

## 3

### **The Cathedral and the Cult**

- Lord's, 1987: an invented tradition • William Clarke's pioneers***
- Cricket's first ideologist • The dictatorship of the MCC • The great pretenders • Workers in whites • The stillbirth of county cricket • Empire • 'Play the game, Lord Hawke!'***
- Legacy: the teflon canvas***

In 1987, the MCC marked its bicentenary by unveiling the new Mound Stand at Lord's. Its post-modernist architecture, applying high tech to traditional purposes with flair and skill, was admired even by those normally contemptuous of the style. Certainly, it was a vast improvement on the Warner and Tavern Stands of the fifties and sixties, with their stark utilitarian awkwardness. Light and airy, the tented roof and cantilevered upper tier of the new stand seemed to float over the arena, while at the base the brick colonnade preserved the ancient circuit of the arena and rooted the flamboyant structure stoutly in the earth.

The new stand was the creation of Michael Hopkins, who also designed facilities at Glyndebourne and Cambridge, as well as the country home of David Mellor. His work at Lord's is celebratory and festive, evoking a grand marquee at a stately home, a lost world of prosperity, elegance, leisure and stability. The new stand harked

back not just to Victorian England, but beyond that to the village green and the original meaning of the word pavilion, derived from the medieval French for a tent or canopy (related to *papillon*, butterfly) which the feudal lords pitched on the field of battle. In the course of the eighteenth century it became a designation for an ornamental building in a park or a temporary shelter on a playing field. Hopkins's Mound Stand summoned such images, which seemed the essence of what cricket, especially cricket at Lord's, was all about.

Back in the forties, Nikolaus Pevsner had found Lord's an unprepossessing jumble, 'unthinkable in a country like Sweden or Holland'. Now, at last, Lord's had a structure worthy of its centrepiece, the high Victorian pavilion, built in 1889–90, at a cost of £21,000, by Thomas Verity, who was responsible for the terracotta work at the Albert Hall and the redecoration of the State Apartments in Buckingham Palace. Anyone who has spent time at Lord's comes to admire the pavilion, whatever they may think of the people who inhabit it. Its rosy brickwork, ornamental iron and terracotta, vast window space and solid flanking towers combine to produce an effect that is at once lavish but light, substantial without being stolid. It is a cheerful sight, a fitting edifice for an elite that was, at the time, very much in command, and not only of cricket.

By the second half of the nineteenth century the Industrial Revolution had created a new urban England. As the towns and cities grew, they acquired parks, libraries and other amenities, including cricket grounds. Of the ninety-odd venues used for first-class cricket in England and Wales in 1992, sixty were established between 1860 and 1910. At the same time, a new, broader cricket public came into being, served not only by the ever-expanding sports coverage in the daily newspapers but also by a host of specialist publications.

Britain witnessed an explosive growth of mass spectator sport. The first Open Golf Championship was held in 1860. The Football Association was founded in 1863 and immediately banned handling the ball and 'hacking' opponents. The Rugby Football Union, founded by dissidents loyal to the 'handling game', was organized in 1871. Tennis was first devised in 1873; the MCC revised its rules in

1875, then handed authority over to the All-England Club in Wimbledon, which staged the first championships in 1877.

Cricket, as we have seen, had codified its Laws and established itself as a popular modern sport a century before. But it too underwent a transformation in this period. Its ramshackle organization was consolidated. The county championship emerged, as did Test cricket, placing Lord's at the hub of the domestic and imperial games. In these years the phrases 'cricket cap', 'cricket flannels', 'cricket week' and 'duck' (a bit of public-school slang) were first seen in print. The old game was acquiring regalia, rituals and a jargon of its own. Just as cricket was initially created in the era of Johnson's Dictionary, it was re-created, augmented with the authority of the past, in the era of the Oxford English Dictionary ('based on historical principles') and the Dictionary of National Biography.

In 1887, the MCC dared to couple its first centenary with the Queen's Jubilee. Though it masqueraded as a celebration of the past, the jubilee was a modern innovation. For historian Eric Hobsbawm, it is the premier example of the 'invented traditions' which proliferated in the late nineteenth century. Fusing ancient ceremony, national symbolism and political expediency, the 'invented traditions' aimed to bind the new, literate, half-enfranchised public to the old regime, not least through the medium of the popular press. The challenge of democracy forced the rulers to find new ways of cementing national unity around the existing institutions, including the monarchy, which in this era became a symbol of both nation and empire, of ancient right subsumed within bourgeois respectability. Elite domination had to be seen as something more than a mere accretion of wealth and weapons. The rulers learned to pose as the guardians of national values, transcending particular class interests.

It is in this context that cricket consolidates its ideology. In 1867, *Lillywhite* advised young cricketers, 'Do not ask the umpire unless you think the batsman is out; it is not cricket to keep asking the umpire questions.' The 'cricket' in 'it isn't cricket' had already come to refer to a transcendent code of behaviour above and beyond the explicit Laws of the game. By the end of the century the phrase 'it isn't cricket' was being widely applied to all spheres of public and private life. On the eve of World War I, Lord Harris staked the boldest

of claims for the old game: 'It is an institution, a passion, one might say a religion. It has got into the blood of the nation, and wherever British men and women are gathered together there will the stumps be pitched.'

Cricket had become a totem for a set of values, a distillation of Englishness. One of the most enduring invented traditions of this era is Britain's 'unwritten constitution', celebrated by Walter Bagehot in 1867. In the bible of public-school ideology, the 1857 novel *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Thomas Hughes (Rugby, Oxford), MP, barrister and cricketer, made the comparison with cricket explicit:

'It's more than a game. It's an institution,' said Tom.

'Yes,' said Arthur, 'the birthright of British boys, old and young, as *habeas corpus* and trial by jury are to British men.'

Only two years before *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Karl Marx had scoffed at the British constitution as 'an antiquated, obsolete, out-of-date compromise between the bourgeoisie, which rules not officially but in fact in all spheres of civil society, and the landed aristocracy which governs officially'. The landed aristocracy certainly governed in cricket, both officially and in fact, and continued to do so until our own times. But just as the Victorian monarchy came to stand above party politics, a disinterested embodiment of the national and imperial destinies and protector of the 'unwritten constitution', so the MCC, guardian of 'cricket' and 'fair play', came to stand above the teams and the individuals who played the game.

In so doing it undermined cricket's democracy, the inclusiveness on which it staked its claim to be a national game. The new pavilion epitomised the prestigious institution which cricket had become, but it also increased social segregation at its headquarters. In 1903, Alfred D. Taylor, in *Annals of Lord's and History of the MCC*, mourned the passing of cricket's casual social interchange:

The cobbler no longer associates with the Duke, or the farmer with the squire. The plebs that pays its shillings is marked off with painful distinction from the patricians who are entitled to higher honour. No longer do the masses mingle with society ... the game is robbed of its old world charm ... Lord's is Lord's no longer ... It is an amphitheatre for gladiatorial contests with its massive and

mighty circle of seats, stands, boxes and buildings ... MCC is a club no longer: it is a national institution.

The old protest against enclosure had already been voiced by Lewis Carroll in his poem, 'The Deserted Parks', on the construction of a cricket ground on Oxford's ancient common land:

The man of wealth and pride  
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;  
Space for the game, and all its instruments,  
Space for pavilions and for scorers' tents;  
The ball, that raps his shins in padding cased,  
Has wore the verdure to an arid waste;  
His Park, where these exclusive sports are seen,  
Indignant spurns the rustic from the green;  
While through the plain, consigned to silence all,  
In barren splendour flits the russet hall.

The missionary confidence of cricket in the Golden Age overwhelmed the voices of opposition. By the turn of the century, the superstructure of English and imperial cricket was in place. It was a magisterial edifice, embodying hierarchy and deference, social stasis and public self-confidence. The natural rulers were in their natural place (the new Lord's pavilion), dispensing cricket to the populace for the good of the nation. English cricket had become an institution with an ideology, but not without resistance, not without casualties, and not without a host of uneasy compromises.

Cricket in the first half of the nineteenth century was still the cricket of All-Muggleton and Dingley Dell in *The Pickwick Papers*. It was popular, but there was little systematic competition. An air of festive exhibition hung about all the great matches. Single-wicket contests, matches of XI against XX or XXII, 'given' men and handicapping of various kinds gave cricket a circus-like ambience. Results mattered most to the gamblers. People came to see the great champions, Alfred Mynn, Nicholas 'Felix' Wanostrocht, Fuller Pilch. It was a jocular, picaresque pastime, an occasion to eat and drink, romanticized but not yet institutionalized.

Cricket did not acquire its special place in the national culture through an uncontested process of gradual evolution. It did so in reaction to an alien force thrown up by rapid social change, a force that threatened to seize cricket from the landowning elite and remake it in a new image. After 1832, England became, in the words of EP Thompson, 'a world in which the working class presence can be felt in every county ... and in most fields of life'. That presence was felt in cricket in the persons of William Clarke and his professional All-England XI.

Both Clarke and the All-England XI were born in Nottingham, a centre of the lace and hosiery industries and a Luddite and later Chartist stronghold. From the ranks of the artisans and piece-workers who had been playing cricket in the area since the late eighteenth century rose up successive generations of labour militants, asserting their right to the vote and to economic security.

In 1838, Clarke, an under-arm slow bowler whose style was considered antiquated but surprisingly effective in his own day, purchased the Trent Bridge pub and adjacent fields. The former bricklayer had acquired the necessary capital through years of hiring himself out to the elite as a professional cricketer. He enclosed the fields, laid out a pitch and charged 6d entrance. Eight profitable years later, he brought together the best professional cricketers in the land to form his travelling All-England XI, the first cricket side run strictly as a commercial concern. Until then, cricket professionals had worked on the ground staff at Lord's, as servants to private patrons, or as practice bowlers and groundsmen for universities and public schools. Now Clarke offered them summer-long employment as independent professionals. His recruits were mostly self-employed crafts – or tradesmen: butchers, tobacconists, glass blowers, cabinet makers, carpenters, braziers, printers, tailors, shoemakers. These skilled workers saw in cricket an opportunity for economic independence. Long before the cricket elite, they saw that there was a new market for the game.

The All-England XI played its first match in August 1846 against 'XX of Sheffield'. The next year they played matches in Manchester (where, it was reported, £30,000 in side-bets were placed), Liverpool, Leeds, York, Stockton, Sheffield, Birmingham and

Newcastle. In 1848 they added Derby, Bradford, Walsall, Coventry, Sunderland, Darlington, Chelmsford and Southampton to their itinerary. For the next thirty years they played at least twenty matches a season, bringing top class cricket to growing industrial towns and cities across the country, well beyond cricket's traditional enclaves in the South, the East Midlands and Yorkshire. In their geographical reach and appeal to all classes, Clarke's All-England XI and its imitators gave cricket's claims to be England's 'national sport' an anchor in reality. Between 1845 and 1875, the touring professional XIs provided the country's principal spectator sport. They certainly dominated gate-money cricket, showing how railways and newspapers could be used to exploit a market which their social superiors had ignored.

Clarke's XI was ostensibly run by a committee of professionals, but in reality it was a small business owned and managed by Clarke himself, and after his death by George Parr, the legside-hitting 'lion of the North'. Clarke distributed payments of three to five pounds to individual players according to his estimate of their standing with the public and their match performance. This was no workers' co-operative. The professionals remained individual freelancers and were paid as such. Newspapers turned them into famous names. Many sought to re-create themselves as entrepreneurs or small traders. Edgar Willsher, the pioneer over-arm bowler, a farmer's son from Kent, managed a cricket ground in Islington and a cricket outfitters in Lewisham. Tom Box, who started off as a cabinet maker, kept a hotel and cricket ground in Brighton while playing for Clarke. He ended up running a pub in Leicester Square.

In 1854, Clarke found himself in dispute with the MCC. Along with several fellow professionals, he declined to play in the Gentlemen v. Players match at Lord's because of a prior All-England commitment in Maidstone. Like the Packer rebels, the All-England men were accused of biting the hand that fed them. Ninety years later, Pelham Warner was still aggrieved: 'It is a pity that Clarke's great services to cricket were marred by an over-tenacity in asserting his rights, real or otherwise.'

The independent, rootless entrepreneurship of the itinerant professional XIs – untrammelled by loyalty to patron, county or club

– posed a major threat to the cricket hierarchy. But from the beginning its limitations were apparent. The one-sided contests, the distorted matches against odds, the lack of systematic competition, meant that while they could whet the public appetite for cricket they could not satisfy it. In order to exploit their skills as cricketers in the market place, they had cut themselves loose from the old bonds, the old identities, but they failed to create new ones. The MCC and the ad hoc county clubs run by the local gentry chose all the players for the major representative fixtures. And without representative cricket, the professionals were compelled to compete among themselves in an entirely unregulated market. John Wisden, a Brighton-born fast round-arm bowler, broke with Clarke in 1852 and set up the United All-England XI. Over the next decade, half a dozen touring XIs were formed. Commercial competition was fierce and sometimes bred bitter rivalries.

Because they remained individual freelancers, the professionals were unable to develop a new model of nationwide competition or a means of stable management. In the end, Clarke's professionals had the mentality of the self-employed, and that made them easy meat for the establishment.

As a result of perceived slights and festering resentments, reflecting tensions over the new style of over-arm bowling and a growing divide between North and South, George Parr and his All-England comrades boycotted fixtures at Lord's and the Oval for several years in the 1860s. *The Times* was outraged:

The cause of this unfortunate position of things is to be found in the too prosperous conditions of the players. So long as they can earn more money by playing matches against twenty-twos than by appearing at Lord's – so long as they can be 'mistered' in public houses, and stared at in railway stations, they will care little for being absent from the Metropolitan Ground, but they are wrong. They may be certain the 'Gentlemen' will not give way in this struggle.

In the 1860s, the MCC came under heavy fire from the press. The *Sporting Life* waged a campaign to replace it with a 'cricket parliament', a representative institution with decision-making meetings held in public. The idea was to prod the MCC into



becoming cricket's upper house, something that did not happen for another century.

The MCC Committee was already viewed as an addled coven of old duffers. The Surrey Committee appealed to the MCC as 'the only true cricket club in the country' to 'travel out of their ordinary retinue'. The MCC was charged, even by its friends, with failing to respond to the social changes overtaking the country and the game, changes epitomized in the controversies surrounding over-arm bowling.

Round-arm bowling, legalized by the MCC amid much confusion in the 1830s, had at first reduced batsmen's scoring opportunities. But with so many balls off the wicket, it soon became easy for batsmen to know which ones to leave alone, so wicket-taking was also reduced. Inevitably, as batsmen conquered round-arm, the bowlers raised their arms higher. From at least 1857, Edgar Willsher, one of the stars of Clarke's All-England XI, had been defying the existing Law. No umpire, however, would call him. Then, in 1862, Willsher was no balled six times in succession by his old friend John Lillywhite, standing as an umpire in the England v. Surrey match at the Oval.

It was widely believed that Lillywhite acted at the behest of the amateur Surrey Committee. All the professionals in the England side walked off the field in protest, leaving Vye Walker, the amateur captain, alone with the Surrey batsmen. Play resumed only the next day when Lillywhite was replaced. The controversy, however, continued to rage.

Bowling at this time was regarded as a form of manual labour, and as such had become a professionals' speciality. Over-arm bowling was a professional innovation, thanks to which cricket became once again a side-on game, in which bowlers and batsmen exploit the wicket-to-wicket axis. It made both batting and bowling more scientific. Along with better wickets and new, spliced bats, it raised the premium on skill.

Yet over-arm was fiercely resisted by members of the old guard. Their pre-eminent polemicist was the Reverend James Pycroft. He had played cricket at Oxford (where he helped re-establish the annual Varsity fixture in 1836) and published his 6d pamphlet *Principles of Scientific Batting* while still an undergraduate. At first he

followed in his barrister father's footsteps, but in 1840, at the age of twenty-seven, he abandoned law for the church, taking up a curacy in the West Country.

In 1851, Pycroft published *The Cricket Field*, a compendium of history, lore and technical advice which contained the first printed reference to a specimen of behaviour not being 'cricket' – in this case, the dangerous fast bowling of Etonian and MCC member Harvey Fellows. In *The Cricket Field*, Pycroft sketched out what was to become the Victorian credo of the game:

A cricket field is a sphere of wholesome discipline and good order ... The game of cricket, philosophically considered, is a standing panegyric of the English character: none but an orderly and sensible race of people would so amuse themselves ... the game is essentially Anglo-Saxon. Foreigners have rarely, very rarely, imitated us. The English settlers everywhere play at cricket; but of no single club have we ever heard dieted either with frogs, sauerkraut or macaroni.

The book proved popular, going through nine editions (including an American one in 1859) in four decades. A few years after its publication, Pycroft abandoned his curacy, took up residence in Bath and devoted himself to literature and cricket. He penned popular instructional works on Greek and Latin as well as novels and memoirs. He was much in demand as a lecturer and was well rewarded for talking to middle-class audiences about the virtues and vices of cricket.

In 1864, he brought his recent lectures together in a volume entitled *Cricketana*, which harps repeatedly on the dangers of legalizing over arm bowling. 'We see no check or limit to the rough play that will ensue,' Pycroft argued. 'The ball will often rise as high as the face of the batsman.' He feared that the batsman would soon be forced 'to pad even his elbow' (and so it has proved). In an anticipation of criticisms made of recent West Indies sides, he foresaw 'tall, strong fellows, pelting down most pitilessly, as mechanically as a catapult, with every ball about the same'.

But Pycroft was no champion of the round-arm style, which he regarded as 'unnatural'; it had discouraged batsmen from playing straight and deprived bowling of 'spin and variety'. His answer was to

de-legalize round-arm and go back to under-arm, which was 'true bowling' with a 'natural' action. He also wanted to see better-prepared wickets (like those at the Oval and unlike the notorious rough pitches at Lord's).

His opposition to over-arm bowling was part of his wider critique of professionalism. 'The game is becoming too professional or too much a matter of routine and business, and too little a matter of mind and manoeuvre and of every kind of dodge and keen judgement.' He proposed that the MCC and Surrey refuse to select professionals from the major itinerant XIs. In a foretaste of the contempt that was to be heaped on the Packer 'circus' a century later, Pycroft wrote scornfully of the great annual contests between the All-England XI and the United All-England XI: 'Very much like the "four-and-ninepenny hat shop" versus the "true original four-and-ninepenny hat shop" which after months of recriminating abuse to attract partisans for each party proved both to belong to the same smart Barnum of a man.'

Pycroft feared that what he called 'free trade in cricket' was lessening the powers of the game's traditional rulers. He inveighed against 'a style of cricket which is becoming a very serious nuisance, as superseding those annual contests between rival counties which used to be fought with a degree of spirit and emulation without which cricket deserves not the name'. To Pycroft, the itinerant XIs promoted 'the cheapest kind of immortality' and he hit at their weak spot, the unrepresentative nature of the cricket they played: 'For any men calling themselves cricketers to play with double numbers, year after year, as a match, and to boast of victory, the thing is childish and absurd ... A flat, stale, spiritless game – no honour for the one to win, no discredit to the other to lose.'

As a result of playing too many matches ('he does not play for the score, he plays for the till'), the professional is 'fagged and jaded – stale and over-done ... the powder and the spirit is out ...' Professional cricketers were 'a remarkably respectable set of men' but too often spoiled by 'feasting and flattery and a sudden elevation to a degree of intimacy with those above them – an intimacy unknown save amidst the warm enthusiasms and genial fellowship of the sporting world'.

Pycroft accused the professionals of over-cautiousness in both batting and bowling. Even though they were regularly and heavily beating the amateurs at this time, the Reverend insisted: 'The Players, though decidedly superior on the whole, are not as superior to the Gentlemen in real cricket as the score would represent ... There is more invention in their play and while it lasts it is infinitely better worth seeing.'

Pycroft singled out for praise the young prodigy, EM Grace, then playing as an 'amateur' for the All-England XI. 'He plays for the sport and not for a livelihood,' Pycroft claimed, and this, he believed, was the secret of his willingness to improvise and entertain. The following year, 1865, EM's younger brother WG made his first-class debut.

Not surprisingly, Pycroft was strongly opposed to the cricket parliament:

Men who meet, big with their own importance, and proud of their first suit of 'little brief authority', if they find nothing to settle, will find something to unsettle; so jaw, jar and discord will be the order of the day. As to harmonising fixtures and programmes of matches, 'in the name of the Prophet, FIGS!' a Committee of the whole House will not settle such things by Doomsday.

Pycroft had great faith in cricket's unwritten constitution. 'No laws can comprise everything that should be done or left undone.' Behaviour in cricket would be best restrained by the abiding principles of 'fair play' and the supervision of 'gentlemen'. In this as in so many of his prejudices, he was the spiritual great-grand-father of Swanton and Woodcock, Trevor Bailey and Christopher Martin-Jenkins.

The MCC resisted the calls for a cricket parliament. It wrote to the *Sporting Life* that its members saw no reason 'to depart from the course which they have pursued in the spirit of cricket through all the difficulties since the first year of their existence in 1787'. But, a few months later, in June of 1864, they did agree to legalize over-arm bowling. In so doing they preserved their status as the arbiters and overlords of the game. They knew better than Pycroft that to do anything else would have been to cede control to other forces.

Pycroft called the MCC 'the great central power, the very balance wheel of the world-wide machinery of cricket', but he lamented the fact that it was 'tied to time and place; its circuit is limited'. It was therefore the wrong body to deal with the cricket crisis engendered by the rise of the professionals and their practice of over-arm bowling. 'The exigencies of the country in these railway days required some club of equal strength and standing, but moveable and ubiquitous withal. It wanted an amateur All-England XI.'

Something like that amateur All-England XI already existed in the form of a private, itinerant cricket club called I Zingari ('the gypsies' in Italian). For Pycroft, 'the Zingari are as much entitled to be consulted on cricket law as any club whatever – we think more'. If the MCC was to be the Commons of cricket then Zingari, Pycroft thought, should be the Lords.

I Zingari had been founded at a London dinner party on 5 July 1845 by a group of Old Harrovians. They adopted as club colours black, red and gold ('out of darkness, through fire, into light') and dedicated themselves to the cause of amateur cricket. By pledging themselves to field an all-amateur side they hoped to remedy the dearth of amateur bowlers, which gave the professionals the upper hand in the annual Gentlemen v. Players matches. Harvey Fellows, the Etonian whose round-arm fast bowling had been condemned by Pycroft, was one of the first products of the Zingari regime. In 1907, he was buried wearing his I Zingari tie.

From the beginning, the club was self-consciously exclusive, so exclusive that it banned any formal subscription. Membership was by invitation only. An amazingly enduring organization, I Zingari became an inner circle within the inner circle of the MCC, a kind of freemasonry linking key individuals in the cricket, political and financial elites. Lords Harris and Hawke were members, as were AC MacLaren, the Lytteltons and FS Jackson (who played his Tests for England in an I Zingari cap). Edward Chandos-Leigh (Harrow, Oxford), barrister, QC, Counsel to the Speaker for twenty years and MCC President in the jubilee year of 1887, regularly sported an I Zingari ribbon in his bowler hat. Alongside the famous cricketers, the club has always counted leading bankers, stockbrokers, barristers and Royalty among its members.

In initiating a new, exclusively amateur type of cricket, I Zingari was as path-breaking in its own way as Clarke's All-England XI. In the decades that followed, a host of travelling amateur clubs followed in its footsteps: Quidnuncs, Harlequins, Free Foresters, Incogniti, and dozens of public school Old Boys clubs. Nevertheless, the Zingari must have been a disappointment to Pycroft. Rather than displacing the MCC, they chose to infiltrate it. Rather than expelling the professionals and their innovatory bowling, they chose to incorporate them.

In 1863, a twenty-nine-year-old barrister and Zingari enthusiast, RA Fitzgerald (Harrow, Cambridge), became the MCC's new Honorary Secretary. Fitzgerald had been nominated by one of the founders of I Zingari, Sir Frederick Ponsonby (Harrow, Cambridge), later the Sixth Earl of Bessborough. A barrister who sat as a Liberal in the Lords, Ponsonby, descended from an old Whig family with large holdings in Ireland, later headed Gladstone's Commission on Ireland, which led to the Irish Land Bill of 1881. Throughout his life he was a major patron of cricket, coaching at Harrow and helping to found and fund Surrey CCC.

Frederick's brother, Sir Spencer Ponsonby Fane (Harrow, Cambridge), was also a founder of I Zingari and served for decades as its Honorary Secretary and Governor. Elected a member of the MCC in 1840 at the age of sixteen, he later played for Surrey, Middlesex, the Gentlemen and between 1858 and 1862, for 'Ireland'. As a member of the MCC Committee from 1866 until 1878 and then as Treasurer from 1879 till his death in 1915, he was a key figure at Lord's when it was at the zenith of its prestige and power. The new pavilion, which he formally opened, featured a caricature of him in terracotta on one of the corbels. As a high-ranking civil servant, he served as private secretary to a succession of Foreign Secretaries, including Palmerston, Clarendon (who was MCC President in 1871) and Granville. He also retained a brace of City directorships and kept up family estates in Ireland and Somerset.

Among Fitzgerald's backers at Lord's was another founder member of I Zingari, Robert Grimston (Harrow, Oxford), fourth son of the Earl of Verulam and grandson of the Earl of Liverpool. Grimston gave up his career at the bar to become Chairman of the

International Telegraph Company and later a Director of Anglo-American Telegraph. The *Dictionary of National Biography* describes Grimston, MCC President in 1883 and an influential figure at Lord's for over thirty years, as 'a Tory ... averse to change of all kinds'. Another I Zingari founder and key member of the new Lord's elite was William Nicholson (Harrow, Cambridge), a gin magnate who became MCC President in 1879. He also owned land in Hampshire, of which he was High Sheriff, and sat as an MP for Petersfield.

Along with legalizing over-arm, Fitzgerald and his supporters set in train other urgently-needed reforms. When the Lord's leasehold came up for sale in 1860 MCC had not even bid for it. Six years later, Fitzgerald convinced the Committee to purchase the lease, at three times the 1860 price. The money was lent to the club, at five per cent interest, by William Nicholson. Lord Suffield, that year's MCC President, argued that the club should model itself on the Jockey Club and become 'a central authority and a playing headquarters' which would 'benefit cricket of all classes'. The Marylebone Professional Cricketers Fund was set up to aid players who 'during their career shall have conducted themselves to the entire satisfaction of the Committee of the MCC'.

In 1868, Fitzgerald was made the MCC's first paid Secretary, at an annual salary of £400. During his thirteen years in charge of the club, MCC hired its first groundsman and installed its first practice nets. The old pavilion was enlarged, a new tavern was built and the first public grandstand rose, courtesy of a private subscription. Press accommodation was constructed. The ground was levelled and turfied. A mowing machine replaced the flocks of sheep which had nibbled the stubble at Lord's for generations. In 1870, the heavy roller was introduced. Club membership rose from 650 to 2,000. Taking a leaf out of the professionals' books, Fitzgerald increased admission charges for the annual Harrow v. Eton and Varsity matches and hired police to control the crowds. Orange and yellow, variants on the Zingari stripes, were adopted as the MCC colours.

Fitzgerald's greatest contribution to the endurance of the MCC may well have been the recruitment of the phenomenal young all-rounder, WG Grace. Fitzgerald thus ensured that WG remained, technically, within the amateur ranks – even as he was touring the

country with the professional United South of England XI. Playing for MCC, WG drew crowds to Lord's and boosted the fortunes of the Gentlemen on the field of play. Before WG, they had won seven out of their thirty-five matches with the Players. In the fifty contests which followed his match-winning debut in 1865, they triumphed thirty-one times, with WG scoring fifteen hundreds and taking 271 wickets.

In 1865, the Committee was expanded from sixteen to twenty-four by the addition of ex-officio members, including the five Trustees, the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer. Presidents nominated their successors, who were always drawn from active Committee members. Only four Committee members were elected each year, of whom the retiring President was always one. The Committee became effectively self-selecting and self-perpetuating. Recruitment from above remained the rule.

The cornerstone of this amazingly clubable, unashamedly hierarchical system was MCC's custodianship of the Laws of Cricket. Like the English judiciary, the MCC dressed its authority in the trappings of antiquity. The club was alleged to be 'disinterested', like the Law Lords or the monarchy; on assuming the MCC Presidency in 1873, the Earl of Cadogan described the job as 'the woolsack of cricket'. The club undertook a systematic revision of the Laws in 1883, and for the first time boundaries became a formal requirement. Cricket had travelled far from its origins in common land.

The MCC became more selective about the uses to which it allowed its ground to be put. There were no more pony races, clowns or army drills. Racquet sports such as tennis, which could be practised in private, away from the eyes of the multitude, were preferred. The boys hawking tankards of beer in the open stands were banished, along with the gamblers. No more would bookies roam the boundary shouting the odds. The money changers had been chased from the temple. Soon, all-white clothing became *de rigueur* at Lord's. It was attire befitting a solemn national ritual.

The ramshackle, mismanaged MCC of 1860 had become an embarrassment to the elite. Under Fitzgerald and his successors, it underwent a gradual transformation, similar to transformations taking place at the same time in other English institutions. The church, army and civil service all purged themselves in this period. The old



free booting merchants and soldiers of the East India Company were replaced, after the 1857 Mutiny, by the direct rule of the Indian Civil Service and the imperial bureaucracy. Not long after, the haphazard, informal rule of Lord's gave way to a rational MCC structure and the codification of its right to govern. Between 1864 and the end of the century, the average age of MCC presidents and committeemen rose from the mid-thirties to the mid-fifties.

In 1888, proposals to run a railway through Lord's were blocked by cricket's friends in Parliament. The market which had created Lord's was being pushed back. It was becoming inviolable territory. The next year, MCC purchased the Lord's freehold with money advanced by Nicholson and began work on the new pavilion.

In 1898, Francis Lacey (Sherborne, Cambridge), another barrister, became MCC Secretary. He had been nominated for the post by Ponsonby Fane. Lacey set up a system of sub-committees and introduced into the MCC the Civil Service-style culture of officiousness and secrecy for which it became notorious. Within the next decade, the MCC established formal control over both county and Test cricket.

Throughout this period, the landowners remained dominant at the MCC, as they did in Parliament. The Earl of Sefton, one of the MCC's first Trustees, owned 20,000 acres in Lancashire. The Earl of Verulam, MCC President in 1867, owned 14,000 acres in Hertfordshire. The Duke of Beaufort (Eton), President of MCC in 1877, owned 52,000 acres, mostly in Gloucestershire. Lord George Hamilton (Harrow), MCC President in 1881, owned 157,000 acres. The Tory MP, WH Long (Harrow, Oxford), MCC President in 1906, owned 15,000 acres in Wiltshire.

The MCC Presidents and Committee men combined interests in land with multiple directorships in the City and a hunger for speculative profit. They forged a close alliance with booze merchants like Nicholson. The Walker family of Southgate, prominent amateur cricketers and MCC members, owed their fortune to brewing, which sustained a stately home and private cricket ground in Southgate. Vyell Walker (MCC President in 1891) had been the amateur captain left alone on the field at the Oval when the professionals walked out

over the no-balling of Willsher. His five brothers also played cricket and several served on the MCC Committee.

The landowners, financiers and alcohol kingpins were joined by an array of professionals, notably barristers. Sir Henry James (MCC President in 1885) was a QC and judge before becoming Gladstone's Attorney General. AL Smith (Eton, Cambridge, MCC President in 1899) was Lord Justice of Appeal and later Master of the Rolls. The England batsman-wicket-keeper, Alfred Lyttelton (Eton, Cambridge, MCC President in 1898), also a QC, served as private secretary to James when he was Attorney General and later Recorder of Hereford and Oxford. Lyttelton was also Gladstone's nephew and successively brother-in-law of Asquith and Balfour. From 1900 until 1913, Viscount Alverstone, an MCC Committee member, presided as Lord Chief Justice.

Although there were few clergy on the MCC Committee, large numbers played as amateurs and maintained MCC membership. One in three Oxbridge cricket blues between 1860 and 1900 (209 amateur cricketers) took holy orders. Fifty-nine of these played county cricket. Seven became bishops. Catholics or non-conformists were rare. This was the Church of England at play and it provided English cricket with ideologists and missionaries. Among the latter was the England cricketer, CT Studd (Eton, Cambridge), who served the church in China and India and played for the Gentlemen of India in 1902. As a vicar in Kennington, HH Montgomery (Harrow, Cambridge) praised the Oval's 'vast, good-humoured, happy crowd impartially cheering successes and failures'. Later, he took the gospel of cricket to Tasmania, where he was bishop for nearly twenty years.

The cricket elite was well placed in both the military and colonial hierarchies. Hamilton, Earl Spencer, and WH Long became First Lords of the Admiralty. Hamilton also served as Secretary of State for India. Long and Alfred Lyttelton became Secretaries of State for the Colonies. Lord Lansdowne (Eton, Oxford, MCC President in 1869) served as Governor General of Canada, Viceroy of India, Secretary of State for War and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Viscount Downe (Eton, Oxford, MCC President in 1872) was a major general who served in India and fought in the Zulu and Boer Wars.

Like the Ponsonbys, many of the cricket elite had interests in Ireland. Spencer was twice Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in which capacity he helped suppress the Fenians in the 1880s. Long was Chief Secretary for Ireland. Lansdowne's Irish house was burnt to the ground by Republicans in 1922. Perry Anderson has remarked that Britain's military officers and colonial officials tended to come from 'the neediest and least reputable branch of the ruling class, its Anglo-Irish extension, which provided most of Britain's leading commanders down even to a century later'. Among the latter was Field Marshal Montgomery, son of HH, the Bishop of Tasmania, who had played cricket for Ireland in 1867 and 1868 and who died on the family estate in Donegal in 1932.

In every respect, including the Irish connection, the cricket elite of the late nineteenth century was the direct descendant of the clique that met at the Star and Garter in 1784. It was also an uncannily precise mirror of the broader elite which ran the country as a whole, knitted together by a shared public-school culture. Forty-nine per cent of MCC Committee members in this period went either to Eton or Harrow and fifty-seven per cent to Oxford or Cambridge. Among the presidents, secretaries and treasurers, these proportions were even higher.

Obviously, the MCC spurned workers of all kinds, not to mention trade unionists or radicals, and there were few industrialists. The rare exceptions prove the rule. They were tradesmen who had remade themselves as gentlemen of landed leisure. Marcus Samuel explained that he had sold his Shell oil company to the Dutch because he preferred 'horses, gardens, angling and watching cricket in comfort' to the trials of business.

In characteristically English fashion, the MCC managed during this period to increase its overall membership without compromising its exclusivity or social status. In 1877, 330 of the club's 2,300 members were titled; ten years later, there were about the same number of titles among a membership of 5,000. Yet at least thirty per cent of the MCC Committee remained titled throughout the 1860-to-1914 era. Thus MCC always retained an aristocratic ethos, no matter how many parvenus it admitted. Money itself was never the decisive factor. The £3 annual subscription was unchanged from 1856 to

1948. To join the MCC, you had to have *connections* (public-school connections).

Though cricket develops in and through an industrial society, it does so under the aegis of non-industrial classes. These classes made English cricket in their own image – and that image was never one of market-supremacy. Unlike industrialists, they remained at a safe distance from the market's vicissitudes. Their fortunes were, of course, entirely dependent on it, but their relation to it was an institutional one, mediated through the City. This profit-at-one remove experience provided the elite with the model on which they ran English cricket. Their hands-on approach to ruling the country and the empire meant that they rarely let slip MCC's control of the game; their hands-off approach to the market meant that they rarely intervened to organize the game at the base of society.

Between 1860 and 1914, fifty-seven per cent of the MCC Committee members were Conservatives and thirty-seven per cent Liberal. Nearly all of the latter became Liberal Unionists following the break-up of Gladstone's coalition in the 1880s. Significantly, it was Irish Home Rule that precipitated the split. Clarendon, Lansdowne, Nicholson, Lyttelton, James, Wenlock and Suffield, all MCC Presidents and prominent politicians, opposed Home Rule (many had land in Ireland) and moved over to Liberal Unionism and in some cases ultimately to the Tories. As with the movement of the rich Whigs into Pitt's ministry in 1792, the rightward shift of the cricket elite following 1885 mirrored a broader recomposition of the English ruling class, which faced an increasingly assertive working class. By the end of the century, the MCC had become overwhelmingly Conservative, dedicated to the Tory truisms of constitutional royalism, the supremacy of private property and the expansion of empire.

The aim of the Zingari clique which had assumed control of the MCC in the 1860s was to resist the take-over of the game by the professionals. To do that they had to ensure cricket remained a game, not a business. Paradoxically, that meant they had to insist it was 'more than a game', and therefore above the exigencies of the market. In 1904, Andrew Lang declared: 'Marylebone is the

Omphalos, the Delos of cricket.’ Cricket had become a cult. The MCC Committee were its priests and Lord’s was its cathedral.

AN Hornby, one of Francis Thompson’s immortal ‘run-stealers’, forever flickering ‘to and fro’, was a free-scoring amateur batsman in the classic mould. His father, whose cotton-manufacturing family had married into Lancashire land, sat as the Tory MP for Blackburn until removed from Parliament following a bribery charge. His brother, EK Hornby, who played for the Gentlemen of the North in 1862, immediately reclaimed the seat with an increased majority, and later became the first Baronet Hornby.

Coached by Frederick Ponsonby, the young AN was a star bat at Harrow. Pycroft watched him play at Lord’s against Eton in 1863, and foretold that he and the other ‘successful batsmen’ of the day would ‘remember their score – aye, and not be above talking of it, however high their honours at the bar or the senate, till their dying day’. Hornby went on to captain the England side that lost the famous Oval Test to the Australians in 1882. Against Spofforth, the world’s first complete overarm fast bowler, England were unable to make the 85 runs needed to win. The next day the famous notice appeared in the *Sporting Times* announcing the death of English cricket: ‘The body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia.’ Thus, one of cricket’s most celebrated traditions was invented as a sour comment on an English cricketing failure.

At the newly-formed Lancashire CCC, the neatly moustachioed and brilliantined Hornby was, in the words of the 1879 *Lillywhite*, ‘the life and soul of the team’. He was a hard hitter with strokes all around the wicket, but his calling for quick singles sometimes confused his batting partners. *Lillywhite* noted that Hornby’s ‘impetuosity’ had often cost the team the wicket of his fellow opener, ‘the patient Barlow’. For fifteen years, off and on, Hornby captained Lancashire, and was elected club President in 1894, while still playing. At old Trafford in 1899 he whipped a reporter who had dared to criticize his tactics. He retired from active cricket that year at the age of fifty-two, but remained President of the club for another twenty-two years. In 1903 he forced the amateur fast bowler Walter Brearley out of the side after the latter had aired opinions with which

Hornby disagreed. 'The press have been against me,' he complained, but insisted, 'As long as I am President of this club I will not tolerate bad behaviour on or off the cricket field by any player.'

The gospel of amateur cricket which Hornby had imbibed at Harrow became the theology of the public schools. As the nineteenth century progressed, the transition from childhood to adulthood was elongated. 'Puberty' became a 'problem'. The upper and middle classes contracted this 'problem' out to the public schools. Games, especially cricket, were a means of preserving some of the non-utilitarian pleasures of the child's world in the brusquely utilitarian world of the adult. For the burgeoning public schools, they formed a bridge spanning the mysterious gulf separating the two. In the 1870s, the old-school tie and old boys' rituals first appear: a proud and novel projection of adolescent loyalties into the adult world.

Cricket became an exercise in character-building, which was rated more highly by the public schools than mere academic excellence. JEC Welldon, Harrow headmaster between 1881 and 1895, explained:

The pluck, the energy, the perseverance, the good temper, the self-control, the discipline, the co-operation, the esprit de corps, which merit success in cricket or football, are the very qualities which win the day in peace or war ... In the history of the British empire, it is written that England has owed her sovereignty to her sports.

Cricket was seen in England as a preparation for the greater games of war and empire. Elsewhere, sport was seen as play, as childish indulgence, and the belief that it was a serious affair was regarded as characteristically English. CB Fry declared: 'cricket is a cult and a philosophy inexplicable to the *profanum vulgus* ... the merchant-minded ... and the unphysically intellectual'. The ugliness of Fry's public school philistinism was starkly revealed by his later attempts to organize paramilitary-style youth training and his dalliance with Nazism. 'The Nazi ideal of education,' he noted admiringly, 'definitely places health and character in front of mere intellectual learning.'

In emphasizing 'character', the amateur elite played down the virtues of competitiveness and partisanship, and often presented them as vices peculiar to professionals and the lower orders. They feared that a cricket meritocracy would make ability, rather than social status, the dominant value of the 'national' game. The free market of sport and the democratic premises of cricket were curtailed and compromised by an amateur code that claimed to embody values transcending mere winning and losing.

The Victorian ethic of team sport was deeply paradoxical. The individual was subordinated to the team but the team itself was subordinate to the overriding dictates of 'fair play'. Winning was not all-important, even if the game itself was. 'Playing the game', submitting to the Laws and the authority of the umpire, giving the benefit of the doubt to opponents, had nothing to do with not caring about winning or about personal success, both of which remained the driving forces in every game of cricket, then as now. Losing graciously was a way of saying not only that there were higher and more important games to win but that those who lost in those higher and more important games – economics, politics, empire – must also accept the verdict of the system. In this way a savagely competitive and unequal domestic and world order was cloaked in the mystical raiments of 'fair play' and the rule of law.

In becoming 'more than a game' under the aegis of the amateurs, cricket acquired not only a moral, but also an aesthetic justification. In 1897, Fry's great friend Ranjitsinjhi declared, 'There is much more in a fine on-drive or a well-bowled ball than the resulting four or wicket.' In the 'Golden Age' of 1895–1914, style was supreme. The model amateur batsman combined elegance and power. His play appeared 'effortless', a telling adjective. The off-drive, transmuting the pace of the bowler into its opposite through timing and footwork, was the consummate expression of this aesthetic. How you looked became as important as how many you scored. And the counterposition of the aesthetic to the utilitarian was frequently seen as a question of class.

Off-side play became an amateur fetish in the 1880s. A generation of public-school batsmen were taught that hitting the ball for runs on the leg side was not the done thing. These 'bread-and-

butter' strokes were for professionals; gentlemen were expected to disdain such vulgarity. Fry and other amateurs railed against this bizarre taboo (not least because of the advantages it gave professional bowlers). And in the next generation Ranji's leg glance came to sum up the delicacy, ease and elegance of the Golden Age. But the on-side taboo endured in folk memory. In a county match in the 1990s, a promising young Yorkshire batsman, Michael Vaughan, played a shot to midwicket. Dicky Bird, the umpire, asked him cheekily if he could balance that with a shot to the off side. Vaughan obliged and turned to Bird: 'Posh-side, all right, ump?'

The sheer irrationality of the on-side taboo tells us a great deal about the nature of the divide between gentlemen and players. Dressing rooms were strictly segregated. There were separate entrances to the field (the grand entrance through the pavilion's central gate was reserved for amateurs), separate travel, accommodation and dining arrangements, even separate tables and menus for meals taken during lunch intervals. These facilities were not only separate, but unequal in every respect. They symbolized the static hierarchy which the amateurs imposed on the democratic fluidity of cricket.

From the 1880s, county and Test captaincy became the preserve of amateurs, even when it meant appointing as captain the least experienced, least effective player on the field. In cricket, mental labour, and with it the exercise of leadership, were made the prerogatives of those who exercised leadership off the field. Amateurs were addressed by professionals as Sir or Mr at all times. Omitting this courtesy could result in a fine or dismissal. The amateurs, in turn, addressed the professionals by their surnames alone. Match reports and score cards denoted amateur status by placing the cricketer's initials before the surname. As with the taboo against on-side hitting, the sheer arbitrariness of the distinction hints at the reality of the gentleman/player dichotomy: that it had little to do with whether or not you made your living from cricket.

Indeed, for many decades, the distinction was ambiguous, and not of great concern to anyone, perhaps because it was considered self evident in a society so sharply divided between the haves and the have nots. The Earl of Aboyne, for instance, appeared for the



Players against the Gentlemen at Lord's in 1819, for the simple reason that he had bet on them. A direct financial investment obviously made the Players 'his' side. But that did not stop him from becoming MCC President in 1821 or playing for the Gentlemen in 1827.

Defining and enforcing amateur status became a concern only in the 1860s and '70s, when the elite were reasserting their old authority against the professionals. GF Grace was excluded from the Gentlemen's side at Lord's in the 1870s because he had received money for playing with the United South of England XI. In 1878, the MCC at last defined amateur status: 'No gentleman ought to make a profit by his services in the cricket field, and that for the future, no cricketer who takes more than his expenses in any match shall be qualified to play for the Gentlemen against the Players at Lord's.'

But the 'expenses' allowed gentlemen cricketers – the costs of the first-class travel, hotels, drink and dining which they regarded as appropriate to their social status – could cost promoters a pretty penny. Touring Australia in 1887–88, Arthur Shrewsbury, the greatest professional batsman of the day, complained that 'the expenses of each amateur member of Lord Harris's team was more than double those of any one of the professionals'.

As fixture lists grew and competition increased, it became harder for amateurs to dedicate sufficient time to the game to keep pace with the professionals. In order to preserve the gentlemen/players dichotomy, 'shamateurism' grew up.

It was widely observed that the leading amateur captains were actually 'professionals in disguise'. The Lancashire captain, AC MacLaren (Harrow), regarded by many as the incarnation of swashbuckling amateur batsmanship, was employed by his County Committee as a 'cricket instructor' and 'Assistant Secretary' at £450 per annum, twice what the club's leading professionals received. MacLaren also stipulated that he was to play in all the county's first-class fixtures, a guarantee denied professionals. When he threatened to move to Hampshire, Lancashire improved its terms, making him the club's 'Assistant Treasurer'.

Though an amateur, the England batsman and Surrey captain WW Read was the best-paid cricketer on the county's staff, thanks to

the salary he received as the club's Assistant Secretary. In 1884 the Surrey Committee voted to pay the stock exchange entrance fee for MP Bowden, their nineteen-year-old amateur batsman-wicket keeper. Bowden went to South Africa with CA Smith's side in 1888–89 and stayed there. He tried his hand at liquor running and died in Rhodesia in 1892 after falling from a cart.

All the leading amateurs enjoyed testimonials which were often more profitable than the benefits staged for professionals. Lord Harris himself was presented with a 400-guinea candelabra in 1882. In 1895, the Surrey Committee donated £200 to Read's testimonial, but only £50 to professional Bobby Abel's benefit. Fry received a motor car from Sussex in 1904. Lord Hawke was given jewellery worth £1,842 in 1908.

The most flagrant and successful of all shamateurs was WG Grace, who was estimated to have earned £120,000 (equivalent to more than £1 million today) from the game during his forty-three-year career. Gloucester paid him £50 a match, plus handsome expenses. He received £1,500 plus expenses for the 1873–74 Australian tour (the professionals got £170 plus expenses). Eighteen years later he asked for and received £3,000 for going back. In 1895, at the age of forty-seven, he hit 2,346 runs, averaged 51 and became the first man to score a thousand runs in May and the first to hit a hundred hundreds. That year the *Daily Telegraph* raised £4,000 for him though a National Shilling Testimonial, an MCC appeal raised another £3,000 and the Duke of Beaufort's Gloucestershire appeal a further £1,500.

The Graces were a middle-class professional family seeking respectability through cricket and its association with the elite. But WG himself attended neither public school nor university. He took ten years to qualify as a doctor – long after he had achieved fame as a cricketer. Respectability demanded that a gentleman cricketer maintain an outside profession. But the expense of this profession was borne by WG's cricket patrons, who had to pay a locum to run his medical practice.

*Wisden* described his case as 'an anomalous one': 'The work he has done in popularising cricket outweighs a hundredfold every other consideration ... nice customs curtsy to great kings.'

WG was indeed an anomaly, but not in his shamateurism, which was only an extreme example of common practice. Unkempt, unwashed, gluttonous, exuberantly competitive and a notorious cheat, WG brought into the urban world of the late nineteenth century a rural, yeoman aura a hint of a past that was vanishing before people's eyes. For that, the elite patronized him and the public adored him. However, he was never invited to join I Zingari, did not captain England until his tenth Test appearance in 1888 and was not asked to captain the Gentlemen at Lord's until the 1890s.

Amateur status was clearly not simply about having money. The great fear of penurious amateur cricketers was that if they turned professional they would lose social status and the privileges that went with it. As a result, very few crossed the line. County clubs were usually willing to make discreet arrangements to enable their amateurs to stay amateur. Being an amateur implied having 'private means', that is, access to capital without recourse to labour. The model for all affluence was landed leisure. No matter how you had accumulated your wealth, you were still expected to behave as if it was inherited and unearned.

For the cricket amateur, to play cricket for a living, to turn the game into a species of labour, was demeaning. The trappings of amateurism – the emphasis on 'style', the muffling of the competitive strife of the game in 'fair play' – were attempts to redefine the 'manliness' associated with the game (and the English) in ways that suited those who did not work with their bodies. Talented young amateurs could while away whole summers as country-house guests with unlimited access to a cornucopia of food, drink and tobacco. Their only expenses would be fares, tips to servants and cricket-bat oil. All this left the amateurs, in the end, as dependent on the patronage of the rich as the professionals.

The hypocrisy that sustained amateur status was affectionately but knowingly satirized by EW Hornung in his tales of Raffles, the England slow bowler and 'amateur cracksman'. In one story, Raffles takes umbrage at being treated by his country-house hosts as if he were a *professional* cricketer. In revenge, he breaks his code of honour and steals their jewels. Hornung's friend and fellow cricket devotee, Arthur Conan Doyle (who played for MCC), was distressed

that a thief should be portrayed in fiction as a gentleman cricketer and a hero, but in Raffles Hornung captured the parasitism of amateur cricket, and the cleavage between appearance and reality which propped up the national institution which the game had become.

In keeping itself at a safe distance from the stresses and strains of industrial life, the elite contrived a cult of ruralism which was (and still is) mimicked by the middle and professional classes in the suburbs. From at least the 1860s, cricket was seen by these classes as a refuge from the new hordes in the cities. Amateurism was part of a wider revolt against industrialism and its extreme division of labour.

It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided, but the men – divided into mere segments of men – broken into small fragments and crumbs of life ... the great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this – that we manufacture everything there except men.

Thus Ruskin, whose books sold in large numbers to a middle-class audience seeking escape from the crassly commercial world which had spawned it. But the more Ruskin thought about it, the more convinced he became that only co-operative socialism could make human beings whole again. The cricket elite had other ideas. Through the amateur code, it seized control of the 'national' game. The virtues of a protected masculinity – encased in pads and gloves and 'fair play' – became national virtues. The national character, as embodied in the cricket cult, became the property of a particular type of English person: the 'gentleman', whom Ruskin scathingly defined as 'a man living in idleness on other people's labour'.

Cricket was unique among the gate-money sports of the late-Victorian era in encompassing amateur and professional in one competitive structure. By 1900, top-class football had been taken over by professionals. Rugby suffered a schism over the issue. Hockey, tennis and athletics were strictly amateur. Cricket's origins in an earlier age enabled it to house both amateur and professional within a single stately home, but they also ensured that within this mansion, 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' remained strictly demarcated.

Hornby's opening partner, the stonewalling RG Barlow, was for twenty years a model Lancashire professional, a teetotaler and non-smoker. Bolton-born, he worked as a moulder in the Staveley ironworks in Derbyshire, where he played against the All-England XI and thus came to the notice of the Lancashire Committee. As a defensive batsman, he was the perfect complement to the stroke making Hornby. Twice in county matches he occupied the crease for two and a half hours for only five runs. In 1876, *Lillywhite* observed: 'It is constantly said by spectators that they do not care to see Barlow play. To our mind, they are thereby paying him a great compliment, for if the onlookers are wearied, what must be the feelings of opposing bowlers?'

He was also a crafty left-arm medium-pacer who took 5 for 19 in the 'Ashes' Test at the Oval in 1882. For a time, he was second only to WG as the country's outstanding all-rounder. But in 1892, Lancashire decided Barlow was past his best and dropped him from the side. Barlow protested. The Committee then dismissed him for 'lack of courtesy'. At their next Annual General Meeting, Lancashire members voted by 200–4 to support the Committee's action. Barlow repaired to the Lancashire League and played as a professional there for another seven years. He also worked for many years as a first-class umpire. In 1908, Lancashire, under Hornby's presidency, appointed Barlow ground manager at £200 a year 'with house, gas and coal'. But the great stonewaller left the job after nine months, tired of the peremptory demands of the amateur Committee men.

The contrasting fortunes of the most famous opening partnership in poetry neatly illustrate the obscene gulf between the gentlemen and the players on which the triumphs of the Golden Age were predicated. The containment of the working class, the repression of the haughty professionals, went hand in hand with the rise of county and Test cricket. One could not have happened without the other.

During this period the rules governing qualification for county sides were gradually tightened. These measures were in part an attempt to make the county competition more meaningful to spectators. There had to be some sense in which the personnel of a team 'belonged' to the county. But where football evolved a transfer system in which 'belonging' was defined by a business-style

contract, cricket preferred to define it by birth or residence, tying players to the land and wrenching them from the national market. Their freelance status was undermined and their bargaining power reduced. County cricket became a cartel: an agreement among ostensibly rival employers.

The professional cricketer was left at the mercy of his county committee. Out of his match fees (£4 or £5 for a county match, £10 for a major fixture like Gentlemen v. Players), he had to meet the costs of bed and breakfast, third-class rail fares, meals and drinks. Tips, talent money and bonuses made up the living wage. Taking the hat around the ground following an exceptional performance became common practice. In each match, amateur captains would award points to professionals according to their own recondite marking systems and, as often as not, their mood on the day. Bonus payments would be issued accordingly.

The strictly amateur county committees regarded any attempt by professionals to secure even a modicum of independence as treacherous. At Gloucestershire, WG dropped the county's veteran bowler, William Woof, because Woof had taken a coaching job at Cheltenham College, which might make him unavailable for some of the county's early-season fixtures. Woof said he would give up the job if the club guaranteed to play him in (and thus pay him for) all matches. Otherwise, he argued, 'they could not expect me to leave a certainty for an uncertainty'.

In 1880, seven Nottinghamshire professionals, among them Arthur Shrewsbury and the medium-pace bowler Alfred Shaw, petitioned the County Committee to pay them £20 each for playing in the match against the visiting Australians, the most popular and profitable of the season. The county met the demand – but awarded £21 to those professionals who had not signed the petition.

By common consent, Shrewsbury was one of the finest batsmen of the era. His 164 against Australia (and Spofforth) at Lord's in 1886 was described by Lord Harris as 'the finest innings I ever saw'. The son of a draughtsman in a Nottingham lace factory, he had little time for the MCC and was contemptuous of amateur hypocrisy. In a letter to the Surrey all-rounder George Lohmann, he complained bitterly of amateurs 'who get a nice round cheque each season out of cricket'.

With his friend Shaw, an astonishingly economical bowler who sent down more overs than he conceded runs, he organized commercial cricket tours to North America and Australia, and built a sporting-goods business. These assertive, aspirant descendants of William Clarke were the most independent force in first-class cricket, but they proved no match for the MCC cartel.

In 1881, the Nottinghamshire seven, again led by Shrewsbury and Shaw, decided to organize a Nottinghamshire side to play a one-off match in Bradford, as had been customary in previous years. But times had changed. The county was now asserting its monopoly. It could not allow Shaw and Shrewsbury to do what Clarke had done. The Committee demanded that the players make themselves available for all county matches that season, which meant no freelancing in Bradford. In response, the seven asked for a contract for the whole season and the guarantee of a benefit after ten years. The Committee refused and the seven were dropped. At the end of the season, five of them backed down and retracted their demands. Shaw and Shrewsbury held out until the following May, then gave in and issued the apology required by the Committee.

The 1882 *Lillywhite* accused the Nottinghamshire seven of engaging in 'a deliberate combination against a recognised administration':

In county cricket the professional, who is the labourer, makes a profit: the committee, who is the capitalist, does not, but merely seeks to encourage and support the game ... Professional cricketers ought to remember that their relation with County Committees is not the ordinary commercial relation of labour and capital.

In 1886, Lord Harris proposed reducing the qualification period from two years to one. 'I have been called a cricket socialist,' he observed wryly. 'I do not know what a cricket socialist is, but if it means I have the interest of professional cricketers at heart, then I am one.' In the same year, there was a resolution which would have prevented players moving counties as long as their current county wanted them, seconded by WG himself. Harris opposed it, saying he could not accept 'anything that had any suspicion of interfering with a

working man from selling that which was his property – his labour’. Both proposals were rejected and the qualification rules remained as before.

Professionals sought compensation for their lost freedom of movement in benefit matches and funds. Prior to the rise of the counties as their chief and ultimately exclusive employers, players organized their own benefits on their own initiative. Under the county regime, benefits were awarded strictly at the employer’s discretion.

Benefits are exempt from tax because they are supposedly *ex gratia*, uncontracted payments. This anomalous status was confirmed by the courts in a test case in 1927. Lord Harris used all his influence to secure this decision, ostensibly to protect professional cricketers from the Inland Revenue. But if benefits had been treated as contracted payments and taxed accordingly, the players would have had a powerful argument to back their long-standing demand that benefits be awarded according to length of service, not the whim of the County Committee.

County clubs often insisted on retaining half the income from a player’s benefit and guarding it on his behalf until the player’s retirement. Johnny Briggs, a popular Lancashire and England slow bowler, requested a benefit after his fourteenth year with the county, but was told it was too early. A few years later, he suffered an epileptic seizure on the field and was committed, penniless, to Cheadle Asylum, where he died at the age of thirty-nine.

In the 1890s, in response to demands made by their highly successful professional corps, the Surrey Committee agreed to pay the county’s best players thirty shillings a week during the winter. Lancashire and Yorkshire followed suit. However, in Yorkshire, half the winter pay (plus four per cent annual interest) was retained by the county until a player’s retirement.

Ponsonby Fane found the idea of ‘paying a man to idle away eight months out of twelve’ distasteful. Winter pay also caused alarm among the weaker counties, who feared Yorkshire and Surrey would snap up all the talent. But Yorkshire already had its Yorkshire-born policy (ruthlessly enforced by the Lincolnshire-born Lord Hawke). And *Wisden* calmed the counties’ fears by reminding them that ‘the law of supply and demand can be trusted to keep things tolerably



straight' – *as long as the informal amateur quota in county cricket was preserved*. Without that, the players would gain the whip-hand. Many counties reserved playing places for amateurs, especially during university holidays. Amateurs comprised on average between a third and a half of county sides in the two decades before World War I. These amateur sinecures limited the number of professional berths available and forced professionals to compete against each other, but not the amateurs, for a place in the side.

Winter pay was never meant to be a full wage but a supplement to other earnings. Professional cricketers were expected to belong to the 'respectable' working class and to maintain a trade other than cricket. The amateurs expected them to reproduce, in modest form, their own part-time approach to the game, and to reflect in their demeanour an appreciation of their place within the social hierarchy.

Professional cricketers in the era of the itinerant XIs were noted for their enjoyment of food, drink and merriment. But under the aegis of Harris, Hawke and others within the MCC elite, the image of the professional was reformed. In Yorkshire, 'professionalism' became tantamount to teetotalism. Lord Hawke proclaimed, 'the man who is a pernicious example ought to be sacked, no matter how skilled he may be as a cricketer'. The county was purchasing more than the professional's labour; it was appropriating his body and soul.

The players were expected to be well-attired, proud of their appearance, but never showy. Where amateurs donned multi-coloured blazers, caps, boaters, and ties, professionals, who had once taken the field in stripes, spots and checks, were forced into a uniform of starched white shirts and flannels, ornamented only by the official county blazer and cap. Their duties included preparing the pitch and bowling in the nets to county members. They also maintained equipment and served drinks. Thus, county cricket institutionalized the ethos of aristocratic patronage even as it was dying out in the rest of society.

In 1896, prior to the third Test at the Oval, Test players Gunn, Lohmann, Richardson, Abel and Hayward had the temerity to submit what they called a 'demand' to the Surrey Committee (which staged and organised the Test). They wanted £20 each for the fixture, doubling the existing fee, which, despite the boom in cricket, had not

changed for two decades. The Committee rejected the 'demand', dropped all the players from the side named to play the Test, then hauled up the four Surrey players involved for a personal dressing-down. Three withdrew their 'demand' on the spot, placed themselves 'in the hands of the Committee' and were promptly reinstated to the Test side. The other two, Lohmann and Gunn, were excluded from the match.

In an interview in the *Daily Mail*, Lohmann explained: 'The enormous crowds which now follow the game benefit the clubs and, in fact, everyone but those who have done at least their fair share towards bringing the game to its present state – the professional players.'

*The Times* took a different view: 'Loyalty to the Surrey Club and patriotism for English cricket should have been a sufficient incentive to the players to have practised self-denial for a while longer.'

The crowds at the Oval backed the dissident players. According to the *Star*, 'the voice of the people in this instance is unmistakably in favour of the professionals'. Nevertheless, Surrey punished Lohmann by dropping him from county matches. To get back into the side, he issued an apology to the Committee in which he stated that he had made a 'request', not a 'demand', which expression, he claimed, 'was inserted against my wish and better judgement'.

'The players were right in principle, but their action was ill judged and inopportune,' said *Wisden*. Following the 1896 dispute, Surrey and the other counties hosting Tests raised the match fee, quietly, to £20. In 1898, Lord Harris, having abandoned his 'cricket socialism', proposed that the residential qualification period be increased to three years. He also suggested that professionals should not be allowed to move unless released by their current counties. To enforce these regulations, he called on the MCC to establish a central register of county cricketers.

Though the qualification period remained two years, Harris's other proposals were gradually adopted. At all levels, professionals, by the end of the century, were dependent on amateur selection committees for any and all opportunities to ply their trade. The only way to challenge the MCC cartel would have been through trade-union action, but this the professionals spurned. They served their

counties in the hope of securing a benefit, the only way they could see to achieve the financial independence that would preserve them from the factory or the poorhouse. Like the amateurs, they were in flight from an industrial society.

However, not everyone was prepared to cede the ownership of English cricket to the elite. While few unskilled labourers took to cricket, it was immensely popular among skilled workers. Before the 1880s, Yorkshire cricket was dominated by framework knitters, lace workers, fitters and turners. As their crafts were undermined by industrial development, a Yorkshire supporter lamented, 'Fast looms have destroyed our fast bowling.' That was before the miners emerged. Like their piece-worker forebears, and like most cricketers in the North, they lived in semi-rural industrial villages. Major urban areas lacked the space for cricket and most factory workers lacked the time and money.

Though industrialism curbed the development of cricket in some areas, it created new markets for it in others. Twenty thousand now attended the big matches. In London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds, county cricket was keenly followed by working-class boys who filled the sixpenny seats to ogle their heroes, who were usually professionals. It cost no more to spend a whole day watching cricket than it did to watch ninety minutes of football. But watching the cricket required a full day off work. County cricket remained largely a mid-week affair for the benefit of amateurs who had social engagements on the weekends. For the working class, cricket remained a holiday entertainment, while football was a weekly staple. This reinforced ruling-class governance of the game. Since the cricket holiday was seen as a special dispensation, suitable behaviour and respectable attire were required. But among these working-class supporters, debates about cricket were keenly pursued, and sometimes with a conscious class perspective.

Cricket was covered regularly in the pages of Robert Blatchford's *Clarion*, the most popular socialist newspaper of the time. Blatchford had worked as a reporter on *Bell's Life* (a sporting paper) and the *Manchester Sunday Chronicle* before converting to socialism (and losing his job) at the age of forty. He started the *Clarion* in 1890 and within a few years its circulation had risen to 60,000. Blatchford and

his contributors celebrated the dignity, skill and intelligence of the professionals and lampooned the pretensions of the amateurs. A faux-naif *Clarion* columnist commented:

Gentlemen dont get payed nothin for playin except their expenses. This is wye they looks down on the perfeshernals who has to call em sir, an go in at the bak door. You coodnt tell witch was the gentleman if it wasn't for this ere. That is wye it is. You see you cant tell by there close nor there maners so they does it this way.

Blatchford described Shrewsbury as 'the Andrea del Sarto of cricket: the perfect batsman ... He never slogs and he never funks. He is no more capable of swiping at a good ball than of tamely blocking a bad one ... He is a cricketer and a man ...' In other words, he possessed all the 'Golden Age' virtues which the amateurs claimed for themselves. Blatchford concludes his paeon to Shrewsbury with a vignette from the Trent Bridge Test:

Outside the gate, a small, poorly dressed boy, not above ten years of age, came up to me and said, 'What's the score, mister?' I said, 'England 300 for 4 wickets.' 'O-o,' said the urchin, then turning up the tail of his eye and turning down the tail of his mouth, he asked, 'ow many's Arthur got?' I gave him sixpence and told him to go in and see 'Arthur' for himself.

In 1893, after eighteen years' service to Nottinghamshire, Shrewsbury received a benefit of £600. He was still playing in 1902, when he topped the first-class batting averages, for the sixth time, at the age of forty-six. A small, shy, unmarried man with a streak of hypochondria, he grew melancholy during the following winter, complaining of kidney pains, and visited doctor after doctor. In May 1903, he died after shooting himself in the chest and head. The obituary in *Wisden* explained: 'The knowledge that his career on the cricket field was over had quite unhinged his mind.'

English cricket inherited the county unit, with so much else, from the eighteenth century and the landed elite. But the county championship itself emerged only in the late nineteenth century. Unlike the great football or tennis competitions which came into

being at the same time, county cricket did not enter the late-Victorian scene as something novel, an internally coherent creation of the age. It was, from the outset, a compromise – between professional and amateur, local and national, tradition and the market.

The modern county organizations were formed out of patchwork quilt of pre-existing clubs and associations. In most counties, there was tension between the old market towns and new urban industrial areas, between county-based aristocracy and town-based bourgeoisie. Usually this was resolved by making the landowners president and vice-president of county clubs, while local professionals, clergy and businessmen undertook the administrative tasks. All of them were united in their loyalty to amateurism and the overlordship of the MCC. The formation of the modern county clubs in the second half of the nineteenth century was very much the work of the elite at the centre of English cricket, which helps explain why county clubs have always been dependent on the Lord's apparatus and never established their own equivalent of the Football League.

Unlike football clubs, cricket clubs were (and are) membership organizations. The former were dominated by industrial proprietors with an admixture of skilled workers; the latter by landowners, professionals and high-street traders. County secretaries were accountable not to shareholders but to members, and they were slow to respond to the growing press and public interest in county cricket.

In 1873, inspired by the recently-inaugurated FA Cup, the MCC proposed to organize an annual competition to determine the Champion County Club. Only two counties entered. The rest rejected the idea, fearing 'it may have a tendency to introduce a speculative element into cricket'. Ten years later, the county secretaries at last agreed to meet together annually – at Lord's. It was a natural choice of venue. They were all MCC members.

Not everyone was pleased by the rise of county cricket. In *The Times* in 1887, Frederick Gale, styling himself 'Old Buffer', declared grumpily: 'Cricket is a game and not a business.' He objected to the press's habit of categorizing counties as first- and second-class, which, he reminded readers, was against 'the dictum of the MCC'. He detested 'the new fad about "champion counties"' and urged

MCC not to award any championship – because under such competitive conditions, the professionals would always play for the draw. ‘Exit old English cricket, enter the betting ring.’

A cricket reporter replied: ‘Cricket is played for honour, and will so continue; but honour implies renown, and how is renown to be gained except in a defined and eager competition among rivals of approximately equal skill and ability?’

The echoes of Pycroft in Gale’s protest are clear, but once again the MCC was wiser – or more adaptable – than its moralistic counsellors.

In July 1888, on the MCC’s initiative, delegates from the counties met at Lord’s during the Gentlemen v. Players match. Lord Harris chaired the meeting, which received a report recommending the formation of a County Cricket Council. Delegates were most concerned that nothing they did should undermine MCC’s right to make the Laws of Cricket. The thorny questions were the qualification rules and the determination of first-class status. Harris wanted to leave both questions in abeyance so that the Council could be set up at once. As usual, he got his way. The Council was established on the basis of equality among all counties, including several ‘minor’ or ‘second-class’ ones. The subscription was £1 per county per year, which indicates the modesty of the new body’s ambitions.

Harris was made its chairman and immediately announced that ‘there was room for improvement’ in the ‘working rules of cricket’. The bowler needed help to be ‘placed on more equal terms with the batsman’. He suggested a change in the LBW Law to prevent stonewalling. The Yorkshire delegate warned that spectators in the North would drift away unless something was done to make the county games more exciting. Changes in the hours of play were mooted. Even the elimination of boundaries was contemplated. It was thought that ‘a cricket match now was rather a tame thing to watch’. Something had to be done to spice it up.

At its inception, county cricket was already struggling with the dilemma that haunts it today: how to fit the old game into the new marketplace. When a formal county championship was finally inaugurated in 1890, it was barely noticed by the press or the public.

It seemed merely a belated codification of what had been happening for years. As so often in cricket, where others innovated, the authorities consolidated – and reaped the rewards.

A stalemate over the question of which counties were or were not first-class led to the collapse of the County Cricket Council in 1890–91, when Harris was out of the country on imperial duties. In 1894, the county secretaries, having given up on any kind of self-government, asked the MCC to intervene. The MCC obliged. In future, its Committee would decide which counties were worthy of joining the select band. First-class counties would be those which played a sufficient number of first-class matches! This was, at best, an abstract, not a competitive standard of excellence. At the same time the MCC decided there would be no ‘second-class’ counties: there would be first-class cricket and there would be the rest of cricket. In the absence of a system of promotion and relegation, a gulf opened between first-class and club cricket. It became rare for a county cricketer, amateur or professional, to play at lower levels.

In the following years, the established county clubs used MCC’s control of the game to see off potential rivals. Five new counties were granted first-class status between 1895 and 1900. A total of three more were admitted in the following ninety-two years.

In 1899, WG ended his thirty-year association with Gloucestershire to spend the remainder of his career as captain and secretary of the newly formed London County Club, based at Crystal Palace. For his services, he was paid £600 per annum, twice as much as the professionals in the side. The London County side was a forerunner of celebrity cricket (one of its attractions was the fast bowler Walter Brearley, whom Hornby had dropped at Lancashire). It shamelessly exploited famous names to get paying customers through the gate. As such, it was deeply distrusted by the MCC and the established counties, which repeatedly refused to admit it to the county championship and even stripped it of first-class status, despite the proven high standard of its cricketers.

CLR James observed of WG: ‘Like all truly great men, he bestrides two ages.’ As a transitional figure between the agrarian past and the urban present, he epitomized cricket’s perpetually arrested development, its incomplete accommodation with the

modern world. But WG was also a prophetic figure. His London County Club, based on a modern identity (the metropolis of London, not the pseudo-counties of Surrey and Middlesex) and aimed squarely at the mass market, pointed the way to a different form of domestic cricket. Thanks to the MCC, it was frozen out of the market and folded after eight years in business.

In 1904, the Advisory County Cricket Committee was set up under the aegis of the MCC, which thus became at long last the undisputed ruler of county cricket. It had less direct financial or bureaucratic power than either the FA or the League or, for that matter, its ancient cousin, the Jockey Club, but it was seen by the counties themselves as a higher authority, independent of partisan interests, embracing the whole of English and ultimately imperial cricket.

MCC policy was that 'all counties are equal'. In reality, this meant preserving the extreme inequalities among current county sides. The Football League provided a stable basis for systematic competition and a ladder whereby teams rose or sank in the hierarchy according to their performance on the field. In contrast, MCC did little to promote closer competition among the counties. There was no central subsidy, no pooling of gates and no transfer fees. No county has ever been relegated from the county championship. Even after MCC took over the championship, the county clubs retained control over their own fixture lists and were not required, in the beginning, to play all other first-class counties. The total number of fixtures varied from year to year as the MCC and the counties tried and failed to iron out anomalies. Between 1890 and 1993, the points system for the county championship was altered more than thirty times.

Although attendance at county matches grew throughout the 1880s and '90s, most county clubs led a perilous hand-to-mouth existence. Rain always made it difficult for counties to secure a stable income from the gate, as did the large number of meaningless draws and abbreviated one-sided wins (a consequence of the MCC's failure to promote equal competition). All this meant that county clubs relied on membership subscriptions and donations from the local elite.

In keeping with cricket's rarefied ethos, few counties allowed their grounds to be used for anything else (football was banned from the



Oval in the 1890s). Fixed assets therefore lay dormant for most of the year – as they still do. It was always accepted that the game could not survive in the marketplace unaided. County committees emphasized the social obligation of members to maintain the county side. County ties became symbols of social status. But the local chauvinism that motivated the football clubs was largely absent. County cricket was seen as a national institution and supporting it a public duty.

Unlike urban football clubs, county cricket clubs did not compete against each other for spectators. Their roots in an earlier age left them with clear territorial monopolies. However, their boundaries were anachronistic even then. Successive reform acts had eroded the counties' political significance. The new counties wanted and needed an urban base (hence Old Trafford, Headingley, Edgbaston and Bramall Lane) but couldn't tear themselves away from the old landed loyalties.

Many among the elite shared CB Fry's contempt for 'the artificial interest of the County Championship', regarded as inferior to the annual Gentlemen v. Players fixture or the Test matches. Because MCC's governance of county cricket was an act of *noblesse oblige*, little effort was made to capture a mass audience for it. In contrast, league cricket shamelessly catered to its working class audience, spreading rapidly through the North and Midlands in the 1880s and '90s. Admission fees were low. Because competition was local, it cost less to travel to matches. And a result was guaranteed, which was vital to highly partisan paying customers. The wickets were rough and therefore unsuitable for classical amateur strokeplay. Everyone had to pull his weight in the field. The crowds were boisterous. The middle-class-dominated, socially exclusive Southern clubs held aloof: In the 1920s their Club Cricket Conference prohibited affiliates from playing in any league or knock-out competitions. Among these clubs, all matches were 'friendly' until the 1960s.

Like black baseball in the USA, league cricket was derided as a backwater and its achievements largely ignored. League clubs were the first to introduce overseas professionals to English cricket. Nelson hired the Australian fast bowler EA McDonald in 1922 and

the West Indian all-rounder Learie Constantine in 1929. Basil D'Oliveira too made his start in English cricket in the leagues.

From the beginning, the leagues offered a refuge for disgruntled county professionals. Bobby Peel, thrown out of Yorkshire by Hawke for alleged indiscipline, continued his career at Accrington. SF Barnes, blunt and never deferential, left Lancashire in 1903, at the age of thirty, to spend the rest of his career in the more congenial atmosphere of the leagues, though he appeared in England Test sides until 1914. More recently, Johnny Wardle found shelter in league cricket after falling out with the county hierarchy, as did Viv Richards, under different circumstances.

Disdaining partisanship, county cricket guaranteed no results. As pitches and batting techniques improved, draws became more common and spectators fewer. In 1902 a noisy campaign to change the LBW Law to aid beleaguered bowlers failed. The MCC always found it hard to adopt new Laws solely for the benefit of first-class cricket because its Laws applied to all cricket, including club cricket, where the pitches already aided the bowlers more than enough. Its claims to universal governance hampered its ability to improve the county game.

By the turn of the century, critics of county cricket regularly decried the excessive number of draws, the domination of bat over ball, the dull and defensive play. At the apogee of the cricket cult, all the discontents of the modern English game were being voiced. The pathology of English county cricket, its ceaseless struggle for survival in a hostile world, cannot be blamed, *pace* Pycroft, Gale and a thousand latter-day pundits, on 'professionalism'. Cautious play and uncompetitive, pointless matches, still the bane of the county game, are the result of its gerrymandered structure. 'Professionalism', long seen as an English disease, is a creature of the amateur-dominated hierarchy.

The *Clarion* lost much of its audience when Blatchford became an enthusiast for the South African War at the turn of the century. The jingoism which mortally infected him, as it has so many socialists in times of war, was then in its heyday, as was the British Empire. What had begun as piracy on the high seas and sharp practice by English

businessmen in foreign lands had become a cause to fight and die for.

The imperial caste carried cricket across the globe, but once again, the professionals, more sensitive to the market, took the commercial lead. In 1859 Parr and a squad of professionals (accompanied by Fred Lillywhite and his printing press) made the first overseas tour – to North America, then second only to England itself as a cricket capital. The first English visit to Australia, three years later, was sponsored by a Melbourne cafe, which netted £11,000 profit from the tour and promptly moved to London.

Test cricket, the supreme form of the game, was pioneered, like county cricket, by the market and the media. The Melbourne Cricket Club, every bit as establishment as MCC itself, began sending representative Australian sides to England in 1886. But for years MCC left overseas touring in the hands of private entrepreneurs and patrons. In 1887–88, two rival England teams – one led by Hawke and one by Shrewsbury – toured Australia at the same time. Only in 1893 did MCC officially invite and host an Australian touring side – the eighth to visit these shores. In 1899, MCC finally set up a Board of Control for Test matches, composed of the MCC President, five others from the Committee and one from each first-class county. The Board appointed a Selection Sub-committee to replace the separate panels at Lord's, Old Trafford and the Oval. (This system remained unchanged until the – ultimately disastrous – reforms of 1989.) It was not until 1903–04 that MCC selected and sponsored its own England side to tour Australia.

Soon requests for MCC tours were pouring in from the colonies. English cricketers, professional and amateur, were in demand and the MCC had once again cornered the market. Its power of patronage was now global. Lord's was the HQ of both English and world cricket. The red-and-yellow club colours were no longer sufficient. From 1903, MCC touring sides sported the national emblem – the lion rampant.

The first proposal for an 'Imperial cricket contest' between England, Australia and South Africa was mooted in 1907. One of its aims was to foster South Africa's integration into the empire. The Australians, however, were not keen on coming all the way to

England to play South Africa, nor were they prepared to divide with South Africa the profits of an England tour. A compromise was reached. The Australians were invited to tour England alone, as usual. At the same time, a conference was called 'to discuss arrangements' for matches between the three Test-playing countries. In 1909, a meeting at Lord's, with Lord Harris in the chair, established the Imperial Cricket Conference (ICC). The MCC President became the new body's ex-officio chairman and the MCC Secretary its ex-officio secretary. It was not a governing bureaucracy, but a forum for private negotiation. After much wrangling, it organized the Triangular Tournament in England in 1912, a commercial flop that put an end to multi-sided international contests until the World Cup of 1975.

Under the aegis of the ICC, cricket was formally linked to empire. This was no help to the game in the USA, which was excluded from the ICC, as South Africa was to be when it left the Commonwealth in 1960. In practice, the 'internationalism' of the ICC was restricted to bilateral relations between the MCC and the colonial cricket authorities.

This was in keeping with the world view of the Tory imperialists ruling at Lord's and Westminster. Chief among them was the Trinidad-born Lord Harris (Eton, Oxford). He toured Australia in 1878–79, at the age of twenty-seven, and despite some rough treatment by the Australian crowds arranged the 1880 return tour to England and the first Test at the Oval. His family, with 3,000 acres in Kent as well as substantial interests in the City, boasted four generations of colonial military service. His grandfather was Archdeacon of Trinidad. As Governor of Madras, his father helped put down the 1857 Mutiny. Later, he became Governor of Trinidad, as well as Chairman of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway, a position which his son inherited. To that, the Fourth Baron Harris added the Chairmanship of Consolidated Goldfields (founded by Cecil Rhodes) and a Directorship of the Naval Construction and Armaments Company in Barrow.

Harris reformed in order to conserve. He was the ideal figure to preside over the marriage of cricket and empire because he was a central figure in both. He served as Under-Secretary for India and

then Governor of Bombay, where he organized the first visit by an English cricket side. In the South African war he served as an Assistant Adjutant General. Later, he was an ADC to Kings Edward and George. Harris was also 'Chancellor' of the Primrose League – a kind of Tory popular front – which stood for the 'True Union of the Classes' and the 'Imperial Ascendancy of Great Britain' and claimed over a million members.

The Primrose League was the Tory response to the challenge of an extended franchise. Through it, the Tories aimed to link the middle classes with the upper classes against the menace of the proletariat. They did so by propounding a higher national interest – which, by an amazing sleight of hand, became an *imperial* interest. The similarities with cricket are obvious and were not lost on Harris himself, who declared frequently that 'cricket has done more to consolidate the Empire than any other influence'.

Harris's principal disciple was Sir Pelham 'Plum' Warner (Rugby, Oxford) whose father was Attorney General of Trinidad. Trained as a barrister under Alfred Lyttelton, Warner dedicated his life (with occasional interruptions for stockbroking in the City) to playing, reporting and administering cricket. When the England side arrived in Australia in 1932 for what was to become the 'Body Line' series, Warner, the tour manager, declared that the aim of the MCC in 'sending teams to all parts of the world' was 'to spread the gospel of British fair play'.

The imperialists left English cricket with a peculiar legacy. It became a symbol of both nation and empire, as English as 'habeas corpus', and as universally applicable. Under the jurisdiction of the empire, everyone, it was said, was subject to the same laws. It was an extension of cricket's old mythology of social inclusion – wed, as ever, to rigid hierarchy.

'High and low, rich and poor, greet one another practically on an equality, and sad will be the day for England if Socialism ever succeeds in putting class v. class and thus ending sports which have made England.'

Thus, Lord Hawke in 1924, during the first, short-lived Labour government. The next year, at the Yorkshire CCC annual dinner,

Hawke, having been reconfirmed as club President for the twenty-seventh year running, made an off-the cuff remark about the professional cricketer Cecil Parkin, who had publicly criticized the way the amateur, AER Gilligan, was captaining the England side in Australia. Hawke sniffed: 'If he had been a Yorkshire player, I do not think Parkin would ever step on another cricket ground in Yorkshire. Pray god no professional may ever captain England.'

The Labour-supporting *Daily Herald* saw this as a declaration of class war and struck back: 'Is it cricket, Lord Hawke?' a headline demanded. The newspaper went on to impugn the great lord's patriotism. 'He would rather see England's prospects at Test cricket imperilled than allow a professional to captain the side.'

From Adelaide, Hobbs, Sutcliffe and other professional Test players wired London: Hawke's remarks were 'disparaging to professionals'. The *Herald* praised their 'moderate and dignified protest' and noted that in Australia, where all cricketers were considered amateurs and paid the same expenses for each match, the English division between gentlemen and players was seen as backward. Denouncing Hawke's 'snobocratic' views, the paper demanded, 'Play the game, Lord Hawke!' It argued: 'The best interests of cricket are imperilled by these snobbish class distinctions. What is the MCC going to do about it?'

An Independent Labour Party branch secretary from Harlesden wrote to the *Herald*: 'If anyone were to tell Lord Hawke that he was preaching the class war, he would be horrified, yet that is what he is doing.' The *Herald* warned readers that Hawke's 'stone age views' were not merely 'funny old survivals' but 'representative' of many in the upper classes who believed 'it is a mark of inferiority to be obliged to earn your own living'.

Sir Home Gordon explained that his friend Hawke had never meant to be inflammatory. All he had been trying to say was that amateurs, as well as professionals, should have their reserved places in the game. 'If first-class cricket has not the leaven of amateurs with professionals,' Gordon argued, 'it would lose its national character.'

Both parties to the debate claimed to be speaking on behalf of the nation and both claimed the mantle of 'fair play'. The *Herald* was

right to insist that the 'cricket' in 'it is not cricket' referred to a spirit of equality and universal human respect. Hawke was right to argue it was also about people knowing their places. That paradox was the creation of English cricket's transitional nature, a legacy of its early origins and uneasy accommodation with modern society.

The integration of world cricket under the English landed elite coincided with the beginnings of that elite's decline in domestic and international politics. Even as the county championship was finally coalesced, the old county gentry were losing their monopoly over the bench and local government in the countryside. From the 1880s, the landed presence in the House of Commons began to dwindle. In 1895, Oscar Wilde had Lady Bracknell complain of the burden of land ownership: 'It gives one a position, and prevents one from keeping it up.' When WH Long narrowly lost the leadership of the Conservative Party to the Ulsterman, Bonar Law, in 1911, it was seen by many as the eclipse of the old landed elite within the party.

Rival imperial powers were emerging. German and US industry had taken off in the 1860s and by the 1890s both were making overseas claims. At the same time, anti-colonial movements appeared. The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. A new Irish national movement took shape. Australia and New Zealand achieved dominion status.

For a hundred years, English cricket has been struggling with the consequences of the prolonged decay of its patron class. The inauguration of Hopkins's new Mound Stand in 1987 invoked past glories, but could not revive them.

At the start of its bicentenary year, MCC had gone through a severe internal crisis over its relations with the marketeers of the TCCB, leading to the resignation of its long-serving Secretary and Treasurer and a contentious Extraordinary General Meeting. The cost of the new Mound Stand had put the MCC under more pressure than ever to do business with the TCCB, and in order to stage a bicentenary match it had to compensate the counties for the revenue they lost from a normal Lord's Test. In the end, JP Getty, the billionaire American, bailed out the old club. His name was inscribed in a stone plaque in the new stand. Getty thus joined WG Grace,

Lord Harris, Plum Warner, Gubby Allen, Compton and Edrich among the select benefactors of cricket commemorated at Lord's.

Having survived a tycoon father, the University of San Francisco, a stint in the US navy and a hellish period managing the family interests in Italy, Getty moved to England, where he fell in love with cricket at the age of forty. He purchased a complete set of *Wisdens* from the estate of Robert Maxwell and a stately home at Wormsley in Buckinghamshire from the Fanes, the aristocratic family of a former England Test captain. There, at considerable expense, he attempted to re-create country-house cricket (with help from TCCB pitch-master Harry Brind, various BBC commentators and that personification of Golden Age strokeplay, David Gower). Getty disapproved of his fellow magnate, Kerry Packer: 'There should be limits to commercial exploitation,' he insisted. The world's most famous American cricket fan has recast himself as an English gentleman, one of the old amateurs, enjoying a style of life which few of their contemporary descendants can afford.

The anomaly of Getty is impressive testimony to the endurance of landed wealth as a touchstone of elite status in English cricket. But, of course, Getty is an expensive copy, not the real thing. In this respect, the new Mound Stand is his perfect memorial. Its billowing tents are not made of canvas, but of a teflon-coated synthetic fabric. No gentle summer breeze can rustle them. Beautiful as it is, the Mound Stand is ersatz, like the mock-Tudor McDonald's in Stratford-upon-Avon. In leaning so heavily on the past, it reminds us that English cricket has yet to come to terms with the present.