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Suburbanisation and Cultural Change: The case of club cricket in Surrey, 1870-1939

Introduction

Throughout much of the late-nineteenth and twentieth-century English cricket was divided in both social and cultural terms. Within the 'first-class' game (Test, County Championship (ECC), public school and Oxbridge university cricket), the most obvious division lay in the class-based peculiarities of the amateur/professional distinction. There were, however, significant differences in the 'amateur' cricket beyond this elite form, and for much of the twentieth-century the game at this lower level was played within two regionally distinct cultural forms: league and club cricket. The development of these, ideologically distinct, cultures involved a number of contemporaneous factors, and no little hostility, in what may be regarded as a 'cultural war' over the legitimate form and meaning of the game. The geographical location, environmental context, and 'class' of the social actors involved, were crucial to these outcomes – principally in the South of England where middle class suburbanites dominated.

Club cricket, which was closely associated with the rural or suburban South, was 'middle class', 'amateur', 'non-commercial' and 'non-competitive'. League cricket on the other hand has been portrayed as a particularly northern phenomenon with close links to urban environments and industry. As such, it was 'working class', 'professional', 'commercial' and 'competitive'. It is important to appreciate just how ingrained these class-specific, and regionalised, portrayals have been. The imagined identities of counties such as Surrey and

Yorkshire have been influenced by these differences and how they have been portrayed in contemporary and historical literature.¹

Although a very small number of 'gentlemen's' clubs operated in the North, the vast majority of clubs played within leagues and represented their communities as a whole.² In the South however – especially after 1918 – cricket clubs increasingly came to represent specific class groups rather than the communities for whom they were often named. This outcome occurred, in-part, because of the establishment, in 1915, of an elitist metropolitan organisation called the Club Cricket Conference (CCC) and its decision to de-legitimise competitive cricket in the form of cups and leagues. Under the influence of the CCC non-elite cricket in Surrey, in the fifty years between 1918 and 1968, was dominated by values and rules that prioritised amateur and non-competitive ideals and made a good deal of club cricket a social rather than a sporting encounter.³

As a result, the inauguration in 1968 of the Surrey Clubs' Championship (SCC), regarded as the first senior cricket league in the South of England, was a highly controversial and divisive event. Despite much media debate in relation to the apparent need for cricket leagues in the South, and the lack of competitiveness of 'English' sport internationally, the CCC and its allies in the media fiercely resisted such a proposal. This resistance, and the class prejudices that informed them, is reflected in the little that has been written about this significant transition. The establishment of the SCC by the ex-England cricketer Raman Subba Row and his 'henchmen' had, according to Sir Derek Birley, achieved 'the most significant social

¹ D. Stone, 'Cricket's Regional Identities: the development of cricket and regional identity in Yorkshire and Surrey', *Sport in Society*, 11 (2008), 501-516.

² R. Light, *The Other Face of English Cricket: The origins of league cricket in the west riding of Yorkshire*, Unpublished Masters thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2002, 81-82.

³ D. Stone, "'It's all friendly down there": the Club Cricket Conference, amateurism and the cultural meaning of cricket in the South of England', *Sport in Society*, 15, (2012), 194-208.

change' by introducing 'the South to the vulgar practice of the North'.⁴ To John Kay, a league cricket historian, the SCC was the 'beginning of league cricket in territory previously totally opposed to such a move'.⁵ Birley's assertion that this was a 'social change' took decades (if even then) to occur after the SCC had been established. 'Tradition and finance' meant that cricket in Surrey remained (within senior clubs at least) the preserve of the wealthy long after the establishment of leagues, where the cost for a junior cricketer in Surrey, during the 1980s, was over six-times as expensive as those incurred by contemporaries in Lancashire.⁶

The rapid establishment of numerous leagues throughout London and the south-east after 1968 represented a *cultural* change. Given the social and cultural bias throughout the game's historiography Kay's error is, perhaps, more understandable. As occurred in relation to the important role gambling played in the game's early development, cricket leagues, so synonymous with the 'industrialised' Midlands and North of England from the late 1880s, have been consciously excluded from cricket's orthodox history.⁷

Such a regional association, and historical myopia, is significant for the SCC was not the first cricket league in the South of England. Competitive cups and leagues had developed throughout the South in tandem with those of the North. Indeed, it is fair to say that cricket in England was played under broadly 'universal' cultural parameters up to the outbreak of War in 1914. Traditional 'friendly' matches, one-off (or home and away) 'challenges' (often for a significant wager), modern knock-out cup competitions and leagues co-existed, as did professionalism, throughout all of English cricket. As will be demonstrated, the

⁴ D. Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket* (London, 1998), 307.

⁵ J. Kay, *Cricket in the Leagues*, (London, 1970), 178.

⁶ B. Heywood 'It's up to the clubs', *The Cricketer*, November 1986, 21.

⁷ Even when leagues are discussed they have been misrepresented. Rowland Bowen incorrectly proposing that leagues were adopted in the North as a conscious alternative to the false morality increasingly attributed to southern cricket. R. Bowen, *Cricket: A History* (London, 1970), 116.

establishment of cups and leagues from 1880 was supported by the elites in city, suburb, town and village alike. Moreover, not only did they serve as a modern extension of a traditional competitive games culture, they had a utilitarian value. Those who established competitions recognised that participation and, if fortunate, success in them was not only good for the status of their club or community, but also the development of talent and the future welfare of the game as a whole. Why then, having enthusiastically adopted the format, did much of the South of England appear to completely reject the concept after the First World War?

This article will examine the social, economic and political reasons why competitive cricket was first deemed undesirable by a small group of elites in London and, having essentially prohibited league and cup cricket, the way in which their extreme form of 'amateurism' spread throughout the south-east.⁸ It argues that the study of local sporting practices – in this case the gradual displacement of a traditional culture which promoted communal identities through competition, with one which served the social needs of particular middle class groups alone, within an ever wider radius from London – may act as a barometer for the pace and nature of 'suburbanisation' and the impact that this process had upon social relations.

Beginning with a brief assessment of the current historiography of suburbia and suburban sport, this article, which uses Surrey as a case study, then traces the 'suburban' identity of the county. It follows this with an examination of the tenets of a traditional 'sporting' culture which transcended any differences in social structure within, or between, urban, suburban

⁸ Clubs and individuals were punished heavily for breaking the Conference's rules in this regard. See: D. Stone, "'It's all friendly down there": the Club Cricket Conference, amateurism and the cultural meaning of cricket in the South of England', *Sport in Society*, 15, (2012), 194-208.

and rural England, and its resilience in the face of early middle class challenges. The establishment of cups and leagues occurred nationwide, but it was the significant social repercussions of this 'modern' meritocratic approach to sport at the elite, commercialised, level which led to 'competition' itself being increasingly criticised. Such criticisms, which arose among a very narrow social group based in London, were largely futile in rural areas where middle class influence was slight or remained the preserve of indigenous elites. Many attempts to challenge traditional leisure activities prior to 1914 either failed or took years to change. It was only after increased levels of 'suburbanisation', during a period of significant class conflict, that the middle-classes were able to influence, or change, local sporting culture.

An examination of the changing culture of cricket in Surrey, during a period of suburban transformation, demonstrates the increasing social and cultural influence of comparatively wealthy / 'white collar' migrants to Surrey, and their relationship with their poorer neighbours. Their adoption of the non-competitive values favoured by the metropolitan-led CCC, not only created their own discrete realm of amateur cricket after 1918, it also provides evidence (in one context at least) of the symbiotic relationship that one particular 'suburban' fringe had with its urban core in social and cultural terms.

Current research

The historiography of sport is almost entirely dominated by studies of the working class experience within an urban context. And yet, despite Victorian towns and cities providing

the stage for the growth and development of the middle-classes,⁹ and the central role this heterogeneous class played in the development, commercialisation and spread of sport, sports researchers have essentially ignored the middle-classes as participants.¹⁰ Although the suburban realm of middle class sport has been studied by Richard Holt, his examination of class and gender within a suburban golf club adds little to debates regarding class relations outside of the club or the suburbanisation process.¹¹ That sports historians have failed to address suburban sport in terms more relevant to 'urban' specialists, or develop ideas beyond the 'private' or 'domestic' nature of the suburb, is somewhat understandable however. Studies of suburban life have suffered from a resolute adherence to long-established (and frequently inappropriate) frameworks and indices used for measuring communities in urban rather than suburban contexts.¹² We thus know a great deal about the urban middle-classes in terms of their economic impact, their political, religious or associational affiliations and voluntary culture, but comparatively little of their lives in relation to the suburban setting where the vast majority resided. Such shortcomings are now being challenged, if not currently rectified. Ruth McManus and Philip Ethington, have suggested alternatives such as longer time periods, 'embeddedness', 'urban morphologies'

⁹ R. J. Morris, 'The middle class and British towns and cities of the industrial revolution, 1780-1870', in D. Fraser and A. Sutcliffe (eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London, 1983), 286. Also see Garrard, who argued that although urban elites later withdrew from 'active participation in the urban and industrial scene', up until 1880 their 'combined social, economic and political leadership ... [was] operating at a point when the urban environment was most friendly to them and their role'. J. Garrard, 'Urban elites 1850-1914: the rule and decline of a new squirearchy?', *Albion*, 27 (1995), 583-621.

¹⁰ M. Huggins, 'Second-class Citizens? English Middle-class Culture and Sport, 1850-1910: a Reconsideration', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17 (2000), 1-35.

¹¹ R. Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford, 1989), 117-134 and R. Holt, 'Golf and the English Suburb: Class and Gender in a London Club, C. 1890-C. 1960', *The Sports Historian*, 18 (1998), 76-89.

¹² C. French, 'The Good Life in Victorian and Edwardian Surbiton: Creating a Suburban Community before 1914', *Family & Community History*, 14 (2011), 423-443 and R. Harris and P. Larkham, *Suburban Foundation, Form and Function* (London, 1999), 2.

and 'interactive ecology', whereas Laura Balderstone has advocated a greater emphasis upon how 'suburbans' interacted with the urban core.¹³

Most recently, a special edition of *The London Journal* has united the sub-fields by exploring a number of pastimes as they (understandably in this case) occurred in certain London suburbs or institutions. This collection confirms the importance of leisure in the formation of identities (social and cultural), highlighted previously by Christopher French, and it rejects the notion that suburbs were essentially 'private', by highlighting the vibrancy of associational culture within suburbs.¹⁴ This refreshing analysis notwithstanding, the edition's emphasis upon 'leisure' within comparatively short time periods or particular middle class institutions, does mean the utility of the individual articles is limited in terms of broader cultural change and their relationship to the suburbanisation process itself.¹⁵ Counter to the overwhelming majority of research completed, this article seeks to transcend traditional cut-off dates, and challenge the dominance of suburban regions north of the Thames (or those within twenty miles of Charing Cross) within the current historiography.

Two questions thus present themselves at this juncture: Why Cricket, and why Surrey? Although golf and tennis – and their private club culture – represent the archetypal suburban sports, they are unsuitable subjects for such clubs were created, and fiercely maintained, as middle class enclaves. Although 'team' variations are possible in both sports, they reinforce the individualism and 'privacy' prevalent throughout the established narrative challenged by Georgiou. Furthermore, their elitist 'culture', despite the financial pragmatism which has led to the relatively recent admission of some from the 'artisan classes' has, as

¹³ R. McManus and P. J. Ethington, 'Suburbs in transition: new approaches to suburban history', *Urban History*, 34, 2 (2007), 317-337. L. Balderstone, 'Semi-detached Britain? Reviewing suburban engagement in twentieth-century society', *Urban History*, 41 (2014), 141-160.

¹⁴ French, 'The Good Life', 112-114.

¹⁵ D. Georgiou, 'Leisure in London's Suburbs, 1880-1939', *The London Journal*, 39, (2014).

highlighted by Rob Lake in relation to tennis, remained consistent.¹⁶ That the culture of cricket in Surrey and the other Home Counties went from a game intimately tied to egalitarian class relations and strong community identities to one which consciously severed ties with local communities and created ‘class-specific’ clubs makes it a more suitable subject for examination. Surrey is chosen for four reasons. Firstly, by focussing on one county, a more detailed and nuanced examination is possible. Secondly, much of what has been regarded as ‘suburban’ Surrey was in fact composed of long-established communities located at distances far beyond the broadly accepted definition of English suburbs. Thirdly, the suburban development of this county, when compared to those with territories north of the Thames, appears significantly different in class terms. Finally, Surrey has been all-but ignored by urban historians – especially in the period after 1914.

Surrey and the suburban identity

A great deal has been written about the social character, living experience, form and function of suburbs, but long-held assumptions of what a suburb was, or is, persist within academic and popular discourse.¹⁷ Like the suburbs, Surrey – ‘symbolically the most suburban county in England’¹⁸ – has been ‘much maligned for its pretensions and character’.¹⁹ The denigration of such areas has been the result of contemporary prejudices (George Orwell for instance) and deficiencies in historical research. Harris and Larkham have highlighted how a narrow definition of suburbs – residential places occupied by the wealthy

¹⁶ R. J. Lake, “‘They treat me like I’m scum’”: Social exclusion and establish-outsider relations in a British tennis club’, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 48 (2011), 112-128.

¹⁷ McManus and Ethington, ‘Suburbs in transition’, 326.

¹⁸ A. Howkins, *The Death of Rural England: a Social History of the Countryside Since 1900* (London, 2003), 164.

¹⁹ P. Brandon, *A History of Surrey* (London, 1977), p. 11.

at the urban fringe – may be ‘analytically neat’, but that a more nuanced analysis, which considers more than ‘commuting’ is more ‘complete’.²⁰

Moreover, these authors have suggested that a distinctive culture or suburban ‘way of life’ prevailed, and that this is linked to the social uniformity within such low-density residential places dominated by owner-occupation.²¹ Robert Morris however has suggested that culture – ‘a series of meanings which human beings attributed to politics, production and consumption’ – is effected by, but not dependent upon, variants in social and economic structure. These meanings are influenced as much by ‘resources inherited from their own past’ as much as any contemporary domestic or international culture.²² In this context therefore, to what extent was the form and timing of the cultural transformation under investigation based upon the changing social structure of Surrey? How much on social and cultural trends emanating from London, and how much on the wider societal context in which it occurred? The existence of a universally understood culture of ‘competitive’ sport within an infinite array of physical and social habitats prior to the First World War may suggest that the suburban ‘way of life’, associated with contemporary Surrey, only developed after 1918. As Clapson has highlighted, suburbs vary considerably in terms of size, their distance from urban centres and social composition.²³ In basic terms, suburbs were planned, physically and economically close to the urban centre, predominantly ‘middle-class’ and, above all else, *new*. Due to age, distance and development, what has usually been regarded as ‘suburban’ Surrey might struggle to meet such criteria.

²⁰ Harris and Larkham, *Suburban Foundation*, 9.

²¹ *Ibid*, 8.

²² R. J. Morris, ‘Structure, culture and society in British towns’, in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Volume 3: 1840–1950* (2001), 397-398.

²³ M. Clapson, *Invincible Green Suburbs, Brave New Towns: Social Change and Urban Dispersal in Post-War England*. (Manchester, 1999), 2.

Due to the Thames acting as a natural barrier to expansion, Surrey's urban / suburban development occurred later than other peripheral regions. Even after the construction of bridges and freer trade links, the majority of those moving to Surrey, according to William Howitt in 1838, were almost exclusively aristocratic gentlemen.²⁴ Unlike the thousands of terraced houses that sprang-up in industrialised England, much of Surrey (beyond the extreme north of the county) continued to be 'studded over with mansions and villas',²⁵ and the exodus from London to Surrey that the eighteenth-century aristocrat or upper-middle class migrants had started, 'never lost its social status'.²⁶ Howitt noted how the polarised nature of Surrey's demographic and physical development resulted in a different social structure from more urban or industrialised areas. The ascendancy of the gentlemen, he argued:

... had produced a curiously dichotomous society. As one observer commented: "A vast number of aristocracy reside in the country for its proximity to town; and besides them there are the farmers and their labourers; the servants of the aristocracy estates – a numerous and very peculiar class; and the few tradesmen who supply the great houses. The many gradations of rank and property which are found in more trading, manufacturing and mixed districts do not exist here".²⁷

As highlighted below, although large numbers of middle class residents were to fill the social vacuum between the high and low of Surrey, exorbitant land prices – even at the beginning

²⁴ W. Howitt, *The Rural Life of England*. (Shannon, 1972), 594.

²⁵ http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/descriptions/entry_page.jsp?text_id=1949270&word=NULL accessed 19 May 2012.

²⁶ J. Connell, *The End of Tradition: Country Life in Central Surrey* (London, 1978), 5.

²⁷ Howitt, *The Rural Life*, 594. Thompson suggests that domestic servants were a 'large group without an identity, not incorporated into working-class culture, organisation, or politics, and lacking a culture of their own'. F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: a Social History of Victorian Britain* (London, 2008), 247.

of the twentieth-century²⁸ – and landowners reluctance to sell to railway or property developers, hindered any large scale house building beyond the northern districts of the county.²⁹ Even here, where urban and suburban development occurred, the county’s suburban image was not simply hindered, it was reversed in 1889 following the creation of the County of London.³⁰ Although the north had retained a significant agricultural presence, the loss of the urban areas of Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth, suburban areas such as Surbiton, and what became the County Borough of Croydon, removed much of the urban space, and the population and industry therein, from the new administrative county of Surrey. Even the Oval, the home of Surrey County Cricket Club (SCCC), was lost to ‘old’ Surrey. As Table One demonstrates, although the County lost less than 5 per cent of its geographical area, the population was cut by almost two-thirds (63.7 per cent).³¹

Table One: Area Size and Population of Surrey³²

Year	Area / Size (Acres)	Total Population	Males	Females
1801	na	269,043	127,138	141,905
1811	na	323,851	151,811	172,040
1821	na	398,658	189,871	208,787
1831	474,480	486,334	230,860	255,474

²⁸ F. E. Green, *The Surrey Hills (with illustrations by Elliott Seabrooke)* (London, 1915), 193.

²⁹ V. Mitchell and K. Smith, *London Suburban Railways: Kingston and Hounslow Loops* (Midhurst, 1990).

³⁰ The boundaries of Surrey prior to the Local Government Act of 1888 included much of what is now south London, reaching all the way up to the Thames at Kew in the north-west and Rotherhithe in the north-east. Suburban growth did continue of course, and the population grew 62% between the 1891 and 1911 census returns (Table One).

³¹ This figure was almost certainly much larger as the boundary changes occurred towards the end of the census cycle.

³² www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide.../surrey/surrey-area-monitor.pdf accessed, 21 May 2012. Of the total population of 1,436,899 in 1881, 980,522 (68 per cent) ‘lived in the area of the metropolis’. *Kelly’s Directory of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex* [3rd edition] (London, 1891), 1131.

1841	474,480	582,678	278,203	304,475
1851	478,792	683,082	325,041	358,041
1861	478,792	831,093	393,647	437,446
1871	483,178	1,091,635	517,111	574,524
1881	485,129	1,436,899	683,228	753,671
1891	461,230	521,551	242,066	279,485
1901	461,807	653,549	303,263	350,286
1911	461,829	845,578	390,395	455,183
1921	461,833	930,086	425,023	505,063
1931	461,833	1,180,878	544,054	636,824
1951	461,833	1,602,509	742,583	859,926

na = not available.

Despite the incursion of the railway network and middle-class institutions – including Charterhouse School, which relocated to Godalming in 1872 – the west and east of the county had retained its rural character.³³ The removal of the urban territories in the north was fundamental in partly re-establishing the county’s pre-industrial ‘rural’ state and Surrey’s association with affluence or extreme wealth.³⁴ Such an image persisted for, unlike other counties on the periphery of London, large estates catering for the working-classes were not built. Quite in opposition to the London County Council (LCC) cottage estates of Beacontree in Essex, Edgware in Middlesex, and Dagenham in Kent, housing estates in Surrey, such as St George’s Hill (from 1911) and Burwood Park (from 1934) near Weybridge, were developed exclusively for the wealthier classes. The creation of the Green Belt

³³ The proportion of agricultural workers rose by at least 2 per cent after 1889 to more than 3.5%. By 1951 agricultural workers formed less than 1% of the working population.

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide.../surrey/surrey-area-monitor.pdf accessed, 21 May 2012.

³⁴ ‘The Millionaires of Surrey’, *Punch*, 20 January 1926.

following the Second World War, only served to stifle the widespread development of Council estates further. In so doing, it 'saved Surrey from being a vast commuter dormitory' and secured the county's association with the 'Stockbroker belt'.³⁵ This regionalised association reflects a social structure in which the middle-classes dominated, but when did this transformation occur, and to what extent were such social groups able to make changes to the county's sporting culture?

Leisure in Surrey

Cricket's early development had occurred within a relatively static rural environment, where the social structure of small towns and villages in Surrey had remained consistent. Even when a new wave of middle class migrants began to arrive during the early decades of the 1800s, they failed to exert any genuine influence upon local rural life. The radical Cobbett bitterly observed how these 'stockjobbers and negro drivers' were: 'A gentry, only now-and-then residing at all, having no relish for country delights, foreign in their manners, distant and haughty in their behaviour, looking to the soil only for their rents ... They were in the village, but not of it'.³⁶ The 'suburban' middle-classes who would transform the county and its cricket culture were essentially absent for most of the nineteenth-century, and their absence meant that traditional customs and social relationships remained intact. These relationships were sufficiently relaxed to allow local cricketers to 'seize' land off the local landowners without any legal repercussions. David Underdown notes how some of Farnham's 'inhabitants converted part of the Bishop of Winchester's park into a cricket

³⁵ Brandon, *A History of Surrey*, 121.

³⁶ Connell, *The End of Tradition*, 3.

ground, without bothering to ask anyone for permission',³⁷ and approximately one hundred years later, cricketers in Cranleigh similarly enclosed a suitable part of the common in 1856.³⁸ This behaviour was no longer tolerated in urban areas where space was increasingly valuable and the middle-classes were able to exert an influence upon social and cultural relationships.

Within Surrey, it was the urban north of the County that witnessed these associated changes first. Not only had the Archdeacon of Surrey noted how capitalist society increasingly created 'separate and unsympathising classes', the popular leisure activities of the pre-industrial age were increasingly decried by the respectable middle-classes within these relatively new urban areas.³⁹ Robert Malcolmson is one of many historians to suggest that traditional sports and popular cultural values, which had been supported by those of high and low status within pre-industrial communities, were 'swept away' by the growth of an urban industrial society.⁴⁰ Violent 'mob' sports such as folk football were, he argues, largely eradicated by the 1850s, and although this date is contested by other historians, there appears to be a general consensus that bear baiting, rowdy Guy Fawkes 'celebrations' and folk football in particular were 'extinct' by the 1890s.⁴¹ The end of such customs – often encouraged by the police truncheon – strongly suggest that the new, 'respectable', middle classes had reached a critical mass, by which they could exert significant social, economic, political and cultural power.⁴² Consequently, in the towns closer to London, folk football

³⁷ D. Underdown, *Start of Play: Cricket and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 2000), 19 and 170.

³⁸ R. E. Webster and C. W. Alcock (Eds.), *Surrey Cricket: Its History and Associations* (London, 1902), 416.

³⁹

<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?view=image;size=50;id=uiuo.ark%3A%2F13960%2Ft87h1t014;page=root;seq=5> accessed, 18 June 2012.

⁴⁰ R. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), 170.

⁴¹ H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1980), 22.

⁴² Thompson suggests that the middle classes reached sufficient numbers for the development of exclusive residential districts 'at different points between the 1820s and 1850s according to the overall size, social

either fell out of favour or was suppressed in Richmond by 1840, East Molesey by 1857, and Kingston-upon-Thames by 1867.⁴³

In the relatively undeveloped towns beyond, similar prohibitions took much longer to occur as a place like Guildford (in the west of the county) 'remained ... a rural market town inhabited mainly by shopkeepers, craftsmen and labourers and visited by farm workers'.⁴⁴ Indeed the town was lampooned in the 1890s for an apparent lack of progress and, some twenty years later, a significant local landowner, the Earl of Onslow, was accused of keeping the town 'landlocked'.⁴⁵ In Dorking (in the east of the County), the construction of villas had boosted the local economy, but the longevity of traditional leisure pursuits and social relations suggests these new residents failed to make any significant impression.⁴⁶ Thus, contrary to Malcolmson's suggestion that middle class pressure had eradicated folk football by 1850, the local game persisted in Dorking into the early years of the twentieth-century.⁴⁷ In fact, not only was this custom being protected by the established social and political elites, it was still being 'played' by them at the end of the century.⁴⁸

structure, and prosperity of different towns'. F. M. L. Thompson, 'The Rise of Suburbia' in R. J. Morris and Richard Rodger (eds.), *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History, 1820-1914*, (London, 1993), 164. T. Mason, *Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915*, (Brighton, 1980), 10; R. D. Storch, 'The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880', *Journal of Social History*, 9 (1976), 481-509; G. Morgan, *The Guildford Guy Riots: Being an Exact Description of the Terrible Disturbances in the County Town of Surrey* (London, 1992).

⁴³ J. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London, 1987), 33; T. Collins, "Football" in T. Collins, J. Martin and W. Vamplew (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Traditional British Rural Sports* (London, 2005), 118.

⁴⁴ G. Morgan, *The Guildford Guy Riots*, 14. Guildford's cattle market having moved from the very centre of the town (North Street) in 1895, only left its similarly central Woodbridge Road location in 1969, *Surrey Advertiser*, 12 September 1969.

⁴⁵ A poem relating to the towns lack of a cathedral stated: 'Poor Guildford, Proud people; Three Churches, And no steeple'. *The Hub*, 20 March 1897. Pamphlet at the Guildford Archeological Society dating from approximately 1911. SHC Ref: 1320/383

⁴⁶ Morgan, *The Guildford Guy Riots*, 30.

⁴⁷ In a letter to the *Surrey Advertiser*, the widow of an ex-Dorking policeman claimed he had policed football in Dorking as late as 1904 or 1905. *Surrey Advertiser*, 11 February 1967.

⁴⁸ It is possible that popular, or locally important figures such as the Dorking town crier John Sandford, who kicked-off the annual match from the 1860s until his death in 1895, ensured the longevity of Dorking football. http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/sports/shrove_tuesday/ accessed, 18 March 2013.

The petitioning of the Surrey County Council by a select group of Dorking residents may well have represented a 'determined attempt to put an end to the custom', but its failure, which prompted a letter defending the game from the chairman of the Urban District Council to *The Times*, highlights the cultural divisions between the old and new members of the town's middle-class.⁴⁹ Concerted middle class pressure, and intervention by the local constabulary, had finally seen off Guildford's annual Guy 'Riots' by the end of the 1860s,⁵⁰ but the survival of other customs throughout the county suggests that the influence of such residents was limited. Whereas local authorities provided leisure facilities, or 'people's parks', after 1870 in more urbanised English towns of the period,⁵¹ the provision of such facilities in Surrey remained the preserve of landowning elites as varied as the Earl of Onslow,⁵² the Crown Prince of Siam,⁵³ and Mrs Jennings of Chobham.⁵⁴

While the endowment of playing facilities by landowning women was relatively common, it was thanks to Onslow's donation of ten acres of land, and the 'public-spirited gentlemen' who provided the money for the 'laying down of a first-class wicket', that the Guildford (Woodbridge Road) Sports Ground, which is still used by Surrey County Cricket Club (SCCC) today, was opened in 1894.⁵⁵ Regarding the cricket clubs that utilised this and other 'private' facilities; although a hierarchy existed, with clubs such as Richmond, Chertsey and Wimbledon at one end of the social scale, and Chilworth Gunpowder and Haslemere

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 3/3/1897.

⁵⁰ P. Johnson, 'The Guildford Guy Riots', *The Lady*, 1 November 1979, 740-741.

⁵¹ N. MacMaster, 'The Battle for Mousehold Heath 1857-1884: 'Popular Politics' and the Victorian Public Park,' *Past & Present*, 127 (1990), 117-154. In her study of Bedford, McHugh suggests that the environmental development of facilities for middle-class male leisure was exclusively provided by the local authority. D. McHugh, 'Remaking the Victorian County Town 1860-1910', University of Leicester Ph.D. thesis, 2002, 131.

⁵² William Onslow (1853-1911), the fourth Earl of Onslow (and his grandson) assisted a number of clubs in this regard. See *Surrey Times*, 30 June 1894, *Woking News*, 25 September 1896 and *Surrey Advertiser*, 20 November 1948 and 8 April 1950.

⁵³ *Aldershot News*, 5 November 1898.

⁵⁴ *Woking News*, 31 January 1896.

⁵⁵ *The Surrey Times*, 30 June 1894.

Working Men at the other, for the most part, customary pre-industrial relations were maintained. The *Westerham Herald* reported in 1890 how the Oxstead CC's decision to draft-in players from other locations was regretted by the Chairman.⁵⁶ This had transgressed one of the touchstones of English cricket at this time: local identity. So important was this local 'patriotism', when these players were drafted in 'the Oxstead people [despite little active participation] did not want new blood, and said, "we don't want your London Cockneys down here"'.⁵⁷

Prior to 1914 therefore – a time before the widespread 'suburbanisation' of rural villages such as Oxstead – the opinions of ordinary 'villagers' were regarded as important by many local elites. Almost every club, village or otherwise, benefitted from the support of men and women of high social, religious, military or political status. The concentration of such people, in what were then little more than villages, is suggested in a report of a concert held by the Ripley CC in 1896:

Mr. C. H. Combe M.P. took five seats; the Hon. Mrs. Stewart Wortley took six seats. The Misses Freeland also took tickets. All the reserved seat tickets were disposed of. Amongst those present we noticed the Rev. Hamilton Vernon, Mr. and Mrs. Aubery Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. Evans and others of the *elite* of the village.

Cricket remained either socially mixed, or the upper and middle-classes were happy to provide working men with the facilities and financial support to play seemingly without any interventionist restrictions.⁵⁸ Bar the banning of gambling at the Guildford Sports Ground,⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Westerham Herald*, 17 November 1890.

⁵⁷ B. E. Hébert and R. Packham, *Oxstead Cricket Club 1890 - 1990: A Centenary Celebration*, (Oxstead, 1990), 15.

⁵⁸ This type of benevolence was exemplified (in Kent) by Charles Dickens who, in a letter to his son in 1868, insisted that 'The first thing to be avoided is, the slightest appearance of patronage (one of the curses of England). The second thing to be avoided is, the deprivation of the men of their just right to manage their own affairs. I would rather have no club at all, than have either of these great mistakes made'. He continued: 'both classes of members [gentlemen and working men, despite the gentlemen paying at least double the

there was no hint of the 'moral reform', 'rational recreation', or the attempted 'social control' (usually via strict membership rules and fines) witnessed in the industrial areas of the North of England.⁶⁰ Moreover, unlike the first-class game, where increasingly humiliating amateur and professional distinctions were introduced after 1870, any apparent deference was ostensibly predicated upon a player's role on the field of play rather than his social position off it.⁶¹ A captain was always to be obeyed of course, but, in the case of Banstead CC, it was the club's groundsman 'professional', Eddie Gilbert, who captained the first XI in 1895.⁶² The false egalitarianism regularly espoused at elite metropolitan cricket dinners after 1918, was not merely 'lip service' in pre-war Surrey.⁶³

If Max Weber's suggestion that many social elites 'maintained possession of all offices of local administration by taking them over *without compensation* in the interests of their own social power', is true; there is little evidence to suggest that this was the case in amateur cricket in Surrey prior to the First World War.⁶⁴ Social relations, in what remained rural Surrey, were always cordial, if not always intimate.⁶⁵ The Guildford Working Men's Cricket Club was supported by local businessmen and councillors, with the Mayor always acting as

subscription] shall have exactly the same right of voting equally in all that concerns the club'.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/25853/25853-h/25853-h.htm> accessed 21 October 2014. The donation of land continued well into the twentieth-century, when the Abinger CC was gifted 1.5 acres of land by a local farmer, Robert Newman, in 1961. *Surrey Advertiser*, 30 September 1961.

⁵⁹ Robert Salsbury JP (the Mayor), 'was pleased to note that a 'no betting' warning was in place, as betting 'had a certain danger about it', and those who were wise would avoid it'. *The Surrey Times*, 30 June 1894.

⁶⁰ A. J. Reid, *Social Classes and Social Relations in Britain 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1995), 36-41. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*; E. Yeo and S. Yeo, *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Sussex, 1981) and D. O'Keefe, 'Church Cricket and Community in Halifax and the Calder Valley, 1860-c.1920', University of Huddersfield Ph.D. thesis, January 2013.

⁶¹ This is in direct opposition to Lowerson's assertion of pre-war 'deference'. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Class*, 4.

⁶² **Banstead Minute Book, 3 October 1895.** SHC REF?

⁶³ *Manchester Guardian*, 4 February 1928.

⁶⁴ Cited in E. D. Baltzell, *Sporting Gentlemen: Men's Tennis from the Age of Honor to the Cult of the Superstar* (New York, 1995), 35.

⁶⁵ R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party in the Making of the British Middle Class: Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990); J. Garrard, *Leadership and Political Power in Victorian Industrial Towns, 1830-80* (Manchester, 1983); M. Castells, *The Urban Question* (London, 1977).

President, and other 'town' clubs were keen to establish their seniority by fielding genuinely representative teams or merging with other clubs. Farnham CC, having already merged with two other clubs, announced in 1914 that it was 'perfectly willing to play [suitably talented] members of any local club without payment of subscription'.⁶⁶ In a similar vein, Dr. Phipps of the Woking Village and Westfield CC, hoped his club 'would continue to amalgamate' and, tellingly, 'give a thrashing' to their neighbouring opposition.⁶⁷

The introduction of league competition

Although the eradication of more violent pastimes, and a minor attempt to curtail gambling, suggests a certain level of 'respectable' middle class control, local identities, being competitive, and defeating the neighbouring opposition remained central to the game's cultural meaning. The introduction of cups and leagues from the 1880s had only served to accentuate this competitiveness. As Phipps' statement implies, competition was seen as natural and positive by local elites and many within Surrey were responsible for establishing some of the very first cricket competitions. Richard Webster – a significant landowner from Cranleigh who also happened to be Attorney General for England and Wales, and President of the SCCC – established the West Surrey Village Cup in 1896. As with other associations, cups and leagues established at this time, this was done in order to 'promote wholesome healthy rivalry and ... raise the standard of cricket in the villages'.⁶⁸ Following the competition's successful inauguration, the Rev. A. W. Leach of Shamley Green, noted that 'the competition had done a great deal to excite interest in cricket and he was told by those

⁶⁶ The reasons for this were complex, but as well as a desire for truly representative sides it is clear that many of the middle-classes now had less time to engage in full-day matches, *Surrey Advertiser*, 2 March 1914.

⁶⁷ *Woking News*, 9 October 1896.

⁶⁸ *Woking Mail*, 25 September 1897.

who knew that it had done so, and had made the village teams much more anxious to win'.⁶⁹

The winners that first year were Webster's club Cranleigh, and the *Woking Mail* reported how 'the newly won village cup... was brought in to great ovation'.⁷⁰

Contrary to the game's historiography, a swathe of competitions, and no doubt similar celebrations, were soon manifest throughout rural, suburban and urban areas of the South of England.⁷¹ Some of the most noteworthy of these competitions were the Oxfordshire Cup in 1890, which still operates today as the Airey Cup; the City of London Championship in 1892; a London Daily Newspaper League founded in 1895, in which *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* participated; the Postal Cricket League of 1897; the Reading and District, Hastings and District, and the East Grinstead Leagues of 1899.

In 1901, the l'Anson Cricket League, which claims to be the oldest village league in the world was established in Farnham. Many local cricketers, including Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle and (of course) a Blacksmith called Andrew Karn, graced the competition but, in a move suggestive of the ambition of village clubs, many left this league 'to enter a higher class of cricket'.⁷² Significantly, in terms of what was to occur after 1918, suburban elites in London also embraced the league format. The London and Suburban Cricket Association (LaSCA), which had some thirty member clubs from Middlesex, Kent and Surrey in 1891, had competed for *The Sportsman* Challenge Cup as a knock-out competition during the 1880s. Following a proposal from Mr. G. Ogilvie of the Polytechnic CC – one of the senior members of the anti-league (and anti-sponsorship) Conference after 1918 – the LaSCA adopted the 'American

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 2 October 1897.

⁷¹ John Bailey, Duncan Stone and others have shared their research on league cricket in the South. John has published a trio of papers called 'Obliterated from memory: cricket leagues in the south' in *The Journal of the Cricket Society*, 27(2014), 27 (2015) and ????

⁷² G. Collyer, *A Century Not Out: One Hundred Years of the l'Anson Cup* (Breedon Books, 2002), 24.

[league] system' at a special general meeting, chaired by the secretary of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), by ten votes to eight.⁷³

It is thus clear that elites throughout the South – including Edwin Ash founder of the Rugby Football Union (which resisted leagues until the 1980s) and a Cricket Challenge Shield for the elementary schools of Richmond in 1892 – had no obvious problem with competition *per se*.⁷⁴ By the outbreak of the First World War, the league and cup formats were being enjoyed by cricketers of all classes throughout urban, suburban and rural Surrey. This included the pupils of Dulwich College where form matches 'worked on the league system [had also] proved a great success'.⁷⁵ It is thus clear, as Lowerson states, that the 'Great Sports Craze' was not confined to 'a maturing industrial society and its cities alone', and that the competitive cultural norms, now closely associated with the (northern) working-classes, were, at one time, essentially universal.⁷⁶

This is not to suggest that the pre-industrial culture, which encouraged relatively easy social mixing and the centrality of local identities, had been challenged by external forces for many decades, but competition had always remained central to the game. As early as 1851, following the publication of The Rev. James Pycroft's *The Cricket Field*, the game had become saddled with alien values designed to 'elevate' what had been a popular, exuberant, competitive, and occasionally violent pastime into what the Old Reptonian amateur, and Classicist, C. B. Fry called: 'a cult and a philosophy inexplicable to the *profanum vulgus* [the vulgar rabble] ... the merchant minded ... and the unphysically intellectual [the

⁷³ *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 19 April 1891 and *The Standard*, 12 October 1889.

⁷⁴ *Cricket*, 22 September 1892, 454.

⁷⁵ Alverstone and Alcock (eds), *Surrey Cricket*, 457.

⁷⁶ Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870-1914*, 7.

professionals]’.⁷⁷ The game’s meaning, purpose even, was being slowly re-invented. In this regard, the boisterous, or ‘vulgar’, behaviour of cricketers had been questioned by some ‘respectable’ quarters of Surrey society before the end of the nineteenth-century. Mr Justice Bray, Lord of the Manor of Shere and chairman of Shere CC, had complained that ‘shrieking and shouting [on the field] was not pleasant to the ears’, and he thought the committee should draw up a code of rules which would enable them to turn persons off who did not obey them.⁷⁸ Free-spirited exuberance such as this was likely to have been extremely common during the years prior to those where respectability was deemed essential in almost every social circumstance, and its early demise in London was recalled by the Essex player Henry Preece in 1924:

Forty or fifty years ago in country cricket matches it was the custom when a man was out for one of the fielding side to throw the ball in the air as high as he could. The practice died out in London some thirty years ago and I remember our amazement and humour when Barham, who had just come from the country, picked up the ball and threw it skywards. The other men thought he had gone crazy, but I had seen the old country practice and remembered it.⁷⁹

Metropolitan trends, and attitudes similar to those expressed by Bray,⁸⁰ were to become more common as the middle-classes migrated to rural areas.⁸¹ And yet, the gradual introduction of relatively reserved, or respectable, behaviour among the middle-classes was

⁷⁷ D. Birley, *The Willow Wand* (London, 1979), 5.

⁷⁸ *Woking News*, 28 August 1898.

⁷⁹ Letter inserted to London and Southern Counties Club Cricket Conference Minute Book, March 1916 to December 1926.

⁸⁰ In a 1923 article on country cricket in the 1860s, *The Cornhill Magazine* noted how the ‘... truly rustic cricket [of the period] could not be found nowadays in the suburbanised villages of Surrey or in the cricketing counties of Kent and Sussex’. ‘Country Cricket of the ‘Sixties’ in *The Cornhill Magazine*, 128 (1923), 14.

⁸¹ Howkins has demonstrated how the Home Counties, and Surrey in particular (21.5 per cent), accommodated the highest proportion of white collar workers. Alun Howkins, *The Death of Rural England: A Social History of the Countryside Since 1900* (Routledge, 2003), 98.

often shared with members of the working-classes.⁸² This was not therefore the most significant change to cricket's culture in Surrey, for a more fundamental change relating to competition was to occur. Such a change was not based upon local relations alone however, for it was originally influenced by broader social, political and economic events within and outside of sport and the manner in which amateurism was used to undermine those disliked by metropolitan sporting elites.

Competition is questioned

Respectability was always central to 'gentlemanly' status but, for many new middle class 'gentlemen', so was the respect – deference even – of one's social inferiors.⁸³ As commercialised sport and meritocratic competition had proved to be the 'great social leveller', it was necessary for increasingly insecure sporting gentlemen (almost universally amateurs – publicly at least) to continuously adapt the concept of amateurism and introduce discriminatory distinctions in order to preserve their social status in the face of popular professionalism.⁸⁴ Briefly stated the status security enjoyed by the mid-Victorian gentleman amateur was increasingly under challenge. In 1913 *The Field* explained the state of affairs that had existed previously:

One great distinction, far sharper than it is to-day, cut across all sport, and, indeed every department of activity, the distinction, namely, between those who were gentlemen and those

⁸² F. M. L. Thompson, 'The rise of suburbia' in R. J. Morris and Richard Rodger (eds), *The Victorian City* (Longman, 1993), 166.

⁸³ The expansion of the middle-classes and the increased availability of a public school education had diluted the concept to the extent that much public debate ensued as to who was allowed to utilise the designation. See: *Aldershot News*, 3 February 1900 and *Daily Mirror*, 18 April 1906.

⁸⁴ Stone 'It's all friendly down there', 195 and R. Holt, 'Amateurism and its interpretation: The social origins of British sport', *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 5 (1992), 19-31.

who were not. Nothing could alter or qualify this distinction of birth. If a gentleman 'turned professional,' as we say, he remained a gentleman. ... In fact, when a gentleman and not-gentleman met in athletic rivalry ... the feeling that it was 'man to man' yielded to the knowledge that it was man against gentleman.⁸⁵

This feeling was increasingly undermined by public interest in the County Championship and Test matches, which led to a rise in status of professional cricketers such as George Lohmann of the SCCC.⁸⁶ *The Field* continued:

In the present stage of evolution games have been both democratized and universalized. As soon as the patronage of the public was assured it was inevitable that some games should be exploited on business principles. This result has had its good influences. There is one interesting effect of public patronage generally, which shows how public games react upon social life; that is, that not the professional only, but the amateur also, have become in a sense 'the servants of the public'.⁸⁷

This unwelcome consequence was to be avoided at all costs and separate travel arrangements, dressing rooms, and entrances to the ground for amateurs and professionals were gradually introduced. These methods are regarded as the key tools for the control of professionalism by amateurs, but the MCC's assiduous refusal to fully reorganise the English County Championship (ECC) and tailor the game to the needs of the paying public, as the leagues in the North did, must be considered a further defence in light of the egalitarian developments league competition had instigated in football. As Dobbs suggests: 'to the country-house set, the very concept of a league had all the connotations of the northern

⁸⁵ *New York Times*, 16 March 1913.

⁸⁶ Commenting that the news Lohmann was to 'winter abroad' on medical advice had been advertised in the 'personal paragraphs which immediately succeed the Court Circular in *The Times*', an article in *The Globe* proclaimed: 'What ampler or more significant recognition of the social importance of the professional cricketer could be wished for?' *Cricket*, 29 December 1892, 508.

⁸⁷ *New York Times*, 16 March 1913.

masses swaying, cheering and booing at football matches'.⁸⁸ Professionalism, commercialism and vulgar working-class crowds, were increasingly associated with competition. George Lacy, a well-known critic, argued, in 1894, that the County Championship was 'reducing cricket to the level of mere popular show' and suggested that undesirable spectators might be eradicated by 'raising the entrance money to at least a shilling',⁸⁹ while others proposed 'a new form of county championship, confined solely to amateur players'.⁹⁰ The meritocratic developments associated with the league system had not been lost on the more reactionary cricket elites with influence beyond the 'first-class' game either, and they also went on the offensive.

One of the earliest salvos in non-first-class cricket's cultural war emanated from the Rev. R. S. Holmes in 1894. Holmes, a regular columnist in *Cricket*, identified how league competition in his native Yorkshire had stirred up a good deal of local interest and passion. Unlike the positive rivalries engendered by the West Surrey Village Cup, this purportedly different 'northern' 'competitiveness' was to be decried. Essentially repeating the charges laid at the foot of northern football supporters the previous year by G. H. Shepherd,⁹¹ Holmes wrote that 'rowdiness ... and [the] outcry about umpires ... all arises from this excessive competition; and you may rest assured this is fed by gambling'.⁹² As with the denouncing of

⁸⁸ B. Dobbs, *Edwardians at Play: Sport, 1890-1914* (London, 1973), 129.

⁸⁹ *Cricket*, 25 November 1894, 444.

⁹⁰ *Cricket*, 30 November 1905, 454.

⁹¹ 'Is Football Dwarfing Cricket?' *Cricket*, 20 April 1893, 71.

⁹² *Cricket*, 30 August 1894, 354. Holmes, in a precursor of what Neville Cardus would also claim, suggested further that 'the ring' was a source of ignorance, with the massed spectators appreciating 'big hitting only, and not skilful batting'. *Cricket*, 30 August 1894, 353.

'rowdy' or exuberant behaviour, it was individual amateurs such as Fry, and metropolitan commentators such as Lacy or Holmes who first advocated anti-league views.⁹³

The establishment of the Club Cricketers' Charity Fund (CCCF) in 1910 provides evidence of the distinctly metropolitan origins of what were – even for the time – very extreme opinions relating to professionalism, commercialism and paying spectators. In a pseudo editorial in the CCCF's *Official Handbook* of 1913 titled 'Curse of the Championship', H. V. Dorey let loose a tirade against competitive cricket, and the 'blighting and killing effect of the tournament, league, or championship system'.⁹⁴ He bemoaned the fact that although county cricket was no longer the 'game of the village green' cricket remained, 'the sport for the amateur, or the man who played for the love of the most glorious game the world has ever seen'.⁹⁵ But there was a dark cloud obscuring this romantic view: the professional who benefitted from popular competitions. Dorey continued: 'in these days we have the spectacle of Notts [Nottinghamshire], Yorkshire and Surrey ... sending an eleven into the field wholly composed of professionals. This is a result entirely due to the championship system'.⁹⁶ Dorey regarded the rise of (commercialised) competition, and its bedfellows, the professional and the paying customer, as the death knell of cricket.⁹⁷ The future he argued, should the county game remained unchecked, would be cricket as a Saturday game

⁹³ Indicative of the supposed threat of the rising status of the professional, Major Philip Trevor, author of *The Problems of Cricket* (1907), had gone so far as to suggest 'a new form of county championship, confined solely to amateur players'. *Cricket*, 30 November 1905, 454.

⁹⁴ Dorey was the owner of the Morland Press in London and editor of the weekly magazine *Lawn Tennis and Badminton*. He also produced *Who's who in Cricket: The Blue Book of Cricket*, (Cricket and Sports Publishers, 1911).

⁹⁵ E. A. C Thompson and W. H. Long (eds.), *The Club Cricketers' Official Handbook for 1913*. (Club Cricketers' Charity Fund, 1913).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁷ This turned out to be a somewhat ironic statement, as it was the Conference's continued insistence that matches remained non-competitive that nearly killed off the club game after the Second World War.

operating like the 'Football League, with its motley teams of paid players and all its attendant evils'.⁹⁸

Dorey's opinions were to be given formal administrative weight after 1915 following the creation of the London Club Cricket Conference (LCCC). Established by a veritable 'Who's Who' of the, now international, cricket world.⁹⁹ These men passed a set of rules that would, in tandem with the suburbanisation process, 'enforce' their class-based, anti-competitive, ideology throughout the South-east of England. The most significant of these rules was 'Conditions of Membership':

5. It shall be an indispensable condition that this London Club Cricket Conference shall neither recognise, approve of, nor promote any Cup or League system, and no club connected with a Cup or League competition, or playing a man as a professional, except the groundsman, shall be qualified to attend any meeting of the Conference. Any club subsequently joining a Cup or league competition, or playing a professional other than a groundsman, shall, *ipso facto*, cease to become a member of the Conference.¹⁰⁰

In insisting that matches were essentially non-competitive, non-commercial, non-professional, and any success remained unrewarded, the Conference had developed an extreme form of 'upper-class' amateurism – even Olympians were able to compete for medals. There was of course a distinct ideological basis for such decisions and, in keeping with the social fears that motivated them, the Conference was consciously populated in its early years by elite London clubs alone.¹⁰¹ The Conference's high social status, which

⁹⁸ Thompson and Long, *The Club Cricketers' Official Handbook.*, 8. Sir Home Gordon thought that cricket was 'trapped by its own popularity'. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes*, 81.

⁹⁹ See Stone, 'It's all friendly down there', 199 and 201.

¹⁰⁰ LCCC Minute Book, 1 April 1916.

¹⁰¹ According to *Cricket*, the CCCF represented 'the cream of London club cricket'. *Cricket*, 3 May 1913, 159. The CCC similarly sought to recruit membership from the bigger more exclusive London clubs only. LCCC Minute Book, 2 November 1917.

afforded it a good press (many committee members, like Dorey, were well known cricket writers), and the post-war spread of its values coincided with increased levels of middle class migration to Surrey and the Home Counties. The high status of the Conference and its membership, and middle class migration beyond London, notwithstanding, these allied factors were not sufficient to overturn the long-held social and cultural values discussed previously. It was to be much broader political and economic factors that would prove influential in the middle-classes' decision to eradicate the traditional attitudes held, and enacted upon, by men such as Webster. Against such a background, the somewhat reactionary values of Surrey's new middle class residents were to become broadly universal for, in inter-war Surrey, many within both the established and migrant middle-classes now began to act against their poorer neighbours in their own self-interest.

Class relations deteriorate, 1918-1939

The political, economic, and social issues which led to the class conflict of the inter-war period had antecedents which pre-dated the end of the First World War. The rise of the Independent Labour Party and high levels of trade union membership, which were followed by record levels of strikes during the hostilities, had put the social and political elites on guard. Events overseas, most notably the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, had further heightened fears of working class hordes among the upper reaches of English society. The expansion of the franchise, the first Labour government, and the increasing influence of trade unionism at home, only served to confirm that such fears were genuine.¹⁰²

¹⁰² J. Shepherd and K. Laybourn, *Britain's First Labour Government* (Basingstoke, 2013).

An increasingly distant relationship between the classes, both on and off cricket fields, arose in the decades following the First World War.¹⁰³ The inter-war period was, of course, marked by an economic depression and high levels of unemployment nationally, and this led to an extended period of social unrest, which included six national hunger marches, the General Strike and the famous Jarrow Crusade.¹⁰⁴ Although the greatest hardships in England were concentrated among the working-classes of the industrial North – where the heavy industries of mining, steel and shipbuilding dominated – the towns and villages of Surrey were also affected. In Dorking, the first six matches of the 1926 season were cancelled due to the General Strike, and six years later the local economy was still perilous as ‘five applicants turned up for the post of groundsman – not exactly a lucrative position in those days’.¹⁰⁵ Allied to this financial insecurity, the working-classes were increasingly shunned by their wealthier neighbours. Whereas William Drowley, chairman of Horsell CC, and Master Builder of numerous middle class homes in and around Woking, stated in 1896 that he ‘was looking forward to the time when workmen will not have to work so many hours ... and [become] more independent as men who rejoiced in being alive’, middle class attitudes towards working-men hardened after 1918.¹⁰⁶ The breakdown of previously cordial relations immediately following the war was influenced by the upper and middle-classes’ realisation that ‘the strategy of restricting working-class demands upon society to the margins had ... failed’.¹⁰⁷ The social and political elites increasingly feared a working class who they regarded as a central problem. But although their fears of Bolshevism far outweighed any real threat, it is clear that they affected social and sporting relations.

¹⁰³ R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford, 1990).

¹⁰⁴ M. Pugh, *“We Danced All Night”: a Social History of Britain Between the Wars*, (London, 2008), 76–82.

¹⁰⁵ K. J. Cole, *Two Hundred Years of Dorking Cricket, 1766-1968*. ([The author], 1969), 58–59.

¹⁰⁶ *Woking News*, 6 November 1896.

¹⁰⁷ R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*, (Oxford, 1998), 259.

Despite the carefully nurtured apolitical image of English sport, somewhat hysterical references to 'Bolshevism' and 'collectivist philosophies', unfairly associated with the professional ranks and the northern counties in particular, were a recurring motif among cricket administrators and journalists following the war. Lord Harris and P. F. Warner used 'Bolshevism' to decry any hint of industrial action by professionals, while Neville Cardus wrote in 1922 that: 'Too many Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, and Yorkshire elevens have overdone the collectivist philosophy, turning out just "utility" teams, mechanically efficient'.¹⁰⁸

This highly politicised defence of their own power, which was reinforced by the centrality of amateurism to first-class cricket's cultural meaning, began to permeate all levels of cricket in the South. That the North had remained culturally consistent since the introduction of cups and leagues meant such notions, and the undesirable habits of (northern) urban life, were still being used to attack professional sport (and large working class crowds), after the Second World War: A speech by General Sir Walter Kirke to the Whitley British Legion games league in 1949, linked 'Communist agitators' and urban life in towns and cities, where 'the majority of people seemed to spend their time watching professionals'.¹⁰⁹ These fears saw many in positions of influence, who had previously advocated cross-class unity, talking of self-preservation after the First World War. The value of the volunteer movement and a 'spirit of self-sacrifice' for the common good had been expressed in a speech by a Dr. Page in Guildford during 1915.¹¹⁰ By 1921 however – a date at which 21.5 per cent of the population

¹⁰⁸ Cited in T. Bateman, *Cricket, Literature and Culture Symbolising the Nation, Destabilising Empire* (Farnham, 2009), 116. For more on the cricket elites fear of 'Bolshevism', see: Birley, *A Social History*, 217–220.

¹⁰⁹ *Surrey Advertiser*, 16 April 1949.

¹¹⁰ *Surrey Advertiser*, 22 February 1915.

of Surrey were deemed to be white collar workers –¹¹¹ the Guildford branch of the Middle Classes Union heard Page state a very different case. In light of the post-war changes, Page proposed that ‘instead of being pugnacious, the Middle Classes Union only desired to use that instinct of self-protection and self-preservation, which animated every creature’. The middle classes, he contentiously argued, felt that:

the burden laid on them was disproportionately heavy to that laid on other classes and that, with incomes reduced by taxation, and by the depreciation of money, they were in a position which almost threatened them with extinction. ... Labour, during the years of the war, had never received or extracted a higher price for every service which it rendered.¹¹²

Such an attitude towards ‘labour’ could not have been more different to those previously expressed by the middle class sponsors of the Guildford Working Men’s CC: ‘What’, claimed Hon-member and future Mayor J. Mason in 1904, ‘can be more desirable than to be associated with a body of men who reckon amongst their number the King, the Prime Minister and the Mayor of Guildford – working men assuredly’.¹¹³ Despite the absence of large working class communities based around single industries, organisations such as the Middle Class Union demonstrated how many among the middle-classes in London, and now Surrey, were not prepared to ‘play a subordinate role in the new order’ in either political or cultural terms.¹¹⁴ Whereas senior cricket clubs had been happy to meet working class clubs in competition, support their efforts, or even merge with them prior to 1914, prejudicial attitudes were increasingly prevalent among the middle-classes in county towns and villages and upon their cricket fields.

¹¹¹ This was a larger proportion than the more urbanised Middlesex. Howkins, *The Death of Rural England*, 98.

¹¹² *Surrey Advertiser*, 20 June 1921.

¹¹³ Unknown newspaper dated 29 February 1904 in Guildford Institute Scrapbook, Album R, 164-165.

¹¹⁴ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 259.

Despite Guildford's first suburb (developed from 1862) being a highly successful mix of villas and artisan dwellings, house building in early twentieth-century predominantly consisted of middle class developments similar to the Abbotswood Estate (from 1912).¹¹⁵ Byfleet (five miles from Woking), described as 'a resort for business people' in 1896, was no different.¹¹⁶ The 'town', which still had fewer than 2,000 residents by 1901, was one of many small 'towns' or 'villages' which had attracted very wealthy industrialists – including Charles Butler Jnr., of the Lambert and Butler Tobacco Company – during the late nineteenth-century.¹¹⁷ The Byfleet CC was one of many which embodied the increasing social retrenchment of the middle-classes. Although the club had allowed the 'junior' Byfleet Village CC to use their ground while their own was being made ready in 1919, they rejected the idea of a fixture against them in 1923,¹¹⁸ for they had already (by 1921) developed a very exclusive list of fixtures against the likes of the MCC, the Stock Exchange, Yellowhammers and Butterflies; a team exclusively selected from Eton, Charterhouse, Harrow, Westminster and Winchester old-boys.¹¹⁹

In Ewhurst, an isolated village located ten miles from Guildford in the Surrey Hills, residential construction appears to have been dominated (after 1870) by very large houses, such as 'Woolpits', which was designed by Sir Ernest George for Sir Henry Doulton in 1884. By 1921, in order to 'restore the Ewhurst Cricket Club to its former famous position amongst the clubs of the county', the club, like Byfleet CC, sought fixtures with well-known metropolitan clubs rather than their neighbours. In order to achieve this ambition they felt compelled to

¹¹⁵ E. R. Camberlain, *Guildford: A biography* (London, 1970), 36-41.

¹¹⁶ *Woking News*, 30 October 1896.

¹¹⁷ http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/data_cube_page.jsp?data_theme=T_POP&data_cube=N_TOT_POP&u_id=10094940&c_id=10001043&add=N accessed 13 August 2013.

¹¹⁸ Byfleet CC, 21 March 1923. SHC Ref: 2710/1

¹¹⁹ *Surrey Advertiser*, 20 July 1921.

adopt the values of the Conference and reject league competition.¹²⁰ Ewhurst had competed in the Hurtwood League – one of a small number of leagues in west Surrey during the 1920s – with Peaslake, Holmbury St Mary, Oakwood Hill, Forest Green and Cranleigh Working Men, but the committee decided to withdraw from the league in 1928.¹²¹ Having refused to share their ground with the Ewhurst Pals Club in 1921, a special general meeting of the club decided that ‘friendly fixtures were more sporting than any league match’.¹²² Although Ewhurst informed the League’s Hon. Secretary that they desired to ‘play friendly games with the [league’s] clubs as heretofore’, their withdrawal immediately severed ties with a number of local teams. The members apparent desire to mix with a better ‘class’ of opposition, resulted in the previous year’s league fixture against Cranleigh Working Men being replaced by a friendly match with Royal Grammar School old-boy club; Old Guildfordians.¹²³

Such a change in attitude towards matches with teams of local working men, and the prioritising of friendly matches (with elite clubs) over meaningful competitive leagues (with their neighbours), also occurred in neighbouring Cranleigh where increasing numbers of migrants began to price out the indigenous workers.¹²⁴ Although the larger residences witnessed in Ewhurst were absent, a swathe of villas had been built during the 1890s to cater for the burgeoning middle class population attracted to the area by not only the fresh air, but also the railway station and public school, which had both opened in 1865. The

¹²⁰ Ewhurst CC Minute Book, 10 April 1912. SHS Ref: 5406/1

¹²¹ These reports were almost always without reference to the fact that that these fixtures were league matches.

¹²² Ewhurst Minute Book, 15 March 1921. SHC Ref: 5406/1

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 15 July 1928. By 1939 Ewhurst were approaching senior clubs such as Banstead CC for fixtures. *Ibid.*, 20 February 1939. Frederick Ernest Green’s claim of 1915 that ‘residents of all classes may join in games of cricket’ in the ‘suburbanised’ village of Cranleigh may well have been made at the very end of such practices. Frederick Ernest Green, *The Surrey Hills* (Surrey, 1915), 192.

¹²⁴ Cranleigh resident Stephen Rowland who established the Cranleigh public school ‘for parents of the middle class or moderate incomes’, also brought gas and water supplies to the village and set up a company to develop the New Park Estate in the late nineteenth-century. <http://www.cranleighvillage.net/visitor6.asp> accessed 11 June 2013. Both the school and the railway line between Guildford and Horsham were established in Cranleigh in 1865. <http://www.cranleighvillage.net/visitor3.asp> Accessed 5 August 2013.

popularity of the village among middle class migrants had left the village with little or no affordable or social housing and, by 1926, 28 applications were received for Hambledon Rural Council's one vacant Council house.¹²⁵ This issue, it was argued, was 'largely due to the acquisition by strangers of cottages formerly occupied by local workers'.¹²⁶ A similar situation appears to have existed in Woking, where 600 applicants were waiting for Council housing in 1927.¹²⁷ Although the Woking example may indicate a simple shortage of housing in a rapidly expanding town, the Ewhurst and Cranleigh examples would suggest that middle class numbers had finally reached a critical mass, which enabled relatively new residents to dominate, even the remotest parts of west and east Surrey, in cultural terms that their metropolitan counterparts would recognise. This included cricket and, reflecting the broader deterioration in class relations, the game was transformed not only in terms of its social configuration, but also its cultural form and meaning.

Conclusion

This contextualised appraisal of the long-term cultural changes within Surrey's club cricket refutes the historical assumption that it had reflected the 'orthodox' cultural values of the sport's 'national' narrative since their invention in the 1850s. Indeed, the cultural form and meaning of cricket was broadly the same throughout the country regardless of local economy or social structure. Despite concerns over gambling and uncouth behaviour, 'competition' – essential for any genuine sport – was seen, by all classes, as natural and

¹²⁵ This absence of social housing was compounded by high rents in what little housing was available. Furthermore, low wages were stretched by expensive provisions in what remained isolated communities. Green, *The Surrey Hills*, 194.

¹²⁶ *Surrey Advertiser*, 24 July 1926

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 August 1927

positive prior to the First World War. That was until the meritocratic repercussions of commercialised cricket were felt by the metropolitan 'elites' involved as players or administrators within the first-class game. There thus began a coordinated backlash against professionalism, and individual professionals, but also the meritocratic competitions which facilitated their rise in status.

As professionalism within the ECC, and the ECC itself, was too well established (and commercially valuable) the first-class counties introduced degrading amateur and professional distinctions, which remained in place until 1963, in order to maintain social distance. Outside of the first class game however, metropolitan elites were able, via the abolition of cups and leagues, to create their own realm of middle class cricket. Within this increasingly discrete world, where clubs got to choose their opposition, working class cricketers were either not necessary (as professionals or representatives of the local community), or could be priced out by prohibitive membership fees.

This development is unlikely to have happened without the far-reaching influence of the Conference, but it is clear that the meritocratic developments cited above influenced their decision to forbid competition cricket from the outset. The spread of this new elitist culture into Surrey resulted from the region's demographically narrow 'suburbanisation', at a time of wider class conflict. Although the relatively 'organic' suburban development of Surrey is important, the wider societal context in which it took place is central to understanding the specific cultural form of cricket the middle-classes chose to adopt. Significantly, it also provides evidence as to the pace and nature of Surrey's 'suburbanisation' itself.

Unlike planned suburbs where the new residents were able to develop a given 'way of life' unhindered by pre-existing social structures or culture, the indigenous elites, and their

poorer neighbours, within Surrey, had been able to resist, or simply ignore, most middle class challenges to traditional social and cultural relationships prior to 1914. It was not until the 1930s – following decades of class conflict and middle class retrenchment – that the so-called ‘friendly’ cricket culture, so synonymous with the South of England, became broadly universal. The timescale required for this transition suggests that the cultural dominance of the middle-classes, so fundamental to Surrey’s contemporary suburban identity, was established decades later than has been previously suggested.¹²⁸ Once established, the local working-classes played amongst themselves (often within obscure and unreported leagues), while the middle class clubs coveted visits from the metropolitan clubs.¹²⁹ Although the boundary changes of 1889 were significant in re-instating the rural image of Surrey, boundaries between one county and another were almost meaningless. Regional or local rivalries did not strictly disappear, but ‘class’ or ‘education’, rather than ‘place’ or ‘community’, became more important. Certain cricket clubs within rural Surrey attained status by inviting elite suburban clubs to them, while offering these suburban elites a taste of the game’s romanticised rural past in return.

Although this methodological approach requires further refinement, this case study has provided sufficient evidence to suggest that the social and cultural history of sport may be a valuable contextual tool for other branches of history. Recent debates have led to calls for the practitioners of sport history to craft their work ‘so it is useful for other historians or

¹²⁸ H. J. Mackinder, *Britain and the British Seas*, 258. **And the Kelly’s description of Cranleigh?**

¹²⁹ The *Weekly Press* established a cricket league in Guildford in 1927. It was dominated by working class or works clubs. *Weekly Press*, 8 March 1927.

other disciplines'.¹³⁰ This essay is a small step in that direction, but the practitioners of other realms of history might like to consider take to the field for themselves.

¹³⁰ M. MacLean, 'Cracks in the (Self-Constructed?) Ghetto Walls? Comments on Paul Ward's 'Last Man Picked'', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 30, (2013), 31.