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The Emergence of Cricket

In Jamaica, on 29 January 1998, a test match between England and the West Indies was abandoned after just fifty-six minutes of play.¹ During that time the England team's physiotherapist had treated injured batsmen on six separate occasions. Ultimately the umpires, in consultation with the team captains and the match referee, decided that the unevenness of the wicket made the ball's bounce too unpredictable and thus that play posed an unacceptable risk to batters' safety. An editorial in *The Times* stated that 'Somebody could have been killed. Test cricket is not a game for the faint hearts. But neither should it be turned into an intimidatory dice of death' (30 January 1998). Remarkably this was the first time that this had occurred in 122 years of test cricket.

The perception of cricket as a genteel game is inextricably linked to the cricket-Englishness couplet. To examine this relationship more fully we need to appreciate how the modern sport we now call cricket emerged. Who was responsible for drawing up cricket's laws and what specific choices did they make? How did this process relate to the broader social context of which it was a part?

From folk game to modern sport

As Major notes, 'the search for the birth of cricket has been as fruitless as the hunt for the holy grail' (2007: 17). This is because it is a fundamentally misconceived search, for while the Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson and Weiner 1989) may cite the first recorded use of the phrase 'cricket ball' as Edward Phillipps' 1658 poem, 'Treatment of Ladies as Balls and Sports' (and the sentence, 'Would my eyes have been beat out my head with a cricket ball'), we have little way of comprehending the similarities between the game played with that 'cricket' ball and the modern form of cricket we know today. Such was the structure of medieval societies that identical games could have a variety of different, locally specific names, or that one name could be used to describe a variety of locally specific rules. The kind of uniformity people expect today was neither possible nor considered particularly important for it is only when social interdependencies are relatively broad and varied that a lack of standardization is thrown into sharper relief. Indeed Strutt (1801: 107) in the landmark *The Sports and Pastimes of the Peoples of England* specifically notes

this as a characteristic of early cricket, stating that its rules were ‘subject to frequent variation’ and evidence presented in Chapter 6 further suggests that variations were apparent throughout the British Isles at this early point in the game’s development. More adequately therefore we should conceive of sports as having multiple origins and antecedents. This enables us to focus on two sociologically more useful questions: what were the structural characteristics of nascent sport forms such as cricket, and why did they change at a particular time and in a particular place?

As discussed in the Introduction, modern sports like cricket are structured in distinct ways. This structure, moreover, distinguishes them from the antecedent sports-like activities out of which they emerged. Brookes (1978) argues that it is possible to identify three general types of ‘folk games’ which existed in the European middle ages:

- 1) team games in which moving players (on foot or on horseback) propelled a ‘ball’ (or similar object) towards a ‘goal’ or fixed point in order to score points;
- 2) individual games in which a stationary player hit a ball at a target (into a hole, through hoops); and
- 3) team games in which a stationary person propelled an object away from him/her self and scored by running between two or more fixed points.

Cricket emerged from this latter group which, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, included bat and ball folk games such as ‘club ball’, ‘stoolball’, ‘trap-ball’, ‘tip cat’ and ‘cat and dog’. Variations of these could have been as similar to each other and as distinct from modern cricket as the international variants listed in the Introduction (for example *Lapta*, *Oină*). In each, however, rules were relatively few, relatively simple and transmitted orally rather than in written form.

The process by which folk games transformed into modern sport forms can be described as ‘sportization’ (Elias 1986a). Evidence suggests that this process first occurred in eighteenth-century England and involved sports such as boxing, cricket, horse-racing and fox-hunting (golf was also codified at this time, but in Scotland. See Stirk 1987). For each of these sports more precise and explicit rules were written down and enforced in stricter and more efficient ways than in the past. The contemporary global significance of cricket is partly a consequence of the fact that it emerged in a coherent form which could relatively easily be communicated before any other similarly structured game did. The question is, therefore, who was responsible for this sportization process and why?

Sportization occurred in conjunction with a parallel process called parliamentarization. Britain was characterized by an end to a ‘cycle of violence’ in the late seventeenth, early eighteenth centuries as, post-English Civil War (1642–1649), the state became more effective in curbing the

violence characteristic of the previously ruling 'warrior nobility' (Elias 1986a). Relatively peaceful means for deciding political issues began to emerge with, for example, the development of parliamentary rules, relatively high levels of mutual trust, and mechanisms for the peaceful transference of power between political parties. In contrast, Britain's European neighbours remained relatively disunited (such as Germany and Italy) or highly centralized and subject to a form of absolute rule (for example France). Parliamentarization did not cause sportization and sportization did not lead to parliamentarization. Rather, these were corresponding processes which not only occurred at roughly the same time but also involved largely overlapping groups of people. Moreover, both processes exhibit a peculiar set of social norms which were emerging in conjunction with these broader structural changes. In Elias's words:

Military skills gave way to the verbal skills of debate ... rhetoric and persuasion ... which required greater restraint all round. It was this change, the greater sensitivity with regard to the use of violence which, reflected in the social habitus of individuals, also found expression in the development of their pastimes. The 'parliamentarization' of the landed classes of England had its counterpart in the 'sportization' of their pastimes. (Elias 1986b: 34)

Two aspects of the relationship between these political changes and the development of sport should be stressed. First, the relative freedom of association combined with the relative unity of the British aristocracy as a national social class, led their activities to become increasingly centred around the twin foci of government and social life; around Parliament and gentlemen's clubs (and to a lesser extent aristocrats' country estates). Although incipient levels of organized cricket existed in rural areas (and historians such as Wynne-Thomas (1997) and Birley (1999) stress the prominence of the game in the South East of England in particular), it was when the aristocracy met in London and began to play the sport against each other that the need for some kind of agreed statement which drew together the similar forms of the game customarily played in different parts of the country emerged. It was in this context that cricket began to resemble a modern sports form and for this reason that the governing bodies for the sports that emerged at this time took the form of *clubs* (i.e. the MCC, horse racing's the Jockey Club and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club) rather than sports associations or unions (i.e. the Football Association and the Rugby Football Union). The close link to parliament is also seen in the use of 'laws' rather than 'rules' to regulate the game.

Second, the shift towards the relatively peaceful settlement of disputes in political conflict facilitated the competition for social status to take place via non-violent means. Behaviour characterized by stricter personal self-control and self-discipline became socially valued, and ultimately ingrained as part of this social class's habitus. It is, therefore, entirely logical that sports rules invariably restrict the means by which individuals can achieve sporting success and therefore reward similar behavioural characteristics.

Thus, in providing a sociological explanation of the emergence of cricket, a number of features need to be examined. Emphasis should be placed on the construction of formal sets of written rules, on the social classes of which the people who developed those rules were a part, and the degree to which those rules illustrated a decline in the prevalence of violence and injury in the game. As will be seen, cricket provides a very clear illustration of the convergence of these developments; the interplay of identity and behavioural norms.

Early cricket matches

Much of what we know about early cricket matches comes from London's 'new crop of single sheet papers' (Harris 1998: 18) launched following the relaxation of state control over information post-Charles II's enforced acceptance of Habeas Corpus in 1679. Government censorship on printing was 'lifted entirely from 1696' (Birley 1999: 14). The content of these publications was initially structured around business, law and politics, but sport, and cricket in particular, grew in prominence in the first half of the eighteenth century. Notices advertising the staging of cricket matches at this time indicate that the game was played by aristocrats for whom gambling was both frequent and significant. Notices also indicate that the participation of women in cricket was not uncommon. As we will see, these matches served as the stimulus for the development of the first sets of written rules for the game and thus the standardization of variously termed folk games into a coherent and subsequently communicable game form. First, however, it is important to say something about the violent tenor in which these sports appear to have been played.

Injury seemed to be an ever-present danger of playing early forms of cricket. On the one hand it may be argued that this was because it was only the occurrence of such incidents that made games newsworthy (Harris 1998: 22). McLean (1987: 18) states that 'almost all accidental references to cricket' stemmed from Puritan hostility and thus associate the game with violence and drinking. Yet newspaper reports of severe injuries and deaths largely passed with little comment, and where the reporting of a game was restricted to the production of its scorecard 'a host of gory titbits about collisions, charges and crashes' would have been omitted (McLean 1987: 33). That some players, notably Hambledon's David Harris, were notorious partly for the injuries their bowling inflicted (Altham and Swanton 1948: 49), suggests that these were sufficiently frequent occurrences to be considered a normal part of the game.

Not only was injury a danger inherent in playing; many writers have referred to the frequency of spectator disorder at games. Ford (1972: 131) argues that largely because of the problems associated with gambling and heavy drinking, 'when there was not some sort of commotion it seemed to be thought unusual'.

Major (2007: 56) similarly states that a 1731 match between the Duke of Richmond and a Mr Chambers ended in 'the near-obligatory affray'. Other notable incidents include the reading of the Riot Act at a match in Writtle, Essex in 1726 and the abandonment of a women's match between Charlton and Westdean & Chilgrove, Sussex in 1747 due to a pitch invasion (Brooke and Matthews 1988: 133). A cricketer called John Smith died in 1737 due to a cut from a stone thrown by a spectator (McLean 1987: 33). Leicester's victory over Coventry in 1788 led to 'a scene of bloodshed ... scarcely to be credited in a country so entirely distinguished for acts of humanity' (*Coventry Mercury*, cited in Brookes 1978: 69), and the *Birmingham Gazette* commented on the same incident: 'At present we have not heard of any lives being lost, though the weapons used in the contest were the most dangerous and alarming' (cited in Lambert 1992). Ford cites a report from the 1776 *London Chronicle* when, at a Kent vs Essex match at Tilbury Fort, a dispute over a player's eligibility led to 'a battle'. One of the Kentish men,

ran into the guard-house, and getting a gun ... fired and killed one of the opposite party. On seeing this, they all began running to the guard-house, and there being but 4 soldiers there, they took away the guns and fell to it, doing a great deal of mischief. An old invalid was run through the body with a bayonet, and a sergeant ... was shot dead. (Ford 1972: 45)

As Harris notes, fighting between teams could lead to 'wholesale mayhem' (1998: 24).

Admission prices were used to keep undesirables out, and individuals or groups were employed to keep the peace. For instance, Brookes (1978: 50) notes how entrance fees to London's Artillery Ground were altered, first to attract a more reputable crowd, and latterly to keep events economically viable. Similarly, at Walworth Common London in 1744, a joint cricket match and smock race was staged and, according to the *Penny London Morning Advertiser*, 'Captain Vinegar, with a great many of his bruisers and bull-dogs, will attend to make a ring, that no civil spectators may be incommoded by the rabble' (cited in Underdown 2000: 85).² 'Recent violence' is cited as the reason why the Corporation of London prohibited cricket matches at the Artillery Ground (London's premier cricket venue prior to the establishment of Lord's) from 1780 onwards (Underdown 2000: 114).

Although Brookes (1978: 53) claims that members of the aristocracy exerted a calming influence at matches, disorder was evident at fixtures involving society's elite. In the eighteenth century, teachers at Westminster and Eton frequently attempted to prohibit boys from playing cricket (Brookes 1978: 72). A game in 1731 between '11 of London' and '11 of Brompton' ended when 'several engaged on both sides for nearly half an hour, and most of the Brompton Gents were forced to fly for quarter, and some retired home with broken heads and black eyes, much to the satisfaction of the other side'

(Wagham 1906, cited in Brookes 1978: 53). A dispute over a catch during a match between Kent and Surrey in 1762 led to the players coming ‘to blows, several heads were broken and a challenge issued between “two persons of distinction”’ (Altham and Swanton 1948: 39; see also Scott 1989: 6–7 on cricket-related duels).

There is evidence that the legal authorities considered a broader prohibition on the game (Ford 1972: 39) though cricket escaped the sort of restrictions imposed on football and its folk antecedents which were prohibited by state and local authorities more than thirty times between 1314 and 1667 (Dunning and Sheard 2005: 20). Some disputes were, however, referred to the emerging legal system. Wynne Thomas (1997: 27) records a legal case concerning Thomas Hatter who died in 1648 having been struck by a cricket bat. A similar case involving Henry Brand was heard at Arundel the same year (Major 2007: 24). In 1693 Thomas Reynolds, Henry Gunter and Elenor Lansford sent a petition to the Queen seeking remission from their fines which had been imposed for riot and battery, ‘they being only spectators at a game of crickett’ (cited in Scott 1989: 177). Underdown (2000: 14) is probably correct to interpret this plea as ‘implying that violence at matches was common enough to be excusable’.

Gauging the violent tenor of life from documentary evidence is a relatively subjective task. For each piece of supporting evidence there will be match reports which say nothing of this theme. It is the case however, that the majority of those who have written about eighteenth century cricket, producing both populist (Ford 1972, Major 2007, McLean 1987) and academic (Guttmann 1986, Underdown 2000) histories concur with the view expressed here (Bowen 1970, Birley 1999, and to some extent Brookes 1978, do not share this emphasis). Underdown’s conclusion that eighteenth-century cricket was ‘part of [a] vibrant, if violent, rural culture’ (2000: 122) seems equally applicable to the aristocratic, urban forms of the game.

The sportization of cricket

The 1727 Articles of Agreement between the Duke of Richmond and Mr Brodrick (an Irish statesman and the heir to Viscount Midleton (Birley 1999: 18)) is the oldest document relating to cricket laws. However, the earliest version of what could be called a ‘full’ and systematic set of laws was published in *The New Universal Magazine* in 1752 and described as ‘The Game of Cricket, as settled by the CRICKET CLUB, in 1744 and play’d at the ARTILLERY-GROUND LONDON’ (Rait Kerr 1950: 13). Subsequently a set of rules, ‘As Settled by the several CRICKET CLUBS, particularly that of the Star and Garter in Pall Mall’ (cited in Rait Kerr 1950: 91) was published in 1755 which,

in all respects agreed with the 1744 rules except for what essentially amounted to some modernization of the wording.³

The early rules defined the standard size of the wicket and some of its markings, though made no reference to boundaries or the care and maintenance of the wicket.⁴ The maximum and minimum sizes of the ball were included in these rules but no restrictions were made relating to the width or length of the bat. The number of balls per over and what constituted legal and illegal bowling was outlined, as was the scoring of fair and unfair ‘notches’ (a term only superseded by ‘runs’ around 1811). In addition to this the methods of dismissal were described and individual sections were devoted to specific laws for the wicketkeeper and umpire, indicating that umpires not only *upheld* the laws at this time, but were *subject to* the laws due to their status relative to the aristocratic team leaders or captains.

Gambling was deeply implicated in much of the game’s early violence and thus was addressed in the early rules. For instance, a 1731 match on Chelsea Common terminated in a free fight among the spectators due to a disputed wager. In delivering judgment on the case, a London magistrate observed: ‘It (cricket) is a manly game, and not bad in itself, but it is the ill-use that is made of it by betting above £10 that is bad and against the law, which ought to be constructed largely to prevent the great mischief of excessive gambling’ (Harris 1907, cited in Brookes 1978: 76). Ford also records how the Duke of Richmond and his team were assaulted by a mob in 1731 because they turned up late for the resumption of a match so depriving their opponents of the opportunity to win the game and how, in 1777, the crowd ‘prevented the Stowmarket gentlemen from going in’ in order to save their side from losing and hence their stake money (1972: 131–32).

Such was the prevalence of and consequences that followed gambling that, in one sense, the 1727 Articles of Agreement drawn up between the Duke of Richmond and Mr Brodrick were an attempt to avoid physical conflicts over deciding the outcome of the game (Brookes 1978: 42). The regulation of gambling reached its height with *The London Club’s* 1774 code of laws which contained an additional section with three clauses relating specifically to the resolution of such issues. These were:

If the notches of one Player are laid against another, the Bet depends on both Innings, unless otherwise specified.

If one party beats the other in one Innings, the Notches in the first Innings shall determine the Bet.

But if the other Party goes in a Second Time, then the Bet must be determined by the numbers on the score. (Rait Kerr 1950: 19)

As Major (2007: 42) concludes, ‘a rough and tumble, or an illegal affray, was a frequent accompaniment to a competitive game or an unsettled bet, and in a violent age that may have been an added attraction’.

That these early rules were the products of aristocrats and gentlemen meeting at their London clubs provides a 'measure of the central position of the club in London cricket and of London cricket in English cricket' (McLean 1987: 42). The 1755 set of rules is particularly significant, however, in that it marks the beginning of the MCC's influence over the game. The Star and Garter Club (with a French affectation common amongst the English aristocracy at this time (Langford 2000), it was sometimes known as the *Je Ne Sais Quoi* Club) whose members were significant among the framers of the 1755 rules, had an overlapping membership with the White Conduit Club (to the extent that they were often mistaken for each other). In 1787 members of the White Conduit Club were central in forming the MCC. The crossover between this emerging administrative structure for the game and the gentry and aristocratic political elite, substantiate Elias's linkage of parliamentarization and sportization processes. Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales, was the perpetual Chairman of the Star and Garter Club (coincidentally he died in 1751 from a cricket inflicted injury). Interestingly Birley argues that the Prince's 'desire to be English was such that he had cricket bats shipped out to Hanover, where he was educated' (1999: 22). Lord Frederick Beauclerk, the Earl of Winchelsea and the Duke of Dorset (Ambassador to France, later Steward of the Royal Household) were among the other prominent founding members of the MCC.

Why did these aristocrats become involved in establishing laws for the game of cricket? The resolution of gambling disputes and the avoidance of crowd disorder provides only a partial answer. Rules to clarify the outcome of bets are a necessary but not sufficient reason for the emergence of a standardized game. Rather, rules were required because these bets were a symptom, rather than a cause of, status rivalry. Aristocrats advertised their matches because cricketing success enhanced their social status. Cricket was a venue for conducting the kind of 'reasonably friendly rivalry' (Harris 1998: 23) that predominated after the cycle of violence ended in the seventeenth century and the process of parliamentarization began. By having sets of rules that were consistently applied, status competition became more transparent. In letters to friends nobles expressed their shame at having lost matches and return matches were a common courtesy. Almost without exception all the early patrons who exerted a significant influence over the early game – Sir William Gage; Lionel, Charles and John Sackville; John Russell, Duke of Bedford; the Duke of Newcastle; the Duke of Richmond – were politically active noblemen. By-election candidates would 'attend games as part of their campaign' (Major 2007: 58). A recurrent notice in the 1747 *Daily Advertiser* stated that matches between Kent and England would be postponed due to players' commitments in that year's General Election (Harris 1998: 25). The Duke of Richmond in particular used cricket matches to entertain allies, attract new followers, and publicly confront political opponents such as William Gage (McLean 1987: 25). Richmond sent his steward to cricket games as part of his political campaigning and attended a match between

Slindon and Portslade in 1741 because he anticipated that the Tory candidate, Thomas Sergison, would be there. Sometimes such meetings resulted in violence. When Sergison's supporters chanted insults "a bloody battle" ensued in which a lot of heads were broken' (cited in Underdown 2000: 61).

At this time, therefore, politics and cricket were closely linked. Both were forms of status competition. Both were undergoing a process of pacification, with more violent elements of each undergoing relatively rapid change. Both became standardized through the introduction of increasingly precise, complex and written laws. Other forms of cricket were certainly played at this time but due to the relative status and power of participants they would not come to have an enduring and global impact on social life. Rather, these particular codes endured because 'the assumption of authority in relation to the organization of cricket was a modest side effect of the more generalized dominance of a ruling elite' (Harris 1998: 24).

Law changes and the control of violence

Aspects of the particular laws that emerged illustrate the way in which personality structures and emotional norms were changing in conjunction with the identity of this particular class. Nine ways of dismissing a batter were outlined in the 1755 code: caught; bowled; stumped; run out; hit wicket; handled ball; hit ball twice; obstruction of a fielder; and 'retirements' (such as timed out, etc.).⁵ The other major alteration to the game in this respect, LBW laws, was introduced in 1774. The implementation and modification of four of the original nine – obstruction, hit ball twice, run out and stumped – have occurred, not necessarily because of, but certainly with reference to, issues of violence and injury. That is to say, in what is perhaps the most fundamental part of the game, we can see a consistent trend which links the emergence of cricket to the significant decline in violence in the broader social context.

One of the most obvious consequences of restrictions relating to obstruction was the reduction in contact between the players on each side. This worked in two ways. One of the laws in the 1755 code refers specifically to batters obstructing the fielding side:

When the Ball is hit up, either of the Strikers may hinder the Catch in his running Ground; or if it is hit directly across the Wickets, the other Player may place his Body any where within the Swing of the Bat, so as to hinder the Bowler from catching it; but he must neither strike at it, nor touch it with his Hands. (Cited in Rait Kerr 1950: 95)

Thus the batter would only be dismissed if, in attempting to obstruct a fielder, he/she left his/her 'running ground' (defined, presumably, as the area between the two wickets). *Within* the running ground, however, either batter could prevent the catch so long as they did not use his/her bat or hand; a practice

called 'charging down' in the 1727 Articles of Agreement. McLean records the case of a man called John Boots who in 1737 was killed 'by running against another man in crossing the wicket' (1987: 33). In 1787 the wording of this law was changed such that any contact with a fielder attempting a catch would result in dismissal. This was further revised in 1884 with the batter given out if the umpires judged the fielder to have been *intentionally* obstructed at *any time* during the game. Restrictions were, however, also imposed on the fielding side. A second law in the 1755 code made provision for the umpire to penalize the fielding side for obstructing a batter: 'They (the umpires) are the sole Judges of all Hindrances; crossing the Players in running, and standing unfair to strike, and in case of Hindrance may order a Notch to be Scor'd' (Rait Kerr 1950: 98). A version of this law remains today.

Similarly, hitting the ball twice appears to have been prohibited partly in order to prevent injury. Under 'The Laws for the Strikers' in the 1755 code, 'If a Ball is nipp'd up, and he strikes it again wilfully, before it came to the Wicket, it's out' (Rait Kerr 1950: 94). One of the consequences of this law was to contribute towards the spatial separation of the fielding and batting sides, for in matches where the batter *was* allowed to hit the ball twice, at which point fielders might legitimately try to gain control of the ball, the potential danger to other participants would have been considerable. This is illustrated by an inquest held at West Hoathly in Sussex in 1624 which heard how Edward Tye hit the ball into the air and attempted to hit it a second time before it landed. Meanwhile Jasper Vinall attempted to catch the ball. Tye either did not see Vinall or did not care and hit him on the front of the head with his bat. Vinall died two weeks later as a consequence of this injury. The inquest passed the verdict that Vinall had not died feloniously but by misadventure and through his own carelessness (Scott 1989; Wynne Thomas 1997). Green (1988: 29) has interpreted this practice in the following way: 'This terrifying weapon in the batter's armoury ... sheds a lurid light on the original spirit in which the game was played ... the clear implication being that up to now the conventional tactic had been to wallop the fielders with the bat.' Nowadays the batter is prohibited from hitting the ball twice, except to protect his/her wicket.

Rule changes concerning attempted run outs and stumpings were introduced with more explicit reference to the reduction of injury. Contained within the specifications for the layout of the pitch in the 1744 code is a particular reference to the popping crease which, Rait Kerr states, was a relatively new development at this time. To complete a run, a batter had to get from his/her batting position in front of the wicket to the bowler's end before the fielding side could return the ball to the bowler or wicketkeeper whilst his/her batting partner ran to the opposite end. By 1744, to be 'in' (i.e. to have successfully completed the run), the batter had to cross the popping crease before the fielding side could 'break' the wicket with the ball. Prior to this it appears that a run out was awarded if the fielding side put the ball into a 'popping hole'

before the batter could fill that hole with his/her bat (Rait Kerr 1950: 67). Subsequently the rule was changed so that a run was deemed to have been completed if the batter touched a stick held by the umpire before the fielding side could touch the stick with the ball. Altham and Swanton (1948: 29) record a further variation, noting that William Goldwin's poem *In Certamen Pilae* (c. 1700) implies that the batter completed his/her run by touching the umpire's body. These various rules/customs clearly had differing consequences for the safety of the fielders, batters and umpires, and Rait Kerr argues that the 1744 development – whereby the stick or popping hole was replaced by the bat crossing the popping crease and the ball breaking the wicket – was linked to the desire to reduce injury through the spatial separation of the batter and fielder. Nyren (1833a/1948: 44) stated that, when the popping hole was used, 'Many severe injuries of the hands was the consequence of this regulation; the present mode of touching the popping crease was therefore substituted for it.'

Whilst the law relating to hitting the ball twice appears to have been influenced by a concern to limit the movement of the batter which could lead to the injury of opponents, laws relating to stumpings appear to have been influenced by attempts to protect the wicketkeeper from his/herself. The batter was deemed stumped out if, as in the case of a run out, the wicket was 'put down' (broken) when both feet were outside the popping crease. However, the wicketkeeper was restricted to standing a 'reasonable Distance behind the Wicket, and shall not, by any Noise, incommode the Striker; and if his Hands, Knees, Foot, or Head, be over, or before the Wicket, though the Ball hit it, it shall not be out' (Rait Kerr 1950: 96–97). When preparing to strike, the batter would normally stand within the popping crease which, in 1744, was specified at 46 inches from the wicket (increased to 48 inches in 1821). There was no restriction on the length of the bat which could be used until 1835 when a limit of 38 inches was introduced, and bats tended to be longer and more curved than they are today (similar to the sticks used in hockey or hurling). The prohibition on wicketkeepers being 'over or before' the wicket suggests that such a tactic was known and, given the above dimensions, it would appear that this would have been somewhat hazardous. Altham and Swanton's (1948: 53) interpretation of this is that, 'there must, it seems, have been some lusty "obstruction" between batsmen, wicket-keeper and the bowler in the old days'. Indeed the stumping law has since been refined further such that the batter will be deemed 'in' with *either* part of the bat *or* the foot behind the popping crease. Such a change serves to further separate, and therefore reduce the potential for injurious contact between, batter and wicketkeeper. This law may, of course, relate back to the previous practice in relation to run outs whereby the batter was dismissed if the ball was placed in the 'popping hole' before the batter could fill it with his/her bat.

In addition to the structure of the game, the physical environment in which cricket was played was highly significant in terms of the potential for injury to

players. Consequently, this issue was also addressed by a number of the early law changes. Initially there was little preparation of the playing area and no formal drawing of boundaries. Nyren, for instance, provides detailed advice on pitching wickets to favour particular bowlers (1833/1948: 49). John Bowyer recalling playing for All-England at Lords in 1810, noted that, 'it was no joke to play without pads and gloves on a bumpy down ... The rough ground made the long hops so difficult. First you had to mind the shooter and if the ball pitched short and rose she would be on your knuckles' (cited in Wymer 1949: 162–63). By 1788, however, with the mutual consent of the captains, the laws allowed for the rolling, covering, watering, mowing and beating of the pitch *during* the match. The 1823 edition of the laws saw the first moves towards standardization of pitch selection with this responsibility transferring from the respective captains to the umpires. Also introduced in 1823 was the provision for moving the pitch or introducing a fresh wicket at any time during the match if the old one became unsuitable (Rosenwater 1970: 131). By 1849 the rolling or sweeping of the wicket between innings would be granted by the umpires if requested by *either* side within a minute of the end of an innings. To improve the quality of the pitch surface further, covers protecting the wicket from the weather were introduced. Although from 1788 the laws allowed for coverings to be used (again with the mutual consent of the captains), it was not until 1872 that pitch covers were used on a regular basis at Lord's (Rosenwater 1970). Even as late as 1820, batters at Lord's were thought to have deliberately got themselves dismissed due to a fear of injury (Altham and Swanton 1948: 59–60).

The clarity of the definition of playing and spectating areas also impacted upon the potential for injury. One of the differences between folk games and modern sports is the move towards a clear distinction between playing and spectating roles. Central to this distinction is the introduction of a physical barrier – in cricket the boundary, in boxing the ring – which designates the spatial area from which non-participants are excluded. In early games, spectators watched from wherever they could and early artwork shows scorers and gentlemen wearing top-hats seated amidst the fielders (see for example the plates in Major 2007). The hazards of this, as well as the social acceptability of injury, are illustrated by a 1778 incident involving the Duke of Dorset. *The Morning Post* records that, while he was batting, the 'Hampshire people' crowded the Duke such that he felt inhibited from playing a stroke:

His Grace gently expostulated with them on this unfair mode and pointed out their dangers, which having no effect, he, *with proper spirit*, made full play at a ball and in so doing brought one of the Gentlemen to the Ground. (Brookes 1978: 40; Birley 1999: 38. Emphasis added)

The problems associated with the informal nature of such an arrangement are highlighted in the first ever reference to cricket to appear in *The Times* on

22 June 1785. The report featured the forerunner of the MCC, The White Conduit Club:

It is recommended to the Lordling Cricketers who amuse themselves in White Conduit Fields, to procure an Act of Parliament for inclosing their play ground, which will not only prevent their being incommoded, but protect themselves from a repetition of the severe rebuke which they justly merit, and received on Saturday evening from some spirited citizens whom they insulted and attempted *vi et armis* to drive from the foot path, pretending it was within their bounds. (Cited in Williams 1985: 2)

Vi et armis is a legal term for trespass accompanied by violence – literally meaning by force and arms – and it seems likely that this sort of incident provided part of the motivation which led Thomas Lord, acting on the advice of the Earl of Winchilsea, to establish Lord's cricket ground in Dorset Fields, London in 1787.

The first recorded use of boundaries occurred in 1731 and the first provision of a 'stand' for spectators in 1772 (Brooke and Matthews 1988: 128–129). Although the standardization of the separation of players and spectators took place in a slow and uneven manner, where relatively large numbers of spectators were regularly attracted to matches some sort of provision became (perhaps financially) necessary. On 22 June 1787 *The Times* reported on a match at The New Cricket Ground, London: 'Upwards of 2000 persons were within the ground, who conducted themselves with the utmost decorum; the utility of the batten fence was evident, as it kept out all improper spectators' (cited in Williams 1985: 4). But where players and spectators were not clearly separated, spectators were liable to incur the same sort of injuries as participants. Often, however, these were not viewed as particularly serious. When the *Hampshire Chronicle* (September 1786) reported on a spectator whose eye was injured by the ball, it concluded, 'but he was only a spectator and therefore [the incident] did not mar the sport' (cited in Ford 1972: 130). Thus, the introduction of boundaries was both 'in the interest of spectator safety ... (and) the maximization of space' (Sandiford 1994: 135). It was not, however, until the publication of the 1884 code of rules that the first official mention of boundaries appeared in the laws of the game (Rait Kerr 1950: 81).

Finally, mention should be made of the development of the game's mechanism for conflict resolution. As has already been shown, central to the early law codes of cricket was the standardization of dispute settlement by investing authority in a third party, namely the umpires. In the 1755 laws, provision was made to allow an injured batter to retire and to resume his/her innings at a later time (a further indication that such injuries were relatively common), but not to be replaced or substituted.⁶ Presumably due to the suspicion that such a regulation would be flouted (and the ramifications this would have for bets placed on matches), an additional law decreed that the umpires were to be judges 'of all frivolous Delays; of all Hurt, whether real or pretended' (Rait Kerr 1950: 97–98). Further to this,

the 1727 Articles included provision for, and sanction against, the questioning of the umpires' decisions: 'If any of the gamesters shall speak or give their opinion on any point of the game, they are to be turned out and voided in the Match; this not to extend to the Duke of Richmond and Mr Brodrick.'

Given the relatively violent character of cricket in its earliest developmental stages and the imprecise authority of the umpires in this context, it is likely that the people filling the role of arbiter had a particularly difficult task. Ford notes that it was not unusual for newspaper reports to note the umpires' good standing as credentials (1972: 105). Furthermore, it seems that in the early game it was customary for the umpires to carry a stick or bat. The 1727 Articles indicate that the stick was used for recording the number of 'notches' scored. As already noted, a common practice *circa* 1700 was for a batter to complete his/her run by touching a stick held by the umpire (for example, eighteenth-century artwork shows one of the umpires standing in a 'position of imminent personal peril' very close to the batter (Altham and Swanton 1948: 29)). However, McLean further argues that these 'staves' were probably also used by umpires for self defence (1987: 33).

Conclusion

Through the development of a range of cricket laws and practices we can see how the prominence of physical violence in the game has changed over time. Because of the overlap of personnel involved, this suggests an interconnection between broader social structural change (i.e. parliamentarization) and changes at the level of personality (i.e. increasing emotional control). While subsequent sports (notably rugby and football) would develop amidst an explicit debate about tolerable levels of violence (Dunning and Sheard 1979/2005), for cricket there was little such discussion and no evidence that any particular individual or group had the specific intention to develop the sport in this way (Malcolm 2005). Consequently, the distinct pattern of violence reduction as part of the clarification and standardization of cricket's rules has to be understood as indicative of a broad and deep-rooted social change towards increased intolerance of witnessing and experiencing violence in everyday life. There is no evidence that these developments were thought out in a particularly coherent way, simply that they seemed to 'make sense' to the individuals involved because they aligned with this group's changing social habitus.

Also unintentional at this time was what this game would subsequently become; a nationally standardized and latterly globally diffused game. Although the MCC issued a number of early statements on the laws of cricket, it did so in an 'advisory' rather than 'regulatory' capacity for the first 100 years of its existence. MCC members were more concerned with organizing their own leisure than they were with enabling the game's national standardization

as a precursor to global diffusion. Indeed the standardization which enabled cricket's emergence as a modern sports form took place largely for parochial purposes. This was consistent with the mindset of parliamentarians who developed English law more generally. A disdain for general ideas was a unifying feature of eighteenth century Englishness (Haselar 1996: 20) and this was evident in the creation of laws which, Colls notes, largely rested on the defence of 'certain persons who at certain times and in certain places did this and that' (2002: 28). This stands in contrast to the notions of universal rights that more commonly developed in mainland Europe and England's closest geographical and social rival France in particular. Cricket could only emerge because a national class with specific interdependencies and specific freedoms of association came into existence. But the British Isles was a fragmented and pluralistic place at this time and while the landed aristocracy was one of the few nationally unified sectors of society, the members were not, at this time, embarking on a nationalistic project. Evidence of this would start to emerge in the nineteenth century and, as we will see in the next chapter, this time debates about the role of violence in the game would become explicit.

Brief mention should, however, be made of the role of Hambledon in the emergence of cricket. Many believe that cricket was first played on Broadhalfpenny Down in this small village fifteen miles north of Portsmouth in Hampshire (Major 2007). This, however, is a misguided belief for while cricket may well have been played at Hambledon at an early time: a) it would be fallacious to argue that it was not concurrently being played anywhere else; b) there is little evidence to link the game played at Hambledon with the specific Law codes which would ultimately develop into the game as we know it today; and c) as well connected as the cricketers from this village were, it is difficult to believe that they held sufficient social power to have such a telling impact on the wider society. Moreover, as I will show in the next chapter, the veneration of Hambledon derives from both the re-invention of the game in the nineteenth century based on a nostalgic desire to identify specific types of origins for cricket, and the creation of the cricket-Englishness couplet.

The way a sport is structured is neither essential nor eternal, and while the laws of cricket have continued to change, they change more rapidly and more significantly at particular points of time. The periods of relatively marked change are linked to periods in which more fundamental shifts in social structure occur. The emergence of cricket occurred in conjunction with one of the most fundamental shifts in English social structure, the development of parliamentary democracy. Given that cricket was the only team game to emerge alongside parliamentarization, it is easy to see how these two institutions should come to be seen in the same exalted light (poet E.V. Lucas, for instance, called the Lord's pavilion 'the Houses of Parliament of cricket'). The English would subsequently come to view their specific and relatively peaceful process of parliamentarization in contrast to the relatively violent

democratic revolutions in America and France. As Langford (2000: 3) notes, 'Foreigners came to England, it was said, in search of government, as they went to Italy in search of arts.' But visitors also observed a game, peculiar in its specific form, which captured the imagination of the people integral to the process of parliamentarization. Thus cricket, like parliament, came to be seen to embody the character traits which the English regarded as the source of their distinctive and distinguished status. It is to this that we now turn.