

'Like a man trying to knit'? : Women's Cricket in Britain, 1945-2000

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor
of Philosophy

July 2015

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Details of publications:

Nicholson, R. (2012), 'Who killed schoolgirl cricket? The Women's Cricket Association and the death of an opportunity, 1945-1960', *History of Education* 41:6.

Nicholson, R. (2015), "'Our own paper': Evaluating the impact of Women's Cricket magazine, 1930-1967", *Women's History Review*.

Abstract

This thesis focuses on a much neglected area of women's history, female leisure. It examines the processes of change since the Second World War in British society as experienced by British women, through the lens of women's cricket, a sport previously completely overlooked by historians. A combination of archival material and oral history interviews with female cricketers past and present is used to examine the constraints faced by women in postwar Britain in gaining access to spaces of leisure such as sport, and the ways in which they exercised agency in overcoming such barriers.

The thesis makes a key contribution to the historiography of the women's movement in twentieth-century Britain, demonstrating that female cricketers always espoused so-called 'second-wave feminist' ideals such as the freedom to control their own bodies, the need for a women-only space, and a rejection of traditional ideas of domesticity in favour of exercising their own right to leisure. Thus, despite the fact that the 'feminist' label is rejected by cricketers in oral history interviews, women's cricket can still be conceived of as a site of feminism.

By documenting the problems women had with gaining access to cricketing resources, coverage of female cricketers in the media, and the attitudes of British governments and British society more broadly to women's cricket, the thesis highlights how sport remains an arena in which traditional attitudes to gender roles have until recently undergone very little significant change.

Acknowledgements

There are many people who have helped me in the course of researching, writing and completing this thesis. Dr Helen McCarthy has combined academic stringency with supportive guidance in her supervision of the project, and the final result is very much the better for her efforts. Dr Peter Catterall as my initial supervisor was always a source of ideas and inspiration, and continues to be a great support to me. I am also grateful to the community of scholars who regularly attend the Sport and Leisure History seminar at the Institute of Historical Research in London. I have greatly benefitted from their advice and company over the course of the PhD.

I am indebted to all those within the women's cricket community who welcomed me into their confidence, and whose voices have thoroughly enriched this research. Their honesty and openness was greatly appreciated, as was the time they spent digging around in their spare rooms, attics and sheds to unearth some of the archival material which form the basis of the following pages. In particular I must thank Carole Cornthwaite, who was the custodian of the Women's Cricket Association archive at the time of my research, and had to put up with me living in a shed in her garden almost solidly for several weeks!

I am also thankful for the wisdom and support of the Women's Cricket Bloggers, who continue to enrich my summers, both in the press box and on the boundary edge. Researching a PhD thesis is (one hopes!) temporary, but friendship is for life.

PhD theses sometimes have long roots; this one began in a Surrey classroom many years ago under the guidance of Angela Mayne, who taught me to love history. While she may not have initially approved of the chosen topic - 'sports history?' - I hope she will appreciate the final result.

Last but not least I thank my parents. Not only did Dad instil in me from an early age his own love of cricket, but both he and Mum provided the financial and emotional support to allow me to complete the PhD (not to mention countless cups of tea along the way). Without them it would not have been possible; it is to them that this thesis is dedicated.

Contents

List of figures	6
List of illustrations	7
List of abbreviations	8
Introduction	9
Chapter 1. 1945 to 1955: 'Brighter Cricket'?	44
Chapter 2. 1956 to 1970: 'Modern life militates against women's cricket'	90
Chapter 3. The 1970s: Women's Cricket and Women's Liberation	142
Chapter 4. 1980 to 1992: 'Limping along'	182
Chapter 5. 1993 to 2000: To a merger and beyond	221
Conclusion	281
Appendixes	306
Bibliography	323

List of figures

Figure 1: WCA affiliation figures, 1945-55	45
Figure 2: WCA affiliation figures, 1955-70	91

List of illustrations

Illustration 1. Molly Hide batting in a divided skirt, 1950s	56
Illustration 2. England touring team in ‘mini-skirts’, 1968/9	105
Illustration 3. Advert for Gray-Nicolls’ bats, featuring England captain Rachael Heyhoe	116
Illustration 4. Uni-Vite’s sponsorship of the 1986 Indian tour	198
Illustration 5. <i>The Sun</i> in the wake of England’s World Cup victory, 1993	250
Illustration 6. Isa Guha in the new, slim-fit Adidas England kit	288

Abbreviations

ACO - Association of Cricket Officials
ACU - Association of Cricket Umpires
AENA - All England Netball Association
AEWHA - All England Women's Hockey Association
AGM - Annual General Meeting
ASA - Amateur Swimming Association
AWCC - Australian Women's Cricket Council
CCPR - Central Council of Physical Recreation
CPE - College of Physical Education
ECB - England and Wales Cricket Board
EGM - Extraordinary General Meeting
FA - Football Association
GPDST - Girls Public Day School Trust
IWCC - International Women's Cricket Council
LCC - Ladies Cricket Club
LCCA - London Community Cricket Association
LEA - Local Education Authority
MCC - Marylebone Cricket Club
NCA - National Cricket Association
NZC - New Zealand Cricket
ODI - One Day International
PE - Physical Education
SDO - Sports Development Officer
TCCB - Test and County Cricket Board
WAAA - Women's Amateur Athletics Association
WAAF - Women's Auxiliary Air Force
WCA - Women's Cricket Association
WCAG - Women's Cricket Advisory Group
WCC - Women's Cricket Club
WI - Women's Institutes
WLM - Women's Liberation Movement
YWCA - Young Women's Christian Association

Introduction

In the summer of 1963, at Chislehurst in Kent, a charity match took place between an England Women's XI and a side made up of famous male England cricketers and cricket journalists. It was captained by Colin Cowdrey. Brian Johnston, the much-loved BBC cricket commentator, was keeping wicket, and Len Hutton (England captain 1952-55) was fielding at slip. 'I asked him what he thought of women playing cricket,' Johnston later recalled. 'He gave me a funny look and answered: "It's just like a man trying to knit, isn't it?"'¹ The women's side went on to win the match.

One can well imagine Hutton uttering those words. Throughout the twentieth century, female involvement in cricket was subject to intense scrutiny regarding its suitability as a 'feminine-appropriate' sport; the England cricketer Walter Hammond wrote in 1952 that: 'There are some games women can play, in general, actually better than men, but the muscular differences of the sexes prohibits cricket from being one of them'.² Hutton's quote is telling: it suggests that cricket was felt to be a masculine activity, unsuitable for female participants. His idea that women playing cricket was the equivalent of men knitting also signifies the existence of broader societal expectations about the gendered nature of leisure in modern Britain. Women's place was at home, knitting; men's was outside the home, playing sport. Even when Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, England captain, scored a century three years after Hutton's remark, during the 1966 Scarborough Test against New Zealand, the *Daily Telegraph* reported it with the headline 'Housewife enlivens day's play'.³

¹ B. Johnston, *A Delicious Slice of Johnners* (2001; reprinted London, 2007), pp.276-7.

² W. Hammond, *Cricket's Secret History* (London, 1952), p.155.

³ *Daily Telegraph*, 20 June 1966.

Hutton's comment was made in 1963, before the onset of the second-wave feminist movement and the resulting shift in women's societal position. Indeed, historians agree that gender roles in Britain underwent significant change in the period between the 1960s and the start of the twenty-first century; Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska concludes that 'gender differences have declined, male and female roles have become increasingly fluid and ambiguous, and women have acquired greater status and power'.⁴ Yet there are limits to this new fluidity of gender roles. In April 2012, the popular BBC Radio 4 soap *The Archers* featured a storyline in which the girlfriend of one of the main male characters, Jamie Perks, expressed a desire to join him in playing cricket for the Ambridge village cricket team. The shocked and confused reaction of Alistair Lloyd, the captain, who admitted that he had never considered the possibility that a woman might want to participate, was as telling as Hutton's remark almost fifty years earlier. It appeared that ideas had changed little in the interim regarding appropriate spaces for women's leisure.

This thesis examines women's cricket in Britain since the end of the Second World War. Given that the subject has previously been almost completely overlooked by both sports historians and historians of women and gender, the first task has been an empirical one of recovery: an in-depth study of the British women who participated in cricket since 1945. Who were they? How did they react when faced with strongly misogynistic attitudes to their participation in the sport? Were they 'feminists'? What impact did cricket have on their lives? Yet the thesis has a broader remit. It uses women's cricket as a lens through which to examine key processes of social change since the Second World War, as experienced by British women: in particular how the development of the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s affected the lives of female cricketers, and what this can tell us about British women's relationship with feminism more generally throughout the

⁴ I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Introduction', in Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), p.12. See also J. Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945* (Oxford, 1992), p.2, and S. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (London, 1999), p.178.

postwar decades. Additionally, as the opening vignette demonstrates, sport is one area in which traditional attitudes to gender roles have undergone very little significant change until recently. It is an arena in which men and women are still institutionally separated on the basis of biological difference; arguably, sport is one of the last bastions of 'acceptable' inequality on the basis of sex in contemporary Britain. Thus women's cricket has much to tell us about the lives of women in modern Britain: the constraints they faced, set against the new freedoms they enjoyed. How far, for example, were women cricketers able to operate in autonomous ways, given that much of their access to cricket grounds and other resources was controlled by men throughout this period? Ultimately, it is argued that the case study of women's cricket points to the existence of ongoing fundamental inequalities in the quantity and quality of women's leisure in contemporary Britain.

Early women's cricket

The current limited historiography on women's cricket is almost entirely focused on the period before 1939, during which the sport first developed and became organised. While the first recorded women's cricket match occurred in 1745, it was during the nineteenth century that the sport expanded, as middle-class and upper-class women with leisure time and financial means at their disposal came to share in the male Victorian 'sporting revolution', partaking in cricket as well as hockey, lacrosse, lawn tennis and golf. In 1887, the White Heather club was founded in Yorkshire by eight ladies, and during the next two decades a small number of other women's clubs appeared. In 1890, two teams of lady professionals were organised by the English Cricket and Athletic Association and became known as 'The Original English Lady Cricketers'. Kathleen McCrone's seminal work *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women, 1870-1914* (1988) outlined

this growth.⁵

McCrone largely focused on the education system, highlighting the activities of those who participated in cricket at girls' public schools and the new women's Oxbridge colleges. The Victorian pioneers of women's education strongly believed that sporting activities should be part of female education as well as male. Following the Schools Enquiry Commission of 1867-8, schools for middle-class girls rapidly increased in number; these included public boarding and day schools modelled on their male predecessors, which offered a wide variety of games and gymnastics, aiming to provide the same opportunities for academic and physical development as were available at the male public schools. The schools of the Girls Public Day School Trust (GPDST), founded in 1872 to provide daughters of professional men with a reasonably priced education, also introduced games. By the turn of the century, sport in girls' schools had been fuelled by the first generation of Oxbridge school mistresses who had played sports at college, and by the games mistresses emerging from the physical training colleges, the first of which was opened in 1903 at Bedford.⁶

Images of the 'New Woman' participating in sport at the turn of the nineteenth century demonstrate that physical activity was a key part of the first-wave feminist movement in Britain. Yet McCrone concludes that 'hockey and particularly cricket...were perceived frequently as threats to the separation of the spheres of men and women that predominated in society at large and protected the "purity" of men's sport'.⁷ The promotion of games, and cricket in particular, within the school environment was, as McCrone argues, part of the 'double conformity' that the founders of female public schools subscribed to: an education for girls in alignment with male academic standards

⁵ K. McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women, 1870-1914* (London, 1988).

⁶ For a history of the physical training colleges, see S. Fletcher, *Women First: the female tradition in English physical education 1880-1980* (London, 1984).

⁷ McCrone, *English Women*, p.149.

whilst at the same time submitting to the constraints of ladylike behaviour.⁸ In Victorian and Edwardian England, girls' games at school reflected these constraints, both in terms of dress and the lack of especially strenuous, contact sports. On the whole, by 1914 opinion remained opposed to widespread female involvement in the sporting arena, reinforced by the male medical arbiters who dictated that sport was unladylike and would have negative effects on sexuality and childbirth.⁹ Additionally, organised women's sport was generally confined to the middle and upper classes.

This changed during the interwar years, a period which witnessed a dramatic growth in the prevalence of women's sport. This has recently been documented by a number of scholars, including Jennifer Hargreaves, Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska and Fiona Skillen. Hargreaves argues that the First World War was a 'unique and liberating experience for many women, leaving them with confidence to flout old restrictions'.¹⁰ She highlights organisational growth in this period; for example, the Women's Amateur Athletics Association (WAAA) was formed in 1922, the first competitive events having been held during the war by munitions workers, and the All England Netball Association (AENA) was formed in 1926 at a meeting of the YWCA in London. By 1938 the WAAA claimed a membership of 20,000, and in the following year it was estimated that 160,000 women were playing in clubs affiliated to the AENA.¹¹ Hockey expanded enormously: by 1939, 2,100 clubs and schools were affiliated to the All England Women's Hockey Association (AEWHA).¹² Golf and tennis were also games of sociability for the middle classes. 'Mixed

⁸ McCrone, *English Women*, p.61 See also J. Hargreaves, "“Playing like gentlemen while behaving like ladies”": contradictory features of the formative years of women's sport', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 2:1 (1985), pp.30-40.

⁹ See P. Vertinsky, *The eternally wounded woman: women, doctors and exercise in the late nineteenth century* (Manchester, 1990).

¹⁰ J. Hargreaves, *Sporting females: critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports* (London, 1994), p. 113.

¹¹ These figures are quoted in R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), pp.368-70.

¹² All England Women's Hockey Association, *Women's Hockey (from Village Green to Wembley Stadium)* (London, 1954), p.11.

foursomes' became common in social golf, whilst tennis was the sport in which women came closest to equality with men. The All-England Club mixed doubles championship tied the men's and women's game together and tennis produced the first female sports star in Suzanne Lenglen. As Hargreaves points out, the feats of several famous sportswomen, including Lenglen, were so well publicised that 'a changing popular consciousness about women in sports' developed, alongside an alternative discourse which acknowledged and accepted that female participation in sport had come to stay.¹³

Zweiniger-Bargielowska focuses on the development of a physical culture movement between the years 1880 and 1939, arguing that: 'A modern, actively cultivated body was yet another aspect of women's liberation along with political emancipation, greater gender equality, and expanding employment opportunities after 1918'.¹⁴ For example, the founder of the Women's League of Health and Beauty, Mary Bagot Stack, was an advocate of women's right and duty to cultivate beauty *through* health: the League organised keep-fit classes for women from across the social spectrum and by 1939 some 160,000 women were participating in these classes. The aim was a eugenicist one of promoting 'Racial Health'; yet the key impact of the promotion of images of fit and physically active women as 'modern' was to help overcome late nineteenth-century medical discourses regarding the frailty of the female body. A 'more assertive and vigorous' femininity emerged as a result.¹⁵ The idea that women's participation in sport was a key signifier of 'modernity' is also taken up by Fiona Skillen, who argues that: 'Sport could provide an opportunity to train and tone the body, to improve posture and, it was believed, even to enhance beauty...some of the

¹³ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, p.118. See also S. Wagg, "Her Dainty Strength": Suzanne Lenglen, Wimbledon and the Coming of Female Sport Celebrity', in Wagg (ed.), *Myths and Milestones in the history of sport* (Hampshire, 2011).

¹⁴ I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the body: beauty, health and fitness in Britain, 1880-1939* (Oxford, 2010), p. 237.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.278.

essential attributes of the young modern woman'.¹⁶ Skillen analyses cartoons and advertising from the period, demonstrating the existence of a new discourse linking women's sport with their emancipation and increased independence. She highlights the expansion of women's sport across several different 'sites', including schools and the workplace: in each case, changing discourses surrounding the importance of sport led to increased provision, and often on a more gender equitable basis. For example, the growing preoccupation with national fitness, particularly as war approached in the 1930s, was a cross-gender phenomenon, generating press demands for more public provision of sports facilities, as well as a continued standardisation of physical education for both boys and girls. In the workplace, the growth of female employment, coupled with ideas about worker productivity, led to many more companies providing welfare amenities for both sexes.

It was previously assumed by historians like Ross McKibbin, who included a section on women's sport in his seminal *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*, that working-class women's sport in these years was almost non-existent, due to high levels of opposition among working-class men.¹⁷ Skillen demonstrates that this was patently not the case; in fact, the interwar period is crucial for historians of women's sport because it was in these years that 'there were local, affordable and accessible sports facilities available to women across the United Kingdom for the first time'.¹⁸ Thus sport was becoming open to women of all classes. This, coupled with the new affordability of fashionable sports clothing, meant that working-class women could and evidently did begin to participate. Modernity, then, was a phenomenon which affected all classes; and the interwar period saw a huge growth in women's sport partly founded on its widened accessibility. The use of oral histories has helped to recover the experiences of some working-class women; research by Liz

¹⁶ F. Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity in Interwar Britain* (Oxford, 2013), p.184.

¹⁷ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.368.

¹⁸ Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity*, p.1.

Oliver based on oral accounts of Bolton women in the 1920s demonstrates that rounders was 'a rich and vibrant area of women's culture'. Schoolgirl rounders thrived and there were more than 80 factory teams operating in two leagues, as the sport was actively encouraged by employers.¹⁹

The growth in women's cricket in the interwar years must be viewed within the context of this general expansion in women's sport provision. One of the few historians who has written specifically on women's cricket is Jack Williams, whose 1999 book *Cricket and England* includes a chapter on the development of the sport in the years before 1939.²⁰ He details the formation of the Women's Cricket Association (WCA), the brainchild of a group of female hockey players who in October 1926 travelled to Colwall in Herefordshire for several days of cricket on the Malvern College Ground. Among them was Marjorie Pollard, who recalled:

After play was over we sat in the Park Hotel at Colwall...and discussed how cricket could become real for us – no longer to be an illusive thing, that one played half afraid of ridicule. We pondered, mused, talked.²¹

Out of this came the decision to form an association. At the first meeting of the WCA nineteen women met, elected a chairman and formed a committee to arrange fixtures around the country. Two aims were declared: 'To encourage the foundation of cricket clubs throughout the country' and 'to provide facilities for and bring together...those women and girls who previously have had little opportunity of playing cricket after leaving school and college'.²² This was a bold step, but it paid off almost immediately. For the 1927 season the WCA arranged a fixture list and 49 matches were played; by 1929 37 clubs and 39 schools were affiliated members and the first public women's

¹⁹ L. Oliver, "No hard-brimmed hats or hat-pins please". Bolton women cotton-workers and the game of rounders, 1911-39', *Oral History* 25:1 (1997), pp.40-1.

²⁰ J. Williams, *Cricket and England: a cultural and social history of the interwar years* (London, 1999), chapter 5.

²¹ M. Pollard, *Cricket for Women and Girls* (London, 1934), p.18.

²² *Ibid.*, p.21.

cricket match was played on Beckenham Cricket Ground between London District and the Rest of England. Public matches continued throughout the 1930s, with some played on county and Test cricket grounds including the Oval. In 1933, County Associations were formed in Middlesex, Lancashire, Kent, Nottinghamshire and Surrey along the same organisational lines as the male counties. Colwall continued to host an annual Cricket Week, the highlight of the season for many players, in which players would gather for several days of matches. An official magazine for the sport, *Women's Cricket*, was set up in 1930 and edited by Pollard until 1950. The enormous success in the venture is demonstrated by the affiliation figures for 1938: 105 clubs, 18 colleges and 85 schools.

Williams' work is an important corrective to the earlier assumptions of McKibbin, who argued that there was a lack of institutional cooperation between the men's and women's games, the women being ostracised by the MCC (the Marylebone Cricket Club, the governing body of men's cricket) at least until 1951.²³ By contrast, Williams suggests that the amateur ethos of those running the WCA was in fact almost identical to that of the MCC and that many men expressed encouragement for women's cricket by, for example, allowing use of their grounds. The WCA adopted both the rules of the MCC and arguably their conservatism: they dictated how their players dressed, and how they behaved on and off the pitch. It was necessary, wrote Marjorie Pollard in 1930, 'to play in something that is above criticism', and regulations specified this meant skirts, and the covering of legs and arms. As Williams recognises, this was an active attempt to secure the approval of the male cricketing community on whom the WCA relied to provide access to facilities.²⁴

Another corrective to McKibbin's account is Williams' recognition of the existence of large numbers

²³ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.370.

²⁴ Williams, *Cricket and England*, pp.101-2.

of works teams participating in leagues in the North of England during the 1930s. The Yorkshire and Lancashire Women's Cricket Federations, established in the early 1930s, saw male cricketers in league clubs organising women's leagues, as well as Lancashire-Yorkshire games which attracted up to 8,000 spectators. For those working-class women who did play, there was a more relaxed dress code and women often wore trousers during matches.²⁵ Peter Davies' work on women's cricket in Yorkshire also explores working-class participation. In particular, he considers teams in the Yorkshire town of Brighouse in the 1930s through the lens of press coverage, arguing that the press took an active and serious interest in women's cricket even in its early days, and that matches were well advertised and given plenty of column space.²⁶ Once again, this contradicts McKibbin's assertion that women's cricket received very little support from the press in its early days. Davies' case study of Brighouse also lends support to Skillen's argument that in some cases, discourses surrounding women's sport in the interwar years were becoming more positive, thus helping to normalise female physical activity.

It is significant, too, that the interwar years was the period in which systematic women's international tours first took place. In 1934/5, a group of female cricketers travelled to Australia and played in three Test matches, a visit the Australians returned in the summer of 1937. Lacrosse, athletics and hockey tours also occurred. These ventures, and the accompanying press coverage which they attracted – during the 1930s the *Morning Post*, *Evening News*, *Times*, *Observer* and *Daily Mirror* all gave regular space to women's cricket – helped to increase interest in women's sport. Hockey crowds grew so much that in 1935 England played Scotland at the Oval cricket ground in London to provide more space; it was reported that over 9,000 spectators attended.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., pp.99-100, p.103.

²⁶ P. Davies, 'Bowling Maidens Over', *Sport in History* 28:2 (2002).

²⁷ N. Tomkins and P. Ward (eds.), *The Century Makers: a history of the AEWHA 1895-1995* (Shrewsbury, 1995), p.51.

What was radical about all this was that for the first time, women playing sport were on public display.

Nonetheless, Williams also notes that: 'Some men belittled and ridiculed women's cricket, which can be seen to reflect assumptions that cricket playing was an area of male social power and a demonstration of male supremacy'.²⁸ While women's cricket never faced the extreme opposition which women's football had to contend with – the Football Association, angry at the seriousness with which women's factory teams continued to play after the First World War and the massive crowds they were attracting, banned the sport in 1921²⁹ – the sport was from its early days subject to scrutiny as to its suitability as a sport for women. Work by historians like Mike Huggins on media coverage of women's sport in the interwar years also suggests that acceptance of women's sport was not universal. Huggins observes that in cinema newsreels, 'coverage was projected as part of a marginalised separate sphere, disjunctive from the main focus on male achievement. Women's sports were sometimes introduced with phrases...such as “and now for the ladies”'.³⁰ There was also a focus on the appearance of female athletes, typified by the *Daily Mirror's* 1924 'Sports Girls Beauty Competition', in which entrants were invited to send in photos of themselves and a selection were published.³¹

Additionally, Skillen acknowledges that the quality of sporting experience still varied dramatically by social class. Within women's cricket, it is likely that up to 1939 the majority of participants were middle-class: generally, the sport required time and financial independence in order for women to

²⁸ Williams, *Cricket and England*, p.104.

²⁹ J. Williams and J. Woodhouse, 'Can play, will play? Women and football in Britain', in J. Williams and S. Wagg (eds.), *British Football and Social Change. Getting into Europe* (Leicester, 1991), p.105.

³⁰ M. Huggins, "“And Now, Something for the Ladies”": representations of women's sport in cinema newsreels 1918-1939', *Women's History Review* 16:5 (2007), p.688.

³¹ *Daily Mirror*, 22 April 1924.

purchase the correct equipment, pay club subscriptions, and travel to away matches. The 1934/5 tour was self-funded by the players, which effectively prevented any working-class women from participating. And while LEA syllabi were recommending exercise for young girls in the 1920s, facilities and finances remained limited. In 1927, a supplement to the 1919 Syllabus of Physical Training for Schools recommended netball and rounders as the chief school games. 'Hockey and lacrosse do not as a rule come within the scope of senior elementary school classes owing to the amount of time required to master the difficulties of technique, the expense of a specially prepared grass surface, and the provision of sufficiently good equipment. Cricket presents even greater difficulties...unless suitable conditions are available, the games are not worth attempting because they cannot be played satisfactorily.'³² The circular movement of physical training college graduates and Oxbridge educated mistresses into the public schools continued to reinforce these class divisions.

Women's sport and leisure

My research takes up the story of women's cricket from 1945, and considers the ways in which it developed in the years up to the turn of the twentieth century, locating this within broader trends in British society. A major rationale behind this project is the scant attention which women's cricket in the postwar period has received from scholars. Histories of English cricket all either deal with the women's game in a brief and perfunctory manner or ignore it completely. Derek Birley's seminal *A Social History of English Cricket*, first published in 1999, contains just one reference to women's cricket, and Peter Davies and Robert Light's recent work *Cricket and Community in England* claims to be 'a social history of grassroots cricket in England', yet devotes a mere five pages to the

³² Board of Education, *Supplement to 1919 Syllabus of Physical Training for Older Girls* (London, 1927), p.33.

women's game.³³ It is still the norm for major historically-focused texts on cricket to be published with no reference to women at all.³⁴

What literature, if any, is there which focuses specifically on women's cricket? Kathleen McCrone argued back in 1984 that material on women's sports history had a tendency to be 'narrative-descriptive', as it was written by former players or journalists, rather than historians; the only existing texts on the history of women's cricket in the postwar period illustrate that this problem persists even today.³⁵ Of the accounts we do have which focus on women's cricket – tour diaries by Nancy Joy and Grace Morgan and a statistical account by Joan Hawes (all three ex-England players), as well as a description of England's 1997 World Cup campaign by journalist Pete Davies – none contain any attempt to locate women's cricket within its broader historical context.³⁶ Most recently, Isabelle Duncan's *Skirting the Boundary* (2013) posits itself as 'a history of women's cricket', yet appears to be produced entirely from secondary material and newspaper accounts, and again is primarily descriptive, with much of the text taken up by accounts of matches and profiles of current players. Duncan is not a historian but a cricketer and an MCC member; indeed, probably the only useful chapter in the book is that which focuses on the campaign for MCC membership in the 1990s, in which Duncan herself was involved.³⁷

Perhaps the most useful text focused on the English context is *Fair Play* (1976), a history of the

³³ D. Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket* (1999; reprinted London, 2003); P. Davies and R. Light, *Cricket and community in England: 1800 to the present day* (Manchester, 2012).

³⁴ For example, A. Bateman and J. Hill's edited collection *The Cambridge Companion to Cricket* (Cambridge, 2011) contains almost no material on the women's game.

³⁵ K. McCrone, 'Play up! Play up! And play the game! Sport at the Late Victorian Girls' Public School', *Journal of British Studies* 23:2 (1984), p.98.

³⁶ N. Joy, *Maiden Over* (London, 1950); G. Morgan, *Women's Cricket Touring in 1934/5 and 1948/9* (London, 2009); J. Hawes, *Women's Test Cricket. The Golden Triangle* (Lewes, 1987); P. Davies, *Mad Dogs and English Women* (London, 1998).

³⁷ I. Duncan, *Skirting the Boundary* (London, 2013).

WCA up to 1976, yet it too was produced by two players (Rachael Heyhoe-Flint and Netta Rheinberg), both of whom were heavily involved with the WCA at the time; it is thus entirely non-critical. It is, though, a key primary source, reflecting the attitudes and preoccupations of those within the WCA during the 1970s. The international context is only marginally better served, though Richard Cashman and Amanda Weaver have produced a history of Australian women's cricket, and Hilary Beckles included a chapter on women's cricket in the West Indies in his edited volume *Liberation Cricket: West Indies Cricket Culture* (1995).³⁸ Both are useful accounts of the development of women's cricket in these countries, and will be drawn on in this thesis when considering the interactions of the English WCA with its sister associations overseas.

The scholarly neglect of women's cricket is symptomatic of a broader neglect of women's sport, and indeed women's leisure more generally, by gender historians. Amongst feminist historians, there has been little attempt to explore how sport has affected women's lives. Major surveys of women in twentieth-century Britain such as Jane Lewis' *Women in Britain since 1945* (1992), Sheila Rowbotham's *A Century of Women* (1997), and Martin Pugh's *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1999* (2000) contain almost no reference to the issue.³⁹ As Fan Hong recognises:

because sport is a physical rather than mental activity, it has been viewed as a lower form of culture and unworthy of serious attention. Feminists...have been more interested in women's political struggles and their economic independence than their physical freedom...Too many feminists have overlooked the fact that for women, sport has been an instrument of liberation.⁴⁰

As will be outlined in more detail in chapter three, there was a vast gap between women's sport and

³⁸ R. Cashman and A. Weaver, *Wicket Women: cricket and women in Australia* (Kensington, 1991); H. McD Beckles, 'A purely natural extension: women's cricket in West Indies cricket culture', in McD Beckles and B. Stoddart (eds.), *Liberation Cricket: West Indies Cricket Culture* (Manchester, 1995).

³⁹ Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945*; S. Rowbotham, *A Century of Women. The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (1997; reprinted London, 1999); M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1999* (Hampshire, 2000).

⁴⁰ Fan Hong, 'Freeing Bodies: Heroines in History', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 18:1 (2001), pp.1-2.

the second-wave feminist movement of the 1970s, which focused on political and economic issues, and ignored sport altogether. The fact that much of the historical writing on women in Britain during and after the 1970s has been produced by women involved in the second-wave feminist movement (Sheila Rowbotham being the prime example) helps explain the general lack of attention paid to these issues within the literature.

Equally, historians of sport have failed to place the contributions of women at centre-stage. Richard Holt and Tony Mason's work *Sport in Britain, 1945-2000*, which claims to be an 'authoritative' history of British sport since the war, discusses women only a handful of times, and women's cricket even less. Holt had stated in an earlier work that: 'the history of sport in modern Britain is a history of men...women figure only fleetingly'.⁴¹ This was written in 1989; the field of gender and sport has been taken up by a number of historians in the last 20 years. Yet a recent article on women in British sport history concluded that, even today, 'dedicated study of women in sport history remains a peculiarly neglected area of academic research in Britain'.⁴² As the above description of early women's cricket demonstrates, much of the recent research has focused on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the interwar period. Exceptions to this have tended to be limited in scope or confined to particular regions of the UK, and in any case cut off in 1970, or even earlier.⁴³

The main exception to this general rule is the work of Jean Williams. Her history of women's

⁴¹ R. Holt, *Sport and the British* (Oxford, 1989).

⁴² C. Osborne and F. Skillen, 'The State of Play: Women in British Sport History', *Sport in History* 30:2 (2010), p.189.

⁴³ Eilidh Macrae's work on women's exercise, for example, focuses on Scotland in the years between 1930 and 1970 (E. Macrae, "'Get fit – keep fit'?: exercise in the female life-cycle in Scotland, 1930-1970' [unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2013]). Joyce Kay's article 'A Window of Opportunity? Preliminary Thoughts on Women's Sport in Post-war Britain', *Sport in Society* 30:2 (2010), considers the immediate postwar years up to c.1960, but is largely limited to a consideration of media coverage. Her more recent work on British sports clubs in the twentieth century also considers issues of gender, but cuts off in 1978. See J. Kay, "'Maintaining the Traditions of British Sport'?: The Private Sports Club in the Twentieth Century', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 30:14 (2013), and 'Grass Roots: The Development of Tennis in Britain, 1918-1978', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 29:18 (2012).

football in Britain, along with her more recent comparative work on Britain, the United States, China and Australia, both challenge the historical construction of football as a male activity by providing an analysis of the growth of women's football across the twentieth century.⁴⁴ She summarises the process of growth as follows:

Roughly between the 1890s and the mid-1920s, the strategy was to lobby and seek space in the social milieu; then, until the late 1950s, it became to protest exclusion of various kinds, after which time women's associations formed and the sports authorities challenged before a process of merger and integration in the 1990s.⁴⁵

There are many parallels here with women's cricket which will be drawn out in the coming chapters: the importance of volunteer activity in the face of male indifference; the argument that sportswomen can contest ideas about physical inferiority while remaining politically inactive; and the loss of autonomy which has accompanied greater FA control of the sport – all occurring alongside a gradual growth in participation as women's sport became increasingly normalised throughout the twentieth century. This last point is also emphasised in Williams' most recent work *A Contemporary History of Women's Sport, Part One*, which covers the period between 1850 and 1950. The book outlines the contribution of women and girls to sport in this period, and the individuals and networks who shaped it, seeking to overcome the prevailing orthodoxy that sport has historically been a predominantly male activity.⁴⁶ The final chapter in particular, on the years after 1948, describes the postwar boom in active leisure and spectator sport, of which women formed a significant part; this analysis will be utilised in the thesis. Additionally, one of Williams' key research aims is to consider the ways in which women's sport had 'a broader impact on cultural, economic, political and social life', an approach which will be adopted in the coming pages.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ J. Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* (London, 2003), and *A Beautiful Game. International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford, 2007).

⁴⁵ Williams, *A Beautiful Game*, p.1.

⁴⁶ J. Williams, *A Contemporary History of Women's Sport, Part One. Sporting Women, 1850-1950* (Oxford, 2014).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1.

Williams' work aside, much of the material on women's sport in Britain post-1945 has, in fact, been produced by sociologists.⁴⁸ The outstanding example is Jennifer Hargreaves' *Sporting Females*, which provides a critical account of the development of women's sport from the nineteenth century to the early 1990s.⁴⁹ She utilises the concept of hegemony, arguing that women's sports were part of a wider battle for control of the female body. While recognising the economic and structural constraints on women's participation in sport throughout the twentieth century, she also suggests that: 'sporting females symbolize freedom', and the emergence of new, radical images of female physicality in the 1990s are analysed.⁵⁰ Hargreaves' account of the development of women's sport is drawn on throughout this thesis in order to contextualise developments within women's cricket.

The recent work of sociologist Philippa Velija must also be mentioned here. Her unpublished PhD thesis 'Women, Cricket and Gender Relations' (2007) is based on fieldwork and interviews with junior and adult county and club-level female cricketers conducted in 2004, and provides 'an analysis of how gender relations impact on the experiences of female cricketers' experiences of playing what is traditionally considered a male sport'.⁵¹ Velija found that female cricketers continue to experience negative reactions to their involvement in the sport, and that as a consequence their identities as female athletes remained insecure. She also suggested that women's cricket clubs still suffer from poor facilities, a lack of coaching, and a sense of long-term instability, even in the wake of the 1998 merger with the England and Wales Cricket Board. She concludes that: 'the testimonies of contemporary female cricketers demonstrate that they remain "outsiders" in the cricket

⁴⁸ For example, S. Scraton and A. Flintoff's edited collection *Gender and Sport: a Reader* (London, 2002) contains a section on historical developments, though the approach of the editors is clearly a sociological one.

⁴⁹ Hargreaves, *Sporting females*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁵¹ P. Velija, 'Women, Cricket and Gender Relations: A Sociological Analysis of the Experience of Female Cricketers', (unpublished PhD thesis, Brunel University, 2007), p.8.

figuration. That is to say, through a variety of processes, they remain *on the margins of male cricket*.⁵² The sense of continuity here between Velija's findings and those of historians of women's cricket in the interwar period is tangible, yet there is little attempt by Velija to locate her research within its broader historical context. This thesis thus seeks to integrate the existing historical and sociological literatures, in order to elucidate why and how power relations within cricket have remained so unequal. Velija's work is drawn upon in the conclusion in order to assess the extent of change across the second half of the twentieth century.

The necessary reliance on sociological literature by the historian of women's sport in modern Britain also extends to the field of women's leisure more broadly, which has suffered from a similar neglect by historians. Since its development in the 1960s, the British historiography of leisure has tended to focus on industrial and institutionalised leisure activities, which often adopted the lens of class rather than gender.⁵³ It was only in the 1990s that leisure historians began to foreground gender in their research; since then, a number of key studies have appeared which focus on gender relations within leisure.⁵⁴ The regional studies of Ross, Davies and Parratt all present a picture of working-class women's leisure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as highly circumscribed, with what Davies describes as 'a framework of financial, domestic and moral constraints' often prohibiting participation in organised leisure activities.⁵⁵ However, Parratt also acknowledges that some women were able to resist these constraints and that the 'resistive, subversive potential' of leisure made it one of the few arenas in which women could in fact contest

⁵² Ibid., p.213. Emphasis in original.

⁵³ Examples include P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830-1885* (London, 1978) and H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1980).

⁵⁴ A. Davies, *Leisure, gender and poverty. Working-class culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939* (Buckingham, 1992); E. Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford, 1993); C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester, 2000); C. Parratt, *'More than mere amusement': working-class women's leisure in England, 1750-1914* (Boston, 2001).

⁵⁵ Davies, *Leisure, gender and poverty*, p.56.

the gender order.⁵⁶

Constraints on working-class leisure continued into the postwar period, a process which this thesis will discuss. Langhamer's work on women's leisure between 1920 and 1960 brings the picture more up to date, using a case study of Manchester to highlight that by this period, even working-class women could participate in a wider variety of organised leisure activities, including the cinema, swimming and tennis. However, she stresses that marriage often constrained leisure opportunities: 'the personal pleasures of youth were replaced by a leisure rooted largely within the family, with the family itself becoming the source of personal happiness'.⁵⁷ The research presented here builds on the work of Langhamer but also provides a challenge to her argument that 'women's experiences of leisure were fundamentally structured along life-cycle lines', presenting evidence that for female cricketers, cricket remained a key part of their lives even after marriage and childbirth.⁵⁸

Furthermore Langhamer's work, as with all the historical studies cited above, concentrates overwhelmingly on the first half of the twentieth century. As Jeffrey Hill points out, the post-1945 period remains one of the chief gaps in the current literature on British leisure; this thesis seeks to extend historical studies of leisure beyond their current remit, into the contemporary period.⁵⁹

The lack of scholarship covering the period since the Second World War means that this thesis draws heavily on the accounts of feminist sociologists of leisure, again seeking to synthesise this literature with historical accounts. A feminist literature on leisure has developed only relatively recently, as theorists have sought to place women at the centre of their analyses, challenging the

⁵⁶ Parratt, *More than mere amusement*, pp.5-6.

⁵⁷ Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p.134.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.190.

⁵⁹ J. Hill, "'What shall we do with them when they're not working?': leisure and historians in Britain", in B. Bebbler, *Leisure and cultural conflict in twentieth-century Britain* (Manchester, 2012), p.32.

existing male bias in accounts of leisure. It was during the 1980s that this literature, grounded in empirical studies, first highlighted the continued difficulties women faced in asserting their right to leisure, even in the aftermath of second-wave feminism. Studies conducted by Erica Wimbush (1986), Rosemary Deem (1986) and Eileen Green, Sandra Hebron and Diane Woodward (1987) all suggested that many of the constraints identified by historians of leisure in the earlier period remained in place: a lack of support with childcare, a shortage of time and money, the sexual division of labour, the attitudes of their husbands/partners, and a strong sense that they did not have a right to demand leisure if they were not in full-time employment.⁶⁰ Despite class, age and ethnic differences, these constraints appeared to be common to the vast majority of women. More recent work by Sheila Scraton found that even in the 1990s, women's opportunities for formal leisure were still limited in comparison to similarly employed men.⁶¹ The research in the following pages utilises the work of feminist sociologists of leisure in order to locate women's cricket within the broader context of women's leisure in twentieth-century Britain.

A key focus of feminist accounts of women's leisure has been the deconstruction of the very concept of 'leisure', with the suggestion that the often fragmentary nature of female leisure activities has led to distinctly female patterns of leisure which do not conform to accounts which see 'work' and 'leisure' as oppositional categories.⁶² While participating in cricket was generally a formal activity which took place away from the home and from spaces of work, the middle-class

⁶⁰ E. Wimbush, *Women, leisure and well-being* (Edinburgh, 1986); R. Deem, *All work and no play?: a study of women and leisure* (Milton Keynes, 1986); E. Green, S. Hebron and D. Woodward, *Leisure and gender: a study of Sheffield women's leisure experiences* (London 1987); E. Wimbush and M. Talbot (eds.), *Relative Freedoms. Women and Leisure* (Milton Keynes, 1988).

⁶¹ See for example S. Scraton, 'Continuities and change – challenges for a feminist leisure studies' (paper presented at Women and Leisure: Towards a New Understanding, International Conference, Athens, Georgia, USA), and S. Scraton, 'The changing world of women and leisure: feminism, "postfeminism" and leisure', *Leisure Studies* 13:4 (1994). More recent work such as C. Aitchison, *Gender and Leisure. Social and cultural perspectives* (London, 2003), and C. Doustaly, 'Women and leisure in Britain: a socio-historical approach to twentieth-century trends' in Bebbler, *Leisure and cultural conflict*, has also confirmed Scraton's assumptions.

⁶² See for example Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p.16; Deem, *All work and no play?*, p.80; Wimbush and Talbot, *Relative Freedoms*, p.181.

dominance of the sport presumably reflects the fact that for many women, its very nature as a more formalised activity precluded their participation. This is recognised in the forthcoming pages, in which female participation in cricket is examined alongside their familial relationships, education, and work, thus taking up Liz Stanley's suggestion that historians need to utilise 'a "whole life" way of looking at leisure: not separating it off from other activities...but instead studying it "in the round" as a totality'.⁶³ Furthermore, a central argument in the sociological literature is that women's leisure is a key site for feminist intervention; sociologists have much to teach historians of women about the importance of leisure in women's lives. Wimbush and Margaret Talbot, for example, see women's leisure as one of women's 'relative freedoms', a space in which they can resist their subordination and 'experience and enjoy a greater sense of autonomy and control'.⁶⁴ Similarly, sport sociologists like Mariah Burton Nelson have convincingly argued that participation in sport is a declaration of independence, leaving men to do childcare and housework; it also gives women the confidence to try new things, and to repossess their bodies and feel strong.⁶⁵ Historians may have failed to fully recognise the importance of sport and leisure, but it is a central argument of this thesis that women's cricket has proved an empowering experience for many of the women who have participated in it, and is thus a site of feminism.

Finally, the research in the following pages also consciously situates itself within recent work on the women's movement in twentieth-century Britain, which has sought to reevaluate women's organisations which were not overtly 'political' or 'feminist' in character. Maggie Andrews' work on the Women's Institutes (WI), for example, argues that the WI needs to be reclaimed as feminist: 'It

⁶³ L. Stanley, 'Historical Sources for Studying Work and Leisure in Women's Lives', in Wimbush and Talbot, *Relative Freedoms*, p. 20.

⁶⁴ Wimbush and Talbot, *Relative Freedoms*, p.xv.

⁶⁵ M. Burton Nelson, *The stronger women get, the more men love football: sexism and the culture of sport* (1994; reprinted London, 1996), pp.9-11, pp.29-33.

offers a potential for women to be themselves, to develop their own value system, creativity, humour and sense of self worth: as such it can not fail to provide space for feminism'.⁶⁶ While its members may have eschewed the feminist label, they campaigned for a variety of feminist issues including equal pay and improved maternity services. Most recently, Catriona Beaumont's study of the Mothers' Union, Catholic Women's League, National Council of Women, Women's Institutes and National Union of Townswomen's Guilds suggests that the term 'women's movement' needs to be expanded beyond its associations with feminism and recast in a way that includes the 'dynamic networks of women' created by these conservative women's organisations. Though all the groups under study rejected 'feminism' and endorsed domesticity, Beaumont argues that they 'acknowledged the status of women as equal citizens and continually sought to inform and educate their members about the importance of democratic citizenship...[they] encouraged members to participate in local and national politics and campaigned to ensure that women benefited from the rights of equal citizenship bestowed upon them in 1928'.⁶⁷

Beaumont's work is helpful with regard to women's cricket and the WCA: sporting organisations, too, need to be reconceptualised as part of a thriving women's movement throughout the twentieth century. The Women's Cricket Association, similarly to the WI and the Mothers' Union, was a female-only space which allowed women autonomy and provided them with a support network. Beaumont also argues that a focus on non-political organisations overturns the orthodox view of the 1950s as a fallow period for the British women's movement.⁶⁸ Studying the activities of female cricketers makes it apparent that those women within the WCA always espoused so-called 'second-wave feminist' ideals such as the freedom to control their own bodies, and the need for a women-

⁶⁶ M. Andrews, *The acceptable face of feminism: the Women's Institute as a social movement* (London, 1997), p.12.

⁶⁷ C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens. Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester, 2013), p.3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.217.

only space. This thesis thus lends further support to the claims of Beaumont, and others, that there is much greater continuity between first and second-wave feminism than historians have previously recognised.

Yet those historians who have argued for an expanded definition of the women's movement have tended to concentrate their arguments on the period before the 1970s: Andrews' work covers the period between 1915 and 1960, and Beaumont cuts her study off in 1964. Current histories of the women's movement in the second half of the twentieth century still focus firmly on those women who defined themselves as feminists and participated in the Women's Liberation Movement and, following the ideological rifts which developed within the WLM in the late 1970s, other political organisations and campaigns such as the Greenham Common movement of the 1980s.⁶⁹ As discussed above, the fact that such histories have tended to be penned by women who participated in the movement helps explain this narrow focus. What is missing from the literature is a focus on the voices of those women who did not define themselves as feminists and never participated in WLM campaigns (the majority of women), but who were nonetheless affected by its maxims. A case study of female cricketers is a way to begin the process of assessing the wider cultural impact of the Women's Liberation Movement on British women.

Women's cricket since 1945

My research into women's cricket after 1945 thus sits at the intersection of a number of literatures, and has a broad remit. It provides an analysis of the development of female participation in cricket

⁶⁹ Examples include S. Rowbotham, *The past is before us: feminism in action since the 1960s* (London, 1989), D. Bouchier, *The feminist challenge: the movement for women's liberation in Britain and the USA* (London, 1983), and A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet freedom: the struggle for women's liberation* (Oxford, 1987).

in the postwar years, taking the conclusions within the historical literature relating to changing discourses surrounding women's sport in the interwar period, and asking how far the quantity and quality of women's sporting experiences continued to grow and improve in the postwar years. It will be shown that, while more women were participating in sports like cricket by the 1990s, and while women's sport became increasingly normalised throughout the period, the process of societal acceptance was both slow and incomplete by the end of the twentieth century.

However, the thesis is also firmly located within the women's history tradition. It seeks to uncover the experiences of a previously ignored group of women, female cricketers, illuminating the continued constraints and difficulties they faced in their attempts to participate in the sport. In sport, as in other areas of life, gendered ideas about appropriate roles for men and women helped to limit female autonomy; the thesis therefore makes an important contribution to the literature on the ideologies of 'femininity' which women were subject to across the twentieth century.⁷⁰ In particular, feminist sociologists such as Festle have argued that societal norms force sportswomen to behave in 'apologetic' ways, projecting a 'feminine', heterosexual image in the face of crude stereotypes about female physical power.⁷¹ For female cricketers, such stereotypes constrained the ways in which they played the game they loved. The fixation of the WCA with how female cricketers dressed and behaved, which dated from its formation in 1926, continued throughout the postwar years. While hegemonic notions of femininity evolved by the 1990s to incorporate female participation in physical activity, the commercialisation of sport in the 1980s and 1990s created new pressures on sportswomen to present a more sexualised image, as will be outlined in chapter five. Discourses of heteronormativity also continued to regulate the sexualities of female cricketers throughout the

⁷⁰ The development of such ideologies is discussed in Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Introduction', in Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain*, pp.1-14; and in C. Nally and A. Smith, 'Introduction', in Nally and Smith (eds.), *Twenty-first Century Feminism: Forming and Performing Femininity* (Hampshire, 2015), pp.3-10.

⁷¹ M. Festle, *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women's Sports* (Columbia, 1996).

twentieth century; despite the overrepresentation of lesbian women within the sport, there was not a single openly gay cricketer in Britain by 2000.

Gender is a relational concept; we can only fully understand ideologies of ‘femininity’ in relation to ideologies of ‘masculinity’, as the burgeoning literature on the history of masculinities in Britain has recognised.⁷² Yet the lack of basic empirical work on cricketing women is a glaring omission in histories of the sport. While much work remains to be done about the precise ways in which cricketing masculinities were developed, sustained and contested across the twentieth century - cricket was, after all, an essentially graceful game, without the physical aggression of rugby or football - the experiences of women need to be recovered before the gendered ideologies of cricket can be fully understood. It is those experiences which form the basis of this thesis.

An analysis of press coverage of women's cricket within the following pages will support Hargreaves' argument that: 'The construction and marginalization of female sports [by the British media] provides a hidden, but very powerful, message that they are less important than men's sports and that men are keener to participate and naturally better suited to do so'.⁷³ Another persistent problem in the postwar period was male control of cricketing resources. As the feminist literature on 'sites of struggle' in sport suggests, 'the ability to influence the production of space [in sport] is

⁷² For an overview of recent work on the history of masculinity, see K. Harvey and A. Shepard, 'What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, c.1500-1950', *The Journal of British Studies* 44:2 (2005); and M. Francis, 'The Domestication of the Male? Recent research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity', *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002). Key works on the British context include R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, 2005), M. Roper and J. Tosh (eds.), *Manful assertions: masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London, 1991), and F. Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and social space in late twentieth-century Britain* (London, 1996).

⁷³ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, p.196. Other sociological arguments relating to media portrayals of sportswomen can be found in P. Creedon (ed.), *Women, Media and Sport. Challenging Gender Values* (London, 1994); Amy Godoy-Pressland and Gerald Griggs, 'The photographic representation of female athletes in the British print media during the London 2012 Olympic Games', *Sport in Society* 17:6 (2014); and J. Wright and G. Clarke, 'Sport, the media and the construction of compulsory heterosexuality', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 34:3 (1999). A recent case study of the way in which the media has covered women's cricket can be found in A. Burroughs, L. Ashburn and L. Seebohm, "'Add Sex and Stir": Homophobic Coverage of Women's Cricket in Australia', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 19 (1995).

an important means to augment social power'; female cricketers continued to rely on men to facilitate their access to cricket grounds throughout the postwar period.⁷⁴ Arguably, the 1998 merger of the Women's Cricket Association with the governing body of men's cricket, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), merely served to increase the erosion of female autonomy, further undermining female control of leisure spaces by the onset of the twenty-first century. Overall, the thesis draws on the current literature on women's leisure experiences in the 1980s and 1990s to provide a case study of how, throughout the twentieth century, their persistent association with domesticity hampered women in the field of leisure, just as it did in other economic and social arenas.

The thesis also draws on oral history to demonstrate the importance of cricket to the lives of the women who participated in the sport. Indeed, it is argued that women's cricket was an important site of feminism throughout the history of the WCA. While Beaumont explicitly rejects the feminist label in her analysis of non-political women's organisations, this hangs on her assertion that before the onset of the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s, 'no women's organisation, feminist, political or mainstream, had yet challenged the traditional assumption that women had a primary duty to care for their husbands and young children at home'.⁷⁵ Yet it will be made clear in the following pages that female cricketers never subscribed to this model of domesticity, and often placed cricket above familial obligations. This, alongside the feelings of empowerment which women expressed in interviews in relation to their cricketing activities, make it possible to label women's cricket as feminist. Furthermore, given that female cricketers espoused feminist ideals from the formation of the WCA in 1926, there are clearly important continuities between the first

⁷⁴ P. Vertinsky, 'Locating a "sense of place": space, place and gender in the gymnasium', in P. Vertinsky and J. Bale (eds.), *Sites of sport. Space, place and experience* (London, 2004), p.13.

⁷⁵ C. Beaumont, 'The Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship, 1918-1950s', in Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth Century Britain*, pp.275-6.

and second-wave feminist movements which have previously gone unnoticed by historians. Above all, it is argued that ignoring women's battle to gain access to spaces of leisure overlooks a key part of their lives; these experiences must be rescued, and integrated into any future analysis of changing gender roles after 1945.

It is a central argument of this thesis that a study of women's sport can offer us new insights into the broader history of postwar Britain. It is for this reason that the thesis is organised chronologically, in order to situate women's cricket within broader societal developments. Thus the questions of how women's cricket functioned during a time of austerity, and later how far it was affected by the onset of 'affluence' in the late 1950s, are both discussed. Schoolgirl cricket is analysed in relation to the 1944 Education Act, and later to the overhauls under Thatcherism; it is shown that the tripartite system failed to overcome disparities in physical education provision, and that the changes under Thatcher helped kill off cricket in schools for girls. The increasing commercialisation of leisure after 1945 is discussed; it is suggested that female cricketers struggled to come to terms with the decline in the amateur ideals which they had for so long held dear. A quantification of the types of women playing cricket throughout the period between 1945 and 2000 will demonstrate that as a leisure activity, it remained dominated by both middle-class and white women – despite the onset of mass immigration into Britain in the postwar period. Women's cricket therefore offers an insight into the persistence of cultural divisions along class and racial lines in contemporary Britain. While it is likely that a study of the WCA's relationships with governing bodies of women's cricket in Britain's former colonies would also shed new light onto the decolonisation process in the postwar years, the focus here is necessarily on the domestic history of the sport.

One of the most exciting aspects of this research has been the discovery of a wealth of new archival material. In contrast with women's football, which had to effectively 'go underground' between 1921

and 1971, women's cricket was served by the same governing body from 1926 onwards: a governing body which established its own (private) archive early on in its existence. At the time that this research was undertaken, the WCA archive was stored in several large boxes in a shed in a remote Lancashire hamlet; each box, upon being opened, was found to contain untold historical treasures. This included WCA yearbooks from 1926 to 1998; a near-complete set of WCA AGM and Executive Committee minutes between 1926 and 1998; vast quantities of press cuttings, scrapbooks and correspondence; all the WCA's official tour brochures; a number of tour diaries written by England players in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s; and the WCA's self-produced magazines, *Women's Cricket* (1930-1967), *WCA Bulletin* (1968-1984), *Women's Cricket News* (1985-1993) and *Wicket Women* (1994-2003). Some of this material has now been transferred online to a website maintained by the Women's Cricket Associates, the successor organisation to the WCA in the wake of the 1998 merger.⁷⁶

In order to explore grassroots cricket and the relationship of the WCA with its member clubs, a search for local club records was also embarked upon, and several club archives were discovered in the attics, spare rooms and garages of female cricketers. Other privately-held collections include the records of the Middlesex Women's Cricket Association, founded in 1933, and the minutes of the International Women's Cricket Council (IWCC), the international governing body of women's cricket, which was founded in 1958 by England, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Holland.

To uncover so much original and unpublished material is a historian's dream, yet there are clearly issues with relying on the above sources. Firstly, almost all the material above relates to the WCA or its affiliated clubs. Yet impressionistic evidence suggests that throughout the postwar period, there were large numbers of unaffiliated clubs participating in cricket: *The Cricketer* estimated in

⁷⁶ See www.womenscrickethistory.org.

1972 that the number of women's clubs in Yorkshire was 60, and the number in Lancashire 40, though affiliated clubs that same year numbered 13 and 5 respectively.⁷⁷ Additionally, the club material relates almost wholly to Surrey and Middlesex, with whole swathes of the rest of the country completely overlooked, though it is clear that women's cricket thrived in the north of England, and in Yorkshire in particular.⁷⁸ For a thesis which posits itself as a history of Britain, the lack of material relating to Scotland and Wales is perhaps particularly problematic.

Historians, though, must work with the sources which are available to them. Attempts were made to uncover other club-based source material, yet it has proved impossible to establish contact with or to trace the history of any clubs which played outside of WCA structures. It has also been difficult to locate material relating to counties other than Surrey or Middlesex, especially given that very few clubs survived continuously through the postwar period. And while women's cricket was certainly played in both Scotland and Wales, cricket has always been a peculiarly English obsession: throughout much of the twentieth century, only two affiliated clubs (Edinburgh University and Cardiff) functioned in the whole of Scotland and Wales. The focus here is therefore overwhelmingly on England, with references to other regions only occasionally. Constraints of both time and space have in any case dictated that the thesis is largely focused on the national picture; a comprehensive study of grassroots women's cricket in Britain must be left for others. It should be noted at the outset, too, that female cricket spectatorship is also beyond the remit of this thesis, which concentrates on active female participation in cricket.

Additionally, though the WCA naturally features heavily, the thesis is not merely an institutional

⁷⁷ *The Cricketer*, May 1972.

⁷⁸ In 1955, there were 20 WCA-affiliated clubs in Yorkshire, more than any other county. 40 years later, even during a period of decline, Yorkshire still managed to maintain more clubs (8) than any other county.

history, for it draws upon a number of sources produced by external observers, and by those involved with men's cricket. For example, Ministry of Education physical education syllabi and Inspectorate reports, as well as school magazines, are used to provide an insight into cricket for girls in the postwar period. National newspaper coverage is analysed extensively to demonstrate changing attitudes towards the sport. Insights are gleaned into the relationship between men's and women's cricket through an analysis of coverage of the women's game in male cricketing periodicals like *The Cricketer*, *Wisden Cricket Monthly* and *Wisden*. The minutes of the Marylebone Cricket Club, currently only available up until 1985 due to the club's own closed access rules, offer an insight into the MCC's attitudes towards women's cricket. Publications produced by the Sports Council, a government quango which was formed in 1965 to regulate the funding of sport and which subsequently undertook a great deal of research into many aspects of sport in Britain, are utilised to give a broader picture of the situation for both cricket and other sports in the postwar years.

The thesis also utilises oral history interviews which I personally conducted with 27 female cricketers, who had all played either international or county level cricket.⁷⁹ The sample was not intended to be consciously 'representative' and obviously does not incorporate the experiences of any women who played outside of official WCA structures. Additionally, as numerous historians have recognised, oral testimonies must be treated with care due to the unreliability of memory and the ways in which interviewees 'compose' their memories in interviews depending on current cultural discourses, and on their relationship with the interviewer.⁸⁰ Many of my interviewees

⁷⁹ For a full list of interviewees, see Appendix 3.

⁸⁰ Positivist critiques of oral history based on the 'unreliability of memory' were first developed in the 1970s; see for example E. Hobsbawm, 'On History from Below', in Hobsbawm (ed.), *On History* (London, 1997) (written in 1985 and first published in 1988). Alistair Thomson has written extensively on techniques of 'composure' within oral history interviews – see in particular A. Thomson, *Anzac memories: living with the legend* (Oxford, 1994). On the importance of the interviewer, see V. Yow, "Do I Like Them Too Much?": Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa', *Oral History Review* 24:1 (1997).

struggled to recall names, dates, and other key information, and some were unwilling to discuss events which have subsequently become culturally sensitive, in particular their participation in 'rebel' tours of apartheid South Africa during the 1980s.

Nonetheless, oral history is a key source for historians of women's sport, as for all women's historians: it allows us to gain access to the distinctive voices and experiences of women in a way which traditional archival sources simply do not. A key motivation for incorporating an oral history element into this research is the large gap which remains in our knowledge of the experiences of sportswomen; there have been very few interviews conducted with women which feature discussions of sport and leisure. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the oral history of sport more generally is still in its infancy; historians of sport have tended to focus more on traditional archival sources, and few major life story projects have included sport as a topic worthy of much interest.⁸¹ But it is also yet another symptom of the neglect by feminist academics of women's sport. This is an omission which needs to be rectified.

Furthermore, as recent oral historians have suggested, oral history is a unique and exciting source precisely because of the speaker's subjectivity. Those historians of women's sport who have utilised oral history, notably Jean Williams, have found that interviews are particularly useful in providing an insight into the meanings of sport for women: the reasons they chose to participate, and its impact on their lives.⁸² With regard to female cricketers, as well as providing an insight into their social backgrounds, it has been a valuable way of allowing them to express what cricket meant to them, and how it affected their personal relationships. It is also a way of accessing their thoughts

⁸¹ The few sports historians who have utilised oral histories are R. Light, "Ordinary working men...transformed into giants on the rugby field": "Collective" and "Individual" Memory in Oral Histories of Rugby League', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 30:1 (2013), and 'Sporting Lives' special issue, *Oral History* 25:1 (1997).

⁸² Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls?*. Both Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity*, and Macrae, "'Get fit – keep fit'?" also utilise oral history interviews with women who participated in sport.

and feelings about feminism, and thus helping to situate them within the broader women's movement in Britain, enabling an insight into what Julie Stephens has termed 'the emotional dimensions of feminist activism...[an] alternative, affective history of the women's movement'.⁸³

The interviews conducted for this research are therefore an integral component of an overall picture of women's cricket history in the postwar years.

As noted above, the thesis is structured chronologically. The first chapter focuses on the period 1945-55, examining the attempts made by female cricketers to recover from the disruption of the Second World War, and providing a case study of the ways in which the leisure habits of British women were affected during a time of austerity. It is suggested that the war had done little to alter the segregation of British society by social class; the 1944 Education Act, for example, continued to divide the education system along both class and gender lines, which was a serious handicap to the advancement of schoolgirl cricket. Additionally, while it has often been argued that the postwar years represented a return to domesticity by British women, it is shown that female cricketers continued to play cricket after marriage and having children. This represents significant continuity with their pre-war activities, and links together the ideals espoused during the first-wave feminist movement of the 1920s with those in place during the so-called fallow years of British feminism in the 1950s.

The second chapter looks at the years between 1955 and 1970, examining why a decline in women's cricket took place in these years. It is argued that by the onset of the 'swinging sixties', in contrast to the interwar period, the sportswoman was no longer a symbol of modernity; in fact, the WCA leadership consciously set women's cricket *against* modernity in their defence of 'amateur' values including non-competitiveness, and their stringent obsession with uniform regulations. Increasingly,

⁸³ J. Stephens, 'Our remembered selves: oral history and feminism memory', *Oral History* 38:1 (2010), p.89.

there was a disconnect felt between the WCA leadership and a younger generation who rejected traditional team sports in favour of coffee-bars and juke-boxes. Another problem was that women's cricket was an expensive activity which continued to be out of reach for some working-class women and girls, even during a period of affluence. Indeed affluence, which has often been represented as a cross-class phenomenon, clearly did not entirely eliminate the class-based nature of some cultural activities, including women's cricket.

The third chapter examines the 1970s, a decade which witnessed the emergence of the second-wave feminist movement in British society. It is shown that the Women's Liberation Movement focused on political and economic issues at the expense of issues of leisure; sport was an arena in which women made little progress towards equality in the 1970s, despite advances in other areas. The dissociation of female cricketers in oral history interviews from the 'feminist' label stems partly from this distance between women's sport and second-wave feminism. Additionally, the British press continually linked women's cricket with radical feminism as a way of belittling their activities; a conscious disengagement with feminism was thus also a pragmatic move designed to protect the image of their sport. Nonetheless, it is stressed in this chapter that women's cricket can and should be viewed as a 'feminist' activity. Female cricketers often prioritised cricket above marriage and motherhood, and strongly emphasised in interviews that women's cricket was equal to its male equivalent and was a physically empowering activity, allowing them to assert strength in the face of stereotypes about female frailty.

The fourth chapter looks at the years between 1980 and 1992, the fallow years of British women's cricket. By the time of the 1992 general election, the WCA reported the existence of just 50 affiliated clubs and 35 affiliated schools – a new low-point for the Association. While increased funding and support from the Sports Council for women's sport was available during the 1980s, it is

argued that by treating women as a homogeneous group the Council failed to tackle the underlying class inequities which remained in relation to sports participation. Much of what went on in the world of women's cricket is thus shown to confirm what other historians have argued about the Thatcher governments, namely that the 1980s was a period in which class disparities became ever more stark. Those women's cricket clubs which did exist struggled to survive financially, and some gave up the struggle altogether. The increasing commercialisation of sport also took its toll: it is argued that it was difficult for women's sports to make the transition from the amateur to the commercial age, given their strong historical attachment to amateur ideals. Even when commercialism was accepted, a continued lack of media coverage precluded readily available sponsorship. The removal of cricket from many schools, and the loss of the all-female physical education colleges, merely added to the spiral of decline.

The final chapter focuses on the years 1993-2000, reflecting on the progress made towards equality within women's sport by the onset of the twenty-first century. Many more women entered cricket during the mid to late 1990s, reflecting a wider process of normalisation of women's sport within Britain. The campaign for female membership of the MCC demonstrated that feminist ideals about equality of access had by this time filtered through into wider society. However, women's cricket remained a largely middle-class, 'white' sport; and in some cases, the 'double burden' could in fact decrease opportunities for women to participate in organised leisure activities. The pressures on women playing traditionally 'masculine' sports like cricket to present a more sexualised and feminised image increased, leading to an environment whereby the vast majority of lesbian cricketers did not feel able to be open about their sexuality, even at a time of increasing societal acceptance of homosexuality. Lastly, the WCA's merger with the ECB is analysed. It is argued that the merger process, while opening up increased funding and resources to female cricketers, also disempowered them in important ways, and left them largely without a voice within cricket. Thus,

while it might be expected that women would have gained more control over leisure spaces by 2000 given their advances towards equality in other spheres, it appears that the 1990s witnessed an increase in male control over at least one arena of female leisure: namely women's sport.

Chapter 1

1945 to 1955: 'Brighter Cricket'?

Introduction

In the first postwar edition of *Women's Cricket* magazine, Marjorie Pollard, one of the founders of the Women's Cricket Association (WCA), celebrated its achievements since its formation in 1926. 'Games of high standard have become taken for granted on such grounds as the Oval, Old Trafford, Northampton...A team has been to Australia, the Australians have been here...A film was made, literature was produced, clubs increased in numbers...All round there was growth'.¹ The statistics support her claim: by 1939, 105 clubs and 85 schools had been affiliated to the Association.²

This growth was arrested by the onset of the Second World War. Wartime meant upheaval for both the men's and the women's games; official matches were cancelled immediately war broke out in 1939, pitches were dug up, clubs ceased to function.³ A 1941 survey indicated that 95% of members wished the WCA to continue its activities, but these remained minimal. It is nevertheless notable that over £300 (roughly £10,000 in today's money) was raised through unofficial matches played in aid of charity. Additionally, from 1943 contact was established with the women's armed services, whose membership by this point numbered 460,000.⁴ Joan Wilkinson and Sylvia Swinburne of the Women's Royal Air Force and Myrtle Maclagan of the Auxiliary Territorial Service would all

¹ *Women's Cricket*, May 1946.

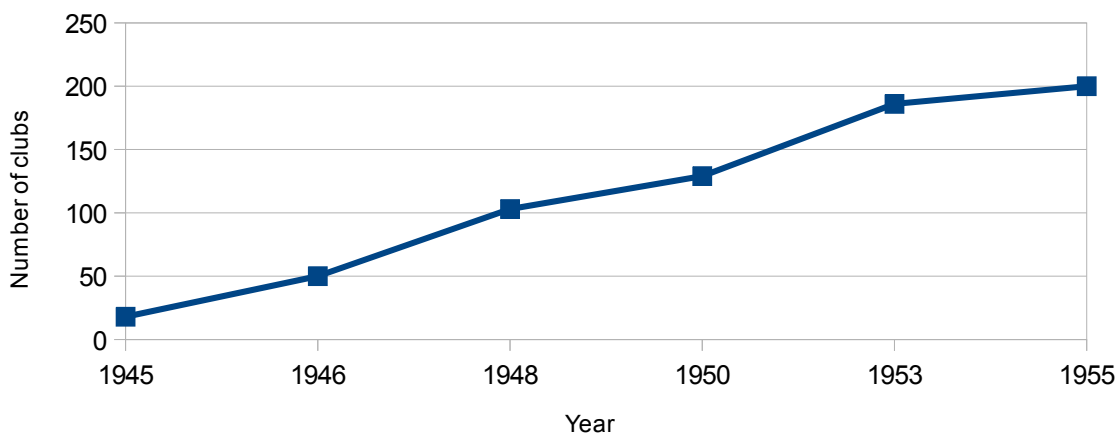
² The growth of women's cricket in the interwar period is documented in J. Williams, *Cricket and England: a social and cultural history of the interwar years* (London, 1999), chapter 5.

³ Notable exceptions, according to the WCA's 1939-45 report, were Gunnersbury, Wagtails and Wallington – all located in London suburbs.

⁴ WCA, 'Report, 1939-45', WCA Yearbook, 1945, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

become big names in women's cricket after the war. Yet at the WCA's 1945 AGM the mood was sombre. The members present stood for one minute in silence to commemorate those in the WCA who had lost their lives during the conflict. It was reported that the total number of affiliated clubs was now 18, with affiliated colleges and schools totalling 12.⁵ How would the Women's Cricket Association, and women's cricket as a whole, recover from a war which had so devastated British society?

Figure 1: WCA affiliation figures, 1945-55⁶



On the surface, recovery was substantial and gave way to renewed growth from 1950 onwards, as Figure 1 demonstrates. The number of affiliated clubs reached 200 in 1953, and while Jack Williams estimates that throughout the 1930s not more than 4000 women were playing cricket throughout the country, by 1953 this number was closer to 9000.⁷

This trend must, however, be placed in the context of postwar growth in other sports. Despite the

⁵ WCA AGM minutes, 1945, WCA archive, Lancashire.

⁶ These figures are taken from the WCA's annual Yearbooks, 1945-55, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

⁷ This figure is provided by Jean Williams, based on an estimate by Eileen White, then secretary of the Midlands WCA. See J. Williams, *A Contemporary History of Women's Sport, Part One. Sporting Women, 1850-1950* (Oxford, 2014), p.223.

upheaval of war, most associations witnessed unprecedented growth in membership over the decade following 1945, and girls and women fully shared in this boom.⁸ By 1950 the All England Women's Hockey Association (AEWHA) had 886 school affiliations, compared with 695 schools in 1939.⁹ The Amateur Swimming Association reported in 1948 that 'public interest in the sport, as judged by attendances at galas and press and wireless reports, was greater than ever....the ASA Championships Meeting attracted a record profit; the ASA publications have been in great demand; and the number of applicants for the ASA Teachers' Certificate was a record'.¹⁰ The handbooks of the Lawn Tennis Association suggest an increase from 2500 tennis clubs in 1936 to 3600 in 1956.¹¹

The popularity of sport is also reflected in its ever-growing audiences: in 1948 158,000 spectators watched the Test match at Headingley, a record for any match in England, and an estimated 2 million people watched county cricket in 1950.¹² Women's sport in particular, which had never attracted the same kind of audiences, was experiencing impressive attendance figures. In 1951 the first women's hockey match to be held at Wembley was watched by 25,000 spectators.¹³ Thus the WCA's own record figure of 15,000 spectators at the Oval Test match against Australia in 1951 is not particularly surprising.¹⁴ Full employment combined with economic austerity in a society where consumption of consumer goods increased by only 6% between 1945 and 1950 helped to drive up the demand for spectator sport.¹⁵

⁸ Ibid., p.201.

⁹ 'AEWHA Report, 1950', ED 169/36, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁰ *Physical Recreation*, April 1948.

¹¹ J. Kay, "'Maintaining the Traditions of British Sport'?: The Private Sports Club in the Twentieth Century', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 30:14 (2013), p.1656.

¹² D. Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket* (1999; reprinted London, 2003), p.276.

¹³ N. Tomkins and P. Ward (eds.), *The Century Makers: a history of the All England Women's Hockey Association, 1895-1995* (Shrewsbury, 1995), p.134.

¹⁴ WCA, 'Report on Australia in England 1951', WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹⁵ See J. Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950* (London, 1978), p.150.

Yet as Williams argues, while the participation of British women in the 1948 London Olympic Games has received academic attention, the leisure lives of women below the elite level, including this boom in female sports participation and spectatorship, have been widely ignored.¹⁶ While Zweiniger-Bargielowska has described how the austerity of the late 1940s and early 1950s disproportionately affected women, as the burden of rationing controls fell largely upon them, there has been no concomitant examination of their leisure lives.¹⁷ This chapter therefore uses women's cricket as a case study of the ways in which the leisure habits of women in Britain were affected during a time of austerity. It assesses how far male opposition to female participation in cricket, the lack of quality press coverage of the sport, and its domination by middle-class women continued to be issues in the postwar years.¹⁸ To what extent had the war encouraged the governing body of women's cricket to become more progressive and to broaden its appeal from the elitist body of the interwar years? In a male-dominated society, and at a time when sporting resources like pitches were at a premium, how far could the WCA successfully represent the interests of women? How might schoolgirl cricket progress in the era of tripartite education? The following pages are an attempt to answer these questions. Overall, the chapter highlights how the concerns of female cricketers help shed further light onto our historical understanding of the lives of British women in the era of austerity.

¹⁶ Williams, *A Contemporary History of Women's Sport*, p.201. On women's participation in the 1948 Olympic Games, see J. Hampton, *The Austerity Olympics: When the Games Came to London in 1948* (London, 2012), chapter 12.

¹⁷ I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford, 2000), chapter 3.

¹⁸ F. Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity in Interwar Britain* (Oxford, 2013).

Women's cricket and social class

Skillen has argued that during the interwar period, sport was for the first time open to women from all social classes, yet she also suggests that the quality of experience continued to vary, and that some sports – for example golf – probably remained overwhelmingly middle-class activities.¹⁹

However, between the 1930s and the 1950s income differentials between the working and middle classes narrowed significantly. As one of the key reasons for the limited availability of sport to working-class women in the interwar years was a lack of means, one might expect to see an influx of working-class women into sport after 1945. Additionally, the organised sport taking place within munitions factories, the Women's Land Army and the women's armed forces ensured that working-class access to sport during the war increased.²⁰

One way to assess whether women's cricket was attracting a more working-class clientele in the decade after 1945 is by analysing the backgrounds and occupations of women playing cricket in this period. The 26 women who represented England between 1945 and 1955 form a manageable data sample, with information available on the backgrounds of 22 of them; this data is suggestive.²¹ Only one attended a council-run elementary school. Seven attended grant-aided secondary grammar schools; two attended private Catholic schools; one attended a voluntary-aided Methodist school; and six attended independent day or boarding schools, with five of these falling into the category of large 'public' girls' schools.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp.96-8.

²⁰ On this phenomenon, see R. Nicholson, 'Playing for their country? Women's Sport in World War Two', unpublished MSt thesis (University of Oxford, 2010).

²¹ For a full list, see Appendix 1.

In terms of occupation, 10 of the 20 women for whom data is available worked as teachers (eight of the 10 taught Physical Education), and another worked for the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR, a national body set up in 1935 to help local authorities with recreational provision). Two worked permanently after the war as officers in the newly-formed women's armed forces; three worked as civil servants; one worked in retailing; two were clerks and one a secretary. These were all fairly typical middle or lower-middle-class female occupations; teaching had always been one of the few professions available to female graduates, and the postwar increase in women in the workforce led many towards the clerical and lower professional sectors, reflecting a broader shift in the British economy.

Less typical, perhaps, were the careers of Hazel Sanders and Molly Hide. Hide was one of only a small number of women to graduate from Reading University with a diploma in agriculture in the years preceding the Second World War, and Sanders' work as a science technician placed her in a group of 'pioneers', according to Dyhouse. Additionally, given that women made up only 24% of the university population by 1958 and only 0.2% of working-class girls were able to attend university in these years, the fact that five of the 24 gained degrees or diplomas and seven more attended physical training colleges indicates a certain level of privilege.²² There were exceptions. Joan Wilkinson, for example, attended the village school where she grew up, and left school at 14 to work in a cotton mill factory. Yet she had played league cricket in Lancashire before the war, and was called up to the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1941 after they became aware of her talent for the sport. Given that she remained in the WAAF after the war, was given leave to play cricket by her commanding officers, and later took up a clerical post with a Lancashire textile firm, it is arguable that she had entered the ranks of the middle class by the time she was playing at

²² See C. Dyhouse, 'Education', in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), pp.122-4, and R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), p.262.

international level. Overall, therefore, the available data suggests that women of working-class backgrounds were extremely unlikely to represent England in the decade after the Second World War.

This is unsurprising given that, until the 1960s, all international women's cricket tours were entirely self-funded by players. For the 1948/9 tour to Australia and New Zealand, players were required to raise £200 for the cost of their boat passage, plus a minimum of £50 spending money while abroad (their accommodation while in Australia and New Zealand was funded by the host associations).

This amounts to over £8000 in today's money. Nancy Joy, one of the 1948/9 tourists, described the difficulties faced by players in her account of the tour:

We contrived [to raise the money] by a diversity of expedients, including overdraft [and] the benevolence of uncles...we are no haphazard party of rich globetrotters: twelve of us have been given leave of absence from our regular jobs, four were living at home, one is a student who has just finished at the university.²³

A sense of the privileged background of female England cricketers comes through in accounts of their touring experiences contained within private diaries. Netta Rheinberg, the tour manager on the 1948/9 and 1957/8 tours of Australia and New Zealand, herself a secretary and the daughter of a wealthy export merchant, was quick to criticise accommodation on the Australian tour when it did not meet with her approval: one hotel was described as 'not good. It was really a hostel for business girls.'²⁴ Rheinberg's entry for 29 January 1949 reads as follows:

Molly thinks the team is stale and suffering from strain – not made easier by living in a hole like this. We queue for every meal – the place is dirty – we have to use the same knives for toast and marmalade as for bacon and eggs – and the whole outfit is badly run and shoddy. I don't know who is responsible, but think we might have been put in a better place for the

²³ N. Joy, *Maiden Over* (London, 1950), p.140.

²⁴ G. Morgan, *Women's Cricket Touring in 1934/5 and 1948/9* (London, 2009), p.185.

second test.²⁵

She later complained when two of the players were billeted in the house of a dustman.²⁶

Addison suggests that the popular culture of imperialism after 1945 continued to impart 'a general belief in the superiority of whites over coloured people' into the minds of the British people.²⁷

Certainly Rheinberg was fully at ease with the white privilege still apparent across the Empire. The team's British host in Colombo, where they disembarked for a practice match en route to Australia, owned a large bungalow, which Rheinberg described as 'beautifully and luxuriantly furnished... black Cingalese [sic] servants everywhere. One claps one's hands and there they are'.²⁸ Additionally on their tour of Panama City en route to New Zealand in 1957, she wrote:

Ended up at the Panama Hotel – glory me – what a place. £5 a day for a room in season excluding meals is the cheapest. Maids and servants are ten a penny and get paid about \$10-20 a month.²⁹

Given the shortage of domestic servants back home in the postwar decade, the sense of envy in both these accounts is almost visceral.

Indeed, it appears that the very act of participating in an international tour could reinforce players' sense of privilege, both economic and racial, due to the fact that those selected acted as informal ambassadors for Britain while abroad. Shirley Hodges, who toured Australasia in 1968/9, suggested that England players were treated 'like VIPs',³⁰ and this appears to have been the case throughout

²⁵ Netta Rheinberg tour diary, 29 January 1949, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

²⁶ Ibid., 29 March 1949.

²⁷ P. Addison, *No Turning Back. The Peacetime Revolutions of Postwar Britain* (Oxford, 2010), p.128.

²⁸ Netta Rheinberg tour diary, 1 November 1948, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

²⁹ Ibid., 12 October 1957.

³⁰ Interview with Shirley Hodges, 5 June 2014.

the postwar years. The 1948/9 tourists socialised with politicians including the Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers, and famous cricketers like Donald Bradman, and Rheinberg wrote in 1949 that 'High Commissioners seem to be two a penny!'³¹ Mollie Buckland, one of the players who participated in the 1960/1 tour of South Africa, wrote:

After a late night neither Ann [Jago] nor I were anxious to get up early. We woke about 9.0am, rang down and ordered breakfast in bed. There we were, like two titled ladies, waiting for the coloured waiter to bring up the menu, so that we could order.³²

On the voyage home in 1949, the team dismounted at Curaco, and Rheinberg wrote an evocative description of the sights that awaited them that is tinged with casual racism:

These people are very dark skinned – negroid looking...We toured the streets...the women carrying baskets on their heads and some holding picanninies in their arms. I attempted to photograph some of them but they ran away every time – probably thinking it was the evil eye!³³

The experiences of these women while on tour, and the celebrity status which developed around the England Women's team while in other countries, seems to have affirmed their sense of self-importance and their perceived racial and imperial superiority to those they encountered while travelling.

It is harder for the historian to systematically analyse the social make-up of participants in women's cricket at grassroots level. Club records from this time do, however, appear to support the general picture of middle-class domination; a 1951 'new members' list for the Riverside club, for example, indicates that four were secretaries, three were teachers, one was a policewoman, and two were

³¹ Netta Rheinberg tour diary, 1 January 1949, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

³² Mollie Buckland tour diary, 4 December 1960, private collection.

³³ Netta Rheinberg tour diary, 2 May 1949, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

schoolgirls (both at private schools).³⁴ Additionally, WCA club affiliation lists show that by 1955 clubs which were likely to have been made up almost wholly of middle-class women included:

Sheffield Young Teachers' LCC
 National Physical Laboratory WCC
 Digby's Hospital Nurses WCC
 Ministry of Labour and National Service ladies' cricket section
 Puriton Women's Institute CC³⁵
 Gunnersbury (Civil Service) WCC

Editorials of *Women's Cricket* from this period suggest a tacit recognition of this fact:

Cricket for women, I am sure and thank goodness for it, will never rank among the mass movements of the country's history, because the Association has from its earliest days eschewed stunts and undesirable publicity.³⁶

There is no denying that works-based clubs did exist.³⁷ For example, in the Midlands, clubs included those based at the John Bull Rubber Company, Symingtons Ltd, Boots, and the Mansfield Shoe Company; in the North, at Rolls Royce and Lever Brothers; in the South, Allen & Hanburys Ltd and the Lyons Sports Club. There were also a handful of YWCA clubs affiliated by 1955. However, they remained only a small minority of total affiliation figures. Additionally, many of these clubs appear to have been started by keen, predominantly middle-class welfare officers (like Nancy Joy, a personnel officer at Lyons) and must be located within the 'rational recreation' phenomenon described by Richard Holt, in which sport was advocated as a way of creating a

³⁴ 'New members: 1951', *Riverside Magazine*, private collection, Surrey.

³⁵ An editorial of *Home and Country* from June 1952 mentions the existence of at least five WI cricket teams.

³⁶ *Women's Cricket*, September 1954.

³⁷ On the strength of works-based sport in this period see McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp.380-82. For examples of how this affected women's sport, see Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* (London, 2003), p.32, and Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity*, chapter 4.

healthy, moral and orderly workforce.³⁸

Was the WCA's ethos in the postwar years a progressive one designed to reach out to new members, potentially from a broader social base? It does not appear so. The WCA, wrote Pollard in 1947, would continue to be guided by the 'principles and standards' which had led the organisation through the 1930s, whether or not these might 'have made things seem more difficult or slow of development' in the past.³⁹ Thus, for example, the new WCA handbook contained a section on 'cricket etiquette', and *Women's Cricket* ran article series' on 'Courtesies'. Instructions included:

Play as one of the team.

If the backing-up batsman leaves his crease before you bowl, it is quite legal to run him out, but it is only sporting to warn him the first time.

Avoid sitting in front of the pavilion with your feet up on the rails or on the seat in front, since it shows expanses of leg – if nothing worse.

Do something about your personal appearance for lunch and tea and put on a blazer or other extra garment.⁴⁰

Rules whilst players were on tour could be similarly strict. In 1948/9, for example, it was a requirement that players get to bed by 10pm if playing the next day. An incident from Cecilia Robinson's diary of the tour is telling:

After dinner about 9 of us go aboard Harpalia which is due to sail for England tomorrow. Cargo vessel with 5 passengers only...Given drinks and eats by crew including ice cream, champagne... cherry brandy, beer etc. Get back at 10.45, but Aline stays out with chief steward, causes stir and Netta [Rheinberg, manager] and Molly [Hide, captain] furious, have to wait up and tell her to go into them when she returns...Molly, Netta and I give up waiting at 12.0, but I'm still awake when Aline comes in at 12.35.⁴¹

³⁸ R. Holt, *Sport and the British: a modern history* (Oxford, 1989), pp.136-148. This is a tentative conclusion and more research into the origins and organisation of 'working-class' women's cricket clubs is required.

³⁹ *Women's Cricket*, May 1947.

⁴⁰ See for example *Women's Cricket*, 14 May 1954 and 28 May 1954. This type of language was typical; terms like 'batsmen' and 'third man' were seen by the WCA as gender-neutral and used indiscriminately.

⁴¹ Cecilia Robinson tour diary, 12 January 1949, private collection.

Aline's eventual fate went unrecorded. The incident, however, highlights that the manager's role as an enforcer of rules was taken extremely seriously.

Furthermore, the WCA continued to enforce stringent dress regulations for representative matches. Before 1939, rules had dictated that teams must play in white dresses or divided skirts. While after 1945, the Executive Committee amended the rules to allow for 'shorts', the length – not shorter than four inches from the ground when kneeling – was still carefully controlled, and knee length socks were required wear.⁴² Such rules were sometimes enforced to the point of absurdity. One former county player, Norma Whitehorn, recalled the following incident, which took place during a Surrey game in the 1940s:

I saw [England and Surrey captain Molly Hide] at a match just as she was leading us out...she turned round...I can almost hear her voice booming out. 'Why are you improperly dressed?' And there was a deathly hush, and some smart alec said 'what's wrong Norma?' So I said, 'she's got the wrong colour [hair] grip!' And that was it. You were not properly dressed.⁴³

Catherine Horwood's recent work on sportswear in the interwar period indicates that while tennis clothing for women was becoming increasingly daring, in other sports like golf 'stolid practicality always came before the whims of fashion'; she argues that having been only recently admitted to formal golf-club settings, women did not want to jeopardise their status by introducing controversial clothing.⁴⁴ Similarly, Jack Williams has suggested that the WCA's preoccupation with dress in the interwar period was based on the belief that, in order to attract male support, female cricketers needed to dress in conservatively 'feminine' ways, thus avoiding the accusation that they were trying to ape men in any way.⁴⁵ This is confirmed by an examination of the WCA in the

⁴² WCA, 'Rules', WCA Yearbook, 1945, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

⁴³ Interview with Norma Whitehorn, 14 May 2013.

⁴⁴ C. Horwood, *Keeping Up Appearances: Fashion and Class Between the Wars* (Stroud, 2005), pp.83-91.

⁴⁵ J. Williams, *Cricket and England*, p.102; Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity*, p.205.

postwar period; Molly Hide spoke out at the 1954 AGM against 'the dangers of allowing members to wear caps...[she] hoped the meeting would realise how harmful their wearing would be to the prestige of the Association'.⁴⁶ Mollie Buckland, who joined the WCA in the 1950s, confirmed that appearing 'feminine' was a central concern during her early involvement:

they would never, never have worn trousers then. It was not the done thing...no way would you wear anything that looked male. No, never...because you were trying to keep feminine in a man's game.⁴⁷

Illustration 1. Molly Hide batting in a divided skirt, 1950s



⁴⁶ WCA AGM minutes, 1954, WCA archive, Lancashire.

⁴⁷ Interview with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014.

However, this was austerity Britain: clothes rationing remained in force until 1949, which created its own difficulties. One club wrote to *Women's Cricket* in 1948 stating that they had been forced to make their divided skirts from 'coupon-free white serge overalls from Gamages...while one member even clothes herself in the best parts of a discarded sheet'.⁴⁸ Yet the WCA still insisted that divided skirts for representative cricket could only be purchased from official suppliers Lillywhites – another factor which may well have impeded the participation of less well-off women. Enid Bakewell, who joined the Nottingham Casuals club in the mid-1950s, recalled how as a young club player:

Mother nearly had a heart attack when I had to have some shorts...they were 7 guineas!...But somebody eventually, Hazel Sanders, gave me a pair of her old ones, so that kept my mother from having a heart attack!⁴⁹

Austerity, then, appears if anything to have increased the middle-class nature of women's cricket. Continuing to define the correct way to play cricket was, as Huggins and Williams have argued of the male sporting elite in the interwar period, a cultural practice 'through which they confirmed their social status and sense of social identity'.⁵⁰ The WCA's ethos can be seen as one example of middle-class defensiveness in a period which saw their influence and relative affluence fading. Certainly it indicated to those new to the game, working-class or otherwise, that they needed to behave in a certain way in order to be accepted by the female cricketing establishment. This reinforces the earlier findings of Langhamer, who found that even by the 1950s, working-class women in Manchester remained much less likely than middle-class women to engage in organised team sport.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Women's Cricket*, 26 June 1948.

⁴⁹ Interview with Enid Bakewell, 17 October 2013.

⁵⁰ M. Huggins and J. Williams, *Sport and the English, 1918-1939* (London, 2006), p.97.

⁵¹ C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester, 2000), p.83.

The WCA and the MCC

Another key element of the WCA's ethos was its close relationship with the ethos of those governing men's cricket; this helps explain why it was so remarkably successful at gaining the support of eminent cricketers and cricketing officials, support which only increased in the postwar period. For example, unlike its sister paper *Women's Hockey Field*, *Women's Cricket* was able to attract high-profile male contributions from Denis Compton and Walter Hammond, two of the finest batsmen of the day. The list of guests at the WCA's twenty-first birthday celebrations in 1947, held at Bedford College, included Colonel Rait Kerr (the MCC Secretary), Learie Constantine, George Geary and Andrew Sandham. When asked by the Chairman of the Cricket Society for a list of 'six men favourably disposed towards women's cricket' the WCA's list included Neville Cardus, Peter West, CB Fry and Brian Sellers – an impressive roll-call of names in English cricket.⁵² Cardus, the famous cricket writer, had been a staunch supporter since attending the 1949 women's Test match at Sydney, after which he wrote:

To the average spectator there was little usual evidence, except for the clothes worn, that these women Test players were not men. A certain lack of physical power in strokes executed perfectly, and the absence of truly fast bowling – these were the only other signs...it is extremely difficult to distinguish Molly Hide [the England captain] from a batsMAN of the finest county class.⁵³

⁵² WCA Executive Committee minutes, 18 February 1955, WCA Archive, Lancashire. Geary, Sandham and Fry had all played Test cricket for England, Constantine had represented the West Indies and was a prominent English league player, West was a famous BBC cricket commentator and Sellers had captained Yorkshire for over a decade when this list was composed.

⁵³ Quoted in *Women's Cricket*, 12 May 1950.

Additionally, in 1952 Rheinberg praised the WCA's 'satisfactory' relationship with the MCC.⁵⁴ This may well have been due to the fact that both Rait Kerr and SC Griffith (Assistant Secretary) were keen supporters of the women's game. In 1955, Griffith led a meeting of the Cricket Society, a body formed in 1945 to facilitate meetings between cricket enthusiasts, which focused on the expanding women's game:

[He] expressed himself wholeheartedly in favour of women playing Cricket. He felt that it was a help if the womenfolk of a family entered into the game, and he could see nothing at all against such an activity on their part...

After Miss Rheinberg had said that she experienced great difficulty in obtaining sufficient publicity, Mr Griffith offered to put any notice of the main women's Cricket matches of the season up in the Long Room at Lord's.⁵⁵

The MCC also contributed £250 to the WCA's 1948/9 Australian Touring Team Appeal Fund, something which was especially helpful at a time when the finances of the WCA were heavily stretched.⁵⁶ The men's counties were supportive, too; many contributed to the 1948/9 Appeal Fund, and Audrey Disbury, who would go on to represent England on the 1957/8 tour of Australasia, received free cricket bats and coaching from the Kent men's first XI – presumably due to the fact that her brother Brian was a Kent professional.⁵⁷

Indeed, for the majority of women their entry to cricket was mediated by their brothers, fathers or another male relative; almost all the women interviewed for this research indicated that they had grown up playing the sport in their back garden with relatives. Mollie Buckland, who was born in 1936, was typical:

⁵⁴ 'Australian women's cricket tour souvenir programme', 1951 and WCA AGM minutes, 1952, WCA archive, Lancashire.

⁵⁵ *The Cricket Society News Letter*, No. 3, 1955, private collection, Surrey.

⁵⁶ In 1952, for example, the WCA reported a deficit of £405 12s 10d. See WCA Executive Committee minutes, 23 May 1952, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁵⁷ Interview with Audrey Disbury, 12 June 2014.

The thing was that my father played a lot of cricket, he was a policeman and he played in the police force... So when I arrived, it was a case of, well I really had to play cricket didn't I?⁵⁸

Pat Siderfin, also born in 1936, had a similar experience:

my dad had always played cricket... I was... probably just about nine [when] he joined the village team. My brother would have been seven, and we used to go along with him on a Tuesday evening for cricket practice. My brother bowled and all that sort of thing, and I thought, 'well I could do that!' And I did.⁵⁹

Given the commonality of experience amongst female cricketers of mixed childhood play, it is understandable that their relationship with the men's cricket authorities was generally a cordial and friendly one.

These kinds of relationships were mutually beneficial. From 1951 the MCC printed details of women's Test and Territorial matches in their official Diary; from 1938 women's cricket was semi-regularly covered in *Wisden*, and from 1951 the sport was given space in the *Playfair Cricket Annual*.⁶⁰ In return, the WCA encouraged its members to purchase these publications and to attend men's Test and first-class cricket wherever possible, to observe 'cricket technique... at its best'.⁶¹ This may well have contributed to the increased audiences at cricket matches in the immediate postwar years.

Why was the WCA so successful at securing increased male support after 1945? There is evidence that their emphasis on playing cricket in decorous ways, and in particular in skirts, not trousers, was

⁵⁸ Interview with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014.

⁵⁹ Interview with Pat Siderfin, 27 May 2014.

⁶⁰ Reports appeared in the 1938, 1939, 1952 and 1953 editions of *Wisden*.

⁶¹ See for example *Women's Cricket*, May 1946.

a helpful strategy. Neville Cardus was just one of many who stated that he was completely won over to the sport once he realised that: 'The main point about women's cricket is that none of its exponents wishes to compare it with men's'.⁶² Furthermore, the WCA promoted a thoroughly amateur ideology which sat well with men's cricketing officials. As Holt and Mason have observed, once the war ended British sport 'went back to its pre-war ways, run by a largely volunteer force inspired by an amateur ideology'.⁶³ Accordingly, even by 1962 five out of seventeen first-class counties had yet to appoint a professional captain; 'the English county clubs adhered to the principle of amateur captaincy with great tenacity in the postwar period'.⁶⁴ The WCA were therefore very much in sync with their male counterparts. Their 1945 rules, most recently updated in 1938 but remaining unaltered until after 1955, read:

Applicants for Individual Membership shall be amateurs of not less than sixteen years of age and shall be proposed and seconded by members of the Association. An amateur is one who does not play for money. A player is not disqualified from playing by reason of accepting a position with a manufacturer or retailer of sports equipment, nor is she debarred from writing for the Press, broadcasting or coaching for a fee; but she must not allow her name, initials or photograph to be used for the purpose of commercial advertisement.

...no member of any affiliated County Association or Club shall institute or take place in any cricket challenge cup or prize competition.⁶⁵

Rheinberg outlined in her 1948/9 tour diary what she saw as the rationale behind the promotion of non-competitiveness, contrasting the English approach with that of the Australians:

We have tried our best here to instil into the Aussies the advantage of playing cricket merely for the love of the game, as it is done in England, and not for points altogether as is the case throughout Australia. This competitive spirit leads to jealousy and rivalries and personal animosities which are unknown in England.⁶⁶

⁶² Joy, *Maiden Over*, p.9.

⁶³ R. Holt and T. Mason, *Sport in Britain, 1945-2000* (Oxford, 2000), pp.34-5.

⁶⁴ S. Wagg, "Time Gentlemen Please": The Decline of Amateur Captaincy in English County Cricket', in A. Smith and D. Porter (eds.), *Amateurs and Professionals in Post-war British Sport* (London, 2000), p.53.

⁶⁵ WCA, 'Rules', WCA Yearbook 1945, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

⁶⁶ Netta Rheinberg tour diary, 17 February 1949, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

New Zealand players were subject to the same critique. Rheinberg described their chairman Dot Symonds as 'a hotbed of intrigue...She asked me whether I would choose the best all round Auckland player in this match to whom a bat was to be presented – but I refused on the grounds that this was firstly against our principles in England; and secondly would lay me open to considerable criticism – knowing the intense rivalry that exists between various women's cricket cliques in this country'.⁶⁷ There was clearly an element of imperialist sentiment here; Rheinberg appears to have believed that the 'English' way of playing was far superior to that of Britain's former colonies. Class snobbery may also have played a part. The Australian Women's Cricket Council (AWCC), to a much greater extent than the WCA, encouraged working-class affiliations.⁶⁸ The largely middle-class ideology of amateurism, therefore, perhaps did not retain such a stranglehold.

It was, indeed, beginning to lose its grip over English cricket; from 1945 the MCC faced increasing calls for modernisation, and separate amateur-professional facilities were steadily abandoned. In 1952 Len Hutton became the first professional captain of England. This only fuelled the fire of male praise for women's cricket, which remained so thoroughly and purely amateur in a time of uncertainty. A 1951 article in the *Sporting Record* supports this suggestion:

[In women's cricket] difficulties connected with earning a living do not raise their ugly heads. I confess it with shame, but I had never seen a women's cricket match until the other day when I looked in at the women's Test Match between England and Australia at the Oval. What a pleasant surprise awaited me! Here was a Test Match with the delightful carefree air of village green cricket – a combination I had never hoped to find in this highly competitive world.⁶⁹

Similarly, women's cricket could be held up as an example of the 'brighter cricket' so desired by

⁶⁷ Ibid., 22 March 1949.

⁶⁸ R. Cashman and A. Weaver, *Wicket Women: cricket and women in Australia* (Kensington, 1991), pp.70-3.

⁶⁹ *Sporting Record*, 11 August 1951.

cricket commentators in the postwar years. In contrast with Peter West's conclusion in the wake of England's 1953 Ashes victory that 'the side which played the more attractive cricket lost the Ashes', it was possible for the *Daily Mail* to write of the Australian women's team in 1951:

People are going to like these Australian girls. They go for the runs: scorn off-the-wicket bowling. Both they and their opponents, though overplayed, get on with it, and any male who went to Sevenoaks feeling a bit lofty or patronising soon changed his tune...The runs were knocked off for the loss of three wickets largely by the forcing bat of Miss Dive, a meteorologist and BSc, in just over an hour. She got 59 of Australia's continued innings of 165-7 dec, and when you compare that with the South Africa men's 190 in 4 ½ hours at Lord's, there is no need to ask if women's cricket is bright.⁷⁰

The MCC, however, refused to accept that men's cricket needed any 'brightening': its committee report of March 1944 rejected the idea of Sunday cricket, over-limited and/or time-limited cricket, and two day county matches.⁷¹ Here, too, the WCA mirrored the attitudes of its male counterpart. Executive Committee minutes show unanimous repudiation of matches being played on Sundays.⁷² League cricket is another good example. The MCC had always criticised the northern Leagues in public for being commercial and competitive, while taking advantage of the talent they fostered at county and Test level. The WCA evidently concurred with the MCC's approach; in July 1949 during a WCA Committee discussion of League cricket, the MCC was held up 'as an example in its clever handling of the League problem'.⁷³ Women's cricket Leagues had existed since the 1930s in the North of England, organised by the Yorkshire and Lancashire Women's Cricket Federations, and as with male leagues tended to be dominated by working-class players. Relations were not overtly hostile between the southern-dominated WCA and the northern Leagues: players like Mona

⁷⁰ *Daily Mail*, 21 May 1951.

⁷¹ Birley, *English Cricket*, p.269.

⁷² See for example WCA Executive Committee minutes, 24 June 1949, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷³ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 27 July 1949, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

Greenwood, who had captained the Yorkshire Federation, went on to play for England, and the WCA sometimes (unofficially) played matches against the Federation.⁷⁴ But WCA policy had always been to refuse to acknowledge these Leagues officially. Greenwood toed the party line when she wrote of her WCA cricket days: 'It opened the door to a so much wider field of cricket, to much more enjoyable cricket, than I had ever dreamed possible'.⁷⁵

If non-competitive, amateur cricket was superior, it made sense to attempt to assimilate Leagues into the WCA. Hence in 1949, it was agreed that clubs belonging to Leagues would be permitted to join the Association and that those playing for trophies already in existence be allowed to continue, though 'the Association would view with disfavour any affiliated bodies starting to play for new trophies'.⁷⁶ By 1950 it was reported that all remaining League clubs in Lancashire had chosen to affiliate.⁷⁷ But this was done in a way that reinforced the Association's perception of its own superior values. In 1955 the Preston and District League was reformed and the Executive Committee minutes stated:

It was agreed that the individual clubs in this League might affiliate. The Hon Secretary was asked to mention when writing that any money raised through collections at League matches played by affiliated clubs should not be retained by any one player and that such amounts should be donated to the County Association or Club funds.⁷⁸

It does seem, therefore, that there was no diminution of the traditional WCA emphasis on etiquette and sufficiently decorous, non-competitive cricket in the period after the war at the top levels. It is harder to get a sense of how the grassroots felt; the relationship of the WCA leadership with its

⁷⁴ See Williams, *Cricket and England*, pp.96-100 for a description of these Leagues.

⁷⁵ *Women's Cricket*, 8 August 1952.

⁷⁶ WCA AGM minutes, 1949, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷⁷ *Women's Cricket*, 26 May 1950.

⁷⁸ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 25 March 1955, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

clubs will be tackled in greater depth in the next chapter. It must certainly be borne in mind that there are likely to have been teams playing outside of the WCA structures in these years whose membership was less comfortably middle-class, and whose members did not necessarily subscribe to the amateur ethos. Nonetheless, the evidence presented here demonstrates that class remained a strong divider in women's cricket after the war, thus reflecting broader trends in British society.

Issues of space: pitches and column inches

McKibbin concludes his study of England in the years up to 1951 with the statement that: 'At a public level [it] remained an almost exclusively single-sex society...At all levels, the most important variable which determined membership of formal associations – in effect, participation in public life – was neither class nor region but gender...most women's relationships with the world were mediated in some way by their relationships with their husbands, fathers, or brothers.'⁷⁹ One challenge of austerity Britain for the WCA was therefore how to survive as a female organisation in a male-dominated society. Women playing cricket were heavily dependent on the men who supplied them with the resources and the publicity they needed to thrive as sportswomen. As the feminist literature on 'sites of struggle' in sport suggests, 'the ability to influence the production of space [in sport] is an important means to augment social power';⁸⁰ this can be equally applied to issues of both physical resources and the space in media outlets whose discourses have such capacity to shape wider societal attitudes towards sportswomen. Male control of resources helps to explain why the WCA were so keen to organise their activities according to strict rules endorsed by the MCC.

⁷⁹ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.518.

⁸⁰ P. Vertinsky, 'Locating a "sense of place": space, place and gender in the gymnasium', in P. Vertinsky and J. Bale (eds.), *Sites of sport. Space, place and experience* (London, 2004), p.13.

In the 1930s women's cricket had received coverage from several major newspapers, including the *Morning Post*, *Evening News*, *Times*, *Observer*, *Daily Mirror* and *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic*. The problem was that much of this was patronising or claimed that the average female had no genuine interest in cricket, but, for example, 'goes to the ground to eat strawberries and be admired'.⁸¹ Recently, Kay has suggested that media coverage of women's sport in the immediate postwar period was largely positive, did not trivialise women's sport and objectified female athletes far less than at any time before or since.⁸² As will be seen, however, it is questionable how far this was the case for women's cricket.

Press coverage was certainly recognised as valuable to the WCA, who lamented the newsprint shortages during the war which had so curtailed coverage of their activities. In 1948 it was decided to elect press correspondents in each county, club and college in order to keep local press informed of the activities within their localities. The WCA archive reveals that the editor of *Women's Cricket* along with numerous other players collected press cuttings and kept comprehensive lists of which newspapers covered the sport. Pollard's brainchild, *Women's Cricket*, was recognised as an even greater asset than it had been in the 1930s; in 1946 and 1947 she was given £100 by the Executive Committee, and from 1948 granted £25 annually, in order to prop up the paper financially in a struggling market.⁸³

In 1947 the WCA elected a Publicity Sub-Committee. Its remit was:

[To produce] a new handbook on women's cricket, including interpretation of MCC Laws.
This handbook to be sent out together with the new MCC laws.

⁸¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 21 1938.

⁸² J. Kay, 'A window of opportunity? Preliminary thoughts on women's sport in post-war Britain', *Sport in History* 30:2 (2010).

⁸³ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 8 March 1946 and April 18 1947, and WCA AGM minutes, 1948, WCA archive, Lancashire.

Compiling of [annual] Report Book.

[Encouragement of] decentralisation – including widespread local advertising.

Drawing up of leaflet on Aims and Objects of WCA.

All matters relating to past and future cricket films.

The Committee would, furthermore, give any necessary advice to local authorities regarding the running and organising of representative matches, and a suggestion was made and approved that various film companies should be informed of any important match date.⁸⁴

This kind of apparatus ensured the press and public were kept well-informed about WCA activities.

Appeals for funds to enable teams to tour or host visitors from abroad were publicised through the distribution of leaflets to the general public. In 1955, a WCA fixture list was sent out to all men's county cricket clubs, with the request that it be displayed in their pavilions. During the 1951 Australian tour of England, an official programme giving information on tour dates and the history of the sport was distributed at all matches.

Coverage of this tour was extensive and almost entirely focused on the cricket, rather than the appearance of the players (as had been common in the interwar period). The *Daily Telegraph*, *Times*, *News Chronicle* and *Evening Standard* all printed scorecards of both Test and other Tour matches. An article from the *Daily Mail* in 1951 illustrates the general tone of these reports:

England's women, fighting at the Oval to wipe out Australia's lead of one in the Test series, hit 215 for five and then collapsed before the new ball and were all out for 238.

Australia's bowlers, who had been punished by Hide, Maclagan, Robinson and Sanders, had hit back splendidly to get rid of their opponents for so moderate a total in this third and final game. The high standard of the batting, bowling, and fielding pleased a crowd of nearly 10,000.

Hide, the England captain, hit nine fours in her 65. She was stylish, strong, and sure in all her strokes. Maclagan, a sound opener, stayed 2 ½ hours for 59.

Whiteman, right-arm fast, and Wilson, right-arm slow medium, took the bowling honours with four for 56 and three for 27 respectively.

The England bowlers failed to separate the dour Australian opening pair in the last 50 minutes and the tourists finished 214 behind.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 14 November 1947, WCA archive, Lancashire.

⁸⁵ *Daily Mail*, 30 July 1951.

But much of the media hype surrounding the 1951 tour was probably due to the the public's fascination with any match involving Australia. The 1954 New Zealand tour attracted very little press interest.

There remained a great deal of patronising or simply inaccurate coverage in the postwar period, such as the *Surrey Mirror's* assertion in a 1954 article on Molly Hide that she had introduced overarm bowling to the women's game.⁸⁶ In 1951 the *Daily Graphic* printed two photographs side by side: the first Godfrey Evans of Kent taking an excellent diving catch; the second Margaret Rosewarne, the Kent WCA wicket-keeper, who in an attempt to run out an opponent had missed the ball entirely. The caption read 'Same idea – but differing style', with the clear implication that women's cricket was simply not of the same standard as men's.⁸⁷ The WCA recognised the dangers of this type of publicity when it stressed the need not to advertise matches 'which we know in advance will be of poor standard'.⁸⁸

They were also cautious of what Rheinberg termed the 'tittle-tattle columns' such as that written by Ingrid Etter for the *Daily Graphic* in 1948, which it is worth reproducing here:

There were 'maidens' all over the field at Kennington Oval yesterday. They were the cricket maidens of England who hope to save the national sporting honour by beating Australia's women team from Perth to Sydney this coming winter.

At yesterday's match, the first I have ever seen, the game seemed to go something like this: You require: brief shorts, long white socks, a long-sleeved white pullover, developed leg muscles, and a lolloping run.

When anything more strenuous than standing or sitting on the grass is needed, you tie the pullover round the waist of a walking female clothes-peg, of which there are two, whose other occupation is staring at a particular point on the ground.

If a ball is ever caught the spectators wake up with a start and clap...

⁸⁶ Quoted in *Women's Cricket*, 23 July 1954. In fact, overarm bowling was possibly invented by a woman, Christina Willes, in the early 19th century (see 'Obituary of Edward Hodges', *Wisden* 1908). Certainly in WCA matches underarm bowling was never permitted.

⁸⁷ *Daily Graphic*, 21 May 1951.

⁸⁸ *Women's Cricket*, 17 July 1953.

Three players seem to do all the work. One throws the ball. Two others, holding bats, try to hit it, and sometimes, not very often, when they've hit it a long way, they run to and fro. At this the spectators not only wake up, but shout happily.⁸⁹

This particular column attracted widespread condemnation amongst female cricketers; *Women's Cricket* received fifteen letters of complaint about it (probably the biggest controversy in its entire history, to place the incident in context).⁹⁰ It was a throwback to the early days of women's cricket when coverage had largely treated the sport as a novelty and something of a joke, and its female author served to reinforce the ever-present stereotype of the ignorant female spectator. This kind of coverage remained an issue for sportswomen who wanted nothing more than to be taken seriously by the general public. Indeed, Mollie Buckland recalled in our interview that:

We wanted to be taken seriously, that's all we were asking...[But] The publicity that you got was always made into a joke...I was interviewed lots of times for different papers and things. And I was always worried what they were going to say. And so often, it was a laughable situation as far as they were concerned. And so we were very cautious about what we said.⁹¹

Men could still exhibit extreme spatial defensiveness when it came to the phenomenon of the woman cricketer. The authorities at Lord's allowed the 1951 Australian touring team use of their nets and much was made of this – hardly a revolutionary step – by the press. It was described, variously, as an 'invasion' (*Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Graphic*), the 'surrender' of 'one of the last all-male bastions in England' (*Daily Graphic*), 'feminine emancipation march[ing] on' (*Daily Mail*) and 'the thin end of the wedge' (*Evening Standard*).⁹² It is no wonder that the MCC continued to prevent

⁸⁹ *Daily Graphic*, 6 July 1948.

⁹⁰ *Women's Cricket*, July 24 1948.

⁹¹ Interview with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014.

⁹² *Evening Standard*, 15 May 1951; *Daily Graphic*, 14 May 1951; *Daily Mail*, 16 May 1951; *Daily Telegraph*, 16 May 1951.

women from playing on the hallowed turf until 1976.⁹³

Other county committees were more generous. Before 1939, Test and Representative matches had been staged at grounds including Northampton, Old Trafford and the Oval. These and other high-profile county grounds such as Worcester and Leeds continued to open their doors to women after 1945; some, such as Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire, arranged winter net sessions for women. The WCA was also represented at the Scarborough and Winchester cricket festivals (from 1948 and 1949 respectively) which permitted annual access to important grounds. The Surrey authorities were particularly accommodating, offering a central pitch for the 1951 Test match when the WCA rejected the original offer.⁹⁴ In some cases the WCA could exhibit considerable bargaining power, refusing to play a representative match on the Lewes ground in 1955 as it was 'not suitable' for their purposes.⁹⁵ At local level, too, women were often given significant help by men's clubs, who lent their grounds and equipment, and provided coaching and umpiring.

The works-based women's cricket clubs which existed are a good example of positive working relationships between male and female cricketers at grassroots level. As well as the organisations listed above, a number of banks revived their women's cricket sections in the wake of the Second World War, and in 1952, trials were held and fixtures arranged for a United Banks XI. This type of venture appears to have generally been supported by male colleagues; the Westminster Bank reported in 1951 that:

The decision to form at least one ladies' eleven met with heartening response. There was no lack of active support, and the timely aid of the Sports Club Office – who provided new

⁹³ The WCA did request its use for the 1948 season, but the MCC refused, ostensibly because 'there was little hope of the ground being available at the time[s] suggested'. See WCA Executive Committee minutes, 14 November 1947 and 17 January 1948, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁹⁴ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 19 January 1951, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁹⁵ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 13 July 1954, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

equipment and continued to give us every possible encouragement throughout the season – contributed greatly to the success of the venture.

We had a shrewd idea, needless to say, of the reactions which our appearance on the Cricket Field might provoke from the Men's Section. But we were surprised – and pleasantly – by the serious advice and criticism that they so freely offered, and thoroughly enjoyed several evening matches with departmental teams.⁹⁶

Matches between men's and women's cricket works sections were increasingly common, and the banks were not alone in supporting their female employees. Cadburys, an employer well-established in the 'rational recreation' tradition, from 1945 hosted an annual women's cricket tournament at Bournville, featuring their own women's cricket section and scored and umpired by the men's section, which became a highlight of the WCA's calendar.⁹⁷ By the 1960s, the firm were hosting visiting international sides at Bournville, both for net sessions and practice matches.⁹⁸

Problems were bound to arise, however, in a Britain steeped in austerity where sporting resources were such valuable capital, particularly in the wake of demobilisation, and particularly for a sport which used such a lot of space. Rheinberg reported in 1947 that the club for which she was Secretary had been ousted from their home ground at Bedford College as the pitch was to be let to a men's club which had used it before the war and had now been able to reform. The article, entitled 'Cricket Grounds – A Secretary's Nightmare', went on to list eight other grounds where the club had previously played which, since the war, had become either unaffordable, unavailable, or been turned into allotments during the wartime 'Dig for Victory' campaign. Pollard had written in an editorial in *Women's Cricket* during the same season that 'if things do not change we shall become one vast migratory murmuration of clubs – playing our games when we happen to meet on the high roads

⁹⁶ *The Westminster*, October 1951.

⁹⁷ *The Bournville Works Magazine*, August 1945. On Cadburys in the earlier period, see C. Dellheim, 'The creation of a company culture: Cadburys, 1861-1931', *American Historical Review* 92 (1987) and C. Parratt, "The making of the healthy and the happy home": recreation, education and the production of working-class womanhood at the Rowntree Cocoa Works, York, c.1898-1914', in J. Hill and J. Williams (eds.), *Sport and Identity in the North of England* (Keele, 1996), pp.74-9.

⁹⁸ *The Bournville Works Magazine*, June 1963 and July 1966.

and their adjacent purlieu'.⁹⁹ The formation of a number of clubs which chose to name themselves the 'Weald Wanderers', the 'Kent Nomads', or similar in this period is a good indication of the extent of the problem. This was another key reason for the existence of works-based clubs; companies like Boots and the various banks were able to guarantee their female workers the provision of good-quality grounds, often at little cost to employees.

Furthermore, while counties and clubs could be generous when they chose, women appear to have generally been low on (probably bottom of) the priority list. One club in Baxenden in Lancashire reported that they used the same pitch as two men's teams, and therefore had to play all their matches in the evenings: 'very often our matches end in a draw because of the bad light'. As for Baxenden's cricket teas: 'the poor visitors often wonder, we are sure, what on earth are in the sandwiches but have no way of telling until they have tasted'!¹⁰⁰ Aline Brown (sister of England captain Freddie Brown), who formed the Riverside club in 1946, wrote that she spent several seasons hunting for a home ground: 'but the answer was always no, no, no. "The men need the pitch every weekend"...'¹⁰¹ By 1951 Warwickshire had withdrawn its offer of winter nets 'owing to the increasing numbers of men now asking for coaching';¹⁰² in 1952 the venue for the second New Zealand women's Test match had to be changed 'due to the [men's] Pakistan [touring team] playing at Trent Bridge on the dates previously fixed and applied for'.¹⁰³ And by 1955 a significant proportion of women's teams were once again nomadic. Even in a sport where the governing body enjoyed such a good relationship with its male counterpart, the extent to which women relied on male-controlled resources to facilitate their leisure was a real issue in postwar Britain.

⁹⁹ *Women's Cricket*, May and June 1947.

¹⁰⁰ *Women's Cricket*, 30 April 1965.

¹⁰¹ A. Waller, 'The start of Riverside WCC', *Riverside Magazine*, 1951, private collection, Surrey.

¹⁰² *Women's Cricket*, 4 July 1952.

¹⁰³ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 5 December 1952, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

The 1944 Education Act and schoolgirl cricket.

In the years before 1939 cricket was concentrated in the girls public boarding and day schools such as Roedean, St Leonard's and Wycombe Abbey, as well as the Girls Public Day School Trust schools, all of which had introduced games to their curricula in the late nineteenth century. Skillen has noted that attempts were being made in the interwar period to standardise provision of physical education in the state sector, with PE seen by the government as a 'bulwark against the spread of illness, disease and declining moral values'.¹⁰⁴ However, prior to the 1944 Education Act most working-class girls left school at fourteen, and games were not compulsory in state schools.

The increasing government preoccupation with the health of its young people, though, carried over into the postwar years, and the 1944 Act transformed the situation for PE within the state sector.

The Act stated:

It shall be the duty of every local education authority to secure that there are adequate facilities for recreation and social and physical training, and for that purpose a local education authority may establish, maintain and manage camps, holiday classes, playing fields, play centres, playgrounds, gymnasiums, and swimming baths (s.53).

Expenditure by LEAs (local education authorities) on recreation and physical training increased from £2,239,000 in 1946-7 to £3,601,000 in 1950-51; by 1960, a government report indicated that this was a long-term trend, as spending was 50% greater in this area than it had been in 1945.¹⁰⁵ The newly-created Ministry of Education offered grants towards the salaries of national coaches in

¹⁰⁴ Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity*, p.29.

¹⁰⁵ Ministry of Education, *The Youth Service in England and Wales* (London, 1960), p.8.

sport, as well as continuing to grant-aid voluntary youth organisations and work closely with the Central Council for Physical Recreation. The first National Physical Recreation Centre was set up in 1946 at Bisham Abbey, and 1,700 young people attended training holidays there in the five years after it opened.¹⁰⁶ This helps explain why so many girls were participating in sport in these years: Williams cites one 1951 survey in which 38% of respondents were participating in cricket (though 93% were participating in rounders, 86% in netball and 75% in hockey).¹⁰⁷ Additionally, for the first time, physical education provision became an obligatory responsibility of LEAs; this differed from the permissive legislation of the interwar years. There was therefore huge potential to introduce particular sports to the influx of girls (and boys) into secondary schools.

The WCA evidently recognised that the Education Act, alongside their lack of school affiliations in the wake of the war (down from 85 in 1939 to 12 in 1945) required action. In 1947 a Schools Sub-Committee was formed:

the first object should be to form groups of schoolgirl cricketers in as many areas as possible. Miss Riley suggested that arrangements might be made for prominent members of the WCA to visit all affiliated, and any possible non-affiliated schools, to speak to the Games Mistresses and girls, if possible, and distribute suitable WCA literature, not forgetting the film.¹⁰⁸

Letters were sent to all schools which had been affiliated pre-war inviting reaffiliation, and to all County Secretaries recommending the formation of groups of school-girl cricketers and the organisation of school cricket rallies to provide group coaching. An 'advantages of membership' leaflet was distributed which cited coaching facilities, reduced admission to territorial and international women's matches, free literature and the annual Colwall Cricket Week as reasons why schools should affiliate to the WCA. In 1950 an annual 'Holiday Coaching Week' was instituted,

¹⁰⁶ *Physical Recreation Bulletin*, June 1947.

¹⁰⁷ Williams, *A Contemporary History of Women's Sport*, p.217.

¹⁰⁸ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 14 November 1947, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

financed by the WCA, which young players were encouraged to attend. Some counties offered financial support as a means of nurturing young talent in their localities. Other national and local coaching courses were arranged, sometimes in conjunction with the CCPR.

Outreach to the public schools continued, as evidenced by their magazines, which report WCA visits during the 1950s in an attempt to encourage those with a long-established tradition to remain enthusiastic about their cricket. Both Cheltenham Ladies College and Wycombe Abbey, for example, entertained the Australian players to lunch during their 1951 tour 'and subsequently followed their fortunes at the second and final test matches at Worcester and the Oval with great interest'.¹⁰⁹ What was new, and particularly striking, was the gradual inclusion of secondary modern schools in WCA efforts. Invitations to evening coaching sessions began to be sent to these schools from around 1947. In Nottinghamshire, for example, the 1950 Schoolgirls' Coaching Scheme was open only to girls from Nottingham grammar and private schools, but by 1951 included two secondary modern schools.¹¹⁰ The few secondary moderns which did own cricket pitches were sometimes used by local women's clubs for practices.

By 1955 school affiliations had surpassed the pre-war peak. The problem was that most of this increase came from the traditional support base of independent schools. By 1960, there were only two comprehensive schools affiliated, and no secondary modern schools at all. The figures for grammar schools were better: the number had risen from 33 in 1950 to 43 in 1960. However, many of these were older grammar schools, generally located in more affluent areas, some of which had merely continued their pre-war affiliations.¹¹¹ This compared unfavourably with other sports. By

¹⁰⁹ *Cheltenham Ladies College Magazine*, 1951; *Wycombe Abbey Gazette*, December 1951.

¹¹⁰ *Women's Cricket*, 14 June 1951.

¹¹¹ At least 23 were grammar schools dating from before 1945. Nine had been affiliated to the WCA before the war.

1950, the All England Women's Hockey Association had 886 school affiliations (compared with 695 schools in 1939), many of which were secondary modern schools.¹¹² The Northumberland representative of the All England Netball Association reported that in 1939 a mere 10 schools had been affiliated, but by 1951 the figures were 14 grammar schools and 61 secondary modern schools. This appears to have been fairly typical.¹¹³

This might partly be explained by the WCA continuing to project a middle-class ethos. But many of the developments in education in this period would have hindered their efforts regardless. The educational policy of the Attlee governments has been described as 'the most important gap in Labour's egalitarianism'; from their beginnings, the new secondary modern schools were often hampered by a lack of funds, and a key element of this was PE.¹¹⁴ The 1944 Education Act was supposed to ensure that no schools were without a playing field, but many school buildings remained out of date. John Newsom's *The Education of Girls*, published in 1948, reported on the ways in which the English education system differentiated between boys and girls, and made recommendations regarding the future of female secondary education. His report touched on the problem of PE, stating:

Many of these [secondary modern] schools have no playing space other than the tarmac of the playground, the girls never handle a tennis racquet or a hockey stick...[they spend] an hour in the playground practising netball, under difficulties since some 200 other girls are milling around in various forms of unorganized play and a good deal of shouting and laughter.¹¹⁵

Under these conditions, any form of cricket was almost impossible. Education syllabi continued to recognise this; the 1933 Syllabus, which had advised that cricket should not be attempted unless the

¹¹² 'AEWHA Report, 1950', ED 169/36, National Archives, Kew.

¹¹³ All England Netball Association, *The Silver Jubilee Book. Netball 1901-1951* (Manchester, 1951), pp.15-25.

¹¹⁴ Addison, *No Turning Back*, p.40.

¹¹⁵ J. Newsom, *The Education of Girls* (London, 1948), pp.89-91.

services of a 'first class coach' were available, was reprinted in 1949 unaltered.¹¹⁶ The situation did improve over time. However, the Newsom Report of 1963 still found that less than a third of the schools sampled had playing field provision 'up to the standard prescribed by regulations' and '[m]any lacked an adequate gymnasium'.¹¹⁷ Additionally, the circular movement of female physical training college graduates into public schools appears to have continued after the war. By contrast, there remained a severely limited supply of specialist teachers in both grammar and modern schools. A sample of staffing for PE taken from eight counties and ten boroughs in April 1949 uncovered an average teaching shortfall of 64% and 61.5% in the grammar and modern schools respectively.¹¹⁸

However, the problem went deeper than this. Cricket was not necessarily beyond the budgetary constraints of state secondary schools. Girls at the Hayward School, Bolton, attended joint practices on the pitch they shared with the neighbouring technical and grammar schools. Girls from all three of these schools were invited to join a team which regularly played after school hours. Eventually the headmistress agreed to include cricket in the games curriculum of the school.¹¹⁹ A pitch was not necessarily a requirement, either. One schoolgirl reported on what could be achieved even with scarce resources, if the teaching staff were willing to cooperate:

I was lucky enough to be at a school which is affiliated to the WCA. The headmistress is vice-chairman of the association and takes a keen interest in games. Girls at our school have one cricket lesson a week in their second year. They are taught first of all to field and bowl, using a hard ball...This is then followed by mass coaching in all the basic batting strokes.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Board of Education, 'Syllabus of Physical Training for Schools' (London, 1933; reprinted 1949).

¹¹⁷ J. Newsom, *The Newsom Report* (London, 1963), chapter 17.

¹¹⁸ Memo, 'Supply of specialist teachers in grammar and modern schools', March 1951, ED 158/114, National Archives, Kew.

¹¹⁹ *Women's Cricket*, 1 May 1959.

¹²⁰ J. St John (ed.), *The MCC Book for the Young Cricketer* (London, 1951), p.52.

Her school did not possess its own pitch but was able to introduce cricket to its pupils nonetheless. Minister of Education inspection reports from this period indicate that several other schools followed suit in having cricket as a main school game while not possessing a 'proper cricket square'.¹²¹ Ultimately, as the WCA indicated in its engagement with local schools that did not possess pitches, a lot could be achieved if teaching staff were enthusiastic and prepared to improvise with less than ideal equipment. As one WCA member wrote, 'If a school has space to play rounders, it should be possible to play cricket bat and ball games in the same area. Why not rounders with a cricket bat and ball and a pitched ball!'¹²²

Cricket was in fact becoming much more readily available to boys in state schools, often in the same schools attended by girls, thanks to effective liaison between the MCC and the LEAs. There was some recognition in the years after the war that the way to improve the standard of English Test players was to provide better facilities for boys, particularly those at state schools. Thus in 1948, following the 4-0 Ashes defeat which had been dogged by selection issues, the MCC announced an enquiry into youth cricket. Chaired by H.S. Altham, treasurer and later president of the MCC, the committee's remit was 'to examine the problems concerned with the learning and playing of cricket by the youth of the country between the age of eleven and the time of their entry into National Service', and 'to consider how best to foster their enthusiasm for our national game by providing them with wider opportunities for reaping its benefits'.¹²³ A whole host of bodies were represented, among them the WCA by the England captain Molly Hide. This was the first time women had ever been represented on an MCC committee.

¹²¹ See for example HM Inspectorate Reports, ED 109/9193, ED 109/9238, ED 109/9585 and ED 109/8962, National Archives, Kew.

¹²² *Women's Cricket*, 5 September 1958.

¹²³ Marylebone Cricket Club, *Report of the Cricket Enquiry Committee* (London, 1950), p.1.

In 1950 the committee's recommendations were published. Their main proposal was the establishment of a national organisation, controlled by the MCC, to coordinate coaching around the country, through new Area Youth Cricket Councils.¹²⁴ Two years later, the MCC Youth Cricket Association was formed and by 1957, 34 Area Youth Councils had been established, covering every first-class county and working in collaboration with their LEAs.¹²⁵ This work has been described by Holt and Mason as an 'innovation' in postwar British sport.¹²⁶

Crucially, the remit of the committee was to consider the situation for boys and girls, and in its concluding remarks the report stated:

We understand that this is the first time that a body of so widely representative a nature has been called together by the MCC, and we wish to record our great satisfaction in the fact that at no stage was any real divergence of view apparent, despite the variety and complexity of the issues involved, and the many interests affected. This unanimity appears to us to emphasise the general recognition of the urgency of the problem and of the widespread desire to try and find a solution.¹²⁷

By 1956, 112 out of 325 secondary modern schools in London were coeducational, a situation being replicated across the country in the postwar period.¹²⁸ There was therefore clearly a market for the introduction of cricket into these new mixed schools, where it could be played by both boys and girls in a way that maximised efficient use of resources. Indeed, four coeducational schools were affiliated to the WCA in 1960, all of which encouraged the sport for both male and female pupils. Yet the majority of affiliated state schools were single-sex, with the implication that most

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹²⁵ Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket*, p.278.

¹²⁶ Holt and Mason, *Sport in Britain*, p.21.

¹²⁷ MCC, *Report of the Cricket Enquiry Committee*, p.23.

¹²⁸ *Directory of Modern Secondary Schools 1956* (London, 1956), pp.35-46.

coeducational state schools where boys played cricket had not introduced it for girls.¹²⁹ The problem was that in practice, while cricket for boys was perceived as important, there was still only a limited recognition that girls might also want to play while at state schools. By 1955 only three counties had invited female representatives to take part in their Youth Advisory Committees.¹³⁰ Despite WCA efforts, two of these committees had actively refused to appoint women, and the others do not appear to have responded to WCA requests.¹³¹ Cricket for boys was therefore able to expand, while it remained difficult for girls to participate.

In fact, given the lack of guidance from central government about precisely which sports should be encouraged at secondary level in the years after 1945, the attitudes of individual teachers and LEAs were often crucial in determining what, in practice, occurred during PE lessons. Many England players reported in interviews that their school PE teachers had played a vital part in encouraging them to join clubs and thus continue with the sport upon leaving school. Mollie Buckland, for example, attended Wakefield Girls' High School, where England player Margaret Lockwood was a teacher, and recalled:

she got me into a club, up in Yorkshire, in Leeds, and she took me everywhere in her car... One day [she] said to me...'what are you doing on Saturday?' And I said 'well I'm not doing anything'. And she said 'right, you're going to play cricket...I'll pick you up at such-and-such'. And we went there, and there were a load of children, schoolgirls, and we played cricket, and it was lovely, I really enjoyed it! And then...I discovered that I'd made the cricket team for Yorkshire. Yorkshire Girls! And I thought, 'well I didn't know I was going for this!' And so, that's how it really all started.¹³²

Unfortunately this attitude does not seem to have been common. Girls regularly wrote to *Women's*

¹²⁹ By 1960 at least 36 of the state schools affiliated to the WCA were single-sex. See WCA Yearbook, 1960, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹³⁰ These were Yorkshire, Sussex and Surrey. See *Women's Cricket*, 4 May 1951.

¹³¹ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 27 October 1950 and 9 December 1950, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹³² Interview with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014.

Cricket magazine complaining that, for example, 'Our school does not play cricket in the summer because our headmistress considers the game unladylike'.¹³³ In 1958 an article was published in the *Illustrated Leicester Chronicle*, printing the responses of several headmistresses to the question, 'why are you reluctant to take up cricket in your schools?' Miss Thomas, the head of Gateways Girls School, responded: 'Lack of accommodation is a big factor. We've no room for girls to play cricket. Also tennis is more useful socially and more the kind of accomplishment we like for our girls.'¹³⁴ One senses that the latter reason was the more important. This prevailing negative attitude is reinforced by a report in *Women's Cricket* that some female teachers considered it unwise to mention their background in cricket when applying for teaching jobs: 'it isn't safe', one was quoted as saying in 1953. 'Education authorities don't like it.'¹³⁵ Most LEAs appear to have been reluctant to endorse cricket for girls in the schools in their localities.

Even those teachers who had permitted girls at their schools to play were not necessarily espousing progressive attitudes. Holland Park School, which was established in 1958 as one of the first comprehensive schools in England, was affiliated to the WCA by 1960. Holland Park's headmaster was asked why girls' cricket was not compulsory at his school but rather optional and played outside of school hours. His response is worth reproducing in full:

Tradition decrees that almost as soon as they can walk boys start playing cricket...For girls there is no such compulsion... They play in smaller groups than do boys and it is seldom that they are found playing team games...When they take part in organised games at school the boys readily and naturally take to organised cricket...For girls...organised games is often an introduction to team-playing...A few of them may take to cricket...but they will be a small minority, a minority which will dwindle when faced with the hazards of the hard ball – and it is no good appealing to a girl's manliness if she declines to accept a chance of catching a full-blooded drive. Girls will not enjoy a game in which they have neither aptitude nor interest.¹³⁶

¹³³ *Women's Cricket*, 27 April 1956.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 September 1958.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 24 April 1953.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 August 1960.

Even the Ministry of Education's PE Inspectorate agreed on the necessity of secondary-level girls following a separate programme to boys. The minutes of their meetings consistently support this point; typically, it was noted in 1953 that there was a difference between '[a] girl's subjective and aesthetic approach' to PE and 'a boy's need for objective achievement and his irritation with refinement and detail'.¹³⁷ This helped to justify the exclusion of cricket – as well as other sports, like football – from the schoolgirl's remit.

Thus, in the wake of the 1944 Education Act, PE continued to develop in a way which reinforced and reproduced traditional gender roles. This was a key moment if schoolgirl cricket was ever to become entrenched within the English education system; the fact that it did not do so, in spite of the WCA's efforts, was a serious handicap to the advancement of women's cricket at school level.¹³⁸

WCA as feminist? Female cricketers and postwar domesticity

Until recently, the prevailing historical orthodoxy was that the cosy domestic ideal of the 1950s represented a backlash against wartime upheaval, and thus precluded the development of an effective women's movement in the immediate postwar period.¹³⁹ However, the work of historians like Beaumont has challenged this interpretation. By showing that women's organisations like the Women's Institute, Mothers' Union and National Union of Townswomen's Guilds were encouraging women to participate in local and national affairs throughout the 1950s, and were acceptant of the

¹³⁷ PE Inspectorate meeting, 17 and 18 December 1953, ED 158/115, National Archives, Kew.

¹³⁸ For a fuller version of this argument, see R. Nicholson, 'Who killed schoolgirl cricket? The Women's Cricket Association and the death of an opportunity, 1945-1960', *History of Education* 41:6 (2012).

¹³⁹ See for example M. Pugh, 'Domesticity and the decline of feminism, 1930-1950', in H. Smith, *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 1990), p.149; and S. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (London, 1999), p.145.

reality of the working housewife and mother, Beaumont demonstrates that 'the years between so-called "first wave" and "second wave" feminism should no longer be called a "silent period" ...the history of the twentieth-century women's movement is one of continuity'.¹⁴⁰ The challenge is to locate the WCA within this broader history of the women's movement. What evidence, if any, is there that a body so reliant on male support was espousing 'feminist' values in this period?

Jack Williams' assertion that before 1939 the general practice was for women to end their cricketing days upon marriage has recently been questioned by Skillen, who indicates that many married women were continuing with sport after marriage in the interwar period.¹⁴¹ Evidence from the postwar decade supports Skillen's conclusion. In 1952 at the England Women v The Rest match at Southampton, the secretary of Hampshire CCC wrote that:

Women's cricket is now so firmly established that one supposes there must already be husbands, or 'cricket widowers,' wondering when next their socks are to be darned – oh! glorious thought!¹⁴²

While none of the women playing for England in these years actually represented their country while married, Aline Brown, one of the 1948/9 tourists to Australasia, married three months after her return, and chose to spend some of her honeymoon playing cricket at the WCA's Cricket Week at Colwall.¹⁴³

Reports in *Women's Cricket* of local club activities highlight a tendency for women at lower levels to continue with cricket both upon marriage and after having children. One article on Hampshire

¹⁴⁰ C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens. Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester, 2013), p.217.

¹⁴¹ Williams, *Cricket and England*, pp.95-6; Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity*, p.202.

¹⁴² *Women's Cricket*, 25 July 1952.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30 July 1949.

and Dorset WCA read:

SALLY SMITH, who is married with two children, comes to the team as a medium fast off-break bowler...She is accompanied to all matches by her husband in a vehicle in which almost a whole cricket team and gear can be stowed...She is a great enthusiast and never says 'no' to a game of cricket.¹⁴⁴

Birmingham WCC consisted of a number of players with small children and the Secretary, herself married with three children including one aged just six months, wrote: 'I think we shall soon have to start a creche to enable cricketing mothers to play in matches!'¹⁴⁵ Sympathy was very much with the women on this issue and older players advised: 'If you must marry, be sure to choose an understanding cricketing husband'.¹⁴⁶ In 1951 a poem appeared in *Women's Cricket*, entitled 'The Married Woman's Apology to her Husband':

Tell me not John, I am so strange
That from the scullery
Of our good home and quiet life
To bowl and bat I fly.
True, a new venture now I chase,
The Aussies must be beat;
And with a firmer grip I brace
My bat, my nerves, my feet.
Yet this desertion from my hearth
Which you, I know, deplore -
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not cricket more.¹⁴⁷

Other contemporary observers were recognising that traditional gender relationships could be transformed through sport. In 1950 Noel Whitcombe noted in the *Daily Mirror* the huge numbers of women attending spectator sports like cricket with their husbands since the war. 'One woman to

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 8 July 1955.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., June 1946.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 3 September 1954.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 18 May 1951.

whom I was talking probably gave the reason for many', he wrote. "My husband is a sports fan," she said, "and I got fed up with being left at home so much. So I started going with him. I thought I'd be bored, but that it would be better than being left alone. Then I found that I became a sports fan myself. My husband gets so furious now that I can argue technical points with him on an equal basis."¹⁴⁸

Langhamer has argued of this period that 'women's own individual leisure preferences were subsumed into those of the family, with "leisure" becoming a vehicle for service to husband and children'.¹⁴⁹ But the above evidence suggests that in fact, female cricketers had absorbed some of the ideals of companionate marriage which were being promoted by contemporaries, and that this ideal was not, as Summerfield and Finch suggest, one in which the benefits were all on the husband's side.¹⁵⁰ Female cricketers viewed themselves as having a fundamental right to exercise their own leisure preferences, and did so.

This is particularly important given that Beaumont argues that women's organisations in this period remained rooted in the home, family and motherhood and thus still stressed the primacy of motherhood over outside interests.¹⁵¹ The WCA, on the other hand, had always focused on the public role of women. Playing cricket in full view of the world was a powerful statement. So was the recognition by the Executive Committee in 1950, when discussing the role of men within the Association, that 'of the fundamental principles on which the WCA was founded, one of the most

¹⁴⁸ *Daily Mirror*, 28 June 1950.

¹⁴⁹ Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p.144.

¹⁵⁰ See J. Finch and P. Summerfield, 'Social reconstruction and the emergence of companionate marriage, 1945-59', in D. Clark (ed.), *Marriage, domestic life and social change* (London, 1991), p.31.

¹⁵¹ C. Beaumont, 'The Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship, 1918-1950s', in Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth Century Britain*, pp.275-6.

important...was that women should run every aspect of it'.¹⁵² Even under pressure due to shortages of trained personnel, women umpires, coaches and selectors were always utilised. This organisational independence was key. 'What enjoyment we get from the incidentals to cricket!' wrote Rheinberg in a 1954 *Women's Cricket* editorial. 'The train journeys...the picnics en route, the fun of "getting there early" and taking it easy...the relaxation and the thrashing out of the whys and wherefores, and the post mortem discussions on the day's play.'¹⁵³ Cricket was not just cricket. It was a way of feeling valued as a woman in a male-dominated society.

Intriguingly, there is also evidence that women's cricket was an early hub of lesbian sociability in a society where there would have been few opportunities for gay women to encounter each other openly. This is illustrated in an extract from my interview with Mollie Buckland:

MB: I think a lot of them never intended to marry anyway...

RN: Perhaps some of them were gay, as well?

MB: There were many of those, yeah, a lot of gay friends. Yeah. Never thought of, you know, anything different at all, no. There were, that's right. Yes, I'm sure there were. But it didn't make any difference to us. If they could play cricket that would do...There were a lot. It never occurred to us that that was anything strange. I think because I, in all women's games, the hockey, whatever it is, there are always lesbian women. There will be. And they're still people! And yeah, good friends...I think [my mother] was very relieved when I got married!¹⁵⁴

Both Griffin and Cahn have described how, in postwar America, sport provided 'a place where lesbians and other women who did not fit the feminine and heterosexual ideal could find other women who shared their experience and interests. In sport, many lesbians found community and

¹⁵² WCA Executive Committee minutes, 19 May 1950, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹⁵³ *Women's Cricket*, 25 June 1954.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014.

intimacy.¹⁵⁵ This may well have been the case within Britain too.

Historians of women's sport have previously argued that sport was 'a cultural space where male social power was rarely challenged'; Jack Williams specifically sees the co-operation which took place between male and female cricketers as an example of social harmony.¹⁵⁶ On the surface, the following quote from Mollie Buckland might be seen to support these arguments:

men pooh-pooed the women's game, on the whole...[But] we never were against the men. They didn't always take us seriously...but they gave us their facilities very often.¹⁵⁷

Yet Mollie's acknowledgement that cricket was seen by society as a 'man's game', and that many men 'pooh-pooed' female involvement, shows that she and her team mates were fully aware that their sport was not uncontroversial in some circles. This continued to be true well into the postwar period; one anonymous letter sent to the President of the WCA in 1948 declared:

Women should occupy themselves in doing things for which they are fitted and avoid trying to act and dress as men do...
It is a most ridiculous thing for females to waste their time in going Overseas to play at Cricket.
Yours faithfully,
One who likes a woman to be a woman.¹⁵⁸

This letter was published by Pollard in *Women's Cricket* in 1948, without comment. Yet the implication is clear: female cricketers were fully aware that their choice of leisure activity was subject to criticism, yet they remained determined to participate nonetheless. Such a determination

¹⁵⁵ P. Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets. Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport* (Champaign, 1998), pp.36-40. S. Cahn, 'From the "Muscle Moll" to the "Butch" Ballplayer. Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in US Women's Sport', *Feminist Studies* 19:2 (1993), pp.356-7.

¹⁵⁶ Huggins and Williams, *Sport and the English 1918-1939*, p.5. On women's cricket, see Williams, *Cricket and England*, p.185.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014.

¹⁵⁸ *Women's Cricket*, 18 September 1948.

has strong feminist undertones.

In this respect the WCA can and should be viewed as a 'feminist' organisation, as well as part of the thriving women's movement of 1950s Britain. Furthermore, the values espoused by the WCA presented here regarding freedom of choice in leisure and the placing of female leisure above that of their husbands and families suggest significant continuity with their pre-war activities, and adds further weight to the argument that the 1950s was a decade when feminist ideas, far from being fallow, were flourishing.

Conclusion

The years between 1945 and 1955 represent something of a paradox in the world of women's cricket. It was a decade of unprecedented growth, with more women than ever before playing cricket, including married women and those with young children. Institutional cooperation with male cricketing bodies continued to improve, ensuring women's continued access to invaluable resources. And cricket was a sport where 'feminist' values were very apparent: an arena of sociability within which it was acceptable for women to place their own leisure lives above those of their husbands and families, even amidst a societal rhetoric which suggested that domesticity should be their main focus.

Yet there was still significant opposition to female participation in cricket, as press coverage from these years indicates. Additionally, in a time of austerity, it was increasingly difficult for a sport which had always been overwhelmingly middle-class to reach out beyond this base to working-class women. The ethos espoused by the WCA continued to be elitist and amateur, with the

working-class leagues of the 1930s exchanging their independence for affiliation to the central governing body. The middle-class nature of the sport was exacerbated by the fact that efforts to spread cricket to the new secondary modern schools had largely been unsuccessful. None of this boded well for the next two decades.

Chapter 2

1956 to 1970: 'Modern life militates against women's cricket'

Introduction

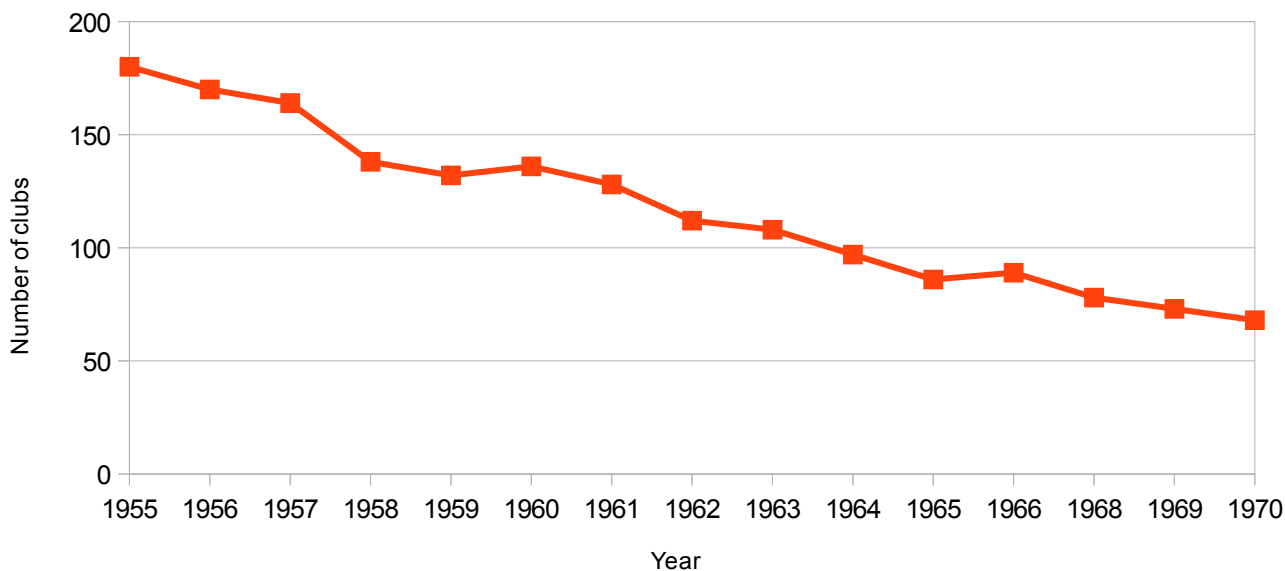
In March 1966, an article in *The Guardian* by a 'special correspondent' considered the situation for contemporary women's cricket. After reminding the reader of the sport's long history, the author concluded:

there is at present some decline in the women's game. Conspicuous players, such as Molly Hide and Betty Wilson, have left the scene, and the number of affiliated girls' schools has diminished. Problems of finances and good, informed publicity confront the organisers. Modern life militates against women's cricket.¹

This was a grim picture indeed, but it well encapsulated the problems facing the sport during Britain's 'swinging sixties'. From 1955, the recovery which the WCA had experienced in the postwar years came to an abrupt end. This can be seen in their affiliation figures:

¹ *The Guardian*, 30 March 1966.

Figure 2: WCA affiliation figures, 1955-70²



'We are better known today and the standard of cricket is generally higher', wrote the editor of *Women's Cricket* in July 1964; this, though, was no consolation for the decline in crowd size and public interest which the sport had recently suffered. By 1970, affiliation figures were down to 68 clubs and 55 schools, a drop of 112 clubs and 42 schools from the heights of 1955. 'The only consolation I can offer,' she concluded, 'is that it is a widespread disease suffered equally by other sports associations'.³

Was the decline, in fact, simply that: a disease common to all sports? Other historians of British sport have certainly noted a similar trend in men's cricket in these years. In 1950 two million people attended county cricket matches; by 1966 this had fallen to just over 500,000, and membership of county cricket clubs had also dropped to a new low. For cricket fans, according to *Wisden*, this was

² These figures are taken from the WCA's annual Yearbooks, 1955-70, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

³ *Women's Cricket*, 31 July 1964.

'positively frightening'.⁴ 'Traditional' women's sports were also in decline, judging by affiliation figures, in particular for hockey and tennis.⁵ This clearly was linked to the fact that during the 1960s there was a move towards home-centred leisure activities, aided by the rise of television ownership.⁶ Yet Holt and Mason note that the growing diversity of available sports was also partly to blame for the decline in more 'traditional' sports; many of those who gave up cricket probably took up golf in these years, just one of the sports which actually experienced growth during the 1960s.⁷

There is, too, a broader historiography within which these changing trends in sports participation must be located: a literature which focuses on the period of affluence enjoyed by many Britons during the 1950s and 1960s, which brought with it many changes in everyday British life, including in the arena of leisure. Fundamentally, the historical understanding of this era is as a time when Britons had 'never had it so good'; and consequently also a time of cultural revolution, when the onset of a more democratic, classless British culture occurred.⁸ The leisure lives of ordinary women, it is argued, were transformed in these years, and for two reasons: firstly, full employment and economic growth meant more money available for more diverse leisure habits, as well as a booming consumer culture which encouraged the growth of the leisure industry. Secondly, the increasing 'classlessness' of culture, which is seen by some to have included sport, encouraged more people to take up a wider variety of sporting activities. Addison, for example, identifies one of

⁴ *Wisden*, 1967.

⁵ See for example the CCPR survey, 'Recreation in local authority parks', 1967, ED 169/128, National Archives, Kew. On the decline of tennis, see J. Kay, 'Grass Roots: The Development of Tennis in Britain, 1918-1978', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 29:18 (2012), p.2536.

⁶ See M. Abrams, 'The Home-centred Society', *The Listener*, 26 November 1959, pp.914-15.

⁷ R. Holt and T. Mason, *Sport in Britain, 1945-2000* (Oxford, 2000), p.4. See also R. Holt, 'Sport and Recreation', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds.), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2005), p.112.

⁸ Arthur Marwick is perhaps the central proponent of this view: see A. Marwick, *The Sixties: cultural revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c.1958-c.1974* (Oxford, 1998) and *British society since 1945* (1982; reprinted London, 2003).

twelve spheres in which the effects of improved living standards could be seen as the '[i]ncreased sporting opportunities and greater democratisation over a number of sports, such as cricket, football, tennis, golf, sailing, fishing'.⁹ This alludes to the fact that sports like cricket which had previously been divided along rigid class lines were becoming much more open; the amateur-professional divide in cricket for example, previously so strongly enforced, was abolished in 1962. The so-called 'embourgeoisement' of the working classes caused by full employment in the 1950s is also seen to have blurred the lines between different social classes.¹⁰

However, such grand claims have generally been based on gross generalisations; Addison provides no figures to support his claim. Similarly, it is equally unhelpful for a revisionist historian like Sandbrook to claim that 'many ordinary people...held on to their traditional habits and hobbies' without analysing why that might have been the case.¹¹ What is really needed is a case study of particular areas of cultural life in order to dig down deeper into such wide-reaching claims and assess their veracity. This chapter uses women's cricket as such a case study. It is an attempt to analyse the extent to which a 'cultural revolution' did in fact take place during this period of affluence. Was this really at the heart of the decline of traditional sports like cricket? It seeks to bring together two currently disparate literatures: one which focuses on sport in Britain in the 1960s, and one which explores the impact of affluence on British society.

Two key themes are thus examined in the following pages. The first is the question of how far affluence was indeed a cross-class phenomenon, and the extent to which it eliminated the class-based nature of some cultural activities, namely women's cricket. Was there an influx of working-

⁹ P. Addison, *No Turning Back. The Peacetime Revolutions of Postwar Britain* (Oxford, 2010), p.173.

¹⁰ S. Brooke, 'Class and gender', in F. Carnevali and J. Strange (eds.), *20th Century Britain: Economic, Cultural and Social Change* (1994; reprinted Harlow, 2007), p.46.

¹¹ D. Sandbrook, *Never had it so good: a history of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London, 2006), p.146.

class women into cricket in these years? Secondly, the *Guardian* quotation relating the decline of women's cricket to the onset of 'modern life' is explored. Historians such as Skillen have argued that female participation in sport in the interwar period was one method by which women could articulate their new modernity: 'Sport could provide an opportunity to train and tone the body, to improve posture and, it was believed, even to enhance beauty...some of the essential attributes of the young modern woman'.¹² Yet if *The Guardian* is to be believed, the sportswoman was no longer seen as a symbol of modernity by this period. Can this help to explain the decline in women's cricket during Britain's 'swinging sixties'? Was there now a disconnect between the WCA leadership and a younger generation who were embracing coffee-bars and juke-boxes? This chapter seeks to explore these questions.

'As far as sport is concerned, we are moving steadily along the road to a classless society'

The rhetoric which was produced during the 1960s provides ample justification for the view that British culture at this time was becoming 'classless'; the January 1966 edition of the Central Council of Physical Recreation journal, for example, argued that: 'in general, as far as sport is concerned, we are moving steadily along the road to a classless society. Who cares any longer whether a champion is a duke or a dustman?'¹³ It might be thought, then, that the potential target market for women's cricket was increasing during this period; yet as we have seen from the affiliation figures, it was clearly in decline. If the historical understanding of affluence is of increasing access to sports like women's cricket, why was this the case? Does the data that we have from the 1960s on those who were playing top-level women's cricket support the idea that it was broadening its social reach?

¹² F. Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity in Interwar Britain* (Oxford, 2013), p.184. See also I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body. Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain, 1880-1939* (Oxford, 2010), pp.237-40.

¹³ *Sport and Recreation*, January 1966.

Once again, it is helpful to analyse the backgrounds and occupations of those women who represented England in this period. Out of the 33 women who made their international debut between 1956 and 1970, some data is available for 30 of them, and this shows significant continuity with the findings presented in chapter 1. Nine attended grammar schools, five attended independent schools, and just one (Margaret Rutherford) had attended a secondary modern school. An overwhelming number, 22 of the 30, had been through some form of further education, and 21 were teachers (16 taught PE), generally in suburban grammar or independent schools, with the others working as secretaries (three), scientific researchers (two), with one clerk, one student, one WAAF and one housewife making up the numbers.¹⁴ Thus it continued to be the case that female cricketers at the top levels of the game were generally from comfortably middle-class families, enjoyed the opportunity for a grammar or private school education, often attended training college or university, and themselves settled in middle-class professions.

There are two exceptions to this general rule. Enid Bakewell, whose father was a miner, did not play cricket at school but fell into the sport by accident, as she relayed during our interview:

And so I went to grammar school and the PE teacher actually knew somebody who belonged to a women's club...she sort of ran the hockey in Notts, and she was a member of this Nottingham Women's Cricket Club...she introduced me to the Nottingham [Club], and so I went down to nets there, and played with her.¹⁵

Enid was lucky; attending a grammar school led onto a place at Dartford College of Physical Education, and to her becoming a PE teacher, which enabled her to continue with cricket. Margaret Rutherford, too, was not born into privilege: she first played cricket with 'bin lids' in the streets of Seghill village, attended the local secondary modern school, and became a shop assistant before

¹⁴ For a full list, see Appendix 1.

¹⁵ Interview with Enid Bakewell, 17 October 2013.

marrying a cricketer who encouraged her to pursue the sport.¹⁶ These two cases are interesting, yet they do appear to be exceptions to the general rule that women's cricket remained overwhelmingly middle-class at the top levels until at least 1970.

It is much harder to analyse more broadly whether the class make-up of women's cricket at grassroots level was changing, but given the small pool of players who remained involved (always less than 10,000)¹⁷ it would be difficult to claim that top-level players were completely unrepresentative. Additional evidence comes from the fact that the affiliated clubs tended to be based in the more affluent areas of Britain: by 1970, for example, there were 22 clubs based in the South region (including eight in Surrey and six in Middlesex), and only seven clubs in the entire West region (which included Cornwall, Devon, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Dorset, Somerset and Wales).¹⁸ Yorkshire (with nine clubs) and Lancashire (six clubs) remained strong counties, probably due to their strong historical ties to men's cricket, but broadly speaking women's cricket was always at its strongest in the Home Counties. Indeed, numerous interviewees highlighted the existence of a visible North-South divide in the WCA at this time, which is supported by the fact that the WCA Executive Committee was very much Southern-dominated, and almost all meetings took place in London.¹⁹

Even during a period of affluence, financial difficulties do seem to have dictated whether women's cricket clubs could survive throughout this period. In 1959, for example, it was reported in *Women's Cricket* magazine that Cornwall WCA had disbanded 'due to financial reasons and lack of support';

¹⁶ *Women's Cricket*, 15 July 1960.

¹⁷ By 1958, the WCA estimated that there were 3000 women playing cricket in Britain (down from their estimate of 9000 in 1953). International Women's Cricket Council minutes, 20 February 1958, private collection, Surrey.

¹⁸ WCA Yearbook, 1970, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹⁹ For example, Enid Bakewell suggested in our interview that 'if you weren't in the Home Counties, you weren't going to be chosen for England'. Interview with Enid Bakewell, 17 October 2013.

this was typical. The industrial-based clubs, which had numbered ten in 1950, were also struggling to survive: by 1970 only two were affiliated to the WCA. Phyl Paton, herself a member of an industrial club, wrote to *Women's Cricket* in 1967 concerned about precisely this. 'In the last ten years these clubs have reduced in number...do we do enough to encourage these firms to form clubs to play cricket? We seem to leave them to stagnate and no one seems to worry or to be concerned about this.'²⁰ This kind of apathy did not help matters for the WCA, and it also suggests that firms were ceasing to offer women's cricket due to lack of interest from both the WCA and, presumably, their employees. Meanwhile more middle-class clubs like Dukesmead, with strong links to the civil service from its inception in 1927 and a membership almost entirely made up of civil service employees, thrived due to financial support from the Civil Service Sports Council and the 'very favourable conditions of both leave and pay' granted to its members who were selected to tour Australasia in 1957/8.²¹ Overall, only 28 women's cricket clubs managed to survive continuously from 1950 until 1970; six of these were training colleges, and 13 others were based in the Home Counties.

Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s the WCA continued to recognise that the expense involved in playing women's cricket would be a real issue for many women. In a 1956 editorial of *Women's Cricket*, Netta Rheinberg wrote that one player had written to her complaining that she had spent £56 on her games last season. 'Here is a real problem,' she concluded, 'which is not easy to solve.'²² Expenses included travel to matches (which required at least some players to possess their own cars) and the payment of club fees, as well as the purchase of uniform, which as we saw in the first chapter could be prohibitively expensive for some. Yet at times there was also an apparent lack of

²⁰ *Women's Cricket*, 26 May 1967.

²¹ Dukesmead WCC minutes, 1956-68, private collection, Middlesex.

²² *Women's Cricket*, 22 June 1956.

appreciation of the fact that for some women who wanted to play cricket, affiliation fees were a not insignificant burden on their finances. At the 1965 AGM for example, during a debate on the raising of WCA affiliation fees, former WCA Chairman Miss Stevenson stated that 'clubs who really wanted to play cricket would contrive to find the extra money'.²³ Many, though, simply could not, as the existence of increasing numbers of unaffiliated clubs suggests. Worryingly, the West reported in 1958 that 'Clubs which had agreed to re-affiliate were deterred by the increase in affiliation fee, and two newly-formed clubs decided against affiliation for the same reason'.²⁴ For large clubs with members who aspired to play for England, the advantages of affiliation were obvious. But for small clubs, it was different. At the 1958 AGM, one member of the Camborne Ladies Cricket Club, Mrs Flann:

spoke of the difficulties encountered by small remote clubs who appeared to get little or no attention from HQ, but who were required to pay an affiliation fee of 35/ just for the privilege of belonging.²⁵

By 1960, Camborne had disaffiliated, though it is unclear whether it continued to function outside of the WCA's remit. Affluence, then, was a complex phenomenon which, as the case of women's cricket demonstrates, did not necessarily open up opportunities for ordinary women to participate in new leisure activities.

This included the younger generation. While it has been generally assumed that the 1960s youth counter-culture was founded on a new generation who had money in their pockets to spend on leisure activities of their choosing, current historiography has not tended to differentiate enough between the ability of female youth and male youth to make free choices about how they spent their

²³ WCA AGM minutes, 1965, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

²⁴ WCA Yearbook, 1958, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

²⁵ WCA AGM minutes, 1958, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

income.²⁶ Mark Abrams, for example, found that the weekly spending of the average teenage boy in 1959 was nearly one third more than that of the average teenage girl.²⁷ Additionally, it may well be that gendered expectations about teenage girls' use of their free time precluded cricket as an activity for some: Langhamer cites housework and other 'pressing family needs', as well as opposition from parents towards girls' involvement, as two factors preventing working-class girls from participating in sports like football and cricket.²⁸ At least some of the women I interviewed were only children, who acknowledged that had their father had sons to introduce cricket to, they might never have learned the sport themselves.²⁹ This is in keeping with Angela McRobbie's work; she found in her observations of a council youth club in the 1970s that: 'the girls were reluctant to take part in any sport. They preferred to sit about watching the boys play.'³⁰

For those who had aspirations to represent their country, the financial problems could be even more acute. The touring party to South Africa in 1960/61 did not include several players who would have qualified on merit but were unable to travel. *The Times* reported in 1968 that two of the players selected for the 1968/9 tour had been forced to give notice from their jobs in order to travel; another 'took a night-shift job on the assembly line of an instruments factory in Middlesex, in order to increase her tour savings'.³¹ Audrey Disbury recalled in our interview that despite getting paid leave from her job in the Women's Royal Naval Service in order to tour Australasia in 1957/8, she spent months beforehand working several other jobs:

²⁶ Angela McRobbie has argued that 'the role of girls in youth cultural groupings' has been widely ignored in the literature. See A. McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture. From 'Jackie' to 'Just Seventeen'* (Hampshire, 1991), p.1.

²⁷ M. Abrams, *Teenage Consumer Spending in 1959* (London, 1961), p.7.

²⁸ C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester, 2000), pp.82-95.

²⁹ See for example interviews with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014, and Sheila Plant, 3 June 2014.

³⁰ McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture*, p.39.

³¹ *The Times*, 3 December 1968.

When I finished at half past four, I was allowed...to stay out til midnight, and I worked in pubs, restaurants, you name it...I did it, selling ice creams, whatever I could get hold of.³²

For many players, parental support was key: Rachael Heyhoe-Flint reported in her autobiography that when she was selected for the 1960/61 tour, her parents 'sacrificed the new car they had been planning to buy in order to ensure my passage to South Africa', and Chris Watmough recalled in our interview that her mother and father had lent her £400 to help cover the air fare to Australia in 1968/9.³³ This merely perpetuated a system whereby only those whose families were relatively affluent, or who were able and willing to make some financial sacrifices in order to support their daughters, could play cricket to any high level.

A picture emerges, then, of a sport which continued to be overwhelmingly middle-class even during the most affluent period of postwar British history. This is clearly significant in the context of the literature on 'affluence', suggesting as it does that at least some leisure activities remained segregated along class lines in these years. This provides further impetus to recent revisionist arguments which argue that claims that a 'social revolution' took place during the 1960s, which eliminated class difference, are exaggerated and overstated.³⁴ It also goes a long way to explaining why the growth of the WCA stagnated in these years.

'I am tired of reading what "thou shalt or shalt not do"'

The existence of so much unaffiliated cricket, however, also points us to another issue which

³² Interview with Audrey Disbury, 12 June 2014.

³³ R. Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe! The autobiography of Rachael Heyhoe-Flint* (London, 1978), p.64. Interview with Chris Watmough, 3 June 2014.

³⁴ See for example the preface to Sandbrook's *Never had it so good*.

remains key to an understanding of the stagnation of women's cricket during the 1960s: the increasing disconnect felt between the WCA leadership and the grassroots in these years. While it is impossible to know how many clubs were operating outside of WCA auspices at various points, mention of them certainly increased in these years. In May 1957 Netta Rheinberg interviewed the secretary of an unaffiliated 'rural club' who told her that: 'No member...bothers about the parent body'.³⁵

Arthur Marwick argues that one key aspect of what he describes as Britain's 'cultural revolution' in the 1960s was the growing tension between the older generation and the proponents of the new youth culture. This tension certainly seems to have been characteristic of the WCA at this time. Enid Bakewell highlighted the generational divide which was emerging within the WCA between older players and administrators and the new generation of England players during our interview:

...Molly Hide [former England captain]...was like a god, she was like royalty. She had a farm down at Haslemere and if you were invited down there it was like being invited to Buckingham Palace...She was the [1959 Holland tour] manager....we were really in awe of the people who were managing us. So there was sort of a divide, rather than feeling that we were together.³⁶

This disconnect between the leadership and the grassroots manifested itself in various ways. Firstly, even clubs who remained affiliated to the WCA often had very little interaction with or connection to the central governing body. On average, only 25 affiliated clubs, colleges and schools sent representatives to AGMs; even clubs like Redoubtables, located in Surrey and heavily engaged with the WCA, reported in 1957 that 'many members of our Committee were not au fait with the WCA policy, or at all happy or clear regarding the constitution of various Committees functioning on behalf of women's cricket'.³⁷ The WCA's two-day annual match at the Oval, supposedly the

³⁵ *Women's Cricket*, 24 May 1957.

³⁶ Interview with Enid Bakewell, 17 October 2013.

³⁷ Redoubtables AGM minutes, 6 October 1957, private collection, Surrey.

highlight of the women's cricketing calendar, was not staged in 1967 due to 'a continual loss and poor attendance' from members. Netta Rheinberg, the editor of *Women's Cricket*, continually bemoaned the ever-decreasing support granted to the magazine, reporting in 1958 that 'Only 40 of our affiliated clubs are official subscribers'.³⁸

Some counties aired their disagreements with the WCA very publicly. In autumn 1954 a club called the Vagabonds, based in Hertfordshire, wrote to the WCA asking whether their club could affiliate to the WCA directly, instead of through the county association as was the usual process, 'because of what they regarded as the inefficient organisation of the County Association, coupled with its apparent disregard both of the spirit and letter of its Constitution'.³⁹ It is unclear exactly what the grievance was; but the WCA's attempt to resolve the dispute, which involved chairing a meeting of the County and appointing their own replacement administration, did not sit well with the Hertfordshire committee, who argued that the WCA's actions were 'unconstitutional'. In July 1955, the WCA Executive received a letter from a solicitor acting on behalf of two of the county officials:

threatening an application to the High Court for an injunction should any attempt be made to put the resolution into force, and further suggesting that the WCA or your Executive were liable to an action for defamation.⁴⁰

Huge amounts of paperwork followed; and on the advice of their own solicitor, and subject to heated debate, at the 1955 AGM the Executive introduced a new ruling:

In the event of any affiliated body or member of the Association...being guilty of any infringement of any Rule of the Association, or of any Law of the Game, or of conduct which, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, is prejudicial to the interests of the Association or of the Game, the Executive Committee shall have power...to suspend such affiliated body or

³⁸ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 15 August 1958 and 27 July 1962, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

³⁹ 'A note on relations between the Association and the Hertfordshire WCA', 1955, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

member...and to call for [their] resignation.⁴¹

The threat of legal action was thus dispelled, but relations continued to be tense.

Another area of tension stemmed from the fact that many women's cricket clubs had never subscribed to the WCA's diktats regarding issues such as Sunday cricket and competitive cricket. Area reports in WCA yearbooks indicate that Sunday matches, both club and unofficial county fixtures, were a fairly regular occurrence; one good reason for this was that it was far more difficult to secure good pitches on Saturdays, as this tended to be when men's league and club matches were played. When the Executive Committee discussed the issue in January 1957 the existence of Sunday cricket was acknowledged, but it was felt that 'Sunday matches should not be made official...some players did not wish to play on Sundays on religious grounds, and...it was unfair to penalise them for not doing so'.⁴² But, as the WCA Chairman argued the following year, if county matches were being played on Sundays anyway, under 'alternative' unofficial titles, this merely rendered the WCA Executive's attitude 'hypocritical'.⁴³ In any case, as the 1960s progressed there was increasing external pressure on the WCA to alter its stance in a society which increasingly rejected Sabbatarian attitudes: the John Player Sunday League was introduced in men's cricket in 1969 and was 'an "instant" success'.⁴⁴ Within the women's game, the WCA Executive finally capitulated at the 1967 AGM, recognising that 'the Association must fall into line with the present day trend towards more Sunday sport', and introducing a rule change which permitted official matches on Sundays, as long as such matches commenced after 2pm.⁴⁵

⁴¹ WCA AGM minutes, 1955, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁴² WCA Executive Committee minutes, 11 January 1957, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁴³ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 18 July 1958, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁴⁴ *Wisden*, 1970.

⁴⁵ WCA AGM minutes, 1967, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

Competitive cricket was another bugbear of the WCA, as we saw in the previous chapter; but though league cricket was officially banned throughout the 1950s, several leagues were clearly still functioning at local level. The Preston and District Women's Cricket League, for example, had reformed in 1955, and a report in *Women's Cricket* in 1967 from Mrs Francis McBrien of Lancashire stated that participating teams included Ensign Lamps, Preston Steam Laundry, Penwortham Mills, Fulwood and Broughton and Preston Ladies. She added that its success had been such that the WCA was forced to partially recognise the league:

the WCA adopted a more hidebound attitude and did not recognise the League's existence. Presumably, it did not approve of competitive cricket...Nevertheless, a few years later having seen the promotion of cricket in such a small area sensibly admitted the league to its ranks and the league since becoming 'respectable' has provided many notable County players.⁴⁶

Other areas followed suit: the Midlands, for example, instituted a league in 1969, which was very successful and continued for several years. This was a clear example of the grassroots rejecting the leadership of the WCA, thus paving the way for change. There was also resistance at grassroots level to diktats relating to the WCA's strict uniform regulations. Rheinberg actively complained about club players turning up to practice and matches 'in the briefest of flimsy tennis shorts... However slim, young and beautiful she may be, this is not cricket'.⁴⁷ Even amongst England players, there was resistance. Heyhoe-Flint recalled that herself and other young players altered their uniform skirts on the 1968/9 tour of Australasia in order to make the length more 'mini': 'They could have made two skirts out of the length of material that some of us wore with one of them!'⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Women's Cricket*, 26 May 1967.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 June 1961.

⁴⁸ Interview with Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, 17 July 2014.

Illustration 2. England touring team in 'mini-skirts', 1968/9



Pressure was also put on the WCA by its member clubs to change its rules regarding the awarding of trophies, with several writing to *Women's Cricket* arguing that some kind of challenge cup might well introduce a much-needed injection of life into club cricket, in the context of the year-by-year decline in affiliations. The MCC, hardly the most progressive body, saw the writing on the wall and introduced the knock-out Gillette Cup in 1963, with the first ever final played at Lord's in front of a full house of 23,000. In the wake of this, the WCA set up a working party to consider the 'Future of the WCA' in order to take into account feedback from the grassroots, and several key changes took place as a result. Firstly, during the 1965 season a national knock-out women's cricket tournament was instituted: twelve teams entered, and the final, which took place at Bedford CPE, featured Wallington LCC (based in Surrey) and Brighton and Hove WCC, with Wallington the eventual champions. Two years later, the aforementioned Hertfordshire-based Vagabonds WCC ran the first

ever women's single wicket competition. These developments were formally acknowledged at the 1966 AGM, when it was agreed, not before time, that the section of the constitution which forbade the awarding of trophies would be deleted.⁴⁹

Women's cricket was, therefore, becoming modernised and accepting the desire of the younger generation for a more competitive and structured system. Yet some of the older members of the WCA were evidently unhappy with this process and the rejection of tradition which it represented. In *Women's Cricket* in 1960, one elderly member of Redoubtables lamented that 'women's cricket, as I knew it, is "dead", there is lack of respect and understanding for the game...discipline and leadership are resented'.⁵⁰ Rheinberg, who had edited *Women's Cricket* since 1950 and served on the Executive Committee for many years, announced both the ending of this publication and her resignation from the Executive in September 1967, noting that she 'had given the matter much careful thought over several years and had come to the conclusion that she was out of touch with the present day affairs of the WCA'.⁵¹ Sandbrook argues that the vast majority of British people felt uncomfortable with the changes taking place in Britain during the 'swinging sixties', and this certainly seems to have been the case for a proportion of the WCA leadership.⁵²

It was at least partly because of the disproportionate influence of these older members that the modernisation which did occur was so late in arriving, and it also remained limited. For example, regulations surrounding playing uniform remained strict, and completely out of touch with current fashion, in contrast with the outfits worn by female tennis players at Wimbledon in these years. In

⁴⁹ R. Heyhoe-Flint and N. Rheinberg, *Fair play : the story of women's cricket* (London, 1976), p.64.

⁵⁰ *Women's Cricket*, 1 July 1960.

⁵¹ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 9 September 1967, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁵² Sandbrook, *Never had it so good*, p.xxiii.

an editorial of 1962, Rheinberg stated:

I am truly thankful that there is no gentleman fashion designer, no Teddy Tinlin, attached to the world of women's cricket. A woman who is outstanding in her particular sphere of sport...is always attractive to watch and it should not be necessary to clothe her eccentrically to catch the eye. The sight of some of the well-built women tennis players clad in frilly dresses finishing at the thigh tends most certainly to detract from the skill with which they play.⁵³

Indeed, both the editors of *Women's Cricket* and the WCA Executive more broadly appear to have been consciously setting women's cricket *against* modernity by the 1960s. Rheinberg wrote that cricket was a way to escape from daily life: 'the sound of ball on bat is better than any pop music'.⁵⁴ She recognised that Britain was changing, but noted:

Times and circumstances change, and we have to change with them – but there is a great inclination nowadays to become anti-traditional. We feel we must break with everything that has gone before us. The WCA was built up by women of great breadth of vision and of courage. These are our traditions, and on them the future *should* be built.⁵⁵

Yet many younger members evidently felt the WCA leadership were out of touch. Sentiments like those promoted by the editors of *Women's Cricket*, which attempted to dictate the way members should act, dress and behave, risked alienating potential new members, and given falling affiliations from 1955 onwards, this risk appears to have become a reality. In 1967, in response to yet one more editorial criticising players for such misdemeanours as the wearing of trousers and the drinking of alcohol after matches, one player wrote to the editors in disgust:

If slacks and beer are so appalling to the sight of so many, they don't have to behave like sheep and follow suit. They need not mix with people like myself who have this dreadful scourge of being a beer drinker and also a slacks wearer. Anyway, I have yet to go to a 'big match' where the thousands of spectators have walked out in disgust because they didn't approve of the 'image' of the WCA. Come off it you lot, we live in 1967 not 1867...What a load of old rubbish!...I think the whole case of the bad 'image' has been conjured up in the minds of a few

⁵³ *Women's Cricket*, 13 July 1962.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 16 June 1961.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 May 1956.

'old hands' who refuse to move with the times and twitter on for the sake of twittering.⁵⁶

Another correspondent wrote:

I've had enough!...your articles have a curiously flat quality that causes a deep depression to settle over me, for one...I play my cricket to enjoy myself and I am tired of reading what 'thou shalt or shalt not do.' To put it bluntly, wouldn't you come off your dignity for once and entertain us average young players?...This officialdom is rather overwhelming, you know – it's liable to scare people off.⁵⁷

Some readers clearly felt that the magazine, and consequently women's cricket itself, did not promote cultural values with which they felt comfortable. The belated and limited modernisation which had occurred within the WCA by 1970 was, at least for some women, too little, too late.

The persistence of amateurism

Another, related problem for the WCA was its continued close relationship with the MCC.

Following the 1951 Australian tour of England, the MCC continued to offer use of nets prior to international tours. The shared, pressing need to train more coaches also had an impact: in 1962, Mary Duggan and Ruth Westbrook (both England players) became the first women to be awarded the MCC's Advanced Coaching certificate; and from 1963, the MCC Youth Cricket Association offered the WCA two places annually on their Youth and Advanced Coaching Courses, which consequently became 'the requisite coaching qualification for members of the WCA'.⁵⁸ Yet this all

⁵⁶ Ibid., 28 July 1967.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 11 June 1954.

⁵⁸ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 3 March 1967, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

came at a time when, as Cronin and Holt argue, the societal attack on 'establishment' values during the 1960s effectively destroyed the 'unique prestige and authority' which the MCC had once enjoyed.⁵⁹ In particular, its resistance to abolishing the amateur/professional divide, which had effectively shored up the role of the upper class within cricket, was seen as outdated. Thus although a joint coaching scheme was helpful in practical terms, the close association between the MCC and the WCA must surely have encouraged the general public to tar both bodies with the same brush. This was not without reason. The WCA, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, had always promoted a thoroughly amateur ideology.

The WCA leadership, however, came under increasing pressure to professionalise its structure as a result of increased government involvement in sport during the 1960s. As Houlihan has recognised, this was the result of a growing public demand for an expansion of opportunities for sport and recreation within an economic context of growing affluence, as well as a growing interest in the pursuit of excellence due to Britain's perceived 'decline' in international sport in comparison with the successes of East Germany and the USSR.⁶⁰ The Wolfenden Committee, to which the WCA supplied a written statement, had also placed pressure on the government when it recommended in its 1960 Report that increased government funding be given to governing bodies of sport, and that a Sports Development Council be established to distribute these funds. In 1959, just £165,000 was given to national voluntary sporting bodies to spend on coaching by the Ministry of Education; by 1965 the total grants offered were worth £457,000 and involved 58 governing bodies of sport, including the All England Netball Association and the All England Women's Hockey Association.⁶¹ The WCA was one of the first women's governing bodies of sport to benefit from these increased

⁵⁹ M. Cronin and R. Holt, 'The imperial game in crisis: English cricket and decolonisation', in S. Ward (ed.), *British culture and the end of empire* (Manchester, 2001), p.112.

⁶⁰ B. Houlihan, *The Government and Politics of Sport* (London, 1991), p.27.

⁶¹ T 227/2416, National Archives, Kew.

investments when, following secretary Miss Riley's application to the Ministry of Education in June 1962, the WCA was awarded an initial grant towards coaching costs of £200, for the year 1962/3.⁶² Liaison was maintained, and an HM Inspector came to watch one of the England-Australia Test matches in 1963; the following year, the WCA's grant was increased to £600.⁶³

The implications of this kind of government involvement for cricket generally were huge. In 1965 a Sports Council was set up by the Wilson government, as recommended by Wolfenden, though it initially had only advisory powers. The ability to award grants was transferred to this organisation, and the total amount was vastly expanded, rising from £195,922 in the financial year 1960-61 to £1.27 million in 1970-71.⁶⁴ This funding stream transformed the situation for the MCC. As a private members club, it was impossible for the MCC to claim public funding for men's cricket: it was thus agreed that its responsibilities would be split between the MCC itself, who remained the law-makers and the owners of Lord's; the Test and County Cricket Board, as the ruling body for the professional game; and the National Cricket Association, who would be responsible for the recreational game. The NCA would, as a public body, qualify for Sports Council funding; but the MCC's influence over men's cricket was clearly waning.

The WCA had been invited in 1965 to send a representative to serve on the NCA Council and Miss Riley had been nominated by the Executive Committee to do so; the WCA were also represented on several of the standing committees, and the Executive recognised that this gave the WCA their 'first tangible opportunity to have a say in the counsels of the game'.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the WCA was also

⁶² ED 169/79, National Archives, Kew.

⁶³ By comparison, the AEWHA received £1750 for the financial year 1963-4. See ED 169/79, National Archives, Kew.

⁶⁴ AT 30/15, National Archives, Kew.

⁶⁵ 'Hon Secretary's Report', WCA Yearbook, 1968, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

eligible as the governing body of women's cricket to apply for Sports Council funding in its own right. The Executive Committee reported in 1965 that they 'welcomed the formation of the Council',⁶⁶ and that their initial request for grant aid had been successful, with £600 being made available in the first year of the Council's existence.⁶⁷

Sports Council funding was a huge step forward for women's cricket in terms of its ability to finance coaching courses (though it would, in later years, have more questionable implications). Additionally, the Council's policy of funding amateur sports teams touring abroad was utilised by the WCA, who received £2000 towards the travelling costs of their 1968/9 tour of Australia and New Zealand; the 1967 visit of Young England to Holland was also grant-aided. However, the disadvantage so far as the WCA leadership were concerned was that, similarly to the MCC, the WCA came under increasing pressure to modernise its structure as a result of its involvement with Sports Council funding sources, due to the conditions attached to Sports Council funding. From the start, the onus was on the governing body to ensure that it showed evidence of growth and development; in a meeting at the Department of Education and Science in July 1965, officials made it clear to the WCA that 'grant at its present level would not continue automatically, and a higher sum would be out of the question unless the Association made efforts to relate its income to unavoidable higher expenditure'.⁶⁸ By 1967 the Development and Coaching Committee of the Sports Council was resolving that each governing body of sport should come up with a Five Year Development Plan, outlining methods of increasing both membership and the standard of elite performance, in order for the Council to see 'what support would be required to enable [the

⁶⁶ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 26 March 1965, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁶⁷ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 10 September 1965, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁶⁸ WCA Yearbook, 1965, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

governing body] to expand and increase its efficiency and standards'.⁶⁹

A sub-committee of the WCA subsequently produced this plan, which included two findings, both revolutionary within the ideological context of women's cricket. Firstly, the plan demonstrated an acceptance of the need for an element of professionalisation in a sport which still, amidst all the focus on commercialisation in 1960s Britain, prided itself on being run by amateurs. In 1968, the WCA appointed their first ever fund-raising coordinator, a personnel officer and club cricketer from London, Brian Lancaster, to help finance the 1968/9 tour to Australia and New Zealand.⁷⁰ And in January 1969 the Executive Committee, having set up a 'working party on administration' as a result of the Five Year Plan, resolved that a part-time clerical assistant be advertised for, 'and remunerated by an honorarium of £200-£250 per annum'.⁷¹

Secondly, there was a growing tolerance surrounding the need to seek out sponsorship, in order to help meet the Sports Council's expectation that women's cricket should be financially solvent and able to demonstrate growth. Given the poor state of the WCA's finances by the late 1960s, the Five Year Plan concluded that, in order to cover the growing costs of the Association, sponsorship would be needed for the WCA's work by at least 1972.⁷² This was particularly revolutionary given that the WCA had been receiving offers of sponsorship since at least 1956 and had continually rejected them. For example, in May 1956 a firm called ICI, famous for being the producers of a synthetic fabric known as 'Terylene', wrote to the WCA offering them free supplies of the fabric for the purposes of producing playing uniforms for the Australasian touring team. The Executive

⁶⁹ WCA Yearbook, 1968, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

⁷⁰ Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, p.73.

⁷¹ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 11 January 1969, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷² WCA Executive Committee minutes, 26 May 1968, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

Committee turned them down on the grounds that 'by so doing the WCA would be treading on dangerous ground and lowering the standards'.⁷³

A combination of pressure from the Sports Council and the poor financial situation of the WCA, though, saw the relaxation of the no-sponsorship ruling by the mid-1960s. An unofficial tour to Jersey in the summer of 1967, arranged by a WCA member, was sponsored by a local tobacco company, and when the Vagabonds club organised the first Single Wicket Championship they were permitted to accept sponsorship from Charrington's Breweries. Approval was given in 1966 to an offer from Lillywhite's to provide a cricket bat free of charge for each member of the England team who played against New Zealand.⁷⁴ But much of this was small-scale and locally organised. The step change came in the build-up to the 1968/9 tour to Australasia when, for the first time, the WCA leadership agreed to accept large-scale sponsorship from a variety of firms. Perhaps the most high-profile example came from Marks and Spencers, who supplied the official walking-out uniforms for the team, worth £500.⁷⁵

Once again, too, the WCA came under pressure on this issue from certain elements of its grassroots base, some of whom could see no good reason why they should not accept the offers of sponsorship which were coming their way. Enid Bakewell, for example, was offered a personal sponsorship deal by cricket manufacturers Gunn and Moore in the mid-1960s, instigated by one of the company directors who wrote to her directly having read about her achievements in the press.⁷⁶ And it was future England captain Rachael Heyhoe who eventually forced discussion of the issue, having been approached in early 1965 by the company Gray Nicholls for permission to manufacture a cricket bat

⁷³ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 11 May 1956, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷⁴ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 17 June 1966, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷⁵ Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, p.73.

⁷⁶ Interview with Enid Bakewell, 17 October 2013.

bearing her name.⁷⁷ At the 1965 WCA AGM, the following change to the constitution was therefore proposed:

A player is not disqualified from membership by the reason of accepting a position with a manufacturer or retailer of sports equipment, nor is she debarred from writing for the Press, broadcasting or coaching for a fee; but she must not allow her name, initials or photograph to be used for the purpose of commercial advertisement, *except by written permission of the Executive Committee, and provided that there shall be no personal monetary gain.*⁷⁸

Vice-President Sylvia Swinburne stated that: 'It was felt that the time had come to permit some relaxation, which if used discreetly, would lead to good publicity and promote commercial goodwill'. The change was initially rejected, with clubs given time to consider the motion again over the following year, but when brought back onto the agenda at the 1966 meeting was passed by a majority vote.⁷⁹ Here, at last, was official acceptance of commercialisation within the world of women's cricket.

It was not, though, a universal acceptance. Some of the WCA's leading administrators were clearly unhappy with the changes which they saw as being thrust upon them. The minutes make it clear that Eileen Broadbent, who had served on the Executive for many years having played for Yorkshire since the early 1930s, voted against the proposal as she felt that 'any form of commercialism would debase the WCA'.⁸⁰ In April 1964 Molly Hide, former England captain, was offered both the Presidency and the Chairmanship of the WCA and refused, on the grounds that 'she was not in wholehearted agreement with the present trend in administration of the Association'.⁸¹ The minutes suggest that this was an oblique reference to the very concept of acceptance of Ministry of

⁷⁷ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 21 May 1965, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷⁸ WCA AGM minutes, 1965, WCA Archive, Lancashire. My emphasis.

⁷⁹ WCA AGM minutes, 1966, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁸⁰ WCA AGM minutes, 1965, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁸¹ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 25 April 1964, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

Education Grant Aid, and the subsequent perception that the amateurism which had been at the heart of the WCA since its conception was being compromised.

Tensions remained between the leadership and the grassroots over the issue of how far sponsorship might be seen to encroach upon the amateur nature of the WCA. The Executive were evidently determined to exert a great deal of influence over which and how many firms were approached, requesting that any County, Club or individual seeking sponsorship should first submit names of potential sponsors for approval.⁸² The altered constitution had plainly spelt out that individuals should not be allowed to accept payment, but there was clearly also a debate over this issue. At the 1967 AGM, one Midlands representative questioned this rule, arguing that it was 'only fair that an individual player of outstanding ability should be allowed to accept any payment offers'.⁸³ This was a clear allusion to one player in particular, Rachael Heyhoe, who (not coincidentally) herself hailed from the West Midlands.

The problem was that Heyhoe, already by far the most well-known female cricketer, had been offered a personal financial contract with Gray Nicholls. From 1969 a 'Heyhoe' bat, marketed specifically at female cricketers, was produced and the negotiations surrounding this involved not only the offer of free bats for her personal use but also a small percentage of sales of the bat, a clear contravention of the new ruling. When the Executive Committee discovered this in March 1968, strong feelings were stirred:

Miss Swinburne considered that there was no alternative to the acceptance of the situation, and proposed that it be covered by the grant of written permission...this was agreed, with the additional stricture that any monies received by Miss Heyhoe be paid into the Wolverhampton

⁸² WCA Executive Committee minutes, 14 January 1967, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁸³ WCA AGM minutes, 1967, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

[WCA] account.⁸⁴

Illustration 3. Advert for Gray-Nicolls' bats, featuring England captain Rachael Heyhoe

LADIES CRICKET

Gray-Nicolls specialise in producing equipment specially suited to the requirements of the lady players. Miss Heyhoe writes: "The Superlite bats are particularly suitable for women cricketers, because they are so superbly balanced, are light in pick-up and have plenty of driving power. I have always used Gray-Nicolls bats and the majority of our top players are now convinced of their superior quality."

England's Lady Cricketers on their World Tour chose Gray-Nicolls' equipment. Their Captain, Miss R. Heyhoe scoring 1,137 runs on the Tour with her Gray-Nicoll's Superlite Cricket Bat.



Rachael Heyhoe
England Ladies' Captain

Not only was Heyhoe unable to keep the money, an 'admonitory letter' was sent from the Chairman. The issue of player payments would recur throughout the 1970s but, for the moment, served to highlight the WCA leadership's limited acceptance of commercialism.

Part of the problem was that the enormous upheaval taking place within the men's game led to a situation whereby the perceived 'amateurism' of women's cricket was romanticised by many within the world of men's cricket. The postwar climate in Britain, with far fewer players able to afford to be amateur, and with the exposure of 'shamateurism' in the 1950s (under-the-counter payment of so-called 'amateur' players by county clubs), alongside feelings that the amateur-professional divide was simply outdated and backward, led to the abolition of the distinction by an MCC advisory committee in November 1962. Additionally, falling attendances and the declining incomes of most

⁸⁴ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 23 March 1968, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

county cricket clubs saw the introduction of large-scale sponsorship from companies like Gillette, who paid out £6500 in the first year of the one-day knock-out Gillette Cup competition.⁸⁵ The foundations of English cricket were fast disappearing and many were uncomfortable with this; women's cricket, still an amateur sport, seems to have provided comfort in a time of upheaval. *The Guardian* suggested in 1966 that amongst the crowds at women's cricket matches were 'a few male renegades, who, reacting against what is termed the negative approach of present-day cricketers, steal silently away to watch the girls'.⁸⁶

Indeed, with increasing professionalisation of the men's game came the argument that cricket was becoming dull and boring. 'One can scarcely tell one county from another; just a succession of seam bowlers against numerous batsmen static on their feet, ready to use their pads as their main line of defence against the ball not directed at the stumps, with a few deflections behind the wicket for the odd single', wrote the editor of *Wisden* in 1967.⁸⁷ Here, once again, women's cricket seems to have provided a refreshing contrast. 'The girls give us brighter cricket,' wrote EM Wellings, having watched England Women play at Melbourne in 1969:

In one important respect it was what men's cricket once was – a briskly moving game. Oh, that modern time-wasting man would stir himself to fit 37 overs of eight balls each into two hours before lunch as the Australian girls did.⁸⁸

Yet, as Laura Robinson has argued, the romanticisation of female amateur athletes is a time-old practice which continues to this day as a means of justifying the huge financial inequities between

⁸⁵ On men's cricket in these years, see Holt and Mason, *Sport in Britain*, pp.38-41; D. Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket* (1999; reprinted London, 2003); and S. Wagg, "Time Gentlemen Please": The Decline of Amateur Captaincy in English County Cricket', in A. Smith and D. Porter (eds.), *Amateurs and Professionals in Post-War British Sport* (London, 2000).

⁸⁶ *The Guardian*, 30 March 1966.

⁸⁷ 'Editor's Notes', *Wisden*, 1967.

⁸⁸ *Evening News*, 10 January 1969.

women's and men's sport.⁸⁹ For women cricketers in the 1960s, it provided a rationale to continue to embrace amateurism and the cultural values which surrounded it. Unfortunately it was also the case that by the late 1960s, the amateur cricketing code of 'fair play' was 'widely ridiculed, savaged and moribund'.⁹⁰ In a cultural climate where the need for scientific modernisation was continually stressed, and the vast majority of the younger generation rejected class hierarchies and anti-commercial sentiment, clinging onto amateurism only enhanced the popular perception that women's cricket was outdated and irrelevant.

A related issue was the imperialist mentality retained by the administrators of women's cricket. Current historiography has suggested that cricket's declining popularity in the 1960s was partly due to its imperial associations in an era of decolonisation. The MCC, for example, retained a good relationship with the South African Cricket Association throughout the 1960s, although other governing bodies (including the International Olympic Committee) had already suspended South Africa from international competition due to the onset of apartheid. Thus cricket became 'the signifier, for many, of all that was wrong with an England struggling with the demands of a post-imperial world, and unsure of its identity or its role'.⁹¹ This literature has ignored cricketing women; yet as we saw in the first chapter, imperialism had permeated women's cricket in similar ways to the men's game.

The D'Oliveira Affair of 1968 brought matters to a head as far as the relationship with South Africa was concerned. Basil D'Oliveira was a mixed-race South African-born cricketer who had made his England debut in 1966 and was an obvious candidate for the 1968/9 winter tour of the country. Yet

⁸⁹ L. Robinson, *Black Tights. Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto, 2002), p.13.

⁹⁰ J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school* (1986; reprinted London, 2000), p.218.

⁹¹ Cronin and Holt, 'The imperial game in crisis', p.125.

when the MCC announced their touring squad, his name was not included. This was ostensibly for cricketing reasons but the ensuing public outcry reflected the suspicion (later proved true) that, behind the scenes, it had been made clear by the South African government that a team which included D'Oliveira would not be able to tour. The protests surrounding the non-selection of D'Oliveira were too vocal to be ignored. He was subsequently called up to the squad, and the South Africans cancelled the tour.⁹²

The WCA, too, continued to naively believe that it was unproblematic to maintain contact with the apartheid regime. This was demonstrated most clearly when in 1967, during the planning of the schedule for their 1968/9 tour of Australia and New Zealand, it was agreed by the Executive Committee to include a ten-day stopover in South Africa en route to the Southern Hemisphere.⁹³ The fact that they were applying for Sports Council funding for the trip did not seem to factor into their thinking; plane tickets were purchased incorporating the stopover, without consultation. Yet it was fast becoming apparent that the Council could not, as a public body, be seen to be funding a tour to South Africa when public opinion was so obviously against it. In late 1968, when the WCA's plans were discovered, Sports Minister Denis Howell threatened to withdraw their travel grant (£2000) unless they altered their plans. Given that the trip could not have gone ahead at all without Sports Council funding, this effectively forced the WCA to cancel the South Africa leg of the tour. They subsequently very publicly expressed their dissatisfaction with the decision. The Chairman, Audrey Collins, was reported to have stated: 'One is always disappointed when matters beyond one's control affect amateur sport. It is the only way to promote friendliness and it seems such a pity that it is not to happen.'⁹⁴

⁹² For accounts of the D'Oliveira Affair, see J. Williams, *Cricket and Race* (Oxford, 2001), pp.57-9, and C. Merrett and J. Nauright, 'South Africa', in Stoddart and Sandiford (eds.), *The imperial game*. See also *Wisden*, 1969.

⁹³ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 22 April 1967, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁹⁴ *The Guardian*, 7 October 1968.

This view appears to have been held by most WCA members, but it was becoming an increasingly problematic one by 1970. Though the majority of MCC members remained in support of continued cricketing links with South Africa,⁹⁵ the outcry surrounding D'Oliveira's non-selection reflected an emerging national sentiment which abhorred any contact with South Africa, sporting or otherwise. This was made even plainer by the 'Stop the Seventy tour' campaign of 1970, a response to the MCC's planned South African tour of England that year, which saw the protest culture of the 1960s extend into the cricketing arena. The Labour and Liberal parties, some Conservatives, the trade unions, and even the royal family publicly came out against the tour. (It was ultimately cancelled, but only when Prime Minister James Callaghan formally requested it two weeks before it was due to go ahead.) The WCA's public dismay at the cancellation of their South African stopover therefore reflects just how out of touch the administrators of women's cricket were with public opinion on this issue. Given that the cancelled stopover was front-page news, the whole affair can only have enhanced the perception that women's cricket, as with its male counterpart, was an embarrassing imperialist legacy, widening the gulf between its administrators and ordinary British women.

Male attitudes to women's cricket.

This is not to say that male support of the kind displayed by EM Wellings was not crucial to the development of women's cricket in the years between 1956 and 1970. To many male cricket correspondents, the England Women's team were the darlings of the day: Terry Coleman wrote in *The Guardian* in 1966 that '11 girls, all dressed in white, make prettier patterns against The Oval

⁹⁵ In December 1968, an Extraordinary General Meeting of the MCC rejected a proposal to end cricketing contact with South Africa. See Williams, *Cricket and Race*, p.62.

outfield than most of the Surrey teams I have seen. And their cricket skirts are a lot less mini than the going length in the King's Road, Chelsea.⁹⁶ This type of coverage could, of course, be patronising, with a continued tendency to focus on the appearance of female cricketers, rather than on the cricket. Enid Bakewell recalled in our interview that journalists would 'want you to lift your skirt a little bit more, and they'd have a headline "skipper loses lucky bra"!'⁹⁷

Yet the quantity of press coverage which women's cricket was receiving certainly increased during the 1960s – and much of what was written does appear to have been serious, factual copy. In the wake of the 1963 Australian tour of England, for example, the WCA concluded

We have hammered at the doors of the national press and broadcasting authorities for years...and now our efforts have borne fruit. There has been a volume of comment and factual reporting, and a wealth of pictures...Every important daily paper has had something to say about us, and mostly it was sensible comment.⁹⁸

Both *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* followed the entire tour with their own correspondents, and the tour also received some coverage in the tabloids.⁹⁹

This equally applied while on tour in other countries. Rheinberg wrote in her 1957/8 tour diary that: 'We are getting wonderful publicity here – much more than in 1948, and so far we've done 7 broadcasts both Commercial and on the National Systems... We've been on the front and back pages of the daily papers and are actually the subject of the third leader this morning.'¹⁰⁰ In the wake of the 1968/9 tour of Australasia, the 1970 edition of *Wisden* carried a full page feature on Enid

⁹⁶ *The Guardian*, 9 August 1966.

⁹⁷ Interview with Enid Bakewell, 17 October 2013. The 'skipper loses lucky bra' headline appeared during the 1968/9 tour of Australia, in a Melbourne daily newspaper.

⁹⁸ WCA Yearbook, 1963, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

⁹⁹ The 1966 tour of the New Zealanders did not receive as much coverage, but this was at least partly because it coincided with England's 1966 World Cup victory, which naturally consumed most sports pages.

¹⁰⁰ Netta Rheinberg tour diary, 15 January 1958, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

Bakewell; a first for women's cricket. The tribute piece celebrated her achievement of scoring over 1,000 runs and taking more than 100 wickets on a single tour.¹⁰¹ This did not just apply to Australasian tours, either: the WCA reported that they believed the coverage of the tour to South Africa in 1960/61 to have been very good indeed.¹⁰²

Why was coverage improving? Evidently, based on Wellings' account, there was benefit to be gained from the perceived dullness of men's cricket. Another key asset to the WCA in these years was the appearance of Heyhoe-Flint on the scene. From the early 1960s, she was working as a freelance sports journalist, and during the 1968/9 tour she produced match reports for the *Daily Telegraph* at the end of each day's play, providing comprehensive coverage.¹⁰³ When she returned from the tour she was appointed sports editor of the *Wolverhampton Chronicle* and her media profile sky-rocketed: she made appearances on the BBC's *Desert Island Discs* and *A Question of Sport*, and conducted a series of after-dinner speeches. 'Each one gave me a renewed sense of pleasure,' she wrote, 'because it at least meant that women's cricket was finally beginning to gain public acceptance in England.'¹⁰⁴

Both at local level and at national level, there is evidence that female cricketers made efforts to challenge the negative discourses which surrounded their participation in what remained a male-dominated sport. Local newspaper coverage appears to have been good: Redoubtables, for example, sent reports of matches throughout the 1950s and 1960s to newspapers in Croydon and Sutton, which were usually printed. On a national level Rheinberg was keen to generate positive publicity through the use of *Women's Cricket* magazine; by 1960 she was able to tell the AGM of the WCA

¹⁰¹ *Wisden*, 1970.

¹⁰² WCA Yearbook, 1961, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹⁰³ WCA Yearbook, 1970, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, p.84.

that '*Women's Cricket* is well-known by the newspaper men and women, many of whom take news from it for publication'.¹⁰⁵ Three years later she reinforced this message:

There is no doubt that the magazine has attained its small place in the cricket world at large; it is surprising, for instance, how useful the Press find it (the National Press are all sent complimentary copies) and its outside reading public is wider than one would imagine.¹⁰⁶

In May 1963, she also organised the first ever exhibition devoted to women's cricket: an 'Exhibition of Women's Cricketana', held at the Qantas Airways Gallery in Piccadilly, to coincide with the start of the Australian tour. Exhibits included paintings and prints of early female cricketers loaned by the MCC, a score book belonging to the oldest known women's cricket club, the White Heather Club, and a variety of different women's cricket 'costumes' from over the years. In the accompanying brochure, Rheinberg wrote:

Few of the general public realise that women have played cricket for nearly 250 years with considerable achievements to their credit. These achievements, however, remain comparatively unknown, and so we decided to use the occasion of the third tour of England by the Australian Women's Cricket Team to try and bring some of these to the notice of the public by way of an exhibition.¹⁰⁷

The Exhibition was opened by Sir Allen Brown, the Deputy High Commissioner for Australia, and attended by a variety of famous male cricketers including the Bedser twins and Denis Compton. Covered by the BBC and most major newspapers, it was a huge success in terms of generating publicity for the tour.

Another factor which transformed coverage appears to have been the onset of commercial television in 1954, and the consequent expansion in sports coverage on all channels. By the late 1950s, there

¹⁰⁵ WCA AGM minutes, 1960, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹⁰⁶ WCA Yearbook, 1963, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹⁰⁷ 'Exhibition of Women's Cricketana 1745-1963', WCA Archive, Lancashire.

began to be a smattering of appearances by the best-known figures in the world of women's cricket, such as Molly Hide, who appeared on programmes like the ITV Quiz programme 'Snakes and Ladders'. In 1963, for the first time ever in the UK, international women's cricket appeared on BBC television: highlights of the Saturday afternoon of the third Test in the series against Australia were broadcast, with Robert Hudson, the well-known sports broadcaster, as commentator, assisted by Hide. The following year, a BBC2 film unit visited the WCA's annual Cricket Week, conducting a series of interviews, and a documentary was produced.¹⁰⁸ Local clubs could also attract the attention of the television cameras. One club, based in Cardiff, wrote to *Women's Cricket* to relay their experience of being interviewed by the BBC during a net session at Glamorgan, with the footage being broadcast throughout Wales.¹⁰⁹ By 1970, 18.4 million British households owned a TV (compared with just 15.6 million in 1956); women's cricket was therefore hugely increasing its visibility to the general public.

Aside from the increased media coverage, male support for women's cricket grew in other ways in these years, as evidenced by the increasing financial support coming from men's county cricket clubs. For example, the Tour Fund for the 1957/8 Australasia tour received donations of £200 from the MCC, £50 each from Lancashire, Yorkshire and Surrey County Cricket Clubs, and £15 each from Middlesex and Hampshire.¹¹⁰ This is particularly striking given that many of the men's counties were suffering from financial problems of their own at this time, due to the decline in spectators at county matches from the mid-1950s onwards.

Additionally, the WCA continued to forge close links with other, predominantly male cricket

¹⁰⁸ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 4 September 1964, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹⁰⁹ *Women's Cricket*, 22 May 1964.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 May 1957.

organisations throughout this period. In 1955, the WCA affiliated to the Association of Cricket Umpires (ACU), the national organisation which provided training for cricket umpires, and encouraged all female umpires on its register to take the exams of the ACU.¹¹¹ The Cricket Society also showed increasing support for women's cricket, a move which was perhaps inevitable given that Netta Rheinberg was its membership secretary and from 1967 vice-chairman. (It may well have also had something to do with the increasing numbers of women becoming members of the Cricket Society at this time, evidenced by the decision to introduce a 'ladies badge' in 1962.)¹¹² The Society entertained both the Australian touring team of 1963 and the New Zealanders in 1966, and by 1968 the link was such that the Society made the decision to permanently affiliate to the WCA.¹¹³

As cricket clubs recovered from postwar austerity and began to share in the new affluence, and enjoy the increased government investment in sports facilities in the wake of the Wolfenden Report, there was an opportunity for female cricketers to share in some of the fruits of the affluent society. 'In the last few years the pleasant custom of foregathering after a match has increased greatly,' wrote Rheinberg in 1960, 'made more easy and attractive by the excellent facilities in the ever growing number of well-built, well furnished and friendly pavilion rooms.'¹¹⁴ Edgbaston Cricket Ground, for example, was in the process of redevelopment from the mid-1950s, and was for the first time selected by the WCA to host one of the 1963 Tests against Australia, thanks largely to the 'most generous' terms offered by Warwickshire CCC, who were also exceptionally keen to allow women cricketers to use their newly-built indoor cricket school.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 6 May 1955, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹¹² Cricket Society minutes, 28 February 1962, private collection, Surrey.

¹¹³ Cricket Society minutes, 24 July 1967, private collection, Surrey.

¹¹⁴ *Women's Cricket*, 29 July 1960.

¹¹⁵ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 8 December 1961, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

Yet women clearly were still reliant on forging local positive working relationships with clubs if they were to share in such affluence; another Rheinberg editorial emphasised: 'Beggars cannot be choosers and *we* are not affluent'.¹¹⁶ Negotiations were the order of the day: Highdown WCC, for example, based in Sussex, was formed in March 1959, and from the outset established an agreement with the local men's club whereby 'we could have their ground any evening of the week and also two Saturdays and one Sunday of this coming season, provided we became lady members of their club'.¹¹⁷ The anonymous rural club whose secretary Rheinberg interviewed in 1957 was also a women's section of the local men's club, and the secretary relayed how she had gone out of her way to gain their support:

the men, who allowed the women use of the ground for only three Saturdays in the season, never took the slightest notice of them and indeed their club might not have existed. Miss Smith felt that co-operation of the men was essential if the club were to succeed and so she decided to make the first approaches. Tactfully, she asked the men for advice. She offered help with their match tea-making, and she and the other members took a lively interest in their activities. Slowly but surely they became interested then co-operative, and then her tactics bore real fruit. One male supporter donated £5 and the women were given permission to take a ground collection.¹¹⁸

Many clubs also reported utilising local male cricketers for coaching.

The problem was that men were not always so accommodating. Heyhoe-Flint reported a telling episode from the Sydney Test of 1968, which took place at the North Sydney Oval:

When I walked out to toss the coin, I found that an adjoining wicket had been saturated by the groundsman. A prompt start was impossible and play was delayed for fifteen minutes while mopping-up operations were completed – otherwise we would have had to field in Wellington boots! The groundsman, somewhat grumpily, took the attitude that we were only women and he

¹¹⁶ *Women's Cricket*, 18 July 1958. My emphasis.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 May 1959.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 24 May 1957.

couldn't understand why we were bothered.¹¹⁹

If this was the case at international level, it is unsurprising that the situation at local level back in the UK could be very difficult indeed. In 1959, the Secretary of the Belfast WCC wrote to *Women's Cricket* magazine bemoaning that 'Women's cricket over here is at a very low ebb, the reason being, I think, that the men will give us very little support and don't like to see us playing "their game". We have only one team left in Belfast and district and we are having a very difficult time to keep it in existence.'¹²⁰ Jean Ifield wrote that her village team had secured use of the village ground 'at great cost from the ever-jealous men who watch anxiously and clutch their brows in despair whenever our newest recruit dispatches the turf to the boundary instead of the ball'.¹²¹ Such reports suggest that cricket was still perceived by some men to be a male domain, even by the 1960s; a trend which is supported by an anecdote told by one female member of staff at the University of Exeter, who recalled that when she arrived in 1967 to begin teaching at the university, having played cricket for Oxford:

the suggestion was made (by the younger members of the team) that I should actually PLAY [for the staff cricket team]... John Lloyd, the captain, didn't, as far as I know, actually say 'no', but he certainly made it clear that the suggestion was not appropriate. The furthest he would go was to agree to my being an umpire and this gave some pain in certain quarters and some quiet amusement and pleasure in others.¹²²

Given that women remained dependent on male support for access to newly-constructed facilities, it was not necessarily the case that affluence improved the quality of their sporting lives.

¹¹⁹ Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, p.77.

¹²⁰ *Women's Cricket*, 22 May 1959.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 20 May 1960.

¹²² S. Fisher (ed.), *The Erratics: Fifty not Out. A History of the University of Exeter Staff Cricket Club 1934-1984* (Exeter, 1987), p.56.

Where men's clubs were not co-operative, the alternative could be to hire a council-owned pitch, but this created problems of its own. Firstly, many of these pitches lacked appropriate facilities, a point which came across strongly in oral history interviews. Janet Bitmead, who played for a club called Riverside based in South-West London, recalled:

the pitches we played on were hired from the council. So we had no clubhouse, a tent we hired for an old 6p I believe from the council. And we changed in that.¹²³

Secondly, many of the pitches themselves were of poor quality. The issues faced by Redoubtables, who played for many years on a council-owned pitch at Beddington Park in Wallington, Surrey, also highlight this. At one meeting in 1964, the committee suggested that

a letter of protest should be sent to the Wallington Council as the pitch had not been cut and had been wrongly marked on two occasions. Members pointed out that as the Ground Rent was paid as a sub-let to the Wallington Hockey Club it would be better to write to the Club, others thought this would be useless...¹²⁴

The following year club members objected to the raising of the ground rent to £35 given that 'the condition of the ground was very unsatisfactory'. A letter of complaint was subsequently sent to the Wallington Hockey Club, but conditions do not appear to have improved a great deal.

Redoubtables, having looked for and failed to find a different pitch to play on, were powerless to alter their situation.¹²⁵ Positive media coverage for women's cricket was welcome, but the likelihood was that for new clubs trying to establish themselves, the lack of access to decent cricket pitches would have been a huge discouragement; many clubs folded within one or two seasons for this very reason. This provides another possible explanation for the stymied growth in grassroots women's cricket throughout this period.

¹²³ Interview with Janet Bitmead, 21 October 2013.

¹²⁴ Redoubtables WCC minutes, 7 May 1964, private collection, Surrey.

¹²⁵ Redoubtables WCC minutes, 9 July 1964 and 17 October 1965, private collection, Surrey.

'School-leavers constitute the Suez Canal for the WCA'

The years 1955 to 1970 represent something of a paradox as far as cricket amongst young people was concerned. An August 1956 editorial of *Women's Cricket* suggested that

School-leavers constitute the Suez Canal for the WCA. They are our life-blood and vital to us if we are to survive... probably our biggest liability is the relatively small entry of school-leavers into the clubs....What can we do more to encourage the younger members?...We must consider the formation and organisation of After-School clubs, junior sections, reduced club affiliation fees for youngsters, suitable publicity, energetic and enthusiastic physical education staff and many other possible remedies. And we must act.¹²⁶

Given the events of that year, this reference to the Suez Canal is rather amusing in retrospect.

Nonetheless, quotations like this one suggest that the WCA continued to be, as a whole, very concerned with the reinvigoration of their membership and with outreach at school level.

This applied more broadly to cricket as a whole; once the NCA was formed in 1967, it took over the mantle of the MCC's Youth Cricket Association, and became responsible for operating a new National Coaching Scheme, which was funded by the Sports Council (as well as the MCC). As we have seen, many of the training courses for coaches were run jointly with the WCA and the NCA, and many of the coaching events organised in the 1960s were also open to both boys and girls. The CCPR also proved helpful in this respect. Counties and Areas arranging regional coaching courses were encouraged to contact them for help with arranging courses, and from 1962, the CCPR included women's cricket in their Sports' Coaching Holidays at their National Recreation Centre,

¹²⁶ *Women's Cricket*, 31 August 1956.

Lilleshall.¹²⁷ The WCA had plenty of its own initiatives, too. The outreach to local schools which had occurred in the immediate postwar period continued, and was given added impetus by the introduction of Ministry grant-aid for such courses from 1962; by 1964 the Coaching Sub-Committee (set up in 1950) were reporting that 'the increase in the number of courses for beginners and young players, and for the training of coaches is very evident'.¹²⁸ By 1970, Surrey, Middlesex, Kent and Lancashire all had official junior county teams; and an annual Junior 'Roses' match, heavily contested, took place between the Lancashire and Yorkshire juniors.

Yet, if the WCA's school affiliation figures are anything to go by, interest in cricket amongst school-age girls was in fact declining in these years. By 1970 there were only 55 schools affiliated to the WCA, a huge drop from the 97 affiliated schools reported in 1955. Though more schoolgirls appear to have been exposed to cricket, encouraging them to retain an interest in the sport was a trickier problem. The North WCA reported in 1958:

During the winter, Lancashire had a coaching week-end at Lilleshall, and early in the season a beginners' coaching course was held at Leeds when four coaches...tackled a large gathering of enthusiastic youngsters...[Yet] *we do not seem to acquire many new club members as a result of [these courses]*.¹²⁹

Survey evidence from this period supports this impression. A study published in 1971 based on interviews carried out in 53 Lancashire schools suggested that while 14.6% of boys were playing cricket at school (making it the second most popular school sport for boys in the county), almost no girls were doing so.¹³⁰ Jack Williams cites a government survey conducted in 1965-6 in which not one from a sample of 300 girls at grammar or secondary modern schools had participated in

¹²⁷ WCA Yearbook, 1962, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹²⁸ WCA Yearbook, 1964, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹²⁹ WCA Yearbook, 1958, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014). My emphasis.

¹³⁰ I. Emmett, *Youth and Leisure in an Urban Sprawl* (Manchester, 1971), p.31.

cricket.¹³¹ And another survey conducted in 1963 by Market Investigations found that the proportion of girls aged between 15 and 25 not playing cricket was 96% (for boys the figure was 67%).¹³² Meanwhile the same 1971 survey demonstrated that while 12.5% of girls were participating in tennis outside of school and 6.6% in netball, none were regularly playing cricket, a marked contrast with the 7.7% of boys who were doing so.¹³³ The increased efforts of the WCA to attract more schoolgirls and school-leavers into their sport had achieved little.

The problem was that, in a decade which spawned a new and distinctive youth subculture, cricket was being framed by the WCA as a traditional, respectable and worthwhile alternative to other pursuits. Rheinberg wrote in 1962 that:

An invitation to a local secondary modern school to send along a specific number of thirteen or fourteen year-olds to the club's nets one evening would...produce a group of interested youngsters. You may also be doing a social service, if by giving them an interest in a game which all can play...you keep them away a little longer from an eternal round of coffee-bars and juke-boxes, which may otherwise become their only interest.¹³⁴

In fact, the WCA's efforts mirrored the attempt of the older generation more broadly to deal with what was seen as the 'problem of leisure' during this period of affluence. As the Conservative Party's Arts and Amenities Committee put it in 1959:

the use of leisure has become a question of national importance since the war...Young people nowadays have more spare time, more money and more surplus energy than they have ever had before. What all too many of them lack, however, is a corresponding sense of purpose and of personal responsibility.¹³⁵

¹³¹ J. Williams, 'Cricket', in T. Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain: a social history* (Cambridge, 1989), p.139.

¹³² *Playing Fields*, April 1963.

¹³³ Emmett, *Youth and Leisure*, p.29.

¹³⁴ *Women's Cricket*, 13 July 1962.

¹³⁵ Quoted in R. Weight, *Patriots: national identity in Britain, 1940-2000* (London, 2002), pp.310-11.

Similarly, the Albermarle Report highlighted the need to channel the affluence of youth, through the Youth Service, into a variety of activities, recommending the formation of more youth clubs and increased spending on physical recreation.¹³⁶ In the wake of this, the government authorised 1,200 youth projects worth £11.5 million to be spent by 1964.¹³⁷ Yet such efforts were often fruitless; they were aimed at a generation who, broadly speaking, wanted that 'eternal round of coffee-bars and juke-boxes' which Rheinberg sneered at, and actively sought to reject what the older generation felt might be an 'appropriate' use of leisure.

Thus Kathleen Evans found that 38% of youth club members surveyed in 1960 attended the cinema, and 24% went dancing, but that involvement in sport was almost-non existent: 'On no evening are more than 2% involved, and on Saturday only 1.3% mention sport as their usual activity...Club members as a group do not seem to be athletically minded.'¹³⁸ A decade later Emmett concluded:

Adults say that sport is one of the things young people should do with their leisure. 'With it' youngsters don't do sport, not only because their sub-culture is associated with other things – with music, dance, dress and conviviality – but also, perhaps, because adults say sport is one of the things young people should do with their leisure.¹³⁹

Sport, then, suffered from a chronic image problem in the 1960s; it is no wonder that the WCA found it so difficult to reach out to school-leavers. And the gendered ways in which physical education was structured at school, which were examined in the last chapter, made this even more of a problem for teenage girls, who consistently came out of surveys as being less likely to play sport outside of school or to continue with sport after leaving school compared with their male counterparts. The aforementioned 1971 survey, for example, reported that 43.8% of girls had said

¹³⁶ *The Youth Service in England and Wales* (London, 1960), pp.23-4.

¹³⁷ Weight, *Patriots*, p.312.

¹³⁸ K. Evans, *Club Members Today* (London, 1960), pp.13-14.

¹³⁹ Emmett, *Youth and Leisure*, p.8.

that they were unlikely to take part in any sport or game after leaving school, compared with 22% of boys.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, Abrams calculated that the average teenage girl spent over a pound a week (nearly 40% of her income) on clothes, shoes and cosmetics; this left very little for other leisure activities.¹⁴¹

Cricket, though, seems to have particularly suffered as regards its image; this was at least partly because, as has been noted throughout this chapter, the administrators of the sport proved themselves to be out of touch with current thinking in a variety of ways. Rheinberg's dismissal of 'coffee-bars and juke-boxes' was just one example of this; a similar sentiment ran through *Women's Cricket* magazine throughout the decade. One fictional account of the formation of a new cricket club in 1959 mocked the club's schoolgirl members for not wanting cricket practice to clash with the new Elvis film.¹⁴² And a poem which appeared in the magazine in the same year, entitled 'Miss Fitt', critiqued the new, younger type of club member:

Her shorts were of the shortest
 That are allowed by law.
 Spectators stopped to watch a sport
 They'd never seen before!
 Her make-up would be perfect
 When her innings came around;
 Each hair was carefully in place
 And with a ribbon crowned.
 We could be sure her boyfriend
 Would turn up to see her bat.
 But not the same one every week
 (She seemed quite proud of that!)¹⁴³

The implication was clear: those with an interest in fashion and boyfriends, and those who wore the

¹⁴⁰ Emmett, *Youth and Leisure*, p.22.

¹⁴¹ Abrams, *Teenage Consumer Spending*, p.7.

¹⁴² *Women's Cricket*, 19 June 1959.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 18 September 1959.

'wrong' kind of playing uniform, would not fit in with the women's cricket subculture. Indeed, the poem concluded: 'We bless the day when one [boyfriend] arrived / To rid us of this menace. / "He doesn't like me wearing pads." / She left and took up tennis!' The fact that many girls were doing exactly this in reality did not seem to worry the author.

Yet if this was the reception with which girls were greeted when joining a cricket club, it is perhaps no wonder that women's cricket had problems attracting new members. Image was clearly of vital importance to this fashion-conscious generation of girls; a sport like women's cricket which actively rejected current clothing trends (as reported above) did not help itself in this respect. This came across clearly in one 1962 article in *The Guardian* which focused on a girls' cricket tournament organised in Lancashire. The author interviewed one of the schoolgirl participants:

A girl who had emerged from an innings of three without ruffling her bouffant hair-do was a fairly solitary voice. 'It is better than hockey, where you have bruises all over your legs for dancing that night. But I don't think I will take cricket up when I leave school.' Why not? 'Well, it would turn me all kind of cricket, wouldn't it?' she said.¹⁴⁴

The article reassured readers that: 'There was little evidence...for girls who might be worried that the game would take away their femininity'. Yet cricket, as mentioned above, was still perceived by some as a masculine domain, a view which had clearly trickled down to the younger generation. While affluence created more employment opportunities for young women, this did not alter the fact that women's magazines bombarded them with the idea that a woman's role should centre on femininity and domesticity.¹⁴⁵

There were broader factors at work here, though, which affected sports other than cricket; numerous

¹⁴⁴ *The Guardian*, 4 June 1962.

¹⁴⁵ See S. Spencer, *Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1950s* (Hampshire, 2005), pp.1-6.

analysts noted the decline in team sports during the 1960s.¹⁴⁶ The Sports Council reported that affiliations to the All England Women's Hockey Association had fallen by 13% in the decade between 1955 and 1965, and that by the mid-1960s the All England Netball Association represented a sport which 'appears stationary in its appeal'.¹⁴⁷ And yet other sports, including golf, judo, badminton, fencing, squash, archery and gymnastics, had grown enormously over the same decade.¹⁴⁸ This had much to do with the increasing availability of such sports to a broader range of British people, thanks to affluence.¹⁴⁹ Yet it was also linked with changes in the school curriculum; McIntosh reports that it was in these years that many LEAs introduced 'outdoor activities such as canoeing, sailing, climbing and outdoor adventure in general...for the first time'.¹⁵⁰ An expansion of physical education away from traditional team sports was encouraged by educationalists who argued that such activities were not suitable for all pupils. Newsom, for example, suggested that

conventional gymnastics and field games, valuable as these are for those with skill enough to perform well, are not a source of enjoyment or of self-esteem for all pupils...some of these same reluctant pupils, girls as well as boys, can enjoyably engage in swimming or dancing or some individual form of athletics, or in an easily organised game involving only a few players. Squash, skating, archery, fencing, judo have all been successfully introduced in some areas.¹⁵¹

And in a society which saw most traditional team sports as still being masculine domains, this was thought to especially be the case for girls; the Albermarle Committee recommended the encouragement of activities such as 'badminton, camping, canoeing, dancing, fencing, golf, judo, motor-cycling, mountaineering, pot-holing, rambling, riding, rowing, sailing, skating, ski-ing,

¹⁴⁶ See for example *The Newsom Report* (London, 1963), *Leisure in the North West* (Manchester, 1972), *Wisden*, 1963, and UK Sports Council, 'Planning for Sport', 1968 memorandum, COAL 76/3511, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁴⁷ ED 169/128, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁴⁸ Sports Council, 'Planning for Sport', COAL 76/3511, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁴⁹ Such a trend was similarly noted in Australia by Cashman and Weaver, and put forward as a reason for the decline of women's cricket there during the 1960s. See R. Cashman and A. Weaver, *Wicket Women: cricket and women in Australia* (Kensington, 1991), p.112.

¹⁵⁰ P. McIntosh, *Physical Education in England* (London, 1952), p.264.

¹⁵¹ *The Newsom Report*, pp.404-6.

swimming, tennis and water ski-ing', stating that these were 'valuable for their informality and the opportunity they give for social mixing and their appeal to girls, who are more difficult to cater for in this field'.¹⁵²

These kind of views permeated through the education system during the late 1950s and 1960s, as evidenced by school magazines from the period, which report that several of the old grammar schools which had long traditions of cricket were embracing alternative activities at this time. Reigate County School, for example, which had played cricket since 1912, reported in 1957 that 'we lost all three of our [cricket] matches...The main reason for our apparent mediocrity is that the senior school is not interested in the game'. The following year, cricket was dropped from the curriculum.¹⁵³ Mitcham County School, whose cricketing tradition had also begun in the pre-war period, and which only a few years earlier had supplied the captain of the Surrey Schools XI and collected £10 from its pupils to send to the Australian Tour Fund, appear to have abandoned the sport entirely from 1966 onwards.¹⁵⁴ St Elphin's, which played a regular fixture against the Derby Ladies' Cricket Club and regularly sent girls to Derbyshire trials during the 1950s, had also dropped cricket by the mid-1960s in favour of gymnastics and badminton, with a new gym being constructed and opened in 1969.¹⁵⁵ Beckenham County Grammar School dropped cricket as an official school game from 1964 after their PE teacher and England cricket international Sandra Brown left the school, in favour of several new sports including athletics, badminton, table tennis, and volleyball.¹⁵⁶ These changes also carried through to university level; in 1964, women's cricket

¹⁵² *The Youth Service in England and Wales*, p.57.

¹⁵³ *Reigate County School Magazine*, 1956-57 and 1957-58.

¹⁵⁴ *Mitcham County School Magazine*, various editions, 1960s.

¹⁵⁵ *St Elphins School Magazine*, various editions, 1960s.

¹⁵⁶ P. Manning and J. Jones, *Hats off! A celebration of 90 years of our school* (Beckenham, 2008), p.53.

was dropped as an official sport of the Women's Inter-Varsity Athletics Board, the governing body of women's university sport in Britain, due to the inability of universities to raise teams for the divisional championship. Athletics, meanwhile, was experiencing 'a considerable increase of interest'.¹⁵⁷ Much of this can be seen to contradict Sandbrook's statement that by the end of the 1960s 'many ordinary people...held on to their traditional habits and hobbies'; from the late 1950s, the education system actively produced a generation of pupils who were encouraged to do the opposite.¹⁵⁸

The ideology of athleticism attached to cricket (and other team sports) which had been so potent in the public schools for so long also seems to have been fading at this time. The history of St Swithuns School provides an insight into this process, suggesting that the broadening of the PE curriculum was all part of the process of adaptation to:

a social revolution...One way in which the school could help to give an increased sense of freedom to its pupils was by extending the range of...activities available to them...as a sign of the times, cricket was abandoned as a compulsory game in 1963. Judo was first introduced in 1968, and had an immediate success...¹⁵⁹

Other sports were clearly taking the place of cricket, as this highlights. At Sherborne School for Girls, cricket was abandoned in favour of athletics in 1963. Cheltenham Ladies College reported that cricket had been made optional in 1962 'in order to allow the girls more time to concentrate on their tennis', and by 1972 it was dropped altogether in favour of athletics. St Leonards School, for years the hub of girls' cricket in Scotland, gave up cricket in 1969, choosing to focus resources on expanding its athletics programme and opening a new school swimming pool. The Queen Anne's

¹⁵⁷ Women's Inter-Varsity Athletics Board minutes, 22 November 1963 and 27 November 1964, University of Liverpool.

¹⁵⁸ Sandbrook, *Never had it so good*, p.146.

¹⁵⁹ P. Bain, *St Swithun's: A Centenary History* (Chichester, 1984), p.62.

School in Caversham dropped cricket in 1960: 'To keep up with changing times and varied interests, and in view of the great popularity of swimming now that we have our new bath'.¹⁶⁰ And the GPDST schools, who had promoted cricket for girls from their inception in the late nineteenth century, had all but abandoned the sport by 1970, with only two schools in the Trust remaining affiliated to the WCA.

Amy Bull, the WCA's President, wrote in 1965 that

the main task of our present day players and club officials must be to get more school leavers to join their clubs...In the past the grammar schools have supplied most of the recruits to the team games...but in the future we have got to find people in all our schools – grammar, modern and comprehensive.¹⁶¹

This was patently true. The problem was that if schools with long cricketing traditions were giving up the sport, it was hardly likely that schools without such traditions would be persuaded to take it up. Though Holt and Mason have argued that during the 1960s 'the cult of fresh air and sportsmanship...spread to the technical and secondary modern schools', their case is based on the expansion of sports like rugby amongst schoolboys.¹⁶² By contrast, girls' cricket was being squeezed on both sides, being abandoned by both the public schools and not being taken up by secondary modern or the new comprehensive schools. Of the 55 schools affiliated to the WCA in 1970, 15 were independent schools, 21 were grammar schools, and none were secondary moderns; just 5 were comprehensives.¹⁶³ More generally, survey evidence indicates that 'sport-loving youngsters are more commonly found among children of middle class origin than among children

¹⁶⁰ B. Williams, *So Many Opportunities: A historical portrait of Sherborne School for Girls 1899-1999* (London, 1998), p.95, *Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine*, 1962 and 1972, *St Leonard's School Gazette*, December 1970, and *Queen Anne's School Chronicle*, October 1960.

¹⁶¹ *Women's Cricket*, 14 May 1965.

¹⁶² Holt and Mason, *Sport in Britain*, p.17.

¹⁶³ WCA Yearbook, 1970, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

of working class origin, and this difference is much more marked for girls than for boys'.¹⁶⁴ The Crowther Report of 1959, which studied young men and women who had left school in 1954-55, found that the gap between girls participating in outdoor sports who had attended secondary modern schools, and between girls who had attended grammar and technical schools, was sizeable.¹⁶⁵ This is in keeping with previous historiography which has identified that by the 1960s, the gulf between the grammar and secondary modern school experience was a very wide one indeed.¹⁶⁶ Yet it contradicts the literature on affluence which tells us that the experiences of teenagers did not vary greatly by social class during the 1960s. Clearly, the activities and outlook being promoted at school could and did have an impact on the activities which young people chose to pursue both out of school hours and when they left school altogether. The schooling system thus helped to entrench the middle-class nature of women's cricket.

School-leavers, therefore, represented the Suez Canal for the WCA in more ways than one. Not only was the number of girls playing cricket at school in decline, with other sports and activities increasingly favoured by the education authorities, but girls themselves, preoccupied with their appearance and perceiving cricket to be an Establishment activity which offered little to them, were rejecting the sport upon leaving school. 'Cricket is a very U [upper-class] game', wrote one Reigate County pupil in 1957.¹⁶⁷ This – the public perception of team sport generally, and women's cricket specifically – was just one further problem for the WCA.

¹⁶⁴ Emmett, *Youth and Leisure*, p.23.

¹⁶⁵ *The Crowther Report* (London, 1963), Part One.

¹⁶⁶ See for example G. McCulloch, *Failing the Ordinary Child? The Theory and Practice of Working-class Secondary Education* (Buckingham, 1998).

¹⁶⁷ *Reigate County School magazine*, 1956-57.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the reasons for the decline of women's cricket throughout the late 1950s and 1960s. It is important to locate this within other longer-term trends which were often beyond the control of the WCA: the increased importance of home-based leisure, and the fact that team sports generally were not being promoted within the state school system. Using women's cricket as a case study thus highlights the changing leisure preferences of British people during the 1960s. Additionally, the fact that cricket remained an overwhelmingly middle-class sport demonstrates that society remained divided along class lines; affluence did not necessarily break down class divides, but could in fact reinforce them.

Yet the administrators of women's cricket clearly did not help themselves. The divide opening up between the grassroots of the sport and those at the top levels of leadership is symbolic of the generational divide which was appearing in British society more generally: as the younger generation became more modern, commercialised, and less bound by rules, the WCA clung onto traditional values like amateurism. The shared value-systems of the WCA and the MCC, demonstrated most plainly over issues like contact with apartheid South Africa, proved that the leadership of cricket were out of touch with contemporary British society. The swinging sixties were a time when the leisure preferences of the younger generation became increasingly influential, something which the WCA certainly recognised in their attempts to reach out to schoolgirls and school-leavers. Yet these attempts were always doomed to fail when the image of cricket was of a sport run by out-of-date, elderly women.

Women's cricket was not 'dead' by 1970, as the Sports Council pessimistically suggested; there were

still a core of clubs and schools participating in the sport.¹⁶⁸ Yet many of the issues encountered in this chapter – debates over professionalism; access to facilities; the decline in schoolgirl cricket – were to endure throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The sport would continue to struggle for survival in the coming decades; the rapidly changing environment of the 1960s had set the tone for that struggle.

¹⁶⁸ WCA Yearbook, 1971, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

Chapter 3

The 1970s: Women's Cricket and Women's Liberation

Introduction

The 1970s has generally been viewed by historians as a decade of significant progress for British women. It saw the passing of ground-breaking legislation including the Equal Pay Act of 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the development of the Women's Liberation Movement. With their assertion that 'the personal is political', those active within Women's Liberation challenged male dominance in every sphere of British life: the home, marriage, the workplace, the body, and female sexuality.¹

Nonetheless, women's cricket continued to experience decline throughout the decade. By 1980, there were only 55 clubs affiliated to the Women's Cricket Association, down from what had already been considered a low point of 68 in 1970. It might seem odd that this continued dip in the fortunes of women's cricket coincided with a movement which sought the emancipation of women from traditional ideals of 'femininity'. Yet both in contemporary accounts and in oral history interviews, the vast majority of female cricketers have not self-identified as feminists, and remained on the fringes of the Women's Liberation Movement.

In fact, it is apparent that there remained a vast gap between women's sport and the second-wave feminist movement. The political and economic struggles of women were always the main focus of

¹ For histories of the Women's Liberation Movement, see S. Rowbotham, *The past is before us: feminism in action since the 1960s* (London, 1989), D. Bouchier, *The feminist challenge: the movement for women's liberation in Britain and the USA* (London, 1983), and A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet freedom: the struggle for women's liberation* (Oxford, 1987).

second-wave feminist campaigns; sport did not figure in any of their campaigns. There were spurious ideological reasons behind this. As Lois Bryson stated in 1987:

For many feminists, sport has...been identified as a supremely male activity and therefore eschewed, both in practice and as a topic of interest.²

Indeed, there has been a strand of radical sports feminism developed since the 1980s, largely by North American scholars, which suggests that women's increased involvement in sport is in fact anti-feminist, in that it sustains what its proponents see as a 'male model' of competitiveness, authoritarianism, materialism, and hierarchical systems of being.³ This attitude has persisted to the present day amongst some feminists, and has influenced - whether directly or indirectly - the parameters of feminist history. Amongst historians of second-wave feminism, there has been little attempt to understand how sport has affected women's lives, and the voices of sportswomen have almost always been ignored by feminist academics. One suspects that historians like Sheila Rowbotham, who herself confessed to 'hiding during games' during her time at the elite girls' school Hunmanby Hall in the 1950s, may well have neglected sport as a topic of interest partly because of their own negative experiences.⁴

Yet if 'the personal is political', it is surely the case that participating in an everyday male-dominated activity like sport becomes highly politicised. For those women who participated in sports like cricket, the lack of autonomy which they faced in their leisure lives could be an everyday issue; by rejecting sport as a masculine institution, feminists overlook a key struggle faced by

² L. Bryson, 'Sport and the maintenance of masculine hegemony', *Women's Studies International Forum* 10:4 (1987), p.359. See also Fan Hong, 'Freeing Bodies: Heroines in History', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 18:1 (2001) and N. Bailey, 'Women's Sport and the Feminist Movement', in G. Cohen (ed.), *Women in Sport. Issues and Controversies* (Newbury Park, 1993).

³ See for example M. Boutilier and L. SanGiovanni, *The Sporting Woman* (Champaign, 1983), S. Birrell, 'Is a diamond forever? Feminist transformations of sport', *Women's Studies International Forum* 10:4 (1987), and K. Fasting, 'Sports and women's culture', *Women's Studies International Forum* 10:4 (1987).

⁴ S. Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream: remembering the sixties* (London, 2000), p.4.

women, that of access to spaces of leisure. Indeed, it is one of the fundamental arguments of this thesis that women's cricket can and should be viewed as a 'feminist' activity. This chapter, which focuses on the decade in which second-wave feminism rose to prominence within British society, provides an ideal context within which to elucidate this argument. It will be shown that the WCA, in its activities, subscribed to many of the tenets of second-wave feminism, and while publicly dissociating itself from the Women's Liberation Movement, absorbed much of its ethos. Bridging the gap between sport and the feminist movement is crucial, and this chapter seeks to begin that process.

Women's sport in 1970s Britain

As ever, we must consider women's cricket within the wider context of women's sport during the 1970s. Arguably, sport is one arena in which women made little progress towards equality in this period. One example of this is the continuity in the type of press coverage which sportswomen received, which remained generally patronising and/or downright hostile. In August 1976, a few days after the first ever women's cricket international was played at Lord's, one columnist for the *Sun* wrote:

Television sport suffers a takeover today by the women. And I refuse to call them ladies. Particularly those who pranced around Lord's this week showing their knickers and screeching like Apaches on the war-path. I don't think I have ever seen a more undignified sight than women trying to play cricket.⁵

Three years earlier, an article in the *Evening Standard* covering the first women's World Cup had described the English players as having 'that weathered, muscly-thighed, broad-beamed, wind-

⁵ *The Sun*, 7 August 1976.

blown look of gym mistresses – as indeed most of them are or have been. Only three of the 16 in the team are married.⁶ There was clearly still some currency in the view that sport had the capacity to 'masculinise' its female participants.

Additionally, a new and even more disturbing element of media coverage of sportswomen in the 1970s was the developing voyeuristic obsession with the sexual attractiveness of female athletes. This needs to be situated alongside the rise of the *Sun's* Page 3 feature, launched in November 1970. The *Guardian*, for example, a newspaper that according to Dominic Sandbrook became 'a bastion of feminist ideas', featured several reports from their chief sports writer Frank Keating which carried distinctly erotic undertones.⁷ For instance, the following was published on the eve of the 1978 women's World Cup in India:

Whatever will [India] make of three lots of 16 short-skirted peaches and cream sports girls? (There will now be a short intermission for all readers and one writer to unboggle minds...) Certainly on my one experience of touring India...it became for all the obvious reasons, a recurring dream that you might play next day against three squads of 16 short-skirted peaches-and-cream sports girls, and later that evening get a decent whisky. And if that's chauvinist piggery, I'm sticking to it because dreams don't count!⁸

It was the *Daily Express* which pushed such voyeurism to its limits, though, when in May 1976 they sent an undercover female reporter, Hilaria McCarthy, into a closed-off ladies toilet at Lord's, where the Australian team were changing in preparation for a net session, in order to take a photograph of the players in various stages of undress. This was published the following day under the headline: 'Ladies at Lord's, caught in the slips'.⁹ The WCA complained afterwards that the photograph had

⁶ *Evening Standard*, 21 July 1973.

⁷ D. Sandbrook, *State of Emergency. The way we were: Britain, 1970-1974* (2010; reprinted London, 2011), p.386.

⁸ *The Guardian*, 23 December 1977.

⁹ *Daily Express*, 26 May 1976.

'caused [the Australians] great distress', but there was little redress they could take.¹⁰

This was clearly symptomatic of a more general creeping sexualisation of the media, especially the tabloids.¹¹ In spite of this, the Women's Liberation Movement largely ignored this kind of patently unequal and misogynistic treatment: major journals such as *Shrew* and *Spare Rib* contain almost no references at all to sport. An exception was *Women's Voice*, which carried a number of articles on women's football following the lifting of the ban by the FA on the sport in 1971. One author wrote in 1982 that:

Today's top women can swim faster, run faster, jump higher and longer than the great male champions of 20 years ago.

So maybe women's apparent inferiority has more to do with numbers and degree of involvement and encouragement than with innate biological differences?...For most sports, there is no reason why women should not be equal to men.¹²

Yet none of this translated itself into any kind of unified action. Whether in the cause of 'women's liberation' or not, there was an almost total absence of public campaigns to promote women's sport in the 1970s. Indeed, a good example of the lack of progress made towards equality in the arena of sport is the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975. This outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex, but with several key exemptions, including that of 'any sport...where the physical strength, stamina or physique of the average woman puts her at a disadvantage to the average man'. Deliberations around this exemption involving the Sports Council and the Home Office demonstrate that from the outset, there was an undisputed acceptance of the principle that 'men's physique gave them an advantage' in many sports.¹³ The Act thus in many cases simply further entrenched single-sex sport,

¹⁰ S. Swinburne, 'Haywire, a reply to *Heyhoe!*', WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹¹ See A. Bingham, *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford, 2009), chapter 6.

¹² *Women's Voice*, July 1982.

¹³ Memorandum, 'Sex Discrimination Bill: Sport', AT 25/236, National Archives, Kew. The section of the Act which excludes competitive sport has remained in place to the present day, in spite of other amendments.

and with it the inequitable division of sporting resources.

Women's sport was therefore almost entirely absent from the agenda of either second-wave feminists or those pushing for equal opportunities legislation during the 1960s and 1970s. This can be contrasted with the equivalent situation in America, whereby sport became a clear battleground for women's rights: the Title IX legislation of 1972, which outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex in schools, was utilised by activists who used it to push for equitable sporting provision for women throughout American educational institutions. Given that the British movement paid very little attention to the needs of sportswomen, it is perhaps unsurprising that oral history interviews suggest almost no involvement of female cricketers in any of the 1970s feminist campaigns.

The impact of Women's Liberation: the Rachael Heyhoe-Flint affair

None of this is to say that female cricketers were not having to operate within the context of the new sexual politics of Women's Liberation, a movement which dominated the cultural landscape of the 1970s. Image was extremely important to the WCA, as we have seen in previous chapters, and the environment of the 1970s, a time of renewed feminist activity, created ever greater pressures for them in this regard. Mary Ingham, who spent the late 1970s interviewing the women in their early 30s who had been her contemporaries at grammar school about their lives, noted:

The image of 'women's lib' remained that put forward by the popular press of man-hating, unfeminine extremists, and the movement itself did little to reach ordinary women to refute this. In 1977, when I first started interviewing, I did not dare mention the movement, such was its image.¹⁴

¹⁴ M. Ingham, *Now We Are Thirty. Women of the Breakthrough Generation* (London, 1981), p.140.

The popular image of second-wave feminists as unfeminine and man-hating was the antithesis of the image the WCA had sought to present. To the vast majority of cricketers, it was laughable that they would consider participating in feminist campaigns; one interviewee, when I asked her about possible involvement with the Women's Libbers, responded:

we'd laugh and say 'oh, burn our bras today!' and then Jackie Court [an England cricketer] would say 'I'm not burning mine cos I'd have two black eyes!' And you'd get the comments like that. But no, [we weren't involved].¹⁵

But this did not stop the press from continually linking the cause of women's cricket with that of radical feminism. One article written by Heyhoe-Flint about the 1973 World Cup was given the headline 'Milestone for Women's Lib',¹⁶ and when the MCC refused to allow the WCA the use of Lord's for the final, the *Guardian* suggested that 'MCC' might now stand for 'Male Chauvinist Cricket'.¹⁷ In 1979, when the MCC's rewrite of the laws of cricket was prefaced with the disclaimer that the laws applied equally to women's cricket, the *Times* presented it in the following terms: 'the women's liberation movement [has not been] forgotten'.¹⁸ And when Frank Keating received a sackful of letters of complaint in response to one of his particularly patronising articles on women's cricket, he directly linked such complaints with 'the Movement':

As storms go...the teacup is overflowing crazily. They do get tedious, do members of The Movement. They use rolling pins like Indian clubs.¹⁹

It appears that participating in a sport like cricket was enough in the eyes of some to make you a radical feminist. As one of my interviewees explained when asked whether women's cricket had

¹⁵ Interview with Chris Watmough, 3 June 2014.

¹⁶ This is referenced in *Wicket Women: cricket and women in Australia* (Kensington, 1991), p.133.

¹⁷ *The Guardian*, 14 June 1973.

¹⁸ *The Times*, 24 November 1979.

¹⁹ *The Guardian*, 16 November 1977.

ever been linked with the feminist movement: 'No I don't think so...Apart from wanting to play the game, which was considered a man's game, and therefore that gave you a tag anyway'.²⁰

Nowhere was this 'tag' more apparent than in the discourses surrounding England's captain between 1966 and 1976, Rachael Heyhoe-Flint. We saw in the previous chapter that Heyhoe-Flint had quickly, through her contacts in the world of journalism, become the most high-profile figure within women's cricket. It was during the 1970s that she became the first ever women's cricket celebrity, continuing to write for the *Daily Telegraph*, becoming one of the first ever female reporters on ITV's flagship 'World of Sport' programme, and making regular appearances on radio and television. She was charismatic and humorous, and the media loved her.

But in July 1977, Heyhoe-Flint was summoned to a meeting with the England selectors and told she was having the captaincy removed. Shortly afterwards, when the squad for that winter's World Cup campaign in India was announced, her name was excluded. The decision had almost certainly not been made for cricketing reasons, and it was highly controversial: in her ten-year stint as captain, Heyhoe-Flint had gone undefeated in Tests, had hit a stoic 179 in the Oval Test match the previous summer against the Australians, thus saving the game for England, and had performed well in the 1977 season trials. An Extraordinary General Meeting was held at the request of the membership just weeks after the announcement, attended by over 200 people, and an overwhelming vote of no confidence was declared in the selectors. The WCA Executive refused to pass comment on the decision, stating only that it had been a private committee decision and that the captaincy had never been a permanent post. A media storm ensued, and Jack Hayward, a multi-millionaire patron of the WCA who had financed the first ever World Cup in 1973, withdrew his financial support. The whole episode was described by David Frith, the editor of *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, as 'a dark blot

²⁰ Interview with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014.

on English sport'.²¹

As still possibly the most famous, and certainly one of the most talented, female cricketers England has ever produced, the mystery behind Heyhoe-Flint's sacking has remained unresolved to this day. Indeed it has been difficult even in numerous oral history interviews to discover the reasoning behind the selectors' decision, with many interviewees displaying a marked reluctance to discuss the episode. It is generally accepted, though, that the decision was made for personal, not cricketing, reasons, and that, as Heyhoe-Flint suggested in her autobiography, she 'may not exactly have endeared [herself] to the...straight-laced establishment of women's cricket'.²²

What exactly was the problem? It was suggested at the time that much of the bad feeling towards Heyhoe-Flint within women's cricket was down to jealousy. Many worked tirelessly behind the scenes to promote women's cricket, yet Heyhoe-Flint was the public face of the Association, and as such received much of the credit for the success of occasions like the 1973 World Cup. When the *Daily Express* interviewed WCA Chairman Rosemary Goodchild in the wake of the sacking, she said: 'I would never decry the wonderful work that Rachael has done for the Association. But she is not *the* Association.' Their reporter concluded: 'That is the rub. Rachael did so much for women's cricket that she became women's cricket.'²³ No doubt there was an element of personal resentment. Yet representations of Heyhoe-Flint during the 1970s, including in her autobiography *Heyhoe!*, published in 1978 as a response to her sacking, arguably also help to explain the rationale behind the decision: that many of her activities in the 1970s could be viewed as radically feminist.

²¹ *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, June 1979.

²² R. Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe! The autobiography of Rachael Heyhoe-Flint* (London, 1978), p.33.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.27.

This was epitomised in the recollections of one interviewee, a former England player who was heavily involved in the administration of the women's game during the 1970s:

She [Heyhoe-Flint] once chained herself to Lords I think it was. No it wasn't Lords, it was, where would it be? A bit like a suffragette would have done. And it caused absolute hell in the Women's Cricket Association. Because she was out of order, and the women's cricket had to take the blame...I think it was the House of Commons, the Houses of Parliament or something. But that was typical. She was making a point, which looked as though it was on behalf of the Women's Cricket Association, and wasn't....that was what we were afraid of all the time. Because that could, it clearly was not good for the image of the WCA, and it wasn't, one person shouldn't be judged, but because she was in the line of the newspapers and everything else, she was on television, she was, she made the most of that and it didn't help the Association.²⁴

I have found no other references to this incident, but in some ways it matters little whether it occurred or not. Heyhoe-Flint was clearly associated with the feminist cause in the minds of her fellow cricketers, and this was perceived as damaging to the image of women's cricket.

In any case, there are numerous well-documented activities which she was involved in which had strong feminist connotations. One of these was the organisation of fund-raising matches against men on a large scale, inspired by the charity match Colin Cowdrey had organised in the summer of 1963, featuring ex-England men's internationals against a current England Women's XI.²⁵ Generally Heyhoe-Flint would take an England Women's XI, made up of the top female cricketers in the country, to play against a men's club, who would guarantee a certain amount of money in return, as well as a large crowd to aid with publicity. The WCA Executive did not attempt to prevent these, given that they resulted in enormous amounts of money for the Association (between 1970 and 1975, almost £4250 was raised as a result).²⁶ But matches of this kind had been officially banned by the WCA until 1970 due to fears that mixed cricket would lead to unfavourable comparisons

²⁴ The interviewee wishes to remain anonymous.

²⁵ This was the match referenced in the introduction, during which Len Hutton uttered the immortal words: 'Women playing cricket is like a man trying to knit'.

²⁶ *WCA Bulletin*, December 1975.

between the female and male players, and there was clearly still some discomfort in the Association about the concept. This can only have been enhanced when Heyhoe-Flint described one 1973 match against an Old England Men's XI captained by Denis Compton as a 'Women's Lib match'.²⁷

In truth, such matches did not seek to undermine the societal gender order: Heyhoe-Flint consistently stressed that 'we do not compare very favourably [with the men], because of the obvious strength difference', and the men's sides were often requested not to bowl at full pace.²⁸ Nonetheless, there were obvious comparisons in the minds of the public with the 'Battle of the Sexes' tennis matches played in the US, whereby Billie Jean King's 1973 victory over Bobby Riggs was heralded as a significant victory for the feminist cause. Heyhoe-Flint herself acknowledged that, should a man be bowled out by a female bowler, 'that quality known as the male ego is sorely tested and when it is threatened by the audacity of a woman, it is more than some men can do to restrain themselves'.²⁹ There was another element to these matches, too, that displeased many within the WCA, and that was the fact that the money raised was deposited in a separate bank account, administered by Heyhoe-Flint and the West Midlands WCA, and the funds distributed at the end of each season according to their wishes. Often, it was divided equally between the England players who had featured in the matches, to help cover the expenses of participating in tours. Yet this smacked of player payment, something that was in clear contravention of the WCA's ruling on amateurism.

Indeed, one of the bugbears of the WCA when it came to Heyhoe-Flint was an ongoing dispute over her amateur status. Heyhoe-Flint herself insists to this day that she remained an amateur throughout

²⁷ *The Cricketer*, July 1973.

²⁸ R. Heyhoe-Flint and N. Rheinberg, *Fair play: the story of women's cricket* (London, 1976), p.162.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.163.

her playing career.³⁰ Yet several of her team mates and those on the WCA Executive disputed this in interviews, claiming that when she agreed sponsorship deals on behalf of the WCA during the 1970s, she would ask for a personal percentage commission of the agreed amount. It was also suggested that one of the other countries participating in the World Cup in India in 1978 threatened to withdraw from the competition if Heyhoe-Flint was selected, as she was not considered to be a true amateur.³¹ Given that she was selected again for England for the next international series against the West Indies in 1979, this is plausible. Whatever the truth of the matter, the point is that Heyhoe-Flint herself made no secret of the fact that she felt there to be no reason why she should not make money out of cricket. In one column for *The Cricketer* in 1982, on the subject of the Indian women's team, she wrote:

[India] are in effect professionals as they are taken away from their homes and jobs for months on end while they are coached and trained. They were even given spending money while they were at the World Cup and the entire costs of their tour and preparation were funded by their government – Whitehall please copy!³²

Heyhoe-Flint also adopted the discourse of 'equal opportunities' in some of her media work. In 1976, for example, she appeared on BBC Radio 4's *World at One* programme citing examples of girls who had approached male PE teachers asking to play cricket and had been refused on the grounds that it was 'a man's game'. She argued that continued discrimination against schoolgirls playing cricket might well, in the wake of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, now be illegal.³³ Several years later she again took up the issue, this time in a column for *The Cricketer*:

Three letters I received over the last month have revealed a disturbing trend in mixed senior

³⁰ Interview with Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, 17 July 2014.

³¹ The interviewees concerned wish to remain anonymous.

³² *The Cricketer*, April 1982.

³³ *The Cricketer*, October 1976.

schools of ignoring the demand from girls to play cricket. I wonder if the Equal Opportunities Commission might consider the lack of provision of equal opportunity for girls to play the sport of cricket, if their demands are constantly turned down by physical educationalists?³⁴

This was not the first time that she had attempted to apply the full force of the Sex Discrimination Act to women's sport. In December 1975, the following story was widely reported:

The captain of the English women's cricket team, Mrs Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, is toying with the idea of drawing the behaviour of the MCC to the attention of the Equal Opportunities Commission. She believes the MCC is not being as accommodating as it might be to the ladies, since the team is continually refused permission to play at Lord's...Mrs Heyhoe-Flint suspects the MCC has been reluctant to make room. 'Next season they'll have such crowd-pullers as the Eton and Harrow match and the National Club Cricket knockout final,' she says. She points out that the women's side has been asking to play at Lord's for six years now.³⁵

According to Heyhoe-Flint, the story emerged from a casual conversation she had with *Daily Mirror* journalist Frank Taylor; the comment was intended to be tongue-in-cheek, and she 'never had the slightest intention of carrying out the threat'.³⁶ Nonetheless, the feminist connotations of the threat horrified the rest of the WCA hierarchy, and they quickly and publicly detached themselves from the story.

Heyhoe-Flint was clearly not a radical feminist, and there is no evidence that she had any direct involvement with the Women's Liberation Movement. In the preface to her autobiography, published in 1978, she made this overtly clear, stating that:

[Entering politics] would certainly mean challenging male supremacy, but I've been doing that for years anyway so it wouldn't be anything different! By that token it doesn't mean I'm Women's Lib – far from it, because I value that bit of underwear they rush out and burn each week with a matinee on Wednesdays. I, too, believe in good support.³⁷

³⁴ *The Cricketer*, August 1982.

³⁵ *The Guardian*, 19 December 1975.

³⁶ Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, p.38.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.14.

It is telling, though, that she felt the need to explicitly deny the label. In many respects, as the public face of the WCA, her use of the rhetoric of Women's Lib makes it almost certain that she contributed to the continual association of the sport with radical feminism during the 1970s, as we saw above. It is likely that removing her from the captaincy was thus seen by the WCA as a way in which they could distance themselves from the radical connotations of her behaviour. This is suggestive of the negative ways in which second-wave feminism was viewed by many of those administering women's cricket during the 1970s.

Working with men: the 'softly softly approach'

Why, though, was it such a priority for the WCA to distance itself from the phenomenon of second-wave feminism? One important factor was the need to continue the positive relationships they had established with many cricketing men. As feminism became ever more radical throughout the 1970s, the idea of 'political lesbianism', the need for a total separation from the male 'enemy', was increasingly pushed, and campaigns were launched 'designed to highlight the destructive power of men'.³⁸ Though not all second-wave feminists subscribed to such ideas – indeed, this was one of the issues which led to the eventual fragmentation of the movement – it was this aspect which was highlighted by the media, and which came to be most heavily associated with Women's Liberation in the minds of the general public. Given that the WCA were still exceptionally weak in numerical terms – the Sports Council estimated that there were 20,000 cricket clubs operating in Great Britain in 1973, with 400,000 men participating regularly in the game, whereas the WCA boasted a mere 66 clubs in the same year – they simply could not afford to antagonise those who, as we have seen in

³⁸ Bouchier, *The feminist challenge*, p.140.

earlier chapters, facilitated their access to vital resources.³⁹

Such dependence on male support only increased during the 1970s, as evidenced by the growth of women's clubs utilising net facilities owned by men's clubs over the period. Additionally, given the dearth of local female clubs and the WCA's decision to lift the ban on mixed cricket, some clubs also began to rely on men's teams to provide opposition. And with the onset of mass comprehensive education in the 1970s, the traditional hub of support for schoolgirl cricket, the girls' grammar school, disappeared. This expansion of co-education led the WCA towards looking to the provision of mixed-gender opportunities: mixed primary school cricket on equal terms, wrote Heyhoe-Flint and Rheinberg in their 1976 history of women's cricket, *Fair Play*, was now 'the ideal'.⁴⁰

The WCA continued to try to build good relationships with the governing bodies of men's cricket, and were largely successful. The new structure of men's cricket introduced in 1967 (see chapter 2) required each county to form a 'Cricket Association', and several of these sought WCA representation on their committees from the outset. Indeed Rosemary Goodchild, WCA chairman, reported in 1977 that she had been 'introduced to many of the NCA [National Cricket Association] Officers and delegates from the County Associations; she was impressed by the general atmosphere of "wanting to be helpful to the WCA"'.⁴¹ When the NCA's Test Award Scheme for young cricketers was launched at Lord's in 1972, six girls from Bedford High School took part; a year later, the NCA reported that 'the scheme is becoming popular with the girls and in the schools where the tests have been taken, the girls have outshone the boys'.⁴² Many more girls of school age were exposed to cricket as a result of this type of coaching scheme. The good working relationship between the NCA

³⁹ UK Sports Council, *Provision for sport, volume 2* (London, 1973), p.33.

⁴⁰ Heyhoe-Flint and Rheinberg, *Fair Play*, p.159.

⁴¹ *WCA Bulletin*, June 1977.

⁴² WCA Yearbook, 1974, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

and the WCA would persist into the 1980s as their coaching structures became increasingly intertwined.

Of course, much of this is suggestive of the fact that the men within these organisations were absorbing the new discourses of equality which were beginning to permeate British society during the 1970s. Nonetheless, there is direct evidence to suggest that such support was conditional on the WCA's public dissociation from the feminist movement. One good example is the negotiations with the MCC which took place over a possible match at Lord's in 1976. According to MCC minutes, the initial request made by the WCA in 1974 for a match during their Golden Jubilee year was turned down due to 'the relaying of the square and the considerable number of matches played each season'.⁴³ But in January 1976 it was reported that the main committee had decided, 'in view of the very charming letter received from the Women's Cricket Association, [that] consideration should be given to providing them with a match on the main playing area'.⁴⁴

The delicate and secret nature of these negotiations was one reason why the WCA Executive were so angry about Rachael Heyhoe-Flint's threat in the press to take the MCC to the Equal Opportunities Commission: they recognised that such rhetoric had the possibility to destabilise the negotiation process entirely. Indeed, the minutes imply that it was only in response to the WCA's profuse apologies that the MCC decided to go ahead with the fixture:

The Secretary reported that he had received a very pleasant letter from the Women's Cricket Association disassociating themselves from articles in the Press concerning England's Women's Cricket Team being unable to play at Lord's. The W.C.A wished to apologise for any embarrassment that had been caused.

As a result, the M.C.C Committee had felt that it would be a suitable gesture to offer the

⁴³ MCC Grounds and Fixtures Sub-Committee minutes, 19 August 1974.

⁴⁴ MCC Committee minutes, 14 January 1976.

W.C.A the use of Lord's for their Test Match against Australia.⁴⁵

The match, a 60-over One Day International, duly went ahead on 4 August 1976, a historic day for women's cricket: the first time women had ever played on the main ground at the Home of Cricket. Yet the MCC were clearly still cautious of the possible agenda of a team of women who were, after all, captained by Heyhoe-Flint. An extract from my interview with Shirley Hodges, who kept wicket for England during the match, is telling:

SH: ...they took security so, it was so strong at Lords, they wouldn't even let somebody carry your bag in to you, they stopped anybody coming in to the changing room. But by the end, by the time we played, they realised that we had just come to play cricket, we hadn't just come to be feminists and ruin their precious Lords!...

RN: Was that the perception then do you think, that you were feminists?

SH: Oh it was, yes...In fact, if I remember rightly we weren't allowed through the Long Room on the way out to field. Because we won the toss and fielded first. But we were after lunch!...

RN: Why did they change it?

SH: Well, probably realised that we were there to play cricket!⁴⁶

Playing at Lord's was a significant step for women's cricket, and was recognised as such by the press: David Frith in *The Cricketer* described it as 'women's cricket's greatest day – the “final bastion” falling, the “last male preserve” scuttled...when June Stephenson bowled that opening ball to Lorraine Hill at Lord's on that Wednesday in August, something more than a game of cricket had started'.⁴⁷ Colin Cowdrey, in the same year that the match took place, wrote that: 'The all-male

⁴⁵ MCC Grounds and Fixtures Sub-Committee minutes, 2 March 1976.

⁴⁶ Interview with Shirley Hodges, 5 June 2014.

⁴⁷ *The Cricketer*, September 1976.

cricket party is over'.⁴⁸ Yet entry into possibly the most hallowed space in cricket, the Long Room at Lord's, seems only to have occurred as a result of the WCA's disavowal of a Women's Lib agenda.

As one of my interviewees, Cathy Mowat, stated:

I can imagine the effect that any strident Women's Libber had on most cricket organisations would have been very negative. It was, for me personally, it was a very softly softly approach, not being strident and saying 'we must have this, we must have that', because you don't get anywhere... You needed to be far more diplomatic than that.⁴⁹

Pragmatism, then, was the watchword of the WCA during the 1970s. This tells us much about the problems many women encountered during the onset of second-wave feminism, and the ways in which they dealt with its negative connotations. Perhaps for some women, the rejection of the 'feminist' label had more to do with practical than ideological concerns.

'Chopping and changing it all around': female cricketers as anti-feminist?

The suggestion that many women sought to distance themselves from the label of 'feminism' during the 1970s for pragmatic rather than ideological reasons was borne out in the discussions surrounding the term 'feminist' in oral history interviews. It quickly became apparent during these interviews that the feminist label was not one with which the majority of my interviewees wanted to identify. The response of Norma Whitehorn, aged 82, was typical:

RN: The other thing is that the media seems to have labelled female cricketers as 'women's libbers' and seen you as feminists. I wondered what you made of that.

NW: Yes, I'm not greatly enamoured. I mean there's always somebody who will want to pick on something and chop and change it all around.

⁴⁸ Heyhoe-Flint and Rheinberg, *Fair Play*, p.11.

⁴⁹ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

RN: So you don't think, did you see yourselves as fighting against inequality or anything like that?

NW: No, no, not really, no.⁵⁰

For Norma, and for others, to represent their actions as 'feminist' is to 'chop and change' them around, to misrepresent them. Cricket was a recreational activity, pure and simple. However, as I explored this issue further with some interviewees, it became clear that their relationship with feminism was more complicated than the straightforward rejection they initially presented. Take this extract from my interview with Janet Bitmead, aged 64:

RN: Are you a feminist?

JB: Oh, I wouldn't have said so, no, no...to me a feminist is someone who is quite outspoken about things, and I don't think women's cricket, any one person is outspoken about anything like that...I suppose you're always trying to move the barrier, the men, trying to give you a few more facilities...

RN: So have any of the women that you've played cricket with been feminists, would you say?

JB: Oh I wouldn't have said so, no. That's all burning bras isn't it? I don't think any of them are like that! Obviously they like to show that they're as good as the men, and we have, we've bowled out a few men in our time playing in the friendly games and things...

RN: Do you feel like the Women's Libbers in the 1970s had any impact on women's cricket?

JB: Erm, well I suppose probably then it made, we had quite a strong team in the '70s, so people were about. Whether it made people who thought they couldn't play could now play, possibly. Yeah, just possibly.⁵¹

This abstract is very revealing about Janet's views of feminism. To her, a 'feminist' is someone who is outspoken in public and who burns her bra. And yet she tacitly recognises that feminism did have the ability to improve female self-confidence and transform women's consciousness. Indeed, much

⁵⁰ Interview with Norma Whitehorn, 14 May 2013. All ages given are the age of the interviewee at the time of the interview.

⁵¹ Interview with Janet Bitmead, 21 October 2013.

of the hostility expressed towards the 'feminist' label in interviews appeared to stem from the experiences of a generation of women who associated it with 'bra-burning' and negative feelings towards men. As Graham Dawson has argued, we compose stories about ourselves in interviews which relate to public discourses; the current cultural representation of 'feminism', just as it was by the late 1970s, is of a small group of angry lesbians who burn their bras.⁵²

Nonetheless, what female cricketers appeared to be rejecting was not the idea of equality, nor indeed the idea that playing cricket enabled them to transform societal expectations about the role of women, but any association with the radical strand of second-wave feminism which has, for a certain generation who lived through the 1970s, come to define the feminist movement as a whole. The reasons why some female cricketers refused to self-identify as 'feminist' demonstrated this clearly. Cecilia Robinson, for example, aged 90 at the time of interview, when asked if she was a feminist responded:

I would never think of that, particularly. No...I started off by playing with boys! Didn't think it would make me a feminist!

Cecilia appeared to feel that alongside the feminist label went the idea of female separatism. Yet she followed this up immediately with a telling anecdote:

But I remember, I always do remember, my mother always quotes someone who was a schoolmaster, of either John or Edward's [her brothers], came and called on my mother...I was about, probably about five or six, and been playing with the boys. And he said to my mother, 'she's going to be the best cricketer'.⁵³

Cecilia was clearly proud that her cricketing ability enabled her to be the best cricketer in her

⁵² G. Dawson, *Soldier heroes: British adventure, empire, and the imagining of masculinities* (London, 1994). Bra-burning was of course itself a myth created and perpetuated by the media; no feminists in the 1960s or 1970s ever participated in such an act. See A. Carter, *The Politics of Women's Rights* (London, 1988), p.53.

⁵³ Interview with Cecilia Robinson, 23 June 2014.

family, regardless of gender, and was keen to articulate this. In fact, the perceived inferiority of the women's game in comparison to the men's was mentioned time and time again in interviews when I brought up the issue of feminism; in every case, my interviewees insisted that women's cricket was 'just as good' as the men's game. Precisely the same juxtaposition occurred during Cathy Mowat's interview:

CM: ...it's a very good sport, a very good sport. I'm not saying we want to compete with the men but if men do come and watch women's cricket at top level they realise that at the technical side of things we're just as good as the men. In fact some, I've heard some cricket men, male spectators say they prefer to watch women's cricket because it's not all crash-bang-whallop...

RN: So would you describe yourself as a feminist?

CM: No. No.⁵⁴

For these women, despite their verbal rejections of the 'feminist' label, feminism was clearly linked with a very public discourse of female equality and physical strength, and this was something which they could and did accept was important in their cricketing lives.

The minority of women who did identify with the 'feminist' label during interviews did so only when they had qualified what the term meant within the context of the interview. A good example is the exchange that took place during my interview with Pat Siderfin, aged 78, and her husband

Steve:

RN: So it sounds like, would you describe yourself as a feminist, Pat?

PS: What does that actually mean?

RN: Good question.

SS: Equal rights with men.

⁵⁴ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

PS: If that's the case, yes. I've always been equal. They can't really do anything better than women.⁵⁵

Mollie Buckland, aged 77, also explained to me that to her, being a feminist meant that 'a person's a person, and whatever they're capable of doing, no matter whether it's a man or a woman, they should be allowed to do it'.⁵⁶ Cricketing feminism, in these conversations, meant equal opportunities feminism, and not the radical overthrow of the patriarchy. Perhaps it was easier for older women who could recall a time before being a 'feminist' automatically made you a 'Women's Libber' to accept such a label.

Only one of my interviewees expressed her views about feminism in radical terms, and that was Enid Bakewell, aged 72:

RN: Would you describe yourself as a feminist?

EB: Oh yes. Yes. Yes. The two have been combined, the fight to establish myself as a woman. Particularly in men's cricket which is so, can be so chauvinistic.⁵⁷

Enid grew up in Newstead, a mining village in Nottinghamshire, and proudly relayed to me throughout the interview the various ways in which she had challenged the gender barriers she had encountered throughout her life: going to Dartford PE College even while already engaged; continuing to teach after she got married; defying her husband's wishes when it came to going on cricket tours. In one revealing abstract, she explained:

Certainly it was a very male-dominated area where I lived. I mean I can remember one chap who I think fancied me say, 'well what are you going to do with this grammar school education?' They couldn't see any point in a girl being educated. I said, 'well if nothing else I'll pass it onto my children'. And you always get, I later on got on the committee at Notts representing women,

⁵⁵ Interview with Pat and Steve Siderfin, 27 May 2014.

⁵⁶ Interview with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014.

⁵⁷ Interview with Enid Bakewell, 17 October 2013.

and I'd go to a match and there'd be a girl there playing against boys who were older than her, Jane Smit who played for England and our Notts wicket-keeper. And she'd be scoring 94 you see, and he'd say, 'well she's not an Ian Botham'. And I'm thinking, 'well why would she want to be an Ian Botham? She's a character in her own right.'

Enid's juxtaposition in this abstract of the sexism she faced growing up in a mining village, and the later attitude to women in cricket she encountered, suggest that for her, the two things were part and parcel of the same underlying societal attitude to women. The fact that Enid adopted the term 'chauvinism' during the interview demonstrated that she had absorbed some of the discourses of radical feminism. For Enid, who self-identifies as both as a feminist and a socialist, cricket was simply one further expression of the autonomy she had fought for in many areas of her life. Yet she appears to have been atypical of women cricketers; in many ways, it was her working-class background in a mining village, another atypical element of her profile as a female cricketer, which shaped her beliefs. Her atypicality was underlined when I asked her if her fellow cricketers were also feminists. 'That I don't know,' was the response. 'Basically we just talk about cricket when it comes to that.' Radical feminism was not something which Enid felt able to share in a cricketing context.

As the interviewer, there is a definite issue of interpretive conflict here, as far as misrepresenting the voices of these women goes: is the term 'feminist' really appropriate to describe this group of women, given their almost wholesale rejection of that label? I am not the first feminist oral historian to encounter this problem. In a now famous article Katherine Borland tells of the story of interviewing her elderly grandmother. Borland chose when writing up her research to interpret her grandmother's life using a feminist framework, an interpretation which was subsequently vehemently rejected by her grandmother after she read the written-up version, and in fact caused her some distress. Borland writes the following:

For feminists, the issue of interpretive authority is particularly problematic, for our work often involves a contradiction. On the one hand, we seek to empower the women we work with by revaluing their perspectives, their lives, and their art in a world that has systematically ignored or trivialized women's culture. On the other, we hold an explicitly political vision that our field collaborators, many of who do not consider themselves feminists, may not recognize as valid... What should we do when we women disagree?⁵⁸

Yet to present these women as totally apart from and outside of feminism would merely perpetuate the incomplete version of the women's movement in twentieth-century Britain which currently exists, a version which continues to marginalise certain groups of women, including sportswomen, who did not subscribe to the tenets of radical 1970s feminism. Given their espousal of equality and the ways in which they had absorbed the discourses of equal opportunities which were present in the 1970s, it is arguable that many cricketers expressed liberal feminist sentiments throughout the interviews.

'It was my escape!': women's cricket as a feminist act

How, though, should we situate female cricketers within the feminist movement, given their rejection of the label 'feminist'? There has been much recent debate about the thorny question of how inclusive historians of women should be when it comes to labelling women's organisations as feminist. Maggie Andrews argues that in spite of its overt rejection of feminism, the Women's Institute needs to be reclaimed as feminist: 'It offers a potential for women to be themselves, to develop their own value system, creativity, humour and sense of self worth: as such it can not fail to provide space for feminism'.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Cordelia Moyse in her history of the Mothers' Union argues that 'the lack of shared motivation and analysis of gender politics undermine[s] the

⁵⁸ K. Borland, "'That's not what I said": Interpretative conflict in oral narrative research', in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (1998; reprinted Oxford, 2006), p.311.

⁵⁹ M. Andrews, *The acceptable face of feminism: the Women's Institute as a social movement* (London, 1997), p.12.

inclusion of some women's groups into the feminist movement'. Andrews, she suggests, 'is guilty of creating what might be called "anonymous feminists", women who belong to a movement towards which they are at best indifferent and at worst hostile'.⁶⁰ Most recently, Catriona Beaumont's study of the Mothers' Union, Catholic Women's League, National Council of Women, Women's Institutes and National Union of Townswomen's Guilds concurs with Moyse in arguing that such organisations never questioned traditional gender roles, or defined themselves as feminist groups: 'It would be wrong therefore to attempt to reconceptualise these groups so that they take on a more recognisable feminist identity'. Beaumont, however, attempts to broaden the term 'women's movement' away from its associations with feminism, arguing that it needs to be 'recast as a social movement encompassing all women's organisations, including feminist, political and conservative women's groups, who campaigned to improve the position and status of women in society throughout the twentieth century'.⁶¹

In attempting to expand the horizons of feminist historians to consider broader definitions of the women's movement, Beaumont's work is thus helpful with regard to women's cricket and the WCA: sporting organisations, too, need to be reconceptualised as part of a thriving women's movement throughout the twentieth century in Britain. The Women's Cricket Association, similarly to the WI and the Mothers' Union, was a female-only space which allowed women autonomy and provided them with a support network. Members of the WCA certainly recognised very strongly the importance of this, even when attempting to strengthen their relationships with men's cricketing bodies. The minutes of one Executive Committee meeting in 1974 state:

Miss Goodchild [Vice-Chairman] asked what our future role would be with NCA and it was

⁶⁰ C. Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism and Globalisation, 1876-2008* (Woodbridge, 2009), p.10.

⁶¹ C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens. Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester, 2013), pp.2-3.

agreed the WCA should continue to work with them as closely as possible as there was a very happy relationship at the moment, but *the WCA must keep its own identity*.⁶²

Right up until the 1990s, the WCA remained an organisation in which no man was permitted to take office or become a full member.⁶³

The Association was also keen to utilise female umpires and coaches throughout its history, and men were excluded from joining the WCA's 'A' Register of umpires, from which all umpires for women's international matches were selected. This policy was occasionally questioned, especially during the 1970s when a shortage of qualified female umpires occurred, but the WCA Executive continued to reject requests for the use of male umpires in top-level women's matches, and the tradition of using female umpires in women's internationals lasted right up until 1996.⁶⁴ When I queried why this was WCA policy with Sheila Hill, aged 85 and a top-level umpire since the 1960s, she responded:

we were swamped out anyway in numbers...we had to keep our heads up above the parapet. We weren't highly regarded. There was an enormous boom in the '30s...[but] that waned. We did everything ourselves. We ran our tours ourselves, we appointed our umpires, we ran our teams...everything was done by the WCA.⁶⁵

Andrews sees the women-only status of the WI as significant because it offers an arena in which women can be themselves and thus develop their sense of self worth.⁶⁶ I would argue that the same

⁶² WCA Executive Committee minutes, 17 February 1974, WCA Archive, Lancashire. My emphasis.

⁶³ A handful of men were granted Associate membership, but this did not give them voting privileges at WCA meetings.

⁶⁴ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 27 June 1971, 16 October 1971, 15 April 1972, 3 September 1972 and November 1976, WCA Archive, Lancashire. Interestingly, England was the only country to implement such a policy.

⁶⁵ Interview with Sheila Hill, 10 June 2014.

⁶⁶ Andrews, *The acceptable face of feminism*, p.12.

is true of the Women's Cricket Association. Yet arguments about the 'feminist' status of the WCA can be pushed even further than this. Beaumont's rejection of the feminist label in association with women's organisations hangs on her assertion that before the onset of the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s, no women's organisation had challenged the idea that women's primary role was to care for their husbands and families at home.⁶⁷ Even if one accepts this argument, what has become apparent in the interviews I have conducted is that female cricketers never subscribed to this model of domesticity. Here was the key difference between the WCA and any of the aforementioned women's groups, and here is the key reason why it seems entirely appropriate to label women's cricket as a feminist activity.

For example, despite the fact that marriage had become 'virtually universal' in the 1960s,⁶⁸ large numbers of women who played cricket remained unmarried. During my conversation with Norma Whitehorn, who played club and county cricket from the 1940s to the 1960s, the subject of her non-marriage arose:

NW: So when I go, the Whitehorn dynasty ends. Unless I decide to get married suddenly, and I don't think I will somehow! [Laughs]

RN: So you haven't ever been married?

NW: No. Never had any inclinations. As I used to say, 'no, I'll take my hockey stick and cricket bat to bed thank you'. And that was, that was my way of life.⁶⁹

Norma chose to reject marriage altogether. For her, cricket (and hockey) were a 'way of life'. The subtext here is that both were too important to her to risk having to give them up on marriage.

⁶⁷ C. Beaumont, 'The Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship, 1918-1950s', in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), pp.275-6.

⁶⁸ J. Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945* (Oxford, 1992), p.72.

⁶⁹ Interview with Norma Whitehorn, 14 May 2013.

Indeed, this was recognisably a risk for women growing up in the environment of 1950s and 1960s Britain. Mollie Buckland had met her future husband in her early 20s, just prior to the 1960/1 tour of South Africa. She was determined to go on tour even if it meant giving up their blossoming relationship:

I had an inkling then that this was going to be, there was going to be a serious relationship, but I was not going to give up this chance to go abroad. I just wasn't. It was too – I knew that it was my big chance to go. But I also knew that if I did marry him, when I came back...I would never go again. Because I'd never have the money to do it...I said to Gerry, 'well I'm going. Whatever happens I'm going.' And I was selected, so that was nice. And then when I came back, I thought, 'well have I jiggered it now? Have I lost this?' But no. He said, 'okay, now will you marry me?' And I said, 'yes I will'...And I knew that if I did decide that I was going to get married, then I would lose my cricket...but I didn't care, I'd done it!⁷⁰

Mollie wanted to get married, and was prepared to give up playing cricket once she had done so: she never represented England again after the 1960/1 tour (though she remained involved in WCA administration). Yet she was also prepared to put the possibility of marriage at risk in order to first fulfil her own cricketing ambitions.

Historians of women's leisure have tended to stress that 'life-cycle' was a determining factor in the ability of women to participate in sport. For example, Claire Langhamer's study of women's leisure in Manchester between 1920 and 1960 concludes that, upon marriage, 'women's own individual leisure preferences were subsumed into those of the family', with domestic labour severely limiting any expectations of leisure time.⁷¹ Yet, as Jean Williams points out, for women involved in sport it often became 'a defining part of their life-long identity' and was not simply dispensed with upon marriage.⁷² In fact, evidence abounds that female cricketers both wanted and were actively

⁷⁰ Interview with Mollie Buckland, 18 June 2014.

⁷¹ C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920-1960* (Manchester, 2000), pp.133-144.

⁷² J. Williams, *A Contemporary History of Women's Sport, Part One. Sporting Women, 1850-1950* (Oxford, 2014), p. 22.

encouraged by their team mates to continue with cricket upon marriage. One news item in the *WCA Bulletin* of September 1970, for example, read:

On Saturday September 5th, Myra Riley was married to Malcolm Barton but we think we may persuade her to continue her cricketing activities.⁷³

Cricket, by its very nature, requires women to regularly be outside of the home for a significant period of time (much longer than, say, a WI meeting). As feminist sociologists have recognised, participating in sport is therefore a 'feminist act' simply because it asserts women's right to time away from the home.⁷⁴ Indeed, there is evidence that for some women this was the most important reason for their participation. Two women who attended the WCA's Cricket Week in August 1977 commented: 'We like the break away from our husbands, our family and cooking meals – and we enjoy the cricket'.⁷⁵ Janet Bitmead, who married in 1970 and had two sons in the ensuing years, stated in our interview that cricket 'was my escape'.⁷⁶ And several other interviewees explained to me that continuing with cricket was non-negotiable as far as their choice of husband was concerned. Pat Siderfin, who took up cricket in the late 1940s and married Steve in 1962, had two children:

RN: ...has that ever been an issue for...you, in terms of having to stop playing when you had children?

PS: Not if I wanted it not to be. It's just that you dictate to the men and they accept it!

SS: I was there to be a taxi!

Pat chose to marry Steve because, in her words, 'he was a person who would let me do what I

⁷³ *WCA Bulletin*, September 1970.

⁷⁴ See for example M. Burton Nelson, *The stronger women get, the more men love football: sexism and the American culture of sport* (1994; reprinted London, 1996).

⁷⁵ *WCA Bulletin*, August 1978.

⁷⁶ Interview with Janet Bitmead, 21 October 2013.

wanted to do...if I wanted to climb on Everest or go to the moon, I don't think Steve would have stopped me. Mind you, I don't think I'd have given him a chance to.⁷⁷

For some women, this insistence on their own space and time for leisure caused tensions within their marital relationships. Enid Bakewell married in her early 20s, after finishing her teacher training, and talked of a husband who initially 'encouraged her' and was 'quite happy' with her cricket. However, tensions were caused when she decided, apparently independently, to go away on an international tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1968/9, leaving her husband to care for their three year old daughter:

...he wrote during this four and a half months tour and he said 'this is too long'. Because he, my parents looked after Lorna during the week and then he'd have her at the weekend.

Enid, though, continued to go on international cricket tours, right up until the 1982 World Cup in New Zealand when she left three children aged 15, 11 and 10 behind with her husband.

Earlier in the interview she had relayed the following incident, which took place in the mid-1970s and is rather telling:

...I mean I did actually play for a men's side locally once. I was playing at the Oval and they rang up because they'd got a holiday...they have a pit holiday regularly, and it's the same fortnight each year. And they rang up and said they were short, would I play for them? Well I came back and of course I told my husband. So he said 'right, if you're playing for the men, I'm going!' So he packed his bag and he actually went off for a night. Came back for his Sunday lunch though.

In Enid's words, 'he couldn't really do anything about it, because my first love has always been cricket'.

⁷⁷ Interview with Pat and Steve Siderfin, 27 May 2014.

It emerged later in the interview that in 1990, Enid had left her husband. She presented the decision as follows:

I left him years ago, because I felt I really needed to do my own thing, and I'm not going to be able to do it with him tagging along.⁷⁸

To Enid, cricket, her 'first love', was more important than marital harmony, to the point where she was prepared to end her marriage to continue to exert her own leisure preferences. This demonstrates forcefully the importance of cricket in the lives of some women.

It is significant, too, that Enid continued to play cricket even after becoming a mother, and was prepared to be apart from her children for lengthy periods of time, even when they were very young. All this took place in an era when John Bowlby's ideas of 'maternal deprivation', in which any kind of separation between a child and their mother was seen as neglectful, still held sway in much of society.⁷⁹ Though Enid was probably exceptional in leaving such a young child for a lengthy period of time, she was certainly not the only cricketer determined to combine motherhood and cricket. One exchange of correspondence in *Women's Cricket* magazine in the 1960s was sparked off by a letter from Alison Littlefair of Kent, who asked for advice: 'I have become the mother of a baby girl and...am determined not to stagnate in domesticity...how does one manage to resume playing and look after one's charge?'⁸⁰ The practical advice contained in the replies received show a clear acceptance of combining cricket with motherhood within the women's cricket community.

In fact, what is striking is that many female cricketers advocated placing the playing of cricket

⁷⁸ Interview with Enid Bakewell, 17 October 2013.

⁷⁹ See M. Thomson, *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, 2013), chapter 3.

⁸⁰ *Women's Cricket*, 5 May 1963.

above domestic commitments. In an article aimed at club cricketers penned in 1977, the WCA chairman wrote: 'although Friday night may be bath night and Monday wash night, these are both movable, if not deletable feasts'.⁸¹ Heyhoe-Flint, who gave birth to a son in the summer of 1974, was actually reprimanded by the WCA Executive for going home in the middle of the 1976 Edgbaston Test against the Australians in order to spend the night with her two-year-old. The policy was outlined by the Chairman as follows:

All the players selected for 1976 were asked sometime before the Tour to ensure that home domestic matters and care of children were organised so that married players could give their undivided attention to playing the game for England. Rachael was no exception. A request had been made by players after World Cup 1973 that children should not be allowed in Dressing Rooms and that the team should be accommodated in hotels a day before the match started and during the match itself. This was agreed and no exceptions were to be made.⁸²

In a societal environment whereby women were often defined principally in terms of their family relationships, and when working mothers 'suffer[ed] constantly from the assumption that a "good" and "proper" mother should not leave her young child in order to go out to work', this kind of attitude is remarkable.⁸³

How did juggling motherhood and cricket work in practical terms? One option was simply to bring your offspring along with you, an arrangement which seems to have been widespread in women's club cricket. 'We have a minimum of 9 under 5's who accompany our mid-week XI', wrote Jeannie Billingham of Cambridge in a 1963 edition of *Women's Cricket* magazine.⁸⁴ Heyhoe-Flint, who returned to competitive cricket within two months of giving birth, relayed to me in our interview that:

⁸¹ *WCA Bulletin*, July 1977.

⁸² S. Swinburne, 'Haywire, a reply to Heyhoe!', WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁸³ S. Sharpe, *Double Identity. The Lives of Working Mothers* (London, 1984), p.137.

⁸⁴ *Women's Cricket*, 17 May 1963.

when you go to a cricket match with a six-month-old son, you've got nine people waiting to go in and bat...it's predominantly women sitting on the sidelines helping, occupying, so there were plenty of babysitters there...It was great, I think Ben had a most wonderful upbringing on crisps and pop and goodness knows!⁸⁵

At a time when Women's Liberation groups were involved in local campaigns for nurseries and in attempts to set up shared childcare regimes, the boundary edges of cricket pitches around the country were already serving as informal crèches.

Yet there was an even more radical solution available. In an interview with Heyhoe-Flint in 1980 she laid out her ideas for the expansion of women's cricket, concluding: 'What we have to do is present clearly the opportunities for women and it may mean the husband will have to stay home to look after baby'.⁸⁶ A number of my interviewees reported precisely this arrangement, which seems to have been common. Indeed, the picture that emerges from Heyhoe-Flint's autobiography is of a shared responsibility for childcare, as the following passage highlights:

During one match against a men's side in Notts, I looked up during my innings and spotted Derrick pushing Ben's pram around the boundary. It was an odd sight to me and I felt slightly perturbed. It wasn't right, I reasoned, that things were this way around. I wondered if Derrick was thinking the same, and that there ought to be a Men's Lib for him.⁸⁷

She also openly admitted that cricket left her with 'little time for housework or ironing': 'her lonely husband has eaten so many frozen dinners that he's been treated for a chilblained stomach and has had a gas heater fitted in his igloo', wrote Eric Morecambe in the foreword of her autobiography.⁸⁸ Indeed it seems to have been widely accepted as natural amongst female cricketers that, if they were

⁸⁵ Interview with Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, 17 July 2014.

⁸⁶ *Sport and Recreation*, January 1980.

⁸⁷ Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, p.131.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.11-12.

out for the day playing cricket, their husbands might usefully engage in their fair share of the housework. In keeping with contemporary sociological studies which point to greater role-sharing within marriage, Netta Rheinberg reported in 1970 that one conversation amongst married female cricketers as to how far cricket might be compatible with marriage concluded with the following advice:

Nor was it advisable for your husband to accompany you, dutifully carry your bag, and then watch. Better for him to carry on with the chores at home.⁸⁹

Jane Lewis concludes that 'the extent to which unpaid work in the family has remained women's work is seemingly one of the most unchanging aspects of post-war life'.⁹⁰ Yet here was a group of women who, even before the onset of the second-wave feminist movement, challenged this kind of sexual division of labour within the home, as well as the idea that 'good mothers' should not enjoy leisure activities separately from their children.

Clearly Heyhoe-Flint feared that those reading about her actions might suspect her of being a bad mother. She actually concluded her autobiography by saying: 'I know I have been neglectful of both Derrick and Benjamin and the family at certain times', and vowing to 'spend more time devoting myself to being a good wife and mother'.⁹¹ But there was a vast difference between her public declarations and her personal actions: she returned to international cricket the following summer, and continued to train with the England squad and play representative cricket, as well as undertaking paid work as a journalist and a PR consultant. Despite the disavowal of the radical connotations of their behaviour, the actions of female cricketers spoke louder than their words.

⁸⁹ *The Cricketer*, August 1970. Sociological studies from the period which highlight the breakdown in role segregation within the home include M. Young and P. Willmott, *The Symmetrical Family* (London, 1973).

⁹⁰ Lewis, *Women in Britain*, p.88.

⁹¹ Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, p.163.

Cricket was also an important way in which women could challenge discourses surrounding the frailty and physical weakness of female bodies. During the 1970s, discussions emerged over the ways in which women experienced their bodies, and activists campaigned to reclaim, in the words of one slogan of the Women's Liberation Movement, 'power over our bodies, power over our lives'.⁹² Such discourses may well have influenced those participating in women's sport during the 1970s, and were certainly reflected in interviews with those who participated in men's league cricket during the decade. For some women this was a practical way to assert the power of the female body. Cathy Mowat, for example, who represented England as a fast bowler between 1978 and 1984, played for a men's club side for several years during the 1980s, and reported:

...they always bowled faster at me. But I could get my own back, because if I ever got, I remember one famous occasion, a guy who obviously didn't rate me and had been making apparently dodgy comments, I got him out, and he was ribbed the whole evening in the bar. So you can get your own back!⁹³

Carole Cornthwaite, an England cricketer who played for Fylde Cricket Club in Lancashire throughout the mid-1980s, also talked about her experiences:

...there was a couple of occasions where guys would get a bit carried away... Occasionally they'd sort of, you'd get the odd one, 'what on earth's a woman doing here?' But they soon learnt that I was quite capable of dealing with them. I think once I proved that I was quite capable of living in that company, then there was no problem, you were just sort of treated as an equal then.⁹⁴

Corporeal feminists such as Elizabeth Grosz have argued that sexist ideologies are absorbed physically in our bodies, as well as in our psyches:⁹⁵ 'throwing like a girl', in Iris Young's seminal essay, means throwing

⁹² Rowbotham, *The past is before us*, p.61.

⁹³ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

⁹⁴ Interview with Carole Cornthwaite, 10 July 2013.

⁹⁵ E. Grosz, *Volatile bodies: toward a corporeal feminism* (Indiana, 1994).

with timidity, uncertainty, and hesitancy. Typically, we lack an entire trust in our bodies to carry us to our aims...We have more of a tendency than men do to greatly underestimate our bodily capacity. We decide beforehand – usually mistakenly – that the task is beyond us and thus give it less than our full effort...In entering a task we frequently are self-conscious about appearing awkward and at the same time do not wish to appear too strong.⁹⁶

For Cathy and Carole, and likely for other cricketers too, it was possible to 'get their own back' on those who belittled them, and to be 'treated as an equal' by their male team mates, through physical prowess on the pitch. They did not play cricket 'like girls', and they were not encouraged to do so by a governing body which extolled, for example, 'diving with a somersault to take near impossible catches'.⁹⁷ Here was a very physical, corporeal resistance to existing ideologies of gender.

Female cricketers challenged social constructions of femininity in other ways, too. One 1977 *WCA Bulletin* challenged players to 'play with the real fighting spirit, the competitive element, the hard approach'.⁹⁸ Competitiveness became an increasing feature of women's cricket in the 1970s as women's leagues were established, the club knock-out competition took hold, and demands came from players for some form of Area Championship, which was duly introduced in the 1980 season. With the institution of a four-yearly World Cup in 1973, there was also an international dimension to such competitiveness. And with competitiveness came aggression. Cathy Mowat expressed this in her interview:

RN: What is it about cricket that appeals to you, do you think?

CM: Ooh, psychological. Psychological, yeah, yeah. Well as a fast bowler the fact that I knew I could frighten people. [Laughs]

RN: [Laughs] Okay. So the intimidation?

⁹⁶ I. Young, *On Female Body Experience. 'Throwing like a Girl' and Other Essays* (OUP, 2005), p.34.

⁹⁷ *WCA Bulletin*, July 1977.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

CM: Yes.⁹⁹

For Cathy, cricket was a way in which she could exert psychological power over her opponents. For her, the enjoyment came in racing in to bowl as fast as she could. Another interviewee, Chris Watmough, who played for England throughout the 1970s, argued that competitiveness was a key element of her enjoyment of women's cricket, expressing it in these terms:

The moment you walk on the pitch, you're focused on killing the opposition, if you like. Whether it's with the bat or with the ball.¹⁰⁰

This throws into question the arguments of some radical sports feminists that women are 'naturally' non-competitive. It also indicates that cricket could provide an outlet for physical and psychological aggression, which were not normally acceptable behaviours for women within British society. Martha McCaughey has suggested that women's self-defence classes provide a similar outlet, and that this legitimate use of aggression by women is a means to subvert gender inequality. 'Self-defense is a counterdiscourse,' she argues. 'It represents woman, man, and aggression in new ways that oppose those we take for granted.'¹⁰¹ Cricket, too, could be a counterdiscourse in this respect.

Lastly, a number of my interviewees revealed that participation in cricket had increased both their sense of self-worth and their confidence levels. Carole Cornthwaite provides a good example:

RN: What difference do you think your involvement with women's cricket has made to you generally?

CC: ...It certainly did make a big difference...I think I'm probably, now I'm not the most outgoing person in the world, but I think I would have been considerably worse had I not played cricket. Through playing cricket I've got, I've done quite a lot of speaking to organisations, things like that, and that's something that I would never ever have dreamed of

⁹⁹ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Chris Watmough, 3 June 2014.

¹⁰¹ M. McCaughey, *Real Knockouts. The Physical Feminism of Women's Self-Defense* (London, 1997), p.89.

being able to do, had I not, and it was only really being involved with the cricket. You don't, I'm not quite sure how it ties in with being able to stand up and talk in front of people, but I think it does. It just gives a certain amount of self-confidence. When you go out there to bat in the middle of an arena with a load of people watching, and you've got to have a certain amount of self-confidence.¹⁰²

Participation in cricket could evidently be an empowering experience for women, transforming their sense of their own capabilities and their self-belief.

Can women's cricket, then, be identified as a site of feminism? Sheila Rowbotham suggests that some of the crucial ideological elements of second-wave feminism were: challenging women's confinement to domesticity and unequal, dependent marriage; female empowerment; and giving women the power to control their own bodies.¹⁰³ What is striking is that many of these issues were absolutely central to the activities of cricketing women during the 1970s, and were ever-present in the way they chose to live their lives. Arguably, female cricketers did not join consciousness-raising small groups because they already had an all-female space which was a site for sisterhood: the women's cricket club.

Conclusion

Studying the activities of female cricketers has much to tell historians of women about the complicated relationship which many women had and continue to have with the feminist movement. For those women, like cricketers, for whom the Women's Liberation Movement did not appear to cater for their needs, it made sense to distance themselves from a group which was widely

¹⁰² Interview with Carole Cornthwaite, 10 July 2013.

¹⁰³ Rowbotham, *The past is before us*, introduction.

vilified in British society. Indeed, 'Women's Lib' may well have caused women to move further away from the 'feminist' label, rather than towards it. Yet it is evident that the very public debates taking place within the 1970s did impact the lives of these female cricketers, and that the discourses of second-wave feminism did shape the ways in which they expressed feelings about their cricketing lives. Indeed, many of the themes which women expressed in the interviews surrounding their participation in cricket ran alongside the underpinnings of the Women's Liberation Movement: freedom of choice in relation to leisure activities, the importance of autonomy and women-only space, the ability to control one's own body. Much of this, however, was merely a continuation of ideas which the WCA and its members had always subscribed to. As discussed in chapter 1, there appears to be greater continuity with the postwar women's movement and second-wave feminism than has previously been recognised.

There is also a broader point to emerge from examining this group of sportswomen during the 1970s. It is overtly 'feminist' activism by self-defined feminists which has dominated accounts of women's lives across the decade, as well as oral histories of the 1970s, such as the British Library's project 'Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the Women's Liberation Movement'. But what of the women who remained outside of the movement? Where are their voices? This is a not insignificant group of people: Women's Liberation was in no way a mass movement, and Bouchier suggests that the core of their activities were undertaken by a group of approximately 2,000 'super-activists'.¹⁰⁴ Arguably, historians of women, and of feminism, need to pay more attention to those women who were situated on the outskirts of the feminist movement. These women may not have been self-defined feminists, or involved in overtly 'political' campaigns, but their ideas and actions fed into the feminist movement, and their self-representations in interviews can help historians as they attempt to investigate the long-term impact of second-wave feminism on British society. As

¹⁰⁴ Bouchier, *The feminist challenge*, p.177.

has been argued in this chapter, many of the actions of sportswomen were 'feminist', in the sense of both informing and reflecting ideological developments within the feminist movement. Their voices, too, deserve to be heard.

Chapter 4

1980 to 1992: 'Limping along'

Introduction

The 1980s presented new challenges for women's cricket; the picture proffered at the WCA's 1986 AGM by one member of the Executive, Mickey Bradley, was a far from positive one. She highlighted a number of problems: the lack of awareness amongst the general public about women's cricket; the loss of the all-women PE colleges; the lack of new clubs forming, alongside the formation of clubs who refused to affiliate to the main Association; and last but not least, the desperate need to demonstrate growth in the face of pressure to justify their allocation of grant-aid from the Sports Council. As it was, Miss Bradley concluded, '[t]here had really been no growth right through the eighties'; women's cricket had for much of the decade merely 'limped along'.¹

Many feminists have argued that the 1980s was a particularly damaging decade for women.² By 1983, as Bouchier acknowledged in his history of the Women's Liberation Movement, the feminist movement had 'receded from consciousness...The organised feminist groups are politically becalmed and divided by deep theoretical disagreements...the movement itself is almost invisible'.³ It has also been suggested that the welfare cuts and unemployment of the 1980s forced many women out of work and back into the home, and the anti-feminist rhetoric employed by Thatcher

¹ WCA AGM minutes, 1986, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

² S. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (London, 1999), chapter 6; S. Rowbotham, *A Century of Women. The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (1997; reprinted London, 1999); A. Carter, *The Politics of Women's Rights* (London, 1988), chapter 4.

³ D. Bouchier, *The feminist challenge: the movement for women's liberation in Britain and the USA* (London, 1983), p.1.

discouraged advances in the role of women.⁴ Conversely, it has been argued that Thatcher's attack on privilege and monopolistic practices may have 'directly and symbolically opened up new space and opportunities for suitably qualified women to enter and compete' within the workplace.⁵

However, there has been a lack of consideration within this literature of how women's opportunities for leisure fared under the Thatcher governments.

We have already seen that, in Britain, the onset of government intervention in sport occurred in the 1960s. Yet it was during the 1980s that the actions of the Thatcher governments, and the increasingly powerful government agency that was the Sports Council, made their biggest impact to date on sport, and on women's cricket in particular. Many historians of sport have stressed the importance of this kind of increased government intervention over the second half of the twentieth century in Britain; Richard Holt and Tony Mason, in their postwar history of British sport, devote an entire chapter to the expanding role of the state since 1945.⁶ Much of the focus, however, has been on the positive effects of such intervention. For women's sport in particular, the increased funding available from the Sports Council, as well as the Council's campaigns to promote female participation in sport during the 1980s, were indeed positive developments, something that this chapter seeks to elucidate. Yet while the commercialisation of sport had been ongoing for decades, the neoliberal policies pursued by Thatcher appear to have encouraged the entrenchment of commercial values within British sport; amateur sports like women's cricket faced a struggle to

⁴ See for example S. Rowbotham, *A Century of Women. The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (1997; reprinted London, 1999), pp.471-2, pp.490-99.

⁵ J. Lovenduski and V. Randall, *Contemporary Feminist Politics. Women and Power in Britain* (Oxford, 1993), p.46. A more positive interpretation of the impact of Thatcher on women's lives can also be found in S. Bashevkin, 'Tough times in review: the British women's movement during the Thatcher years', *Comparative Political Studies* 28:4 (1996).

⁶ R. Holt and T. Mason, *Sport in Britain 1945-2000* (Oxford, 2000), chapter 7.

adjust to this new environment.⁷ Additionally, cuts to local government spending in the 1980s discouraged the growth of leisure provision at a local level, and prevented the Sports Council from thoroughly tackling the underlying class inequalities in sports participation amongst women.

The bigger picture does indicate that the gap between men's and women's sports participation narrowed during the 1980s, and that female participation in some activities increased. Yet by the time of the 1992 general election, the WCA reported the existence of just 50 affiliated clubs and 35 affiliated schools. This compared with 65 clubs and 52 schools in 1981. Additionally, reports by the WCA during the 1980s suggest an estimated playing membership of only c.800 women across the decade.⁸ In seeking to explain this stagnation in membership, broader trends affecting women's leisure must be borne in mind, including the expansion of female employment and the decline in marriage rates, both of which might be seen as opening up new opportunities for leisure amongst women. Yet the chapter also seeks to assess how far arguments about the problematic legacy of Thatcherism for women can be applied in the arena of women's sport. Overall, it suggests that the 1980s was a decade in which women's cricket was increasingly subject to, and suffered from, forces outside of its control. The evidence indicates that the increasing influence of governments over sport could cause ill-effects, as well as positive ones.

Women's sport in the 1980s: equal opportunities?

In 1972 the Sports Council became the official intermediary between government and sport, and its remit was hugely expanded: it was tasked with increasing the level of available facilities,

⁷ See T. Slack, 'Introduction', in Slack (ed.), *The Commercialisation of Sport* (London, 2004).

⁸ 'Official Tour Brochure: England v India Uni-Vite Women's Test Series 1986', WCA Archive, Lancashire.

encouraging wider participation, and improving Britain's international sporting performance. Under the Wilson government, the Council had been purely advisory; under Heath, thanks to the continued strength of public demand for better leisure facilities caused by affluence, it was granted executive powers, and by 1990, annual spending on sport had increased to almost £50 million, with the total grant allocation for cricket being in the region of £160,000.⁹

The importance of the Sports Council for women's sport was increasingly felt during the 1980s, as a number of factors coalesced to make them increasingly aware of the needs of women. One was the impact of the second-wave feminist movement, which, though no longer ideologically cohesive, had evidently had a widespread impact on societal thinking. As Coote and Campbell wrote in 1987, '[t]he idea that men and women should be treated equally – an extreme aspiration in the late 1960s – is scarcely contentious today'.¹⁰ Additionally, the emergence of a feminist literature on women and leisure during the 1980s highlighted the difficulties women faced in asserting their right to leisure opportunities. Studies conducted by Erica Wimbush (1986), Rosemary Deem (1986) and Eileen Green, Sandra Hebron and Diane Woodward (1987) all suggested that there were specific constraints on leisure for women: a lack of support with childcare, a shortage of time and money, the sexual division of labour, the attitudes of their husbands/partners, and a strong sense that they did not have a right to demand leisure if they were not in full-time employment.¹¹

The need, these authors argued, was to create 'an environment in which women's leisure is safe and practicable'.¹² The Sports Council attempted to take heed of this. In 1982, their 'Sport in the

⁹ Sports Council, 'Annual Report 1987-8' and 'Annual Report 1990-1'. See B. Houlihan, *The Government and Politics of Sport* (London, 1991), p.97.

¹⁰ A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet freedom: the struggle for women's liberation* (Oxford, 1987), p.235.

¹¹ E. Wimbush, *Women, leisure and well-being* (Edinburgh, 1986); R. Deem, *All work and no play?: a study of women and leisure* (Milton Keynes, 1986); E. Green, S. Hebron and D. Woodward, *Leisure and gender: a study of Sheffield women's leisure experiences* (London, 1987).

¹² Deem, *All work and no play?*, p.142.

Community' report recognised women as a 'target group' for increased participation. Over the next ten years, the target was to increase female participation in indoor sport by 70% and in outdoor sport by 35%, through specific programmes and projects in partnership with local authorities and governing bodies of sport, aimed at introducing beginners to various activities. Over the first five years, this meant an increase from 3.1 to 4.1 million participating in indoor sport, and from 4.8 million to 5.7 million participating in outdoor sport.¹³ The projects were indeed carried out, and an attempt was made to provide sporting opportunities to fit with women's perceived needs by, for example, organising creches, and holding women-only sessions. Sports development officers were employed, funded partly by the Sports Council and partly by local authorities, with special responsibility for women. It is significant that by 1990, 13.26 million women were participating in sport, an increase of 7.9 million from 1982, and that the gap between male and female participation in sport had 'narrowed significantly'.¹⁴

Yet by 1993, when the Council reflected on the success of its campaign, it acknowledged that progress had not met targets. Much of the growth had come in indoor sports, largely from an increase in keep fit and aerobics. Meanwhile, team games had declined, and 'women's overall participation in outdoor sports has remained static'.¹⁵ It might be thought that this simply reflected female choice: that women did not want to participate in outdoor sport, or indeed in team games. Yet the assumption that women now had free choice about which leisure activities to partake in is problematic. There were three key issues. One is that, as sociologist Jennifer Hargreaves argued on

¹³ UK Sports Council, *Participation. Taking up the challenge* (London, 1984), p.18; UK Sports Council, *Sport in the Community. The next ten years* (London, 1982), p.3.

¹⁴ UK Sports Council, *Sport in the Nineties. New horizons* (London, 1993), p.26. See also J. Hargreaves, *Sporting females* (1994; reprinted London, 2003), p.188 and pp.238-9. The Sports Council's statistics relating to female participation in sport are drawn from the UK General Household Survey, which is based on a representative sample of the general population aged 16 years and over, and has included questions about participation in sport periodically since 1973.

¹⁵ *Sport in the Nineties*, p.28.

assessing such campaigns in 1994:

much of the expansion of women's sports has been linked to stereotyped ideas about what women want – aerobics, keep-fit, swimming and yoga are highly favoured. Because in many contexts they are the only activities available, the idea that they are all that women want is confirmed. However, when women are offered subsidized 'tasters' of a less predictable kind, the evidence shows that a surprising number choose to take part.

'The likely interest of women in a variety of sports,' Hargreaves concluded, 'has probably been greatly underestimated.'¹⁶ Women's cricket, as we will see later on in the chapter, was seen as of minority interest, and thus not prioritised by the Sports Council when it held the kind of taster sessions described above.

Certainly there is evidence that, where new forms of cricket which suited women's needs were made available, it became a popular activity. Indoor cricket provides a good example of this. Eight-a-side indoor cricket was an Australian import which hit Britain in the early 1980s, and grew in popularity thanks largely to the expansion in sports hall provision which saw 1000 new sports centres constructed in Britain between 1971 and 1989.¹⁷ A national indoor cricket league was set up in 1986, and by 1987, an estimated 45,000 people, men and women, were playing the game nationwide.¹⁸ Designed to be more fast-paced and inclusive, with every member of a team batting and bowling at some point during a game, the striking thing about indoor cricket was that, as one *Cricket World* article stated in 1988: 'The majority of those who play it are non-cricketing sports people. It is thus attracting a vast additional population'.¹⁹

¹⁶ Hargreaves, *Sporting females*, p.240.

¹⁷ R. Holt, 'Sport and Recreation', in P. Addison and H. Jones, *A companion to contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2005).

¹⁸ *The Cricketer*, December 1987.

¹⁹ *Cricket World*, February 1988.

This was even more noticeably the case with female participants, who were attracted to the sport over traditional outdoor eleven-a-side cricket for a number of reasons. Importantly, sports centres were generally erected in areas which were easily accessible by public transport, and the Sports Council encouraged the provision of supervised childcare and play areas to ensure they were attractive to mothers with young children.²⁰ Barbara Daniels, an England cricketer who worked in an indoor cricket centre in Birmingham in the late 1980s, outlined her own experiences of the centres:

lots of women started playing...we had loads of people who just used to come and, they turned up and had maybe not played any form of proper cricket before...and they'd come and play with their company or their firm. It just, it grew. All of a sudden it was a really popular thing. So we were packed at that centre...we'd have courts full til about 11 o'clock at night every night, and then all weekend.

You played it in an hour and a half or two hours, you could do it after work, 'I know I'm going to get a go, I'm going to be involved'...if you've got a limited amount of leisure time...this fitted, for women, blokes as well, but for a lot of women who wouldn't have come out ever, they never would have come to any of the programme of ours, but they turned up. Middle-aged women, mothers with kids, their kids would come, and then the kids would be all right, they'd play on another court. Because they could do it in a couple of hours, and they could have a drink, there was a bar, and all that sort of stuff.²¹

Indoor cricket was also a much cheaper leisure commitment than outdoor club cricket: participants would pay a one-off fee for use of the facilities, and the sports centre would provide the kit, the balls and the umpires required. Thus, while there is evidence that some of those who participated in indoor cricket did go on to play in women's outdoor cricket – a number of England players worked in and ran indoor cricket facilities, and used this to recruit new club players – the cheapness and accessibility of indoor cricket clearly appealed to working-class women in a way that traditional cricket did not. Presumably a similar process occurred with other sports; this goes a long way towards explaining why indoor participation in sports by women increased during the 1980s, while

²⁰ UK Sports Council, *Sports Halls: A new approach to their dimension and use* (London, 1975), p.14.

²¹ Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

outdoor participation decreased.

Indeed, this points us to the second key issue: the failure of the Sports Council to thoroughly tackle the underlying class inequalities in sports participation. Women were, largely, treated as a homogeneous group, yet as studies of female leisure in the 1980s continually found, 'the women with the most active and varied leisure profiles are middle class women from the higher income groups... playing and watching sport... require[s] a certain level of material resources and/or cultural self-confidence, which middle class women may be more likely to possess'.²² Certainly in the case of cricket, while indoor participation became easier for less well-off women, outdoor participation remained difficult financially. Cathy Mowat, England cricketer and WCA Chairman from 1986, summed this up in interview when she described women's cricket in the 1980s as 'a very expensive hobby'.²³

This is reinforced by the experiences of some women's cricket clubs who struggled to survive in the economic climate of the 1980s. There is evidence that new clubs were forming at this time: affiliation figures pushed up as far as 66 in 1989 before they fell again by 1992. Leicester WCC, for example, was established in 1984, and reported in 1987 that it had an active membership of over 20, with most having never played cricket before they joined the club. In an article for the WCA newsletter in 1987, their founder Ann Woods wrote that one of the main problems for any new club was finance: 'Women's cricket can become prohibitively expensive for some'. An effort had been made by Leicester to keep costs low, with special club subs for juniors and the unwaged, but their survival had still been a struggle, even with a grant of £120 from Leicester City Council.²⁴ Many

²² Green, Hebron and Woodward, *Leisure and gender*, p.130.

²³ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

²⁴ *Women's Cricket News*, Spring 1987.

other new clubs simply could not afford to survive for long. West Essex was a new Middlesex club, established in 1980, who complained in 1984 that it was 'struggling to meet the financial commitments involved – its own running expenses and affiliation fees and levies to the County and National bodies'.²⁵ It dissolved the following year, surviving only five years in total. As the drop in affiliations by the early 1990s indicated, this experience was probably typical.

One problem was that the financial commitments of women's cricket clubs were continually rising, due to the increase in affiliation fees and, from 1974, the imposition of a club levy to finance the growing WCA administration. By 1985, members of affiliated clubs had to pay a £1.50 per head affiliation fee, a £4 per head administration levy, a club affiliation fee, and a contribution towards the petrol required for what were often 100-mile round trips to weekend fixtures. Existing clubs were clearly concerned about the constant increases in such commitments, as a letter from Redoubtables WCC to the WCA chairman in 1988 demonstrates:

If the WCA is to represent and provide services for all women cricketers rather than just an elite, every effort of the WCA must be directed towards increasing the membership. At present...we are aware of at least as many non-affiliated clubs as those that affiliate.²⁶

Indeed there is a plethora of evidence that during the 1980s, the numbers of non-affiliated women's cricket clubs rose enormously. Chris Watmough, who played for England between 1968 and 1985, highlighted this in her interview:

when I first started playing, everybody was loyal to the WCA...It was one of those things that was unheard of to break away, you just didn't, in those days...[then] towards the end there were some clubs, especially if they'd been formed at men's clubs, and they perhaps didn't even know that the WCA existed. If a club in, let's say in Hampshire, which wasn't renowned for its women's cricket, formed a women's section and the club next door did, 'who is this WCA? Don't

²⁵ 'Middlesex WCA Golden Jubilee Booklet', 1984, private collection, Uxbridge.

²⁶ Letter to WCA Chairman Cathy Mowat from Marion Collin, Chairman of Redoubtables WCC, 21 December 1988, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

know anything about it.' So they just played against each other.²⁷

Not only did remaining unaffiliated save money on fees, it thus also cut costs as clubs would simply play others in their locality, avoiding the long distances which some women's clubs regularly travelled. This situation seems to have been exacerbated in the North of England, which suffered disproportionately from economic hardship under the Thatcher governments. One estimate placed the number of clubs in Yorkshire at 60, and the number in Lancashire at 40, though affiliated clubs peaked at 14 and 7 respectively throughout the 1980s.²⁸

This poses difficulties for the historian of women's cricket, as it suggests that the drop in affiliations during the 1980s did not necessarily reflect a lack of women playing cricket, so much as a lack of women who were playing it under the auspices of the Women's Cricket Association. For many working-class women, as the above example of indoor cricket suggests, a more informal set-up would have suited their lifestyle far better, as the WCA recognised when it highlighted the existence of increasing numbers of 'informal competition[s]...amongst wives of men's clubs [or] between mixed teams' in 1985.²⁹ Such informal activities are extremely difficult to research, and it is impossible to give an indication of the extent to which they took place, though one estimate by the WCA in 1993 suggested that there were at least 300 'unregistered players' participating in women's cricket by this time.³⁰ Nonetheless, the existence of this type of female cricket does suggest that the demand for the sport was higher than the Sports Council, whose estimates relied on data from official governing bodies, recognised. It was not that women did not want to play cricket, but that they wanted to do so in ways which fitted with the time and money at their disposal. The Sports

²⁷ Interview with Chris Watmough, 3 June 2014.

²⁸ *The Cricketer*, May 1972.

²⁹ *Women's Cricket News*, Winter 1985.

³⁰ IWCC minutes, 31 July 1993, private collection, Surrey.

Council failed to recognise that it was this – the social and cultural dimensions of class difference, as well as economic inequality – which lay at the root of women's non-participation in affiliated club cricket.

What we can safely say, though, is that at least some of this more informal participation in cricket by working-class women was short-lived, as increasing Conservative government cuts to local government spending made it even harder for lower-income groups to access sporting facilities.³¹ For local authorities forced to cut back on spending, sport was an obvious target: unlike health, education and housing, it was a non-statutory provision. The 1989 Local Government and Housing Act severely restricted the ability of local authorities to continue to provide community sports facilities, and the onset of economic recession in 1991 only increased the problem. This is probably what killed indoor cricket, which was a craze which did not survive beyond the early 1990s. As Barbara Daniels explained:

[sports centres] very quickly became centres that were fairly run-down, and they never invested any money in them. People started getting injured...by the time you've had however many sweaty blokes teams playing in there and then having a drink, and smoking at that point of course, they just began to be, 'I don't want to go in here'. And they sort of just dropped out of favour.³²

One article in *Sport and Leisure* magazine in 1991 estimated that £100,000 per centre would be required to bring them up to standard.³³ The money was not forthcoming.

In any case, unaffiliated cricket clubs were not permitted to send members to trials, even if they were aware of the WCA as an organisation; county and England level cricket thus remained

³¹ See B. Houlihan, *Sport, Policy and Politics. A comparative analysis* (London, 1997), p.94.

³² Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

³³ *Sport and Leisure*, September-October 1991.

trenchantly middle-class up until 1992. This is illustrated by the fact that of the 52 women who made their England debut between 1970 and 1992, 18 were teachers, and almost all the others worked as civil servants, technicians, clerks and secretaries/PAs.³⁴ Much of what went on in the world of women's cricket, therefore, confirms what other historians have argued about the Thatcher governments, namely that the 1980s was a period in which class disparities became ever more stark. As Arthur Marwick recognises, by 1992 inequality in Britain was at its highest point for fifty years, with the bottom 10% of the population having grown steadily worse off since the election of Thatcher in 1979.³⁵ By 1990, 85% of people in Britain accepted the existence of a new 'underclass'.³⁶ The example of sport shows that such disparities were reproduced at a cultural level.

There was, though, a third issue. In 1980, former Minister for Sport Denis Howell, in an article for the Sports Council's magazine *Sport and Leisure* entitled 'The Way Ahead', wrote:

The extraordinary thing is that all our sports organisations have been forced, reluctantly, rather late in the day, to look at what should be done about providing sporting and recreational opportunities for women.

The most difficult job in our society is that of the working housewife. She is expected to work to earn a living, the second income that most families now need. And then she comes home and does the cooking, the cleaning and the laundry. No one asks whether she is entitled to some leisure and to get a look-in, when we provide for her recreational needs, in this male chauvinistic society in which we live...we have never properly tackled this matter.³⁷

While the article recognised the existence of the 'working housewife', and demonstrated a new recognition on behalf of the Sports Council that they needed to cater for women's needs, Howell failed to challenge the prevailing division of labour. This reflected a broader societal issue. For while the phenomenon of the 'working housewife' continued to increase during the 1980s, as the

³⁴ For full details, see Appendix 1.

³⁵ A. Marwick, *British society since 1945* (1982; reprinted London, 2003), p.356.

³⁶ R. Weight, *Patriots: national identity in Britain, 1940-2000* (London, 2002), p.572.

³⁷ *Sport and Leisure*, April-May 1980.

expansion of the service industries and the increase in part-time employment led to many more women entering the workforce, the expectation that women would still be largely responsible for domestic chores remained firmly in place.³⁸ Thus, far from opening up more opportunities for leisure, female employment actually created a 'double burden' for women, which decreased their leisure time even further.

This was recognised by Chris Watmough, who stated:

I've had obviously relationships with men, but...I just found it too much. I couldn't have coped with getting married and having children, which I would have wanted to do if I'd got married. Something would have had to have gone. It never rose to give up sport or to give up teaching.³⁹

Chris felt that it would have been exceptionally difficult to have married, had children, and still continued with both her career and with cricket. Given that the marriage rate fell by about half between 1971 and 1991, and that by 1990 the average age for giving birth had risen to 27, Chris was perhaps not alone in her choice.⁴⁰ Yet this also suggests that the problem of married women's access to leisure remained acute. Many of the constraints on female leisure identified by Wimbush, Deem and Green et al noted above went across women of all social classes and were fundamentally divisions of gender. Thus while leisure opportunities were broadly speaking growing in the 1980s – the availability of personal credit meant more money to spend on holidays and home entertainments – this did not necessarily alter the situation for married women. Deem recognised that the majority of women in her study who regularly participated in sport were single.⁴¹

³⁸ M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1999* (Hampshire, 2000), p.336, p.343. As a percentage share of the total labour force, women's work increased from 37% in 1971 to 45% in 1987. See J. Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945* (Oxford, 1992), p.65.

³⁹ Interview with Chris Watmough, 3 June 2014.

⁴⁰ Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, p.339.

⁴¹ Deem, *All work and no play?*, p.71.

Given this general trend, it is notable that several of the women who played for England in these years do not even seem to have even contemplated the possibility of having to give up cricket upon marriage. Janet Southgate, who captained England during the 1984 New Zealand tour, was married throughout her England career. A 1982 interview in her local newspaper revealed:

Janet and David...rarely see each other over summer weekends...'We are ruled by a fixture card in the summer,' she admitted...'When we do see one another, we usually have about a week's conversation to catch up on.'⁴²

Another piece in *The Times* from the same year, which reported the following conversation between the couple, is also striking:

'When the washing piles up, I'll ring you,' [David] said to his wife.
'You'd better not,' she replied. 'I've left enough instructions. Every wall in the kitchen has notes stuck on it.'⁴³

While this does indicate a certain level of adherence to the prevailing division of labour, the very fact that Jan made the decision to go away on tour for five weeks indicates that she prioritised cricket over her domestic role.

Indeed, far from women serving their husbands' leisure, it could sometimes be the case that men were serving the cricketing needs of their wives. When *Cricket World* ran a 'Tea Lady of the Month' competition in 1989, they were forced to alter it to a 'Tea Person of the Month' competition after they received the following letter from Pat Siderfin of Thames Valley WCA:

The Thames Valley Women Cricketers have played 50 and 55 over matches this season and the Lunches have been prepared by Mr Steve Siderfin, my husband...The other members of the

⁴² Newspaper clipping, 7 October 1982, private collection, Surrey.

⁴³ *The Times*, 8 January 1982.

squad were delighted at Steve's effort at quiches and sausage rolls and he has always made an excellent cup of tea.⁴⁴

For some within the women's cricket community, traditional ideas about the division of labour were clearly obsolete. Thus, while *The Times* article quoted above concluded with Rachael Heyhoe-Flint's assurance that: 'No one in the party claims to be a feminist. Certainly not', the ongoing assertion of their right to exercise their own leisure preferences shows that female cricketers continued to promote feminist values during the 1980s. In a society where female access to leisure was still limited, women cricketers were once again paving the way for change.

'Supporting a sport with jumble sales and bazaars': the WCA and commercialism

While the commercialisation of sport predated Thatcherism, the individualistic, market values pursued by the Conservative governments of the 1980s helped create an environment whereby the process both sped up and became entrenched. Marwick notes that the expansion of sports sponsorship across the decade was '[t]he most significant feature of the eighties':⁴⁵ in 1971, £2.5 million was spent on sponsorship, but by 1982, the figure was £84.7 million, and this had risen to £226 million by 1990.⁴⁶ The commercial effect was being seen across many sports, in particular in horse racing, which in 1986 secured sponsorship worth £700,000, and in golf, which attracted investments of £500,000 in the same year.⁴⁷ Cricket was clearly not immune to this. Following on from the MCC meeting at Lords in 1962 when the 17 first class counties decided to accept a £6,500

⁴⁴ *Cricket World*, September 1989.

⁴⁵ Marwick, *British society since 1945*, p.268.

⁴⁶ These figures are taken from T. Mason, *Sport in Britain* (London, 1988), p.4; and UK Sports Council, *Sport in the Nineties*, p.62.

⁴⁷ Marwick, *British society since 1945*, p.268.

offer from Gillette to sponsor a one-day Knockout Competition, sponsorship expanded rapidly. By 1989, Cornhill had a five-year contract to sponsor Test cricket worth £1 million, and Britannic Assurance, the sponsors of the county championship, were investing approximately £400,000 annually into the sport; most counties had also signed lucrative sponsorship deals.⁴⁸ Additionally, Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket had provided an impetus for the introduction of a minimum wage in English cricket in 1979; by 1986, the salaries of county professionals had tripled from what they had been in the late 1970s.⁴⁹ Any vestiges of amateurism which had remained in men's cricket after the abolition of the professional-amateur divide in 1962 had well and truly dissipated: even by the late 1970s, it was reported that professional cricketers had begun to treat cricket 'essentially as a job of work and a source of money'.⁵⁰

Much of this has been documented previously by sport historians. Tony Collins notes that within rugby union, the 'move away from traditional middle-class values of character and status that began in the 1960s...assumed breakneck speed following the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979...Her disdain for aristocratic privilege and identification with "wealth makers" made the open pursuit of money not only acceptable but fashionable.'⁵¹ Yet there has been little detailed consideration as to how women's sport experienced this same transition from the amateur to the commercial age. Women's cricket provides a useful case study of the difficulties faced. The most obvious manifestation of commercialism within the sport was the onset of sponsorship of all home international series' from 1976 onwards, when the series against the Australians was sponsored to the tune of £9,000 by Unigate Foods. When the West Indians toured in 1979, the Co-

⁴⁸ *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, March 1989; *The Cricketer*, April 1990.

⁴⁹ *Wisden*, 1986.

⁵⁰ C. Brookes, *English Cricket. The Game and its Players through the Ages* (London, 1978), p.183.

⁵¹ T. Collins, *A social history of English rugby union* (Oxford, 2009), p.196.

operative Insurance Society provided £17,500 for the Tests and One Day Internationals (ODIs), as well as sponsoring that year's junior coaching courses and competitions. Teams also received increasing support from sports goods firms: the squad who travelled to New Zealand for the 1982 World Cup were given equipment and clothing worth £5,500, and by the 1984 tour of England by New Zealand, goods were provided from a mammoth 73 companies.⁵² The most significant sponsorship, though, came in 1986, when Uni-Vite, a diet and nutrition firm, agreed a deal worth £30,000, no doubt in search of a female market for its slimming products amidst the new slimming 'craze' amongst British women in the 1980s.⁵³

Illustration 4. Uni-Vite's sponsorship of the 1986 Indian tour



⁵² *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, April 1982; *Wisden*, 1985.

⁵³ 'Official Tour Brochure, England v India Uni-Vite Women's Test Series 1986', WCA Archive, Lancashire.

Area reports in the WCA's yearbooks show that individual Playing Areas and counties were also in a position to attract local sponsorship: for example, Lancashire and Cheshire were provided with funds by McVities in the 1990 season, reporting afterwards that 'the free biscuits came in extremely useful'.⁵⁴ Yet sponsorship was not, as it was for struggling men's county cricket clubs, the solution to all financial problems. We saw above that many women's clubs struggled to survive during the 1980s; one letter in the November 1986 edition of *The Cricketer* described the formation of a club in Halifax by two sisters who had

wanted to play for a long time. After writing to all of the clubs in the area, they at last received a reply from the Halifax Cricket and Athletic Club, who invited them to join the club. The team was duly formed but all the expense, advertising for players and buying the equipment, had to be met by the girls themselves. They have written to several businesses seeking sponsorship, but most did not bother to reply.⁵⁵

This experience was far from atypical. And there were also problems at national level, as evidenced by the continuing poor state of the WCA's finances throughout the decade. Though the 1973 World Cup and 1976 series against Australia both made a profit, the huge inflation of the 1970s ensured that the WCA's savings were severely eroded by the onset of the 1980s. In fact, between 1979 and 1984 the WCA did not host a single tour, failing to retain the support of previous sponsors. The planned tour by New Zealand in 1982 had to be cancelled due to lack of sponsorship. And the sums provided by sponsors were not so great as to cover the costs of tours entirely: the WCA continued to partly rely on fund-raising amongst its membership to enable international fixtures to take place.

Why, though, did the WCA not manage to achieve more comprehensive sponsorship of its activities? Media coverage was clearly a problem. It was far easier for men's sports, who almost

⁵⁴ WCA Annual Report, 1990, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

⁵⁵ *The Cricketer*, November 1986.

without exception had guaranteed coverage of international matches on television, to present an attractive package to sponsors. On the other hand, only one women's cricket match was televised on British TV in the entire period between 1980 and 1992, and that was the ODI at Lord's in 1987 against the Australians, covered by Channel 4 and watched by a peak audience of 1.1 million people.⁵⁶ The Channel 4 coverage cost £50,000 and was an exciting coup for the women's game: a number of new features to the coverage made for fascinating viewing, including cameras at both ends of the wicket, a camera in a blimp suspended over the pitch, and live televised interviews with players. But Channel 4 appeared to be simply testing the waters in their bid to gain the rights to televise men's cricket, and they subsequently showed no interest in televising any further women's matches: it was reported that, on being approached in 1989 with a request to televise the Area Championship Final, 'little enthusiasm' was shown.⁵⁷ In the main, women's cricket was a very minor sport which made it difficult to attract the coverage a sponsor expected for their money; the Executive Committee reported several examples in the late 1970s and 1980s of potential sponsors withdrawing from sponsorship negotiations once it became clear that television coverage would not be forthcoming.⁵⁸ Cathy Mowat, WCA chairman from 1986 until 1993, summed this up in our interview:

...sometimes some paper would do a profile of somebody, particularly if it was a new talent coming along...But not a lot. Not a lot. And that was the frustration, you weren't high profile so how do you get hold of sponsors? It's a vicious circle, and very very difficult...I mean, what would they get out of it?⁵⁹

⁵⁶ This viewing figure is taken from an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, 10 August 1987.

⁵⁷ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 14 July 1989, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁵⁸ See for example WCA Executive Committee minutes, 17 March 1979 and 7 September 1980, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁵⁹ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

The situation was made worse by the negative coverage which the WCA had attracted in the wake of the Rachael Heyhoe-Flint affair, which rumbled on throughout the early 1980s, and was revived when controversy arose over the non-selection of another high-profile player, Sarah Potter (the daughter of playwright Dennis Potter) for the 1984/5 tour of Australia. Once again, the incident gained widespread press coverage, including a page spread in the *Daily Mail* in which she blamed her non-selection on the blue streaks in her hair, and a controversial BBC TV interview in which Potter and Heyhoe-Flint appeared together critiquing the Association for its underhand dealings.⁶⁰ As the Chairman put it at the 1984 AGM, 'when things are going well we get little or no coverage, but when things go wrong we almost make headline news'.⁶¹

As before, the problem was that the media tended to project a patronising image of women's cricket. This continued to be the case for women's sport generally during the 1980s, and the Sports Council, despite official rhetoric, was equally culpable. Its magazine, *Sport and Leisure*, regularly featured advertisements for sunbeds containing topless women, and although the editor John Ingham received letters of complaint regarding these, he refused to take any action.⁶² Other articles in the magazine also undermined the Council's promotion of women's sport: in one feature on a female karateka, Ingham described the athlete as 'well balanced and quite normal', a remark which heavily implied that female participation in martial arts left their 'normality' in question.⁶³ One regional Sports Council guide to public relations for sports clubs even stated that 'newspapers... favour photographs which contain pretty girls, children and animals...if your club is organising a charity

⁶⁰ *Daily Mail* 12 December 1984. WCA AGM minutes, 1985, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁶¹ WCA AGM minutes, 1984, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁶² *Sport and Leisure*, January-February 1985.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

football match then perhaps you can arrange for a pretty girl to kick off'.⁶⁴

This was the context within which women's cricketers were attempting to seek sponsorship; it was thus, understandably, an uphill struggle to be taken seriously. The PR firm Sam Weller Associates, engaged by the WCA in 1978, set out the situation as follows:

in 1976, the press coverage was more aimed towards short skirts and frilly knickers appearing on the 'hallowed ground' of Lord's Cricket Ground than the serious reportage of the games that were played...from the WCA point of view, the type of publicity received was little short of disastrous.

...cricket has developed, in the eyes of the general public, as a 'not serious game for women.'
 ...Sports commentators are in the main, men. News reporters are in the main, men. The sight of a female clothed in anything less than a full length mackintosh, welly boots and balaclava helmet excites the average news reporter beyond the point where he can see anything on a cricket pitch but women rather than cricket players.
 All publicity is not good publicity.⁶⁵

But despite the best efforts of the WCA PR machine, the situation had changed little by the end of the 1980s. Coverage of the 1987 Lord's ODI, the biggest match of the decade, continued to focus on issues extraneous to the cricket, such as the perfume worn by the players. Many seemed to concur with *Guardian* journalist Patrick Barclay when he suggested in an article on the 1984 series against New Zealand that women's cricket was 'pleasantly small-time...they ought to be content to stay that way'.⁶⁶

Perhaps an even greater problem was that some of those within the women's cricket community itself also appeared to agree with him. As an enquiry into sports sponsorship conducted in 1983 suggested, many governing bodies found it 'difficult to reconcile the growing commercialism

⁶⁴ West Midlands Sports Council, *A guide to public relations for sports clubs and governing bodies of sport* (Birmingham, 1975), p.8

⁶⁵ *WCA Bulletin*, October/November 1978.

⁶⁶ *The Guardian*, 14 July 1984.

brought in by very necessary sponsorship with the desire to retain the ethos of “amateurism”.⁶⁷ This was particularly the case for women's sports given that, as we saw in an earlier chapter, they were often placed on a pedestal by those who disliked the erosion of amateurism within their male equivalents. There was thus an element within the WCA which resisted commercial encroachment for reasons of pride in their amateur status: Heyhoe-Flint derided an element of the administration in 1978 for their attempts to continue 'supporting a sport with jumble sales and bazaars'.⁶⁸ This was evident in a letter of 1981 to the WCA Bulletin, in which Acting Chairman Ellora 'Budge' Stuart Smith wrote that she found the WCA's increasing reliance on sponsorship a worrying development.

I seem to remember in past years running fund raising activities to raise the money for ourselves – but this seems to have gone out of fashion...We have been thinking 'Let's have a tour – who can we get to sponsor us?'...Should we not, however, be thinking the other way – 'We want a tour – let's start working to raise the money first and just as soon as we have an adequate amount, then invite a visiting team.' This would seem to bring us far less heartache – and hopefully foster a club and national spirit in the process of working together.⁶⁹

There was clearly a feeling that commercialism could damage the ethos of self-reliance and the spirit of unity within women's cricket, eroding the purity of the amateur ethic.

Indeed there were times whereby the WCA did itself damage with its cautious approach to sponsorship, losing out on financial investment which could have helped expand the sport at a time when increased pressure was put on them by the Sports Council to do so. The attitude of the Executive was made clear in 1979 when it was stated that sponsors must be informed 'that sponsorship does not carry with it the right for the sponsoring company to dictate to a Governing

⁶⁷ Central Council of Physical Recreation, *Committee of Enquiry into sports sponsorship: The Howell Report* (London, 1983), p.23.

⁶⁸ R. Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe! The autobiography of Rachael Heyhoe-Flint* (London, 1978), p.191.

⁶⁹ *WCA Bulletin*, September 1981.

Body of Sport'.⁷⁰ In 1976, for example, it was agreed that sponsorship of the Trent Bridge Test match by a local brewery company should be refused 'if the WCA could not control the Farewell Reception arrangements'.⁷¹ This was subsequently agreed by the sponsor, and the sponsorship went ahead as planned. The fall-out from this attitude was much more serious six years later, however. In 1982 Heyhoe-Flint – who had returned to WCA administration three years after her falling out with the WCA – spent many hours negotiating a sponsorship deal for the scheduled tour by New Zealand with a building contractor, JM Dewhurst, worth £30,000. When she informed Stuart Smith of the agreement, the Chairman wrote to the director, Mr Cullimore, stating that this had been a 'preliminary proposition' only, which would need further discussion amongst the Executive regarding the 'implications of the overall promotion'. Cullimore promptly withdrew the offer, on the grounds that:

I have a number of companies to run and I just cannot afford to have detailed discussions with organisations on matters peripheral to the business and then find that these were merely preliminary before the serious discussions could start... it seemed pointless for me to waste time with an organisation which does not know whether its Chairman, President or its most distinguished member is responsible for doing a deal!⁷²

The £30,000 offered was thus lost, and the proposed tour delayed by twelve months and funded largely by fund-raising on behalf of the members themselves. Heyhoe-Flint proposed a vote of no confidence in the Chairman at the Executive meeting following this incident and when this failed to pass she, along with two other Executive Committee members, stormed out of the meeting in protest, having tendered their resignations.⁷³

⁷⁰ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 22 July 1979, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷¹ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 24 April 1976, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷² Letters from Mr Cullimore to WCA Chairman and to Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, 8 July 1982, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷³ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 23 July 1982, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

Heyhoe-Flint's own attitude to sponsorship and her lack of adherence to the amateur ideal, including her belief that player payments were perfectly acceptable, was made clear in the previous chapter: 'I was very anxious that [England players] try to get as much help as we possibly could in material terms', as she put it in our interview.⁷⁴ Within men's cricket, star players like Ian Botham were beginning to attract lucrative personal sponsorship deals; the issue of personal sponsorship was thus increasingly one which the WCA had to face. In fact, a further indication of the ambivalence of some within the WCA towards commercialism was their continued resistance towards this. Interestingly, though, there appears to have been an increasing disquiet on behalf of England players during the 1980s with regard to rulings on this issue, with many players coming to share Heyhoe-Flint's perspective.

Despite support with clothing and equipment, players were still expected to pay significant amounts in order to represent their country. The 1978 World Cup in India, for example, saw players contribute £400 towards the costs of the tournament; three players who were selected could not afford to join the touring party, and Shirley Hodges, England's wicket-keeper, had to take unpaid leave from work in order to travel.⁷⁵ This was nothing new, of course, but it now went alongside increased demands on the time of England players, due to the gradual professionalisation of the sport off the pitch. A memorandum produced by Stuart Smith in 1979 on the training of Test players stated:

We must demand a high standard of commitment from the players. Test matches should be an enjoyable experience, but participation in them does also carry responsibilities for the players who need to prepare for them in a businesslike way if women's cricket is to be classed as an International sport...

Sporting society in general is becoming much more used to the idea that players will have to

⁷⁴ Interview with Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, 17 July 2014.

⁷⁵ Interview with Shirley Hodges, 5 June 2014.

become more dedicated to their chosen sport.⁷⁶

Fitness testing had been introduced for the first time prior to the 1978 World Cup in India, and was gradually expanded: Heyhoe-Flint reported in the build-up to the 1982 World Cup in New Zealand that the team had four weekend fitness sessions and that each player was asked to follow a fitness programme at home: 'For the first time in 21 years of playing cricket at international level I've gone out running every morning and it's been damned hard, especially in wellies in the snow'.⁷⁷ From 1982, fitness testing was conducted regularly in the build-up to tours at St Mary's College, Twickenham, with each player paying £7 annually for the compulsory privilege.⁷⁸ Shirley Hodges recalled being told that 'anybody who's not fit won't go...I hated [fitness testing]'.⁷⁹

The training regime introduced under new coach Ruth Prideaux, appointed in 1988, is another good example of the increased commitments expected from players. Prideaux was a PE lecturer, recently appointed to the Sports Science department at Chelsea College of Physical Education, with radical new ideas about the way she wanted the England team to progress. She secured funding from the National Coaching Foundation for a five-year intensive training programme from 1989 to 1993, which incorporated both sport psychology and physiological testing. Steve Bull, a colleague at Chelsea, became the team's official sport psychologist, and worked closely with Ruth to plan the programme, which aimed to increase confidence, develop positive thinking skills, and provide team cohesiveness.⁸⁰ There was also an intensive focus on both nutrition and physical fitness, as Prideaux recalled in our interview:

⁷⁶ E. Stuart Smith, 'Training of WCA representative/Test players', 2 September 1979, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷⁷ *The Observer*, 20 December 1981.

⁷⁸ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 23 July 1982, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁷⁹ Interview with Shirley Hodges, 5 June 2014.

⁸⁰ S. Bull, 'Reflections on a 5-Year Consultancy Program with the England Women's Cricket Team', *The Sport Psychologist* 9:2 (1995).

I was quite determined that the whole squad, they wouldn't be a member of the squad if they weren't fit. And we worked a lot on fitness. We used to run up and down the beach [at Eastbourne], on the shingle, which was tough...And then we started to introduce the importance of diet. That particular aspect was not popular, because they were very fish-and-chip girls! But they were more or less banned.⁸¹

The programme was years ahead of its time; no other sport, including elite men's cricket, had utilised sports psychology to such an extent before. Ultimately, England's World Cup victory in August 1993 would prove to be largely the fruit of Prideaux's labour: Bull reported that, by the time he concluded his work with the squad, 'a feeling existed [among players] that success would not have been achieved without the provision of sport psychology support'.⁸²

Yet despite its evident positive results, the professionalisation of England squad training under Prideaux did not initially sit well with the traditionalists within the WCA. It was reported in *The Cricketer* in 1988 that '[t]he decision to appoint Prideaux...did not meet with universal approval within the WCA fraternity'.⁸³ She recalled that:

the [England] selectors were not a bit supportive. They thought it was all wrong. They expected them always to be doing something on the cricket line as it were, with the activities of batting, or bowling, or fielding. But they were not in any way supportive of that type of [fitness] work. So that was quite difficult.⁸⁴

This was reflective of the broader resistance of some within the sport to any kind of innovation, and in particular to the professionalisation of the game.

Meanwhile the increased emphasis on fitness and professionalism, and its concomitant demand on

⁸¹ Interview with Ruth Prideaux, 5 June 2014.

⁸² Bull, 'Reflections on a 5-Year Consultancy Program with the England Women's Cricket Team', p.160.

⁸³ *The Cricketer*, June 1988.

⁸⁴ Interview with Ruth Prideaux, 5 June 2014.

their time and money, created a feeling amongst the players that they deserved some recompense for their efforts. A 'general discontent' amongst those who travelled on the Young England tour to India in 1981 about the financial commitments required was reported.⁸⁵ Additionally, the decision by the Executive Committee not to reimburse England players for travel expenses incurred during the tour by New Zealand in 1984 angered those concerned. The discussion on the issue at the WCA's 1985 AGM is illuminating of the generational divide beginning to open up between players and officials on the issue: one member commented that she 'did not agree with players having their travelling expenses paid...It was after all an honour to play for one's country'. Sarah Potter, one of the players concerned, responded:

they all accepted that it was a very great honour to play, but a profit had been made and the point was whether a player should have to pay to play for her country.⁸⁶

It was eventually agreed to endorse the Executive Committee's decision. But the disagreement continued to split the WCA. One letter from Audrey Collins, the WCA's 70-year-old President, appeared in *Women's Cricket News* later that year:

There is always controversy about the need for our England players to pay for the privilege of playing for their Country. I am old fashioned enough to think that this is good.

We are all amateurs who play because we love and enjoy the game; it is an expensive game to play with costly equipment and much travelling, but it is our choice and if we are blessed with ability we aspire to be chosen to play for England and to bask in the honour and limelight that follows.

I believe, too, that if we have to make some sacrifice to achieve our ambitions, then we get more out of our achievement.⁸⁷

This was clearly at odds with the views of the players. Perhaps playing cricket within a society where neoliberal ideas predominated, with the accompanying expectation of financial reward in

⁸⁵ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 4 April 1981, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁸⁶ WCA AGM minutes, 1985, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁸⁷ *Women's Cricket News*, Summer 1985.

return for effort, had taken its toll.

Certainly the views of the players had made enough headway within the WCA for a significant change to take place in the code of conduct for players by the end of the 1980s. In 1981, it had been stated that: 'No individual player may accept money in connection with her status as an England player'.⁸⁸ Yet in 1988, the Sports Council's decision to withdraw grant aid to those travelling to the World Cup in Australia left each player saddled with a £2000 bill in order to participate. The Executive Committee thus agreed that 'players should seek and keep for themselves personal sponsorship for additional expenses'.⁸⁹ The amateur ethos which had for so long been the basis of women's cricket was being eroded, though there was significant resistance to this process. Ideological struggles like this one were presumably commonplace within women's sport in the 1980s.

'This Government's approach to funding of governing bodies of sport...is becoming tighter and tighter': the WCA and the Sports Council

But where did this lack of funding through sponsorship leave the WCA? Perhaps the major consequence was that it increased their reliance on the Sports Council's financial support. Already by 1976 the Association was recognising that 'it is impossible to run the Association financially without grant aid'; by the end of the 1980s, the total amount of grant provided annually was in the region of £20,000.⁹⁰ Grant aid helped to fund the costs of sending teams on overseas tours, but it

⁸⁸ WCA Yearbook, 1971, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

⁸⁹ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 10 April 1988, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁹⁰ WCA AGM minutes, 1976, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

also offset some of the administration costs of the WCA: it was Sports Council policy to assist in the development of efficient administration of sport governing bodies. The Council thus encouraged the WCA to establish a permanent office at its headquarters in Brompton Road in Knightsbridge in 1971, and to appoint its first full-time salaried official, a National Development Officer. Three years later, an additional paid official, an Administration Officer, was added to the staff. The Sports Council agreed to provide 75% of the salaries of these two officials, as well as 75% of the costs of postage, telephone, office expenses and office accommodation, on the understanding that the WCA would provide the remaining 25%.⁹¹

This initially provided a measure of financial stability, but it left the WCA subject to the vagaries of government policy, and vulnerable to cuts in grant-aid as and when they came. The 1975 White Paper on Sport and Recreation, for example, placed emphasis on the value of sport in the welfare of the community, with a key aim being to encourage greater equality of access to sport. This put the WCA under pressure to show clear evidence of development across the country. At the 1976 AGM, the Chairman issued a stark warning:

Future policy must depend entirely on your decisions to continue to be a Governing Body of Sport. To remain one, there must be growth of membership in all Areas...One more year is left in which to prove to the Sports Council that the WCA is an efficient Governing Body, providing for the needs of girls and women wishing to play cricket, and a Body worth the money being expended on it... what will your decisions be in twelve months time if the Government withdraws grant aid because the WCA has not shown that there are worthwhile numbers of girls and women wishing to play cricket? There will be no office, difficulty in finding volunteers to cope with the essential correspondence and no voice as a Governing Body of Sport – today essential...The White Paper...emphasises [that] money must go where it is needed most.⁹²

Development evidently was not sufficient to satisfy the Sports Council, and in September 1977, they withdrew their support for the WCA's National Development Officer, which led to the

⁹¹ R. Heyhoe-Flint and N. Rheinberg, *Fair play: the story of women's cricket* (London, 1976), p.79.

⁹² WCA AGM minutes, 1976, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

termination of her contract, and thus brought an end to the valuable development work she had been doing across the country. By 1981, it was reported that the WCA's administration grant was being reduced from 75% to 65% in 1982, 55% in 1983 and 50% in 1984.⁹³

Pressure increased again in 1983 as the Sports Council formally adopted a new approach to grant aid which focused directly on grant-aided bodies fulfilling the new 'Sport for All' objectives: the amount of cash received was now directly related to the development programmes governing bodies were planning, with the aim being to increase the numbers of participants in their sport.⁹⁴ Money was thus redistributed away from elite development towards community participation, as part of a general Council policy shift which gave greater prominence to concentrating resources on the inner cities, in particular following the 1981 riots.⁹⁵ For the WCA, one direct result of this policy was that the Centre of Excellence for women's cricket, which had opened in 1977 at Bedford College to provide top-quality coaching facilities for female cricketers, had to be closed down in 1985 after the Sports Council withdrew financial support.⁹⁶ In 1988, the Sports Council offered the WCA a sum of £57,000 to be spent across a three-year period; but this was less than had been promised previously, and as we have seen did not include any assistance for the squad who were travelling to Australia that year for the World Cup.⁹⁷

This went hand in hand with the enforced cutbacks by local authorities throughout the 1980s, to leave the WCA struggling financially by the end of the decade. In fact, by 1988 the WCA were

⁹³ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 26 June 1981, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁹⁴ *Sport and Leisure*, July-August 1983.

⁹⁵ See Houlihan, *The Government and Politics of Sport*, p.28.

⁹⁶ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 15 April 1984, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁹⁷ *Women's Cricket News*, Spring 1988.

reporting that the current financial situation was 'critical – the WCA may be bankrupt by March, 1989'.⁹⁸ The Chairman told members at the 1989 AGM that:

As I sat down to write this report, I was not at all sure if there would be an Association for which to plan a future. Two scenarios: Either the disappearance of the Association, finally having run out of funds; or an Association consisting only of an elite of those clubs who could afford to belong, while an unknown amount of cricket was being played on an unorganised basis beyond the Association's knowledge and remit.⁹⁹

It was for this reason that the decision was made to substantially raise club affiliation fees to £10 per playing member.

Current academic research on the relationship of the Conservative governments in the 1980s with the Sports Council has suggested that their attitude towards spending on sport was similar to their attitude towards welfare spending more generally: bodies should not be reliant on state hand-outs. Houlihan argues that: 'Funding for sport [was] shaped by the uneasy accommodation between an established welfare state ethos and...the Conservative government's antipathy to both public expenditure and local government'; Coghlan concludes that the Thatcher governments 'failed to resource adequately the Sports Council to carry out the tasks laid down for it in the Royal Charter'.¹⁰⁰ Annual grant in aid for sport throughout the 1980s increased well below the rate of inflation and was, in Coghlan's words, 'mean in the extreme'.¹⁰¹ The experience of the WCA supports these arguments. As the WCA Chairman concluded in 1989, 'this Government's approach to funding of governing bodies of sport – all sports, big and small – is becoming tighter and tighter.

⁹⁸ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 20 November 1988, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

⁹⁹ WCA AGM minutes, 1989, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹⁰⁰ B. Houlihan, *Sport, Policy and Politics*, p.98; J. Coghlan, *Sport and British Politics since 1960* (Hampshire, 1990), p.257.

¹⁰¹ Coghlan, *Sport and British Politics*, p.224.

Essentially, it is a question of “find sponsorship for all aspects of your sport”.¹⁰² This ignored the fact that for women's sports like cricket, it was extremely difficult to attract sponsorship, for the reasons outlined above. Government policy in this area was therefore both short-sighted and financially damaging to the WCA.

The decline of cricket in schools

The negative effects of Thatcherite policies were also felt elsewhere within sport during the 1980s. The situation for school cricket was deteriorating even before Thatcher came to power, with the new comprehensive system in the 1970s removing the traditional hot-beds of support for both boys' and girls' cricket: the grammar schools. Government inspectors reported that even by the mid-1970s, cricket was 'struggling to maintain its former status' within secondary education in England and Wales.¹⁰³ But it was during the 1980s that cricket in schools came near to dying out altogether. The Thatcher governments created a number of problems. One was that the enforced retrenchment in local government spending meant that, as one 1987 enquiry found, '[t]here is evidence of gross under-funding for the maintenance of school grounds by some Education Authorities...[cricket] pitches are sometimes dangerous...and the Local Education Authority lacks the commitment or the funding to repair them'.¹⁰⁴ Cash-strapped local authorities were also encouraged to sell off playing fields to avoid making cuts elsewhere in their budgets: 5000 were sold between 1987 and 1995.¹⁰⁵ Another issue was the wave of national teacher strikes in the

¹⁰² WCA AGM minutes, 1989, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹⁰³ See for example the reports in ED 235/20 and BD 19/7, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁰⁴ Secondary Heads Association, *No Ball. An Enquiry into the provision of Physical Education in Secondary Schools* (London, 1987), p.3.

¹⁰⁵ Holt, 'Sport and Recreation', p.121.

mid-1980s, and the subsequent decline in teacher pay and conditions, both of which led to a decline in the number of teachers willing and/or able to devote time to extra-curricular activities like cricket. One report in Kent in 1991 summed this up:

For many years there has been a genre of teacher who has given freely of his or her time in lunchtimes, evenings, weekends and holidays to provide sporting opportunities for pupils... Recent legislation affecting schools has enforced changes in curriculum delivery and funding regimes and increased monitoring of progress; changes which have been perceived by these teachers as creating a climate where...funds are not used to provide a satisfactory level of pitch maintenance nor to provide incentive allowances for teachers who provide extra-curricular sport in schools...Anxiety has gradually risen and morale gradually fallen.¹⁰⁶

Lastly, there was the issue of the introduction of the national curriculum under the terms of the Education Reform Act 1988. This made PE a foundation subject, and ensured that a minimum figure of 5% of curriculum time was allocated to it; the issue was that in practice, this often meant less time available for PE lessons. Chris Watmough, who taught PE at Langley Park Girls' School in Kent for most of her career, emphasised this in our interview:

And then of course the pressure of the National Curriculum came in, PE time was cut. I can remember when I first started at Langley, having quite a time with the older girls, and you could actually have, not a cricket match, but you could play some form of games. Whereas it got cut to an hour, and even the Kwik Cricket is difficult to get going...I'm sure that's the reason why [school cricket was dying].¹⁰⁷

These problems are exemplified in a case study of one school which did offer girls cricket during the 1970s and 1980s, the Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School in Kent. A girls' cricket team was established in 1974, and mixed cricket formed a part of school PE lessons. The girls' team was successful, producing several junior county players. Nonetheless, in 1986 it was reported that the recent industrial action in local schools had 'virtually decimated' the new inter-school eight-a-side

¹⁰⁶ D. Turner, *Cricket in Kent: towards 2000* (Kent, 1991), p.81.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Chris Watmough, 3 June 2014.

league, and that the local winter six-a-side competitions had 'had to be cancelled due to lack of support'. The following year, the school's magazine stated that:

the Girls Cricket Club has been a victim of the general decline in girls cricket in schools within our area due partly to the action being taken by staff in these schools, and also to the fact that a number of schools have stopped playing the sport.

The fact that there is little competitive cricket taking place has also meant that there has been a serious decline in interest in the sport in our own school. As a result we had a very small squad to call upon.¹⁰⁸

By 1988, cricket was no longer played at Chislehurst, and they disaffiliated from the WCA. This was a not uncommon experience. WCA school affiliations, which were 55 in 1980, had decreased to 26 by 1991.

Many of these problems affected boys as well as girls. Yet there is no doubt that there was a gendered aspect to the decline of school cricket: cricket for girls suffered disproportionately during the 1980s. There were two main reasons for this. The first was that while cricket did survive in some comprehensive schools, in many cases it was only offered as an option for boys. Studies clearly show that the onset of comprehensive education did little to dislodge entrenched ideologies of gender which labelled some activities as 'masculine-appropriate': in the vast majority of schools, girls continued to be excluded from sports like football and cricket, and boys excluded from dance.¹⁰⁹ Sara Delamont found that when girls were selected to play for school teams, there was resistance from both parents and some PE teachers, and concluded that: 'there is a feeling in Britain...that mixed cricket would emasculate schoolboys almost as much as ballet; that the elusive

¹⁰⁸ *The Chronicle of the Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School*, various editions, 1974-1988.

¹⁰⁹ See Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, pp.188-193; O. Leaman, '*Sit on the sidelines and watch the boys play*': *sex differentiation in physical education* (York, 1984); A. Flintoff, "'One of the boys?': an ethnographic study of gender relations, co-education, and initial teacher education in physical education', unpublished thesis, Open University, 1993.

male *camaraderie* will be spoilt'.¹¹⁰ Sheila Scraton's 1992 study demonstrated that the national curriculum had done little to tackle such gender-based divisions in school PE.¹¹¹

The second reason was the loss of the all-female PE colleges, which had been a bastion of support for women's cricket throughout the twentieth century. There were times when almost the entire England XI was made up of PE teachers who had trained at such institutions, with Dartford in particular being a stronghold for the sport. This provided a group of teachers within the education system who were trained in the teaching of cricket, were eager to teach it within their schools, and were good role models for their pupils. Numerous school histories report the introduction of girls cricket as coinciding with the arrival of a cricketing PE teacher, followed by its demise a few years later when the member of staff concerned left for pastures new.¹¹² Yet the James Report of 1972 recommended merging the women's PE colleges with the rest of teacher training, and they gradually lost their independent identities during the 1970s.¹¹³ In 1986, thanks to a directive from the European Commission, mixed PE teacher training courses became obligatory within the UK. Thus one of the WCA's main sources of support was lost. By 1983 a survey by Dr Nick Whitehead, senior lecturer in PE at Carnegie College, Leeds, found that of ten PE colleges surveyed, three did not teach cricket at all, and that for the three where it was compulsory, only 16 hours on average was allocated to the subject over a four-year training course. The survey also revealed that PE teachers ranked cricket behind athletics, tennis, rounders, swimming and volleyball as summer options for girls.¹¹⁴ Sheila Plant, who taught cricket at Croydon High School for almost 30 years,

¹¹⁰ S. Delamont, *Sex roles and the school* (London, 1980), pp.95-6.

¹¹¹ S. Scraton, *Shaping up to Womanhood: Gender and Girls' Physical Education* (Buckingham, 1992).

¹¹² See for example RD Ackerley, *Bexley Grammar School. A History* (Kent, 2004), and P. Manning and J. Jones, *Hats off! A celebration of 90 years of our school, Beckenham County Grammar School* (Beckenham, 2008).

¹¹³ S. Fletcher, *Women First: the female tradition in English physical education 1880-1980* (London, 1984), pp.141-7.

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, 5 August 1983.

outlined the effects of the loss of the women's PE colleges in our interview:

in the end I was struggling to keep cricket going...the people they employed in the schools in the PE departments had no idea how to teach cricket...I don't think there were enough people going into schools, who took over from those who were doing a good job, they couldn't replace them. And so therefore they couldn't be bothered to play cricket any more...And you're going to get pressure from the other members of the department to say, 'well what are you bothering teaching cricket for? Why don't we do something else? Why don't we do athletics? Why don't we do rounders?'¹¹⁵

When Sheila retired from teaching in 1992, girls cricket at Croydon High School stopped completely.

What the erosion of school cricket meant in practical terms was that junior cricket transferred itself to the clubs. As *The Cricketer* reported in 1986, 'The gap in secondary schools cricket is being filled by local clubs, more and more of whom have started junior sections'.¹¹⁶ WCA reports, such as the following from 1975, show that this was equally the case for girls' cricket:

the number of schools who have affiliated has decreased in the last year...On the other hand, each Area Association confirms that there have been more Junior players participating in various cricket activities...Each Area Association now has an organising secretary for Junior Cricket...The type of activities held within each Area include: winter coaching sessions, especially for the absolute beginner, winter indoor 6-a-side tournaments...inter-school and inter-club six-a-side tournaments... Area Trials, Area matches, etc, etc.¹¹⁷

A cricketing coaching scheme for schoolgirls was instituted in 1978, and a major junior development programme was launched, whereby girls aged between 12 and 18 were encouraged to attend sessions at selected sports centres throughout the country, and from there to participate in the six-a-side tournament which led onto selection for Junior England. Jan Godman, who entered junior

¹¹⁵ Interview with Sheila Plant, 3 June 2014.

¹¹⁶ *The Cricketer*, October 1986.

¹¹⁷ WCA Yearbook, 1975, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

cricket during the 1980s before debuting for England in 1991, described her route into the England side:

...they weren't playing it in school when I started playing. There wasn't the girls cricket in schools...so when I came through as a 12-year-old I played Junior Thames Valley...And going to Morden to the six-a-side, which was the, it was a weekend of all the six Areas or counties...And then they'd select the [Junior England side] from there.¹¹⁸

Once again, though, the transfer of junior cricket from schools into clubs had a disproportionately negative effect on girls and women. For one thing, their junior development programme was a huge financial drain on the WCA's meagre resources. They relied both on grant aid from the Lords Taverners charity (a recreational cricket charity founded in the 1950s), and on the payment of travel and accommodation costs by the juniors themselves. This clearly would not have encouraged girls from working-class families to participate. And while the equivalent programmes for boys relied on sponsorship – one company provided the TCCB with £1.4 million over three years, beginning in 1990, to give specialist coaching to the best boys in the country¹¹⁹ – girls' cricket was no more of an attractive prospect for potential sponsors than its adult counterpart.

There was another issue, too, which directly related to the selling off of school cricket pitches. It has been shown in earlier chapters that, because women's clubs did not own their own grounds, they almost always relied on the use of public sector facilities, including those owned by schools. Thus when school pitches disappeared, it often spelled difficulties for local women's clubs. The problem was made more acute by the fact that the financial pressure on local authorities often led them to withdraw provision of local municipal facilities, too: studies showed that in Greater London, for

¹¹⁸ Interview with Jan Godman, 27 May 2014.

¹¹⁹ *The Cricketer*, April 1990.

example, 10% of public cricket pitches were lost between 1972 and 1986.¹²⁰ The Sports Council recognised that women's teams relied disproportionately on such facilities, and identified this as an area of concern.¹²¹ But by the time the problem was highlighted in the late 1980s, the damage had already been done. Government policies, in particular those pursued under Thatcher in relation to education, could therefore have negative effects on women's sport, just as they could in many other areas of women's lives.

Conclusion

Overall, the years between 1980 and 1992 were largely years of stagnation for women's cricket; too often it was a case of 'one step forward, two steps back' for the sport. Investment by the Sports Council in facilities and in WCA administration was certainly helpful. Yet the WCA's reliance on such funds made them exceptionally vulnerable to the government retrenchment of the 1980s. Crazes like indoor cricket came and went, and left the administrators of women's cricket still continually struggling to attract enough women and girls into the game to warrant further Council investment. Additionally, the education policies of the Thatcher governments caused a crisis in school sport, which led to the near-collapse of girls' cricket within schools by 1992. The WCA did not help themselves, either. While some younger cricketers like Rachael Heyhoe-Flint and Sarah Potter accepted the need for sponsorship, the continued influence of those who embraced amateurism above all else prevented the sport from fully coming to terms with the commercial age.

¹²⁰ UK Sports Council, *The playing pitch strategy and guide to assessing playing pitch requirements and developing local policy* (London, 1991), p.9.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

By 1992, the situation had reached crisis point. The WCA needed to bring more women and girls into the game, to encourage existing clubs to affiliate, to fund further development schemes for schoolgirls, and to provide a boost to the image of their sport. Yet their own dire financial straits, which were highlighted above, made this very difficult to do unaided. Arguably, as the 1990s progressed, they were left with no choice but to seek a closer relationship with the world of men's cricket. This would bring its own problems to the fore.

Chapter 5

1993 to 2000: To a merger and beyond

Introduction

In the summer of 1993, England hosted the fifth women's World Cup. In every quarter, the tournament was heralded as a great success for English women's cricket: the final at Lords was watched by 4,500 spectators (probably the largest crowd at a women's international in England since the 1950s), including Prime Minister John Major, and crucially, England defied the odds to win the tournament. The BBC featured live coverage of the final on Grandstand, watched by 2.5 million viewers,¹ and the following day saw women's cricket dominate the front and back pages of all the national newspapers for the first time in the sport's long history. A few days afterwards, then President of MCC, Dennis Silk, wrote to the Chairman of the Women's Cricket Association: 'It was the best day's cricket at Lord's this year and between you all, you created a magical atmosphere. You have done the whole of English cricket a great service.'² Indeed, the legacy of the tournament was to convert many who had previously been sceptical to the delights of the women's game.

Yet the staging of the tournament also epitomised the contradictory situation faced by women's sport in Britain in the 1990s. Though cricket was clearly becoming normalised as an activity for women, as the positive media coverage surrounding the World Cup suggests, women's sport still lacked the financial security of its male counterpart. In fact, the staging of the tournament reflected many of the problems identified in the previous chapter. Firstly, though the WCA had appealed to

¹ This figure is taken from *The Observer*, 8 August 1993.

² *Women's Cricket News*, Winter 1993.

over 300 firms for financial assistance, none offered sponsorship of the tournament.³ Secondly, it emphasised the WCA's reliance on Sports Council support: the Council refused to offer grant-aid towards the tournament, which cost an estimated £167,000 to stage, and the whole event came within two days of cancellation before the Foundation for Sport and the Arts charity agreed at the last minute to contribute £90,000 toward the costs. The rest of the money was secured through small-scale local sponsorship, and fund-raising on behalf of the WCA.⁴

As it was, this was clearly a tournament run on a shoestring. Teams were put up at Wellington College, and the organisers had to fight for access to decent pitches and facilities. England's group match against Holland at Ealing was played after the players had rolled the wicket themselves.⁵ Sportswomen still had to fight for equitable access to resources; attitudes regarding the worth of women's sport had not undergone a total transformation. Additionally, the 14 players in the England squad, still amateurs, had to take time off work to compete, and in some instances, players had to hire their own cars and fund the cost of petrol themselves to ensure they were able to attend all matches.⁶ This highlights another broader issue for British women's sport: even by the 1990s, it was dominated by middle-class women who could afford to participate.

Crucially, too, only four and a half years after the tournament, at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the WCA, its membership voted by a clear majority to dissolve the Women's Cricket Association, and join up with the new administrators of men's cricket, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). Clearly, for much of its history, the WCA had worked in conjunction with those administering men's cricket, but as the 1990s progressed, it became apparent that a much closer

³ WCA Annual Reports, 1989 and 1990, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

⁴ *Wisden*, 1993.

⁵ *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, September 1993.

⁶ *Ibid.*

relationship was necessary. Pressure was felt by the WCA from a number of quarters: financially, its funds were running at an all-time low; governmentally, the Sports Council was making it patently clear that it saw cricket, men's and women's, as one game, to be administered as such; and societally, the separatist feminist ideas which had shaped the WCA's history were becoming moribund in the face of 'new' equal opportunities feminism. Yet as debates within women's cricket throughout the 1990s indicate, the merger with the ECB also represented a clear loss of autonomy. Many other women's sports were facing a similar dilemma.

In many ways the situation for women's sport was a microcosm of the precarious state of the British feminist movement by the 1990s. Feminist ideas of equality had filtered through into wider society, but most feminist activists had become absorbed into mainstream male-dominated institutions, and the movement itself had consequently become deradicalised. Feminist ideas had taken root; yet the feminist movement itself was much less visible than it had been during the 1970s. This was clearly of concern, given that Britain by the end of the twentieth century remained a fundamentally gender unequal country. This chapter seeks to assess shifts in women's societal position by the 1990s through the lens of women's sport, suggesting that, in the words of one historian: 'Women in 2000 [had] many more choices and opportunities than women in 1900 but genuine equality between men and women remain[ed] elusive'.⁷

Women's leisure in the 1990s

A number of historians of modern Britain, writing during the 1990s, attempted to weigh up how far

⁷ I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Introduction', in Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), p.1.

women had progressed towards equality by this period.⁸ Jane Lewis, for example, recognised that three fundamental social changes had occurred by 1992 which particularly affected British women: an increase in married women in paid employment; an increase in the divorce rate; and the rise of illegitimacy.⁹ Yet this focus on demographic changes, and in particular changes in the number of women in the workforce, failed to consider an important arena by which shifts in women's societal position might be measured: that of women's leisure. It was left to sociologists to draw the obvious conclusion:

In theory, the changes now evident in women's work involvement, and the consequent limiting of the amount of time they spend directly involved in child care and household responsibilities, offer an opening for a revision of attitudes about the role of leisure in women's lives.¹⁰

There appeared to be an expectation that an increase in women's work might open up more opportunities for leisure.

This might appear to be the case if one considers the increase in overall female participation in sport during the 1980s, a trend which continued and expanded into the 1990s. The General Household Survey of 1996, for example, revealed that 56% of women now took part in sport at least once a month, a rise of 4% since 1987. Interestingly, this compared with 71% of men, a total which had actually fallen by 3% between 1987 and 1996.¹¹ Also, though in the 1980s much of the rise in female participation had come through indoor sports and those activities considered 'feminine-appropriate' such as aerobics, at least some of the increase during the 1990s came in sports

⁸ Examples include J. Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945* (Oxford, 1992), P. Thane, 'Towards Equal Opportunities? Women in Britain since 1945', in T. Gourvish and A. O'Day (eds.), *Britain since 1945* (London, 1991), and S. Rowbotham, *A Century of Women. The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (1997; reprinted London, 1999), chapter 10.

⁹ Lewis, *Women in Britain*, p.2.

¹⁰ T. Kay, 'Women's Leisure and the Family in Contemporary Britain', in N. Samuel (ed.), *Women, Leisure and the Family in Contemporary Society: a multinational perspective* (Wallingford, 1996), p.152.

¹¹ Sport England, *General Household Survey: trends in adult participation in sport in Great Britain 1987-1996* (London, 1999), p.3.

considered more traditionally male activities: Williams notes that between 1991 and 1996, the number of registered women's and girls' football players rose from 9,000 to 21,500, with the number of clubs rising from 334 in total to 1350 across the same period.¹² The figures for women's cricket also indicate a surge in interest during the 1990s: in 1993 39 clubs and 51 schools were affiliated to the WCA, but by 1997 there were 171 clubs in existence, rising to 204 clubs by 2000. ECB statistics show that by early 2000 there were more than 5000 women playing cricket in England and Wales, compared with 3,600 women participating in 1997 and probably less than 1,000 during the 1980s.¹³ This increase in female participation suggests that, at least to some extent, sports participation was becoming normalised as an activity for women by the 1990s.

The normalisation of women's sport was heavily promoted and encouraged by the Sports Council. During the 1980s, as we saw in the previous chapter, the idea of 'equal opportunities' became embedded in the practices of the Sports Council. However, a new framework for action was outlined in their 1993 policy document, *Women and Sport*.¹⁴ The introduction to this document stated that:

It is time to progress towards a policy which takes a much more comprehensive view; not simply opening up opportunities for women to enjoy equal access to sport, but also recognising that sport needs women just as much as women may benefit from sport and that sport itself will need to change to accommodate them.¹⁵

It was recognised that, though the identification of women as a target group in the 1980s had led to increased participation, 'wider and more fundamental issues to do with the culture and structure of

¹² J. Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* (London, 2003), p.40.

¹³ WCA Yearbook, 1993, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014); 'Women's cricket: the facts', *ECB Factsheet* (London, 1999); *Wicket Women*, Spring 2000.

¹⁴ A. White, 'Towards Gender Equity in Sport: An Update on Sports Council Policy Development', in A. Tomlinson (ed.), *Gender, Sport and Leisure: Continuities and Challenges* (1995; reprinted Aachen, 1997), pp.206-7.

¹⁵ UK Sports Council, *Women and sport. Policy and frameworks for action* (London, 1993), p.6.

sport [had been] ignored', and the document set out measures to address this, including tackling early stereotyping of boys and girls, balancing the inequities prevalent in private club provision, and putting competitive structures in place for talented females.¹⁶

Crucially, the Sports Council's 1993 document also recommended the following actions for governing bodies of sport:

Draw up and implement a gender equity policy for the sport and the governing body...

In consultation with women draw up and implement an action plan for increasing the number of women at all levels and in all roles...

Where separate governing bodies for men and women exist, discuss the formulation of a common policy and co-ordinate planning and practice. Where appropriate, establish a single governing body.¹⁷

It thus became official Sports Council policy that men's and women's sports should, wherever possible, be administered by a single governing body. This reflected a broader ideological move away from the separatist feminism of the 1970s, as outlined by 'New Feminists' such as Natasha Walter:

for today's generation of young women, the outsider mentality...has little resonance...Now, the changes we are looking for must happen within the context of paid work or Parliament or prime-time television, not in some separate space.¹⁸

Throughout the 1990s, this manifested itself in several sports. Squash had pioneered the way when in 1989 the Women's Squash Rackets Association amalgamated with the men's Squash Rackets Association. In 1992, the Football Association took over control of women's football from the (admittedly already male-led) Women's FA. In 1996, the English Lacrosse Union and All England

¹⁶ Ibid., p.45.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.13.

¹⁸ N. Walter, *The New Feminism* (1998; reprinted London, 1999), p.34.

Women's Lacrosse Association joined together to form one national governing body, the English Lacrosse Association. And in 1998 the sister association of the WCA, the All England Women's Hockey Association, merged with the men's Hockey Association to form the new English Hockey Association. Cathy Mowat, Chairman of the WCA between 1986 and 1993, recalled that pressure from the Sports Council to consider a merger with men's cricket was increasingly felt:

the reason I stopped being Chairman was that this was the time when all women's sports were being brought in under the umbrella of one sport...it had just happened to squash, it was happening with hockey and it was happening with cricket. And the meetings with the Sports Council became more and more time-consuming... essentially, 'if you want a grant, you have to become part of the men's organisation and they will get a grant from us, the Sports Council, and give you some of it'.¹⁹

Minutes of WCA Executive Committee meetings from this period support Cathy's recollections.

The Executive reported in 1991 that it had met the Sports Council's Grant Assessment Panel, who had agreed funding of £18,500 for the next year, but had also 'expressed its considerable concern at the limited liaison between WCA and the men's cricketing governing bodies, as well as the unsatisfactory nature of the administrative structure of cricket as a whole which had been noted at the Panel's earlier meeting with the Cricket Council'. They concluded that:

There is a need for WCA to look beyond its own resources and utilise the infrastructure provided by NCA [National Cricket Association]...for new vision, direction and initiative to arrest the slow but steady decline in women's cricket.²⁰

At the November 1992 meeting of the Executive, two representatives of the Sports Council attended, and actually threatened to withdraw all grant aid for the years 1992-4 if a full development plan incorporating proposals for closer links with the Test and County Cricket Board

¹⁹ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

²⁰ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 15 November 1991, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

(TCCB) and NCA was not put forward by the WCA.²¹

The WCA's new Development Plan, which covered the period between October 1993 and September 1997, thus utilised the resources available to men's cricket to encourage greater numbers of girls and women into the game. Surrey WCA, for example, reported in 1995 that they had 'established a good working relationship with various members of the Surrey Cricket Council and the Surrey Cricket Association at the Oval and now the Oval staff are carrying out development work on our behalf within the county'.²² A number of Development Plans created by men's county associations in the early 1990s formally incorporated women's cricket for the first time: the *Cricket North-West* strategy document, published in 1993, identified that 'access and opportunity to play' was extremely limited for girls, and two of the stated objectives of the plan, which covered the period from 1993 to 1997, were:

To improve the management and administration of women's cricket in the region.
To ensure that equal opportunities exist for boys and girls.²³

By 1997, Cricket Development Officers with special responsibility for Women's and/or Girls cricket had been appointed in Surrey, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Kent. During the 1990s, too, many local authority Sports Development Officers reported that they were running women's cricket initiatives in their areas. In one typical case which took place during 1993, the SDO for Tameside, after being approached by the mother of one of the boys who attended colts sessions at a Tameside club and asked why there was no local women's team, rounded up several interested women, and organised an indoor coaching course. This was attended by 33 women, and resulted in the establishment of

²¹ *Women's Cricket News*, Spring 1993.

²² WCA Annual Report, 1995, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

²³ North West Council for Sport and Recreation, *Cricket North-West 1993-1997: a development plan for cricket in the North West* (Manchester, 1993), p.14. See also D. Turner, *Cricket in Kent: towards 2000* (Kent, 1991).

two new women's cricket clubs in the area.²⁴

Kwik Cricket was another programme which was predicated on the basis of equal opportunities for boys and girls. This had been launched by the Cricket Council in January 1988 to 'bring the game to new generations of boys and girls and ensure cricket is a mass appeal sport well into the 21st century'.²⁵ A response to the near death of cricket within the state school sector during the 1980s, it was a child-friendly, cheaper and quicker form of the game which could be organised on any surface, played with special lightweight plastic bats and stumps, and a lightweight orange ball. The project was sponsored by the Milk Marketing Board, who initially contributed £550,000 over five years, and the Lord's Taverners. Crucially, it was aimed at both boys and girls from the very beginning: the launch was attended not only by Mike Gatting but also by Jan Brittin, England Women's premier batsman of the day.²⁶

Barbara Daniels, who was involved in schools cricket coaching in the early 1990s, explained the significance of this:

Kwik Cricket was a massive deal for us...[it] was the big thing that first went into schools that said, 'girls and boys, you're coming in and you're dealing with the whole class, girls and boys'...That was a big deal because there was some funding around for people to go into schools, and it was a given that you'd go into a whole class, so therefore you had to coach the girls...all of a sudden there were lots of girls in schools, primary schools largely, saying 'oh we really quite like this, what else can we do?'...That was revolutionary, really.²⁷

By 1998, 374,000 primary school girls and 83,000 secondary school girls were participating in Kwik Cricket, and *The Cricketer* reported that 51% of primary schools and 67% of secondary

²⁴ *Women's Cricket News*, Spring 1993.

²⁵ *Cricket World*, February 1988.

²⁶ *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, March 1988.

²⁷ Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

schools were now offering cricket to their pupils.²⁸ Overall, official WCA affiliation figures show an increase from 50 affiliated schools in 1993 to 114 affiliated schools in 1998.²⁹ This was a remarkable revival, and is borne out by a 1999 Sport England survey which noted that 51% of primary-school-age girls and 37% of secondary-school-age girls had participated in cricket at least once over the preceding 12 months; participation for boys and girls overall had increased in school lessons from 39% to 42% between 1994 and 1999.³⁰ The introduction of Kwik Cricket thus brought many girls to the game who might otherwise have never played at school; most notably future England captain Charlotte Edwards, who was discovered by a scout for Huntingdonshire Boys when playing in her regional Kwik Cricket final.³¹

Kwik Cricket also led to an increased acceptance of mixed gender cricket at junior levels, which benefited many women. During the 1990s, many of the best female cricketers in the country emerged from a background in which they had played the vast majority of their cricket with boys: of the 14 players who participated in the 1997 World Cup in India, seven had come through boys' club or school cricket. Clare Connor, for example, who captained England between 2000 and 2005, played for the age-group sections of her local men's club, Preston Nomads, from under-9s all the way through her teenage years, and later made headlines when she became one of the first ever girls to play First XI public school boys cricket, for Brighton College. Additionally, as feminist theorists have argued, participation in mixed sport at a young age has potentially radical implications, as it enables boys to grow up being aware of the skill and strength of the female body.³² Charlotte

²⁸ *The Cricketer*, June 1998.

²⁹ WCA Yearbooks, 1993 and 1998, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

³⁰ Sport England, *Young people and sport in England 1999: a survey of young people and PE teachers* (Sport England, 2001), pp.13-25.

³¹ Interview with Charlotte Edwards, 9 June 2014.

³² See for example D. Sabo and M. Messner, 'Whose Body Is This? Women's Sports and Sexual Politics', in G. Cohen (ed.), *Women in Sport: Issues and Controversies* (Newbury Park, 2001), p.34; and L. Robinson, *Black Tights. Women, sport and sexuality* (Toronto, 2002), p.209.

Edwards, who captained Huntingdonshire Boys from age 12, relayed in an interview:

The boys were fine. The boys had grown up with me playing cricket, so the boys I played with it was 'Charlotte, she plays cricket', boy or girl, they didn't care.³³

These norms filtered through into wider society and helped both the girls themselves and their male team mates see their participation in cricket as 'normal'.

Within this environment, participation in sport could transform women's lives and provide an empowering space for their leisure. Beth Morgan, for example, who first played club cricket aged 13 and later played for England, explained in our interview that:

I was a very shy kid...I was very socially awkward and struggled with any social situation really...But [cricket] completely gave me confidence and friends, a social network, and a confidence in myself and something that I was good at and enjoyed...I'm a completely different person...it's been my whole life. It's given me everything really, and changed me in a massive, massive way.³⁴

Barbara Daniels, who represented England between 1993 and 2000, reported a similar experience:

I found sport, for me, was absolutely a liberating thing...I knew I was good at it I suppose, because I could play with the boys, not just my brothers but their friends and stuff. Not just I was good, but I loved it. Any sport, it didn't matter. I found being able to run and hit things, I found it freeing somehow...And actually as I got older, as I went to secondary school, I was a very shy child, and sport became a vehicle for me to be confident really.³⁵

Additionally, as Hargreaves suggests:

If sport becomes part of a 'way of life' for increasing numbers of women, such a trend can

³³ Interview with Charlotte Edwards, 2011, MCC library, London.

³⁴ Interview with Beth Morgan, 16 September 2013.

³⁵ Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

begin to change the perception of other people about what is appropriate behaviour for women. Such a movement does not immediately eliminate male hegemony, but it shifts its construction and the extent of its effectiveness.³⁶

As the 1990s progressed, a broader societal shift in attitudes to women's sport was visible at a number of levels in British society. The positive press coverage surrounding the 1993 World Cup is a good example: Peter Johnson in the *Daily Mail* praised 'the female of the species' for being 'deadlier than the male', and Mike Selvey in the *Guardian* said he had witnessed 'high quality skills with the bat, old-fashioned virtue with the ball, superb fielding...and not a single no-ball to blight the memory'. 'Make no mistake,' he concluded, 'these are terrific cricketers.'³⁷ The outcry surrounding the 1993 BBC Sports Personality of the Year awards ceremony confirmed that the media were now fully behind England women's cricket. Having won the World Cup, the team were widely expected to win the BBC's Team Award, yet it went to the men's rugby team, at least partly because the BBC were at that stage in negotiations with the Rugby Football Union for the television rights to the Five Nations Championship, and felt this would help their cause. Ian Wooldridge wrote in the *Daily Mail*:

This space is not exactly renowned for its fiery pro-feminist sentiments but I felt like marching with Germaine Greer and the rest of them when England's women's cricket team were left standing there like spare nuns at a wedding.

Too well brought up to express their feelings in public, they have left it to me to do it for them: 'What the hell do we have to do next to win a little public recognition?'³⁸

The letters pages in *The Cricketer* in the wake of the World Cup also seemed to confirm the the idea that perceptions of women's cricket were in flux. Admittedly, traditional attitudes still prevailed in

³⁶ J. Hargreaves, 'The Promise and Problems of Women's Leisure and Sport', in C. Rojek (ed.), *Leisure for Leisure* (Hampshire, 1989), p.146.

³⁷ *Daily Mail*, 2 August 1993; *Guardian*, 2 August 1993.

³⁸ *Daily Mail*, 15 December 1993.

some quarters, as the following letter from a 'P. Holland' of Lincolnshire suggested:

I find it deeply disturbing that with such a wide range of quality cricket being played throughout the world you should decide to dedicate in September issue's coverage of the Women's World Cup two full pages to a form of cricket which is little more than village green standard.

At present I am introducing my young grandson to the vagaries of cricket, and I feel that scenes on programmes such as *Grandstand* showing such a consistently poor standard of cricket can only be confusing to a boy of tender age. I feel that members of MCC are fully justified in their decision to allow male only membership....there is no room for [women] on the international stage.

I am sure your readers will agree with my sentiments, as does my cricket loving wife whose cricketing ambitions extend no further than making teas, which role she has dutifully fulfilled for the past 35 years.³⁹

Yet the editor later acknowledged that responses to this letter had been 'torrential', and of the selection of replies published, all overwhelmingly disagreed with the sentiments expressed:

Some women are happy to make teas, others want to play cricket, run businesses or become ministers in the church. Let's not create a male versus female society, but encourage everyone in what they wish to achieve. (Ed Barnett, Rickmansworth)

P Holland's views in the October issue's letters are deeply damaging to the future of cricket in this country...The very least that is required is that women are provided with opportunities. *The Cricketer* is to be congratulated for giving coverage to the World Cup but should now give more exposure to women's cricket. (Sanjeev Shah, Harrow)

Like others, my cricket club could not survive without its ladies and our gratitude is due to them all. However, I hope our players do not see tea making or any other activity as a woman's duty, nor expect our many female members to have no other cricketing ambitions. As an example, my club also has a female Treasurer and a female Social Secretary, both of whom carry out these roles at least as well as any man.

Anyway ladies, back to your knitting. You'll be wanting the vote next! (Chris Overson, Harrow)⁴⁰

Most of the published letters, interestingly, were penned by men: cricket fans who had watched and enjoyed women's cricket, welcomed coverage of the women's game in *The Cricketer*, and found P. Holland's attitude both sexist and laughable. Letters similar to P. Holland's which had been

³⁹ *The Cricketer*, October 1993.

⁴⁰ *The Cricketer*, November and December 1993.

published even ten years earlier had not attracted anywhere like the same kind of condemnation.

P. Holland also showed himself to be out of touch with public opinion on another subject of controversy: the campaign for female membership of the MCC. The Marylebone Cricket Club retained enormous influence in cricket as both the owner of Lord's and the owner and maker of the laws of cricket, yet even by the 1990s it continued to uphold a ban on women members. As a private members club it was not covered by the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act and was thus legally entitled to do so. However, the indefatigable Rachael Heyhoe-Flint caused a stir when in 1991 she applied for membership of the club, supported by famous names including Tim Rice, Jack Hayward, Dennis Amiss and Brian Johnston, and the issue was brought before the membership. The initial vote went overwhelmingly against Heyhoe-Flint, with 2,371 members voting for and 4,727 against admitting women to membership; yet Heyhoe-Flint continued to campaign for admission to membership throughout the 1990s. By February 1998, when a second vote took place, opinion had shifted and 56% of the membership voted in favour of admitting women; yet the necessary two-thirds majority needed to secure a change in the rules was still not secured.⁴¹ Many members of MCC continued to argue that the atmosphere of their club would be fundamentally altered by the admission of women, and that 'there is...no evidence that women can make any positive contribution to the game of cricket'.⁴²

But the MCC membership was hardly representative of society as a whole, and it is telling that by 1998 its president Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie and his committee fully supported the campaign for female membership. Additionally, the public reaction to the two 'no' votes demonstrated that the rightful place of women within the cricket community was by this time fully accepted by the

⁴¹ The campaign for MCC membership is described in I. Duncan, *Skirting the Boundary* (London, 2013), pp.243-257.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.246.

broader public. The press labelled the MCC as 'a misogynists' convention', 'social Luddites', and 'old bores in panama hats, blazers and ties'.⁴³ The idea that men still needed to hide themselves away in all-male spaces was also seen as moribund; there was a similar onslaught against gentleman's clubs like the Garrick and Boodles during the 1990s.⁴⁴ This was linked back to ideas about appropriate uses of leisure, as one article from the *Guardian* suggested:

It all seems to reinforce the idea that men can't really enjoy themselves with women around and that at the weekends, men should be at play while women catch up on the housework and mind the kids. Cricket matches can remove men from their families for days on end. Perhaps that is the idea, particularly for the gentlemen to be found at most matches watching the game on the pavilion TV or downing their sorrows in the bar.⁴⁵

Attitudes towards the continued exclusion of women from MCC membership, then, perhaps indicate a broader shift towards what were perceived as appropriate leisure spaces for men and women: no longer was sport a male enclave, and no longer was it acceptable for men to enjoy leisure space and time at the expense of the female members of their families. The normalisation of sport, and cricket in particular, as an activity for women as well as men was a significant step towards progress in equal opportunities for female leisure during the 1990s.

Constraints on women's leisure

Yet, as many of those working within the newly-developed field of women's leisure studies discovered, 'one size did not fit all' when considering women's leisure opportunities during the

⁴³ *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, April 1988; *The Observer*, 1 March 1998; *Daily Mail*, 25 February 1998.

⁴⁴ See for example *The Guardian*, 28 September 1998.

⁴⁵ *The Guardian*, 16 August 1989.

1990s.⁴⁶ Karla Henderson, in a review of research into women's leisure between 1990 and 1995, concluded that it was still the case that 'constraints to leisure may be more acute for women who are in nondominant groups or women who exist on the margins'.⁴⁷ Though women's participation in the workplace had increased, there was a huge difference between the earnings of, for example, the 'new' middle-class career woman and the working-class single mother. As Sheila Scraton recognised, even by the 1990s half of female employment in Britain was in low-paid work which left little disposable income for formal leisure activities. In fact, the empowered 'new woman' image was often far from a reality in women's lives.⁴⁸

These economic realities are especially pertinent when considering female participation in sport, which remained disproportionately middle-class throughout the 1990s. The General Household Survey of 1996 provides a snapshot of this, indicating that sports participation levels were at 85% for independent female workers and just 42% for manual female workers.⁴⁹ Additionally, a Sport England survey from 1999 suggested that of those who did not participate in sport, 19% of women regarded that activities being of a lower cost was the most important factor which would encourage them to take part, whereas only 12% of men felt this was a significant factor.⁵⁰

Elite level women's cricket did seem to have become socially broader by this time if we consider the fact that the 14 players selected for the 1997 World Cup in India included a van driver and a

⁴⁶ K. Henderson, 'One Size Doesn't Fit All: The Meanings of Women's Leisure', *Journal of Leisure Research* 28:3 (1996).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.149.

⁴⁸ S. Scraton, 'Continuities and change – challenges for a feminist leisure studies', paper presented at Women and Leisure: Towards a New Understanding, International Conference, Athens, Georgia, USA. Quoted in B. Wearing, *Leisure and feminist theory* (London, 1998), p.36. See also Kay, 'Women, Leisure and the Family in Contemporary Society', p.157.

⁴⁹ Figures quoted in C. Doustaly, 'Women and leisure in Britain: a socio-historical approach to twentieth-century trends', in B. Bebbler (ed.), *Leisure and cultural conflict in twentieth-century Britain* (Manchester, 2012), p.188.

⁵⁰ C. Aitchison, *Gender and Leisure* (London, 2003), p.104.

service station attendant, and that the privately-educated 'posh' Clare Connor was seen as an anomaly.⁵¹ England captain Karen Smithies had in fact attended her local state school; her father was a designer at an electrical machine firm, her mother worked in a factory, and she herself left school with 6 O levels and 1 A level, married a welder, and became a manager at a local bookmaker's.⁵² This hardly suggests unqualified privilege. Yet it is also the case that the 1990s witnessed players giving up more of their time and money than ever before to participate at the highest level, due to the professionalisation which occurred under coach Ruth Prideaux and her successors. By 1992, for example, players were contributing c.£1600 a year to cover their travel, accommodation and training expenses, and the five members of the 1993 World Cup squad who hailed from Yorkshire spent hours driving back and forth to Eastbourne for training weekends.⁵³ Sue Metcalfe was forced to give up her job to keep up with training and touring commitments in the years leading up to the 1993 tournament. Only those women with a certain level of financial security, often provided by affluent parents, could have afforded this, and many clearly still relied on parental support. Smithies, when interviewed in 1997 about her 11-year career for England, stated that: '*between me and my parents*, cricket's probably cost us fifteen or twenty thousand pounds in lost wages, travelling, kit'.⁵⁴ Survey evidence more broadly from a spectrum of sports across this period found that elite level sportswomen were likely to be concerned about financial hardship and dependent on family support.⁵⁵

Given the lack of statistical evidence, it is harder to draw conclusions about quite how representative the growth in participation in women's cricket at grassroots level may have been

⁵¹ P. Davies, *Mad Dogs and English Women* (London, 1998), p.180.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.29-31.

⁵³ 'England Squad Report 1992', WCA Annual Report, 1992, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

⁵⁴ Davies, *Mad Dogs and English Women*, p.33. My emphasis.

⁵⁵ Sport England, *Women's Participation in Sport* (London, 2002).

during the 1990s, but by comparison with other sports like women's football it probably suffered from its ever closer association with the men's game. Adonis and Pollard, writing in the mid-1990s, suggested that cultural divisions remained an important demarcation of social class; sport for them was, after the BBC, 'the second most revealing aspect of national life for class today'. They argued that football had become a national sport, attracting a cross-class following; cricket, meanwhile, remained hide-bound by the Gentleman and Player division which had supposedly been abolished decades previously.⁵⁶ Both the cricketing and mainstream press during the 1990s began to talk of cricket in the UK as suffering from an 'image problem': 'The blunt fact is that cricket in the UK has become unattractive to the overwhelming majority of the population,' wrote the editor of *Wisden* in 1997. 'The game is widely perceived as elitist, exclusionist and dull.'⁵⁷ The refusal of the MCC to admit female members simply reinforced the perception that the sport as a whole was out of touch with modern-day realities, and this was directly contrasted with football:

While football has been trendily reinventing itself as a hip Nineties activity that men and women can enjoy, cricket has been gathering dust as a boys-only ball game unconcerned with attracting new fans...If cricket wants to recover its place as a national sport rather than a national embarrassment, it must make the changes that the rest of Britain made long ago. If cricket wants to face the future, it must let 'the ladies' into Lord's.⁵⁸

An environment like this would hardly have encouraged participation in cricket by working-class girls and women.

Black and Asian women living in Britain in the 1990s also generally faced greater constraints on their opportunities for leisure than white women. Within sport, overall participation rates for both

⁵⁶ A. Adonis and S. Pollard, *A Class Act. The Myth of Britain's Classless Society* (1997; reprinted London, 1998), p.214, pp.235-6.

⁵⁷ 'Editor's Notes', *Wisden*, 1997.

⁵⁸ *The Guardian*, 25 February 1998.

Afro-Caribbean and Asian women remained low;⁵⁹ not only did they often live in less affluent circumstances than white women, but Asian women in particular faced numerous cultural constraints on their participation, such as parental restrictions, increased family responsibilities, religious barriers and a lack of gender-segregated sporting spaces.⁶⁰ Additionally Hargreaves, writing in 1994, highlighted that deep-rooted racism within British sporting institutions was often a powerful constraint on women's sporting participation.⁶¹ This was clearly the case for cricket; one study of English men's cricket published in 2001 concluded that 'racism is both deeply rooted and pervasive in recreational cricket in England'.⁶² An environment which excluded ethnic minority men on the basis of skin colour would hardly provide a conducive one for female participation.

Within English cricket, racism operated at two levels. Institutionally, black and Asian men were often informally excluded from established 'white' leagues, forcing them to create their own structures which received no official funding and consigned them to poor pitches.⁶³ Yet there was also a more deep-rooted issue: the cultural imagery of cricket. Prime Minister John Major in a famous speech of 1993 typified the mythology surrounding the sport:

Fifty years on from now, Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county [cricket] grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers, and – as George Orwell said – old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist.

Not only did this vision of Britain explicitly exclude non-whites, who were generally located in urban areas, it also harked back to past days of greatness, and was an attempt to promote an image

⁵⁹ J. Hargreaves, *Sporting Females* (1994; reprinted London, 2003), p.256.

⁶⁰ See G. Verma and D. Darby, *Winners and Losers: Ethnic Minorities in Sport and Recreation* (London, 1994), p.107, and A. Lyons, *Asian women and sport* (London, 1990).

⁶¹ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, pp.257-60.

⁶² B. Carrington and I. McDonald, 'Whose game is it anyway? Racism in local league cricket', in Carrington and McDonald (eds.), *'Race', Sport and British Society* (London, 2001), p.49.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.60.

of an imperial past where Britain was the dominant force in cricket, a past which had existed prior to the arrival of non-white immigrants. It was the promotion of the myth of the 'whiteness' of cricket which led to the publication of articles in the cricket media during the 1990s questioning the 'loyalty' of non-white England cricketers, even those who had been born in the UK.⁶⁴ The long association of cricket with British imperialism had left its mark.

Evidence suggests that a similar culture predominated within women's cricket. Even by the 1980s, the WCA's attitude towards touring teams reflected their continued belief in their own racial and cricketing superiority. A good example is the maiden Indian tour of England in 1986, during which tensions between the two nations were rife. During one of the early tour matches against Middlesex, the Indian captain reportedly verbally abused the English umpires, and accused them of cheating.⁶⁵ The breaking-point came during the first Test match at Collingham; on the final afternoon of the four-day game, England were chasing 254 in the fourth innings for a victory. The WCA's account is as follows:

A complaint was made [by the Indians] about the size of the Ground. During play numerous requests were made regarding the sight-screen, the reflection of the sun on various fittings around the ground and parked cars. The assistance rendered by the Ground Authorities to alleviate the problems was exemplary.

On the fourth day, the over-rate (7) in the penultimate hour precluded a result being achieved by either side. The acting Captain did not seem to have full authority over her players and the delaying tactics were to be deprecated.⁶⁶

According to the Indian account, after play was over, WCA chairman Cathy Mowat entered their dressing room and told them privately that they would be ostracised in women's cricket unless they changed their ways. Several of the players were reduced to tears and the then Indian captain

⁶⁴ See M. Marqusee, *Anyone but England. An Outsider Looks at English Cricket* (1994; reprinted London, 2005), p.158, pp.290-7.

⁶⁵ Memorandum, 'WCA's views on recent visit of India touring team', 1987, private collection, Surrey.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

accused the WCA chairman of 'racial abuse'. A written apology was demanded and eventually granted, after the Indians threatened to return home without fulfilling the rest of their tour commitments. Yet the WCA's account of the tour concluded that:

Throughout the Tour, the tantrums of the team and flagrant gamesmanship signified an obvious lack of understanding of the Laws of Cricket and a complete ignorance of the 'spirit of the game'...Their ignorance of the spirit and conventions of touring abroad, namely to accept that one's hosts are doing their best to ensure that things run smoothly, caused antagonism among the membership.⁶⁷

One WCA official told the *Daily Mail* that the heart of the problem was that 'the Indians are a race who will always find something to complain about'.⁶⁸ Perhaps the real problem, though, was that India had become a women's cricketing powerhouse by this time, thanks to the overwhelming popularity of the sport there. Meanwhile the WCA were struggling to come to terms with the harsh reality of British decline, both within women's cricket and more generally. This, alongside the continued efforts of WCA members to keep up sporting links with South Africa through 'rebel' tours, ensured that a 'white', imperial-based identity remained normalised within British women's cricket, even by the 1990s.⁶⁹

The tacit acceptance of the WCA leadership of the 'whiteness' of women's cricket came across strongly in oral history interviews, as the following extract with Cathy Mowat, the Chairman of the WCA from 1986 to 1993, demonstrates:

RN: What about if I was to say that there's this perception of women's cricket as quite white?

CM: Yep.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *Daily Mail*, 5 July 1986.

⁶⁹ Details of these 'rebel' tours can be found in *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, April 1984; *Daily Mail*, 19 December 1973; and N. Rheinberg, 'Women's Cricket Overseas', in *Barclay's World of Cricket* (London, 1986), pp.379-82.

RN: Yeah. You'd agree with that.

CM: Yes. But you could say that about, well certainly men's cricket internationally...we had a lovely black girl called Celia who played a long time ago, an absolute hoot, but it takes a big step for them to come and knock on the door and say 'I'd like to play'. A big step...And I think apart from, well, certain inner-city clubs, I would say outside of the big cities cricket is very much a white sport. It's just when you get into London and I suppose Birmingham and Manchester, a lot of the leagues have got a lot of Asians. But yeah, why isn't men's cricket tapping into that talent? It must be huge.

RN: So it's a cricket-wide problem.

CM: I think so, yeah.⁷⁰

Cathy argued two things during our interview: firstly, that the 'whiteness' of women's cricket was simply something that carried over unproblematically from the men's game; and secondly, that it was felt to be the responsibility of black and Asian girls and women to 'knock on the door' of the sport, rather than the responsibility of women's cricket to alter its image and seek to actively recruit women from different backgrounds. Both these attitudes appear to have been pervasive, and this helps to explain why there was never any policy commitment on behalf of the Women's Cricket Association to attempt to increase participation in women's cricket by ethnic minority groups. Additionally, as Mike Marqusee observed, the English men's cricket authorities generally denied claims that racism existed within the game, creating a 'culture of complacency and denial' which presumably permeated across into the women's game.⁷¹

The problem of racism affected female opportunities for participation far more than their male counterparts, however. While separatist Asian and Afro-Caribbean men's cricket clubs have been held up by sports sociologists as an arena of cultural resistance whereby cricketers could be freed

⁷⁰ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

⁷¹ Marqusee, *Anyone but England*, p.160, p.314.

from racist ideologies and practices,⁷² ethnic minority women generally lacked the resources to circumvent exclusion by starting their own clubs and leagues. This is supported by contemporary statistics: one Sport England survey of 1999 based on a random sample of ethnic minority women suggested that participation in cricket for all ethnic groups (including Black and Indian women) was 0%, with the exception of Pakistani women (2%) and Bangladeshi women (also 2%).⁷³ This was not a positive picture, and it is backed up by the almost total lack of non-white women who appear in photographs of club and county women's teams throughout the postwar period, as well as oral history interviews on the subject. Indeed, it would be fair to conclude that there has been extremely little penetration of grassroots women's cricket by non-white women throughout the sport's history.

In August 2001 Ebony Rainford-Brent and Isa Guha became, respectively, the first black and Asian women cricketers to represent England. Their stories well illustrate the difficulties faced by ethnic minority women seeking to take up the sport during the 1990s. Ebony, who grew up in a lone-parent household in Brixton, first played cricket aged ten at her state primary school when an organisation called the London Community Cricket Association ran a coaching session there in 1993. The LCCA was a charity established in 1981, funded partly by the regional Sports Council, which sought to provide access to cricket for those who would not normally have had access to the game. Through the 1980s and 1990s they ran inner-city cricket programmes, and worked to develop girls and women's cricket through coaching programmes, as well as disability cricket. Ebony stressed the importance of an LCCA employee, Jenny Wostrack (herself of Caribbean origin and a female club and county cricketer) to her early days in cricket. After 'spotting' Ebony during an early cricket session, Jenny invited her to a cricket festival hosted by the LCCA at Arundel, and to join her own club, Redoubtables. Ebony was then spotted at Arundel by a female coach and selected for girls-

⁷² B. Carrington, 'Sport, masculinity and Black cultural resistance', in S. Scraton and A. Flintoff (eds.), *Gender and Sport: a Reader* (London, 2002).

⁷³ Sport England, *Sports participation and ethnicity in England: national survey 1999/2000* (London, 2000).

only training sessions, and went on to play for Surrey at an early age. As Ebony relayed to me:

...cricket wasn't accessible from where I was. If I think about it, we couldn't afford the equipment. My first bat, my mum, we went down to Brixton Market and we got like a £5 bat...But that jump, my mum spending £5 on that, was like the biggest investment. She was like 'this is a lot of money Ebony', and I was like 'I know Mum, please please please'. Club fees they add up, equipment they add up, so Jenny did a lot of work, she applied for a lot of scholarships, through Surrey.

As well as financial support, Jenny also provided practical support:

What she was doing for me was kind of over, above and beyond, because she would go out and literally pick me up and take me to everywhere...because my mum didn't drive...she was a single parent, four kids as well, so it was quite hard...our local club was Cheam and to get there from where we were, my mum worked nights at the time as well, so to get there and get around, it was a nightmare...She was amazing to be honest. Without her, I would not have played cricket....there was a lot of kids who would've loved to have keep playing, but they just didn't have the support.

Ebony's account also highlighted the importance of parental support to her ability to pursue her early aptitude for cricket. She lived in a community where many of those who also enjoyed cricket in the inner-city school which Ebony herself attended had parents who simply could not afford to support their interest in cricket.

RN: When you were first introduced to cricket were there other black girls who were playing?

ER: Mm.

RN: Did any of them make any kind of progress?

ER: ...I think there was talent...if there were a few Jenny Wostracks...they would have ferried them, and the girls would've gone 'yeah yeah, I'll go, I'll go'. But the parents, a lot of them were single parent families, it wasn't going to happen, it wasn't going to happen. And it wasn't for lack of passion from the kids, it just wasn't going to happen...I mean, let's be realistic. Playing cricket, to have the luxury to spend a whole day, all that equipment, all that time travelling up and down. Working-class family, like my mum would've been working weekends, nights, coming into a third job sometimes to make ends meet. So if you were in that kind of environment, cricket is the last thing on your mind.

Ebony recalled that her own mother supported her even in the face of a cultural critique from other members of the family regarding the appropriateness of her involvement in the sport:

My mum got slated by family...I was doing a cleaning job at 14, and stuff like that, but my mum would get from other members of the family that 'she should be looking to get a job and working or something'....because in our environment it was like 'what is she doing playing when the rest of the kids are out working?' My mum was quite supportive of me. I was quite lucky to have a supportive mum who, she could see I was enjoying what I was doing, I was passionate about it, it was good for me. She let me do it but a lot of other families as soon as you can work you need to be bringing money in the home.

Lastly, Ebony provided a detailed explanation as to why, in her eyes, she is as yet the only black woman to have represented England at cricket. In her view, this can be attributed to two key factors.

The first is the inaccessibility of cricket to those growing up in the inner-cities:

Without Jenny I would have most probably kept doing like a lot of the kids do, went to Stockwell Park. I could walk there from my house...other [sports] would have been more accessible. You could play football in your park, across the road, and at that age you don't know the difference between playing cricket, you enjoy it in this or that, it's just sport's sport. So I would've just gone back to playing football across the park, or at school, and that would've been cricket for me.

The second is the way in which cricket is currently viewed by the British Afro-Caribbean community:

there hasn't been a tradition of British-born black people having that passion [for cricket]...I just think of my own journey, I wasn't passionate about cricket. I was passionate about football. I'd look on the TV and I saw black, white, orange, whatever colours, everyone's playing football, but I didn't connect to cricket and me. It just seemed like old white guys on a field playing.⁷⁴

Ebony's experiences are extremely telling as a case study of an Afro-Caribbean female's experience of cricket in late twentieth-century Britain. Cultural, financial and practical factors, along with an image of a sport which remains of 'old white guys on a field', acted together as forceful constraints

⁷⁴ Interview with Ebony Rainford-Brent, 1 October 2013.

on black female participation in cricket. Ultimately Ebony was in the right place to meet the right person – Jenny Wostrack – at the right time. She was lucky.

Isa Guha, who first played cricket aged eight with the colts section of her local men's club in High Wycombe, was also lucky. Her parents, who came to Britain from Kolkata in the 1970s, provided crucial support throughout her early years in cricket. Isa began playing with her older brother at home in the back garden, but her parents made the decision to take her along to their local club to play with other boys of her age, and because there were no girls teams in High Wycombe in the early 1990s, her father formed a girls section at High Wycombe Cricket Club to help Isa continue in the game. From there, she went on to play for the Thames Valley Area women's team and was selected to train with the England development squad. Isa herself has highlighted in interviews how rare this type of parental support was at this time for Asian girls like herself:

I was fortunate that my parents were unbelievably supportive of me. I don't know if a lot of Asian females in England receive the same sort of support. I just think it's a lot tougher with the traditional mentalities of Asian families who say it is much better to focus on your studies.⁷⁵

Barbara Daniels recalled that, though some Asian girls living near Reading were 'dead keen' to participate in cricket during the 1990s, they generally dropped out once they reached GCSE-age due to parental pressure.⁷⁶

The rarity of parental support is supported by oral evidence from other Asian cricketers who entered the game during the 1990s. Salma Bi, for example, who in 2009 became the first British Asian to be selected for Worcestershire, first played cricket at age nine, in 1996, at home in the garden, and then

⁷⁵ 'India performing on the big stage will be good for women's cricket', ESPNcricinfo, <http://www.espncricinfo.com/magazine/content/story/754765.html> (accessed 21 February 2015).

⁷⁶ Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

joined her local club. She relayed:

In the beginning, I felt as if I was on my own. I used to come home after practice and my parents would say, 'Why are you always out so late?', or they would complain because I'd been out all Sunday playing a match. Sometimes they would say I couldn't go, and I had to miss training.⁷⁷

Even by 2011, Salma suggested that for Asian girls, playing cricket was going 'against the norm'. Like Ebony, then, Isa was the exception to the general rule, and her case serves more to highlight the continuing constraints on Asian female participation in cricket by the end of the 1990s than to provide an encouraging example of progress. While different pressures existed for different ethnic minority groups - for Ebony, the pressures were economic, linked to poverty and deprivation; for Asian girls like Isa and Salma, they came from parental expectations of academic achievement - the above evidence suggests that even by the end of the twentieth century women's cricket often remained inaccessible to both working-class and non-white women, who still suffered from greater constraints on their opportunities for leisure than middle-class and white women.

The importance of image

Additionally, it would not be accurate to represent participation in sport during the 1990s as a straightforwardly liberating experience for British women. While hegemonic notions of femininity had evolved by the 1990s to incorporate female participation in physical activity, phenomena like the rise of female gym culture and aerobics were founded upon a new obsession with body maintenance and sexual attractiveness.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, as sports sociologists in the 1990s argued, a

⁷⁷ *The Guardian*, 18 March 2011.

⁷⁸ See Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, pp.160-64.

similar commodification of the female body was taking place within women's team sports, partly founded upon the growing professionalisation of such activities.⁷⁹ Thus, while image had always been a preoccupation of the amateur administrators of the WCA, these new ideologies of 'femininity' now placed vastly increased pressures on sportswomen to maintain their bodies and to dress and behave in particular ways.

This was expressed by several of the younger interviewees, most forcefully by Ebony Rainford-Brent:

RN: Have you ever felt under pressure to present a particular image, as a woman in sport?

ER: Yeah, 100%. I think we do have a duty to an extent, because...people only really invest when you're seen as successful. That's invest time, invest media coverage, invest facilities, resources, whatever it is...a successful image brings that extra...you've got people who are watching you and if you slip up, that can affect [these things]...if the sport's more attractive and feminine, we know that makes a difference to your magazine covers and people are going to look more interested...we know how the world works, the world is very image-conscious.⁸⁰

As Ebony suggests, the increasing pressure during the 1990s came from both the growth of the media gaze and the increased need to secure sponsorship and other forms of investment by men, both of which were heavily reliant upon the presentation of a positive image by female athletes.

Within the women's cricket community, it was felt that male support depended on the traditional amateur values which went alongside the women's game. Audrey Collins, the WCA's President, argued in a 1990 letter to the WCA newsletter that: 'We should be meticulous in all the etiquette and standards that are normal practice. Everyone from the newest recruit to the veteran player has a part to pay in ensuring that our Association maintains our standards both on and off the field *and goes*

⁷⁹ A. Dworkin and M. Messner, 'Just do...what? Sport, bodies, gender' in Scraton and Flintoff, *Gender and Sport*, pp. 17-29. Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, pp.158-166.

⁸⁰ Interview with Ebony Rainford-Brent, 1 October 2013.

*from strength to strength in the coming years.*⁸¹ Emphasis on correct 'etiquette' in women's cricket therefore remained strong at all levels of the sport, even by the 1990s. Club archives suggest that, at least in Middlesex and Surrey, players were still regularly reminded of the need to avoid 'casual attire and attitudes...pull up their socks, tuck their shirt in...wear the correct jumpers and hats'.⁸² 'Sledging' (verbal criticism of the opposition on the pitch) was still officially frowned upon, and when asked about the issue in press interviews, players simply claimed that it did not exist in women's cricket.⁸³ In 1993, one of the bowlers in the women's Varsity match was actually banned from bowling for grunting while she released the ball, as this was seen as 'unladylike behaviour'.⁸⁴ In an environment like this, there may well have been an element of truth to Sarah Potter's claims that the blue streaks in her hair led to her non-selection for England in the 1980s. As she put it in 1993: 'in my experience the domestic game lives in a narrow, rather quaint world where...anything as outre as individuality is frowned upon as a form of immodesty'.⁸⁵

Media coverage surrounding women's cricket during the 1990s indicates that those within the WCA were right to suggest that there was a link between the traditional image of women's cricket, the 'femininity' of its participants, and the support it attracted from some, predominantly male, fans of the men's game. This was evident in the press coverage surrounding the 1993 World Cup victory. Christopher Martin-Jenkins in the *Daily Telegraph* described the women's game as 'a model example of amateur sport'; Frank Keating in *The Guardian* labelled the WCA 'custodians of cricket's once innate charms'.⁸⁶ Even by 1998, Rob Steen was writing that:

⁸¹ *Women's Cricket News*, Winter 1990. My emphasis.

⁸² 'Captain's Report 1997', Dukesmead WCC minutes, private collection, Middlesex.

⁸³ For example, interviews with Anne Savory, 3 July 2014, and Pat Siderfin, 27 May 2014.

⁸⁴ *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, August 1993.

⁸⁵ *The Times*, 19 July 1993.

⁸⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 1993; *The Guardian*, 31 July 1993.

Mick Cleary in *The Observer* was even more direct:

There we all were at The Oval last Tuesday for the launch of the Women's World Cup... And there, stretched out on Harry Brind's hallowed turf, was one of the Dutch players, a 21-year-old blonde, posing with ankle-length skirt hitched somewhere around the extremities of the lbw region. The photographer was not a slobbering male but a woman. 'Femininity is important,' she said. 'Even in sport.'

Is it? Should we not ignore the fact that the performer is a woman and treat the sport on its merits? Well, if we did, *no one would pay it any attention.*⁸⁹

The idea that media coverage depended on the sexual attractiveness of female players was something of which the players themselves were evidently very aware. Pete Davies' book on the 1997 World Cup contains a telling anecdote concerning a conversation he had with the England squad during the tournament:

Someone asked how long the book would be. Reply, theoretically 200 pages but has twice as much already. 'And who'll buy a book about women's cricket that's eight hundred pages long?' 'They'll buy it if the laundry doesn't come back. 'Cause then you can have pictures in it of them playing in their underwear.'⁹⁰

Barbara Daniels, one of the members in that squad and also Executive Director of the WCA between 1996 and 1998, indicated that she felt it was necessary to push the most 'attractive' players into the media spotlight in order to gain positive coverage:

who do you put up front to go and be interviewed?...you find yourself saying, 'right, not her. Let's have this nice blonde girl'...And you rationalise it and think, 'well, at the minute, I've got to play the game. We want to get some increased publicity, this is the way to do it, but I feel really bad about that.' Do we keep away the people who look a bit funkier?...you just thought, some people we're quite happy to have up front and some people we're not...partly on the basis of what they look like...You were forever balancing, and thinking, 'inside I don't feel 100% comfortable about this, but from a public professional front I've got to go along with this for a

⁸⁹ *The Observer*, 18 July 1993. My emphasis.

⁹⁰ Davies, *Mad Dogs and English Women*, p.153.

bit'...Quite a lot of weird stuff that you were fighting with in your head at the time.⁹¹

The pressure to appear 'feminine' helps explain why there was so much resistance when the idea of moving to wearing trousers was posited. Even by the 1990s, the official uniform of representative women's cricket in England remained the white divided skirt or culottes which they had worn since the 1930s. For a group of England players of whom many had spent their early years in cricket playing with boys in trousers, these felt more like 'a throwback to the '50s' than a suitable garment to wear while participating in an elite sport.⁹² The new regime under Prideaux partly focused on increased athleticism on the field of play; this new style of fielding was simply not practical in a skirt, as a number of players recalled:

we had some very good fielders and we did throw ourselves about, and we dived around a lot and all that stuff. And we were practising that kind of thing, and you'd just get ripped to shreds...you were forever scabbing up and...getting infected and things, so not very helpful.⁹³

if we were going to be more dynamic, we had to start being dynamic in the field. And I remember Helen Plimmer dived in the field in a skirt [and] she got a really deep cut on the outfield...And I physically saw the damage that did to her leg. And it was like, well that's a good enough reason for me to wear trousers. Because that's how we have to go, that's the direction we need to move in.⁹⁴

Yet skirts had been introduced as a way of stressing both that female cricketers were not trying to ape men, and that their participation in cricket did not 'masculinise' them. Barbara Daniels, one of the players who led calls for dress reform in the 1990s, stated in our interview:

⁹¹ Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Interview with Sue Redfern, 9 June 2014.

there seemed to be an underlying discussion somewhere about femininity. And how one should look. And yet ironically you'd look at people on the pitch and off the pitch, and off the pitch they'd never be seen in a skirt! Or a dress or whatever. But really deep commitment to wearing a skirt, 'we've got to look like girls, we've got to look like women'.⁹⁵

Trousers might have been everyday wear for some players off the pitch, but on the pitch, the overwhelming need was to ensure that in a cricketing environment, they looked like women.⁹⁶

Indeed, resistance to changing from skirts to trousers remained strong throughout the 1990s. A vote at the 1998 AGM of the WCA on the issue resulted in a reassertion of the rule that all players in domestic competitions should continue to wear culottes.⁹⁷ Even when the new Women's Cricket Advisory Group, formed when the merger with the ECB formally occurred in 1998, ruled in 1999 that trousers could now be worn at all levels of women's cricket in England, a compromise was instituted whereby clubs could vote themselves on whether they wished to introduce trousers, and for a few years matches took place whereby sides would play in skirts or trousers according to preference.⁹⁸ It was only as a younger generation of players came through and began to dominate domestic cricket, in the early 2000s, that trousers became the norm.

For England players the change had come several years earlier, when the squad was given special dispensation by the WCA Executive to contest their series against South Africa in the summer of 1997 in trousers.⁹⁹ Why had the WCA accepted this change while rejecting it at domestic level?

Once again, there was pressure due to increased media scrutiny during the 1990s. The fact that the TCCB included the women's game in their new television rights deal negotiated in 1995 meant that

⁹⁵ Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

⁹⁶ Katrina Russell found similar feelings when interviewing female cricketers in the early 2000s. See K. Russell, 'Women's Participation Motivation in Rugby, Cricket and Netball: Body Satisfaction and Self-Identity', unpublished PhD thesis, Coventry University, 2002, pp.188-191.

⁹⁷ *Wicket Women*, Spring 1998.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Summer 1999.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Summer 1997.

several of the ODIs against New Zealand in 1996 and South Africa in 1997 were screened live by Sky, with highlights shown by the BBC. This was the first time women's cricket had ever regularly appeared on television in the UK, and the players, having watched the 1996 coverage, felt that the combination of divided skirts and stump cameras left them exposed.¹⁰⁰ Even the traditionalists had to admit that a televised view of women's underwear while teams batted was not good for the image of their sport. There was clearly a fine line between appearing 'feminine' and being overtly sexualised by the media: this was a tightrope which many female athletes were forced to walk during the 1990s.

There was another important element to this emphasis on 'femininity'. As Pat Griffin states:

Femininity...is a code word for heterosexuality. The concern is not that women athletes are too plain, out of style, or don't have good grooming habits. The real fear is that some women athletes will look like dykes, or even worse, are dykes.¹⁰¹

Griffin argues that challenging the femininity and heterosexuality of female athletes is a means of controlling women in sport who, by their demonstration of physical strength, provide a powerful challenge to male privilege.¹⁰² The promotion of a feminine, heterosexual image was thus also a defensive response to the continued association of women's sports with lesbianism, and was a common tactic deployed by many female athletes during the 1990s to ensure the continued support of male sponsors and journalists.¹⁰³ Within English women's cricket, the players were operating within a highly pressurised environment whereby the British media displayed an unhealthy obsession with the sexuality of female athletes; cricket in particular was brought into the limelight

¹⁰⁰ See for example interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

¹⁰¹ P. Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets. Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport* (Champaign, 1998), p.68.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.66-75.

¹⁰³ This was a real risk: at the end of the 1980s the American Ladies Professional Golf Association had lost sponsorship due to the belief of the sponsors that a large number of players were lesbians. This is cited in J. Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport: the politics of difference and identity* (London, 2000), p.142.

when in 1994 an Australian woman, Denise Annetts, was dropped from the Australian national squad and publicly complained that the decision had been made on the basis of her heterosexuality.¹⁰⁴ England players thus had to deal with questions in the media about their own and their team mates' sexuality; when Clare Taylor admitted in an interview with the *Sunday Mirror* in 1998 that two of the squad were lesbians (but refused to say who), the newspaper seized on the story and headlined the piece: 'Yes, we have two lesbians in England women's cricket squad'.¹⁰⁵

This all added to the pressure on sportswomen, who felt obliged to emphasise their heterosexual femininity: Ebony, for example, explicitly stated in our interview that '[there was] a pressure to not present yourself as a lesbian'.¹⁰⁶ Yet it also made it exceptionally difficult for those women who were actually gay, who faced strong peer pressure to conceal their sexuality even in a climate of growing societal acceptance of homosexuality. Barbara Daniels relayed a telling example of this from the 1993 World Cup:

I think the *Daily Mail* or the *Express* or something did an article about a number of the girls [in the England squad], and they came and they did a makeover, with...three or four of them. And they'd all, make-up, swanky dresses, and then photographs taken leaning against a sight screen...And then they'd been interviewed...they were universally asked about their boyfriends, 'what do your boyfriends think about you playing cricket?' And...two or three of them invented a boyfriend.¹⁰⁷

Griffin describes a 'conditionally tolerant' climate within some American sports during the 1990s, whereby women were 'out' to their team mates and within the sport, but where acceptance of their sexuality was contingent on them remaining silent about their sexuality in public, and not, for

¹⁰⁴ For example, Ian Wooldridge wrote in the *Daily Mail*, 19 January 1994: 'when we get past the fourth round of the women's singles at the All England Championships one of the regular distractions in the Press box is to guess the sexual preferences of the survivors'. On Denise Annetts, see A. Burroughs, L. Ashburn and L. Seebahm, "'Add Sex and Stir': Homophobic Coverage of Women's Cricket in Australia', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 19:3 (1995).

¹⁰⁵ *Sunday Mirror*, 15 March 1998.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Ebony Rainford-Brent, 1 October 2013.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

example, bringing their partners to social events.¹⁰⁸ This certainly applied to women's cricket during the 1990s, a time where, despite the continued over-representation of lesbian women within cricket, there were no openly gay cricketers in Britain whatsoever. Daniels, herself a lesbian, described in our interview how after the WCA merged with the ECB in 1998 and she became the first National Manager of women's cricket, she felt forced to conceal her sexuality from her new employers:

by the time I was working at ECB I knew I was gay and I was in a relationship. But never talked about it at ECB. Never, well not for a long time anyway I didn't, and let people believe what they wanted to believe. But you go along and you play the whole game around boyfriends and whatever. Or actually you just censor your own language, and you just sort of, well it's quite easy to do. It's quite hard internally. But I was convinced it was the right thing for me and the sport to be, not to be completely open about this.¹⁰⁹

Even by the onset of the twenty-first century, then, the continued existence of discourses of heteronormativity continued to preclude women in traditionally 'masculine' sports like cricket being open about their sexuality. For both heterosexual and lesbian athletes, the pressure to present themselves in feminised ways was not only strong but had actually increased by the 1990s. A secure identity for women in sport was still desperately illusive.

Women's cricket and the feminist movement

The British feminist movement had undergone a significant transformation by the 1990s when compared with the onset of the 'second wave' two decades earlier. Its focus had shifted away from issues such as free contraception, abortion on demand, legal independence for women and sexuality, towards broader campaigns for equal opportunities and gender 'diversity' in the workplace. Joni

¹⁰⁸ Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets*, pp.101-2.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

Lovenduski and Vicky Randall, writing in 1993, described a process over the previous decade of 'deradicalization', whereby WLM activists became increasingly absorbed into mainstream institutions like the trade unions, the Labour Party, academia and the media, and 'fragmentation', which diluted the core values of the WLM and blurred the boundaries between 'feminist' activism and a broader movement of women working to create equal opportunities but disavowing the feminist label. Nonetheless, they concluded that:

There has been a steady diffusion of feminist values that is probably linked to the increasing presence of feminists in the political mainstream, but which has a much wider influence. Contemporary public opinion undoubtedly harbours negative images of feminists, but it has, nevertheless, gradually absorbed many feminist arguments.¹¹⁰

How did these developments manifest themselves within the world of women's sport, and cricket in particular? We have already seen that the discourse of 'equal opportunities' provided more opportunities for women to participate in sport by the 1990s, and contributed to its normalisation; this process undoubtedly owed something to the diffusion of feminist values throughout mainstream British society by this time. This was also apparent in the new, self-consciously 'anti-sexist' rhetoric surrounding women's involvement in cricket. When *Wisden* featured the England women's team on an advertising poster for their 1997 edition, for example, their managing director stated: 'Although the book is 99.9% about the men's game we wanted to show that we weren't sexist'.¹¹¹

Advocates of female membership of the MCC also stressed that the club had become a bastion of sexism in a world where such ideas were thoroughly outdated. 'In the 1990s...men-only clubs have become an anachronism', wrote Richard Streeton in the *Times*. Even the *Daily Mail* maintained in 1997 that: 'We have passed through the eras of feminism and post-feminism and arrived at Girl

¹¹⁰ J. Lovenduski and V. Randall, *Contemporary Feminist Politics. Women and Power in Britain* (Oxford, 1993), p.357.

¹¹¹ *Wicket Women*, Summer 1997.

Power...[It is] 21 years since the Sex Discrimination Act was passed...time has rendered as obsolete the notion of excluding women on grounds of chauvinism, or any other grounds'.¹¹² There was a clear recognition that the debate resonated beyond the cricketing arena: Christopher Martin-Jenkins wrote in *The Cricketer* that 'this was a social argument, not a cricketing one, and it has been fought in many other areas of British life'.¹¹³ One poem penned in the 1990s even overtly linked the issue to the victories of first and second-wave feminist campaigners:

The days of chivalry are past, as we are often told,
And ladies are no longer woo'd by knights in armour bold,
They like their menfolk modern, and they call their fancy free,
But there are no lady members of the MCC

A husband has no more the right to call his wife a slave,
The women wear the trousers now, and make the men behave,
They play lacrosse and hockey, and are powerful off the tee,
But there are no lady members of the MCC

Parliament has ladies in both parties, Left and Right,
They do not like bad language, so the men must be polite,
They all have had a vote, indeed, since 1923,
But there are no lady members of the MCC

Women play their cricket with both credit and renown,
They bat with skill and science, and they bounce their bumpers down,
Their fielding is a pleasure, and as neat as it could be,
But there are no lady members of the MCC.¹¹⁴

The campaign itself, which as we have seen gained widespread support, was a sure indicator that feminist ideas had penetrated the popular consciousness of the cricket community.

This must be balanced, however, against the self-conscious distancing of those involved in the campaign from the 'feminist' label. The following extract from my interview with Rachael Heyhoe-

¹¹² *The Times*, 20 March 1991; *Daily Mail*, 3 December 1997.

¹¹³ *The Cricketer*, November 1998.

¹¹⁴ 'Female Reflections from Lord's', by Heather Wheatley. Quoted in Duncan, *Skirting the Boundary*, p.267.

Flint illustrates this well:

RN: I'm interested in the environment of the '70s and whether...Women's Lib as a campaign changed the situation for women's cricket or had any kind of impact on women's cricket.

RF: No, I don't think it did, honestly. Not as far as I was aware of. You see that's the interesting thing. What do you call 'Women's Lib'? You could sort of say, in quotes, my 'campaign' to try and get women to become members of the MCC could have been construed as feminism, women's lib, but all it was, was...I've played cricket all my life, I got to the top, and I just wanted to become a member of this club. And I wasn't demanding it as a right because I am a woman, I was trying to persuade 18,000 men, who are the members, that it wouldn't be too detrimental to enable women to apply in exactly the same way. Not to seek any favours and queue-jump in order to get into the club, it had to be done in exactly the same manner. Because otherwise that would have been done because, 'oh well it's only because they're women, we're having to be kind to them' sort of thing. Do it as a human being, and that's what I was trying to achieve.¹¹⁵

Heyhoe-Flint still associated feminism with what she perceived as the extremism of 'Women's Lib', even by the 1990s; it was therefore important that the issue was understood as one of equal opportunity and access, not as a feminist tirade. Isabelle Duncan, who controversially appeared on the front of *Wisden Cricket Monthly* in 1998 in an MCC sweater just before the final vote for female membership, evidently felt the same way. Writing in 2013, she concluded:

I cannot emphasise too strongly that I am no bra-burning, man-hating, equality-at-any-price virago... I didn't want to appear as a feminist flag-bearer, more as a reminder that we girls were knocking on the Long Room door – girls who loved cricket and who felt we had a right to watch this beautiful game from the best seats in the house...[I] disagree with...over-the-top attitude[s] to equality.¹¹⁶

The arguments of Heyhoe-Flint, Duncan and others were in part a response to the complaints of some MCC members that the campaign would result in 'Germaine Greer and her pals tramping through our pavilion'.¹¹⁷ Heyhoe-Flint countered this by stressing that: 'No woman would wish to

¹¹⁵ Interview with Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, 17 July 2014.

¹¹⁶ Duncan, *Skirting the Boundary*, p.xi, p.xiv, p.265.

¹¹⁷ An MCC member was quoted as saying: 'We don't want Germaine Greer and her pals tramping through our pavilion just to please the bloody Lottery' in *The Guardian*, 24 February 1998.

apply for membership just for the sake of achieving a breakthrough'.¹¹⁸ Indeed, when the final vote took place in September 1998 and 70% of members voted in favour of female membership, the decision was not presented as a feminist victory but welcomed by campaigners as a triumph for 'common sense'.¹¹⁹ And when the first ten honorary women members were formally admitted in March 1999 – the ten included Audrey Collins, Norma Izard (WCA President 1994-1998) and Netta Rheinberg – all denied that there was any kind of political statement behind their long-awaited entry to the Long Room. 'Women's cricket is not a vehicle for women's rights nor should it be,' the WCA had argued in their newsletter three years earlier. 'We have our own business to attend.'¹²⁰ It was a perfect illustration of the paradox facing British feminism during the 1990s: a victory for second-wave feminist ideals of equality, set against the weaknesses of a movement which still had a profoundly alienating image in wider society.

Oral history interviews with women who entered cricket during the late 1980s and 1990s support the idea that for this generation of British women, the 'feminist' label was a deeply uncomfortable one. Charlotte Edwards, for example, as England captain and perhaps the most talented female cricketer England has ever produced, has been a potent role model for young girls since she debuted for England aged 16 in 1996, yet denied that her actions had 'feminist' connotations:

RN: Do you see yourself as a feminist?

CE: No not really. Not really at all. I'm not like that...I just love cricket. What I do want is girls and women to have the opportunity to play cricket, because I think it's a fantastic game. But no, not really.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ *The Guardian*, 14 February 1998.

¹¹⁹ See for example *The Cricketer*, November 1998.

¹²⁰ *Wicket Women*, August 1996.

¹²¹ Interview with Charlotte Edwards, 9 June 2014.

Another player who represented England during the 1990s also dissociated herself from the label, despite expressing frustration at the barriers she faced because of her gender:

I am passionate about women's sport, because I come at it from an angle of, I've tried to get along in women's sport, and there's been barriers. But that doesn't make me a feminist. What it does make me is somebody who appreciates the opportunities that present. I get frustrated when traditional male values get in the way of women's sport, and get in the way of where I want to go and what I want to do, but no, I don't think I'm a feminist...I think a lot of males feel that women's cricket is either a novelty, or shouldn't exist, or is not comparable with men's cricket. And that frustrates me sometimes.¹²²

It is telling that the interviewee in question, on reviewing the transcript, stated that she did not wish to be publicly associated with these remarks. The 'feminism' issue is evidently still a sensitive one for those within women's sport; Charlotte's comment: 'I'm not like that' highlights the pervasive negative image of feminists in British society, and it is likely that as the profile of elite level female cricketers increased during the 1990s, the pressure to dissociate themselves from the 'feminist' label increased accordingly.

Additionally, some female cricketers had evidently absorbed the discourses of the 'New Feminism' being promoted by writers such as Naomi Wolf, Camille Paglia and Natasha Walter. The New Feminists sought to rebrand the feminist movement during the 1990s away from the negative image of 'old' 1970s feminism, which was seen to have focused too heavily on restricting the behaviour of women; they were heavily celebratory of the numerous achievements of British women. Walter's *The New Feminism*, published in 1998, argued that: 'Everywhere you look, you see individual women who are freer and more powerful than women have ever been before'.¹²³ Yet, as Whelehan suggested, this type of argument created a climate whereby young women were seen as already

¹²² The interviewee wishes to remain anonymous.

¹²³ Walter, *The New Feminism*, p.1.

successful and independent; feminism was thus rendered outmoded.¹²⁴ Beth Morgan expressed this sentiment in our interview:

RN: Would you consider yourself a feminist?

BM: No, is the honest answer. I mean obviously I believe in equality...I certainly would support women's rights...but I think you have to recognise how far things have come in recent years...And obviously there is still a way to go, but I haven't got a lot to complain about, being a woman. So I wouldn't, no.¹²⁵

Ebony Rainford-Brent also suggested that feminism was much less relevant for those of her generation:

RN: Would you describe yourself as a feminist?

ER: No...

RN: Why do you think that women who have been involved in sport might have been described as feminists?

ER: Because...I think because some most probably were to an extent...you'd have to go early days, not this current generation...it did feel like women were very separate and you were fighting for women's right to play cricket and sport and the system. It felt more like a battle. So to have kept cricket going and set up structures...you had to have strong individuals, who were passionate about women, women's sport, and women's this, and women's that, and I think you needed that to get it through to the stage where it could be handed on, where it's not about that any more.¹²⁶

Ebony felt that by the 1990s, feminism was no longer relevant to cricket because it was now an activity which was much easier for women to access. Yet as discussed above, her own difficulties as a black woman entering the sport in fact illustrated that the precise opposite was true. Such was the illusory power of New Feminist ideas about gender equality in 1990s Britain.

¹²⁴ I. Whelehan, *Modern Feminist Thought. From the Second Wave to 'Post-Feminism'* (Edinburgh, 1995), p.240.

¹²⁵ Interview with Beth Morgan, 16 September 2013.

¹²⁶ Interview with Ebony Rainford-Brent, 1 October 2013.

However, much like in the 1970s when a similar climate of hostility towards feminism prevailed, female cricketers during the 1990s continued to act in 'feminist' ways despite their rejection of the label in interviews. Cricket was still often placed above societal expectations regarding women's domestic role: when Sarah Potter wrote in the *Times* of Jo Chamberlain's resolution to sit out the 1996 cricket season, having married several months earlier, she questioned '[t]he strange timing of her decision', indicating that it was still generally expected that players would continue to represent England upon marriage.¹²⁷ A number of England players also juggled motherhood with cricket during the 1990s. Laura Newton, who represented England between 1997 and 2007, opened the bowling for England against India in 1999 just five months after giving birth to her first child; she repeated the feat three years later, choosing to go on a month-long tour of India while leaving her two sons, aged three and five months, at home with her husband.¹²⁸ Jan Godman took time off from cricket to have four children during her England career, which lasted from 1991 to 1996, but returned to the squad afterwards each time. Once again, these events were reported on within the WCA's newsletter without any kind of fanfare, suggesting that continuing with cricket after having children continued to be accepted as normal within the women's cricket community.

Demographics, though, had fundamentally shifted by this time: by 1990, the average age for giving birth in the UK had risen to 27 years, and it was estimated that 21% of all women born in 1965 would remain childless.¹²⁹ The contraceptive revolution meant that it was possible for women like England all-rounder Kathryn Leng to choose to postpone motherhood until after her cricketing career had ended. She told Pete Davies in 1997 that:

the moment I'm not enjoying it, OK, I'll pack it in and have babies and be a housewife. But at

¹²⁷ *The Times*, 24 June 1996.

¹²⁸ *The Times*, 2 June 1999; *The Cricketer*, January 2002.

¹²⁹ M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1999* (Hampshire, 2000), p.339.

the minute, all that takes a back seat to cricket, 'cause I've worked really hard to get to this.¹³⁰

However, this also suggests that it was becoming increasingly difficult for some women to combine cricket and motherhood. Indeed, while earlier in the century cricket had been something which women remained committed to throughout each life-cycle stage, there is evidence to suggest that the life-cycle model was becoming an increasingly accurate descriptor of the leisure habits of female cricketers by the 1990s, with more women, particularly at grassroots level, dropping out of the sport in their mid to late 20s. Janet Bitmead, who remained heavily involved in club level cricket in Middlesex during the 1990s and early 2000s, described this in our interview:

I think most of the girls who play cricket are single. They play hockey or rugby or football in winter and then they come over and, they just are sports people...I do know a few people who've had children, and have lost touch, and no longer play. They might have started off when they're a baby and they can play the odd game here and there, but once they start toddling and things like that. And then also there's so many other things that they have to cram in at weekends.¹³¹

The average age of retirement for the 14 players who represented England in the 1973 World Cup was 37, and five of those women were still playing for England by the time they were 40. By comparison, of the 16 England players who participated in the 1993 tournament, the average retirement age had dropped to 32, and only one continued playing until she was 40, with four ending their England careers before they reached the age of 30.

The last chapter demonstrated the existence of the 'double burden' for women by the 1980s; many historians and sociologists highlighted that this continued to be an issue into the 1990s. Though the proportion of women in work had doubled since the 1940s, with part-time and full-time

¹³⁰ Davies, *Mad Dogs and English Women*, p.86.

¹³¹ Interview with Janet Bitmead, 21 October 2013.

employment of women with dependent children having increased from 15% to 24% and 36% to 42% between 1977 and 1996, women continued to be overwhelmingly responsible both for unpaid domestic labour and for childcare.¹³² In accordance with this, despite the increase in female participation in sport, statistics indicate that women continued to take part in fewer leisure activities than men, and that their leisure was generally more home-based and family-oriented.¹³³ In the 1970s, it had been usual for female cricketers to combine cricket with marriage and family; by the 1990s, juggling the demands of home life, cricket *and* the commitment to more hours of paid employment which had now become the norm was much more difficult. It is likely that this led women to feel pressured to give up cricket earlier than they might otherwise have chosen to. Karen Smithies told Pete Davies in 1997 that she was contemplating retirement:

I'll feel awful, I know that. It'll be like someone wrenching both me arms off...[But] I've got other things. I'm married, maybe I want a family soon, and Dean's not a cricket man...as time goes on and the game gets better and we play more and more, and we train harder, and he's got another winter coming up on his own...I think he's getting to the end of his tether.¹³⁴

As well as pressure from male partners, some women also expressed concerns regarding their limited career options while continuing to play elite-level cricket. Increasing numbers of England players placed their careers on hold at least for a time while pursuing cricket: Jane Cassar, despite having a degree in sports science, worked part-time as a secretary while keeping wicket for England between 1992 and 2008, as it meant she could take time off to go on tour more easily; Barbara Daniels effectively halted any kind of career progression by switching to supply teaching in the build-up to the 1993 World Cup, as this gave her more time to devote to training. And Claire Taylor,

¹³² I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Housewifery', in Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain*, p.161; Lewis, *Women in Britain*, pp.117-20; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, p.343.

¹³³ C. Doustaly, 'Women and leisure in Britain', pp.194-5.

¹³⁴ Davies, *Mad Dogs and English Women*, p.32.

who first represented England in 1998, graduated from Oxford University with a maths degree in 1997 and started a graduate job with Procter and Gamble. But the pressures were enormous: 'I was balancing my burgeoning cricket career with a graduate job, travelling to Europe once a week on average, in the office before seven every other morning so I could escape to the gym or the Surrey Cricket Centre at Guildford by five,' she wrote in *Wisden* in 2012. 'Every Friday during the long winter months, I would make my way to the indoor nets at The Oval, train with male club cricketers, then head back...to South London suburbia.' Eventually matters came to a head and she was forced to take redundancy, moving back home with her parents to focus entirely on cricket.¹³⁵ Taylor's story well illustrates the difficulties faced by female cricketers attempting to negotiate the demands of the 'double burden'. And for the majority, while careers could be placed on hold temporarily, the pressure to find a stable source of income could not be postponed indefinitely. Sue Metcalfe, for example, found a job as a blood coagulation specialist at a laboratory on graduation, but was forced to give it up when selected for the 1991/2 winter tour of Australia. By the time of the 1997 World Cup, she had returned to work for the same company, and admitted that 'if she had to choose between the job and a tour again, she'd not go on the tour...at thirty-two, it was a career; she couldn't afford to chuck it in'. 'Of course I'd like to be paid [for playing cricket]', she told Pete Davies. 'But it's not going to happen, is it?'¹³⁶ This is in direct contrast with the experiences of the many women who, during the 1950s and 1960s, had felt able to give up their jobs in order to go on tour with England - presumably because of the greater economic security on offer during a time of full employment and affluence.

These kind of dilemmas highlight the illusory nature of New Feminist ideas celebrating a new-found equality for British women. While more female cricketers were now pursuing high-level

¹³⁵ *Wisden*, 2012.

¹³⁶ Davies, *Mad Dogs and English Women*, p.240.

careers, far from providing more opportunities for leisure, this often created further pressures on their leisure time. Yet it seemed that even by the 1990s, the British feminist movement had not managed to bridge the gap which had emerged in the 1970s between feminism and sportswomen. Female cricketers continued to provide a visual symbol of progress towards equality, while rejecting the notion that feminism had any relevance in their day-to-day lives.

A merger or a takeover? Sportswomen and disempowerment

On 29 March 1998, at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Women's Cricket Association, members voted to merge with the newly-formed England and Wales Cricket Board. After 71 years as an autonomous organisation, 97 out of 128 delegates who attended the meeting voted in favour of dissolving the WCA: women's cricket would now be administered by those who ran the men's game. While the decision to merge appeared to be a free choice, it was a highly problematic process that symbolised a wider issue: the increasing male control of women's sport during the 1990s.

Sociologists of women's leisure stressed during the 1980s and 1990s that female access to leisure was often mediated by men, who placed constraints upon women's access to public leisure spaces. For example, Eileen Green and Sandra Hebron found during their 1987 Sheffield study that women were generally dependent on their male partners for social lives, and rarely ventured outside the house without them.¹³⁷ For sportswomen, access to male-owned resources often made them dependent on the fostering of good relationships with their male counterparts; we have seen in previous chapters that this was certainly the case for female cricketers. Yet the pressure from the

¹³⁷ E. Green and S. Hebron, 'Leisure and male partners', in E. Wimbush and M. Talbot (eds.), *Relative Freedoms. Women and Leisure* (Milton Keynes, 1998), p.39.

Sports Council for women's and men's sport to be administered together, noted above, pushed women towards increasing dependence on their male equivalents.

This had been apparent at club level in women's cricket as early as the 1980s. In 1981 there had been only one joint men's and women's cricket club in existence, yet by 1987 the WCA themselves were stressing to the grassroots 'the ease with which women's sections can be formed at men's clubs'.¹³⁸ By the early 1990s, it became increasingly common for new clubs to form in this way. There were many benefits to this type of relationship, as letters to the WCA's newsletter suggest: the provision of a pitch and regular coaching helped ensure that women's club cricket was well-resourced and sustainable. Shepperton Cricket Club in Surrey was one example whereby a closer relationship appeared to work well for all concerned: having begun in 1980, the Shepperton Ladies team was officially incorporated into the club constitution five years later when the Club Management Committee voted to accept a 'Ladies Charter'. One member of the club wrote to

Women's Cricket News in 1985:

There is no doubt in the minds of Shepperton members that a joint venture benefits men and women alike, with the men providing undying support, encouragement and technical expertise to help the women, and the women and their visiting opposition sides contributing fully to the social side of the club, fundraising and of course the bar profits!!!¹³⁹

By 1991 Shepperton had become a shining example of the Sports Council's 'Sport for All' policy, offering organised cricket for men, women, girls and boys, and in turn receiving Council grant aid for clubhouse improvements. Yet genuine equality under these conditions was often difficult to ensure. In many cases, taking on a women's team was merely lip service for men's clubs who were told they would only secure grant money if they were seen to be catering for women's interests.

¹³⁸ 'Members reports 1987: WCA', IWCC minutes, private collection, Surrey.

¹³⁹ *Women's Cricket News*, Summer 1985.

This was the case for the Bury Ladies team, who joined with Bury Sports Club in 1989. The club promptly gained £18,000 from the Sports Council for the improvement of club facilities, specifically to help women's sport, but by 1994 the women's cricket team were complaining that:

men's friendly games...take precedence over women's league games in use of the square... We were graciously offered the use of the artificial pitch in another corner of the ground, a seemingly generous offer until the slippery surface and rutted, pot-holed outfield are taken into account...We are thinking of renaming ourselves the Bury Wanderers.¹⁴⁰

Even at Shepperton, Ebony Rainford-Brent described a situation whereby the men's first and second XI took priority when it came to pitch allocation, with women third or even fourth in the 'pecking order'.¹⁴¹

For established clubs considering mergers with men's teams in the 1990s, there were also issues of identity at stake. Riverside Ladies, who had formed in 1946, made the decision to merge with Twickenham (men's) Cricket Club in 2000. Janet Bitmead described the merger process in our interview:

JB: We went across originally as Twickenham Riverside, on our logos, and then about four years later the word Riverside disappeared...

RN: Was...carrying over the name Riverside, was that quite important?

JB: Well it was, because it was our roots...it was important to carry over our history and not lose sight of it...It did irk the men that we wanted to keep that in, and then as I say about four years later, four or five years later, we lost it altogether. Because that's what they wanted us to be, just Twickenham Ladies, not Twickenham Riverside...And of course now we wear the same uniform as the men, it only ever comes with Twickenham on it. So it's gradually disappeared, and the new people only know us as Twickenham Ladies... It was just us not wanting to give up our independence too easily.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Wicket Women*, August 1994.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Ebony Rainford-Brent, 1 October 2013.

¹⁴² Interview with Janet Bitmead, 21 October 2013.

Distinctive women's cricket traditions were being lost; yet in an environment where resources were at a premium, clubs like Riverside felt they had no choice but to accept the facilities, and the conditions attached to them, which men were offering.

What becomes clear from a study of club-level mergers is that the women involved often felt pressured into these mergers while unable to negotiate an equitable allocation of resources, as power remained in the hands of the established male clubs. This was a microcosm of what was occurring at national level, as pressure increased on the WCA to move towards a merger with the governing body of men's cricket throughout the 1990s. It was evident that WCA officials did not envisage or desire this kind of formal merger at the onset of the decade: in a 1985 memorandum sent to the governing body of recreational men's cricket in England, the National Cricket Association, the WCA wrote that they expected to remain 'the independent governing body promoting cricket for women and girls...The Association is not seeking any merger with any other organisation'.¹⁴³ What was desired was a partnership with the NCA, and nothing more. Yet as the 1990s progressed, top-level WCA officials became more and more convinced of the necessity of a full merger. New chairman Sharon Bayton, who succeeded Cathy Mowat at the end of 1993, and Barbara Daniels, who became Executive Director in early 1996, were the main driving force behind the change; Daniels explained their reasoning:

we were all aware that we needed more clubs, we wanted more girls to play, [and] we needed a bit of help with doing it...And we wanted to keep maintaining a developing England side, which costs. So there was always a need for money...I was recognising quite quickly within the job, there's a limit to what I can do on my own...we talked about it a lot, and we wanted to do those things, but we just didn't have any sort of infrastructure to say, 'right, someone's come to us in York...and they reckon they've got a group of people who could get really involved with women's cricket, we need to be able to help them, where's our structures to help them?' We didn't have any. Men's cricket did. So [we had] the notion of

¹⁴³ *Women's Cricket News*, Winter 1985.

beginning to piggy back on any initiatives that they had, to just say, 'don't forget us, how about we do this together?' Cos we can do this without it costing us anything, but you'll pay for it and we can come along. So there was a lot of that going on, and recognising that if we were going to increase, that was the way we had to go.¹⁴⁴

Pressure from the Sports Council to show evidence of development, and the WCA's own desire to increase access to their sport, thus logically pointed the way towards utilising the resources of their male counterparts wherever possible. As the success of this strategy became evident by the increasing numbers of girls and women participating in cricket by the late 1990s, the impetus for a full merger with men's cricket only became stronger.

Other forms of support from men's cricket also increased support for a full merger. For example, the Test and County Cricket Board (TCCB) was effectively propping up the WCA financially throughout the 1990s. In 1994, they offered the Association funding of £37,500 for the years 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997;¹⁴⁵ this was essential for the WCA's survival, given that the 1993 World Cup had been an enormous drain on resources, and that they failed to find sponsors for either their European Cup campaign in Dublin in 1995 or New Zealand's tour of England in summer 1996. It was only the TCCB's financial support which enabled England to host the 1996 series at all. And while the WCA did secure their first ever sponsor for the National Knock-Out Cup in the summer of 1996, stockbrokers Tilney & Co, the firm's director heavily implied that this was on the basis of the growth in interest which a closer association with men's cricket would bring. 'Women's cricket is on the verge of a promising future and we are interested in being a part of that,' he was quoted as saying in the press release announcing the sponsorship deal.¹⁴⁶ Additionally, after the England and Wales Cricket Board was formed in 1997, its new sponsorship deal with Vodafone, agreed in March

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Barbara Daniels, 15 September 2014.

¹⁴⁵ WCA Executive Committee minutes, 23 January 1994, WCA Archive, Lancashire.

¹⁴⁶ *Wicket Women*, Winter 1996.

of that year and worth £13 million over a five year period, was extended to include the women's game for the first time ever; the WCA was reportedly set to receive £50,000 for every year of the deal.¹⁴⁷

Many England players became convinced of the benefits a merger with men's cricket would offer because this kind of financial support eased the pressure on them as top-level athletes. During the 1996 series against New Zealand, the England squad could not afford to train together until the evening before the first game, with many having to return to work between the matches. This was in direct contrast with the Kiwis, who having amalgamated into their men's governing body New Zealand Cricket in 1992 now had full financial backing, with their mortgages paid for by NZC during the tour, and even prize money on offer.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, as Carol Salmon put it in the 1997 edition of *Wisden*:

in 1996, the New Zealand tourists provided a clear example of how the women's game can link positively with the men's. Their amalgamation into New Zealand Cricket has been accompanied by a significant improvement on the field, a higher profile, and increased numbers taking up the sport.¹⁴⁹

The desirability of a full merger only increased in the wake of the new Vodafone deal, which enabled a much more professional preparation for the series against South Africa than they had experienced only 12 months earlier: training sessions at the male-owned Centres of Cricketing Excellence at Headingley and Lord's, a full week's training camp directly before the series in August 1997, and the hiring of top male coaches including Mike Gatting and Paul Farbrace.¹⁵⁰ This continued in the period leading up to England's World Cup defence in India in December 1997;

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Summer 1997.

¹⁴⁸ *The Cricketer*, September 1996.

¹⁴⁹ *Wisden*, 1997.

¹⁵⁰ *Wicket Women*, March 1997.

England's coach Megan Lear recognised that: 'our preparation for this World Cup has been as professional as it's possible to be'.¹⁵¹

Additional exposure in the media was also a noticeable benefit. The coverage surrounding England's 1993 World Cup victory could not have been more positive, yet this wave of enthusiasm quickly dissipated in the face of no international cricket for two years as the sport failed to hold the attention of the cricket media. In 1997 the chairman of England selectors told journalist Pete Davies: 'it's still hard to get it in the papers. It's like knocking your head against a brick wall'.¹⁵² Naturally, developing a sport with such a low public profile, as the WCA were attempting to do throughout the 1990s, was extremely difficult. The deal with Sky negotiated by the TCCB mentioned above, where several women's internationals each summer would be televised, was positive proof of the fact that a closer relationship with the men's game would be the best way to raise the profile of women's cricket. 'Without doubt the closer links now established with the men's game, especially at national level, have made a big difference to the credibility of the women's game and many doors have been opened to us,' wrote the WCA's Executive Director Maria Grant in 1994, 'the most exciting being the television deal secured through the Test and County Cricket Board'.¹⁵³

On the one hand, this kind of support and recognition was hugely welcome for women's cricket. Yet it was also problematic. Sports Council grant aid remained one of the WCA's main sources of income by the 1990s, and given that it was official Council policy that the WCA should be linked with the governance of men's cricket, this placed intense pressure on the Association to push ahead

¹⁵¹ Davies, *Mad Dogs and English Women*, p.16.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p.23.

¹⁵³ 'Executive Director's Report', WCA Annual Report 1994, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

with a full merger or risk going bankrupt. By 1998, the WCA President Norma Izard was writing of the merger that:

*Realistically if we want Women's Cricket to remain, we have no option, as the Sports Council Funds will only be available to one governing body for cricket.*¹⁵⁴

As Hargreaves pointed out in 1994, the Sports Council of the 1990s was still overwhelmingly male-dominated.¹⁵⁵ The pressure exerted on the governing bodies of women's sport to dissolve themselves was therefore effectively just one more example of male control at the expense of female autonomy, mirroring the gender relations of power which existed in other areas of society. Financial dependence on men's cricket can be subjected to a similar feminist critique.

The feeling that, by the time of the Extraordinary General Meeting in 1998, there was no option but to vote in favour of a merger is borne out when examining oral histories of the process. Cathy Mowat recalled:

It was all much presented as a fait accompli...I could see that it was going to be very damaging for women's cricket. But that was the way things were going...if we wanted any sort of funding.¹⁵⁶

Pat and Steve Siderfin concurred:

RN: So were you in favour of the decision to merge, or to join up with the ECB?

PS: No. No, but if it meant that we had funding, and an acceptance that we could play cricket, and were possibly worth attention...

SS: You see ECB had the women over a barrel, as you might say. In the fact that they said...'if you join us you get the funding, but if you want to run as a separate thing we don't

¹⁵⁴ WCA Handbook, 1998, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014). My emphasis.

¹⁵⁵ Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, p.182.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

give you any!' So there was a sort of *fait accompli*.¹⁵⁷

Becoming financially dependent on those in charge of men's cricket in the years leading up to 1998 also forced the WCA into the merger from a position of weakness whereby it was difficult to negotiate terms effectively. This was recognised by members of the WCA at the time, who expressed significant concerns about the repercussions of a merger based on the fear that it was effectively handing control over to men and thus would represent a significant loss of autonomy. The main objections at the 1997 EGM where the issue was discussed were from Lancashire WCA and Redoubtables WCC; a document circulated by Lancashire at the meeting stated:

[Currently][w]e are largely in control of our own destiny...we organise our own affairs. [If we merge] women's cricket...will be catered for by a Women's Cricket sub-group...The terms of reference agreed for this Women's sub-group do not in fact give us any real powers and any decisions, proposals or recommendations made by this sub-group can easily be blocked at a number of higher levels according to the present ECB committee structure.¹⁵⁸

Redoubtables argued that, while pursuing an 'isolationist policy' was no longer an option, the step of dissolution was an extreme one; they favoured the formation of an Advisory Committee which would allow the WCA membership a continued say in the future of the women's game.¹⁵⁹ Ebony Rainford-Brent, who was a member of the Redoubtables club, recalled:

You always felt like the Women's Cricket Association was for women, and it was like their baby and their environment...there was like a feeling of 'this is our world of cricket. And it's...going into another world, how do they know what our cricket's about?'¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Pat and Steve Siderfin, 27 May 2014.

¹⁵⁸ Lancashire WCA, 'Issues to consider before merging with the ECB', <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹⁵⁹ Redoubtables WCC, 'ECB-WCA merger', <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Ebony Rainford-Brent, 1 October 2013.

Other comments made in oral history interviews revealed similar fears about the loss of an all-female space and the accompanying autonomy which went with it:

I think the problem was...a lot of these women and girls, they'd just been pooh-poohed by a lot of male chauvinists. Because they just weren't taken seriously, and that's what they had fought against all the time. And then to hand it over to all these men...[when] they'd been working and working and working to prove a point that girls could play cricket...that's the big worry.¹⁶¹

They felt...we would be sort of lost...When you had the WCA, you became a member of the WCA and could go to their AGMs...you had a say at how the Association ran. You elected their officers, their policies and all that, so you were very much involved. When it was decided with the ECB, you knew that instantly there wasn't going to be that involvement, because there couldn't be...you knew it would disappear, but you hoped they wouldn't abandon us.¹⁶²

Lancashire WCA and its member clubs ultimately abstained from the final vote due to the belief that 'women's cricket will not be adequately protected by the terms put forward'; and while a majority of members voted in favour, the required two-thirds majority was only just achieved.¹⁶³

The kind of fears expressed above were not unfounded, as can be seen when considering the reality of the merger process in the aftermath of the vote. Initially, Bayton and Daniels had asked for a women's cricket seat on the ECB board; this never transpired. Instead, a Women's Cricket Advisory Group (WCAG) was set up, and Daniels, as former Executive Director of the WCA, became the ECB's first National Manager for Women's Cricket. Yet without access to the main Board, or indeed to the Audit Committee or the Cricket Committee, which all remained staffed entirely by men, Daniels and the Advisory Group had in practice only limited influence over the funding, publicity

¹⁶¹ Interview with Jan Godman, 27 May 2014.

¹⁶² Interview with Janet Bitmead, 21 October 2013.

¹⁶³ Lancashire WCA, 'Issues to consider before merging with the ECB', <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

and resources devoted to the women's game.¹⁶⁴ Other responsibilities formerly dominated by women, such as coaching and umpiring, were also taken over by the ECB. In practice, because this often required female officials to requalify, this meant that such duties became almost entirely undertaken by men. Thus former England cricketer Megan Lear was replaced as England coach by an ECB nominee, Paul Farbrace, and the umpires in women's internationals became male first-class ECB appointees. Additionally, the new network of County Boards created by the ECB to control both the professional and amateur men's games were to be 'advised of their responsibilities with regard to women's cricket'.¹⁶⁵ This, though, left it up to individuals to attempt to create positive working relationships. By summer 2000 the Chairman of the WCAG reported:

I conducted a survey of counties to find out the extent to which women's cricket had been included in the county board structure. It is fair to say, that the picture was mixed; some counties had managed to secure a seat for women's cricket at the full board, others were happily represented at the recreational cricket committee, whilst some were far from integration.¹⁶⁶

For many men working within County Boards, women's cricket was still far from being taken seriously. When one ECB employee turned up at a county in the early 2000s and was introduced as the co-ordinator of women's and girls' cricket, she was reportedly asked: 'are you here to show us how to make the tea?'¹⁶⁷ Redoubtable WCC had posed a telling question at the 1998 EGM:

If we dissolve today, will the ECB and County Boards rise to the challenge of developing the women's game or will it be paid lip service because of current Sports Council policies

¹⁶⁴ This point is made by P. Velija, A. Ratna and A. Flintoff in 'Women at the Wicket: The Development of Women's Cricket in England and Overseas', in C. Rumford and S. Wagg (eds.), *Cricket and Globalization* (Newcastle, 2010), p.115.

¹⁶⁵ Letter from Tim Lamb (ECB Chief Executive) to WCA members, 5 March 1998, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹⁶⁶ *Wicket Women*, Summer/Autumn 2000.

¹⁶⁷ This incident was relayed in an oral history interview conducted by the author. The interviewee in question wishes to remain anonymous.

and funding issues?¹⁶⁸

Given the continued resistance to accepting full responsibility for women's cricket by many county boards, even after the merger, arguably this fear was proved correct. Indeed, those who remained involved in the grassroots game after 1998 reported in oral history interviews that 'we were bottom of the pile...focus on [the] women's recreational game was nil'.¹⁶⁹

Other studies of similar amalgamations between men's and women's sporting organisations have found that such processes increase male control at the expense of female autonomy; Williams, for example, labels the gradual integration of women's and men's football since the 1960s as a process of 'negative integration' whereby '[w]omen's and girls' concerns are maintained as a niche'.¹⁷⁰ The above evidence suggests that this was also the case for women's cricket. The formation of a successor organisation to the WCA in 1999, the Women's Cricket Associates, also supports this; led by Norma Izzard and run by former WCA administrators, one of its key stated objectives was:

To provide an organisation with which present and past women cricketers, officials and administrators can identify.¹⁷¹

In the aftermath of the merger process, therefore, the women's cricket community felt it had been left without a voice. In effect, the merger had become a takeover. Thus, while it might be expected that women would have gained more control over leisure spaces by 2000 given their advances towards equality in other spheres, it appears that the 1990s witnessed an increase in male control

¹⁶⁸ Redoubtable WCC, 'ECB-WCA merger', <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013, and interview with Janet Bitmead, 21 October 2013.

¹⁷⁰ J. Williams, *A Beautiful Game. International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford, 2007), pp.16-17. See also M. Stronach and D. Adair, "Brave new world" or "sticky wicket"? Women, management and organisational power in Cricket Australia', *Sport in Society* 12:7 (2009), D. Lovett and C. Lowry, 'Women and the NCAA: Not Separate – Not Equal', *Journal of Sport Management* 9:3 (1995), and B. Cox and S. Thompson, 'From Heydays to Struggles: Women's Soccer in New Zealand', *Soccer and Society* 4:2 (2003).

¹⁷¹ Women's Cricket Associates, 'Proposed Constitution and Rules' (1999), private collection, Surrey.

over at least one arena of female leisure: namely women's sport.

Conclusion

On 20 July 1998, a ceremony took place in the Harris Garden at Lord's Cricket Ground. A miniature bat, signed by both the English and Australian women's cricket teams, was burned, and some of the ashes were then sealed in a new 'women's Ashes' trophy which both teams would compete for. But the trophy would also contain the ashes of something else: a copy of the WCA Constitution and Rules.¹⁷² As the constitution burned, the Women's Cricket Association was officially dissolved, and the running of women's cricket handed over to the England and Wales Cricket Board. The creation of the trophy symbolised the fact that, while a merger may have granted female cricketers access to more resources than ever before, it ultimately robbed them of the autonomy which had been so heavily prized since the WCA's beginnings, back in 1926.

This chapter has used women's cricket as a case study to demonstrate that the Sports Council's policy of 'one sport', which was designed to achieve equal opportunities and access for women, in fact disempowered them in important ways. The example of women's cricket also highlights a number of issues facing women's sport during the 1990s. It has been shown that as a sport, it had failed to wholly escape its roots as a middle-class, white activity; this demonstrates the problems, more broadly, which many working-class and ethnic minority women had in gaining access to leisure spaces, even by the 1990s. There were positive developments too: women's sport was evidently becoming normalised, and more women were participating in physical activities than ever before. Yet women's leisure remained a contested sphere, with the pressures of presenting a certain

¹⁷² http://www.womenscrickethistory.org/History/international_tours.html. (accessed 1 July 2014).

image more salient in the commercialised environment of the 1990s than ever before. Women also still faced difficulties in continuing with leisure activities like cricket due to the increasing pressures of the 'double burden'.

Historians of British women have often overlooked women's leisure when making assessments of progress towards genuine equality across the twentieth century; the task has largely been left to sociologists. This is an omission which needs to be corrected: as this chapter has shown, gender was still one of the main determinants of female access to leisure, even by the onset of the twenty-first century, and women's sport was still a profoundly unequal arena.

Conclusion

Epilogue: Women's cricket in the ECB era

On 13 February 2014, a major pay rise for the England women's cricket team was announced by the England and Wales Cricket Board. 18 of the squad would receive new contracts, on a three-tiered system, with the top-tier contracts rumoured to be worth around £50,000. Giles Clarke, ECB chairman, stated: 'we are proudly creating the first group of full time women's professional cricketers. We hope that they will become some of the best paid sportswomen in Britain.'¹ It was a far cry from the situation in the immediate postwar period, whereby those women selected for the 1948/9 tour of Australia and New Zealand were forced to raise £300 (over £10,000 in today's money) for the privilege of representing their country.

Indeed, it was also a far cry from the situation outlined in the final chapter of this thesis: as late as the 1990s, England players were struggling to juggle cricket with high-powered careers and the decision to start a family. This has all changed in recent years. When current captain Charlotte Edwards retires, she will be the last in a long line of players who remember a time when the vagaries of employers and personal finances dictated their opportunity to represent England at cricket. Clare Connor, the ECB's current head of women's cricket, praised the new contracts in our interview:

...hopefully it will make them better. Even better. Because they will be able to do more on their game. And not feel the kind of constant pressure to juggle life quite so much.²

¹ <http://www.ecb.co.uk/news/articles/ecb-approves-investment-england-womens-team-and-inner-city-facilities> (accessed 1 April 2015). The ECB has never released exact figures as to the value of the contracts.

² Interview with Clare Connor, 10 March 2014.

This includes, for some women, eliminating the necessity of choosing between motherhood and cricket: Arran Brindle, between her return to international cricket in 2011 two years after the birth of her son and her retirement in February 2014, was given the official support of the ECB to travel abroad on tour with son and husband in tow. 'The ECB has been fantastic,' she reported. '[I]t has worked out superbly.'³

The professional contracts are merely one manifestation of the impressive resources which have been poured into women's cricket since the ECB took over the sport in 1998. Initially Sport England lottery funding was made available; subsequently in 2008, the ECB responded to player demands and introduced the first ever female contracts. These were Chance to Shine Coaching Ambassador contracts, funded in conjunction with the Cricket Foundation charity, which had initiated the Chance to Shine scheme in 2005 with the aim of reintroducing cricket into state schools. Ten contracts were awarded; the deal for those who received them was that they would spend 50% of their time coaching girls in schools and clubs, while able to spend the remainder training and playing cricket, without other paid work to worry about.⁴ In October 2011, the ECB increased remuneration further with the introduction of tour fees and match fees. The awarding of fully professional contracts in 2014, then, was simply the latest in a steady line of progress towards the current situation, whereby England's women cricketers are the best paid women's sports team in the UK, and one of the best in the world. For elite-level English women cricketers, women's cricket is no longer merely a leisure activity, but their livelihood.

At lower levels, too, the investment provided by the ECB in the women's game has borne fruit since

³ *The Times*, 21 September 2012.

⁴ C. Taylor, 'From culottes to contracts', *Wisden*, 2012.

1998. Women's county cricket, while still entirely amateur, is now generally played on good-quality pitches, with coaching and other resources funded by the men's county cricket boards. Since 1998, according to ECB statistics, the number of cricket clubs offering women and/or girls' cricket has increased by 507%, from 93 to more than 600. There are now 30 women's leagues operating in England and Wales. Between 2006 and 2011, the percentage increase in girls playing cricket in school was 525%, from 25,049 to 156,577. 14,000 girls annually take part in the age-group competitions organised by the Lady Taverners charity.⁵ And the ECB's recent National Playing Survey revealed that more than 63,000 women and girls over the age of 14 played cricket in 2013.⁶

It has been ECB policy to support and promote the kind of club-level mergers which had occurred throughout the 1990s, giving extra impetus to an equitable provision of resources at club level. Somerset Wanderers, for example, which had been formed in 1969 by Nicola Tranter, a teacher at the Bath Convent School, agreed to form a partnership with Bath Cricket Club in 2001; by 2003, this led to a full merger, whereby the women's team became the 'Bath Wanderers'. The women's team now have access to Bath's ground on Sundays throughout the season. There are three women's XIs, and 50 girls train each Friday evening. Jan Godman (who represented England between 1991 and 1996) negotiated this merger, and recalled in our interview:

Bath couldn't have been more helpful. They wanted to become an all-inclusive cricket club, which is what they are now. They just promote cricket...girls have every opportunity to play cricket at whatever level they want to, and not be treated any differently to the blokes...it's in the ethos that they treat everybody the same, and they give everybody an opportunity to play.⁷

Of the oldest women's clubs still in existence, Riverside continue to play at Twickenham CC;

⁵ *All Out Cricket*, October 2012.

⁶ ECB, 'Women's Cricket: a sport transformed' (London, 2013).

⁷ Interview with Jan Godman, 27 May 2014.

Gunnersbury have become Finchley Gunns, the women's section of Finchley Cricket Club, having moved to Finchley in 2010; Dukesmead merged with Old Actonians CC in 2011; and Redoubtables now play at Purley CC as Purley Redoubtables. All have access to their clubs' first team pitches on Sundays during the season. Thus there appears to have been significant steps towards resolving the issues outlined in this thesis relating to female access to cricketing resources.

The quantity of media coverage given to women's cricket has also improved since 2000, and the ECB has invested resources here, too. Since 2003, there has been a designated member of their communications department whose job is to promote the women's game; most recently, they have committed themselves to joined-up marketing campaigns with England men, such as the 'RISE' campaign during the 2013 Ashes series' against Australia. The current Women and Girls Media Manager Beth Wild describes the work of the ECB as: 'doing everything we can...in terms of presenting the men and the women on an equal footing'.⁸ The results are encouraging. Rarely does any England women's international pass by these days without coverage in several major British newspapers. The 2015 women's Ashes series will be televised live in its entirety by Sky, a first for women's cricket. *Wisden* has featured two women in its 'Cricketers of the Year' feature, Claire Taylor in 2009 and Charlotte Edwards in 2014; most recently, its 2015 edition introduced a new 'Leading Woman Cricketer in the World' award, alongside an entire section devoted to the women's game.⁹ *Wisden's* editor in 2009, Scyld Berry, wrote that:

there is no element of political correctness or publicity-seeking about [Taylor's] selection. The best cricketers in the country should be recognised, irrespective of gender.¹⁰

⁸ Interview with Beth Wild, 2 June 2014.

⁹ R. Nicholson, 'Meg Lanning: the Leading Woman Cricketer in the World', *Wisden*, 2015.

¹⁰ S. Berry, 'Editor's Notes', *Wisden*, 2009.

For the first time since the 1950s, women's cricket matches in England are selling out.¹¹ And Charlotte Edwards is a household name in a way that no female cricketer has ever been before.

Similar benefits have been seen globally since the International Cricket Council took over the governance of international women's cricket from the International Women's Cricket Council in 2005. The IWCC had remained a volunteer body staffed by female administrators right up until the ICC takeover; Pete Davies in 1998 described it as 'a toothless, penniless body' whose role in the 1997 World Cup was to 'yelp ineffectually down the long-distance line' while the WCA of India acted as it pleased.¹² A 2002 report listed its weaknesses as:

- Run by a group of volunteer administrators
- No stand alone capacity for a paid administration officer, a CEO, a marketing/promotions officer or a development officer
- Few financial reserves and limited capacity to generate revenue, other than through membership fees
- Lack of an identity and profile
- Lack of respect/response/co-operation from some member countries
- Lack of a formal relationship/link with the International Cricket Council.¹³

By the early 2000s, the IWCC was only surviving due to subsidies provided by New Zealand Cricket. Their 2002 strategic plan thus concluded that the only way forward was to work towards amalgamation with the ICC by 2005; an ICC-imposed condition of the eventual merger was that all remaining independent women's associations would join up with their male counterparts, which duly occurred. Since 2005, an ICC Women's Committee has met twice annually to discuss the development of the game, and has subsequently produced a 'Females in World Cricket' strategy, which aims to grow participation, performance standards, the profile of and investment in the sport,

¹¹ This occurred at the Chelmsford ground for England Women's Twenty20 games against Australia in 2013 and South Africa in 2014.

¹² P. Davies, *Mad Dogs and English Women* (London, 1998), p.6.

¹³ 'Women's Cricket. A report on the game at the international level', July 2002, private collection, Surrey.

with the goal being 'full integration' of the women's game. There are now semi-professional contract systems in place in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, West Indies (with India the notable exception).¹⁴

From a liberal feminist perspective, then, the story since the WCA-ECB merger is a rosy one, with improved resourcing of women's cricket, the normalisation of the sport as more women and girls participate, and growing financial rewards for women at the elite level. Yet when you dig beneath this, cracks begin to emerge. Hargreaves and Anderson have described the recent growth of women's football internationally as follows:

while women are defining their world of sport by participating in growing numbers...they are at the same time assimilated to a male-dominated system...Gender relations of power are simultaneously being reproduced and transformed.¹⁵

This could equally be applied within the context of cricket. Claire Taylor's description in a 2012 *Wisden* article of 'a frustratingly hard-to-break shackle of male dominance in the sporting press', whereby still only 7% of sports coverage within the UK media is devoted to women's sport, is but one example.¹⁶ At all levels of cricket, both in England and internationally, power remains concentrated in the hands of men. As a result, all too often men's cricket is implicitly treated as the norm to which the women's game should aspire.

A good example is the fact that, while media coverage of women's cricket has grown since 2000, coverage increasingly appears to compare women's cricket with the men's game, and to treat the

¹⁴ An entire thesis could be written about the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and its shockingly backward attitude to women's cricket.

¹⁵ J. Hargreaves and E. Anderson, 'Sport, gender and sexuality: surveying the field', in Hargreaves and Anderson (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality* (Oxford, 2014), p.11.

¹⁶ Taylor, 'From culottes to contracts', *Wisden*, 2012. <http://www.wsff.org.uk/the-challenge/the-challenge-elite-sportswomen> (accessed 1 April 2015).

male version as 'real cricket'. This 2009 piece from the *Daily Telegraph* in the wake of England's World Cup victory is typical:

[Claire] Taylor regularly plays with men's teams, and I don't see why this shouldn't be carried to its logical conclusion. The recent pitiful performance of the England [men's] team against very ordinary opposition has been not least because so many of them were playing like a bunch of girls – though not nearly so well as girls like Miss Taylor. Pick her to play against the Australians this summer, for heaven's sake. She might do a proper man's job on behalf of her country.¹⁷

The most talented female players, as this suggests, are seen to be 'batting like men'. Even while their physical abilities challenge norms of femininity, the stereotype of female frailty is still being reinforced by the male-dominated sporting press.

The implicit idea that women's cricket is inferior to its male counterpart was typified in the media explosion which surrounded a story which broke in January 2013, focusing on England wicket-keeper Sarah Taylor. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Taylor revealed that she was in talks with Sussex regarding the possibility of her keeping wicket for the men's second XI in order to 'help my game'.¹⁸ The ensuing reaction was telling of prevailing attitudes to women's cricket when compared to its male counterpart. Typically, MCC member Isabelle Duncan wrote that she was fully supportive of such a move; it would 'lift...women's cricket to a new and spectacular level. With this will come prestige and popularity, which can only enhance women's presence in the world of sport.'¹⁹ Perhaps the question should be why a similar kind of media attention and prestige is not paid to Taylor's world-class performances within the women's game. Indeed it sometimes appears that there has been little progress since the IWCC forum held in July 1993, at which member countries agreed that their priority must be to 'convince the media that women are playing cricket

¹⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 4 April 2009.

¹⁸ *The Guardian*, 14 January 2013.

¹⁹ I. Duncan, *Skirting the Boundary* (London, 2013), p.270.

for themselves – not trying to be like the men'.²⁰

Additionally, there continues to be pressure on female cricketers to dress in very particular ways, both on and off the pitch. There have been strenuous efforts by the ECB since 1998 to emphasise the 'femininity' of players; top designers Paul Costello and TM Lewin have both been commissioned to design women's skirt suits for players to wear at official functions, and new fitted women's shirts have become the norm on the field since Adidas became kit sponsors in 2008.

Illustration 6. Isa Guha in the new, slim-fit Adidas England kit



In our interview, Charlotte Edwards praised such moves:

this real slim-fit...does make a difference, whatever you say...the kit now is obviously individually made for us all, and it looks fantastic...for the younger girls looking at us it's more

²⁰ 'Notes from the forum for players, officials and members of the IWCC', 30 July 1993, private collection, Surrey.

a sexier game now because of the stuff that we wear, and it's Adidas, and it looks better...I think if you were marketing the game, you'd want us looking like athletes, and I think that kind of kit really helps us do that.²¹

Yet it appears that at times, 'sexiness' has been prioritised over athleticism. Don Miles and Marion Collin recalled one example of an ODI shirt which left very little to the imagination:

DM: And of course there's now talk isn't there...of having the women's shirts all done 'feminine', whatever that might mean...They did make an attempt once before didn't they?...And it was a bit of a failure!

MC: It was an absolute failure! Jenny Gunn [England all-rounder] had to have the men's one because they couldn't get one to fit her!...she's quite broad-shouldered, and I think she couldn't bowl in it or something, so she had to wear one of the men's!²²

The emphasis seems to be on looking the part, even at the expense of those women who do not fit preordained ideas about the correct shape of an athletic female body.

As outlined in the last chapter of the thesis, this emphasis on marketing heterosexual attractiveness within women's cricket creates an environment which discourages lesbian female cricketers from being open about their sexuality. An extract from my interview with Clare Connor is revealing:

RN: ...would players in the England team now feel comfortable with being open about their sexuality, do you think?

CC: Um...yeah...I don't know. [When Surrey cricketer] Steve Davis came out...we considered whether it was something that we would do a joint men's and women's campaign on, and we decided not to...we have shied away from doing that.²³

Connor estimates that 30% of the current England squad are gay. Yet not a single one of them has

²¹ Interview with Charlotte Edwards, 9 June 2014.

²² Interview with Marion Collin and Don Miles, 19 June 2014.

²³ Interview with Clare Connor, 10 March 2014.

'come out' publicly, and the concern is that they are still being discouraged from doing so by the ECB. While feminist sociologists have argued that the situation for lesbian athletes globally has improved in recent years, evidence from women's cricket would indicate that there has been little progress within certain women's sports since the 1990s.²⁴

The huge resources now poured into women's cricket both in England and internationally, while massively beneficial, have also come largely at the expense of female autonomy within the sport, which is now almost wholly administered by men. The ECB Board, while it has had a 'women's game representative' since 2010, is currently constituted of 12 men and two women.²⁵ Umpiring and coaching within the women's game are now overwhelmingly male activities; scoring remains the exception, but only thanks to a conscious effort on behalf of women like Marion Collin, who now works for the ECB as their women's cricket statistician:

DM: Thing is they've always been rather played down, the women [umpires].

MC: That's why we're so very determined to keep on with scoring, and not let the ACO [ECB Association of Cricket Officials] do it.²⁶

At club level, while resourcing of women's clubs has improved, many players report feeling pushed into mergers with men's clubs, due to a perception that there was no other choice but to hand over control. For example, while Beth Morgan praised Gunnersbury's decision to merge with Finchley CC, she recognised that the move had occurred because: 'it's quite difficult now for a women's club to run solely by itself'.²⁷ Cathy Mowat, who has allowed her membership of Finchley Gunns (as

²⁴ See for example P. Griffin, 'Overcoming sexism and homophobia in women's sports: two steps forward and one step back', and R. Bullingham, R. Magrath and E. Anderson, 'Changing the game: Sport and a cultural shift away from homophobia', in Hargreaves and Anderson, *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality*.

²⁵ The situation is similar within other traditionally 'male' sports like football and rugby. See M. White and J. Kay, 'Who Rules Sport Now?', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 41:3-4 (2006), p.469.

²⁶ Interview with Marion Collin and Don Miles, 19 June 2014.

²⁷ Interview with Beth Morgan, 16 September 2013.

they are now known) to lapse since the merger, said simply: 'that was the way it was going in women's cricket'.²⁸ Such mergers have often caused clubs to lose touch with any sense of their history, as older members become alienated in the wake of mergers and leave. Anne Savory, who had been a member of Gunnersbury since the 1940s, reported:

the membership went much much higher. They've got their own bar there which we're allowed to use, but I've never been to their clubhouse...They have nets that we can use, both indoor and outdoor. Which is an enormous help...But it is sad for the older members of the club, because they don't want anything to do with us now they've joined up with the men...we don't get a fixture list, we don't get any communication whatsoever as to where the matches are, or when they start, when they finish, where they're playing. I think that is very very sad for people.²⁹

Williams found that many of the former female administrators of women's football who were disaffected by increasing male control had tended to withdraw from the sport altogether.³⁰ This appears to have occurred in women's cricket too, and has helped to perpetuate the recent male dominance of the sport's administration.

Additionally, amongst those women who have remained involved in the sport since 1998, there is a feeling that the ECB have poured money and resources into the elite level at the expense of the county and club game. Janet Bitmead, the secretary of what is now the women's section at Twickenham CC, reported:

gradually it has been weaned out...I don't think they're [the ECB] involved in grassroots cricket. They're only interested in cricket at the national level.³¹

This is in keeping with a previous study of the contemporary women's game by sociologist Philippa

²⁸ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

²⁹ Interview with Anne Savory, 3 July 2014.

³⁰ J. Williams, *A Beautiful Game. International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford, 2007), p.18.

³¹ Interview with Janet Bitmead, 21 October 2013.

Velija, whose analysis of the experience of female cricketers, based on research conducted in Middlesex in 2004, concluded that there remained problems with poor facilities and a lack of long-term stability at club level. Remarks from players included:

The ECB promised a lot when they wanted the merger. It really hasn't materialised. The ECB are really only interested in the top premier clubs, the grass roots are left to get on with it.

The ECB are continually trying to mess up women's cricket...The male administration of the ECB...impose a male structure on the women's game...the mandate is to treat men and women the same, but it just doesn't work. There are X number of men and a tiny proportion of women, the men have a professional international game, we don't, they are ruining the recreational game and they haven't done anything to help us.³²

While Velija's research was conducted in 2004, and the situation for some clubs has certainly improved since then, it remains true that the game is disproportionately resourced at the top levels. By comparison to the contracted players, who are now earning up to £50,000 annually, county players are still paying to play: for kit and for travel costs. An elite strata of 18 players who can devote their entire lives to cricket will surely only increase this distance between the national game and the grassroots; and the recent decision by the ECB to abolish their network of Women's Regional Development Managers (the successors to the WCDOs mentioned above) seems to indicate where their priorities lie. This is all reinforced by the fact that the British media are exclusively interested in the national side, with women's county cricket ignored completely by the press.

Arguably, the needs of women's cricket are still best understood by the dedicated local volunteers who are now left working at a local level within the women's game. A good example is the numerous independent women's leagues which have been established since the merger, outside of the auspices of the ECB. While league cricket was initially the ECB's responsibility, the

³² P. Velija, 'Women, Cricket and Gender Relations: A Sociological Analysis of the Experience of Female Cricketers', (unpublished PhD thesis, Brunel University, 2007), pp.174-5.

dissatisfaction expressed by various clubs at the miscommunication and disorganisation which resulted led to these kind of independent initiatives. Dukesmead, for example, concluded that: 'The ECB couldn't organise a piss-up in a brewery...[we should] get rid of ECB'.³³ The club now play in the Women's Cricket Southern League (WCSL), which was established in 2004 and is run by an autonomous committee with very little input from the ECB. Cathy Mowat, who has been on the WCSL committee since it was formed, stated: 'we get a great deal of encouragement from the clubs. "We like the way you run it. Thank god you're running it!"³⁴ This is but one example of the kind of locally-administered initiatives which have helped to grow the game since 1998, quite separately from anything which the ECB has implemented.

The frustration of those at grassroots level with the ECB since the merger is compounded by a feeling of disempowerment in the face of continued inequitable distribution of resources by some male-dominated county cricket boards. Since 1998, the ECB has provided funding for women's county and girls' age-group cricket, intended to cover approximately 60% of their costs. Yet the problem is that this money is distributed directly to the male-run county boards, and there is no ECB auditing to ensure that the money which should be ringfenced for women's cricket ends up where it is intended. Don Miles, current chairman of Sussex WCA, described this situation:

You're entirely at the mercy of what the cricket board, and the county cricket club, care to give you...we didn't know for about three years we were getting performance money cos we had the players in the England side. And then, even then when we found out, they're not obliged to give it to you. They can stick it in the main pot and give it to the guys, as far as I can gather. I mean Sussex don't, but I just don't know about other counties.³⁵

Clare Connor acknowledged in our interview that some men within the recreational game who sit

³³ Dukesmead AGM minutes, 2004, private collection, Middlesex.

³⁴ Interview with Cathy Mowat, 17 September 2013.

³⁵ Interview with Don Miles, 19 June 2014.

on county cricket boards 'probably don't buy into women's cricket yet'.³⁶ While many more women are playing cricket, it is cause for concern if their sport is being administered by those who still see cricket as the 'male preserve' that Velija described in 2007.³⁷

It is likely that this situation is mirrored in other countries, given that many men's cricket boards only accepted responsibility for the women's game when the ICC demanded it in 2005. Indeed, much like the WCA-ECB merger, the IWCC's decision to hand over control of women's cricket to the ICC and its member bodies can be criticised as a move which they were forced into from a position of weakness. Initial IWCC discussions about developing their relationship with the ICC in the late 1990s in fact showed their desire to retain their own individual identity, while formalising a link between the two bodies.³⁸ But, as the Governance Report conducted by Ernst and Young in 1999 stated:

It would...be unrealistic to expect the ICC to 'restructure' given the relative strength of women's cricket in comparison to the men's (not merely playing but also funding, administrative and sponsorship).³⁹

The joint ICC-IWCC report on women's cricket published in 2002 concluded that, in spite of the desire of some member bodies to 'maintain individuality, tradition, identity and control over the women's game', the advantages of a merger outweighed the disadvantages:

by remaining independent, the game is setting itself apart from the decision makers in the sport. As a separate entity women's cricket struggles to be recognised...
The history and tradition of the IWCC are important, but if the IWCC resists change in order to maintain those, it is setting itself up to become an irrelevant body with nothing to offer the game

³⁶ Interview with Clare Connor, 10 March 2014.

³⁷ Velija, 'Women, Cricket and Gender Relations', p.7.

³⁸ See for example minutes of IWCC general meeting, 27-28 December 1998, private collection, Surrey.

³⁹ 'IWCC Governance Report', 7 May 1999, private collection, Surrey.

or its members.⁴⁰

The survival of women's cricket appeared to depend upon giving up the reins of control to the ICC. This explains why the merger went ahead; and it has, of course, brought with it the benefits outlined above. But as predicted by IWCC members, disempowerment has also been par for the course, as the former administrators of women's cricket are left without a voice in the global governance of what was for so long their sport. The ICC Women's Committee has in practice little decision-making power. It can make recommendations to the Development Committee, which can then refer such recommendations to the higher levels of the ICC; only then can a final decision be made. And, while Clare Connor now sits on the ICC Cricket Committee, there are still no women on the main ICC Board, or on any of its other committees.

Thus, both internationally and within Britain, decisions regarding women's cricket are now being taken almost wholly by men, often with exclusively men's cricket in mind. From a feminist perspective, this can hardly be considered progress, given that - as the preceding chapters indicate - women administered the sport quite capably for 72 years. Perhaps, then, the real importance of this thesis is to demonstrate that women's cricket has a long history, a unique tradition, and a distinctive identity, quite separate from that which has been imposed on it by the ECB and the ICC in recent years.

Women's cricket since 1945: continuity and change

British society underwent huge transformations between the end of the Second World War and the

⁴⁰ 'Women's Cricket. A report on the game at the international level', July 2002, private collection, Surrey.

onset of the new millennium: changes so transformative that they have been labelled by Paul Addison as 'revolutions'.⁴¹ Yet much of the above discussion of women's cricket in the ECB era points to the persistence of problems which dogged the sport throughout the twentieth century. How different really was women's cricket in 2000 to women's cricket in 1945?

Certainly there were significant continuities, particularly in the type of woman who was most likely to have been participating in cricket. Though by 2000 Britain was being billed as a 'classless society', social class remained a division at the heart of cultural life. More women may have been playing cricket by the 1990s, but the increase had come from the expanded middle classes, which by the time of the 1991 census comprised 37% of the population.⁴² Class was certainly not dead; even the affluence of the late 1950s and 1960s had never entirely eliminated the class-based nature of some cultural activities, with women's sport being one of them. By treating women as a homogeneous group during the 1980s and 1990s, the Sports Council failed to tackle the underlying class inequities which remained in relation to sports participation; the economic struggles of those who chose to participate in women's cricket during the Thatcher years have been documented in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Additionally, the whiteness of women's cricket remained starkly noticeable by the end of the period in question, despite the onset of mass non-white immigration to Britain in the years after 1945. The lack of black and Asian women participating in cricket by 2000 was indicative not just of the cultural constraints which acted against their participation, but also of the failure of those within women's cricket to reach out to non-white and non-affluent communities.

There is evidence to suggest that there has been positive change in cricket's ability to attract participants from a broader range of backgrounds in recent years. Velija found in 2004 that all but

⁴¹ P. Addison, *No Turning Back: The Peacetime Revolutions of Post-War Britain* (Oxford, 2010).

⁴² F. Devine, *Social Class in America and Britain* (Edinburgh, 1997), p.136.

one of the girls she interviewed came from middle-class backgrounds; one of her interviewees stated that: 'There is a snobbish attitude towards people who played in state school'.⁴³ Yet at least ten of the current 18 contracted England players attended state schools, including captain Charlotte Edwards and vice-captain Heather Knight, and given that since 2005 160,000 state school girls annually have received coaching through the Cricket Foundation's Chance to Shine scheme, it seems probable that the social base of the sport will continue to expand in the coming years. The Chance to Shine scheme has also been particularly good at targeting ethnic minority and inner-city groups, and while it is hard to give exact figures – the ECB has never provided statistics on this issue – it is clear that more girls from different ethnic backgrounds are entering women's cricket as a result. In a multicultural area like Middlesex, for example, player-coach Beth Morgan described 'a real mix of [racial] backgrounds now playing [cricket]'.⁴⁴ One continued concern is that at international level to date only one black woman (Ebony Rainford-Brent) and two Asian women (Isa Guha and, in August 2014, Sonia Odedra) have represented England. This perhaps indicates that it is still difficult for black and Asian women to reach the elite level, even if grassroots participation is on the increase.

Another significant continuity since 1945 has been the reliance of women upon men to facilitate their participation in cricket, mirroring the gender relations which have existed in society more broadly. Oral histories indicate that women have almost always been introduced to cricket by their fathers or brothers; and that once they enter the sport more formally, they have frequently utilised positive relationships with male cricketers in order to gain access to resources such as pitches, clubhouses and equipment. Far from changing over time, the reliance of women on male-owned resources in fact increased over the second half of the twentieth century. From the 1960s, the male-

⁴³ Velija, 'Women, Cricket and Gender Relations', p.198.

⁴⁴ Interview with Beth Morgan, 16 September 2013.

dominated Sports Council began to exert significant control over the Women's Cricket Association's finances; they later used this authority to place pressure on the WCA to merge with the ECB, thus surrendering the autonomy which they had prized for so many years. The erosion of autonomy has, as we have seen, continued apace since the merger took place in 1998.

Additionally, female cricketers continued by 2000 to be reliant on the column inches provided by a largely male sporting press to publicise their activities. While the quantity of coverage probably increased gradually over time, and the tone of media coverage certainly became less overtly patronising as the twentieth century progressed, the press continued even in the 1990s to offer unfavourable comparisons with the men's game, and to exhibit an unhealthy obsession with the appearance and sexuality of women cricketers. Indeed, another key continuity in the face of media pressure was the fixation of the WCA throughout the postwar years with the ways in which female cricketers dressed and behaved, and their attempts to control this. As women's cricket became increasingly commercialised during the 1980s and 1990s, the pressure to present a feminised image actually increased, forcing lesbian female cricketers to continue to remain 'in the closet', even in a society which was now otherwise tolerant of homosexuality.

Despite elements of continuity, the upheavals occurring within British society in the post-1945 period naturally did not leave women's cricket unscathed. The overhaul of the education system in the wake of the 1944 Education Act, for example, saw 'secondary education for all' for the first time, and a huge expansion of physical education within the state sector. Yet the evidence presented here suggests that education continued to be divided along both class and gender lines, with cricket almost non-existent for girls who attended secondary modern and, later, comprehensive schools. This, too, helped perpetuate the middle-class nature of the women's game. The more recent cuts under Thatcher, and the concomitant pressures faced by schools to sell off playing fields during the

1980s, were also a serious handicap to the advancement of schoolgirl cricket. Thus, until the belated arrival of Kwik Cricket during the 1990s, cricket for girls largely grew outside of the formal education system. Additionally, as chapter two demonstrated, the onset of affluence in Britain, and the distinctive youth culture which developed as a result, helps explain the decline in women's cricket during the late 1950s and 1960s. By this time, the sportswoman was no longer a symbol of modernity; in fact, the WCA leadership consciously set women's cricket *against* modernity in their defence of 'amateur' values including non-competitiveness, and their stringent obsession with uniform regulations. This caused the younger generation, who were more interested in coffee-bars and fashion than team sports, to reject cricket altogether.

The third chapter of the thesis attempted to unravel the diverse and complex ways in which the onset of the Women's Liberation Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s impacted upon women's cricket. The evidence presented supported the findings of other historians of women's sport, notably Jean Williams regarding women's football, that British sportswomen have generally wanted simply to participate in their sport of choice without viewing their actions politically, and have to that end almost with one voice disavowed the 'feminist' label.⁴⁵ The tendency of those within the WLM to focus on political and economic issues at the expense of issues of sport and leisure helps demonstrate why they have done so. Additionally, the attempt by the British press to belittle women's sport by linking it with radical feminism suggests that a conscious disengagement with feminism was also a pragmatic move designed to protect the image of women's cricket. This has remained the case to the present day: one female club player, who started the girls section at Spondon Cricket Club in Derby in 2002, explained:

I didn't want it to be sort of a crusade. Talking to other clubs this is where they've gone wrong, sort of, almost like a feminist movement. Men in cricket don't like that. So it was very

⁴⁵ Williams, *Rough Girls*, p.9.

much through the back door, bringing an awful lot to the club.⁴⁶

Clare Connor, who currently sits on the Secretary of State's Women in Sport Advisory Board and is probably one of the most influential figures in women's sport within the UK, also appeared reluctant to embrace the 'feminist' label in our interview:

CC: ...as I became captain, I realised the responsibility and the power I could have off the pitch...I think we are part of a movement...and I think the whole women's sport movement now, is so important. We're at the forefront of that...

RN: Is it a feminist movement?

CC: Er...I suppose it is really. I suppose it is, although I wouldn't naturally pick that word. But I suppose it is. It's about girls...having the same opportunity to pick up a cricket bat as they would to pick up a netball or a tennis racket or a hockey stick...So I suppose it is a feminist wave, or journey...

RN: So are you a feminist?

CC: Again, I wouldn't have, I've never uttered those words, but...yeah. I wouldn't say I'm a rampant...I do think 'right, crikey, I've got a really important role here' ...I'm really enjoying the women in sport movement, and being part of that, and really sensing progress. And genuine change, and genuine shifts, so yeah, I suppose from that perspective, yeah, I am.⁴⁷

Though eventually accepting that she did, in fact, represent a movement which espouses feminist values, Connor did so only very reluctantly and after being prompted; it is evidently not a label she feels comfortable adopting publicly. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the prevailing view of feminism within contemporary Britain is a largely negative one.

Nonetheless, it has been shown within the preceding pages that women's cricket was a site of feminism throughout the twentieth century. Firstly, female cricketers continually, from the formation of the WCA in 1926, espoused so-called 'second-wave feminist' ideals such as the

⁴⁶ <http://www.takingthefield.com/stories/girls-and-girlies-spondon-cc> (accessed 1 April 2015).

⁴⁷ Interview with Clare Connor, 10 March 2014.

freedom to control their own bodies, the importance of female autonomy, and a rejection of traditional models of domesticity, placing their own leisure needs above servicing the needs of their husbands. This in itself is significant, because it indicates that there were important continuities between the first and second-wave feminist movements which have previously gone unnoticed by historians. Secondly, the meaning of cricket for women always went deeper than simply being a physical activity. Playing cricket was a way to challenge discourses surrounding female frailty and to assert their independence; the women interviewed for this research expressed definite feelings of empowerment as a result of their involvement. It would be difficult, therefore, not to conclude that women's cricket was a 'feminist' activity in all but name.

The impact of second-wave feminism within British society more broadly is difficult to measure accurately, but it is fair to say that attitudes towards the societal role of women have been transformed since the 1970s. Despite the failure of the WLM to recognise sport as a feminist battleground, it indirectly helped to create a greater acceptance of female participation in sport within Britain. The last chapter of the thesis demonstrated clearly that by the 1990s, sport for women had become increasingly normalised, with all-male sporting institutions like the MCC seen as outdated bastions of sexism. Perhaps the biggest change described in this thesis, then – and it is one which historians still often overlook – is the transformation of what were seen as appropriate leisure activities and spaces for women between 1945 and 2000. It would probably no longer be appropriate to suggest that women playing cricket is 'like a man trying to knit', as Len Hutton did in 1963 – both because of the thousands of women and girls who now enjoy playing cricket, and because of the large community of male knitters in Britain. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that there has been significantly less progress towards equality in women's sport than in many other arenas. Comments like the following still regularly appear on cricket blogs:

I suppose the patronizing/hollow tone [in commentaries on women's cricket] comes from a feeling reminiscent of a father being presented with a picture by his four year old daughter which is little more than scribble and acting as if it's The Last Supper. International women's cricket is somewhere around the standard of second grade club cricket.⁴⁸

Plenty of people would still concur with Walter Hammond's assertion, made in 1952, that 'the muscular differences of the sexes' prevent women's cricket from ever being equal to its male counterpart.⁴⁹

What of future research? It has become apparent while researching this thesis that the preceding pages merely scratch the surface of the hugely underexplored areas of women's sport and leisure in modern Britain. Of the 8,500 women who took part in the 1996 General Household Survey, 58% were regular participants in sport; yet much of this activity has gone unnoticed by historians.⁵⁰ One key research question would be how far the situation for women playing traditionally 'female' sports like hockey and netball differed from that of those playing cricket and football. There is clearly scope, too, for regional studies of women's leisure similar to those conducted in Edinburgh by Erica Wimbush and in Milton Keynes by Rosemary Deem during the 1980s, though utilising a historical approach.⁵¹ Much of the research presented here necessarily focuses on the national picture, but the state of affairs may well have varied widely across the country, particularly in areas like Yorkshire where women's cricket was at its strongest. Additionally, the evidence presented here regarding the type of woman who participated in cricket has been, below England level, largely impressionistic; local studies could help to confirm or challenge claims regarding the middle-class and white nature of the sport. Regional studies might also offer a way of accessing the experiences of women who

⁴⁸ <http://www.thefulltoss.com/england-cricket-blog/the-conundrum-for-womens-cricket> (accessed 1 April 2015).

⁴⁹ W. Hammond, *Cricket's Secret History* (London, 1952), p.155.

⁵⁰ Sport England, *General Household Survey. Participation in Sport in Great Britain 1996* (UK Sport, 1996), p.3.

⁵¹ E. Wimbush, *Women, leisure and well-being* (Edinburgh, 1986); R. Deem, *All work and no play?: a study of women and leisure* (Milton Keynes, 1986). Joyce Kay has recently described the history of local sports clubs as 'a much neglected area in British sports history'. See J. Kay, "'Maintaining the Traditions of British Sport'?" The Private Sports Club in the Twentieth Century', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 30:14 (2013), p.1655.

played in clubs outside of the auspices of the WCA.

At the other extreme, there is evidently a massive gap in our knowledge of women's cricket in other countries (the work of Cashman and Weaver on Australia notwithstanding).⁵² Did women's cricket suffer from the same constraints abroad as it did in the imperial centre? Additionally, the relationship between the WCA and other female associations abroad would be a fascinating subject for future study. The research presented here has used tour diaries and the minutes of the International Women's Cricket Council to hint at the imperialist mentality shared by many female cricketers in Britain; it has also suggested that the ways in which visiting teams like the Indians in 1986 were treated demonstrates that British women cricketers continued to assert racist-imperialist ideologies right up until the 1980s. It may well be that adjusting to the loss of Empire was a lengthier and less straightforward process for some British women than some current historiography would have us believe.⁵³ Furthermore, it would be intriguing to explore how other associations in turn viewed the British WCA, and how this changed as the Empire disintegrated in the postwar period. This thesis indicates that female sporting associations would be ripe for analysis by future historians of gender, Empire and British decolonisation.

Oral historians must also ensure that in future, they explicitly explore leisure when conducting interviews with women. Ignoring the issue overlooks a fundamental part of the experience of being a woman; leisure is an arena in which gender relations of power are ever-present. The oral evidence presented in this thesis is a key component of a broader historical understanding of why women played cricket, the ways in which they prioritised it over traditional ideals of domesticity, and their

⁵² R. Cashman and A. Weaver, *Wicket Women: cricket and women in Australia* (Kensington, 1991).

⁵³ For example, Porter suggests that after 1945 the Empire quickly became irrelevant to the lives of most people in Britain. See B. Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-2004* (Harlow, 2004), pp. 345-6.

relationship with the second-wave feminist movement. While only 27 women were interviewed for the thesis due to time constraints, there are surely numerous other women – both in cricket and in other sports – with sporting stories waiting to be told. Their voices deserve to be heard.

Finally, historians need to begin to redress the overwhelming imbalance given in mainstream histories to women's economic and political position at the expense of their leisure lives. Feminist leisure historians and sociologists have demonstrated clearly that leisure is inherently gendered; the research presented here indicates that being a woman had a fundamental impact on the quantity and quality of British experiences of cricket in the second half of the twentieth century. Specifically, more research needs to be conducted which reconceptualises sporting organisations as part of the women's movement within twentieth-century Britain. The verbal rejection by female cricketers of the 'feminist' label in interviews does not take away from the fact that they consistently espoused so-called 'second-wave feminist' ideals even before the onset of Women's Liberation; surely, when a full account of the cultural impact of second-wave feminism on British society is produced, it needs to incorporate their experiences.

'To be better at sport,' suggests Wearing, 'is translatable into being better or more capable in other areas of life. Because women are deemed to be inferior at sport, by inference they are less capable in other areas of life. Such is the cultural control of male hegemony exercised through the arena of sport.'⁵⁴ Perhaps more than any other arena in the Western world, sport is still a bastion of institutionalised inequality; cricket remains structured 'from playground to Test arena' on gendered lines.⁵⁵ The origins and development of such inequality can no longer be ignored by historians. Above all, this thesis points to the need to integrate experiences of leisure, and sport in particular,

⁵⁴ B. Wearing, *Leisure and feminist theory* (London, 1998), p.76.

⁵⁵ 'From playground to Test arena' is an ECB slogan describing their remit.

into future women's histories. To continue to ignore such experiences is to overlook a key part of women's lives.

Appendix 1:
England players and their backgrounds, 1945-2000

Player	Year of international debut	Occupation while representing England	Education	Father's occupation (where known)
Enid Bakewell (nee Turton)	1968	PE teacher	Brincliffe County Grammar School; Dartford CPE	Miner
Caroline Barrs	1988	Lab scientist	Unknown	
Josephine Batson	1958	Scientific assistant at the National Physical Laboratory	Heaton High School	
Betty Birch	1951	PE teacher (Lady Margaret's School, Parsons Green)	Lady Margaret School, Parsons Green; Chelsea CPE; London University	
June Bragger	1963	PE teacher at Rugby	Solihull High School; IM Marsh CPE	
Janette Brittin	1979	Student; later British Airways systems manager	PE College	
Katherine Brown	1976	Teacher	Unknown	
Sandra Brown	1963	PE teacher (Beckenham County Grammar School)	Unknown	
Mollie Buckland (nee Hunt)	1960	Student (Dartford CPE)	Wakefield Girls' High School; Dartford CPE	Policeman
Jane Cassar (nee Smit)	1991	Student; later sports centre attendant and secretary	Nottingham Girls High School; Nottingham Trent University	Businessman
Jo Chamberlain	1987	Manager at an indoor cricket centre	Unknown	
Jean Clark	1968	Unknown	Unknown	
Lesley Clifford	1966	PE lecturer	PE college	

Sarah Collyer	1998	Student	Newton County High School	
Clare Connor	1995	Student; teacher (Brighton College); Journalist	Brighton College (private); Manchester University	Managing Director of electronics firm
Sarah-Jane Cook	1996	Bank clerk	Unknown	
Catherine Cooke	1989	Postgraduate student	Unknown	
Lesley Cooke	1986	Sports centre assistant	Unknown	
Carole Cornthwaite (nee Hodges)	1982	Bank clerk	Fleetwood Grammar School	Policeman
Jackie Court	1976	Secretary	Unknown	
Jill Cruwys	1969	PE teacher	PE College	
Jean Cummins	1954	Insurance clerk	Unknown	
Barbara Daniels	1993	Teacher; later Executive Director of WCA	St Thomas More Secondary School (state); University of Lancaster (English)	Headmaster
Heather Dewdney	1968	PE teacher	Dartford CPE	
Audrey Disbury	1957	WAAF mechanic; later guest house landlady	Bedford High School	
Shirley Driscoll	1957	PE teacher	Richmond and East Sheen Grammar School; Chelsea CPE	
Mary Duggan	1948	PE teacher (Queen Ethelburga's School, Harrogate); later lecturer and Deputy Principal of Dartford CPE	Alice Ottley School, Worcester; Royal School, Bath; Dartford CPE	Surgeon
June Edney	1984	Pharmacy technician	Unknown	

Charlotte Edwards	1996	Retailer (Hunts County Bats); cricket coach	Ramsey Abbey School (state)	Potato farmer
Alison Elder	1990	Teacher	Unknown	
Jacqueline Elledge	1963	Teacher	Unknown	
Carol Evans	1968	PE teacher	PE college	
Annie Geeves	1951	Unknown	Unknown	
Sue Goatman	1979	Teacher	Unknown	
Jan Godman (nee Siderfin)	1991	Electrical technician in RAF	Holmbury Middle School	Teacher
Rosemary Goodchild	1966	Unknown	Unknown	
Jane Gough	1973	PE teacher	PE college	
Julia Greenwood	1976	PE teacher	PE college	
Kay Green	1954	PE teacher	Bishop Otter College; PE college	
Joan Hawes	1957	Teacher at King's Warren School, Plumstead	Battersea Polytechnic	
Helene Hegarty	1954	Civil servant (Inland Revenue)	Richmond and East Sheen County School	
Ros Heggs	1978	Accountant	Unknown	
Rachael Heyhoe-Flint	1960	PE teacher; journalist	Wolverhampton Girls High School; Dartford CPE	Organiser of PE in Staffordshire
Molly Hide	1934	Farm worker on family farm in Haslemere	Wycombe Abbey; Reading University (agricultural diploma)	Businessman
Sue Hilliam	1973	PE lecturer	Unknown	
Shirley Hodges	1968	PE teacher (Lewes County School; Hastings High School for Girls)	Hove County Grammar School for Girls; Avery Hill Teacher Training College	Clerk

Nicola Holt	1996	Unknown	Unknown	
Glynis Hullah	1976	PE teacher	PE college	
Esme Irwin	1960	Insurance clerk	Bishopshalt Grammar School	
Ann Jago	1960	Teacher	Dartford CPE	
Karen Jobling	1987	Unknown	Unknown	
Mary Johnson	1948	PE teacher (Whiteacre School, Whalley, Lancs; Arnold High School for Girls, Blackpool)	Kingston upon Hull High School; Liverpool CPE	
Suzanne Kitson	1988	Lab technician	Unknown	
Megan Lear	1976	PE teacher	PE college	
Joan Lee	1986	PE teacher	PE college	
Winifred Leech	1951	Unknown	Unknown	
Kathryn Leng	1995	Bank clerk	Woodhouse Grove School (private)	
Margaret Lockwood	1951	Art teacher (Wakefield Girls' High School)	Royal College of Art, London	
Patsy Lovell	1987	Pensions administrator	Unknown	
Megan Lowe	1949	Teacher (Twickenham County Girls' School)	Wyggeston Girls' School, Leicester; Avery Hill College, Kent; Birkbeck College, London University (philosophy)	
Ruth Lupton	1995	Self-employed consultant	Unknown	
Dorothy Macfarlane	1957	Secretary	The Marist Convent, Richmond	
Myrtle Maclagan	1934	ATS Physical Training inspector	Royal School, Bath; Harcombe House Domestic Science College	Army officer

Olive (Polly) Marshall	1954	Retailer in family furniture business	Methodist School in Pickering, Yorkshire	
Pamela Mather	1973	PE teacher	PE college	
Julie May	1986	Teacher	Unknown	
Debra Maybury	1988	Bank clerk	Unknown	
Gill McConway	1984	Sports Centre administrator	Unknown	
Dorothy McEvoy	1948	PE teacher at Kilburn Polytechnic, London; later London County Council Inspector of PE	Notre Dame Collegiate School, Liverpool; Pensionnat Florissant, Switzerland; Liverpool CPE	
Sue Metcalfe	1984	Student; later a medical representative	Crewe and Alsager College (sports science)	
June Moorhouse	1966	Secretary	Unknown	
Marie Moralee	1991	Post office worker	Unknown	
Grace Morgan	1948	Civil servant (variously in Ministry of Health and Ministry of National Insurance)	Putney County School	
Cathy Mowat	1978	Secretary	St Anne's College for Girls (grammar school); London University (French and German)	Nuclear scientist
Barbara Murrey	1951	Unknown	Unknown	
Laura Newton (nee Macleod)	1997	Cricket coach	Unknown	
Bev Nicholson	1996	Service station attendant	Unknown	
Lisa Nye	1988	Police officer	Unknown	

Lucy Pearson	1996	Teacher	Taverham Hall, Norfolk; Oakham School (private); Oxford University	
Margaret Peear	1979	Unknown	Unknown	
Mary Pilling	1963	PE teacher	PE college	
Sheila Plant	1960	PE teacher (Croydon High School)	Wallington County Grammar School; Dartford CPE	Industrial manager
Helen Plimmer	1989	PE teacher (Sowerby Bridge High School)	Carnegie College	
Barbara Pont	1960	Teacher	Bishop Otter College (Diploma in Health Education)	
Sarah Potter	1984	Journalist and PA	Unknown	
Jane Powell	1984	PE teacher	PE college	
Jill Powell	1979	Recreation Officer (Hillingdon)	Unknown	
Ruth Prideaux (nee Westbrook)	1957	PE teacher / PE lecturer	Gravesend County School; Anstey CPE	Headmaster
Alison Ratcliffe	1960	PE teacher	Homerton College	
Lynne Read	1976	Teacher	Unknown	
Sue Redfern	1995	Sports coach	Kimberley School (state)	Fleet manager
Melissa Reynard	1995	Technical assistant at Yorkshire Water	Unknown	Insurance claims inspector
Netta Rheinberg	1949	Secretary	South Hampstead High School; secretarial college	Export merchant
Cecilia Robinson	1948	PE teacher (St Saviours and St Olaves Grammar School; Roedean)	St Paul's Girls School; Wycombe Abbey; Bedford CPE	Clergyman
Margaret Rutherford	1960	Housewife	Seghill County Modern School	

Hazel Sanders	1948	Technician in pathology laboratory	Mitcham County School; Reading University (science)	
Anne Savory (nee Sanders)	1954	Worker for Central Council of Physical Recreation	Lady Margaret's School, Parsons Green	
Helen Sharpe	1957	Research pharmacologist	Waverley School, Huddersfield; Harrogate College; Leeds University (pharmacology)	
Gill Smith	1986	Local government officer	Unknown	
Kathleen Smith	1960	Teacher at Gravesend Technical School	Holme Valley Grammar School; Manchester University (English)	Stationmaster
Karen Smithies	1986	Manager at a bookmakers	Unknown	Designer at electrical machine firm
Betty Snowball	1934	PE teacher (St Swithun's; St Leonard's; Moray House Teachers Nursing College, Edinburgh)	St Leonard's; Bedford CPE	Doctor
Jan Southgate (nee Allen)	1976	Civil servant	Chelsea CPE	
Mary Spry	1951	Unknown	Unknown	
Avril Starling	1982	PE teacher	PE college	
June Stephenson	1976	Housewife	Unknown	
Amanda Stinson	1986	Student	Unknown	
Debbie Stock	1991	Photographic technician	Unknown	
Jill Stockdale	1984	Secretary	Unknown	
Helen Stother	1982	PE teacher	PE college	

Claire Taylor	1998	Systems analyst for Procter and Gamble; later a Chance to Shine coach and council administrator	Abbey School (private); Oxford University (maths)	
Clare Taylor	1988	Van driver for Royal Mail	Hull University (geography)	
Janet Tedstone	1979	Student; later an accountant	Unknown	
Lynne Thomas	1966	PE teacher	PE college	
Jackie Wainwright	1979	PE teacher	PE college	
Chris Watmough	1968	PE teacher (Wallington High School; Bromley Grammar School)	Chislehurst and Sidcup Technical High School; Dartford CPE	Journalist
Wendy Watson	1987	Clerical officer for British Rail	Unknown	
Joan Westbrook	1954	Clerical worker (British Electricity Authority)	Mitcham County School	
Eileen Whelan	1937	Civil servant	Ursuline Convent, Ilford	
Claire Whichcord	1995	Teacher	Unknown	
Jacqueline Whitney	1966	Unknown	Unknown	
Joan Wilkinson	1948	Physical Training instructor, WAAF	Foulridge Village School, Lancashire	Weaver in cotton mill
Margaret Wilks	1978	Secretary	Unknown	
Katherine Winks	1998	Teacher	Unknown	
Barbara Wood	1949	PE teacher	Hunmanby Hall; PE college	
Elaine Wulcko	1987	PE teacher	PE college	
Eileen Vigor (nee Rump)	1963	Shorthand typist	Unknown	

Appendix 2:
Clubs and schools affiliated to the WCA, 1945-1998

This data is taken from the WCA's Yearbooks (www.womenscrickethistory.org). No Yearbook was produced in 1967 or 1994.

Year	Affiliated clubs	Affiliated schools
1945	18	12
1946	50	18
1947	90	41
1948	103	43
1949	105	71
1950	129	81
1951	153	93
1952	189	100
1953	200	94
1954	194	86
1955	179	97
1956	170	93
1957	164	84
1958	138	80
1959	132	90
1960	136	87
1961	128	81
1962	112	79
1963	108	86
1964	97	74
1965	86	67
1966	89	60
1967	Data unavailable	Data unavailable
1968	78	60
1969	73	56

1970	68	55
1971	66	45
1972	66	47
1973	66	48
1974	65	49
1975	66	40
1976	75	48
1977	80	48
1978	67	59
1979	61	61
1980	55	55
1981	65	52
1982	60	38
1983	50	46
1984	54	34
1985	50	40
1986	53	48
1987	57	45
1988	55	46
1989	66	36
1990	56	17
1991	54	26
1992	50	35
1993	43	50
1994	Data unavailable	Data unavailable
1995	55	59
1996	69	87
1997	78	90
1998	96	114

Appendix 3: Oral history interviews

The oral history element encompassed 26 interviews with 27 women (one was conducted jointly with a cricketering mother and daughter), as well as two men – the husband of one of the interviewees (Steve Siderfin, interviewed with Pat Siderfin), and the close friend of another (Don Miles, interviewed with Marion Collin). Don Miles is also the current chairman of the Sussex Women's Cricket Association.

The women interviewed had all played either international or county level cricket, and were recruited through an organisation called the Women's Cricket Associates, which seeks to organise reunions with the ex-players and administrators of the sport.

Before being interviewed, interviewees were sent an information sheet about the research, outlining the issues I wished to discuss. The interviews lasted between one and three hours and were semi-structured, beginning with discussing the interviewee's family background and when they first played cricket, and moving on to discuss the various stages of their cricketering career, how cricket has affected their lives, and how they now view their involvement.

I transcribed the interviews myself, and sent copies of the transcripts to all interviewees, who were given the option to anonymise any sections of the interview they wished to.

Brief biographical records are given of the 27 women whose oral testimonies have been used in this study.

Interviewee	Date of birth	Age at time of interview	Parental occupations	Education	Occupation while playing international / county cricket	Teams represented - with dates where known
Enid Bakewell (nee Turton)	16 Dec 1940	72	Father: Miner Mother: None	Grammar school; Dartford CPE	PE teacher	England 1968-82; Surrey 1994-99; Nottingham Casuals; Redoubtables
Janet Bitmead	1948	64	Father: Civil engineer Mother: None	Gilliatt School, Fulham	Bank clerk Local government officer	Riverside, c. 1966-present
Mollie Buckland (nee Hunt)	29 July 1936	77	Father: Policeman Mother: None	Wakefield Girls' High School; Dartford CPE	Student	England 1960-61; Yorkshire 1953; Kent 1956-62 Leeds
Marion Collin	15 October 1943	70	Father: Banker Mother: None	Sutton High School	Financial administrator	Surrey; Redoubtables 1961-96
Clare Connor	1 Sept 1976	37	Father: Managing director of electronics firm Mother: Secretary in the firm	Brighton College (private); Manchester University	Teacher (Brighton College) Journalist	England 1995-2005; Sussex 1991-2008; Brighton and Hove 2001-08

Carole Cornthwaite (nee Hodges)	1 Sept 1959	53	Father: Policeman Mother: Teacher	Fleetwood Grammar School.	Bank clerk	England 1982-93; Lancashire and Cheshire 1976-93; Leyland Motors 1974-?; Wakefield 1990-93
Barbara Daniels	17 Dec 1964	49	Father: Headteacher Mother: Nurse	St Thomas More Secondary School (state); Lancaster University (English)	Teacher Executive Director of WCA	England 1993-2001; Wolver- hampton 1988-91; Invicta 1992-2003
Audrey Disbury	5 March 1934	80	Unknown	Bedford High School	WAAF Landlady	England 1957-1971; Kent 1961-75
Charlotte Edwards	17 Dec 1979	34	Father: Potato farmer Mother: None	Ramsey Abbey School (state)	Retailer at Hunts County Bats Chance to Shine coach	England 1996- present; Kent 2004- present Invicta 1999-2009; Finchley Gunns 2011-12; Wokingham Ridgeway 2013- present

Jan Godman (nee Siderfin)	16 March 1966	48	Father: Teacher Mother: Teacher	Holmbury Middle School (state school)	Electrical technician in RAF	England 1991-96; Thames Valley 1980-93; Somerset 2000-11; Beacons- field; Somerset Wanderers 1997-2002; Bath Wanderers 2005-13
Rachael Heyhoe- Flint	11 June 1939	75	Father: Organiser of PE in Staffordshire Mother: Teacher	Wolver- hampton Girls High School; Dartford CPE	PE teacher Journalist	England 1960-82
Sheila Hill	10 August 1928	85	Father: Electrical engineer Mother: None	Bromley County School; Oxford University	Maths teacher (St Paul's Girls School)	Kent 1954-65; Kent Nomads; Gunnery- bury
Shirley Hodges	27 June 1943	70	Father: Clerk Mother: Typist	Hove County Grammar School for Girls; Avery Hill Teacher Training College	PE teacher (Lewes County School; Hastings High School for Girls)	England 1968-82; Sussex 1962-84
Barbara Hutton	1927	86	Father: Vet Mother: None	Belvedere High School (GPDST); Sutton High School (GPDST); University of London	Student	Surrey 1947; Wallington 1946-7

Beth Morgan	27 Sept 1981	31	Father: Engineer Mother: Secretary	Nower Hill High School; University of Reading - Psychology	Student MCC Young Cricketer Chance to Shine coach	England 1999-2012; Middlesex 1996-present; Gunners-bury 1995-present
Cathy Mowat	20 Sept 1952	60	Father: Nuclear scientist Mother: None	St Annes College for Girls (grammar school); University of London (French and German)	Secretary	England 1978-84; Middlesex 1980-94; Gunners-bury 1973-2006
Sheila Plant	19 Feb 1936	78	Father: Worked in industry Mother: None	Wallington County Grammar School; Dartford CPE	PE teacher (Croydon High School)	England 1960-69; Surrey 1958-74; Wallington 1965-84
Ruth Prideaux (nee Westbrook)	12 July 1930	83	Father: Headteacher Mother: Headteacher	Gravesend Grammar School; Anstey CPE	PE teacher (Wakefield Girls' High School; Leeds University)	England 1957-63; Yorkshire 1953-8; Kent 1959-64
Ebony Rainford-Brent	31 Dec 1983	29	Mother: Hospital receptionist (single parent)	Stockwell Park School; Greycoat Hospital School; University of London (chemistry)	Student Chance to Shine coach	England 2001-10; Surrey 2001-12; Redoubtables 1996-2006; Shepperton 2007-12
Sue Redfern	26 Oct 1977	36	Father: Fleet manager Mother: Hairdresser (owned own salon)	Kimberley School (state school)	Sports coach	England 1995-9; Derbyshire 1997-2001; Staffs 2003-8; Derby WCC

Cecilia Robinson	22 May 1924	90	Father: Clergyman Mother: None	St Paul's Girls School; Bedford CPE	PE teacher (St Saviours and St Olaves Grammar School; Roedean)	England 1948-63; Kent 1949-66; Sevenoaks Vine
Anne Savory (nee Sanders)	20 July 1931	82	Unknown	Lady Margaret's, Fulham	Worker for Central Council of Physical Recreation WCA National Development Officer	England 1954-71; Middlesex 1949-74; Gunnersbury
Pat Siderfin	1936	78	Father: Policeman Mother: None	Wycombe High School	Teacher	Beaconsfield; Bucks
Claire Taylor	25 Sept 1975	38	Unknown	Abbey School (private); Oxford University (maths)	Systems analyst for Procter and Gamble Chance to Shine coach Council administrator	England 1998-2011; Thames Valley 1993-9; Berkshire 2000-11; Reading Ridgeway 2007-11
Chris Watmough	22 March 1947	67	Father: Journalist Mother: None	Chislehurst and Sidcup Technical High School; Dartford CPE	PE teacher (Wallington High School; Bromley Grammar School)	England 1968-85; Surrey 1978-84; Kent 1971-6; Kent Nomads; Wallington 1977-81

Norma Whitehorn	24 April 1931	82	Father: North Thames Gas Board Mother: Secretary	Gonville Academy; Old Palace Grammar School, Croydon; Secretarial college	Secretary	Surrey 1955-65; Wallington
Beth Wild	26 March 1987	27	Father: IT manager for an insurance company Mother: None	Colchester County High School for Girls (grammar school); Oxford University (geography)	Administrator at MCC Women's cricket media manager at ECB	Essex 2002-11; Loughton Women; Kent Invicta; Catford Wanderers 2013-present

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