

‘Gilligan’s Island?’: The Club Cricket Conference, Amateurism and the *Evening Standard* in Post-War Britain.

Introduction

Amateurism in sport and political and civil society was a firmly established ideology, or ‘ethos’, which informed British culture and identity prior to the outbreak of World War Two, although this concept was frequently challenged prior to 1939 – especially in sport. The Labour Party’s landslide electoral victory of that year (and the 1942 Beveridge Report before it) contributed towards ‘amateurism’, in all aspects of British society, being questioned, and, if necessary, replaced by a new breed of professionalism. Innovations such as the National Health Service, the Welfare State and a policy of nationalization, attempted to alter the cultural, economic and political foundations of English society. However, as Ross Mc Kibbin has argued, these innovations did not essentially affect the structure of English society, especially with regard to those social groups who controlled a variety of political, civil and cultural organizations.

‘Cricket – like a number of sports [at a national level] – was administered, and its ethos established, by self-electing, all-male associations recruited overwhelmingly from the upper and upper middle classes’.¹ Norman Baker notes how the committees of organizations, such as the MCC, managed to maintain their pre-war influence and the inherent ethos of amateurism that informed it.² It was clear at the national level, where traditionalist administrators held the majority of key positions, that if change was to happen at all, it was going to be a drawn out process influenced by exterior social changes rather than pro-active decision making from within.³ At lower levels of the game, however, a greater degree of latitude was available. ‘Competitive’ amateur cricket, in opposition to the ‘friendly’ non-competitive image of cricket evoked by cricket histories, had coexisted in the South since the 1880s.⁴ The I’Anson Cup: the oldest village cricket league in the world, to

name but one.⁵ As Roland Bowen highlighted, cricket histories, such as H. S. Altham and E. W. Swanton's *A History of Cricket*, record the 'cricket played by a certain, comparatively narrow section of the [English] population'. Namely: 'public school, Varsity and Test cricket'.⁶ Consequently leagues in the South were overlooked, and amateur values, or what Bowen called a 'false morality',⁷ not only dominated cricket's culture, but also its history, as those who prescribed this ethos influenced or produced histories themselves, which only reflected the cricket played and controlled by the social elites.⁸

Such a cultural and historical myopia has contributed towards the sports image, to become so distorted, that for many, the historical presentation of cricket would be unrecognisable from their contemporary experience – particularly for many working class cricketers. This paper will demonstrate how the patterns of control, highlighted by Mc Kibbin, also existed at lower levels of the game in the South, and how these conservative, or traditional, men exerted and maintained a particular version of amateurism in southern club cricket in the face of direct, and 'progressive', challenges. It will also demonstrate how social deference within the post-war media assisted them in this regard, as club cricket in the South was largely represented by the more socially elite clubs. These clubs, as well as many of the less exclusive clubs in the South, were, in turn, greatly influenced by an organization called the Club Cricket Conference (CCC). The CCC had set its face against so-called 'competitive' cricket, in the form of cups and leagues, since its establishment in 1915 from the remnants of its parent organization the Club Cricketers' Charity Fund (CCCF). Club cricket in the South thus came to be regarded, and presented, as a 'league free' zone, as the ideological basis of the region's cricket was built upon strict amateur foundations.

Following certain events in 1948 however, one southern newspaper: London's *Evening Standard* launched a 'campaign'⁹ to introduce competitive leagues to club cricket in

London and the South, and this paper will also examine how the Conference dealt with this and three independent but overlapping challenges to establish league cricket in the South of England. Firstly, in order to achieve this, the events leading up to the *Evening Standard's* campaign will be discussed, followed by an examination of what the *Standard*, and others perceived as the 'problem' with English cricket. After a brief précis of the Conference's social and ideological background, and its early, and highly influential, constitutional decisions, the paper will then examine the three challenges to the Conference in 1949 to introduce league cricket to Essex, Sussex and Surrey. Through an analysis of the *Evening Standard's* coverage and the CCC's minute books, the outcomes of these challenges and the *Evening Standard's* role will be assessed.

I will conclude that the *Standard's* focus upon the 'elite' clubs playing – both literally and metaphorically – 'pointless' recreational games, rather than the 'meaningful' cricket, played by less socially exclusive clubs, results from the long-standing influence and social status of the Conference. The *Standard's* deference towards these 'elites' contributed directly towards the failure of at least one of these challenges and a delay of almost twenty years in the 'official' introduction of leagues to the South.¹⁰ This and the content of orthodox cricket histories, reflect the hegemonic influence of the upper and middle-classes and the amateur ethos that they promoted via the Conference.

Campaign pre-cursors

1948 may have been a somewhat bleak summer of cricket for many English supporters. The English County Championship title was won by Glamorgan and duly left English soil for the first time, and Don Bradman's 'Invincibles', who won the Ashes 4 – 0, remained undefeated in over thirty first-class games that summer. If not Glamorgan's Championship,¹¹ it was certainly the Australian's strength, which stirred the media to ask

what exactly the problem with English cricket was?¹² Even before the Ashes series had finished, two editorials appeared in the *Standard* in the July and August of 1948 first asking, and then answering the question 'What's wrong with English Cricket?' In the July editorial (under this title) the *Standard's* Sports Editor, Bruce Harris, acknowledged that what he proposed to remedy English cricket was controversial when he stated: 'I know I am talking heresy, but if London followed the lead of the North the Southern clubs would be a fuller reservoir of talent for our county and England elevens'.

Harris then went on to report the attitude that prevailed in London club cricket at this time, and the consequences of a refusal to change. As one club cricketer stated: "Once leagues were started I should stop playing cricket altogether ... I play the game for pleasure, league cricket is too grim." Harris sympathised, as long as the nation remained 'indifferent about the results of Test matches'. But, he argued: 'we cannot have it both ways. We cannot go on in the present happy-go-lucky style, and beat these keen, organised Australians as well'.¹³

By the following month, Harris in a second editorial entitled 'This is what's wrong with English cricket' believed he had to instigate a change, or at least a debate about a move away from the 'happy go lucky' cricket advocated by what he regarded as a minority group. Leading on from his implication of the previous month Harris argued that as the game was 'unorganised to the point of chaos'. Young players disappeared into a 'desert' of non-competitive cricket, where they were unable to rise to the attention of 'the tired old men who ruled county cricket'. In referring to their 'illogical attitude of caring for the game and not the result' Harris pulled no punches regarding the culpability of the amateur ethos, although he did not explicitly say so in print.¹⁴ He concluded that, if the England team was

to see any improvement, a competitive league system in the South of England was a prerequisite.

This 'problem' with the English team's recent record against Australia, and competitive cricket in the South of England had also been debated, by A. W. T. Langford in *The Cricketer*.¹⁵ But the root of the problem was highlighted, perhaps typically, by an Australian, the ex-Test player now journalist, Jack Fingleton. In his book, *Brightly Fades the Don*, Fingleton recalls playing in a match at East Molesey in Surrey, on a date between the two *Standard* editorials. Fingleton wrote: 'The president of the club told me that there were over 1000 club teams in Surrey alone, but the county draws nothing from this colossal strength because in England to-day there seems to be no half-way mark between professionalism and amateurism'.¹⁶ All three authors highlight the largely southern specific problem of amateur cricket: the amateur ideology of 'cricket's rulers' which dictated that matches remained non-competitive, non-commercial, non-professional and success non-rewarded. The remedy to English cricket's ills was thus made clear, but who were 'cricket's rulers' in the South of England, and why, in 1948, was it regarded as 'heresy' to suggest a move towards competitive cricket?

The Club Cricket Conference

The Conference, according to A. C. L. Bennett, its captain in 1949, was an organization whose social membership 'started at the top, and has since worked down'.¹⁷ Formed in 1915, the CCC¹⁸ adopted the amateur ethos of its parent organization the CCCF, and like the Fund, the Conference was largely populated by the cricketing elites, and notions such as that expressed in the Fund's *Official Handbook* of 1913 prevailed. In a pseudo-editorial entitled 'Curse of the Championship', the cricket author, H. V. Dorey, let loose a tirade against competitive cricket, and the 'blighting and killing effect of the tournament, league,

or championship system'.¹⁹ But what brought about this hostility towards competition and the adoption of the amateur ethos; the end product of which was the constitutional codification of class exclusiveness and discrimination following the outbreak of World War One.²⁰ Dorey had suggested that county cricket in 1913 remained 'the sport for the amateur, or the man who played for the love of the most glorious game the world has ever seen', but there was a dark cloud obscuring this romantic view: Professionalism. Dorey continued: 'in these days we have the spectacle of Notts, Yorkshire and Surrey ... sending an eleven into the field wholly composed of professionals. This is a result entirely due to the championship system'.²¹

In that same year, *The Field* was reporting on how it was not just the working-class professional who was on the rise, but how the amateur cricketer's status was, in a reaction to the games commercialization and popularity with the public, in decline. It stated:

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'.²²

Such a state-of-affairs would not do, and the social elites who controlled the Conference went on the offensive, by establishing an amateur *plus* version of the game, which was to stand apart from the other amateur cricket played throughout the South.

This heady combination of insecurity and elitism brought about two committee decisions in 1916, which, set both the short and long-term trajectory of this organization, 'club' cricket,

and the image of the game.²³ The first decision, which was to have such far-reaching ramifications, was made at the inaugural General Meeting on the 22nd March, 1916. This was presided over by Sir Home Gordon,²⁴ who, along with Hon. Secretary E. A. C. Thompson and committee members elected that evening, decided that they, as the first committee, were 'empowered to frame and agree upon the objects and code of Rules to govern the Conference'.²⁵ Somewhat mirroring the social make-up of the Fund, this first Conference committee,²⁶ was similarly narrow, clearly of like mind and would exhibit longevity and consistency in its membership and decision making.²⁷

The second decision, which would set apart the format and image of 'club' cricket in the South from the North, was taken at the first committee meeting not two weeks later. Having decided that they alone would decide the rules of the new Conference, the Committee then passed a set of rules that would shape the ideological direction of 'club' cricket in London and the South for the next 52 years.²⁸

The most significant of these rules was Rule 5:

Conditions of Membership

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.²⁹

This rule established the elitist social foundations of the Conference, and did much to re-create the conditions (professional groundsman/coach) that many would have grown up

with at the public schools and Oxbridge Universities. The Annual General Meeting in February 1920, some seven years after Dorey's editorial, updated Rules defining eligible 'amateur' players and 'amateur' clubs. These continued to reflect the views Dorey had expressed.

Definition of an Amateur, & c.

4. An amateur club is a club of which all the playing members are amateurs. A member of an amateur cricket club is a person who plays cricket for the game's sake only.³⁰

Significantly, this rule – perhaps for the first (and only) time in sports history – codified the amateur ideal of playing a game for the game's sake only, and this rule thus represented a tightening of the Conference's ideological grip on its member clubs. Furthermore, all clubs affiliated to the Conference and their members were now obliged to accept this, and other, rules as 'final and binding upon them'.³¹

Although these rules were designed to negate any confusion regarding competition and professionalism, it is clear from the minute books that compromise for some, and strict adherence to these rules for others, led to institutional hypocrisy. Thus, although they allowed London Hospitals (the CCCF's original benefactors), and others to compete in competitions from as early as 1919,³² others such as Steinway Athletic CC, who had joined the Music Trades League, were removed from the Conference Register of Clubs, and any member club who still had fixtures against Steinway was duly notified: 'that they must cancel their fixtures with the offending club forthwith'.³³

Frequently, the use of professionals by clubs was overlooked, and thus, it would appear, that competition itself, rather than professionalism was the Conference Committee

members' greatest fear. The reasons behind this fear were rather familiar.³⁴ The indirect control of professionalism aside, commercialism, or 'trade', was increasingly becoming involved in amateur club cricket, and it was this which further reinforced the Conferences resolve against competitive play. As will be demonstrated, this would continue after 1945.

Amateurism is challenged

Having maintained operations during World War Two, as they had during World War One, the CCC appears to have been able to strengthen its grip over southern club cricket, and its stance against competition. This is demonstrated by the way in which the Conference dealt with some of the new, often progressive, cricket Associations which were being formed across the South. Sussex was to be the initial epicentre of this phenomenon, with the formation of the Brighton and Hove Cricket Association (BaHCA) in 1941 and the Sussex Cricket Association (SCA) in 1943. The Brighton Association's Rule 2, although stating that the Association would not promote league cricket itself, did allow for clubs' competing in them to become members. The Sussex Association's 'Aims and Objects', on the other hand, explicitly stated that it would promote competitive cricket. Despite this, both Associations desired to be affiliated with the Conference. However, the Conference's Executive Council strongly rejected their applications until both Association's offending clauses were erased.³⁵

Although the rules of the Conference were 'thoroughly overhauled to meet modern conditions'³⁶ in 1947, almost nothing had changed from 1915 up to the time the *Evening Standard's* editorials appeared in 1948. However by early 1949 it was clear to most that a 'spirit of adventure'³⁷ was manifest across the South. H. M. 'Monty' Garland-Wells, the ex-Surrey captain and now President of the recently formed Surrey Association of Cricket Clubs (SACC), wrote of the 'frequent topic of discussion at club dinners [he had

witnessed] during the winter months',³⁸ and 'the great swing of public opinion in regard to the type of cricket which should be played'.³⁹

Although apparently popular, the desire to foster league cricket in Surrey, or the wider South, was not universal, and letters, both for and against, appeared in *The Cricketer* at this time. Perhaps typical of the anti-league camp was the opinion of a Mr. J. A. Wright, of Dulwich CC, who claimed that league cricket was 'not wanted by the great majority of [elite] clubs'. Indicative of his Conservatism and a reluctance for change, he then stated: 'the real danger lies in the fact that supporters of a new way of life, in whatever sphere, by the very nature of things are to be heard with greater frequency and with louder clamour than those who prefer the *status quo*, as it were'.⁴⁰ The rejection of modernity by some of the club cricket elites aside, A. C. L. Bennett provided a further reason why change to southern club cricket was deemed undesirable. In his 1951 book, *The Week-end Cricketer*, Bennett alludes to the importance of middle-class 'sociability', highlighted by Mc Kibbin.⁴¹ In stating that 'the choosing of opponents is a most important factor',⁴² Bennett highlighted an element of social control the elite's would lose within a league format.

The supporters of reform argued that standards of play and poorly kept time-keeping would improve, and that the recently embarrassed national side would, eventually, benefit. Crucially, as G. R. Langdale and Andrew Kempton, the Surrey coach, pointed out, those against league cricket were essentially a group who had never tried it.⁴³ Naturally, this was countered by the anti-league lobbyists, and the battle lines were drawn, and fought, upon these issues between the CCC and three independent, but overlapping, challenges from Sussex, Essex and Surrey. These challenges, it must be stressed, did not wish to appropriate the Conference's authority, but sought only to extract a relaxation in its ideological stance against competitive cricket.

Late in 1948 the ex-Sussex captain A. E. R. Gilligan, who was president of the SCA, had stated his desire to inaugurate some form of competitive cricket. This had in due course been relayed to the Conference via member clubs writing to elicit a reaction or guidance. Unsurprisingly, having been 'jolted' into action, the CCC, in correspondence to all member Sussex clubs, decreed that this would be in contravention of Rule 4 (Conditions of Membership), and clubs risked expulsion if they participated. By January 1949, the Conference had received 'another jolt',⁴⁴ which, this time emanated from Garland-Wells and the Surrey Association. In the *Standard*, Peter Goodall reported on the Surrey Association's meeting, and highlighted just how much the Conference's opinions were respected, or perhaps even 'feared':

The inevitability of competitive top-class cricket being played in the South of England was shown at the annual general meeting of the Surrey Association of Cricket Clubs, held at the Oval. Discussion and reactions were very similar to those of A. E. R. Gilligan's Sussex conference I attended in Brighton not long ago. But *stifling free speech* at both places was the old bogey, "What will the Club Cricket Conference say?"⁴⁵

Despite these fears, we may assume, from Goodall's tone that both meetings were well attended and enthusiastic towards the idea of leagues, for he was convinced competitive cricket in the South was 'inevitable'. The Surrey committee recorded that the representatives of most Areas within the Association 'strongly approved' of league cricket, and it was decided to canvass member clubs opinions directly. Reporting in the *Evening Standard* in March, Bruce Harris noted how Garland-Well's challenge, which had bypassed the CCC, had overtaken that of Gilligan in Sussex. Gilligan's challenge was by now flagging, as the 'bigger clubs', due largely to the CCC's intervention, were 'not

prepared to commit themselves'. However, despite the enthusiasm of the meetings, and Goodall himself, Goodall realized that the introduction of competitive cricket would need to be incremental and in a different form to that in the North. He wrote:

Mild and bitter

Northern league cricket, it seems, is divided into two categories – “mild” and “bitter.” The committee, I believe, are more partial to “mild”. The “bitter” (Lancashire League) is too strong for southern consumption.⁴⁶

In doing so, Harris re-enforces a stereotype widely held in the South of the Northern Leagues, and the Lancashire League in particular; for although highly competitive, the Lancashire League had, since 1900, enforced a maximum of one professional per side, and the league remained a nursery for the amateur cricketer.⁴⁷ The rather humorous beer analogy aside, and the fact that the majority of SACC members rejected the proposal,⁴⁸ the zeal with which the CCC defended its amateur ethos elsewhere, and the social, cultural and status ‘capitals’ at stake are ably demonstrated by the Conference’s reaction to the third challenge, of 1949, to establish an ‘Essex County Senior League’.⁴⁹

Despite his challenge appearing to be the last underway, a Mr. G. M. Parkinson, very quickly felt the wrath of the Conference’s Executive Committee. Proposing a league with two divisions of twelve teams each, Parkinson and his Essex comrades were, according to Goodall, ‘in a happier position’ in late April, for the CCC had, ‘after a certain amount of evasion ... let it be known that if sufficient members want to play competitive cricket they are prepared to consider any scheme put before them’. Having taken ‘the very reasonable course of preparing a programme for next season’. Parkinson’s group then went ‘to the Conference for their advice before proceeding any further’.⁵⁰ In what were to prove somewhat prophetic words, Goodall then noted that: ‘To my mind, by far the most

important point is that at last the Conference must make a decision as to whether this type of cricket is compatible with continued membership of the Conference. If not it is unlikely that we shall see any league cricket of any standing played in the South for many years'.⁵¹

Clearly, as Goodall had implied in January and April of 1949, it was up to member clubs to resign, for it was never a question of the CCC reneging upon its amateur values. The Essex challenge, now 'made the Conference act',⁵² or rather react. Parkinson's Essex group tabled a 'second' resolution to the Conference's May 20th meeting 'which would allow them to play in "a cricket league which has been approved by the council."' ⁵³ However, the *Standard's* Harris, who according to Bennett, 'has often said that he advocates league cricket among southern clubs',⁵⁴ performed a journalistic *volte face* in an article headed 'Are Essex clubs too impatient?'

Harris's article reported that the Conference's Secretary, H. E. Scheele had written to Parkinson, informing him that 'the meeting would produce "no concrete answer." Even if approved, the rule could not be altered before the next AGM in February 1950'. This, being wholly unsatisfactory to Parkinson and the Essex group he represented, he called a parallel meeting, that same evening, of May 20th, in Brentwood, Essex. This meeting was designed to do no more than attain enough support (24 clubs) to force the Conference to hold an extraordinary general meeting within two calendar months so that the issue of forming a league could be discussed openly. It is strange therefore, that Harris then accused the Essex clubs – who after all only wanted to introduce something he and Goodall had 'campaign'd' for – of being premature, impatient and possibly even disrespectful in calling their meeting. In stating that: 'Surely the council reply should have been awaited',⁵⁵ Harris's article clearly sided with the Conference.

The meeting of the Conference's Executive Council that night, as Scheele, Parkinson, and no doubt, Harris and Goodall would have known, produced no surprises. After opening the meeting with letters objecting to leagues in the South from such 'vocal' clubs as Dulwich CC, Parkinson's resolution was discussed. According to Bennett, these discussions became rather 'heated, but the general feeling was clearly against any change of rule'.⁵⁶ The committee then prepared a statement for the Chairman, Jack Cooper, of Barclays Bank CC, to issue to the press.⁵⁷ It stated: 'This Council considers the introduction of competition cricket in the south is not in the interests of club cricket and that no alteration to the objects and rules of the Conference is desirable'.⁵⁸ One has to question whose interests were being served.

Over in Brentwood, Parkinson was to feel the sharp end of the power of the press. Harris's article on the evening of the two meetings had, as 'Parkinson told Goodall later ... made the Essex representatives waiver ... [and] many of them ignored their promises and did not attend Parkinson's meeting'.⁵⁹ This rapidly resulted in the failure of Parkinson's resolution to alter the CCC's constitution, and ended the most serious challenge to the Conference's dominance. This failure also removed any chance of forming an 'elite' league in Essex until the Essex Cricket League was established in 1972. Now that the Essex clubs had been given, in Bennett's words: 'a nasty jolt [of their own] ... the C.C.C. was taking no chances' over the preservation of both non-competitive cricket and its own influence. The Conference's newly formed Competitive Cricket Sub-Committee⁶⁰ had reported back in July, and had prepared, as Sub-Committee member Bennett recalled:

... a memorandum listing the main arguments for and against competitive cricket, so that ... if any clubs had similar ideas, it [the CCC Committee] would have most, if not all, the answers in

support of the view that southern clubs in general opposed any departure from their normal game.⁶¹

Bennett thus admits to the fact that the Conference, having been reactionary regarding the Surrey, Sussex and Essex challenges, was now being pre-emptive in its future relationship with member clubs on the issue of competitive cricket. Subsequently, the committee he sat on produced a memorandum which did not act in the interests of those member clubs who desired change.

Although Garland-Wells' Surrey challenge appears to have been defeated internally, without interference by the Conference, 'Parkinson's Essex experiment was ruined by it'.⁶² This only left Arthur Gilligan's challenge in Sussex. Naturally, in the climate created by the Conference, Gilligan's proposal, despite being described as 'a mild form of competitive cricket',⁶³ had met with strong and organized resistance. Following the CCC's initial correspondence in December 1948, Gilligan 'had a hard time persuading the bigger Sussex clubs that they should compete'.⁶⁴ The influential Sussex clubs, faced with a resolute CCC were unprepared to risk 'being banned',⁶⁵ and, as in Essex, had 'backed out as soon as they were told that the Conference would never approve'.⁶⁶ However Gilligan, now president of the newly formed Sussex Association of Cricket Clubs, did get his league, albeit one without the more 'established' clubs. Bennett indirectly stressed the importance of this classic re-negotiation of terms/teams, and how the absence of these 'established' clubs resulted in the new league being deemed irrelevant. He notes, somewhat speculatively:

Now, though I've never heard Arthur Gilligan mention it, I myself believe he would have been far happier if the more powerful clubs could have been persuaded to enter the competition. But

clubs ... which at first showed interest in what was going on, made it quite clear that they didn't want to have anything to do with the scheme.⁶⁷

Today we may only contemplate if Bennett ever asked Gilligan, but it was very clear from a *Standard* article by Harris, in June of 1949, that Gilligan, despite the 'hostile decision of the CCC', was more than happy with how things had developed. While the Conference, only wished to preserve an ethos, which incorporated a particular way of playing, it did not see a need, or more accurately a role, in developing young players for a higher standard. Gilligan on the other hand, in line with almost every advocate of league or competition cricket, saw cricket through a progressive, meritocratic, lens. His league, which was already operating, was made up of Sussex working men's clubs, who cared 'less than nothing for the CCC', and, he was quick to point out, 'many of them [had] material rich in promise'. Pertinently, he added: 'It is a mistake to suppose all youngsters worth developing are attached to Conference clubs'.⁶⁸ But while Bennett confirms that the interest of more powerful clubs only began to wane once the Conference had made its threats of exclusion clear, he also makes it clear that without the socially elite clubs – or rather *with* the working men's clubs – Gilligan's league was indeed deemed a 'lesser' undertaking.⁶⁹

In light of the Conference appearing to successfully fend-off the competitive challenges to its amateur, non-competitive, ethos, this was an opinion shared by Goodall in July 1949. Goodall now feared, in a complete u-turn from the optimism displayed in January, that, despite Gilligan's league, there was now 'little possibility of league cricket being played in the South'. Gilligan's league was confined to 'minor clubs', but, if club cricket was to produce the keener cricket needed to develop talent for the counties and the national side, it was, he argued, 'the bigger clubs that must compete'. He continued: 'Parkinson of

Chelmsford made a good try, but when it came to the point prospective member clubs in Essex suddenly faded away – and he was left helpless'.⁷⁰ Firstly, Goodall appears to have missed the point that Gilligan had made in June. But in overlooking the fact that 'working men's clubs' were participating in a competitive form of cricket both the *Standard* had 'campaigned' for, Goodall reveals the deferential relationship between the 'elite' clubs and the *Evening Standard*. Secondly, Goodall appears wholly ignorant as to the role that Harris's article had played in ruining Parkinson's challenge.

Executive Council members had thus demonstrated how determined they were in maintaining their control of amateur cricket, and its continued preservation on non-competitive lines. As such, Jack Cooper's statement that Conference member 'clubs have their own solution. We only carry out their wishes', appears extremely hollow.⁷¹

The Conference compromises?

But was the Conference about to compromise? Having successfully made, or blocked, significant decisions regarding leagues as a Committee, without member clubs being present, the Conference was to now face a fourth challenge regarding a cup competition. Although the member clubs of the SACC had rejected the proposal of a league, many of these clubs competed in the Flora Doris Cup. This cup, which represents an antecedent of Twenty/20 cricket, had been established, in 1946, to raise funds towards the Surrey County Cricket Club's Centenary Fund. Unusually, this competition involved long-standing Conference members such as Guildford CC.⁷² More significantly; this competition's format resulted in larger clubs, such as Guildford CC, competing with smaller, often working-class, clubs on a regular basis for often the first time. Like the Football Association Cup, 'giant killings' were common, and this competition had, by 1949, 'become famous

throughout the County'.⁷³ However, it would appear from the minutes that the Conference was not aware of this competition until late 1949.

In typically blunt fashion, the Conference then contacted the SACC to demand compliance with its rules, and this demand was reported in the *Standard* in March of 1950 by Harris. Interestingly, Harris utilises the language associated with cup competitions by those not entirely convinced by their value. In stating that the competition is an 'annual piece of fun', Harris both demeans the Flora Doris Cup and implies that it was not taken seriously by the participants, or the thousands who watched these matches; something that could not have been further from the truth. However, despite the image projected by such language the Conference dispatched a letter to the competition's secretary, which stated that: 'This type of cricket is not approved by the Club Cricket Conference'.⁷⁴ Unlike the successful campaigns to stop the establishment of leagues in 1949, the Conference was now attempting to impose its will upon a competition that was already established. Harris reported that the Surrey Association had every intention of expanding the competition, and significantly, how the older generation of cricketer attempted to retain influence over the younger cricketer. Rear Admiral S. H. Dunlop, Chairman of the Surrey Association noted how: 'In ordinary club cricket the tendency is for the old players to keep the youngsters out. They won't give up their places. In this cup cricket you've got to be lively in the field and at the wicket and the youngsters get a chance in these games. The competition has livened local cricket and generally done it a great deal of good'.⁷⁵

Goodall's article ended by asking if the Conference would 'pass sentence of excommunication' upon those member clubs who participated, and, unsurprisingly, this came to the attention of the Conference. Having been read out at an Executive Council meeting on March 17th 1950, it was referred to the General Purposes Committee, which

met the following month. The Flora Doris Cup was discussed. It was agreed that the 'CCC's Chairman was to contact Rear Admiral Dunlop by telephone to, advise him as to the Conferences views, and request that rules be drawn up and that any profits from the competition be donated to charity'.⁷⁶ Ultimately, no doubt because the Guildford Area of the SACC, who ran the competition, had refused to accept terms – the SACC needed the profits from the final to maintain operations – pragmatism appears to have won-out. Bennett, employing some serious spin, recalled: 'You may well ask why such well-known C.C.C. clubs as Guildford are permitted to take part. The answer is that it is considered to be too small a competition to worry about, and the existing Conference rules permit this type of competitive play'.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The foundation of the Fund, and then the Conference, within a context of increasing commercialization, professionalism and the slow deconstruction of the class structure resulted in the formation of a reactionary, and extreme, 'upper-class', version of amateurism. The cricket played elsewhere within the South, whether in a league or not, was also amateur, but leagues, and clubs of lower status were not restricted by what are effectively social 'hang-ups'. Professionalism was, until relatively recently, unknown in club cricket, although some evidence of talent money has come to light, and the playing of 'friendly' cricket was no guarantee that competitiveness would not get out of hand. However, the amateur ethos of the Conference and this organization's zealous defence of it, had, by 1949, developed a strong hegemonic influence over club cricket in London, and its neighbouring counties, especially as member clubs were unable to challenge the Conference without endangering their place within, what was a socially narrow and close-knit cricket community. The clubs' reluctance in this regard is indicative of the value placed

upon the membership and 'sociability' of this clique, although it ultimately proved to be a weakness, which enabled the Conference to maintain its influence. As McKibbin states:

Class and status distinctions were overt and at its [sport's] upper reaches usually crushing ... the assumptions and codes of those at the top were often antithetical to those at the bottom; and it was in ... [cricket] that amateurism was most tenacious. Here a discreet class war was conducted in the guise of a code of honourable practice.⁷⁸

He concludes, as so few contested this lack of administrative democracy, that this 'suggests how ... limited ... English democracy was'.⁷⁹ Although Mc Kibbin is correct regarding the longevity and influence of the Conference's amateur ethos and the lack of administrative democracy within southern cricket, he is mistaken in one respect, as numerous challenges to this authority were ongoing from 1918. As proved by Gilligan, cricket did not begin and end with the Conference, no matter how much the Conference wished to believe it.

Ultimately, the lack of administrative democracy reflected the wider social influence these groups possessed and this has clearly influenced the false portrayal of cricket in the South of England. The authors of such histories, as were Harris and Goodall, being attracted to the cricket played by the social elites (at the best grounds), rather than perhaps the most meaningful or 'best' cricket. Arthur Gilligan's league was not a competitive island in a sea of non-competitive cricket, as leagues and cups had been, and remained, a relatively common phenomenon throughout the South. The fact that 'competition' cricket has not been regarded as such stems from the disproportionate influence of the Conference, and the deference and respect given to the social elites displayed by Harris and Goodall, which led to the failure of Parkinson's challenge.

'Profound change lay in the future of English sport', but this did not begin to emerge until the late 1950s. Television, the end of the Gentlemen v Players matches, the amateur/professional distinction and the introduction of sponsored one-day cup cricket are cited, by Baker, as *the* landmark social and economic changes in cricket. Arguably it is these developments which heralded the consignment of the Corinthian ideal to history.⁸⁰ In 'elite' club cricket however, profound change did not occur until after 1968,⁸¹ and one may only wonder how much sooner these highly significant changes may have taken place had the *Evening Standard* backed the Essex challenge and Gilligan's league in 1949? It was clearly too early for those in charge at the CCC, but an interesting question nonetheless.

[¹] Mc Kibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 339.

[²] Baker does highlight the odd concession, such as the Amateur Athletic Association's adoption of national coaching scheme, *Even Playing Field?*, 138, and the MCC reverting to a single changing room for the amateurs and the professionals, *Even Playing Field?*, 141. See also Birley, *English Cricket*, 271.

[³] Conservative cabinet minister from 1951 to 1955, Sir Walter Monckton is a good example. He was Churchill's Minister for Labour and National Service and was then Marylebone Cricket Club president between 1956-57, and Surrey County Cricket Club president between 1950-52 and 1959-65.

[⁴] League, cup or 'competition' cricket was, if not universal, then certainly common across the Surrey, Hampshire and Sussex borders from a relatively early stage. Across this relatively small part of southern England, leagues and cups, such as the West Surrey Village Cup, the I' Anson Cup, the Farnham and District League, the Guildford, Godalming and District League and a 'works' Inter-borough League existed from the 1880s. Between the wars, these competitions' were joined or replaced by others, such as the Miller Cup, the Redhill Cricket League, the South London Cricket League, the Sir Thomas Lipton Cup and the South Eastern Cricket League.

[⁵] When mentioned, it is only the Midland and Northern semi-professional leagues that are referred to, often in disparaging terms. *Wisden*, a major source for these authors, was the most significant cricket publication to marginalize this form of competitive cricket, which contradicted the amateur values inherent in its editorial position.

[⁶] Bowen, *Cricket*, 13.

[⁷] Bowen, *Cricket*, 116.

[⁸] Cricket histories, Altham and Swanton aside, have been written by one Reverend (James Pycroft), one Major (Roland Bowen) and three Knights' (Home Gordon, Derek Birley and John Major).

[⁹] Arguably, the *Evening Standard's* 'campaign' was an effort to increase its circulation numbers, but it is also consistent in its editorial position of questioning the *Status Quo* at this time.

[¹⁰] In the context of this article, hegemony is to be understood in the sociological sense as opposed to the journalistic use of the term. As a social group's hegemony is never complete, the strength or weakness of different groups 'power' or influence is always in flux, and, as the article demonstrates, constantly being re-negotiated. Similarly, no one group has a uniformed ideological perspective, as many members of the club cricket 'elites' advocated league cricket, and others at less exclusive clubs refused to participate in competitions.

[¹¹] Glamorgan's 'team ethic' was greatly admired by A. W. T. Langford in *The Cricketer Annual of 1948/1949*, 458.

[¹²] Even the MCC, at the unanimous request of the Counties, launched a 'Cricket Enquiry' in November 1948.

[¹³] *Evening Standard*, 5 July 1948.

[¹⁴] *Evening Standard*, 17 Aug 1948.

[¹⁵] *The Cricketer*, 4 Sept 1948, 378.

[¹⁶] Fingleton, *Brightly Fades the Don*, 222.

[¹⁷] Bennett, *The Week-end Cricketer*, 249.

[¹⁸] Initially called the London Club Cricket Conference, this organization changed names a number of times, but for the benefit of clarity it shall be referred to as the CCC, or Conference throughout the article.

[¹⁹] *Club Cricketers' Official Handbook*, 1913, pp. 7. Northamptonshire Cricket Club had proposed a two-division format in 1911 and 1912.

[²⁰] See M.A. Speak, 'Social Stratification and Participation in Sport in mid-Victorian England with particular reference to Lancaster, 1840-70', in J.A. Mangan, ed., *Pleasure, Profit and Proselytism: British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad, 1790-1914*, (London, 1988), p. 59.

[²¹] *Club Cricketers' Official Handbook*, 1913, pp. 7.

[²²] *New York Times*, 16/3/1913.

[²³] The 'Conference originally formed March 15th 1915 at a meeting, called by E.A.C. Thompson by request of some clubs, at the Charterhouse Hotel, Charterhouse Square, EC and carried on single-handedly by E.A.C. Thompson until first Annual Meeting on March 22nd, 1916 by his request'. Handwritten note in LaSCCCC minute book. No date. Private collection.

[²⁴] Gordon was educated at Eton and was a keen amateur cricketer, playing for numerous MCC sides, without ever playing first-class cricket. A journalist, he produced numerous books on cricket. His title was hereditary.

[²⁵] LCCC minute book, 22 March 1916. Private collection.

[²⁶] Sir Home Gordon Bart as President, EAC Thompson as Hon. Secretary, with Howard Lacy (Mitcham CC), W. H. Wheeler (North Middlesex CC), W. H. Long M.P. (Arlington and West Ham), A. R. Thorpe (Honor Oak CC), A. C. Higgs (Parsons Green), H.G. Dormon (Hampstead Montrose CC) and C. B. Fry (Record Office, Royal Fusiliers) as Committee members.

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- [²⁷] A Mr. Frank Dolman was an Executive Council member for 46 years. Elected to the Executive Council in 1931, he was against league or cup cricket, held positions as President, Chairman and Secretary until his retirement in 1977.
- [²⁸] In order that deep set amateur conventions were understood by all; 'things necessarily had to be organized'. Mc Kibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 103.
- [²⁹] LCCC minute book, 1 April 1916. Private collection.
- [³⁰] LCCC minute book, 6 Feb 1920. Private collection.
- [³¹] LCCC Rules 1920. Private collection.
- [³²] For instance, 'as all cricketers involved were employees of GNR, 'no action would be taken''. LCCC minute book, 19 March 1920. Private collection.
- [³³] LCCC minute book, 21 May 1920. Private collection.
- [³⁴] At the same meeting where Eshelby's XI were expelled, and associated clubs warned to cancel their fixtures on the 21/5/1920, the Wanstead CC had charged the Seford CC of playing the Essex Professional Russell against them. While the Committee agreed that the club should be similarly expelled, Seford CC were to be informed that: 'if a formal application for re-admission be made the Council would give it their best consideration'. CCC minute book, 21 May 1920. Private collection. By 1923, the Cheam CC complained that the Surrey professional, Lowe had invoiced them for 'playing assistance'. Despite the club breaking the rule in this regard, the Council decided it was a matter to be settled between the Cheam and Surrey clubs. CCC minute book, 12 Jan 1923. Private collection.
- [³⁵] CCC minute book, 14 Dec 1944. Private collection.
- [³⁶] CCC minute book, 20 Feb 1948. Private collection.
- [³⁷] *The Cricketer Spring Annual*, 1949, 50.
- [³⁸] *The Cricketer Spring Annual*, 1949, 50.
- [³⁹] *Surrey Association of Cricket Clubs Illustrated Handbook*, 1949, 11.
- [⁴⁰] *The Cricketer*, 6 Aug 1949, 408.
- [⁴¹] Social ease dictated which clubs you would, or may, join as the 'right atmosphere in the company of the 'right sort' was most important. Mc Kibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 95.
- [⁴²] Bennett, *The Week-end Cricketer*, 246.
- [⁴³] See *The Cricketer Annual*, 1948/1949, 458 and *The Cricketer*, 14 May 1949, 166.
- [⁴⁴] *Evening Standard*, 20 Jan 1949.
- [⁴⁵] *Evening Standard*, 20 Jan 1949. Italics added.
- [⁴⁶] *Evening Standard*, 25 March 1949.
- [⁴⁷] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 217. The Bradford League, which allowed for four paid players at this time would have been a better example. See Genders, *League Cricket in England*, 14.
- [⁴⁸] Worplesdon Cricket Club Centenary Booklet, *100 Years to Remember*, 32.
- [⁴⁹] CCC Minute book, 20 May 1949. Private collection.
- [⁵⁰] *Evening Standard*, 29 April 1949.
- [⁵¹] *Evening Standard*, 29 April 1949. Italics added.
- [⁵²] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 235.
- [⁵³] *Evening Standard*, 20 May 1949.
- [⁵⁴] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 234.
- [⁵⁵] *Evening Standard*, 20 May 1949.
- [⁵⁶] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 235.
- [⁵⁷] According to Bennett, this consisted of Goodall only at the meeting.
- [⁵⁸] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 235-236.
- [⁵⁹] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 236. It would later be reported that only seven of the promised twenty-five clubs attended the final meeting. *Evening Standard*, 23 July 1949.
- [⁶⁰] The Committee consisted of the four elected members: A. C. L. Bennett, A. W. Chadwick, A.R. Duff and K. D. Poulter, along with the ex officio members G. F. Clatworthy, E. H. Cooper, F. L. J. Dolman and B. H. Goulding.
- [⁶¹] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 236.
- [⁶²] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 238.
- [⁶³] *The Cricketer Spring Annual* 1949, 50.
- [⁶⁴] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 237.
- [⁶⁵] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 237.
- [⁶⁶] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 237.
- [⁶⁷] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 237.
- [⁶⁸] *Evening Standard*, 15 June 1949.
- [⁶⁹] Gilligan's league, in opposition to the established history of cricket in the South was played from 1949; the inaugural winners being Rottingdean CC.
- [⁷⁰] *Evening Standard*, 23 July 1949.

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- [⁷¹] *Evening Standard*, 20 May 1950.
- [⁷²] Guildford had joined the Conference in 1925, three years after their 'reformation'. CCC minute book, 17 Sept 1925. Private collection.
- [⁷³] Garland-Wells, *SACC Illustrated Handbook for 1949*, 11.
- [⁷⁴] ?
- [⁷⁵] *Evening Standard*, 7 March 1950.
- [⁷⁶] CCC Minute book, 12 April 1950. Private collection.
- [⁷⁷] Bennett, *The Weekend Cricketer*, 239. See CCC minute book, 26 May 1950. Private collection.
- [⁷⁸] Mc Kibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 384.
- [⁷⁹] Mc Kibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 385.
- [⁸⁰] Baker, *Even Playing Field?*, 155.
- [⁸¹] The Surrey Clubs' Championship (league) being the first 'elite' league in the South of England.

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