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The ‘National Game’

Cricket in nineteenth-century England

As significant as the codification of cricket was, the game as it was played at the end of the eighteenth century was distinctly different from that played today. The crucial difference relates to the style of bowling, for the nineteenth century saw under arm bowling replaced by round arm and subsequently over arm bowling. The cultural significance of cricket also changed fundamentally during the nineteenth century as cricket became the ‘national game’. These two developments were symbiotic. Like the emergence of cricket, both also relate to broader social structural developments and changing interdependency ties in English society.

What do we mean when we refer to cricket as England’s national game?¹ As Bairner notes, the concept of a national sport ‘is a slippery one’ (2001: 167). National sports range from those activities ‘invented’ in a particular place (for example baseball) and/or which remain exclusive to a particular nation (such as Gaelic games in Ireland), to those in which a nation has been particularly successful and/or developed a specific style of play (for example football and Brazil, rugby union and New Zealand). Paradoxically therefore both international isolation and international competition can enable a game to become a national sport. A game may also attain this status by being the nation’s most popular sport, but again this is not a necessary qualification (for instance, football is as widely played in Wales as the national sport of rugby union). National sports do, however, generally entail the greatest ‘depth of celebration’ or the ‘most widespread attention’ (Bairner 2001: 18–19).

Cricket’s status as the national game of England is in part based on it being seen to have been ‘invented’ in England. Cricket also exhibits a peculiar balance between international isolation and competition, being limited to a particular group of nations (discussed further in Chapter 3). The English can certainly be associated with a distinct style of playing (and watching) the game, though this only became apparent when other nations diverted from established patterns and developed their own contrasting styles (see Chapter 5). Moreover, cricket is not, and probably never has been, the most widely played sport in England. At times the English have been particularly successful at cricket, but cricket’s place in the nation’s culture does not depend on playing achievements.

Rather, cricket's distinction as the English national game stems from the correlation between the supposed national character of the English people and the behaviour of those who play the sport; that is to say, why cricket and Englishness is a pleonasm. Importantly, however, national character should not be viewed as some kind of essential or unchanging set of traits, but as 'a construct, an artifice. Whoever defines or identifies it is at best selecting, sifting, suppressing, in the search for what is taken to be representative' (Langford 2000: 14). For Elias, however, the personalities and behavioural forms which constitute national character are not entirely subjective or free-floating but change according to the broader social structure of which people are a part. While this chapter delineates the correspondence between notions of Englishness and the character of cricketers, a fuller discussion is deferred to the Conclusion. The aim here is to explain how and why this connection first occurred at this particular time. This necessarily entails a discussion of the interweaving of an amalgam of social processes which influenced both English society and the game of cricket during the nineteenth century.

National identity and Englishness

The sociological study of nations and nationalism 'can appear esoteric, requiring specialized knowledge and using a language and conceptual apparatus entirely its own' (Day and Thompson 2004: 2) and while McCrone (2000: 3) argues that a lack of consensus over key terms stems from the historical diversity of experience, some definitional work is necessary to structure this discussion. The existence of a national game presupposes a *nation*. Nations are geographical units but rarely are their boundaries fixed and uncontested. Often, but not always, nations exist as political units – as *nation states* – but nations are also inherently social entities which rest upon some shared conception of identity – a *national identity*. Attempts to forward the status of a nation(-state), or indeed to establish its political structure or identity politics, is perhaps better defined as *nationalism*. The similitudes which are believed to form the basis of this shared sense of national identity may be biological (leading to ethnic nationalism) or cultural (civic nationalism) but they are always somewhat arbitrary, identifying certain commonalities as significant (such as not being French or German) while obscuring manifest differences (for example being Cornish or Geordie). National identity is ultimately a conceptual tool for organizing the world into 'we' and 'they' groups (Elias 1991) and thus the notion of 'Englishness' can be defined as, 'those distinctive aspects of national life' that both insiders and outsiders have described as characteristic of the English (Langford 2000: 2). The way a group would like themselves to be seen, and their ability to persuade/coerce others to agree, are deeply implicated in this process.

English national identity is often portrayed as peculiar. Kumar (2003a: ix) describes it as an 'enigma', more elusive and difficult to pin down than for other nations. Writers note the strong tendency to deny the very existence of an English national identity. In part this relates to the use of 'British' and 'English' as synonyms which, it is argued, stems from the creation of Great Britain (Colley 1996) and led the English nation and the British nation-state to become conflated entities. Allied to the British imperial experience, this led the English self-conception to be defined by inclusion and expansion rather than exclusion and inwardness (Kumar 2003a). As a consequence of this peculiarity, and in contrast to the 'virtually universal consent' that nationalism was a nineteenth century invention (Kumar 2003a: 23), a number of authors have argued that the English case pre-dates these developments. The eighth (Hastings 1997), sixteenth (Greenfeld 1992), seventeenth (Kohn 1940) and eighteenth (Newman 1987) centuries have all been claimed as the earliest manifestations of English national identity or nationalism (Kumar 2003a cites the late nineteenth century as the 'first moment of Englishness').

Different interpretations of the emergence of English national identity/nationalism essentially follow the debates between 'modernists' and 'ethnicists'. Briefly stated this entails the idea that nationalism is a cultural and political ideology produced by modernity, versus the view that modern nationalisms require a sense of common history, unifying myths and symbols, and cultural practices characteristic of ethno-cultural communities. However, the difference between these two positions, 'seems to come down to how much invention; to matters of degree rather than of kind' (McCrone 2000: 16). Is a self-conscious sense of Englishness sufficient, or is the political expression of that identity necessary? How widely must that identity be shared? Does it matter if that identity exists among political elites, the masses or both? We do not need to resolve these questions here. Rather, for present purposes it is enough to note that there is considerable agreement that there were significant social changes during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which impacted upon the way in which (some of) the English viewed themselves and attempted to disseminate and propagate such views. Two largely complimentary accounts of the making of Englishness are particularly relevant to the development of cricket.

Langford (2000) argues that 'national character' became a fashionable idea in late eighteenth-century England and that over the next fifty years a remarkably stable and consistent model emerged. The English national character became perceived to be practical yet lacking in subtle appreciation. The English were independent, upright and honest to the point of tactless. They possessed unflagging energy. They were self-disciplined and dedicated. They persevered and did not know when they were beaten. The 'radical reassessment of the importance of England and things English' (Langford 2000: 3) between 1650 and 1850 occurred in conjunction with England's/Britain's rise as a European power. Following the political reform noted in the previous chapter, England's

history of 'violence, turbulence and instability' (Langford 2000: 5) was forgotten. Commercial and industrial developments driven by an ethos of improvement and innovation came to be admired by Britain's European neighbours, but within England a cult of 'Old Englishness' developed as a reaction to the speed of change. Where the British aristocracy had affected French mannerisms as part of their cosmopolitan outlook at the beginning of the 1700s (remember the *Je Ne Sais Quoi* Club), by the nineteenth century the ability to speak English became valued on the continent. The process of identifying English national character enabled the people rather than the social elite to be accredited for this rapid development and enhanced international status. It also enabled the continental influence on sport, which had the potential to undermine claims for its distinctively English character, to be obscured.²

Haselar similarly argues that 'in the space of a few short decades in the latter part of the eighteenth century the idea of England began to form' (1996: 17). He defines the emerging sense of Englishness as pre-modern in that rather than being dominated by urban commerce and democracy (as, for example, in France), it was built upon the pre-industrial trinity of 'land', 'class', and 'race'. Englishness was defined by a small group of non-entrepreneurial land-owners (i.e. the social equivalents of those who codified cricket in the mid-1700s) but the emphasis on land meant that wealthy Celts (for example Matthew Brodrick, see also Chapter 6) could be easily assimilated. This essentially feudal perspective on social class hierarchy exalted the rural over the urban. The ideology of Englishness was fortified by an aristocracy reacting to revolutions abroad and in France in particular. Faced with the choice of remaining distinct from or embracing the lower classes and emerging bourgeoisie, the aristocracy took the latter course. They were aided in this by the new literary classes which 'helped define and describe the new national identity' (1996: 26). The newly invented Englishman was honourable, upright, and noble. Key attributes included 'innocence, honesty, originality, frankness, above all truthfulness and moral independence' (1996: 27). The English were anti-intellectual and particularist, valuing the traditional, familiar and practical, and showing 'disdain for general ideas and theories' (1996: 21) such as the rather abstract notions of rights and democracy which drove the French revolution.

Cricket and Englishness

The ideological connection between cricket and Englishness emerged concurrently with these late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century developments. In the same way that sportization and parliamentarization were concomitant processes, so the identification of English national character and cricket as the national game corresponded. Like English national character,

cricket's social significance was championed by a literary elite. Both sets of writers venerated the rural over the urban, both embraced an ambiguity over Britishness and Englishness, and both were formed in opposition to the peoples of the European mainland. It did not matter that, 'until the early nineteenth century the British were famous for their *disorganized* games: rowdy, bloodthirsty, cruel sports' (Perkin 1989: 146). It did not matter that emerging interpretations of the game stood in direct contradiction to some of the evidence of the way the game had been played in the eighteenth century. It did not matter that the world's first industrialized nation, and ultimately most urbanized was 'exalted for its countryside' (Haselar 1996: 106). This was a time of wholesale re-imaging. The invention of cricketing tradition (Hobsbawm 1983) was concurrent with the invention of Englishness.

Cricket was first portrayed as a symbol of British/English national identity in James Love's *Cricket: an heroic poem* (1740). Love refers to the 'glorious, manly, *British* game' and contrasts the qualities of manliness and athleticism with the emasculating influences of European culture. But it was nineteenth-century literaturization of cricket which truly established it as England's national game (Bateman 2009). Mary Mitford's *Our Village*, serialised in *The Lady's Magazine* between 1824 and 1832, is typical. For Mitford,

I doubt if there be any scene in the world more animating or delightful than a cricket match. I do not mean a set match at Lord's Ground for money, hard money ... No! the cricket I mean is a real solid old-fashioned match between neighbouring parishes ... (the spectators are) retired cricketers, the veterans of the green, the careful mothers, the girls, and all the boys of two parishes ... There was not a ten-years-old urchin, or a septuagenary woman in the parish, who did not feel an additional importance, a reflected consequence, in speaking of "our side". (Cited in Guttmann 1986: 78)

Our Village was fundamentally nostalgic. It combined pastoral imagery with notions of inclusive, passive and cohesive community. Cricket became a vehicle through which various strands of the broader concept of national identity could be drawn together.

Probably the most significant literary works in the elevation of cricket to a national sport, however, are Nyren's *Cricketers of my Time* (1833a/1948) and Pycroft's *The Cricket Field* (1851/1948). Nyren's *Cricketers of my Time* was originally printed in conjunction with *The Young Cricketer's Tutor* (1833b). The former is essentially a description of the men who played for the Hambledon village team around the 1770s, while the latter is an instructional manual for playing the game. Pycroft's text is a more self-conscious and explicit attempt to chart the history of the game. The messages these texts convey closely resonate with ideas of English national identity. This in turn explains their fame and subsequent significance relative to similar texts (for example Lamberts' *Instructions and Rules for the Playing of the Noble Game of Cricket* (1816); Lillywhites's *Illustrated Handbook of Cricket* (1844); Denison's

Cricket: Sketches of the Players (1845)). Nyren and Pycroft did not simply reflect a particular ideology of the game they were instrumental to its construction.

Cricketers of my Time opens with an introduction by Charles Cowden Clarke (1833/1948: 14), the first line of which reads, 'Of all the English athletic games, none, perhaps, presents so fine a scope for bringing into full and constant play the qualities both of the mind and the body as that of Cricket.' Clarke goes on to list the characteristics of a good cricketer. The good cricketer will, of course, be a man. He will also be manly. Consistent with the anti-intellectualism identified by Haselar, rather than celebrating intelligence as a virtue, Clarke merely says that a good cricketer will not be stupid. He will, however, be active and a physically competent all-rounder. The notion of self-discipline is relayed via the term 'cool tempered'. Perseverance and unflagging energy are conveyed in the claim that the good cricketer will be able to endure fatigue. Clarke urges younger readers to adhere to 'the sterling qualities of integrity, plain dealing, and good old English independence – the independence of native worth and moral rectitude, not of insolence and effrontery' (1933/1948: 15). There are, therefore, direct crossovers between the projected character of Nyren's cricketers and the broader narrative of English national character that was developing at this time. The physicality of sport made it an ideal vehicle for the advancement of practicality over subtle appreciation.

Nyren is less explicit but nonetheless consistent in his evocation of national character. The contrast between his opening line – 'The game of cricket is thoroughly British' (1933/1948: 16) – and Clarke's description of cricket as 'English' shows the easy elision of these national identities after the formation of the Union. Nyren describes the beer drank at Hambledon as strong, 'unsophisticated John Bull stuff', and thus Bateman (2009: 24) notes that, 'the rambunctious energies and virility of late-eighteenth century rural cricket provide [Nyren with] a point of contrast to the relatively temperate, effete and Europeanised present'. Consistent with the inclusionary motif of English national identity, Nyren portrays cross-class harmony. In describing yeoman cricketers as possessing integrity, independence and honesty he identifies the lower classes as the embodiment of English virtues and, by extension therefore, responsible for the dramatic improvements in Britain's international status.

But in order to make this connection between cricket and English character Nyren had to 're-invent' cricket through a portrayal which strategically belied eighteenth-century evidence. Nyren 'consistently euphemised the sport's violence through a process of aestheticisation' (Bateman 2009: 26). His claim that 'like true Englishmen' the Hambledon spectators 'would give the enemy fair play' (2009: 27) when a cricket ball was knocked amongst them, seems rather romanticized given that games at Lord's continued to be disrupted in this way well into the latter half of the nineteenth century (Malcolm 2002a. See also the conclusion to this chapter). Through the emphasis the text gives to Hambledon, the game is located as essentially rural and therefore linked to the land. While

Nyren notes that Strutt's *The Sports and Pastimes of the Peoples of England* (1801) suggests that cricket had no popular ancient roots, he omits to mention Strutt's assertion that the game was particularly popular among 'nobility and gentlemen of fortune' (1801: 106), or indeed that it was codified in London as a consequence of a commingling of political classes and therefore had an essentially urban genesis. While he describes each of the Hambledon players in considerable detail, he deems it sufficient to merely list the predominantly aristocratic and upper-class members of the MCC. The essentially nostalgic tone is enhanced by the fact that these are described as childhood recollections. It is a moot point whether these are cricketers of Nyren's time (as the book title claims), or in fact cricketers of his father's era.

Published twenty years after Nyren, Pycroft's *The Cricket Field* is more self-congratulatory. A chapter on 'The General Character of Cricket' begins thus: 'The game of cricket, philosophically considered, is a standing panegyric on the English character'. Pycroft continues, 'none but an orderly and sensible race of people would so amuse themselves', thus perpetuating notions of a peaceful and rational English people. The description of the game and its players contains a number of notable similarities with other portrayals of English national character. A player, we are told, must 'be sober and temperate. Patience, fortitude, and self-denial, the various bumps of order, obedience, and good humour, with an unruffled temper, are indispensable' (Pycroft 1851/1948: 62). Another chapter title proclaims that cricket was 'Generally Established as a National Game by the End of the Last Century' and thus attempts to give cricket's new found status a sense of longevity.

Pycroft is also more explicit than Nyren in contrasting Englishness (and cricket) with the characteristics of other nationalities. Though unusual in its explicit highlighting of differences between British nationalities, Pycroft conforms to an anglo-centric view of power relations where the English are portrayed as both partners in, and leaders of, a Union that was as much 'Greater England' as Great Britain (Haselar 1996: 30). Of England's closest neighbours he writes:

As to physical qualifications [of a good cricketer], we require not only the volatile spirits of the Irishman *Rampant*, nor the phlegmatic caution of the Scotchman *Couchant*, but we want the English combination of the two; though with good generalship cricket is a game for Britons generally. (1851/1948: 62)

However, Pycroft's reference to England's continental neighbours draws a sharper distinction:

The game is essentially Anglo-Saxon. Foreigners have rarely, very rarely, imitated us. The English settlers and residents everywhere play; but of no single cricket club have we ever heard dieted either with frogs, sour crout, or macaroni. But how remarkable that cricket is not naturalised in Ireland! The fact is very striking that it follows the course rather of ale than whiskey. (1851/1948: 63)

Both in relation to cricket and more broadly (Langford 2000), national differences were identified as culturally rather than biologically based. If the French, Germans and Italians changed what they ate, and best of all if they drank beer, there was no reason to think that they could not also become proficient at cricket just as the German-born Frederick Louis had. Similar ideas are expressed in John Mitford's review of Nyren's *Cricketers of my Time* which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* just months after the latter's publication. Mitford contrasts cricket, 'the pride and the privilege of the Englishman alone', with pastimes specific to the French (Tennis), Swiss (Shooting), Italians ('ballone') and Dutch (skating). 'A Frenchman or a German would not know which end of the bat to hold' (Mitford 1833/1948: 122). As we will see in Chapter 6, the concern to link cricket to Englishness may have led to the obscuration of the popularity of cricket in the Celtic nations of Britain at this time. As we will see in Chapter 9, the role of cricket in the process of 'Othering' continues today.

Pycroft's assessment of the relationship between cricket and intelligence further resonates with the broader discourse of Englishness. Pycroft makes three descriptions in this regard. Initially he says, 'For intellectual virtues we want judgment, decision, and the organ of concentrativeness ... the cricketer wants wits down to his fingers' ends' (1851/1948: 62). He subsequently writes that the cricketer should 'have *nous* in perfection, and be instinct with sense all over' (1851/1948: 64). Finally he states that,

there is something highly intellectual in our noble and national pastime. But the cricketer must possess certain qualifications, not only physical and intellectual, but moral qualifications also; for of what avail is the mind to design and the hand to execute, if a sulky temper paralyses his exertions ... or if impatience dethrones judgement. (1851/1948: 66)

Thus while cricket is portrayed as a cerebral pursuit and thus not a childish or foolish game, the intellect required is instinctual rather than learned, practical and applied rather than theoretical and abstract. There is no indication that a man should apply himself to, or would benefit from, study of the game. Pycroft implicitly suggests that abstract intellectualism can be detrimental to character and thus is more broadly problematic. English cricketers, he tells us, are pragmatic.

Pycroft replicates Nyren's 're-invention' of cricket as non-violent. In a section titled 'Chapter of accidents – Miscellaneous', he claims that 'Fatal accidents in any legitimate game of cricket there have been none' (1851/1948: 107). He further describes various incidents of injury and mishap in the game only to systematically deny the *real* harm or significance of risk in each case: 'all this proves little as to the danger of the game' (Pycroft 1851/1948: 108). At one point he states, 'these are hardly the dangers of cricket: men may run their heads together in the street' (1851/1948: 110). He notes, for instance, the physical proximity of multiple matches on common ground like Oxford's Cowley Marsh

but concludes, 'The wonder is, that twelve balls should be flying in a small space for nearly a day, yet I never heard of any man being hit in the face – a fact the more remarkable because there was usually free hitting and loose bowling' (1851/1948: 111). Thus Pycroft tells the reader that while cricket might look dangerous, one would be foolish to make this assumption:

Let any man of common judgement see the velocity with which the ball flies from the bats of first-rate players, and how near the fieldsmen stand to the hitter; and then let him feel and weigh a ball in his hand, and he would naturally expect to hear that every public cricket ground was in near connection with some casualty hospital, so *deceptive is a priori reasoning*. (1851/1948: 107. Emphasis added)

Characteristic of the ideology of Englishness more generally, cognitive reasoning is contradicted by practical experience, universalism by particularism. Ultimately however the length to which Pycroft goes to stress the peaceful nature of the game is matched only by the empirical weakness of his position.

There were, therefore, two key characteristics of early nineteenth-century cricket literature. First, it contained an account of cricket which was closely aligned to the sense of English national character that was more widely emerging at this time. Second, like the emergence of Englishness more generally, it entailed a portrayal which obscured an elitist and violent past. But *why* did these texts so closely match the broader discourse of English national character? It is to these that we now turn.

Cricket and social change in nineteenth-century England

The identification of cricket as the game which both reflects and defines the English national character occurs in conjunction with a number of broader social processes which influence the emergence of a sense of Englishness in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The social composition of the ruling aristocratic elite was changing as it became untenable for this group to govern simply on the basis of social status as they had in the eighteenth century. Commercial opportunities were increasingly open to a wider range of people. Industrialization created new wealth and these emergent classes were subsequently incorporated into an aristocracy more open and more nationalistically minded post-French revolution. This was a period of rapid innovation and marked change in which the romanticism of Old Englishness emerged as a reactionary force (Langford 2000).

Similar social processes influenced and were evident in cricket. The game became increasingly subject to commercial considerations. The aristocracy's governance of the game changed. As we have seen, cricket's history was re-invented. This was a reaction to both societal changes and also something more parochial and specific to the game; the development of round arm and

over arm bowling. Nyren and Pycroft's texts can be understood as the outcome of both broader structural social changes and the 'local' conflicts in cricket which these changes fuelled.

In response to the development of lob bowling (under arm, with the ball spinning on pitching) batsmen started 'running down' to meet the high tossed lob before it bounced (also termed 'giving her the rush' (Altham and Swanton 1948: 65)). This led to the domination of batting over bowling and thus longer matches. Bowlers responded by bowling faster and, in doing so, raising their arm from vertically down, to horizontally round. While Nyren claims that Tom Walker first introduced the 'system of throwing instead of bowling' (1833a/1948: 34) and was immediately censored by his Hambledon teammates, the actions of John Willes were ultimately rather more significant. Willes' first recorded game was for the Gentlemen in the inaugural Gentlemen vs Players match of 1806. By the following year a match report in the *Morning Herald* claimed that 'the straight-armed bowling, introduced by J. Willes Esq. was generally practiced in the game' (cited in Read, 1898: 86–87). Willes' style of bowling caused much controversy. In 1821 the *Morning Herald* reported that, 'Mr Willes and his bowling were frequently barred in making a match and he played sometimes amid much uproar and confusion. Still he would persevere until the ring closed in on the players, the stumps were pulled up and all came to a standstill' (cited in Rae 2001: 99). The issue came to a head in 1822 when Willes played for Kent against the MCC and was no-balled by the umpire. 'Willes threw down the ball in disgust, jumped on his horse and rode away out of Lord's and out of cricket history' (Altham and Swanton 1948: 66). Birley (1999: 64) speculates that the umpire was acting on the orders of Lord Frederick Beauclerk, the most influential aristocrat cricketer of his day and subsequently President of the MCC.

The momentum of bowling innovation changed with the emergence of two Sussex professionals, William Lillywhite and Jem Broadbridge. Lillywhite so perfected this technique that he became known as 'Nonpareil' and defeated opponents, many of whom were also professionals and whose livelihoods also depended on playing success, objected to 'Lilly and Jem's' methods. However, Lillywhite and Broadbridge had an influential ally in G.T. Knight, a leading MCC member who was himself a round arm bowler. Through a series of letters to *The Sporting Magazine* in 1827–28, Knight set out the case for legalizing round arm bowling. He argued that the dominance of batting was detrimental to the game, that attempts to regulate round arm bowling had continually failed because of the difficulties in precisely defining a 'throw', and that other proposals to correct the imbalance between bat and ball (such as increasing the size of the wicket) would be retrograde steps. Furthermore, Knight claimed that this style of bowling was not at all new, that historical precedent existed (citing Tom Walker of Hambledon as one example) and, finally, that there was nothing to fear about the new style, because it 'makes it quite impossible to

bowl fast and dangerously'. Mr Denison, replying for the MCC, stated that the change would lead to scientific play being replaced by chance hits, that the new style was throwing 'pure and simple', and finally that 'It must lead to a dangerous pace, such as cannot be faced on hard grounds, save at the most imminent peril.'³

Knight also persuaded the MCC president, H. Kingscote, to sanction three 'experimental matches' between Sussex and All England in 1827. After Sussex won the first two, the nine All England professionals (indicating that this was no straight batsmen-bowler, amateur-professional, class conflict) refused to play the final match, unless the Sussex bowlers 'abstain from throwing' (Altham and Swanton 1948: 67). The side's batting was strengthened by the inclusion of two further amateurs and, with Knight's own round arm bowling particularly successful, the All England team secured victory in the final match. For now, however, the MCC resisted calls for change and Law X was modified only to clarify and re-assert the existing position (Rait Kerr 1950: 76). Despite this, round arm bowling persisted and the law was finally altered in 1835, 'legitimising any ball not thrown or jerked in which the hand or arm did not go above the shoulder' (Birley 1999: 67). Birley notes that 'the march of intellect' was 'the term used by the opponents of the innovative style of bowling that was disturbing cricket's equilibrium' (1999: 63). The phrase, widely used at this time by those optimistic about social progress, was sarcastically mocked by their reactionary critics. As with the innovation and social change of early nineteenth-century England more broadly, these new bowling techniques were met with nostalgia-based resistance.

The protracted nature of the dispute over bowling was a consequence of a particular set of power relations evident in the game at this time. By the early years of the nineteenth century, with the increasing commercialism of English society, there were 'unprecedented openings' for skilled cricketers to make money (Birley 1999: 67). The MCC increased the number of professionals contracted at Lord's to perform various cricketing duties for members. Harrow became the first public school to hire a professional coach. 'Lilly and Jem' were not only the most popular and successful bowlers of their day, they were commercially proactive. Lillywhite, having severed links with his local employers, had come 'up to London to seek his fortune' (Denison 1845/1948: 60). Together they helped Sussex attain 'a celebrity it never before acquired' (Denison 1845/1948: 65). They attracted numerous imitators. It is therefore not surprising that the matter of legal and illegal bowling was ultimately 'to be decided not by debate or by committee edict but by a demonstration of the growing power of market forces' (Birley 1999: 66).

The dispute was also influenced by the aristocracy's relatively weak governance of the game. As the game nationally diffused (or at least its folk games antecedents became nationally standardized) cricketers in different parts of the country became increasingly interdependent. For instance, Knight argued that

round arm bowling had been 'commonly practiced in various parts of England for many years' (Denison 1845/1948: 80). 'One or two' local men were included in the England team for the first of the three experimental matches between England and Sussex played in Sheffield. Tellingly the proficiency of such players 'convinced the cricket world that the *South* must not, as heretofore, presume to wear the wreath forever' (Denison 1845/1948: 82). While Denison noted that the authority of the MCC had 'never hitherto been disputed' (1845/1948: 65) club members were ill-disposed and ill-equipped to govern the game for a more demographically diverse population. For the first half century of the club's existence members were largely happy just to turn up and play cricket. Few showed any inclination towards administrative matters and what influence over the game they held was simply a by-product of their high social status. Most MCC members favoured batting and employed professionals to do the bowling for them. Few, therefore, were inclined towards rule changes which would improve the bowler's prospects. The disparity between what the MCC pronounced and what was practiced undermined the club's position.

The MCC's orientation towards the game was, however, changing. A new outlook stemmed from the club's changing social composition which itself stemmed from changes in the aristocracy more generally. Between 1776 and 1830, 209 new British peerages were created and the number of seats in the House of Lords increased from 199 to 358 (Cannadine 1990). This expansion was driven by industrialization and the emergence of an increasingly affluent capitalist class. The new, wealthy, middle classes 'sought to catch up with the old' by adopting typically aristocratic social practices, acquiring such things as land, art work, titles and honours. To secure their status, the rising middle classes sought to (re-)present themselves just as cricket was being (re-)presented; not as something new, recent or novel, but as something old and organic. While the richest, most well-established, and powerful aristocrats 'looked on with disdain as their inferiors and the parvenus fought it out' (Cannadine 1990: 31), some concessions were made and traditional aristocratic practices relinquished. In cricket the main tradition to be cast aside was the aristocracy-led fashion for gambling. Of course, given the shift in economic power in the nation, the older, more established aristocracy would have had less desire to use wealth as a basis for status competition.

The emergent classes sought to adopt cricket in an attempt to self-aggrandize and thus aid their movement into and assimilation with society's changing elite. Consequently, by 1833, in terms of membership and administration, the MCC could 'scarcely be described as an aristocratic institution since only twenty-five, out of a total membership of 202, possessed titles' (Brookes 1978: 87). This trend continued throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. For Bradley, from 1860 to 1914, 'the whole feeling of the general committee was more upper-middle class than aristocratic' (1990: 8). However, underlining Cannadine's point that there was a large degree of incorporation of other social

classes into the aristocracy at this time, Bradley (1990: 7) notes that even 'those who were not aristocrats certainly moved with ease in that milieu'.

These changes had multiple impacts on the game. Law revisions became more frequent, occurring for instance, in 1811, 1817, 1821, 1823 and 1825. Further revisions in 1828 were the first to be put to an MCC general meeting, and by the 1830s the MCC had a formal and coherent administrative structure. It was also at this point that the distinction between amateurs and professionals became most pronounced. Social distance was maintained by various status-emphasizing practices such as the use of separate gates for entering and exiting the playing field, the listing on scorecards of the professional's initials after, and the amateur's initials before, the surname; the use of separate, usually inferior, travel and changing facilities by professionals. Professionals were expected to help with the preparation of the playing area and to bowl to the amateur batsman in the 'nets' in order to provide him with practice (Dunning and Sheard 1976: 58–9). Furthermore, 'by 1850 the pattern of amateur batsmen and professional bowlers was well established' (Brookes 1978: 92).

These playing, commercial, governance and demographic changes were the stimulus for the Englishness and cricket discourse discussed in the previous section. Mary Mitford's account of cricket in *Our Village* is explicitly contrasted with matches at Lord's played for 'hard money'. The obfuscation of the role of gambling in cricket's codification was, ironically, a response to the increasing monetization of the game. Consequently Pycroft, thirty years later, championed the consignment of cricket-related gambling to 'A Dark Chapter in the History of Cricket.' Pycroft argues that 'the lovers of cricket may congratulate themselves at the present day that matches are made at cricket, as at chess, rather for love and the honour of victory than for money' (1851/1948: 100). He suggests that bookmakers were excluded from Lord's 'many years since' and celebrates the reform of this 'corrupting' practice, even though clauses related to gambling remained integrated within the game's laws up until 1884.

There are however even more compelling grounds to see Nyren's work as an explicit response to the development of round arm bowling. The concluding section of *The Young Cricketer's Tutor* is titled, 'Protest Against the Modern Innovation of Throwing Instead of Bowling the Balls'. Here Nyren predicts that, if the new style of bowling continues, cricket will 'deteriorate in character' (1833b/1948: 40). He claims that no modern player can compare with the old cricketers he describes, that the 'fine style of hitting' will cease, and that 'the elegant and scientific game of Cricket will decline into a mere exhibition of rough, coarse, horse play' (1833b/1948: 41). Furthermore Nyren strategically dedicates *Cricketers of my Time* to William Ward, then owner of the lease for Lord's and a player whose competitive success appeared to wane in the face of the new bowling style (Birley 1999). The dedication explicitly argues that such bowling is 'in direct infringement of a law prohibiting that action' (1833a/1948: 13) and Nyren appeals to the MCC to bring in alternative, stronger, regulation. Of course,

if a central objection to round arm bowling was that it would make the game more dangerous, cricket's violent and disorderly past needed to be forgotten. This re-invention of cricket's traditions runs parallel to the collective amnesia over England's violent and unruly past that accompanied the emergence of English national character.

Cricket towards the end of the century

The story of cricket in the second half of the nineteenth century is essentially a continuation of these themes – bowling innovation, commercialization, and governance changes. The legitimization of round arm bowling effectively granted bowlers such as Lillywhite licence to develop their experiment into over arm bowling. Lillywhite's performance in the North vs. South matches in 1836 demonstrated both that he was unplayable under the new regulations and that the severe injuries critics predicted were likely to occur. However Lillywhite's reputation and subsequent economic power meant that few umpires were prepared to declare his style illegal. As leading umpire William Caldecott noted, '(umpires) thought that what Lillywhite did must be right ... it was cruel to see how he would rattle either the knuckles or the stumps' (cited in Brookes 1978: 95). Consequently for 29 years the Laws of Cricket were regularly altered in overt and covert attacks on bowling innovation (see Rait Kerr 1950). In 1845 Law X was reformulated allowing umpires to call no ball whenever the bowler came 'so close' to infringing that it became difficult for the umpire to judge the ball's legality. Penalties for no balls and wides began to be accredited to the bowler in an attempt to make them accountable for any waywardness. Leg byes were introduced and the LBW Law was revised so that, for the batter to be out, the ball had to pitch in a straight line between the wickets (which was thought to restrict round arm bowlers' chances of obtaining such a dismissal).

The most significant commercial development was the formation of domestic touring professional XIs. Starting with William Clarke's All England XI, a series of professional teams was established that were relatively autonomous from the MCC. These toured the country enabling cricket to become 'a national sport as well as big business' (Brookes 1978: 101). Matches involving Clarke's XI tended to be one-sided affairs with the opposition often terrorized by Clarke's two fast bowlers, John 'the Demon' Jackson and George 'Tear 'em' Tarrant. Tarrant's bouncers 'frighten(ed) timid batsmen ... causing them to change colour and funk at the next straight one', whilst Jackson would bowl beamers to batsmen who scored runs off his bowling (Lord Harris, cited in Rae 2001: 89).⁴

But debates over legitimate and illegitimate bowling would not go away and the issue came to a head again in 1862. As Edgar Willsher began his third over for All England against Surrey he was no-balled by the umpire John Lillywhite

(coincidentally the son of round arm pioneer, William Lillywhite). His following five attempts were also no-balled at which point Willsher, and the eight other professionals playing for England, walked off the pitch. Play was abandoned for the day but resumed the following morning, with Lillywhite replaced. It is a mystery why Lillywhite acted as he did. Over arm bowling was widespread and widely tolerated by umpires. Lillywhite and Willsher were good friends and subsequently became business partners as secretary and treasurer of the United South of England XI. Willsher was allowed to bowl unimpeded in subsequent matches. Perhaps Lillywhite had been pressured by the MCC, perhaps Lillywhite (with Willsher's knowledge and approval) merely wanted to make a (very) public statement about the current ambiguity in the Laws. Either way, this incident precipitated a debate in the press, a vote by the MCC twelve months later, and finally the revision of the law in June 1864.

The MCC also struggled to grapple with the changing balance of power in the game. In 1835 James Darke purchased the leasehold for Lord's, transformed the ground facilities and upgraded the MCC fixture list. A revitalized MCC made its first general pronouncement on the conduct of the game in 1851. The instruction to umpires to enforce the existing Rule X was largely ignored by bowlers and umpires alike. The MCC launched its first consultation with cricket clubs in 1863, again in relation to (il)legitimate forms of bowling. Despite these moves, Rait Kerr describes 1840–1864 as 'probably ... the very worst period of MCC control of the game' (1950: 37). Indeed in 1863 *The Sporting Life* set in motion a move to establish a Cricket Parliament. It was not until the MCC's 1894 'Classification of Counties' that the national game could be said to have had a truly national governing body (Brookes 1978: 137).

Conclusion

By the end of the century cricket had developed into the game that those in the early part of the century had prematurely claimed it to be. It was now nationally played and administered and, in W.G. Grace, had a totemic and popular figurehead who was 'the first national sporting hero' and represented 'a robust kind of old world Englishness of sturdy yeomen and hunting squires' (Holt 1996: 54). From 1890 to 1914 cricket would enter a 'golden age', a time when the game was dominated by amateur batsmen who were lauded as stylish, entertaining, adventurous and chivalrous. With the development of fast bowling cricket assumed a form similar to that which it holds today and while the laws of the game continue to evolve, the codification of cricket was such that the game cannot be said to have assumed its 'modern character' until 1864 (Sandiford 1994: 128).

Further developments counteracted the bowling changes and reduced the element of physical danger in the game. Batsmen increasingly sought to protect

their bodies. Robert Robinson 'was laughed out of his invention' when he used wooden boards as leg protection c. 1800 (Wisden 1978: 115). The first 'pads' in the modern sense were invented by H. Daubney of Oxford, c. 1836, and worn by batsmen in the Sussex v England match of 1839 (Brooke and Matthews 1988: 127). Gloves, were first produced by Daniel Day, circa 1827 (Wisden 1978: 115) and refined by Nicholas Wanothrocht who played for Surrey, Kent and the All England XI during the 1830s and 1840s (Sandiford 1994: 132). The first groin protector (now commonly called a box) was shown at the 1851 Great Exhibition. It was described as 'so completely protect[ing] the person from injury, that the most timid can play without fear' (Brooke and Matthews 1988: 128). Head protection would follow in the twentieth century.⁵ Playing surfaces also vastly improved. David Jordan in the 1860s and Percy Pearce from 1874 onwards made major contributions to developing the Lord's playing surface into 'the envy of every county club' (Sandiford 1994: 136). Pearce's writings on the subject helped to spread what became known as the new craft of 'groundsmanship'. By 1900, all the major British cricket grounds had been re-laid and levelled. The initial impetus for this, Sandiford (1994: 137) argues, 'was largely the offspring' of the death of George Summers, a batter who was hit by a ball from a fast bowler at Lord's in 1870.

Crowds had also become more orderly, though violent incidents continued to occur. For instance England Captain and MCC President, Pelham Warner, recalled an incident at Lord's in 1866 when a spectator fielded the ball and returned it to the wicket. The batter, presuming that a boundary would be signalled, stopped running and was run out by the fielding side. 'So great was the uproar and confusion', that play was abandoned for the day (Warner 1946: 55).⁶ Similarly, following the Eton v Harrow Match of 1873, the MCC called for old boys to ensure order at future matches. For the 1874 game, the MCC warned against 'undue exhibitions of party feeling, hoisting being prohibited' (Warner 1946: 69). Despite such incidents historians largely agree that by the mid-nineteenth century cricket crowds could be described as 'usually quite civilized' (Guttmann 1986: 79). For instance, Sandiford (1994: 123) states that Victorian cricket crowds, 'behaved very well indeed. They were certainly less rowdy than contemporary gatherings at other sports'. Exceptional incidents were attributed to the increase in cups and leagues, over-crowding due to a larger than anticipated turnout and the presence of the so-called 'football element' (Vamplew 1980: 15), or a 'non-cricketing', 'holiday' crowd (Sandiford 1994: 123–5). While cricket does appear to have been more orderly than other sports, there was also a concerted effort to make that *appear* to be the case by displacing the blame for any such disorder away from the game.

Paradoxically the 're-invention' of cricket buried the link between the game and that other particularly significant English institution, Parliament. Such obscurantism was necessary to disguise the foreign influences on the game which came via a social class which, at one stage, had relatively strong interdependency

ties with their continental counterparts. Yet subsequently cricket would go from strength to strength as the epitome of Englishness, and as the embodiment and source of national character. Probably the most famous expressions of this interdependence of cricket and national identity is provided by Thomas Hughes in his classic book, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857). Cricket 'is more than a game. It's an institution' states Tom. 'Yes' his friend Arthur agrees, 'the birthright of British boys old and young, as *habeas corpus* and trial by jury are of British men' (cited in Brookes 1978: 86). In further stating that 'there's a place for everyman who will come and take his part', Tom relays the sense of inclusivity consistent with the aristocracy's decision to embrace the emerging bourgeoisie and cite the masses as the source of England's rise in international status. This ideology would subsequently be fundamental to the cultural diffusion of cricket. The continued conflation of England and Britain in descriptions of the game enabled the quintessential English game to become the game *par excellence* of the British Empire. It is to this that we turn in the next section of the book.

Postscript

The developments discussed in this chapter also had radical implications for the participation of women in cricket. Eighteenth-century evidence suggests that female participation in cricket was a fairly frequent occurrence, and McCrone argues that female cricket 'flourished' in the second half of the century only to go into a prolonged slump after c. 1838 when 'two teams of Hampshire hay-makers played the last game of cricket for several decades in which women are known to have taken part' (McCrone 1988: 141. See also Underdown 2000, for a description of the relative prevalence of women's cricket in the eighteenth century). Cricket's evolution into a male preserve therefore coincides with the developments charted in this chapter. Tellingly, Nyren and Pycroft offer no instances of females playing cricket in the eighteenth century. As Bateman concludes, 'as forms of literature positioned cricket within a discourse of moral manliness, women were increasingly positioned beyond the boundary of the cricket field' (Bateman 2009: 27).

On the one hand this concurs with other evidence that suggests that nations and states are gendered institutions. For Nagel (2005: 116), 'Masculinity and nationalism articulate well with one another, and the modern form of Western masculinity emerged at about the same time and place as modern nationalism.' Sport, and specifically cricket and Englishness, provides a particularly clear example of this, for the re-invention of cricket as the national game was fundamentally also the description of it as a manly pursuit. Such an argument would have been rather difficult to sustain had women also been seen to play the game.

Paradoxically, however, women are given a central place in the development of round arm bowling. Pycroft provides what appears to be the first report of

the theory that it was Willes' sister who was responsible for this innovation, as she sought to avoid her voluminous skirts when bowling under arm (see also Hargreaves 1994: 98). Subsequently it was claimed that round arm bowling was invented by W.G. Grace's mother. Though widely repeated, the attribution of this technical innovation to a single female seems implausible and probably stems from the attempts to discredit this new style of bowling. Once again we see the interdependence of bowling innovation and cricket's elevation to the status of England's national game. The apparently neutral act of codification therefore reveals a commingling of a range of different class, gender and national relations.