

Moving on to the background of German gymnastics, we find Johann Bernhard Basedow (1723-1790), Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths (1759-1893), and Frederick Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), as the pillars of strength of German gymnastics supporting the view that this activity was primarily indulged in for the purpose of developing strong young men for war. While the Turnverein and Turner bund, popular German gymnastic societies were operating over Germany and systems of school gymnastics were being developed in that country and Sweden, a variety of sports and organized games had become an established feature in the life of English public schools and activities. The playground movement made headway in Germany and Denmark, but the Swedish system of school gymnastics was gaining a foothold in England as it had done in Denmark.

Montague Shearman attempts to show "that competitions in running, jumping, and hurling of heavy weights are not only indigenous to the land, but have been one of the chief characteristics of both town and country life in England as far back as chronicles will reach; and that athletic sports, though they have had their days of waxing and waning, have always been a feature of life in 'Merrie England'." Young Londoners in the reign of Henry II (1154-1189) practiced leaping, wrestling, casting the stone and playing with the ball, together with other exercises in open spaces set apart for their use near the city. Another author refers to lifting or throwing the heavy stone or bar, wrestling, running, swimming, handling the sword and the battle-axe, riding, vaulting and shooting in a long bow. Some idea of the universal prevalence of vigorous forms of recreation in the early part of the seventeenth century we gain from a passage in Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy. Writing of exercise as a cure, he first considers hunting and fishing, and then goes on to say that many other sports and recreations there be, much in use, such as ringing, bowling,