FURTHER INFORMATION

Readers wishing to know more about the game can begin their search by consulting the following books.
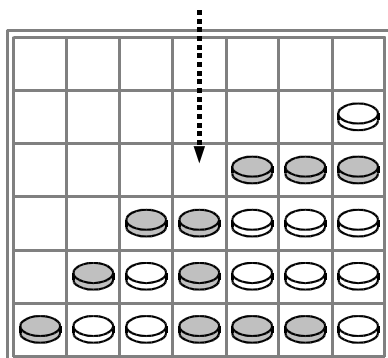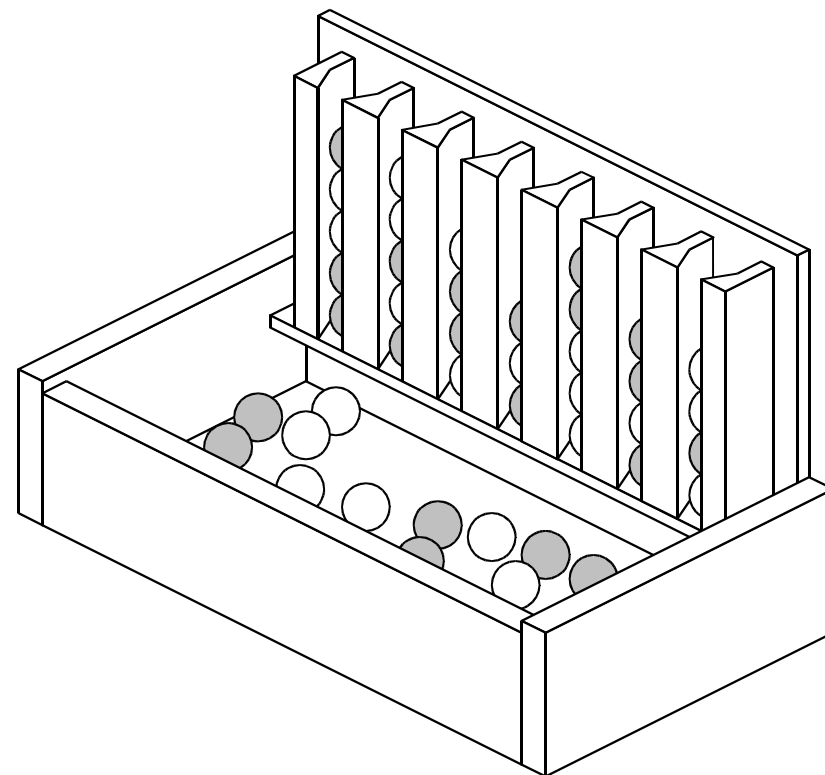
Bell, R. C. *Games to Play*, p. 47. London: Michael Joseph Limited, 1988.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 113-114. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Illustration 3: another, somewhat unlikely, example position. Black is to play. If he places his piece where indicated, he will simultaneously form three lines of four, any of which would win him the game.

THE CAPTAIN'S MISTRESS
by Damian Walker

Board Games at ⊞ CYNINGSTAN
Traditional Board Game Series
(Second Edition)
Leaflet #52

Introduction & History

The origin of this game is unknown. It certainly dates back to about 1900, though it could be older. It is unusual among traditional board games in that the board is mounted vertically, and it involves the force of gravity in its mechanism of play. Plenty of other old table games use this method, for instance, *bagatelle*, but among old board games it is rare if not unique to this game.

An amusing story is that the game is so called from the fact that Captain Cook hid away in his cabin for hours playing this game, his crew supposing that he was locked away with a mistress. Whether true or not, it certainly gives the game a charming name.

More concrete proof of the game's age is given by an example once owned by the game historian R. C. Bell, which dated from the Edwardian period (1901-1910). It used wooden balls dropped into slots in the lid of a box, as illustrated on the cover of this leaflet. The outside of the box advertised Rémy Martin Cognac, giving Bell

the idea that this might have originally been a pub game.

More recently Milton Bradley published the game under its better known name *Connect 4*. Milton Bradley therefore are probably responsible for the popularity of the game since the 1970s. Though it is thought of as a children's game, due
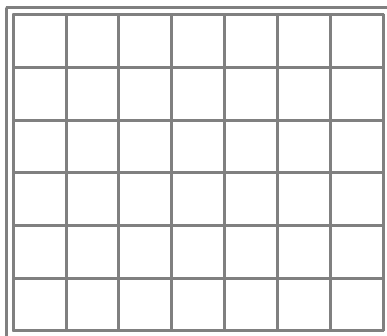

Illustration 1: the empty board, displayed as a grid.

to Milton Bradley's brightly coloured plastic board and pieces, the game is strategic enough to be enjoyed by adults too.

How to Play

The game is played on a vertical grid of seven columns of six rows each. The pieces are discs or balls, twenty-one of each colour, and the

board is so constructed hold the pieces in place as they are dropped from the top. In the absence of this equipment the game can be played

on a flat square grid of the same size, observing the moves given in these rules.

Beginning the Game

1. The board of the game starts empty. The grid is shown in Illustration 1.

2. Players decide at random who begins. The first player takes
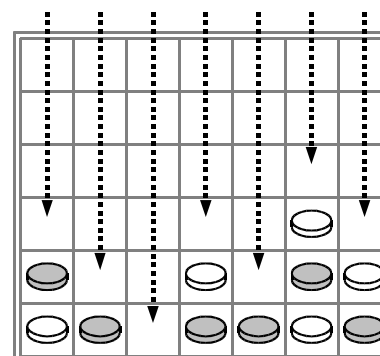

Illustration 2: an example position. White is about to place his sixth piece, and there is room for placement in all seven columns. If he does not place his piece in the first column, the way is open for black to form a line of four and win the game.

the twenty-one black pieces, his opponent taking the white.

Placing the Pieces

3. In his turn a player drops a piece from the top of the board into any column that is not already full.

4. The piece drops down, or is moved down, that column until it reaches the bottom or is stopped by another piece. This move is shown in Illustration 2.

5. Once placed, a piece never moves to another square.

6. There is no capture of pieces. A piece played stays on the board till the end of the game.

Ending the Game

7. If a player manages to form his pieces into a row of four, vertically, horizontally or diagonally, the game is over and he is declared the winner. Examples of possible wins are shown in Illustration 3.

8. If the board is filled without either player making a row, then the game is a draw.