisation; a promise of greater-than-usual levity, even transgression, with a nod to continental Europe, in a context of growing relaxedness as to how the masses spent their spare time; and a broadening range of primarily visual entertainment forms organised along provider/consumer lines. Its ready availability as a descriptive term perhaps reflected both the lack of a specific carnival tradition in Britain, and the loose, multi-faceted nature of the traditional continental carnival; in the absence of fixed preconceptions about what carnival in Britain ought to be, but with a number of appealing resonances to the word itself nonetheless, journalists and advertisers could comfortably make the case for a diverse set of occasions and events belonging in this category. The relative sanitisation and commercialisation of carnival in nineteenth century Europe, and the growing ability of Britons to read about and even attend them, did however pave the way for *some* standardisation of the meaning of carnival, as a specifically local philanthropic event; yet the vagueness of form attached to the idea of carnival meant an increasingly wide range of leisure forms could still be integrated into these events, particularly during the interwar era.

That various sports could be described as ‘carnivals’ in the same way as theatrical entertainments or traditional festivals were, and that sport could be included in charity carnivals as part of an ever widening constellation of amusements that also included processions, concerts, and the like, owes partly to the contemporary ambiguity of the term, but also the perceived similarities between sport and these various other entertainments at the time. This article has focused to a significant degree on sport but only to reject its specificity; rather, it has examined sport as carnival spectacle in order to illustrate how permeable its borders with other popular cultural forms are. Examining these margins, where sport shades into display, in turn raises questions over the centrality of competitiveness to sport as a differentiating characteristic from other leisure forms.

The leisure activities accumulated under the umbrella of carnival were shaped by the broader temporal structures they operated within, which were in turn products of processes of urbanisation and industrialisation, and of negotiation between capital, labour and state. They also functioned within a market dominated by fast-growing and diversifying cultural industries, pushing even non-commercial leisure provision to at least partially mimic their content and formats. As Emma Griffin has argued, ‘Although it is clearly important to understand cultural practice from the perspective of those engaged in it, the challenge for historians of popular culture must be to integrate popular cultural experiences with the power structures that variously encouraged, permitted, and suppressed them.’[[92]](#endnote-92) Such an approach means looking beyond specific forms in a superficial manner and drawing artificial parallels or demarcations, instead understanding their particular operation within formally diverse but historically and geographically specific contexts, and deducing from there what equally particular meanings they would have held for the people engaged in them. It requires that historians do not simply focus on one type of leisure, but rather look for thematic parallels across a range of them, and yet at the same time that in making such connections, they are sensitive to the significance of period and place to their operation. If academics are to utilise ‘carnival’ as a model through which to analyse modern cultural forms, they should look to contemporaneous versions of carnival, arising from sufficiently comparable circumstances; such analogies are likely to provide far clearer insights into the temporalities, connotations, affectivities, sensorial relationships, and economics imbued in leisure in industrial and post-industrial societies.

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41. References to golf as carnival were found in: *Fife Herald*, September 22, 1870; *Evening Telegraph*, August 28, 1906; *Evening Telegraph*, December 6, 1910; *Evening Telegraph*, February 25, 1914; *Dundee Courier*, September 28, 1918; *Evening Telegraph*, January 1, 1923; *Aberdeen Journal*, April 24, 1928. References to horse-racing events as carnivals were found in: *Wrexham Advertiser*, April 2, 1870; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, December 27, 1871; *York Herald*, September 13, 1879; *York Herald*, April 10, 1882; *Northampton Mercury*, May 27, 1882; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, September 14, 1882; *Manchester Evening News*, February 19, 1886; *Edinburgh Evening News*, May 4, 1898; *Hull Daily Mail*, May 27, 1914; *Newcastle Journal*, June 8, 1914; *Yorkshire Evening Post*, March 3, 1923; *Derby Daily Telegraph*, May 29, 1933. References to cricket matches as carnivals were found in: *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal*, August 19, 1871; *York Herald*, August 2, 1879; *Blackburn Standard*, September 13, 1879; *Leeds Mercury*, August 22, 1882; *York Herald*, August 24, 1886; *Northampton Mercury*, September 4, 1886; *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, August 27, 1890; *London Standard*, August 13, 1894; *Yorkshire Evening Post*, May 21, 1898; *Dundee Courier*, June 30, 1914; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, August 19, 1918. References to water sport events as carnivals were found in: *Portsmouth Evening News*, June 18, 1890; *London Standard*, July 16, 1890; *Hampshire Advertiser*, August 16, 1890; *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, February 19, 1894; *Dover Express*, April 1, 1898; *The Era*, November 19, 1898; *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 12 April, 1902; *Cornishman*, August 21, 1902; *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, February 9, 1906; *Chelmsford Chronicle*, August 5, 1910; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, September 15, 1910; *Hull Daily Mail*, March 18, 1914; *Manchester Evening News*, May 7, 1914; *Hereford Times*, June 29, 1918; *Nottingham Evening Post*, July 14, 1923. References to fairs as carnivals were found in: *Wrexham Advertiser*, April 2, 1870; *Coventry Herald*, June 21, 1872; *London Standard*, April 7, 1874; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, October 2, 1874; *Hull Packet*, September 15, 1882; *Nottingham Evening Post*, October 7, 1882; *Tamworth Herald*, October 9, 1886; *The Era*, October 9, 1886; *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, June 2, 1898; *Nottingham Evening Post*, October 3, 1902; *Gloucester Citizen*, October 5, 1906; *Nottingham Evening Post*, March 28, 1910. References to pantomimes as carnivals were found in: *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, December 23, 1872; *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, January 2, 1902. References to musical entertainments as carnivals were found in: *The Era*, October 5, 1879; *Liverpool Mercury*, April 10, 1882. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. References to Christmas as a carnival were found in: *Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald*, December 16, 1882; *The Era*, November 20, 1886; *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, December 9, 1890. References to New Year as carnival were found in: *London Daily News*, January 2, 1882; *Dundee Advertiser*, December 27, 1890; *Aberdeen Evening Express*, January 2, 1918; *Leeds Mercury*, February 23, 1882. References to Easter as carnival were found in: *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, April 9, 1874; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, April 12, 1879. Reference to Shrovetide as carnival was found in: *Leeds Mercury*, February 23, 1882. References to the Lord Mayor’s Show as carnival were found in: *Belfast News-Letter*, November 11, 1870; *Nottingham Evening Post*, November 10, 1882. References to the Henley Regatta as carnival were found in: *London Standard*, July 19, 1886; *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 8, 1898. References to the Oxford-Cambridge boat race as carnival were found in: *The Era*, April 2, 1871; *Cornishman*, March 6, 1879. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. *Edinburgh Evening News*, May 4, 1898; *Hull Daily Mail*, May 27, 1914. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. For horse-racing as carnival, see Mike Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society 1790–1914: A Social and Economic History* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 117–123. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. *Cheltenham Looker-On*, February 22, 1873; *Northern Echo*, June 21, 1882; *Evening Post*, January 1, 1902. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. *Sheffield Independent*, March 18, 1873; *London Daily News*, February 7, 1874; *Manchester Evening News*, September 13, 1879; *Belfast News-Letter*, April 11, 1882; *Southern Reporter*, May 8, 1890; *Gloucester Citizen*, June 20, 1890. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, November 10, 1882; *Bristol Mercury*, April 1, 1886; *Bristol Mercury*, September 6, 1886. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. The history of Hampstead Bonfire Carnival was recounted in Valerie Hart, *Popular Celebrations and Customs in Hampstead, 1820–1914* (Diploma in English Local History thesis, Portsmouth Polytechnic, 1985). The history of the Camden and Kentish Towns’ and Queen’s Crescent Carnival was recounted in *Daily Chronicle*, November 6, 1897. The first Enfield Carnival was covered by *Meyers's Observer*, November 7, 1890. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. *Manchester Evening News*, February 12, 1890; *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, July 23, 1894; *Hull Daily Mail*, May 5, 1898. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. First Enfield Tradesmen Cycling Club Carnival was covered by *Meyers's Observer*, September 18, 1896. First Wood Green Cycling Club Carnival was covered by *Meyers's Observer*, October 2, 1896. First Tottenham Carnival was covered by *Tottenham and Enfield Weekly Guardian*, July 22, 1898. First New Southgate Cycling Club Carnival was covered by *Meyers's Observer*, October 18, 1899. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. 1898 Croydon Life Boat Day Procession programme in Croydon Local Studies Library (P570 (394.2) LIF). Kingston, Surbiton and Teddington Life Boat Day Procession was covered by *Morning Post*, June 18, 1898. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. *Isle of Wight Observer*, April 7, 1894; *Morning Post*, September 1, 1894. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. *Leeds Mercury*, May 27, 1890; *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, October 23, 1890; *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, November 6, 1890; *Cornishman*, May 3, 1894; *Yorkshire Evening Post*, June 2, 1898; *Chelmsford Chronicle*, July 8, 1898. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. *Liverpool Daily Post*, August 2, 1906. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. The Boer War Carnivals were extensively covered on a daily basis by *Daily Telegraph*, January – October, 1900. For 1902 Coronation Carnivals, see for example: *Cornishman*, June 5, 1902; *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, June 25, 1902; *Reading Mercury*, July 5, 1902. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. *Chelmsford Chronicle*, May 18, 1923. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Programme contained in Brent Archive (LCH1/ENT/1; LHC1/ENT/4). [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. *Cheltenham Chronicle*, Mar 17, 1923; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, June 18, 1928; *Western Daily Press*, July 20, 1928. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. *Western Daily Press*, January 1, 1923; *Dover Express*, July 13, 1923; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, December 1, 1923; *Derby Daily Telegraph*, January 2, 1928; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, August 22, 1928; *Gloucestershire Echo*, March 15, 1933; *Western Daily Press*, June 12, 1933; *Western Daily Press*, July 31, 1933. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. *Cork Examiner*, January 1, 1923; *Derby Daily Telegraph*, February 17, 1923; *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, March 16, 1923; *Southern Reporter*, November 15, 1923; *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, February 4, 1933; *Hull Daily Mail*, March 15, 1933; *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, June 10, 1933. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. *Dover Express*, May 4, 1923; *Kent & Sussex Courier*, May 18, 1923; *Western Gazette*, October 5, 1928. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Surviving 1935 Jubilee carnival ephemera include Woolwich Jubilee Carnival programme, Greenwich Heritage Centre (W.394 pamphlet); Beckenham Jubilee celebrations programme, Bromley Local Studies & Archive (B8/394.43 L73.2 1935); Leyton, Leytonstone and District King's Jubilee Grand Carnival and Pageant programme, Waltham Forest Archive (L03 Pamphlet); Hornsey Silver Jubilee programme, Haringey Archive (960.5 Tottenham Festival File); Richmond Silver Jubilee Celebrations list of events, Richmond Local Studies Library (L394.4R). Surviving 1937 Coronation carnival ephemera include: Petts Wood Coronation Day programme, Bromley Local Studies and Archive (3944 L73.2); Bromley's Coronation Festivities Two-Day Gala programme, Bromley Local Studies and Archive (L73.2 394.4); Beckenham Coronation Celebrations Cavalcade of History programme, Bromley Local Studies and Archive (GEN/LVE 394.4); Ephemera from Coronation celebrations in Hampton ,Hampton Wick, Teddington and Twickenham, Richmond Local Studies Library (L394.4 T (1937)). [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Bernhard Rieger and Martin Daunton, ‘Introduction’, in *Meanings of Modernity: Britain from the Late-Victorian Era to World War II*, ed. Bernhard Rieger and Martin Daunton (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 1–21. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. *The Era*, June 1, 1856; *The York Herald*, August 23, 1882. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. *The Era*, 2 April, 1871 [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. *Leeds Mercury*, September 2, 1881, August 24, 1885); *York Herald*, September 1, 1888. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. *Meyers's Observer*, November 7, 1890, November 6, 1891, November 11, 1892, November 10, 1893, November 9, 1894, November 8, 1895, November 6, 1896, November 12, 1897, November 11, 1898, November 10, 1899, November 8, 1901. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Sally Alexander, *St Giles's Fair, 1880-1914: Popular Culture and the Industrial Revolution in 19th Century Oxford* (Oxford: History Workshop, 1970), 10–11; Cunningham, ‘Metropolitan Fairs’, 168. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. *Meyers's Observer*, July 1, 1904. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Huggins, *Flat Racing*, 120–121, 126–128, 204–228. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. John Wolffe, ‘Change and Continuity in British Anti-Catholicism, 1829–1982’, in *Catholicism in Britain and France since 1789*, ed. Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1996), 67–83. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. John K. Walton, 'Popular Entertainment and Public Order: The Blackpool Carnivals of 1923–24', *Northern History* 34, no. 1 (1998): 172–174 [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. *Birmingham Daily Post*, December 25, 1860. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, January 12, 1871. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. *Meyers's Observer*, July 1, 1898. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. *Ilford Guardian*, July 20, 1908. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. In 1911, there was one place of worship for every 1,907 residents in Ilford, compared to one for every 2,227 in the County of London; almost all of these were affiliated to the Church of England or evangelist denominations. General Register Office, *Census of England and Wales. 1911. Families or Separate Occupiers, and Population. Vol. VI. Buildings of Various Kinds.* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1913), 80, 146; Kelly’s Directories, *Kelly’s Directory of Essex, Hertfordshire and Middlesex. 1914.* (London: Kelly’s Directories, 1914), 325. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. According to Ellen Wright, aquacades first emerged as part of world fairs across the US, with burlesque impresario Billy Rose playing a vital role in promoting them. Personal correspondence, August 22, 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. *The Standard*, December 28, 1858. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. Lords of Misrule were officers appointed in late medieval England at Christmas to proceed over the Feast of Fools. Clifford Davidson, *Festivals and Plays in Late Medieval Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 12–13. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. *Liverpool Mercury* (14 Jan 1880); *The Era*, December 26, 1880. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. *The Era*, December 23, 1893; *Glasgow Herald*, November 16, 1893. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. James Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950* (London: Longman, 1978), 74–76. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald*, September 20, 1901. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Andrew Horrall, *Popular Culture in London, c. 1890–1918: The Transformation of Entertainment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. Adrian Harvey, *The Beginnings of a Commercial Sporting Culture in Britain, 1793–1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 156–157; Huggins, *Flat Racing*, 143–165. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. Tony Collins, *Sport in a Capitalist Society: A Short History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 3–6. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Ibid, 51–52. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. Horrall, *Popular Culture in London*, 130–139. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. Robert Snape, ‘All-in Wrestling in Inter-War Britain: Science and Spectacle in Mass Observation’s ‘Worktown’’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 12 (2013): 1418–1435. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. Griffin, ‘Popular Culture in Industrializing England’: 627. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)