

Metropole-to-Colony Cultural Traffic and the Development of Australian Cricket, 1860–1877

Abstract This chapter looks at the first years of Anglo-Australian crick-
eting relations, which almost entirely consisted of metropole-to-colony
cultural traffic. This cultural traffic was transmitted via the first interna-
tional tours of English teams to the colony as well as the importation of
metropolitan players and coaches in the 1860s and 1870s. This resulted
in Australian cricket in these years largely being an attempt to mimic the
metropolitan model. The gradual improvement in colonial cricket—and
especially the first time an Australian Eleven beat an English Eleven in
1877—was framed as proof that the British ‘race’ had not been ener-
vated in colonial conditions. This was consonant with a broader British
race patriotism discourse that was prevalent at this time.

Keywords Cultural traffic · First test match · Greater Britain · British
race patriotism · Australian cricket

Until the first tour of a (white) Australian cricket team to England in
1878, most of the cultural traffic between colony and metropole flowed
one way: metropole → colony. This cultural traffic took the form of
intermittent tours of English cricket teams organised by various inter-
ested parties as well as the migration of individual players and coaches to
assist with the development of the game in the colonies. This movement
of people and teams from the metropole to the Australian colonies pro-
vides a good, notwithstanding unidirectional, illustration of the cultural

traffic dynamic and the various ways in which it shaped a British World 'node' like Australia. The changes wrought by this cultural traffic had important ramifications for the evolution of an early colonial cricketing identity.

Obviously the very first instance of metropole-to-colony cultural traffic occurred when the early settlers brought with them a number of British games and sports, cricket being one. Cricket clubs were established in some colonies as early as the 1830s. These early clubs were fashioned on metropolitan models, some even going so far as to copy the names of English clubs like the Mary-Le-Bone club in Sydney. The ongoing infusion of British cultural traffic was sustained through the visits of travelling British regiments who would play games against these colonial clubs. It has been suggested that the popularity of cricket in these early years was precisely due to its close identification with the metropole—it was the most 'English of English sports'.¹ But although these cricket clubs helped the early settlers feel more 'English' in their strange surroundings, cricket in Australia didn't really begin to develop and expand until the vast increase in British cultural traffic that came with the explosion of metropole-to-colony migration in the second half of the nineteenth century—that is, with the formation of the British World.

The two most influential cricket clubs were the Albert Club in New South Wales and the Melbourne Cricket Club in Victoria. And just as the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) was the pre-eminent organisational and governing body in England, so too did these clubs occupy similar positions in Australian colonial society (and it is surely no coincidence that the most powerful colonial club—the Melbourne Cricket Club—shared the same acronym). As David Montefiore has noted, '[The leadership of the Melbourne Cricket Club] represented the colonial equivalent of the paternalist Tory-Anglican leadership of the senior English county clubs'.² Indeed, many prominent members of these clubs were brought up and/or educated in Britain. For example, the prominent sports journalist W.J. Hammersley was born in Surrey and educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, before migrating to Australia in 1856. He promptly joined the Melbourne Cricket Club and captained Victoria in its intercolonial match against New South Wales in 1857.³ Hammersley's personal friend and fellow Melbourne Cricket Club member Tom Wills provides a good example of the significance of British World networks for these formative years of cricket in Australia. Born in New South Wales, Wills

went to school in Melbourne before being sent to Rugby School in England where he captained the school cricket team. Wills then returned to Melbourne in 1856, bringing back with him new innovations in cricket that he had observed in the metropole, such as overarm bowling and tossing a coin to decide who would have the first innings. He played for the Melbourne Cricket Club and was the club's secretary in 1857–1858. Then he re-traversed the British World as manager and coach of the aboriginal cricket team of 1868.⁴

Metropole-to-colony cultural traffic was further magnified with the commencement of tours of metropolitan teams to the Australian colonies in the 1860s. Indeed, the inaugural tour of an English cricket team to the Australian colonies in 1861–1862 offers an instructive example of British World networks in operation. The idea for the tour was prompted by the success of a similar tour to Canada and the United States in 1859. The planning for the tour was made possible via a number of British World contacts and demonstrates the intertwining networks of the British World.⁵ There is evidence to show that the initial idea for the tour may have come from Melbourne Cricket Club committeeman Arthur Devlin, who was in Britain when the 1859 touring party left for North America. On 16 December 1859, the *Argus* reported: 'A letter has been received from an old Victorian Cricketer now resident in the mother country, to the effect that ... the All England Eleven are prepared to peril the transit of the tropics, and the rolling forties, *with a view of showing this young country how cricket ought to be played*'.⁶ The idea, however, appeared to founder when a number of important members of the 1859 tour ruled out a trip to Australia, citing that the £150 per player (plus fares and expenses) being offered was insufficient. It was the Surrey club, and in particular the Surrey captain, H.H. Stephenson, who stepped into the breach and agreed to organise a team with himself as captain.

It is not clear how the catering firm Spiers and Pond became aware of the proposal but it was they who ultimately decided to underwrite the costs of the venture. Spiers and Pond was itself the product of British World networks. The owners, Felix Spiers and Christopher Pond, were British catering entrepreneurs who migrated to Melbourne in the 1850s and established a number of successful restaurants and hotels.⁷ The tour was immensely popular, with the Australian public with 45,000 paying to watch the first match against Eighteen of Victoria. The takings from this match alone ensured that Spiers and Pond recouped their expenses.⁸ The tourists were greeted with similarly enthusiastic crowds at all the ensuing

fixtures (thirteen in all). All their matches were against odds (i.e. against teams of eighteen or twenty-two) with the visitors dominant. The success of the tour prompted a second tour in 1863–1864, which was again the product of British World cooperation. Although the exact arrangements are unclear, the tour was the result of negotiations between the Melbourne Cricket Club and the Nottinghamshire cricketers George Parr (who had captained the 1859 tour of North America) and George Marshall. This tour was, again, very popular with the Australian public and a great financial success.⁹

Another by-product of these early tours was the employment by colonial clubs of metropolitan professionals to assist with coaching and development. After the 1861–1862 tour, Charles Lawrence agreed to an offer by the Albert Club to stay on as a coach. Not to be outdone by their NSW rivals, the Melbourne Cricket Club obtained the services of their own English professional, William Caffyn, after the 1863–1864 tour. And there were a number of others after them who migrated from the metropole. Indeed, the 1865 New South Wales team to play the inter-colonial match against Victoria featured four English professionals—Lawrence, Caffyn, Ned Gregory and Nathaniel Thompson. Three years later a number of English amateur cricketers studied the Victorian team. The phenomenon was commented on by the *Australasian* in 1872: ‘Victorians must never forget how much they owe to the home polish, how much indebted they have been to men who learnt their cricket in the old country ... in estimating the progress the game has made here ... remember how much we owe of late years to home importations’.¹⁰ These imports certainly had a marked impact on Australian cricket and, in this regard, the metropole more than delivered on its promise of ‘showing this young country how cricket ought to be played’.

The next tour of a metropolitan team did not take place until 1873 and the improvements that had taken place in Australian cricket were immediately apparent. Where the previous English teams had convincingly beaten teams of twenty-two, the 1873–1874 team was beaten by eighteens of NSW and Victoria. These changes were noted by the captain of the English side who, arguably, was cricket’s first real superstar, William Gilbert Grace. ‘W.G.’ later wrote in his ‘cricketing reminiscences’, ‘We could easily beat any team of fifteen that could be gathered together in Australia, but with eighteen or twenty-two against us victory was not so easy. The best cricketers we met were, as a rule, English University and Public School men, who had settled in the

Colony, but some of the native-born showed considerable aptitude, especially in bowling'.¹¹ The matches again proved extremely popular with the Australian public—a fact no doubt helped by the drawcard of W.G.—and, furthermore, the scores were telegraphed back to Britain for the first time.¹² After the tour, one Australian player was heard to say, 'Bar W.G. we're as good as they are, and some day we'll lick'em with eleven', a quote which could perhaps be interpreted as expressive of proto-nationalist Australian sentiment if it hadn't been uttered by Sam Cosstick, another Surrey player who had migrated to Australia.¹³ These words were to prove prophetic when, in March 1877, a combined Melbourne and Sydney Eleven, branded 'All Australia', took on the next England touring party led by James Lillywhite. True to Cosstick's word, All Australia won this match. Lillywhite's team demanded a rematch a week later in which they levelled the score and these two matches received retrospective classification as the first in the long-standing tradition of Australia vs. England 'Test matches'.¹⁴

This early cricketing interaction between the metropole and colony is revealing of a couple of things. First, we can see how the construction of the British World in the latter part of the nineteenth century was reflected in cricket. In fact, to a large extent, this British World interaction was responsible for the rapid growth and development of cricket in Australia. For example, the explosion of metropole-to-colony migration that was constitutive of the British World is mirrored in the migration of individual metropolitan players and coaches to the Australian colonies. Furthermore, the networks established by this British World migration, and the cultural traffic that passed along these networks, were integral to the organisation of these first cricket tours. In turn, the tours themselves served to reinforce and sustain these networks. Indeed, the British World interplay effected by these tours was largely responsible for the success and popularity of cricket in the colony generally, as W.G. would later pronounce: 'I have no doubt that [the 1873–1874 tour] and the subsequent tours made by English teams had a most salutary influence on the development of Australian cricket; as, apart from the experience they gained by playing against the best cricketers we could send out, the vast interest taken in the various matches led to the adoption of cricket as the national game of the Colony'.¹⁵

Furthermore, we can find invocations of that cultural glue of the British World—Britishness—in many statements made by individuals on both sides of the metropole-colony nexus. For example, the first touring

team of 1861–1862 was received in Melbourne by the civil servant George William Rusden, who hailed them ‘first as antagonists, secondly ... as countrymen’.¹⁶ Rusden’s sentiment was echoed later in the tour by the English captain, Stephenson, who said in a speech in Sydney that

English customs and English feelings were firmly implanted here; the same love of manly sport, the same appreciation of fair play existed that prevails in England. ... Everything around us seems so thoroughly English that I could almost imagine we were still home.¹⁷

Likewise, even those who doubted the quality of Australian cricket, as ‘Paul Jones’ writing in the *Australasian* did, had ‘too good an opinion of them as Britons to doubt their pluck and gameness’.¹⁸ Moreover, it was hoped that the success of the tour would also help thicken the British World ties between colony and metropole in a more general sense. The Victorian treasurer, (English-born) William Haines, said he hoped the tourists would communicate to their compatriots back home ‘the great progress [Australia] had made and the inducements there were for persons to settle in this country’.¹⁹ And in a gesture that neatly symbolised not only the Britishness of this transnational British World but also the unidirectional flow of cultural traffic at this time, each member of the touring team was invited to plant a (British) elm tree at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.²⁰

These expressions of pan-Englishness/Britishness did not diminish with the emergence of greater parity between English and Australian cricket. When an Australian Eleven defeated an English Eleven in the first ‘Test match’, Alfred Shaw, a member of the touring English team, later observed: ‘The success of the Australians created immense jubilation in Melbourne and other Colonial centres. ... For the time being the defeated Englishmen and their associates in the Colonies had to be content to eat humble pie—sweetened, it is true, with the thought that it was members of their own race who had offered it—but humble pie all the same’.²¹ Indeed, this victory helped address a fear that had often pervaded colonial discourse in the nineteenth century, which was that the Australian climate would have an enervating effect on the British ‘race’. For example, the Sydney-based *Daily News* hailed the win as a demonstration that ‘the English race is not disintegrating in a distant land’.²² Similarly the *Australasian* reported: ‘The event marks the great improvement which has taken place in Australian cricket ... and the proof which

the victory affords that the physical qualities of the English race show no sign of decline in these sunny southern lands'. In other words, the article continued, the win showed that 'the Englishmen born in Australia do not fall short of the Englishmen born in Surrey or Yorkshire'.²³ Furthermore, from a metropolitan perspective, this growing parity between English and Australian cricket could actually be viewed as testament to the strength of the imperial bond. As Shaw would later opine:

Equality and fraternity between England and her Colonies are now established with a completeness that is at once the astonishment and the envy of the other nations of the world. Let it not be forgotten that cricket has played a most important part in this happy concord, and that the two events which marked its origin were the matches that James Lillywhite and his men played in March and April, A.D. 1877 at Melbourne.²⁴

The 1860s and 1870s were a high-water mark for British race patriotism more generally. The creation of the British World through the mass migration of Britons to the settler colonies had stimulated a good deal of thinking and commentary on the fate of the British race in these far-flung locales. As we have seen, much of this was provoked by fear: fear of the unknown and, particularly, fear that the British race would degenerate in environments far removed from Britain itself. This British race patriotism discourse was promulgated by writers like Seeley and Dilke, who both employed the term 'Greater Britain' to describe this expanded British World. Seeley wrote: 'Those ten millions of Englishmen who live outside of the British Islands ... are of our own blood, and are therefore united with us by the strongest tie'. Dilke also maintained that although the British had been dispersed throughout this Greater Britain, in 'essentials the race was always one'.²⁵ We can see that this British race discourse also permeated through Australian cricket in the 1860s and 1870s.

NOTES

1. Richard Cashman (1998) 'Australia', in Keith A.P. Sandiford and Brian Stoddart (eds.) *The Imperial Game: Cricket, Culture and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 34–35.

2. David Montefiore (1992) *Cricket in the Doldrums: The Struggle Between Private and Public Control of Australian Cricket in the 1880s* (Sydney: Australian Society for Sports History), p. 19.
3. W.F. Mandle (1973) 'Games People Played: Cricket and Football in England and Victoria in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Historical Studies* 15, 60: 519.
4. Mandle, 'Games People Played'; W.F. Mandle, (1976) 'Wills, Thomas Wentworth (1835–1880)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wills-thomas-wentworth-4863/text8125>, published first in hard copy 1976, accessed online 10 September 2015.
5. *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle*, 4 January 1862, p. 3.
6. *Argus*, 16 December 1859, p. 5 (emphasis added).
7. Alf Batchelor (2011–2012) 'A Revised Look at the Spiers and Pond Tour of 1861/62', *The Yorker* 46: pp. 16–23.
8. In fact, the tour was even more of a financial success than originally advertised, with Spiers later admitting that the total profits were actually closer to £19,000 than the £11,000 that was announced at the time—Jim Blair (2011–2012) 'Spiers and Pond in England', *The Yorker* 46: 24. And in a striking instance of colony-to-metropole cultural traffic, Spiers and Pond took their colonial catering experience (and handsome profits from the cricket tour) back to the metropole and established a string of very successful catering enterprises; see Blair, 'Spiers and Pond in England', pp. 24–27.
9. Jack Pollard (1987) *The Formative Years of Australian Cricket, 1803–1893* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson), pp. 112–133.
10. *The Australasian*, 30 March 1872, p. 394.
11. P.F. Warner (1912), *Imperial Cricket* (London: The London and Counties Press Association), p. 270; W.G. Grace (1899), 'W.G.: Cricketing Reminiscences and Personal Recollections' (London: James Bowden), p. 104.
12. Grace, *Cricketing Reminiscences*, p. 105.
13. Pollard, *Formative Years*, p. 175.
14. Pollard, *Formative Years*, ch. 12.
15. Grace, *Cricketing Reminiscences*, pp. 104–105.
16. *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle*, 28 December 1861. This statement was probably particularly true for Rusden, who had emigrated with his family in 1833 at the age of fourteen and probably never stopped thinking of himself as English. In 1882 he retired to England but then in 1893, on health advice, he again made the British World perambulation back to Melbourne, where he resided until his death in 1903. In his obituary he was described thusly—'We don't know any Australian resident so

- distinctively English'. Ann Blainey and Mary Lazarus (1976) 'Rusden, George William (1819–1903)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rusden-george-william-4523/text7405> accessed online 10 September 2015.
17. *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle*, 22 February 1862.
 18. *The Australasian*, 22 June 1872.
 19. *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle*, 28 December 1861, 4 January 1862.
 20. Richard Cashman (2002) *Sport in the National Imagination* (Sydney: Walla Walla Press), pp. 19–20.
 21. A.W. Pullin, (1902) *Alfred Shaw Cricketer: His Career and Reminiscences* (London: Cassell and Company), p. 57.
 22. Pullin, *Alfred Shaw*, p. 190.
 23. *The Australasian*, 24 March 1877, 370. This statement is further complicated by the fact that six of the eleven All Australia team members were, in fact, born in England—Pollard, *Formative Years*, 186.
 24. Pullin, *Alfred Shaw*, 61.
 25. John Robert Seeley (2005; first published 1883) *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (New York: Cosimo), p. 11; Charles Dilke (1869) *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries in 1866–1867* (London: Macmillan), preface. See also, Duncan Bell (2007) *The Idea of Greater Britain* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press).

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