Tudor Entertainment

Feste is a character who can sing, dance and provide entertainment for both the courts of Lady Olivia and Duke Orsino. Dancing to music was a pastime that was enjoyed by all. At court, music would be played by hired professional musicians like Feste.

As well as making and playing less well-tuned instruments, people of lower status could listen to the music of travelling musicians playing at markets, festivals and in taverns.

Dancing to music was considered an important skill that all members of society should be able to participate in. This is because it would be difficult to have an active social life then if you didn't know how to dance.



Tudor dances had steps that had to be remembered by all who took part. The rich would perform elaborate and fashionable dances. Whereas, ordinary people would have performed traditional country dancing. These dances were a lot simpler to learn as they included a lot of repetitive steps, which had been passed down through the generations.

In 'Twelfth Night', as well as Feste, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew love to dance and sing. Sir Andrew's ability to "caper" (a lively and energetic dance move which shows off the strength of a man's leg) is highlighted when tells his friend,

"Faith, I can cut a caper"

He's then encouraged to demonstrate this to Sir Toby who says,

"Let me see thee caper, Ha, higher: ha, ha! Excellent!"

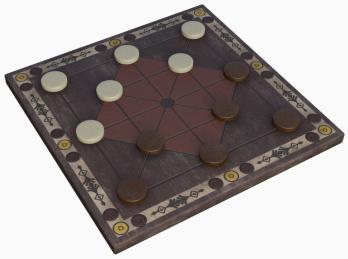
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Twelfth Night
Activities

Board games were also popular in Tudor society. The Tudors referred to tables as "boards" as they consisted of a loose board of wood that rested on a framework of legs called trestles. It is thought that board games would be scratched or chalked onto the board, and pebbles or stones would be used as counters.

Nine Men's Morris was a popular game in Tudor times. It is a bit similar to our modern day noughts and crosses and the aim is to make a line of three with your coloured counters whilst stopping your opponent doing so. If you succeed you are allowed to remove one of your opponent's pieces. The game continues until one player has run out of pieces.



Fox and Geese (sometimes called Fox and Hounds) was another popular game. One person would play as the fox and would have just one counter, and their opponent would play as the geese and would have 13 counters. The person playing as the geese would try to surround the fox with its counters, and the fox would attempt to catch as many of the geese as possible.

Tables (backgammon) and chess were popular with the nobility too, while card and dice games were played by all members of society. This bone dice was found during an archaeological excavation on the site of Shakespeare's New Place.



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In Tudor times, sports were mostly played by men and enjoyed across all levels of society, although there were differences in the types of sport enjoyed by the rich and by the poor.

The rich might play tennis which was a new sport in Tudor England. Some also liked to joust. Jousting involved two knights in armour on horses. This involved the knights riding at each other and trying to knock their opponent off their horse with a lance. It was a sport in which only men participated, but women would watch and cheer on their champion!

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Football was popular with lower members of Tudor society, although it was very different from the sport we know and love today. The ball was made from a bloated pig's stomach and the game was often played between two villages meaning that the "pitch" could be a few miles long. There was no limit on the amount of players and the aim was to get the football to the centre of the opposing village. There were no other rules. The game was quite rough and men could get hurt whilst playing. The Tudor government failed in their attempts to ban it as it was too popular.

Hunting was also a pastime of both the rich and poor. However, hunting for the rich was more for pleasure, while the poor would hunt to feed themselves. Both the rich and the poor also regularly practiced archery.



Two Sheldon tapestry panels c. 1590-1610 showing a hunting scene
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The forests of England were owned by the king or queen and so the only nobles in the court were allowed to hunt there. Ordinary people hunted on common land.

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