

## WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE DURING STAGE ONE OF 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ?

The Popular Recreations of England were taken to Public Schools by the boys that went there: at school they adopted some of the activities and adapted others – it was the start of the development of sport as we know it



- Schools at this time were 'spartan' places with harsh living conditions. The teachers (masters) didn't take any responsibility for boys apart from when they were teaching them, and very much left the boys to themselves: the limited school curriculum allowed the boys a lot of free time outside the classroom. Schools were tough and boys could be barbaric: disagreements would be settled by fighting. Harsh treatment prepared the boys for the rigours of competitive and occasionally violent sport as well as adult life.
- Many of the boys would also congregate at the local Inn where cock fighting, prize fighting, gambling and drinking alcohol were popular. Many of the schools tried to ban such activities but in reality it was very difficult to police.
- Many of the boys took part in the activities that they had enjoyed playing or watching at home. Mob football, hare and hounds and poaching around the locality were very popular. Obviously mob football was violent and some headmasters tried to ban it. Similarly poaching was frowned upon by local landowners.
- Boys took ideas from where they lived to school with them: some of these sports were adopted by schools (eg mob football and cricket) and some were adapted by schools to suit their circumstances; they made their own versions (eg: Hare and hounds)
- Boys would use simple and naturally occurring facilities: in other words whatever facilities were at hand. At Eton the game of Fives (like squash but using the hand instead of a racquet) was developed against the Eton Chapel wall. Hare and hounds would take place in the countryside next to the school. Swimming would take place in the river.

