

**'A FAR GREATER GAME':
SPORT AND THE ANGLO-BOER WAR**

Dean Colin Allen



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Sport Science at Stellenbosch University**

Study Leader: Dr. F.J.G. van der Merwe

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date:

ABSTRACT

Today white South Africans take their sport very seriously and at the turn of the nineteenth century this was no different. The key difference however was that a war had erupted between the two Boer Republics (Orange Free State and the Transvaal) and Britain. The Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 was fought for the supremacy of South Africa at a time when sport was still developing within the country and like other facets of its culture, it too became entwined within a conflict that was to effect the whole future of Southern Africa.

This socio-historical study is an attempt to explore sport during this era and how it impinged upon the relationship between Boer and Briton. A pivotal period in South African history, the account will trace the background and nature of the Anglo-Boer conflict and how a passion for sport was shared by both sides throughout and beyond the hostilities. Britain had indeed introduced its sporting codes to South Africa prior to the war and cricket and rugby in particular were already established within its towns and cities. The origins of both sports will be examined here including the significance of the first tours which took place between South Africa and Britain during this time.

The majority of research for this study has been completed in South Africa, predominately within the Western Cape but also during spells in the Free State and Gauteng. Visits have also been made to various sources in the UK including Twickenham and Lords. Whilst published work has been used, concerted efforts have been made throughout to include data obtained from primary sources. The descriptive nature of the work has also necessitated the employment of qualitative methods of analysis with data gathered from archive and literary sources selectively underpinned with information from a number of interviews.

OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrikaanse Blankes is vandag baie ernstig oor hul sport en aan die einde van die negentiende eeu was dit ook nie anders nie. Die belangrikste verskil was egter dat 'n oorlog uitbreek het tussen die Boererepublieke (Oranje-Vrystaat en die Transvaal) en Brittanje. Die Anglo-Boereoorlog van 1899-1902 is geveg vir die oppergesag van Suid-Afrika toe sport, net soos baie ander fasette van die kultuur, steeds besig was om te ontwikkel in die land. Dit het deel geword van 'n konflik wat die hele toekoms van Suidelike Afrika sou raak.

Hierdie sosio-kulturele studie is 'n poging om sport tydens hierdie era te verken en hoe dit die verhouding tussen Boer en Brit beïnvloed het. Hierdie was 'n deurslaggewende periode in die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis en die studie sal die agtergrond en aard van die Anglo-Boerekonflik navors en toon hoe 'n passie vir sport gedeel is deur beide partye ten spyte van al die vyandigheid. Brittanje het inderdaad voor die oorlog sy sportkodes na Suid-Afrika gebring en veral krieket en rugby was alreeds gevestig in die stede. Die oorsprong van beide sportsoorte sal hier bestudeer word, insluitend hoe belangrik die eerste toere was wat in hierdie tyd tussen Suid-Afrika en Brittanje plaasgevind het.

Die meeste navorsing vir hierdie studie is in Suid-Afrika gedoen, hoofsaaklik in die Wes-Kaap, maar ook, met tye, in die Vrystaat en Gauteng. Besoeke is ook afgelê in verskeie plekke in die Verenigde Koninkryke, bv. Twickenham en Lords. Terwyl van sekondêre bronne gebruik gemaak is, is daar deurgaans nougeset te werk gegaan om primêre bronne te ontsluit. Die beskrywende aard van die werk het ook die gebruik van kwalitatiewe metode van analise van data genoodsaak. Hierdie data is versamel vanuit argivale en literêre bronne wat goed ondersteun is deur inligting verkry uit 'n aantal onderhoude.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction – Sport and War

Even today, for those arriving in South Africa there is a sense that history is still unfolding for the new 'Rainbow Nation'. Yet as we concern ourselves with the contemporary relations of black and white within the country, one hundred years ago a war raged that was the pinnacle of a dispute in the troubled relations between two white races – the Afrikaner and the British. Marked by its centenary in 1999, the Boer War represents a topical, yet highly significant phase in South African history and as such, has been the focus of much socio-historic analysis during recent years. This study will nevertheless endeavour to explore the very nature of the Anglo-Boer conflict; the antagonisms it created, and crucially, the role that sport played during this unique period of history.

Most 19th Century Afrikaners were indeed men of the veld, their sporting activities confined largely to riding and shooting – skills that made them such formidable enemies against the British. English-speaking South Africans, on the other hand, tended to organise themselves in clubs: A habit given impetus by the soldiers who came to fight Queen Victoria's wars in South Africa. Some of the clubs were formed for a single sport: cricket, rugby, soccer, tennis, cycling. Others, like the Wanderers in Johannesburg, and Collegians in Pietermaritzburg, were multi-purpose, with vastly superior facilities.¹ In sport, as in other areas of life, these two diametrically opposed societies could not have been more different.

'The White Tribe'

"While Africans migrated south into present day South Africa some two thousand years ago and the Dutch began to settle in and around Cape Town from 1652, it was only with the arrival of permanent British control supported by the weight of British Imperial power in 1806 that economic, cultural and political power began to spread throughout the region".² The British felt themselves to be superior culturally, economically as well as politically when compared to other groups of people and this led to a promotion of things British, including sport, in the new regions of the Empire. This naturally alienated the rural Afrikaners, who, despite their own European origins were now as much a part of South Africa as the other 'tribes' that inhabited this vast and varied land.

When Britain attempted to incorporate all the territories of Southern Africa in a federal system in the 1870s, it simply assumed that Afrikaners would assimilate to the British way of

¹ Reader's Digest, *South Africa's Yesterdays*, 1981, p. 233.

² D.R. Black & J. Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation*, 1998, p.22.

life, but British Imperialism and hegemony alienated the Afrikaner intelligentsia in the Cape.³ Cape Afrikaners began to mobilise along cultural lines. Led by Stephanus du Toit, a Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, they formed *Die Genootskap van regte Afrikaners* (the Fellowship of True Afrikaners). It was, according to Booth,⁴ Du Toit who was the first person to articulate the notion of Afrikaners as a ‘Chosen People’ and who first compared the Afrikaner with other covenanted races. A concept readily adopted by President Paul Kruger at the turn of the century, this view clashed with the Imperial ethos of a Britain intent on securing its capitalist interests throughout South Africa. Backed by sentiment from within both the media and literature, Chapter Four of this study will investigate Britain’s struggle with the Boers for the supremacy of Southern Africa and the forces which sustained this rivalry.

Allied to this, Afrikaner nationalism was greatly strengthened by the events of the Anglo-Boer War and by the struggle to preserve the Afrikaans culture and identity in the face of aggressive policies of Anglicisation. “It took a century of wrong” according to De Villiers and the “deaths in the British concentrations camps” to construct an Afrikaner nationalism that lasted.⁵ Though some feared that the Afrikaners were doomed to extinction, others expressed the belief that out of the ashes of defeat a new people would rise.⁶ As Chapter Three reveals, the latter proved to be the case as it investigates the effects of the war and its aftermath as crucial factors in the development of sport during this period.

The Value of Sport

When war was declared in October 1899, it did not signify an end to sport in South Africa. Indeed as Chapter Five reveals, sport continued to be played extensively by both the British and the Boers throughout the war. An investigation of military sport exposes its value to both sides during the conflict and highlights cases where sport even crossed the conventional boundaries of politics and warfare. British forms of sport had of course already been established within South Africa by the late 1800s so it is no surprise that cricket and rugby were popular in the towns and cities when war broke out. Both games represented a discernible link to the British empire and reinforced key elements of a middle-class, Anglophile culture shared by many within the colonial executive of South Africa.⁷

³ D. Booth, *The Race Game*, 1998, p. 28.

⁴ D. Booth, *The Race Game*, 1998, p. 29.

⁵ M. de Villiers, *White Tribe Dreaming*, 1987, p. 354.

⁶ H. Adam & H. Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power*, 1979, p. 103.

⁷ D. Adair et al., *Sporting Manhood in Australia, Test Cricket, Rugby Football, and the Imperial Connection, 1878-1918*, 1997.

Cricket is perhaps *the* quintessential English game evoking images of green fields and dreaming spires. “No other game”, writes Hughes, “captures the peace and tranquillity of an English summer afternoon quite like cricket”.⁸ The game speaks much of the English and the countries their empire has spawned. Just as cricket speaks of England at peace, so too, perhaps because of Newbolt’s much quoted *Vitai Lampada*, it is bound up with England and the way she sees herself at war. It is not strange then that when war descended upon England and her colonies, cricketers rallied and were rallied to the ranks. And wherever the fight took them, cricket went too. The Duke of Wellington watched his guards playing cricket at Enghien a few days before Waterloo and on the day after the battle of Chernaya in the Crimea there was a match between the Guards division and the ‘Leg of Mutton Club’, a team of officers from other regiments.⁹

With the game already established in the colonies of Southern Africa, an intended tour to England during 1900 by a South African team was cancelled as a result of the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War.¹⁰ Underestimating their opponents in the war and believing that the conflict would soon be won, the English cricket authorities requested that the tour be undertaken instead during 1901. Of course the war dragged on but the predominantly *Uitlander*¹¹ team did go, leaving Cape Town on what was to prove a testing, if somewhat ground-breaking tour. Chapter Six will investigate the background to this tour, the controversy it created and the whole ethos of South African cricket during this time of war.

As a major part of South Africa’s heritage, the history of rugby football has also received detailed attention from those seeking to explore the intricacies of the game. Greyvenstein wrote during the early 1980s how “more than ninety years of triumph and defeat, achievement and humiliation, have gone into the forging of a tradition of which the Springbok jersey is the symbol”.¹² The tradition and past of which he talks owes much to those early days of the 1900s. The days when South Africa emerged from the destruction of war to build again in life as in sport.

⁸ G. Hughes, *The Veil of War*, 1989, p. 14.

⁹ G. Hughes, *The Veil of War*, 1989, p. 14.

¹⁰ *The Times*, 5 March 1900, p. 12.

¹¹ Literally an ‘outlander’ or foreigner, this was the name given to those (mainly British) immigrants who flocked to the Transvaal after the discovery of the Witwatersrand gold-fields in 1886. C.C. Saunders (Ed.), *An illustrated dictionary of South African history*, 1994, p. 243.

¹² C. Greyvenstein, *Springbok Saga*, 1981, p. 5.

Former South African Rugby Board President A.J. (“Sport”) Pienaar once reflected that rugby was the “greatest cementing influence between the Afrikaans and English-speaking sections in the country”.¹³ When Mark Morrison brought the British Isles team out again in 1903, barely a year after the war had ended, it was, according to rugby historian Paul Dobson, as “a tour of reconciliation”. This was, he added, “rugby’s contribution to healing the sad and painful wounds of the Anglo-Boer War”.¹⁴ The penultimate chapter will explore the significance of these early pioneering tours as well as the effect the conflict had on Anglo-Boer rugby relations. Significantly, the post-war tours of 1903 and 1906, the year of the first overseas rugby Springboks, will be examined as early examples of sport being used in South Africa to reconcile a divided society. Finally, Chapter Eight will provide a brief conclusion for this work.

Before these areas can be tackled however, Chapter Two will first deal with the methodological techniques used to gather and analyse the research information and data used in this study. Why such methods were employed and the success, or otherwise, of the research methods used.

¹³ Quoted in A.C. Parker, *The Springboks 1891-1970*, 1970, p. 5. Pienaar was President of the South African Rugby Board between 1927 and 1953.

¹⁴ P. Dobson, *Bishops Rugby. A History*, 1990, p. 44.

CHAPTER TWO

Research Issues and Methodology

Problem

When devising this research I was faced with the dilemma that the analysis of sport during this tumultuous time in South African history may be construed as incongruous. Whilst sport has undoubtedly been a large part of popular culture, it could be argued from another perspective that it has no real bearing on the political and economic 'substance' of life. Douglas Booth however, along with other academics, have come to recognise that sport does indeed form an important part of South Africa's psyche and as such cannot be separated from the bigger issues that have shaped the country during the past century.¹ In terms of my own research, Sammons supports this view when he says:

Sports history should be no more or no less than any other type of history. The same methods, the same standards, and the same dispassionate objectivity must be practised ... above all else the sports historian must realise the necessity of viewing sports in terms of the underlying social developments which helped to produce them or they in turn helped to produce.²

With this in mind and inspired by a genuine interest in South Africa and its heritage, the aim of this study has been to explore the processes and events that shaped South African sport during one of the most crucial periods in its history. The Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 represented the apogee of a dissension that existed between the country's two major white factions. Yet it was also an era from which South African sport would ultimately evolve.

Within *The South African Game*, Archer and Bouillon explored not only issues of race, but those relating to character, culture and interaction between the English and Afrikaans-speaking components of the white population group.³ This study aims to develop this theme by focussing on developments in relation to sport during the turn of the nineteenth century. But in order to achieve this, first there were a number of research issues and methodological concerns that had to be addressed. This chapter will deal with how this was done.

Methodology

The present-day sociologist interested in attitudes is indeed well equipped to investigate his subject. He needs only a tape recorder and an entrée into the realms of his subjects, and he can gather invaluable source material for the future historian. The task of a socio-historian

¹ Amongst others see R. Archer & A. Bouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism*, 1982 and D. Booth, *The Race Game – Sport and Politics in South Africa*, 1998.

² J.A. Sammons, 'Sports History? Why? What? How? Methodological suggestions for research, writing and teaching in the South African context', 1984, p. 21.

³ R. Archer & A. Bouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism*, 1982.

researching a study such as this however, is not so easy. Often relying for evidence upon the impressionistic printed word within newspapers, journals or other such sources, it is often uncertain just whose opinion is being recorded. What results is therefore subject to the limitations of the source material and methodology.

By its very nature then, this study has pursued forms of inquiry that may be termed qualitative, subjective, even 'humanistic'. Information has been obtained using 'unstructured' forms of data collection rather than quantitative measurement and statistical analysis.⁴ Lincoln and Guba propose another description of this approach; one that they term 'naturalistic'.⁵ Salient to this concept is that, first, no manipulation on the part of the inquirer is implied, and second, the inquirer does not impose pre-conceived ideas upon the outcome. There are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically. True, each inquiry raises more questions than answers but what it achieves, and what the aim of this work has been to achieve, is a heightened level of understanding. This study sets out, not to provide definitive theories on South African sport or Anglo-Boer relations, but rather to increase awareness and provide understanding of the processes that were at work during this crucial period in the country's history.

The defining feature of 'naturalistic research', according to Blumer,⁶ is that it respects the nature of the social world. It encompasses flexible data-collection strategies in which decisions about what data to collect and how are made over the course of the research as well as the construction and continued re-construction of a model of the process under study. This approach ideally suited this work. Naturalistic inquiry is also carried out, logically enough, in a natural setting, since context is so heavily implicated in meaning. The vast majority of data employed in this work was gathered in South Africa from sources of both Afrikaans and English origin.

Qualitative data, in the form of words rather than numbers, have always been the staple of certain social sciences, notably anthropology, history and political science. So when probing attitudes and examining events during this period in South African history, qualitative, rather than quantitative data, was found to be implicitly more relevant to this work. According to Miles and Huberman :

⁴ M. Hammersley, *The Dilemma of Qualitative Method*, 1989, p. 1.

⁵ Y.S. Lincoln & E.G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 1985, p. 7.

⁶ For an example see H. Blumer, *An Appraisal of Thomas and Zwanecki's 'The Polish Peasant in Europe and America'*, 1979, pp.155-156.

Qualitative data are attractive. They are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, access local causality, and derive fruitful explanations.⁷

Lincoln and Guba view qualitative methods as being “more sensitive to and adaptable to the many mutually shaping influences and value patterns that may be encountered”.⁸ It was these values and influences that this work, amongst other things, strove to examine. Of particular interest was the historical relationship between Briton and Boer and the effect that war and its aftermath had on sport within the country. To achieve this, qualitative methods were used that were appropriate to humanistic inquiry, amongst others, document analysis, observation and selective interviews.

The Use of Interviews

As qualitative information is presented in words rather than in numbers, the ideal medium used to collect data would appear to be the interview. However, the use of interviews within historical study such as this, is limited and does of course bring with it its own set of dilemmas. Because much of the subject matter dates back one hundred years, both the question asked and those chosen to be interviewed, all had to be carefully considered if the process was to add value and not detract from the study.

Chapter three in fact contains extracts from interviews conducted for a related study during January 2000. Whilst the focus of this current work is a little different, the responses relating to Anglo-Boer relations are relevant for use again here. Chapters five and six however contain information obtained from the two interviews conducted solely for this study. They feature the close relatives of key personalities who were involved directly within the context of sport and war a century ago. One, the grand daughter of a Boer prisoner who had played cricket for the English, the other, the son of an Irishman who represented South Africa at rugby during 1902 and was vice captain during the historic 1906 tour. It was felt that these were justified additions that would add a human, less theoretical dimension to the study.

Whilst the interviews afforded a valuable insight, it was important to remain aware of the question of validity. Qualitative methods are indeed criticised for the way in which its research can appeal to a few, telling examples of some apparent phenomenon, without any

⁷ M.B. Miles & A.M. Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 1984, p. 15.

⁸ Y.S. Lincoln & E.G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 1985, p. 40.

attempt to analyse less clear (or even contradictory) data.⁹ This problem is expressed very clearly by Bryman:

There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews ... are used to provide evidence of a particular contention. There are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness or generality of these fragments is rarely addressed.¹⁰

With this in mind, an element of purposive sampling was employed for the interviews. The purpose, according to Lincoln and Guba, is to “define a sample that is in some sense *representative* of a population to which it is desired to generalise”.¹¹ The sample I had used previously were Afrikaners of varying ages and backgrounds who resided in the Cape Town or Stellenbosch area. Because of time constraints and the size of the population the interviewees were selected through the use of snowballing – involving the “use of personal contacts to build up a sample of the group to be studied”.¹² This method proved fruitful and through contacts made during my previous visits to South Africa, interviews were successfully arranged with nine Afrikaans citizens, who represented academic and political backgrounds as well as sport.

For this current study however the interviews were a result of an appeal within the South African press. It had been suggested that because of the historical nature of this research and it coinciding with the centenary of the Anglo-Boer War, a request for information might prove beneficial. As a result, a letter (which can be seen on page 120 of this study) was submitted to both local and national newspapers across the country.¹³ This resulted in a tremendous response that yielded not only the interviews but also countless new leads for information. This type of appeal is, I admit, open to chance, but given the lack of response from the same request back in the UK,¹⁴ it is, I would like to think, a measure of the acknowledgement I received as a researcher throughout my time in South Africa.

⁹ D. Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, 2000, p. 10.

¹⁰ A. Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, 1988, p. 77.

¹¹ Y.S. Lincoln & E.G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 1985, p. 200.

¹² M. Haralambros & M. Holborn, *Sociology: Theme and Perspectives*, 1995, p. 832.

¹³ The letter was carried in both Afrikaans and English periodicals, including *Die Burger*; *Cape Argus*, *Cape Times*, *Beeld* and *The Star*.

¹⁴ An identical letter was submitted to both local and national press in the UK during June 2001. The letter hardly featured in any of the publications and when it did, it yielded just one response!

My previous interviews had all been semi-structured. In other words, where the questions are normally specified, but the interviewer is free to probe beyond the answers.¹⁵ For this purpose, the questions were all open-ended and for the sake of comparison and conformity, the interviews were all based upon the same standard questions.¹⁶ For this study, without the same need for conformity, both interviews were unstructured. “Authenticity, rather than reliability is often the issue in qualitative research” states David Silverman and for these dialogues this was indeed the case.¹⁷ The full transcripts of both interviews can be seen on pages 118 and 119 of this study.

Documentary Evidence

Despite the benefits of the data obtained from the interviews, the historical nature of this work naturally meant that the majority of information employed was gathered from documentary sources. Having reached its centenary recently, the events surrounding the Anglo-Boer War and the emergence of South African sport thereafter, made literature and document examination the only practical method of exploring the subject. Concerned primarily with the processes through which these texts depict ‘reality’, their use however should be tempered with an element of caution. As Atkinson and Coffey put it:

We should not use documentary sources as surrogates for other kinds of data. We cannot, for instance, learn through records alone how an organisation actually operates day-by-day. Equally, we cannot treat records – however ‘official’ – as firm evidence of what they report ... that strong reservation does not mean that we should ignore or downgrade documentary data. On the contrary, our recognition of their existence as social facts alerts us to the necessity to treat them very seriously indeed. We have to approach them for what they are and what they are used to accomplish.¹⁸

With this in mind as well as published books, journals and conference papers, information for this study was predominantly gathered from primary sources, such as newspapers (both South African and British), annual reports, official guides and notably, a selection of private and public letters written by key cultural and political figures of the period. The minutes of both the English Rugby Football Union and the South African Rugby Football Board as well as the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) were especially useful in recreating the climate of discourse during this particular period in history.

¹⁵ T. May, *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*, 1993, p. 93.

¹⁶ A copy of the questions as well as the proformas, transcripts and observations made are located within D.C. Allen, *Beating Them At Their Own Game*, 2000, unpublished BSc (Hons) Paper. Stellenbosch University Library, South Africa.

¹⁷ D. Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 2001, p. 13.

¹⁸ P. Atkinson & A. Coffey, ‘Analysing documentary realities’, in D. Silverman (ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, 1997, p. 47.

The information was obtained from the following sources in South Africa: Stellenbosch University, Cape Town University and the National Library of South Africa, Cape Town; Paul Kruger House and Voortrekker Monument Museums, Pretoria; South African Cultural History Museum, Cape Town and the South African Rugby Football Union, Newlands, Cape Town. A research trip to the Northern Cape and Free State proved particularly useful and included spells at the Anglo-Boer War Museum in Bloemfontein as well as the McGregor Museum and Africana Library in Kimberley. Supplementary data was also gathered from the following sources in the United Kingdom: The English RFU Library, Twickenham; the MCC Library, Lords Cricket Ground; the British National Museum Newspaper Library, Colindale; Somerset and Avon County Libraries; and University College Cardiff.

A motivation behind the research was the scarcity of literature actively linking the different themes covered by this study. Whilst there has been an abundance written about the Anglo-Boer War, few apart from Van der Merwe have attempted to forge a link between the war and its effect on sport in South Africa.¹⁹ Even more so, the essential nature of the antagonisms that existed between the British and Afrikaner during this time needed to be investigated if the findings of this particular work were to be complete. With this in mind, primary data became a necessity.

Allied to this, because of the problems concerning reliable secondary information, the study of sports history demands more than the usual oral history sources.²⁰ Sammons makes a relevant point when he says:

Sports history is not or should not be written by sports writers. Unfortunately, much of the material which passes for sports history suffers from these very transgressions. Far too often, those who have written on the subject have been professional sports writers or athletes assisted by ghost writers (often sports writers). The results have been, in most cases, hero-worshipping biographies, inspirational autobiographies, self-serving exposés, or pictorial magazines in hardback. In these works one often finds shallowness, distortions, and myth perpetration and perpetuation.²¹

¹⁹ See F.J.G. van der Merwe, 'Sport and Games in Boer Prisoner of War Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902', 1992, and F.J.G. van der Merwe, 'Rugby in the Prisoner of War Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902', 1998.

²⁰ J.A. Sammons, 'Sports History? Why? What? How? Methodological suggestions for research, writing and teaching in the South African context', 1984, p. 24.

²¹ J.A. Sammons, 'Sports History? Why? What? How? Methodological suggestions for research, writing and teaching in the South African context', 1984, p. 18.

It has been my aim here to delve deeper than this by explaining the processes and events that were shaping South African sport during the Boer War era. In order to achieve this then, the only practical method has been literature and document examination. However, whilst this has provided valuable sources of information, one should recognise the limitations of using secondary literature and document evidence:

All secondary sources to a greater or lesser extent suffer from the problem that they have been collected for other purposes, they may not include the information that is needed and they may have their own biases and inaccuracies.²²

In an attempt to counter this, a range of primary sources was utilised in conjunction with relevant secondary information then supplemented where necessary by data yielded from the interviews. So despite the problems involved in researching a comparatively original area, the research processes employed during the course of this study nevertheless appear to be the most appropriate for the project's subject. Having accumulated all this information, the most difficult dilemma remained: How could I justify not including all of my data? Perhaps Strauss and Corbin provide the answer when they say that "part of an increasing maturity as a research-writer is to understand that no manuscript is ever finished!"²³

Additional Concerns

A few aspects of this study call for specific comment. The first involves translation. On occasion, it was found necessary to use quotations from original pieces written in Afrikaans. Whilst accepting the possibility that the nuance or subtlety of a quote or phrase may be lost in translation, I have attempted for the sake of fluency to convey, in English, an accurate representation of the original.

The study's use of the words 'Afrikaans' and 'Afrikaner' also need explanation. In South African historiography 'Afrikaner' commonly refers to Afrikaans-speaking whites in general. Employed in this way however, the term 'Afrikaner' obscures the constructed nature of Afrikaner nationalism, and perpetuates the myth of a monolithic Afrikaner tribe or nation. This study has used 'Afrikaner' in a historically specific sense, to indicate those Afrikaans speakers who came to see themselves as belonging to the racially and linguistically exclusive imagined community of Afrikanerdom. References to the 'Boers' and the 'Dutch' are also

²² A. Dunsmuir & L. Williams, *How to do Social Research*, 1991, p. 43.

²³ A. Strauss & J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 1990, p. 235. Also see H. Wolcott, *Writing up Qualitative Data*, 1990, p. 35.

used to represent this same group of people. The 'Boers' (or 'farmers') as they were commonly known at the time, were the majority of Afrikaners who were of rural existence, whilst reference to the 'Dutch' in the study's work on the late nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century, acknowledges the predominant ancestral background of the majority of Afrikaners.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that academics and historians alike have referred to the 1899-1902 conflict using a variety of terms.²⁴ These include the Boer War, the Anglo-Boer War and the South African War. For the sake of fluency a combination of these names have been employed throughout this study and their use should not be viewed in any symbolic or reactionary sense.

²⁴ See B. Johnson Baker, *A Concise Dictionary of the Boer War*, 1999, p. 8.

CHAPTER THREE

War and the Shaping of a Nation

The Boer War was other than most wars. It was a vast tragedy in the life of a people, whose human interest far surpassed its military value. It was an epic struggle between the smallest and the greatest of peoples.

General Jan Smuts, 1929.¹

The Anglo-Boer War, which broke out in 1899 was an expensive venture for British Imperialism. Four hundred and fifty thousand troops were sent to South Africa, of whom over twenty thousand lost their lives.² It cost the British taxpayers two hundred and fifty million pounds to secure the interests of the mining magnates in a land where the entire white population of the Transvaal in 1899 for example, was much less than the population of Sheffield at that time.³ Subsequently, to many at home, the significance of such a small nation was largely irrelevant to the good of the Empire.

However, British prestige was about to suffer incalculable damage; for the war was fought with the utmost barbarity. Boer women and children were confined in concentration camps, their homes and farms destroyed, before they could be brought to surrender; while the gallantry and guerrilla strategy of the Afrikaners - a small nation defying the world's great imperial power in defence of their independence - won them admiration and support from around the world.

Regarded now as crucial in the historical development of South Africa, the war at the time, was the ultimate frustration for the Afrikaners. The nineteenth century had proved to be a period of sparring, of jockeying for position between the British and Boer and a time when the Cape had been abandoned to imperial control with hardly a struggle. Now the Afrikaners had been chastised on their own home soil, and they could see nowhere else to go. However what the war achieved, as this chapter will reveal, was a singleness of purpose in Afrikaner thinking. A Boer unity developed that not only deepened the division between Briton and Afrikaner, it was a unity that would ultimately lead to the dominance of Afrikaner views on race, society and politics throughout South Africa.

For an investigation of sport during this period as well as the relationship between Briton and Boer, it is important that we first examine the background to the conflict, as well as the nature of the war itself and its aftermath. Armed with this understanding, subsequent chapters of this

¹ Quoted in D. Reitz, *Commando: A Boer Journal of the Boer War*, 1929, p.5. Both Jan Smuts and Deneys Reitz fought in the campaign for the Republics.

² A. Lerumo, *Fifty Fighting Years*, 1971.

³ H. Meysey-Thompson, *The Transvaal Crisis*, 1899. The white population of the Transvaal in 1899 was recorded as 288 750, compared to Sheffield's population of 324 243.

study will then explore how sport survived and even evolved from the debris of this bitter three-year conflict.

Mistrust, Misunderstanding and Gold!

There already existed a deep mistrust of the British by the Boers by the time gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand in 1886. However, the discovery of such mineral wealth in the region, would ultimately cost the Afrikaner Republics far more than anyone could have imagined.

As a result of the goldrush, *Uitlanders* (foreigners) poured into the Transvaal. Kruger's Republic was being overrun, every Afrikaner susceptibility ignored. Cecil Rhodes, the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, did little to appease the situation and with intentions of imperial domination throughout South Africa launched the 'Jameson Raid' in 1895 – a failed attempt to provoke a general uprising of the *Uitlanders* against the Afrikaners. To President Kruger and his Boers it only underlined what they had already known all the time, that the British could never be trusted. Sure enough, following the failure of protracted negotiations between Pretoria and London regarding the rights of the *Uitlanders*, the Boers declared war against Britain on 10th October 1899.⁴

The Boers, as Harrison points out, had fallen into the trap of presenting themselves as the aggressors.⁵ Kruger's Republic had entered into a war in which it had everything to lose by fighting, purely because it sensed and deeply mistrusted British intentions. The perceived spread of British Imperialism and the subsequent fear of losing internal independence had provoked a response from the Afrikaners in the form of a narrow and assertive nationalism.⁶ For the Boers they had no option but to take up arms and defend what they saw as rightfully theirs.

Analysts such as De Villiers suggest however that confrontation could and should have been averted.⁷ The personalities of influential British politicians and their lack of understanding of the Afrikaner and his situation were key factors prior to the outbreak of hostilities. "War could have been avoided" suggests De Villiers "had not the Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain, been prone to the jingoism of his time and had he not chosen the chilly personality of Alfred

⁴ D. Harrison, *The White Tribe of Africa*, 1981, p.24.

⁵ D. Harrison, *The White Tribe of Africa*, 1981, p.24.

⁶ See I. R. Smith, *The Origins of the South African War, 1899-1902*, 1996.

⁷ M. de Villiers, *White Tribe Dreaming*, 1987, p. 203.

Milner for his South African representative”.⁸ For Milner, the test for South Africanism was loyalty to the British Empire. For such a man to conduct delicate negotiations with a ruler like Kruger, who was intimately connected with the central myths of a majority of his people, meant almost certain failure. In 1902, Kruger himself revealingly wrote: “Lord Milner is the typical jingo, autocratic beyond endurance and filled with contempt for all that is not English”.⁹

South Africa, to many imperialists like Milner remained the ‘Cinderella of the Colonies’. It was a primitive country, a difficult country to administer, one where Downing Street found its population, particularly the Boers, awkward people to manage. To Britons like Meysey-Thompson England had already made enormous sacrifices necessary to bring South Africa into a condition of civilisation fit for the occupation of her subjects and in doing so, had received little gratitude from the indigenous population:

The unfortunate thing is, that by persons in the conditions of civilisation and mental development of the Boers, our forbearance is absolutely misunderstood.¹⁰

Yet significantly the Boers were not the only party capable of misunderstanding. Markham for one, typifies the conceited view of many pro-imperialists at the time when commenting that

the farmer Boers are in many cases kindly, hospitable men, but the treachery and deceit prevalent among many of their leaders is a painful fact. Their narrow experience has moved them to mistrust all but their own pastoral patriarchal way.¹¹

Markham goes on to conclude that

the Briton makes for progress; the Boer, left alone, would relapse into savagery. Therefore we say, and say rightly, that the Briton must rule the land.¹²

⁸ M. de Villiers, *White Tribe Dreaming*, 1987, p.203.

⁹ S. J. P. Kruger, *The Memoirs of Paul Kruger*, 1902, p.290.

¹⁰ H. Meysey-Thompson, *The Transvaal Crisis*, 1899, p.6.

¹¹ V. R. Markham, *South Africa Past and Present*, 1900, p.202.

¹² V. R. Markham, *South Africa Past and Present*, 1900, p.202.

Significantly Milner, and those loyal to the Empire had never really understood two hundred years of Afrikaner retreat and withdrawal and the extent to which they were bound by ties of blood to the land they now inhabited. Unlike the British whose community relations were based upon rigid and antagonistic class divisions, the Boers operated within a communal economy that saw the land as central to their identity.¹³ The British, in the heyday of the Empire, foregrounded commercial interests and had, therefore, no direct link, materially or metaphorically, to the land. In addition, they never understood the Afrikaner's "sacred" history or how group identity and solidarity in the face of outside pressure, had become part of their soul.¹⁴

Nevertheless evidence suggests that there was some support for the Boer cause amongst elements of the British Press. During negotiations and the early stages of the campaign, the *Daily Chronicle* for example, promoted peace by "supporting the Boer side against the diplomacy of Mr. Chamberlain".¹⁵ Some politicians too, could see no avowable reason for war. Mr. H.J. Wilson, MP for Holmfirth questioned at the time:

Why could we not trust to the methods which had won the British Empire her freedom, instead of going back to the old barbaric methods of brute force?¹⁶

Within a speech to party delegates at Maidstone on 4th October 1899, Liberal leader Campbell-Bannerman also proclaimed that

the cardinal principle of good government in South Africa is the maintenance of the best feelings between the Dutch and the English elements. The results of a war between these two elements must be so grave that they gave strength to the appeal to the governments in London, in Cape Town and in Pretoria to avert so dire calamity brought about on grounds so wholly insufficient.¹⁷

The grounds for conflict however, appeared to many, as supporting the interests of the capitalists who had sensed a build-up of tension in the region to forward their own particular cause.

¹³ J. de Reuck, 'A politics of blood: The 'white tribe' of Africa and the recombinant nationalism of a colonising indigene'. *Critical Arts*, 10 (2), 1996, p.140.

¹⁴ M. de Villiers, *White Tribe Dreaming*, 1987, p.204.

¹⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 19, 1911, p.560.

¹⁶ *Daily Chronicle*, 7 October 1899, p.7.

¹⁷ *Daily Chronicle*, 7 October 1899, p.7.

Certainly a feature of this troubled relationship, was the stubborn uncompromising spirit displayed by each nation toward the other.¹⁸ “Two such antagonistic civilisations as that of Boer and Briton cannot exist side by side without continual conflict” remarked one commentator.¹⁹ “Neither the blunders of diplomacy, nor the gold-fields, nor Chamberlain, nor Kruger, can be said to play the chief parts in this drama; but the unchangeable antagonism of two forms of civilisation”.²⁰ For Britain, her imperialist agenda had been obstructed by a small, yet determined nation who were not prepared to step aside. “War and confrontation has always been one of the great striving lines of the Afrikaner” De Beer remarked recently.²¹ Certainly as the dawn of the twentieth century beckoned, and up against the might of the British Empire, Kruger and his people were not about to shirk from their biggest confrontation to date.

The Fight for Existence

In war, as in peace, the two nations behaved in stark contrast. Against the trained British military force there stood a ‘people’s army’ of farmers, clerks, schoolmasters and students.²² As the war progressed, the Boers formed naturally into small commandos, which were mobile, swift-moving, independent and could blend into the civilian population at will. The British, on the other hand, advanced across the veld in serried rank, waiting for set-piece battles that rarely happened, becoming increasingly demoralised by an enemy that killed without being seen.²³ The British soldiers, who, may not have understood or cared for the high-minded principles of Imperialism for which they fought, were thrust up against determined and desperate Afrikaners, who were indeed fighting for their land and for their existence.²⁴

Early Republican triumphs were met by the inexorable sweep of the Imperial armies whose superior numbers and military might eventually began to tell against the stubborn resistance

¹⁸ Interestingly, Robert Morrell views the conflict as a reflection of an aggressive masculinity inherent to both sides (R. Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, 2001, p.12).

¹⁹ J. G. Roberts, *The South African War or the irrepressible conflict between Boer and Briton*, 1902, p.20.

²⁰ J. G. Roberts, *The South African War or the irrepressible conflict between Boer and Briton*, 1902, p.16.

²¹ N. de Beer, Private interview, Stellenbosch, 19 January 2000.

²² J. H. Picard, ‘Col. F. F. Pienaar’s Boer War Diary’. *Militaria*, 23 (3), 1993, p.22.

²³ See T. Pakenham, *The Boer war*, 1979, for an authoritative account of the nature of the conflict.

²⁴ Price argues that the ethos of imperialism which surrounded the Anglo-Boer War had little impact on Britain’s working class. See R. Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*, 1972, p.241. For an understanding of the contrast between the opposing forces see M. F. Marix Evans, *Encyclopaedia of the Boer War*, 2000, p.33. The innate purpose of the Afrikaner struggle is highlighted in an address by Commandant General Louis Botha to the Burghers at Ermelo, 15 March, 1901: “(We) have fought heavily, but how can it be otherwise, when the existence of our nation is unlawfully threatened? The blood and tears that this war has cost has been hard, but giving up our country will be doubly hard”. Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, Enclosure No.3, April 1901.

of the Boers. Despite this reverse the conflict was set to continue however through a gallant but ultimately futile Boer campaign of guerrilla warfare. Ominously it was against this that Britain was to employ a new set of tactics; tactics that would “cause scars where they were hardest to heal, on the bruised psyche of a whole people”.²⁵

Kitchener, the British military commander, proposed to terrorise the republican forces into surrender. In his opinion, the Boers were “uncivilised Afrikaner savages” who needed to be dealt with by the utmost severity.²⁶ He mandated ‘camps of concentration’ for the families of men still on commando, to encourage Boers to surrender. The concentration camps proved disastrous. Largely from incompetence, thousands of women and children died. When the war ended in May 1902, just over three thousand Boer troops had died in battle.²⁷ By astounding contrast, according to British sources, eighteen thousand women and children died in the camps, though the Boers claim the figure was nearer twenty six thousand dead.²⁸

In London, Lloyd George accused the British government of pursuing “a policy of extermination” whilst condemnation of their revised strategy began to flood in from around the world.²⁹ The Irish, Germans and French, whose traditional rivalries with England, meant that they sided with the Boers, believed the war and the camps to be nothing but an exercise of oppression and aggression. The Dutch in particular, considering the war in the light of race sympathy, were unqualified in their condemnation of it. In 1902 Roberts wrote how Holland held England accountable, in her greed for ground and gold, for “ruthlessly crushing to the earth a liberty-loving and heroic people,”³⁰ while as early as 1900, Cape Politician John X. Merriman had predicted that;

never again will England hold the title she did as the friend of small peoples and the unwavering champion of liberty. She will regain her military prestige I have no doubt, but I do not think she will regain her position on the continent.³¹

²⁵ M. de Villiers, *White Tribe Dreaming*, 1987, p.230.

²⁶ Cited in G. H. L. le May, *British Supremacy in South Africa 1899-1907*, 1965, p.103.

²⁷ I. Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism Against British Imperialism*, 1981.

²⁸ G.H.L. le May, *British Supremacy in South Africa 1899-1907*, 1965, p. 106. Recent research has indicated that 22 074 of the 27 927 Boers (men, women and children) who did die in the concentration camps were less than sixteen years old. Official figures are incomplete, but they indicate that at least 14 154 Africans also died, although there were many fewer camps for them. See P. Warwick, *Black People and the South African War, 1899-1902*, 1983, p.145; F. Pretorius, *Scorched Earth*, 2001, p.21.

²⁹ Cited in G. H. L. le May, *British Supremacy in South Africa 1899-1907*, 1965, p.107.

³⁰ J. G. Roberts, *The South African War or the Irrepressible Conflict between Boer and Briton*, 1902, p.3.

³¹ Quoted in *The Seeker*, 25 October 1900. UCT Collection BCA 120.

Opposition to the war came not only from overseas; there were growing concerns in Britain that the war was misguided and that an amicable, peaceful settlement should be reached as swiftly as possible. Despite these views being derided as ‘Pro Boer’ (see figure 1),³² organisations such as the *South African Conciliation Committee* and the *Stop The War Committee* were founded to register concerted, organised protests against the British military campaign in Southern Africa. “We are committed to a task of destruction such as England has not put her hand to, I think, for three hundred years” was British author John Robertson’s reaction in 1901.³³ Many others too had cause to question the ethics of Britain’s actions against a nation significantly smaller than itself. In a revealing letter to the editor of the *Morning Post*, F.A. Channing wrote:

Is it worthwhile, or in the true interests of the Empire to eliminate from the life of the world the resolute courage and passionate love of freedom that have made this little people – less than the population of one of our big towns – ready to defend their existence, as they understand it, as they love it, and as they have fought for it for sixty years, to the last drop of their blood? Would it not be better for the Empire to have such a race with us than against us?³⁴

Clearly the plight of the Afrikaner and their fight for survival had raised their profile around the globe. Any hopes of peace however were blighted by a lack of dialogue between the two parties. The British colonial government, with its intractable classist bias, still held the Boers up to ridicule and contempt. As late as 1902, for example, A.B. Paterson, as War Correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* produced the following perspective on the Boers, who at the time, were perceived as severely wanting in the social niceties of the ruling classes:

November 30th: At Cape Town. Met my first Boer prisoner. He is a doctor, holding an English degree, and can make fifty break at billiards. Apparently these Boers are at any rate partially civilised ... He evidently looks on us as less civilised than his own people – the poor fish.³⁵

The two sides were still worlds apart in terms of understanding each other and the divisions the war had deepened would continue long after peace was achieved in 1902. Afrikaners,

³² *Punch*, 11 December 1901.

³³ J. M. Robertson, *Wrecking the Empire*, 1901, p.15.

³⁴ F. A. Channing, ‘Is war to the bitter end worthwhile? An appeal to sound policy and common sense’, 1900, p.1.

³⁵ Cited in S. Walker, ‘The Boer War: Paterson, Abbott, Brennan, Miles Franklin and Morant’, 1985, p.210.

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—DECEMBER 11, 1901.



HER WORST ENEMY.

PEACE. "YOU MAKE SUCH A NOISE THEY CAN'T HEAR MY VOICE."

Figure 1.

according to Booyens, had “lost their independence; they had suffered in the concentration camps and they wouldn’t forgive it”.³⁶

Language, Sport and the Road to Recovery

At the end of the war in 1902 it might have seemed likely that Afrikaner nationalism had been shattered once and for all. The republics were overthrown and their former ruling race was impoverished and dispirited. Moreover, the events of the war had left a bitter legacy of divisions within Afrikanerdom – between Transvalers, Free Staters and Cape Colonials, and between *Bittereinders* (‘Bitter-enders’) who had fought to the end, *Hensoppers* (‘Hands-uppers’) who had passively accepted British rule, and National Scouts who had actively assisted the British forces.³⁷ For the Nationalists that remained it was imperative therefore that a unifying feature of Afrikanerdom be found and nurtured. With all the divisions that the war had created, the one thing that all Afrikaners had in common was their language; and it was this which was destined to play a major role in the revival of the Afrikaner nation.

Following the war, Sir Alfred Milner recognised the threat posed by Afrikaans and pursued a vigorous policy of Anglicisation to alienate its use and to secure British hegemony. He banned Dutch as a medium of instruction in government schools and ensured that history textbooks reflected Britain’s worldview.³⁸ During 1903, Mr. E. Sargent, Milner’s Director of Education became intent on introducing British-style education for the Boers. In the newspaper, *The Star*, of that year he stated his aim of providing “an educational instrument combining the supremely effective organisation of the Church with unwavering loyalty to English ideals of Empire”.³⁹

Despite these policies, the Afrikaners managed to maintain schools with funds from Holland, in which the Dutch language was taught.⁴⁰ In addition, in 1910 the Constitution of the Union of South Africa guaranteed equal language rights for English and Dutch. This important concession, secured by General Hertzog, became the life-blood of the nationalist movement as a new virile tongue, Afrikaans, emerged from Dutch to represent the independence of the Boer in South Africa. *Die Burger*, the first daily newspaper fighting the Afrikaner cause, was founded in Cape Town in 1915, and in the course of time this too became entirely Afrikaans.

³⁶ B. Booyens, Private interview, Stellenbosch, 19 January 2000.

³⁷ L. M. Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa*, 1960.

³⁸ D. Booth, *The Race Game - Sport and Politics in South Africa*, 1998.

³⁹ *The Star*, 25 May 1903, p.6

⁴⁰ E. S. Munger, *Afrikaner and African Nationalism*, 1967.

The language issue was gaining momentum as Afrikaans began to represent a counter hegemonic culture. Through the exclusiveness of his language, the Afrikaner could at last distance himself from the overt influence of the English and the Empire.

Sport in South Africa during this period was another arena where the ideals of superiority and identity were contested. There has, for example, been much speculation as to why Afrikaners developed an almost mystical identification with (rugby) football in the years following the Boer War. Like cricket, it was a colonial sport; it was originally brought to South Africa in 1861 by Canon George Ogilvie, who had played the game at both Winchester College and St. Andrew's College Bradfield before emigrating to become director of Diocesan College in Cape Town.⁴¹ Significantly, the emergence of rugby came at a time when the extent and importance of sport in the British public school curriculum had already been established. There was, according to Holt

a close relationship between the creation of this muscular elite and the extension of formal control over large areas of Asia and Africa by the British government in the later nineteenth century.⁴²

The growth of the Empire during this period had meant that British forms of games and leisure were being introduced to local cultures right across the globe. The situation in South Africa was no different and by the time of the Anglo-Boer War, the foundations of British sport had been well and truly laid in the country.⁴³

It was during this period that Britain, in wishing to impose a greater degree of control, actively pursued a policy of social imperialism in South Africa. It assumed British racial superiority and applied the principles of social Darwinism and eugenics to incorporate Afrikaners into the British way of life.⁴⁴ At a time when the Empire advanced its interests under the banner of development and civilisation, the progress of indigenous communities still lay in their assimilation and incorporation into 'things' British. Sport, as well as language, was an integral part of this assimilation process.⁴⁵

⁴¹ F.J.G. van der Merwe, 'Oorspronklike voetbal aan die Kaap en die ontstaan van die Stellenbosch Rugbyvoetbalklub: Nuwe feite'. *S.A. Journal for Research in Sport, P.E. and Recreation*, 23(1), 2001, p.88.

⁴² R. Holt, *Sport and the British*, 1989, p.204.

⁴³ See I. D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football, 1875-1932*, 1933.

⁴⁴ D. Booth, *The Race Game*, 1998, p.20.

⁴⁵ See B. Stoddart, 'Sport, cultural imperialism, and colonial response in the British Empire'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30(4), 1988, for a useful account of how sport was introduced throughout the colonies by Imperial Britain during this period.

Aside from sport, the war had a major impact on both nations, but in differing ways. For Britain, many believe that the 1899-1902 campaign in South Africa shook imperial confidence to such an extent that a new era of conscience-ridden national self-doubt prevailed.⁴⁶ For the Boers, the significance of the war grew once it had entered Afrikaner history as one of the creative forces of a revived nationalistic awareness. The experience of defeat and the trial of sacrifice were seen as being integral to Afrikaner national identity, serving to confirm rather than deny the unquenchable spirit of Afrikaner independence.

The final message of President Kruger to his people conveys the innate determination of the Afrikaner to rebuild after the war:

It is true much of what has been built is now destroyed, despoiled and ruined; but through singleness of purpose and unity of strength what now lies shattered can still be restored. I am thankful to see that this unity and this concord prevail amongst you. Then our people and our language will endure and prosper. What I myself shall live to see of this, rests with God ... Born under the British flag, I do not wish to die under it.⁴⁷

Kruger was to get his wish. He died in exile in Switzerland on July 14th 1904, some fifteen days after this message was written. The legacy of nationalism however had already been passed down to the next generation of Afrikaners, but as the next chapter reveals, they too were set to inherit the Anglo-Boer discord that had been a feature of South African society since the early nineteenth century.

⁴⁶ See G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1994, p.215.

⁴⁷ S. J. P. Kruger, Letter addressed to General Louis Botha, Villas Des Prierriers 17, Clarens (Vaud), Switzerland, 29 June 1904. From the collection housed at the Paul Kruger House Museum, Pretoria.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Struggle for Supremacy

The greatest threat to the Afrikaner did not come from any group native to Africa, but rather from Europe. The English brought with them a culture that, in relation to that of the Afrikaner, was undeniably superior.¹

Several studies have attempted to clarify the relationship that existed between the English and the Afrikaner during the nineteenth century. Notably, Streak suggests that the relationship hinged on the conflict between liberalism and conservatism and not simply a barrier dividing the 'colonial south' from the 'republican north'.² Religious beliefs played an integral part in this. On the one hand was the liberalism of the English, stemming as it did from the humanitarianism and philanthropy of the evangelical revival which swept Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century; on the other was the conservatism of the essentially rural Afrikaner people whose religious traditions were based on Calvinism.³

Work attempting to explore sport, or any form of cultural expression during the Boer War era would be incomplete without at least first probing the essence of Anglo-Boer relations. This chapter will therefore investigate the character of these two diametrically opposed civilisations. The political and literary 'voices' that sustained the rivalry will be examined as will the very culture of both societies which gave rise to the 1899-1902 war.

Indeed, when the English first landed in 1795 they came from a background of empire builders and not surprisingly this clashed with the interests of the Boers, who as the pioneers of South Africa, held an outlook of an essentially conservative society. Any attempts by the British to integrate the Afrikaners into their own religious sanctums were heartily rejected as this also meant accepting the King and the Empire as part of God's plan of salvation.⁴

Following British occupation of the Cape Colony in 1806, antagonism had developed between the imperial government and the white settlers, who, predominantly Dutch-speaking farmers, resented the imposition of the English language, of British officialdom and particularly of the concepts of bourgeois-democratic liberalism in relation to slavery.⁵ The response from the Boers was the mass migration of 1836-1854, in the first ten years of which

¹ W. H. Vatcher, *White Laager: The Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, 1965, p.3.

² M. Streak, *The Afrikaner as viewed by the English 1795-1854*, 1974, p.220.

³ M. Streak, *The Afrikaner as viewed by the English 1795-1854*, 1974, p.221. Based on the theology of John Calvin. For a detailed account of the Calvinist origins of the Afrikaner civil religion, see T. D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 1975, pp.22-38.

⁴ C. Greyling, 'From hyper-Imperialist to super-Afrikaner: The developments within a white theology'. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 5(2): 47-63, 1992.

⁵ The 'liberal' policy of the British toward black Africans appeared to T. D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 1975, p.3, as "particularly designed to provoke the Afrikaners".

over fourteen thousand of them crossed the Orange River.⁶ The ‘Great Trek’ consisted of a series of planned expeditions of farmers accompanied by their families, servants and all their possessions. They did not seek to extend the frontiers of the Cape Colony; rather their purpose was to escape British rule and establish a ‘free and independent state’ beyond the borders of the colony.

However their independence was short lived. British annexation and military occupation of Natal, the Boer’s first Republic was followed in 1877 by the annexation of the Transvaal Republic again under the pretext of Afrikaner treatment of black Africans. Although Pretoria and its surrounds prospered in the wake of British investment, farmer Paul Kruger, who was determined not to be subjected by the British again, mobilised commandos of Afrikaner farmers to remove them.⁷ This resulted in the first Anglo-Boer War (1880-81). After defeat at Majuba on the Natal border, the colonial government abandoned the war and ceded independence in 1884.

As Booth explains, it was after the first Anglo-Boer War that Paul Kruger, now President of the Transvaal, propounded a revised history of Boer consciousness which consisted of a tabulation of grievances, ‘injustices’ and ‘oppression’ and stories of clashes between the Boer and the ‘despicable and cowardly’ English.⁸ During this time, particular significance was attached to events such as the Great Trek and the Battle of Blood River;⁹ from which the Boer, it was hoped, could derive an element of pride and identity. The seeds of Afrikaner mythology were thus cast, which within fifty years would produce their own ethnic and nationalist ‘realities’.

The Afrikaner Civil Religion

The Christian-Nationalist civil religion is grounded in the Afrikaner sacred history, which was publicly stated as early as 1899.¹⁰ The roots of this Afrikaner doctrine of election grew out of the Calvinism of President Paul Kruger, who believed that God chose His People (the *Volk*) in the Cape Colony and brought them out into the wilderness and through hardship and struggle

⁶ A. Lerumo, *Fifty Fighting Years*, 1971, p. 9.

⁷ Born in the Eastern Cape in 1825 Kruger took part in the Great Trek as a child. He was three times President of the Transvaal and a strong opponent of British interests in South Africa.

⁸ D. Booth, *The Race Game- Sport and Politics in South Africa*, 1998, p. 29.

⁹ Vastly outnumbered, on December 16, 1838 a group of *Voortrekkers* defeated a Zulu army deep in the heart of Natal. During the apartheid years, this date was celebrated by Afrikaners as the ‘Day of the Vow’, a public holiday honouring a covenant made by the Boers with God himself that if he granted them victory, they would hold the day sacred.

¹⁰ T. D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 1975, p. ix.

delivered them the 'free' lands of the Transvaal. Through Kruger's influence, Christian Calvinism thus became the divine agent of the Afrikaner civil faith – an active sovereign God, who calls the elect, who promises and punishes, who brings forth life from death in the course of history. The object of his saving activity – the Afrikaner people – were not a congregation or Church, however; they were a whole nation with a distinct language and culture, their own history and special destiny.

Kruger's civil theology amounted to a "simple cycle of transgression, retribution, and reconciliation"¹¹ and as the proclaimed new 'chosen people', it was no surprise that the miraculous outcome of the first Anglo-Boer War of 1881 over the British oppressors was used by Kruger and his followers, as proof of God's election of the Afrikaans people.

Armed with the belief of being God's elect people, the Afrikaner identified strongly with the Israelites of the Old Testament. The trials and afflictions which the Afrikaner believed threatened him (the black 'hordes' in the interior, tropical disease and the threat of British Imperialism) were likened to the difficulties the Israelites encountered themselves.¹² Parallels were found between the Israelites' epic journey through the desert on the way to the Promised Land and the Great Trek. In much the same way that Moses and his people fled oppression in Egypt, the Boers had endured great hardship in order to secure self determination away from the reach of imperialism and like the Israelites, they too had made a pact with God (the Day of the Vow, 16th December, 1838).

Paul Kruger was himself a keen advocate of this biblical comparison. In a despatch to the Commandant General during the second year of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), State President Kruger proclaimed in an attempt to motivate the Burghers;

is not our God the same God who led Israel under the power of His miracles out of the land of the Pharaoh? ... If we trust Him as they trusted Him, it shall be our guide through the darkness, leading our feet safely to the light.¹³

Despite the fact that it was not until the 1930s that the majority of Afrikaners accepted the major tenets of the civil faith, it was the Calvinist sermons of the Dutch Reformed Church that were fundamental during the time following the war. The Church helped to cement the

¹¹ T. D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 1975, p.28.

¹² E. Cloete, 'Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender'. *Agenda*, 13: 42-56, 1992.

¹³ S. J. P. Kruger, *The Memoirs of Paul Kruger*, 1902, p.461.

beliefs of the leaders and to satisfy the Afrikaner feelings of predestination whilst Nationalists came to acknowledge the Church's role in reaffirming the Calvinist message. A mutuality soon developed.

For many Afrikaners there could be no question of conciliation with the English while the memories of the 1899-1902 war and concentration camps were still fresh in their minds. Regarding themselves as pioneers of the South African civilisation, many viewed their continued existence as a separate entity as part of a divine dispensation. "Only by stressing their ethnic identity could the humiliation of defeat and the cultural chauvinism of the English be overcome".¹⁴ Sport, as this study will show, was one such vehicle used during the post war period to articulate Afrikaner identity. Another important mobilising tool, as revealed by the previous chapter, was language. In 1908 Malan stated:

Raise the Afrikaans language to a written language, let it become the vehicle for our culture, our history, our national ideals, and you will also raise the people who speak it ... The Afrikaans language movement is nothing less than an awakening of our nation to self-awareness and to the vocation of adopting a more worthy position in world civilisation.¹⁵

But what of the Boers themselves, and their innate ability to survive and adapt? Roland Schikkerling observed in his diary whilst on commando during the war how "the force of circumstance and a strange environment, have shaped the Boer to the singular being that he is".¹⁶ Indeed, he added:

He is the most vigorous, resourceful and intelligent peasant in the world ...the one long emergency in which he lived, evolved the qualities of self-reliance and individualism and equipped him for the strenuous struggles of his daily life.¹⁷

To rely on these same qualities, to withstand the might of one of the world's most powerful empires, was to prove the Boer's ultimate test.

Boer War Britain

Within Britain's imperialist society, the Boers, according to Krebs, were seen as "backward, petty tyrants who sought to exploit British settlers in the gold mining districts of the

¹⁴ H. Adam & H. Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power*, 1979, p.107.

¹⁵ Cited in S.W. Pienaar (Ed.), *Glo in u Volk: D.F. Malan as Redenaar, 1908-1954*, 1964, p.175.

¹⁶ R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando Courageous*, 1964, pp.169-70.

¹⁷ R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando Courageous*, 1964, pp.169-70.

Witwatersrand".¹⁸ When war was declared in October 1899, it was generally believed in Britain that the ragged bands of untrained Boer soldiers could never mount a credible attack on the British army, and the war would be over by Christmas. But, as history proved, the South African war was set to continue for the next three years with the British public starved of the good news they were expecting.¹⁹

May 1900 saw the relief of Mafeking by allied forces and an instant outpouring of celebration in the streets of Britain's towns and cities.²⁰ Seen as significant, this show of emotion "made jingoism safe for the middle classes by blurring the distinction between jingoism – working-class over-enthusiasm for the Empire – and patriotism, that middle-class virtue of support for one's country against foreign opposition".²¹ Yet it was a display that demonstrated the immense effect that this conflict, thousands of miles away at the Southern tip of Africa, was beginning to have upon the British psyche.

If any one generalisation may stand, it is that British Imperialism was based upon "a sense of superiority, upon a conviction of a superior economic system, a superior political code ... (and) on a superior way of life".²² Yet the war was fought at a time when the complexities of the ideology of imperialism were at question. Britain, at this time, possessed a culture in which empire was assumed and yet critiqued, was understood and yet always needed to be explained, and in the form of a South African conflict, was far away and yet appeared in the daily press each morning. Figure 2 demonstrates trivialisation of the hostilities through a sporting analogy offered by *Punch* towards the end of the war.²³ This was typical of much of the media at the time.

Whilst the Zulu War (1879) and the first conflict with the Boers (1880-1881) failed to rouse the British public from domestic concerns, the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 however, was different. It was a long, large-scale war against another white nation, it cost millions of

¹⁸ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p.5.

¹⁹ There was complacency too amongst the British soldiers. In a letter home during August 1900, Captain F. D. Price of the 1st Durham Royal Engineers wrote: "None of us expected that the campaign would hang on so long as it has, and I agree that the primary cause of it all is in our under-valuing and underestimating Brother Boer". F. D. Price, *The Great Boer War, 1899-1901. Letters*, 1987, p. 58.

²⁰ Field-Marshal Lord Roberts had himself written: "No episode in the present war seems more praiseworthy than the prolonged defence of this town by a British garrison". Lord Roberts, Letter to the Secretary of State for War. Army Head-quarters, Pretoria. 21 June 1900. For an insight into the British view of the siege, read R.S.S. Baden Powell, 'Report upon the siege of Mafeking'. *Mafeking Mail*, 1 March 1901.

²¹ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p.2.

²² R.W. Winks (Ed.), *British Imperialism: Gold, God, Glory*, 1963, p.3.

²³ *Punch*, 15 May 1901, p.359.



THE LAST WICKET.

Kitchener (Captain and Wicket-keeper). "HE HAS KEPT US IN THE FIELD A DEUCE OF A TIME; BUT WE'LL GET HIM NOW WE'VE CLOSED IN FOR CATCHES!"

Figure 2.

pounds of public money, and it couldn't help but capture the interest of the British public.²⁴ Crucially, an era of imperial expansion and cheap military victories had militarised British society to a significant degree during this period.²⁵ Nationalistic and militaristic teaching in schools; cadet corps and boys' associations; and involvement in the various organisations connected with the army, such as the volunteers and militia, were all elements that lead to militarisation during this era.²⁶ The subject matter of the music halls also conveyed an influence which heightened the nation's awareness of military matters and the role of the army in expanding the empire.²⁷ Moreover, recruiting figures for the army, the militia, the volunteers and the yeomanry between 1881 and 1898, reveal that just over 22 per cent of the entire male population between the ages of seventeen and forty had some form of military experience just prior to the outbreak of the Boer War.²⁸ Certainly it would appear that powerful pre-war influences helped shape popular response to the war itself.

According to Krebs the celebrations in Britain following the relief of Mafeking were a prime example of the late Victorian press's role in creating a climate of public support for the war and imperialism. The 'new journalism' of the late 1890's incorporated the cheap, sensation-orientated jingoist reporting that covered the events in South Africa in great detail.²⁹ But not all Victorian press critics succumbed to uncritical enthusiasm about the events of the day. The Boer War writing of J.A. Hobson, whose economic and cultural theories of imperialism influenced Lenin and historians throughout the past century, provides the terms in which some of the most important challenges to jingoism were framed during the war.

Hobson's theory of imperialism was born out of his experience in South Africa as a journalist during the conflict. Here, Hobson learned first-hand about culture and imperialism and the necessity of ideological control for imperial hegemony. In *The War in South Africa*, published shortly after the outbreak of the war, Hobson examined the manoeuvrings of capitalists in the conduct of imperialism, but he also emphasised the importance of "popular passion" for maintaining a war effort on the home front. A complex process involving, not only the press, but popular entertainment, the church, education and other cultural factors, was at work in

²⁴ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p.9.

²⁵ K.T. Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899-1902*, 1998, p.62.

²⁶ K.T. Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899-1902*, 1998, p.63.

²⁷ K.T. Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899-1902*, 1998, p.63.

²⁸ M.D. Blaich, *British Society and the War*, 1980, p.215.

²⁹ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p.10.

British society to influence public opinion. Hobson indeed recognised that ‘psychology’ was as essential to jingoism as jingoism was to capitalism.³⁰

The Role of the Literary Figures

The Boer War required that the British people be able to imagine the value to Britain of an unfamiliar landscape most of them would never see, positing a future of wealth and ‘freedom’ for white British-descended people in that land. Perhaps more than any other imperial conflict, this war relied on an imperial imaginary – the myths of British imperialism as they interacted with its material conditions. As Edward Said explains, “neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations”.³¹

The Boer War brought imperialism into the public eye in a new way as the British fought with a white settler nation for lands where the indigenous population was African. The “impressive ideological formations” that supported such a war included the popular press of course, but also, more subtly, the literary figures of the period. Individuals such as Kipling and Haggard, who had both published in the daily press in the past, were naturally called on to do so again during the war. These authors held a new authority that resulted from the powerful combination of the new literacy of the lower classes, the new penny and halfpenny newspapers and an imperial experience that afforded them licence to comment upon the policies and controversies of the time.³²

Rudyard Kipling, of course, had his Indian experience. On the basis of his popularity and his journalistic experience he was asked by Lord Roberts to edit a troop newspaper in Bloemfontein³³ and even allowed to participate in a battle against the Boers. Cricket-loving Arthur Conan Doyle served as a physician in a field hospital during the war and was knighted for his pro-British propaganda. H. Rider Haggard had been an imperial administrator in Southern Africa during the first Boer war in 1881, and Olive Schreiner was South African, based in that land, and came to be treated in the press as representative of a particular strand of South African thinking.³⁴

³⁰ J.A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa*, 1900, p.306.

³¹ E.W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1994, p.8.

³² P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, pp.145-146.

³³ After Roberts had entered Bloemfontein on 13 March 1900, he commandeered the *Friend of the Free State*, a pro-Boer newspaper. In its place, he established a new paper, *The Friend*, probably the first professionally-produced army newspaper in military history. See R. Durbach, *Kipling's South Africa*, 1988, p.49.

³⁴ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p.147.

Purveyors of Imperialism

Prior to the arrival of Kipling, H. Rider Haggard had already made a reputation for himself as the premier African adventure writer by the early 1890s. His fiction has been seen by many as contributing to the ideological hegemony of imperialism at the end of the century, whilst his non fiction work featured regularly in journals and periodicals of the day.³⁵ With Anglo-Boer hostilities again looming, this romance writer and former colonial functionary felt compelled once more to write about the political situation in South Africa.

Within *The Last Boer War* he explains the value in 1899 of reading a history of the Anglo-Boer War of 1881. Had Britain taken a tough line with the Boers in and after 1881, he believed, there would have been no need to do so in 1899.³⁶ The problem in South Africa, according to Haggard, was one of character. The Boer is “lazy, corrupt, sneaky, and wants most of all to live in a land where the necessary expenses of administration are paid by somebody else”.³⁷ The Briton, however, has different priorities in ruling Southern Africa: “a redistribution of the burden of taxation, the abolition of monopolies, the punishment of corruption, the just treatment of the native races, (and) the absolute purity of the courts”.³⁸

Clearly this was an era filled with misconceptions about South Africa and its people. Victorian and especially Boer War stereotypes of Boers presented illiterate and crude peasants who never washed or changed their clothes.³⁹ Metaphors alternated between social class and evolutionary status – the Boers were a nation of peasants, paralleled in the British working classes and poor, but they were also holdovers from an earlier stage of European civilisation, either in a state of arrested development or culturally degenerate. Elements of the popular press endorsed this view, often featuring prejudiced descriptions of the Boers. The *Liverpool Mercury* carried one such account written by H. F. Reynolds, a British worker forced to flee the Transvaal at the outbreak of hostilities:

Some of the Boers in the towns had a slight veneer of culture, but the great mass were ignorant, lazy and unprincipled. It is not difficult to imagine what would happen to an educated Englishman if he were compelled to live on the Veldt with no neighbours, no communications with the outside

³⁵ Studies that have examined Haggard’s imperial contribution include P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914*, 1988; W. Katz, *Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire*, 1987, and A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 1995.

³⁶ H.R. Haggard, *The Last Boer War*, 1900, p.vi.

³⁷ H.R. Haggard, *The Last Boer War*, 1900, p.ix.

³⁸ H.R. Haggard, *The Last Boer War*, 1900, p.x.

³⁹ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p.117.

world, and no incentive to industry. But the Boer has been in that condition for generations.⁴⁰

This however presented its own set of problems as the Boers, at the same time, had to be portrayed as credible opponents for the British military. In 1900, Arthur Conan Doyle published *The Great Boer War*, a book based on notes from his experiences in South Africa as well as government documents and voluminous correspondence from soldiers, officers, and newspaper correspondents. Typical of the Imperialist's approach of constructing the Boers as worthy opponents of the noble British, Doyle opens *The Great Boer War* with the following recipe:

Take a community of Dutchmen of the type of those who defended themselves for fifty years against all the power of Spain at a time when Spain was the greatest power in the world. Intermix with them a strain of those inflexible French Huguenots who gave up home and fortune and left their country forever at the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The product must obviously be one of the most rugged, virile, unconquerable races ever seen upon earth. Take this formidable people and train them for seven generations in constant warfare against savage men and ferocious beasts, in circumstances under which no weakling could survive, place them so that they acquire exceptional skill with weapons and in horsemanship, give them a country which is suited to the tactics of the huntsman, the marksman, and the rider. Then, finally, put a finer temper upon their military qualities by a dour fatalistic Old Testament religion and an ardent and consuming patriotism. Combine all these qualities and all these impulses in one individual, and you have the modern Boer – the most formidable antagonist who ever crossed the path of Imperial Britain.⁴¹

This enemy bore little relation to the backward farmer many Britons had thought they would find in the South African Republics. Of course, a crude peasant enemy would not have allowed the British a chance to shine – they needed a worthy and gallant opponent.

Olive Schreiner was one literary figure however, who attempted to create a sympathetic British perception of the Boers. She wrote of a pastoral race whose uncomplicated love of the land would mix well with British intellect and progressive spirit to make the South African of the future.⁴² Her prime loyalty, as Krebs explains, was to “the future white South Africa”,⁴³ and in order to achieve this, she had first to win sympathy for the Boer in Britain and create a climate in which Britons would look forward to a future South Africa with blended Briton and Boer. With the pro-imperialists in the majority however, Schreiner faced a difficult task. The

⁴⁰ *Liverpool Mercury*, 20 March 1900, p.6.

⁴¹ A.C. Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, 1900, pp. 1-2.

⁴² In particular, see O. Schreiner, *Thoughts on South Africa*, 1923.

⁴³ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p. 129.

poetry of Kipling, the propaganda of Doyle and the history of Haggard, all worked in support of some higher and worthy imperial ideology.

The Boer War, as has already been mentioned, was an imperial war with a difference. It was fought against a white settler population. Because of this, it was difficult to portray the conflict as a step down the road of civilising the Dark Continent. But the imperial imaginary played a more important role in the Boer War than it had in any earlier imperial conflict, as the newspaper column inches devoted to these literary figures reveal.

Whilst Doyle remained involved, Rider Haggard stepped away from writing about the political situation in South Africa once the war started, perhaps feeling that he had set before the public all that he could contribute on the topic. His friend Rudyard Kipling, no authority on South Africa but an authority of sorts on “empire”, took a much different approach. By 1899, thanks to huge sales, Kipling was synonymous with empire, so it was somewhat inevitable that the imperial imaginary would demand the participation of empire’s prime spokesperson in this troubled imperial war.⁴⁴

Flannelled Fools : Sport and Kipling’s War

Certainly, Rudyard Kipling took his role as public spokesperson for imperialism seriously. During this period, along with Doyle and Haggard, he wrote regularly for the daily press and gave pro-empire speeches in which he berated Britons for insufficient enthusiasm about matters of imperial defence. The feeling amongst these eminent British writers was that their nation needed to take military preparedness more seriously. But while Doyle and Haggard wrote letters to the papers creating relatively little stir, Kipling would often put his suggestions in poetry, and it was this that produced the far greater reaction.⁴⁵

A few months after the outbreak of war, the Kipling family had in January 1900, sailed for the Cape. Rudyard Kipling helped edit an army newspaper, *The Friend of Bloemfontein* for a short period, and spent a day under fire in the front-line at Karee Siding. He also interviewed soldiers who had walked into and survived a daring ambush set by the Boer commander, General Christiaan de Wet, at Sanna’s Post, where the British lost six guns and 500 men.⁴⁶ According to Charles Carrington in his biography, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, the

⁴⁴ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p. 156.

⁴⁵ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p. 161.

⁴⁶ C.E. Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, 1955, pp. 299-327.

interviews “left a general impression of heroism on the part of the junior officers, but of indecision and inactivity on the part of the higher command”.⁴⁷

A few days after the ambush at Sanna’s Post, Kipling’s wife, Carrie, recorded in her diary that “he feels he has joined up all his ideas with the others of many years ago”.⁴⁸ These were indeed influential times for Kipling, times when perhaps the English nation needed reorganising even more than did the Empire. As Carrington points out, Kipling had “seen young England at war and, though no one questioned the courage and endurance of the soldiers, no one could fail to see their lack of training, their physical unfitness, (and) their slow reaction when initiative and intelligence were needed”.⁴⁹

In April 1900, Kipling returned to England where he reflected about what he had seen in South Africa. Now, as he told relatives, he was convinced the “real crux of the war” was in Britain where he hoped to be “of some little service”.⁵⁰ With his family however it was not long afterwards (Christmas Day, 1900) that he returned to Cape Town to discover that the situation for the British had worsened. It was now, moved by what he saw, that he wrote the now famous poem, *The Islanders*, in which, according to Carrington, he made “an appeal to the English to take national service as seriously as they took their organised games”.⁵¹ Kipling had brought the full power of his pen to bear in addressing the English people with what was at once a passionate castigation and a passionate appeal on the familiar subject of military preparedness. Kipling lashed out at the pride and complacency that blinded the English to their own vulnerability, and at their refusal to give due attention to the arts of war; instead, they spent their energies on sport, making heroes of “the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals”. Published in *The Times* on 4 January 1902, Kipling’s attack on the sacred cow of English sport, provoked violent discussion, giving offence to many who had been his fervent admirers.

⁴⁷ C.E. Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, 1955, p. 311.

⁴⁸ C.E. Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, 1955, p. 313.

⁴⁹ C.E. Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, 1955, p. 313.

⁵⁰ A. Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling*, 1999, p. 326.

⁵¹ C.E. Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, 1955, p. 318.

Kipling wrote:

Ye hindered and hampered and crippled; ye thrust out of sight and away. Those that would serve you for honour and those that served you for pay. Then were the judgements loosened; then was your shame revealed, At the hands of a little people, few but apt in the field. Yet ye were saved by a remnant (and your lands' long-suffering star), When your strong men cheered in their millions while your striplings went to the war. And ye vaunted your fathomless power, and ye flaunted your iron pride, Ere-ye fawned on the Younger Nations for the men who could shoot and ride! Then ye returned to your trinkets; then ye contented your soles With the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals.⁵²

As Carrington commented, “This was indeed a shock to a generation that gave such moral consequence to cricket”.⁵³ There was dismay that Rudyard Kipling, the Bard of the British Empire, should blaspheme the national idols with his talk of “flannelled fools” and “muddied oafs”. Kipling enlarged upon this theme. He scorned his critics and derided their alternatives. What would they do in event of war?

Will ye pitch some white pavilion, and lustily even the odds, With nets and hoops and mallets, with rackets and bats and rods? Will the rabbit war with your foeman – the red deer horn them for hire? Your kept cock-pheasant keep you? – he is master of many a shire. Will ye pray them or preach them, or print them, or ballet them back from your shore? Will your workmen issue a mandate to bid them strike no more?⁵⁴

Two letters protesting the sentiments in the poem appeared in the very next issue of *The Times*. Herbert Stephen, while agreeing that “compulsory military service would be an excellent thing”, nevertheless felt that the poem’s rebuke is “so little deserved that it is more likely to do harm than good”.⁵⁵ Stephen rendered the poem into prose as:

That until the South African War began we, the English, were sunk in sloth, and took no pains to secure military efficiency; that we consequently came near to failure in the war, and should have failed if we had not been able, by ‘fawning on’ the colonies, to get better men than ourselves to fight for us, whereby we were just saved; that we then turned our attention exclusively to cricket and football.⁵⁶

⁵² *The Times*, 4 January 1902, p. 9.

⁵³ C.E. Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, 1955, p. 319.

⁵⁴ R. Kipling, ‘The Islanders’, *The Times*, 4 January 1902, p. 9.

⁵⁵ *The Times*, 6 January 1902, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *The Times*, 6 January 1902, p. 4.

W.J. Ford, in the same edition also wrote, “I, for one, wish to protest most strongly against such an expression as ‘flannelled fools’, which has been applied by Mr. Kipling in his poem *The Islanders* to those who happen to play cricket”.⁵⁷ Ford went on to cite valorous military officers who were cricketers. Letters about the poem continued, and on 9 January, football fans came to the rescue of the “muddied oafs”. Kipling, who had never been a fan of organised sport,⁵⁸ had clearly touched a nerve amongst the British public and particularly those who took their sport, as they did their war, most seriously.

Despite this controversy, for Britons at home, the output of journalistic and literary figures on the scene in South Africa was crucial in conveying not only information, but also a stimulus for public opinion. For writers such as Kipling, there existed a capacity to exert tremendous influence upon how events in South Africa were perceived by the British public. The work that Rudyard Kipling had managed to get through during the South African summer of 1900-1901 for example, included a polemical paper, *The Science of Rebellion*, written for the Imperial South African Association and subsequently published in pamphlet form.⁵⁹ Like *The Sin of Witchcraft*,⁶⁰ published a year earlier, this was an outspoken attack on the “disloyal” element in the Cape Colony. Kipling castigated both the Afrikaner Bond (“the right wing of the Republican armies”) for betraying Britain from within the Colony, and His Majesty’s Opposition in Britain for advocating lenient treatment for the Cape rebels.⁶¹ In a letter to his old Vermont friend, Dr. James Conland, written at the same time (February 1901) Kipling expressed himself equally forcefully:

The Boers ... are having the time of their lives – stealing from friends and foes alike and living on the fat of the land ... Cape Town is full of rebels and is the only place where martial law is not proclaimed. A man gets as much as 12 months imprisonment sometimes for assisting the enemy, and 6 months for helping to blow up a railway culvert. And we wonder why the war doesn’t end. They make no secret of their intentions. They want to sweep the English into the sea, to lick their own nigger and to govern South Africa with a gun instead of a ballot box. It is only the little Englanders in London who say that the Transvaal is merely fighting for its independence; but out here both sides realise it is a question of which race is to run the country.⁶²

⁵⁷ *The Times*, 6 January 1902, p. 4.

⁵⁸ As an insight into this, Krebs points out that the biggest fools and villains in Kipling’s school stories in *Stalkey and Co.*, are those associated with football and cricket. See P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p. 163.

⁵⁹ See R. Durbach, *Kipling’s South Africa*, 1988.

⁶⁰ R. Kipling, *The Sin of Witchcraft*, 1899.

⁶¹ R. Durbach, *Kipling’s South Africa*, 1988, pp.66-68.

⁶² In R. Durbach, *Kipling’s South Africa*, 1988, p. 68.

Rhodes, of course, was a major influence in Kipling's life and work. Kipling believed implicitly that the British had a greater aptitude for ruling than other people, and a civilising mission to "take up the white man's burden";⁶³ his own task was to translate the ideals and emotions underlying this imperial trusteeship into art. However, while Kipling produced much poetry, fiction and polemic about the war, he was unable to produce what was in effect being demanded of him from all sides – a coherent, unified empire.

The aftermath of the war was to prove quite different to the one many imperialists had expected. Barely a few years after the death of Rhodes, Lord Milner, whom Kipling had believed would make "a sane and orderly success" of the reparation programme in South Africa, was recalled to London at the end of his term of service in 1905. His intention had been to exert greater influence over South Africa by encouraging British emigration there. This, he believed, would lay the groundwork for progressive policies in the country in the anticipation of the granting of self-government to the former Boer republics. This design would of course take time to effect; self-government would have to be postponed until Britain's objective of land settlement and administrative reform were well under way.⁶⁴

However, shortly after Milner's return to England, a new Liberal government was returned to power with an overwhelming majority, and the Conservative policies affecting South Africa were reversed. Milner came under harsh criticism and retired into private life. The old regime was being replaced. In June 1907, under the Liberals, full self-government was granted both to the Transvaal, where Louis Botha was elected Prime Minister, and to the renamed Orange River Colony⁶⁵ under the leadership of Abraham Fischer. The Cape Colony election of 1908, held after the re-enfranchisement of the Cape rebels, brought a further blow for the imperialists: the Progressives were defeated by the South African Party, lead by J. X. Merriman, which had the support of the Afrikaner Bond.⁶⁶

Like many other Conservatives in the years that followed, Kipling felt that the Boer War had been fought in vain; Britain's victory had been shown to be hollow. His dream of a South Africa with a British future was shattered. To him, inefficiency and corruption would soon

⁶³ R. Durbach, *Kipling's South Africa*, 1988, p. 19.

⁶⁴ See R. Durbach, *Kipling's South Africa*, 1988, p. 97.

⁶⁵ When British forces occupied Bloemfontein in March 1900 the Orange Free State became the British Orange River Colony. It was incorporated in the Union in 1910 as the province of the Orange Free State. C. C. Saunders (Ed.), *An illustrated dictionary of South African history*, 1994, p. 188.

⁶⁶ See R. Durbach, *Kipling's South Africa*, 1988, pp. 97-98.

prevail and the English would be *Uitlanders* in South Africa once again. The summer of 1908 was the last that the Kipling family were to spend at the Cape. As Kipling saw it, “the handing over of a higher civilisation to a lower is a heart-breaking job”.⁶⁷ He did not want to be present to watch it in progress.

The general election in England of 1905, which brought in the Liberals with an overwhelming majority was nowhere more enthusiastically acclaimed than in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, as it was then for a brief period called. The aim of Botha and Smuts was to secure a government wholly chosen by the South African people and under the Liberals, with the support of Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman, there seemed to be a chance of obtaining this.⁶⁸

From the outset of their careers, both Botha and Smuts had set before themselves as their main object to sink the differences between the two races, Boer and Briton, and weld them into one South African community intent only on the welfare of their common heritage. It was no easy task, for on both sides the rancour nurtured by the recent war was still alive. The British victors, in a minority in all the South African States except Natal, felt that, with the large Boer majorities in the two defeated States, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and with the preponderance of Boer voters even in the Cape Colony, the fruits of victory had been thrown away; while the Boers on their side, especially in the Free State, were inclined to make up for their defeat in the field by their voting power in the elections. To Botha and Smuts it appeared that much of this racial antagonism might disappear if the four independent colonies could be merged into a comprehensive State concerned with the common well-being of the whole.⁶⁹

Sport, as this study will show, played a significant role in this unification of South Africa’s two white factions. Despite their immense differences, both Boer and Briton indeed shared a passion for sport; a passion that continued throughout the entire three year conflict. As the next chapter will reveal, there is ample evidence to suggest that sport was played extensively on both sides during the war, and that this, along with other factors, provided a common ground on which the seeds of unification could be sown.

⁶⁷ C.E. Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, 1955, p. 389.

⁶⁸ B. Williams, *Botha, Smuts and South Africa*, 1946.

⁶⁹ B. Williams, *Botha, Smuts and South Africa*, 1946.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Game Goes On

Shortly after Smuts's departure from the North Western Cape for the talks at Vereeniging in April 1902, Field General Manie Maritz challenged the besieged British garrison at Okiep to a football match. Originally written in High Dutch this now famous letter is housed in the South African Rugby Museum at Newlands. The English translation reads:

The Honourable Major Edwards,
O'kiep

Dear Sir,

I wish to inform you that I have agreed to a football match taking place between you and us. I, from my side, will agree to a cease-fire tomorrow afternoon from 12 o'clock until sunset, the time and venue of the match to be arranged by you in consultation with Messrs. Roberts and Van Rooyen who I am sending to you.

I have the honour etc.,
pp. S.G. Moritz
Field General
Transvaal Scouting Corps.

Concordia, April 28, 1902.¹

Although the match never took place,² the challenge itself indicates a common ground represented here by rugby, between Boer and Briton. At Mafeking too, towards the end of April 1900, cricket and war also mixed in a lighter vein. A British patrol inspecting railway lines to the south west of the town found a letter addressed to Colonel Baden-Powell from Sarel Eloff, Commandant of the Johannesburg Commando and one of Paul Kruger's thirty-five grandsons. It read:

¹ See A.C. Parker, *The Springboks 1891-1971*, 1970, p. 5 and South African Rugby Board, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1964, p. 19.

² Within his *Memoirs*, Ben Bouver, like the *Times History*, regarded the idea of having such a match as merely a diversion in the midst of daily fighting, but Robert de Kersauson de Pennendreff, Maritz's emissary, recorded in his diary that the envisaged game was part of a Boer tactic to occupy Okiep. Apparently Col. Sheldon was as much in favour of the match as his subordinate, Maj. Edwards, but his senior, Col. H. Cooper, who was trying to relieve the town from Steinkopf, disapproved and so scotched all efforts to arrange it. For the varying accounts surrounding this, see O.J.O. Ferreira, *Memoirs of General Ben Bouver*, 1980, pp. 278-279; L.S. Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa. Vol V, 1900-1907*, p. 553; R. de Kersauson, *Le Dernier Commando Boer*, 1989, p.236; F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p.116; M.H. Grant, *History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902*, 1910 and R. de Kersauson de Pennendreff, *Ek en die Vierkleur*, 1960, pp.118-123.

Dear Sir,

I see in *The Bulawayo Chronicle* that your men in Mafeking play cricket on Sundays, and give concerts and balls on Sunday evenings. In case you will allow my men to join in, it would be very agreeable to me, as here, outside Mafeking, there are seldom any of the fair sex, and there can be no merriment without them being present. In case you would allow this we could spend some of the Sundays, which we still have to get through round Mafeking, and of which there will probably be several, in friendship and unity. During the course of the week, you can let us know if you accept my proposition and I shall then, with my men, be on the cricket field, and at the ballroom at the time so appointed by you.

I remain,
Your obedient friend,

Sarel Eloff,
Commandant.³

Baden-Powell, his biographer records,⁴ read the letter with a sardonic smile – a Sunday cricket match with the Boers – he sent his answer to the Boer lines under a white flag:

Sir,

I beg to thank you for your letter of yesterday, in which you propose that your men should come and play cricket with us. I should like nothing better – after the match in which we are at present engaged is over. But just now we are having our innings and have so far scored 200 days not out against the bowling of Cronje, Snyman, Botha and Eloff, and we are having a very enjoyable game.

I remain,
Yours truly,
R.S.S. Baden-Powell⁵

Despite their many differences both incidents, although isolated, indicate a mutual appreciation for sport. Indeed, the Anglo-Boer War it would seem, did not prevent either side from continuing forms of sporting activity. This chapter will explore sport played by both the British military and the Boers during the South African campaign as well as selected cases where sport crossed the boundaries of politics and warfare. The chapter would not be complete without also addressing sport played in the prisoner of war camps – an area which

³ Quoted in J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 44.

⁴ W. Hillcourt, *Baden-Powell, The Two Lives of a Hero*, 1964, p. 197.

⁵ Quoted in J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 44.

has been highlighted through the recent work of Van der Merwe.⁶ Finally, in the days of amateurism, profiles are included of eminent sportsmen who found themselves involved in the conflict.

Sport and the Late Victorian Army

War being simply sport on a grand scale, and the individual qualities exercised in both being to some extent synonymous, any attempt to justify sports appropriateness for soldiers should be superfluous ... Training for sport is training for war.

An Ex-Non-Com, 1910.⁷

In the 40 years before the outbreak of the First World War one of the most notable social phenomena in Britain was the dramatic rise of organised sport, both amateur and, increasingly, professional. In much the same way that civilian society's passion for sport grew, the military was also affected as sport came to dominate the lives of soldiers during this period. The development of sport and physical training in the late Victorian British army meant that for the soldiers serving in South Africa during the 1899-1902 campaign, sporting activity formed an important part of their daily existence.⁸

At the end of the nineteenth century, British army officers were of primarily upper-class origins, with a majority coming from landed families.⁹ With the officer corps firmly rooted in the social and cultural traditions of the rural upper class, one of the characteristics that dominated the life of the British officer was a passion for sport – mainly field sports and competitive games. In addition to hunting and shooting, officers enthusiastically took to team games, especially cricket, football and polo. These games each held similar attractions to those of field sports. Cricket is an ancient and revered game with origins deeply rooted in rural England, and so was a familiar and traditional game for the upper class officer. Football, especially rugby football, demands a high degree of fitness and agility, as well as a large amount of physical courage and teamwork, all desirable qualities for a soldier. Polo combines

⁶ See F.J.G. van der Merwe, *Sport and Games in Boer Prisoner of War Camps During the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, 1992 and F.J.G. van der Merwe, *Rugby in the Prisoner of War Camps During the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, 1998.

⁷ Ex-Non-Com, 'The Soldier in Relation to Regimental Sport'. *The United Services Magazine*, XL(1909-10), 1910, p. 35.

⁸ See J.D. Campbell, 'Training for sport is training for war'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17(4): 21-58, 2000.

⁹ J.D. Campbell, 'Training for sport is training for war'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17(4), 2000, p. 22.

these aspects of football with the requirement for skilled horsemanship, another requisite attribute for both the rural gentry and the nineteenth-century soldier.¹⁰

With polo, steeplechase, gymkhanas and horse racing popular amongst the officers in South Africa, horses were valued for such reasons and meetings were held where and when an opportunity arose.¹¹ On 9 July 1900 Captain F.D. Price of the 1st Durham Royal Engineers writes in a letter home that a horse race was arranged amongst officers of his company. The race was known as the “Viking Derby” from the fact that the stake was a tin of Viking tobacco presented by Captain Price.¹² A month earlier, in June 1900, a military steeplechase had taken place near Pretoria, in which Lord Roberts had himself attended as a spectator after giving permission for the event to take place.¹³

Gymkhanas were also popular. Whilst on picket at Belfast in November 1900, Captain David S. Miller of the Gordon Highlanders produced the following account:

We are having a gymkhana on Wednesday consisting of a steeplechase (in which I am riding the doctor’s pony), and various other events, including a race in which you ride in a waterproof and get off your pony halfway, light a cigar and ride back and so on.¹⁴

Figure 3 depicts action from a gymkhana of the Cape Mounted Police that took place at Vryburg during 1901.¹⁵ At one time in fact, officers in Pretoria and Johannesburg were allowed to keep remount horses until they were wanted and these were invariably used for sport.¹⁶ On one occasion Lord Kitchener was extremely annoyed when he discovered that one officer in Johannesburg had a nice racing stud of thirty of the very pick of the remounts. Others were used as polo ponies by the polo playing fraternity.¹⁷

¹⁰ Numerous mentions are made of the ‘benefits’ of playing polo during the Anglo-Boer War campaign by Lieutenant Eustace Abadie of the 9th Lancers. The experiences of the young cavalry officer whilst serving in South Africa are detailed within: S.B. Spies, (Ed.), *A Soldier in South Africa*, 1989.

¹¹ Horse racing is one of the oldest established sports in South Africa. The first meeting was held in Cape Town in the late eighteenth century. Polo has been played in South Africa since the 1870s. See Readers Digest, *South Africa’s Yesterdays*, 1981, pp. 250-252.

¹² F.D. Price, *The Great Boer War, 1899-1901 letters*, 1987, p. 123.

¹³ E.M. Wessels, ‘British Army plays polo’. *Knapsak*, 4(2), 1992, p. 20.

¹⁴ M. & H.R. Miller (Eds.), *A Captain of the Gordons*, 1914, p. 73.

¹⁵ From the Public Collection, McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

¹⁶ See I. Robertson (Ed.), *Cavalry Doctor*, 1979.

¹⁷ E.M. Wessels, ‘British Army plays polo’. *Knapsak*, 4(2), 1992, p. 19.



Figure 3: Cape Mounted Police Gymkhana. Vryburg, 1901.

The origins of polo in South Africa can be traced to the military. 1885 saw the first club established at Kenilworth in Cape Town after the local garrison leased a portion of the Turf Club's enclosure. Popular with civilian members and boasting Lord Baden-Powell among its followers, the game soon moved up to Natal and East Griqualand with the British regiments stationed there. Its popularity then spread to other regions with the Johannesburg Fire Brigade forming the first ever polo team on the Witwatersrand.¹⁸

This passion for sport and equine games had other roots beside the traditions of the land-owning gentry. Officers were not only primarily members of the rural upper classes, but as a corollary to that membership they were almost to a man products of public schools. As former schoolboys they were naturally subject to the cult of games and athleticism that stemmed from nineteenth century British public schools.¹⁹ This obsession with games carried over into their lives as officers, and according to Campbell "was one of the most central factors in the development of late Victorian army sport".²⁰ Major A.J. Richardson, in 1905, stated that "proficiency at games of skill argues a well-balanced mind", and with reference to the Boer War, put a twist on a well-known statement by adding, "if Waterloo was not won on the playing fields of Eton, and I don't think it was, neither was Colenso lost there".²¹

An important factor in the growth of regimental sport in the latter part of the 1800's was, according to Campbell, the movement throughout British society to form associations and leagues to regulate play and provide for championships.²² The Football Association (soccer) was formed in 1863, and the Rugby Union in 1871. The army was heavily represented among the individuals and teams that initially formed these bodies, and something of this organising and propagating spirit was transferred to the nascent institution of regimental sport. Within this culture, soldiers of all ranks were encouraged to participate in army sport and build upon interests they had carried with them from civilian society.

¹⁸ V. de Kock, *The Fun They Had!* 1995, p. 77.

¹⁹ Works detailing the connection between army officers and the public schools include E.M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, 1992 and B. Farwell, *Mr. Kipling's Army*, 1981.

²⁰ J.D. Campbell, 'Training for sport is training for war'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17(4), 2000, p.24.

²¹ A.J. Richardson, 'That Idol-Education'. *The United Services Magazine*, 31(1905), 1905, p. 545.

²² J.D. Campbell, 'Training for sport is training for war'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17(4), 2000, p. 33.

The most common of the many games played by the regular soldiers were football, cricket and boxing.²³ Sports days continued to spread as well, and during this time began to include football, cricket and boxing matches along with athletics events, gymnastics displays and competitions, and ‘military sports’. Figure 4 shows a sports day from 1899 involving both the military and civilian population during the siege of Kimberley.²⁴ Of course, the popularity of each game varied in the army according to where a regiment was from and at least partly depending on the preferences of the officers. English regiments more often preferred cricket, whilst Scots regiments vastly favoured football over all other sports.²⁵ Figure 5 shows the ‘Gordons playing football under fire in Ladysmith’.²⁶

Accounts of regimental sport during the South Africa campaign continued to dominate the journals of the various regiments based across the country. Around the turn of the century, *The Thistle*, the monthly journal of the 1st Regiment of Foot, The Royal Scots, and *The Thin Red Line*, journal of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, contained more information about company and regimental football than about the regiment’s actions on active service in India and in South Africa.²⁷

The soldiers, ever resourceful, did not allow their situation in South Africa to detract from their ‘recreational’ pursuits. The December 1901 issue of *The Thistle* for example, contains an account of a football game played between officers and NCOs at Gun Hill Camp, Middelburg, whilst the battalion was awaiting orders. It would seem as if a good time was had by all, in spite of soaring temperatures and the fact that several players on the officer’s team might have been ringers: “Please note that of those composing the officer’s team some got their commissions very quickly – for instance, Pte. McDougall, of 2nd Battalion Fame, who was previous to the kick-off an officer’s servant, turns up smiling as an officer at right-back”.²⁸ An indication, perhaps, that in those days, it did no harm in the British army to be a capable sportsman!

Cricket was also played extensively amongst regiments during the war. The Northumberland Fusiliers continued to play their favourite game, with reports in the April 1901 issue of *St.*

²³ J.D. Campbell, ‘Training for sport is training for war’. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17(4), 2000, p. 33.

²⁴ From the Public Collection, McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

²⁵ C. Beg, *The Soldier at Play*, 1975, p. 76.

²⁶ H.W. Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria, Vol. II*, 1901, p. 493.

²⁷ J.D. Campbell, ‘Training for sport is training for war’. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17(4), 2000, p. 45.

²⁸ *The Thistle*, December 1901, p. 150.



Figure 4: Sports at the Sanatorium during the Siege of Kimberley, 1899.



Frank Craig.]

GORDONS PLAYING FOOTBALL UNDER FIRE IN LADYSMITH.

Artist at work on the spot by W. T. Mason

The incident here depicted took place on November 18. The Boers dropped a shell into the football ground in the midst of the game, fortunately without injuring anyone; the Gordons filled up the hole and went on with their sports.

Figure 5.

George's Gazette of matches at Lichtenburg between the officers and sergeants, the 5th Battalion versus the 3rd Imperial Yeomanry, and also against Paget's Horse.²⁹ The Guards also played cricket during the South Africa campaign, as the *Household Brigade Magazine* reported in 1901: "An interesting cricket match was played at Springfontein, Orange River Colony, 1 December, between the 1st Battalion, the Scots Guards and Lord Lovat's Scouts, who won by 16 runs".³⁰ Even the threat of Boer bombardment during the siege of Mafeking, could not interrupt the cricket matches played by the 'Elevens of Lieut. Murray and Lieut. Minchin in the Market Square' during the latter part of 1899.³¹ Figure 6 depicts British troops indulging in a game of cricket whilst on active duty in the veldt.³²

The Voyage to South Africa

Her Majesty's ship "Guelph" February 1900

My Dear Mother and Father,

... While writing this letter, we left the Bay of Biscay. I had heard talk of it and can tell you I felt it. The sailors said it was the roughest they had seen it for a long time. For instance, we ought to have been through it in thirty hours and it took us three days and two nights. The Captain said we ought to travel at 12 miles an hour and we only did 4 ½ ... We have drill every morning on the deck in sections. The passengers do enjoy it. It takes us all our time to stay on our feet.

Your loving son, Arthur.³³

This experience was typical of many of the troops who sailed to serve in the Boer War. The voyage of some sixteen days from Britain to South Africa was usually very tedious and sports and recreation on board for the soldiers was commonplace. Whilst most travelled aboard troop transports, some of the more fortunate officers and men completed the journey on board ordinary passenger liners. On one occasion, General Buller organised a programme for physical entertainment on board the *Dunnottar Castle*³⁴ and showed special interest in the tug-of-war manned by eight stalwart officers on one side pitted against the second class passengers and then against the marines on the other.³⁵

²⁹ *St. George's Gazette*, 30 April 1901, p. 220.

³⁰ *Household Brigade Magazine*, 1901, p. 67.

³¹ *The Mafeking Mail*, 9 November 1899, p. 3.

³² From the Public Collection, Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein.

³³ A. Stennet, *Letters from South Africa*, 2001. Anglo-Boer War Museum, Collection 6805/1, pp. 4-5.

³⁴ Involved in transport of a different kind, some years earlier this vessel, the *Dunnottar Castle*, had taken Maclagan and his 1891 touring British rugby team to Cape Town to meet South Africa for the first time. See A.C. Parker, *The Springboks 1891-1970*, 1970, p. 7.

³⁵ E.M. Wessels, 'British Play Onboard Ship'. *Knapsak*, 4(3), 1992, p. 20.



Figure 6: British troops playing cricket whilst on active duty in the veldt.

The Earl of Rosslyn in his book also recounts the ‘sport’ on board the Union liner *Briton* whilst en route to Cape Town during January 1900:

(The men) double round the boat-deck for hours every day, do plenty of physical drill, and are learning to mount and dismount on a vaulting horse which is on board for the purpose.³⁶ Among them I found a friend in R.P. Lewis, the old Oxford wicket-keeper.³⁷

Not all the troops indulged in organised sports on board ship. Dr. Francis Fremantle mentions in the diary which he kept on board the *Roslin Castle*, that the best time of day was from 6 to 7.30 a.m. as this was the time “during which you drink your coffee and perform various gymnastic feats in pyjamas, doing a mile round and round the slippery decks or pulling in a tug-of-war”.³⁸ Clearly the benefit of exercise was known to the British, but what of the enemy they faced on arrival in South Africa?

‘Boeresport’ (rural sports)

After an engagement near Belfast on 13 February 1901, Burgher Roland Schikkerling found himself as custodian of five prisoners from the Queensland Mounted Infantry (QMI).³⁹ The next day he wrote the following:

The five QMI prisoners, who have liberty to wander where they like, are greatly amused at our playing the childish games of ‘Leap-frog’ and ‘Egg in the hat’, saying they had no idea we were such natural beings. Strange it must seem to them to see the same howling and dashing horsemen of yesterday ... now going out morning and evening to play at skipping, rounders, and other girlish games.⁴⁰

For the Boer on active service, life offered ample time for all manner of pastimes and types of recreation as actual battles formed only a minor part of existence on commando. Organised *Boeresport*, including athletics and horse racing, and informal fun and games were popular throughout the war and especially prevalent on the traditional feast days and public holidays of the Republics.⁴¹ Certainly during the early days of the campaign when ardour for the struggle still abounded, and in the idle times towards the end, both organised and informal

³⁶ See Figure 7. The Earl of Rosslyn, *Twice Captured*, 1900, p. 20.

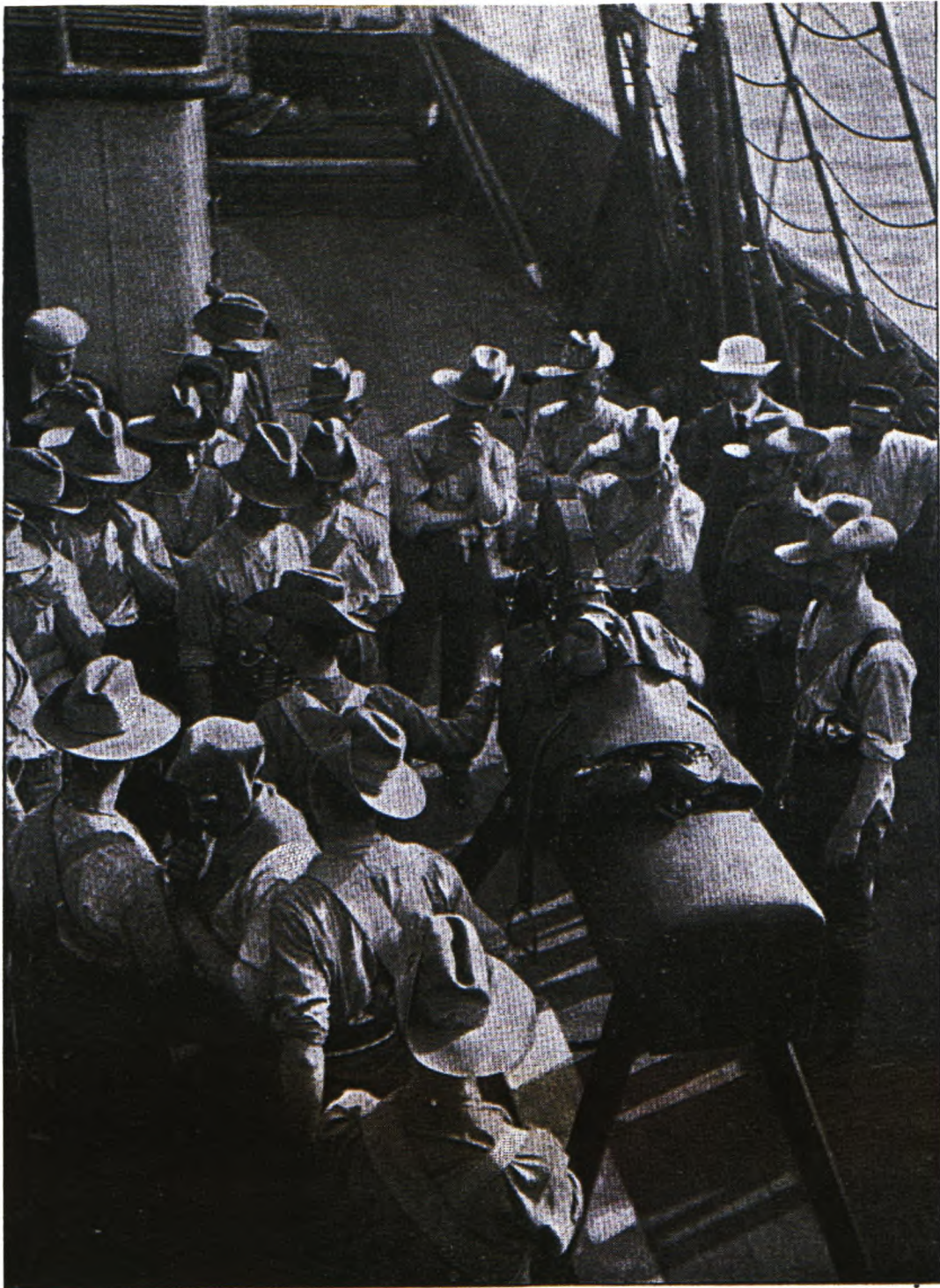
³⁷ The Earl of Rosslyn, *Twice Captured*, 1900, pp. 6-7.

³⁸ F.E. Fremantle, *Impressions of a Doctor in Khaki*, 1901, p. 24.

³⁹ One, a Corporal named W.S. Buchanan, was lightly wounded in the head, and the others were C.B. Holme, L.R. Rawson, Dr. Matthews and L.C. Wilson (who later wrote to Schikkerling to thank him for the treatment his colleagues and he received while captive). See R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando Courageous*, 1964, pp. 149-51.

⁴⁰ R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando Courageous*, 1964, pp. 152-53.

⁴¹ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 112.



THE VAULTING-HORSE ON BOARD THE BRITON.

Figure 7.

games were played regularly among the burghers. After the victory at Bakenlaagte on 30 October 1901 for example, Pretorius records how “the Heidelbergers celebrated with an athletics and *Boeresport* meeting and in Natal, early in March 1900 after the bad news of the relief of Ladysmith, the collapse of the southern front and Cronje’s surrender, ... the same commando had cheered itself with sporting activities.”⁴²

Enthusiastic athletes at *Boeresport* days competed in various track and field events, like 100 (sometimes 120) and 220 yards races; high jump; running long jump; and shot-put. Traditional *Boeresport* events included an obstacle race; three-legged races, in which participants ran in pairs, their inside legs tied together, as well as finger-tug and the traditional tug-of-war.⁴³ Officers encouraged these games as good for moral and sometimes even money or valuables were collected beforehand to serve as prizes. At the sports meeting near Heidelberg on New Years Day 1901, for instance, Henning Viljoen earned five shillings for winning the sack race, and he and his partner shared half a crown for their second place in the three-legged race. A year later, with rations and ammunitions scarce, the first prizes at Steenkampsberg were five Mauser cartridges for the 120 yards over eighteen, three Lee-Metford cartridges for high jump, two plugs of tobacco for the three-legged race, a draught of maize coffee for the standing long jump, and a pinch of snuff for every member of the Heidelberg and Carolina Commando teams who drew in the tug-of-war.⁴⁴ The final bitter months of the war had brought value, it seems, to things other than money.

Quoits was also a popular game on commando. Also known as *ghoen-gooi* (literally ‘throwing marbles’) it was played by all burghers, young and old.⁴⁵ A game related to traditional *jukskei* (literally ‘yolk pin’) quoits were thrown by players in turn, scoring each time the quoit fell over the stake opposite them.⁴⁶ The first team to reach a score of twenty one was the winner, and winning teams were enthusiastically challenged. During the guerrilla phase General P.R. Viljoen and his partner almost permanently sported the red ribbons that distinguished them as the top quoits players of their commando.⁴⁷

⁴² F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 112.

⁴³ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 113.

⁴⁴ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 113.

⁴⁵ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 114.

⁴⁶ The only sport to originate in South Africa, *Jukskei* is similar to quoits and the American game of throwing the horseshoe. The *Jukskei*, which is used instead, is the wooden pin from an ox-yolk and common at the time of the Voortrekkers. It was artificially revived around the time of the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938. See V. de Kock, *The Fun They Had!* 1955, p. 70; D. Harrison, *The White Tribe of Africa*, 1981, p. 96 and Readers Digest, *South Africa's Yesterdays*, 1981, p. 232

⁴⁷ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 114

But what of those games played and recognised by their enemy, the British? With regard to rugby and soccer on commando, Pretorius, like the author and other researchers of this period, found reference to ‘football’ being played, but little indication as to which code this referred. Although there is no direct reference to rugby, there were however, well-known rugby players on commando, which might mean that they played this game in their leisure time – provided of course a ball could be found. One of these players was *Dominee* Herman van Broekhuizen who, as a student at the Victoria College played for South Africa at Cape Town against the visiting British rugby team captained by J. Hammond in 1896, and who was a member of Danie Theron’s Scouting Corps during the war; Generals Beyers and Bouwer had both represented the Transvaal before the war; Jopie Fourie had played with Bouwer for the Pretoria club; and prominent Pretoria residents like the lawyer Robbie Reynecke and the surveyor Charles Jeppe had been team-mates of Bouwer and Fourie – both were killed at Spioenkop.⁴⁸

There were, however, clear indications that football’s other code, soccer, was played and enjoyed by burghers on commando. On the afternoon of 10 October 1899, as part of the celebrations of Kruger’s birthday, Danie Theron and other members of his corps played a game of “football” against the State Artillery team at Zandspruit. Strong wind prevented either team from scoring and the match ended in a draw.⁴⁹ Figure 8 shows the same Free State Artillery football team a year earlier in 1898, including the now famous Gideon Scheepers (front, right) himself a keen soccer player.⁵⁰ The game was also played during the guerrilla phase. Pretorius records how the Boksburg Commando team narrowly beat a team of Heidelberg and Carolina burghers late in the war, on a site vacated by the British in the Eastern Transvaal. The next day most of the men were limping because of the uneven field.⁵¹ Albeit to a lesser extent, cricket was also played by the commandos, although with equipment scarce, opportunities were limited. Sarel Eloff’s challenge to the besieged Baden-Powell outside Mafeking in late April 1900 is one such indication that cricket figured among the

⁴⁸ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 115; O.J.O. Ferreira, *Memoirs of General Ben Bouwer*, 1980, pp. 38-39; H.P. Swaffer (Ed.), *South African Sport 1914*, [1915], p. 65.

⁴⁹ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 115; E.G. Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 1981, p. 7 and J.H. Breytenbach, *Kommandant Danie Theron*, 1950, p. 121.

⁵⁰ K. Schoeman, *Bloemfontein in Beeld*, 1987, p.62. Seconded to the Artillery of the Orange Free State as a communications expert, Scheepers served during the war under Christiaan de Wet as an intelligence officer. Put on trial and shot by the British on 18 January 1902, his determination to carry on the fight had been great. In July 1901 he had written to Christiaan de Wet saying that the blood of too many brave burghers had been shed to give up the struggle; he would fight to the death. M. Marix Evans, *Encyclopaedia of the Boer War*, 2000, p. 234. For an account of Scheepers’ life also see E. Lee, *To the Bitter End*, 1985 and P. Labuschagne, *Ghost Riders of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)*, 1999.

⁵¹ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 115.



Figure 8: Free State Artillery Football Team, 1898.
(Gideon Scheepers, front right).

sporting interests of the Boers on military service.⁵² During the guerrilla phase in the Eastern Transvaal one cricket fan from Boksburg reputedly always had his bat strapped to his saddle and at the slightest opportunity took up his place at the stumps.⁵³ Rounders, a type of baseball, also helped to while away leisure hours.⁵⁴

As part of the Boers inherent 'manliness', physical strength was of course regarded with manifest admiration. As a result, the burghers enjoyed boxing and wrestling in their spare time.⁵⁵ During the first phase General Ben Boucher recalls how the 'noble art' played a big part in daily life with the Ermelo Commando:

Boxing was a favourite, it drew the largest crowd; but running, jumping and wrestling all had their adherents. We set up a ring nearly every time we halted and any man who aspired to the championship of the commando had the path to it clear before him: all he needed to do was to step into the ring and take his coat off.⁵⁶

In some commandos, like those of Ermelo and Boshof, the boxers even had gloves.⁵⁷ It would appear that, where possible, the burghers managed to pursue their love of sport as keenly as their British counterparts.

⁵² W. Hillcourt, *Baden-Powell. The Two Lives of a Hero*, 1964, p. 197. See also R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando Courageous*, 1964, p. 139, for a further example of cricket played on commando.

⁵³ N. Hofmeyr, *Zes Maanden Bij De Commando's*, 1903, p. 285.

⁵⁴ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 116.

⁵⁵ R.H. Davis, *With both Armies in South Africa*, 1900, p. 190; O.J.O. Ferreira, *Memoirs of General Ben Boucher*, pp. 37-38.

⁵⁶ O.J.O. Ferreira, *Memoirs of General Ben Boucher*, p. 37.

⁵⁷ F. Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, 1999, p. 116.

Guests of Her Majesty

Some places 'tis our fate to see
Are odious as they well can be
The worst of all, it seems to me
Is prison

There is no change in any day
You get no money and no pay
No chance to fight or run away
In prison

Johan C. Pretorius.
Greenpoint Prisoner of War Camp, 9 May 1900.⁵⁸

Apart from sport played in the veld, the war, it would appear had had an unexpected effect on the evolution of 'colonial' games within South Africa. Highlighted through the work of Van der Merwe⁵⁹ there is a suggestion that Afrikaners only took up sports such as rugby en masse after learning the intricacies of the games in British prisoner of war camps. In total twenty seven thousand Boers were captured during the war and twenty four thousand of them were sent to prisoner of war camps abroad in the British enclaves of St. Helena, Ceylon, India and Bermuda. As Van der Merwe notes, sport came as a natural deliverance from the adversity of the camps and it was during this period that a large percentage of the Boer prisoners were introduced to 'British sports' for the first time.⁶⁰

Before transfer overseas though, many Boers found themselves temporarily in the prisoner of war camps set up in and around Cape Town. Although conditions varied, for those housed at Greenpoint and Simon's Town sport became a welcome distraction from the monotony of camp life.

Tennis was one of the first sports to get underway at the Cycle Track Camp, Greenpoint. With the donation of four rackets and a net by the *Hulpfonds vir Krygsgevangenes* (Fund for the Relief of Prisoners of War), a club under the captainship of John Adam was founded only three weeks after the first prisoners arrived there at the end of March 1900.⁶¹ By 1901 there

⁵⁸ J.C. Pretorius, *In Prison*, 1900. Within the Pretorius Collection made available by Mrs. S. Bowman, Stellenbosch.

⁵⁹ F.J.G. van der Merwe, *Sport and Games in Boer Prisoner of War Camps During the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, 1992 and F.J.G. van der Merwe, *Rugby in the Prisoner of War Camps During the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, 1998.

⁶⁰ F.J.G. van der Merwe, *Sport and Games in Boer Prisoner of War Camps During the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, 1992.

⁶¹ M.C.E. van Schoor (Ed.), *Dagboek van Hugo H. van Niekerk*, 1972, p. 57.

were twenty five members.⁶² Figure 9 shows all the members of the club right before the closing of the camp in November 1901.⁶³ Soccer was even more popular and more than one team was formed so that tournaments could be held. A team made up of players from Boshof was the proud winner of one such tournament, beating a Jagersfontein team and a camp team made up of players from different areas.⁶⁴ See figure 10.⁶⁵

To alleviate their frustrations, bare fist boxing contents also became a popular diversion for the Boer prisoners at Greenpoint,⁶⁶ as did rugby, with sides from the Free State and the Transvaal soon formed. Trained by advocate J. de Villiers, they played their rugby matches on the inner track, which boasted a pair of goal posts.⁶⁷

Nearly a full year after the establishment of Skyview,⁶⁸ a cricket eleven was formed there. It was suggested that the British medical officer, Dr. R. Morrow, a good cricketer, should set up a staff team in order to provide the prison team with opponents.⁶⁹ That such a suggestion should come from the prisoners themselves shows that there was a co-operative spirit of competition between prisoners and their guards. It is also consistent with other evidence suggesting generally considerate treatment of prisoners and cordial relations between the two at the Greenpoint camps.⁷⁰

Athletic meetings with various running and jumping events were held almost from the beginning of the first camp's existence.⁷¹ One such meeting was cancelled on 2 May 1900 in deference to the death of Philip Cronje, who had been shot by a sentry two days earlier.⁷² Other more informal games participated in by prisoners were those of the school boy variety

⁶² R. Reid, *Boer Prisoners of War at Greenpoint March 1900 – December 1901*, 1989, p. 57.

⁶³ From the Public Collection, Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein.

⁶⁴ R. Reid, *Boer Prisoners of War at Greenpoint March 1900 – December 1901*, 1989, p. 57.

⁶⁵ From the Public Collection, Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein.

⁶⁶ See figure 11. From the Public Collection, Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein. Following the arrest of Jim Holloway on 12 June 1900, the middleweight champion of Pretoria was responsible for promoting boxing in both the camps at Greenpoint and at Diyatalawa in Ceylon. See E.M. Wessels, *Tog houden wij jolly boksevegte*, 1990, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁷ R. Reid, *Boer Prisoners of War at Greenpoint March 1900 – December 1901*, 1989, p. 57.

⁶⁸ Skyview was the second camp to be erected on the Greenpoint site.

⁶⁹ *The Skyview Parrot*, 18 September 1901.

⁷⁰ R. Reid, *Boer Prisoners of War at Greenpoint March 1900 – December 1901*, 1989.

⁷¹ V. Pohl, *Adventures of a Boer Family*, 1944.

⁷² See T. van Rensburg (Ed.), *Oorlogsjoernaal van S.J. Burger 1899-1902*, 1977, p. 31.



Figure 9: Prisoner of War Tennis Club. Cycle Track Camp, Greenpoint, Cape Town. November 1901.



Figure 10: Soccer players of Greenpoint Prisoner of War Camp.



Figure 11: The Boxing Club, Greenpoint. Prisoner of War Camp.

such as bok-bok, ghoen, quoits and marbles,⁷³ while less energetic games such as draughts, chess, bridge, whist and word games proved equally popular.⁷⁴

Burgher Hugo van Niekerk, while captive at Greenpoint, reflected on the recreation favoured by his colleagues:

It is sometimes amusing to see what kind of childish games they play. Leap frog (Bok, Bok ...), 'Caps on the Back' and others usually played by schoolboys are now fancied. Football and tennis, indeed any kind of sport is being played.⁷⁵

Boers imprisoned at Greenpoint took their sport so seriously that they even established a 'sport committee' to deal with issues affecting their leisure time. Captured burgher, Johan C. Pretorius, Hon. Secretary of the committee, wrote the following letter to the camp commandant in the hope of improved facilities for the prisoners:

Greenpoint Track
7 September 1900

Lt. Col. Money-
Comdt.
Greenpoint

Sir,

The sporting committee for prisoners of war; do hereby respectfully beg your permission, to make a tennis court between the buildings B and C; and also to have the use of the cricket matting which is here in the camp.

Hoping this will meet with your approval.

I am yours obediently and faithfully,
J.C. Pretorius
Hon. Sec. Sport Com.⁷⁶

The appeal, however, received mixed results owing to the ground not being owned by the British military rather the local sports club from which the site was leased. Lt. Col. Money's response read:

⁷³ V. Pohl, *Adventures of a Boer Family*, 1944, p. 82; M.C.E. van Schoor (Ed.), *Dagboek van Hugo H. van Niekerk*, 1972, pp. 49 & 68.

⁷⁴ M.C.E. van Schoor (Ed.), *Dagboek van Hugo H. van Niekerk*, 1972, p. 11; *The Skyview Parrot*, 18 September 1901.

⁷⁵ M.C.E. van Schoor (Ed.), *Dagboek van Hugo H. van Niekerk*, 1972, p. 49, translated.

⁷⁶ J.C. Pretorius, *Letter to Lt. Col. Money, Commandant Greenpoint Prisoner of War Camp, Cape Town, 7 September 1900*. In the Pretorius Collection made available by Mrs. S. Bowman, Stellenbosch.

Hon. Sec. Sporting Committee

You are quite welcome to have lawn tennis where you propose. But I must make you responsible that the windows in the huts are not broken, and think to prevent this you would have to put wire before the windows.

I am afraid the matting for cricket pitch does not belong to me, but to the club from which the ground is hired, and I have no power to lend it.

Lt. Col. Money to the committee.⁷⁷

Sport was indeed as important to the Boer prisoners of war captive at Simon's Town. In a letter to the Prime Minister in early 1900, Joubert, a Boer prisoner, mentioned the importance placed on sport whilst complaining of the camp's conditions:

Dear Sir,

I am just writing a line or two to inform you the way which we are treated. First we had eight men in a tent and had cricket and football grounds. But now we are deprived of our pleasure ... and we are nine men in a tent in which a person can hardly sleep.⁷⁸

Facilities in the camps varied, especially once the prisoners were transferred overseas. In March 1900 Hugo van Niekerk reported in his diary that the cycling course in the Greenpoint prisoner of war camp had more than enough seats for spectators and that the piece of land is perfect for soccer and tennis.⁷⁹ In St. Helena however the rugby players of Broadbottom Camp could not find space to practice and had to contend with the hilly terrain and high winds experienced on the island as well as the restrictions of the authorities.⁸⁰

In March 1900, despite these difficulties, Broadbottom played against an experienced Deadwood Camp team which contained a number of players who had regularly played for Pirates before the war. Figure 12 shows the Deadwood Camp team during May 1900.⁸¹ By April 1901, as restrictions eased, Broadbottom were playing up to three times a week outside the camp against the prisoners of war out on parole in James Town. By that time two rugby clubs had already been established, namely, *Nooitgedacht* and *The Exiles* and these were later joined by *Kamp Kruimels*, *Federals*, *Eendracht*, *Krugerites* and *Mausers*. A club

⁷⁷ Lt. Col. Money, *Letter to the Hon. Sec. Sporting Committee, Greenpoint Prisoner of War Camp, Cape Town*, 7 September 1900. In the Pretorius Collection made available by Mrs. S. Bowman, Stellenbosch.

⁷⁸ A. Joubert, *Letter to the Hon. Mr. W.P. Schreiner (Prime Minister)*, Prisoner of War Camp, Simon's Town, 24 March 1900. University of Cape Town Collection BC 112.

⁷⁹ H.H. Van Niekerk, *Dagboek van Hugo H. van Niekerk*, 1972, p. 48.

⁸⁰ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Rugby'. *Knapsak*, 1(1), 1989, pp.7-8.

⁸¹ From the Public Collection, Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein.



Figure 12: Deadwood Prisoner of War Camp, St. Helena.
Rugby Team, May 1900.

championship was contested between all these clubs in October 1901, with Krugerites being the victors.⁸²

At Diyatalawa – a prisoner of war camp in Ceylon – similar rugby rivalries were established. L. Edmeade's and P. Oosthuizen's teams battled for the Rugby Challenge Cup in April 1900 and in July 1901 the challenge was between three teams, namely, *Franchise*, *Suzerainity* and *Independence*. In that same month around 1 500 spectators at Diyatalawa witnessed a game between representatives of the Transvaal and Orange Free State rugby teams.⁸³

These matches were taken very seriously and were played in a hard manner, no doubt as an opportunity for the burghers to take out their frustrations on each other. On Ceylon, Ginger Roelof ended up in hospital after one of these games while Theo Curran wrote that his shins were swollen from all the kicks he had to suffer. Even the match between *Bloemfontein Colleges* and the *All Comers* in March 1902 had its number of casualties.⁸⁴

Though the games could be very tough at times, players within the team were, however, very disciplined. When rumours started spreading on St. Helena that the Broadbottom players were smuggling in liquor after the matches they were all thoroughly searched after every game or practice session. Those who used foul language, were in danger of being expelled from the Sport Union since it was against the beliefs of the Union. This could be attributed to the fact that some prisoners of war, even at this stage, considered playing sports, and specifically rugby, as a sin.⁸⁵

Despite the poor weather on St. Helena, soccer managed to flourish there amongst the Boer prisoners and challenge matches were regularly played. During March 1901 the camp newspaper *De Krijgsgevangene* reported how Deadwood Camp had trounced Broadbottom by seven goals to zero while in June of that year Transvaal (Johannesburg and District) had gone down to the Free State (Bloemfontein and Kroonstad) by three goals to two.⁸⁶ On Bermuda however, space was at a premium and Burts Island was the only camp with its own soccer field.⁸⁷ Here, tennis was more accessible and by the end of the war in Bermuda, the camps in

⁸² E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Rugby'. *Knapsak*, 1(1), 1989, pp.7-8.

⁸³ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Rugby'. *Knapsak*, 1(1), 1989, pp.7-8.

⁸⁴ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Rugby'. *Knapsak*, 1(1), 1989, pp.7-8.

⁸⁵ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Rugby'. *Knapsak*, 1(1), 1989, pp.7-8.

⁸⁶ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Sokker!' *Knapsak*, 1(3), 1989, p. 12.

⁸⁷ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Sokker!' *Knapsak*, 1(3), 1989, p. 12.

Darrells, Tuckers, Burts and Hawkins all had a tennis court or two. The residents of Darrells even had a croquet court.⁸⁸

In Trichinopoly (India) a *Lawn Tennis and Gymnastics Club* was established. The camp authorities laid out the necessary courts and provided the prisoners of war with rackets and nets. Also in Trichinopoly the birthdays of Presidents Steyn and Kruger were celebrated with an athletics meeting on 10 October 1901. The celebrations were preceded by a prayer meeting before 'roll call' and a meeting in the hall afterwards. The meeting was interrupted for a special religious practice in the Recreation Hall.⁸⁹ The *Centraal Sport Committee*, that consisted of representatives of the *Takhaar Cricket Club*, the *Takhaar Tennis Club* and the *Takhaar Voetbal Club* were responsible for the arrangements of these and other meetings.⁹⁰

Given their Colonial heritage however, cricket remained the favoured sport of the camps in both Ceylon and India. At the parole camp in Dagshai, at the foot of the Himalayas, the Boers played against the soldiers on a regular basis.⁹¹ Of all the matches they played, the prisoners of war only lost one.⁹² Melanie Steyn tells a fascinating story of her grandfather, Marthinus Hendrik Steyn, who at seventeen was captured by the British and imprisoned at Dagshai. A talented all-rounder, Steyn was noticed playing cricket in the camp and in an unprecedented move, was made an honorary British officer so that he could play in their regimental team. With the military, he toured all over India playing for the British as a prisoner of war.⁹³ In Ahmednagar as well, the *Ahmednagar Boer Cricket Club* shown in figure 13,⁹⁴ also played quite a few games against the guards.⁹⁵ Further examples, it seems, of sport crossing the political and cultural divide.

As well as team sports the prisoners of war also participated in other physical activities to pass the long hours in the camp. A very popular society was the *Wapenbroeders Schermvereeniging*. Nineteen prisoners of war in St. Helena established the society on 21 August 1901 with the aim of improving their fencing skills and to entertain their fellow prisoners. With the help of Sir Wijgers, previous instructor of the fencing society, *De Vrije*

⁸⁸ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Tennis'. *Knapsak*, 2(3), 1990, p. 19.

⁸⁹ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Atletiek!' *Knapsak*, 2(1/2) 1990, p. 15.

⁹⁰ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Atletiek!' *Knapsak*, 2(1/2), 1990, p. 15.

⁹¹ F.J.G. van der Merwe, *Sport en Spel in die Boerekrygsgevangenekampe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902*, 1992, p.97.

⁹² E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Cricket!' *Knapsak*, 1(4), 1989, p. 11.

⁹³ M. Steyn, Private Interview, Stellenbosch. 13 November 2001. See p. 121 of this study.

⁹⁴ From the Public Collection, Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein.

⁹⁵ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Cricket!' *Knapsak*, 1(4), 1989, p. 11.



Figure 13. The Ahmednagar Boer Cricket Club.

Wapenbroeders in Pretoria, they received the necessary fencing equipment from Holland and on 11 October 1901 a fencing show was held in the *Nut en Vermaak* building. De Haas, Stalk and Saris delivered excellent shows.⁹⁶

Gymnastics was also popular especially amongst the German, Dutch and Scandinavian prisoners of war on St. Helena. In the camps in Bermuda the prisoners also received a selection of gymnastics equipment that included a horizontal bar, bridge and rings. On Burts Island a club was established where a number of skilled gymnasts also acted as instructors.⁹⁷

The *International Sporting Club* in St. Helena possessed a billiard table that they put up in a building next to the German block. Players had to pay three penning per game and for many this was a totally new experience. Rocco de Villiers also mentions in his diary that there were two billiard tables in the camp on Morgan Island (Bermuda) made by the prisoners of war. On St. Helena a ten pin bowling court was also set up in the building next to the *Nut en Vermaak*.⁹⁸ Athletics meetings were also organised. Figure 14 shows the one-mile race held on 27 March 1902 at the Deadwood Camp.⁹⁹

With restrictions eased in the different camps, the authorities often allowed the prisoners of war on parole to go on excursions. Hiking was encouraged in Ceylon whilst on St. Helena some of the Boers visited the grave of Napoleon whilst others decided to climb the highest mountain, Dinah's Peak.¹⁰⁰

Guests of the Republic

But what of the allied prisoners of war? Whilst research has highlighted details of the Boer camps, a first hand account by Trooper H.P. Valintine appeared in 1901 which could at least shed some light upon sport and recreation in the allied prisoner of war camps. The New Zealander, who as a member of the First Contingent was among the first of the Colonial Corps to arrive at the Cape, was taken prisoner by the Boers at Sanna's Post on 30 March 1900 and sent to a camp at Waterval. It seems, like the British, the Boers were relaxed enough to allow 'traditional' sports to be played in their camps, as Valintine recalls here with some humour:

⁹⁶ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Als Krijgsgevangene!' *Knapsak*, 3(1), 1991, p. 20.

⁹⁷ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Als Krijgsgevangene!' *Knapsak*, 3(1), 1991, p. 20.

⁹⁸ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Als Krijgsgevangene!' *Knapsak*, 3(1), 1991, p. 19.

⁹⁹ From the Public Collection, Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein.

¹⁰⁰ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden Wij Jolly Als Krijgsgevangene!' *Knapsak*, 3(1), 1991, p. 19.



Figure 14: The one-mile race. Deadwood Camp, 27 March 1902.

Of amusements in Waterval, we had quite a variety. We played cricket until the ball was lost, and the bats and stumps taken for fire wood. For football, which was very popular at first, we were hardly in the necessary condition. It was amusing to see the game after we had been playing a few minutes. The man with the ball could only get up a Chinaman's trot, while his opponents would languidly walk after him; besides, it made one so hungry that, as Tommy said, he could eat the ball.¹⁰¹

According to the Earl of Rosslyn who spent some time as a prisoner of war on the race track in Pretoria they had plenty of time after breakfast to work on quoits, cricket and even chess. They played their matches in a very limited space, using a tennis ball and a stick, with two boxes for wickets. It was exercise nevertheless and helped to pass the time, as the days, as in most prisons, had a tendency to follow each other with monotonous regularity.¹⁰²

More than a Game

In the days of amateur sport, whenever war descended upon England and her colonies, international sportsmen rallied to the ranks. The Anglo-Boer War was no different as the top rugby players of the day, cricketers and the like, were called to arms to serve Queen and country. For some however, the conflict in South Africa proved the ultimate sacrifice.

Among those destined not to return was cricketer Frank Milligan, a Yorkshireman who had toured South Africa a year earlier with Lord Hawke's side. In the war he served the Rhodesian Regiment as an officer under Colonel Plumer, but was killed on 31 March 1900 during an attempt to relieve Mafeking.¹⁰³ Among his possessions was found a Yorkshire fixture card for the 1900 season. The report stated mournfully, "He could not guess that he had played his last match".¹⁰⁴ Another was Douglas Money Penny, 2nd Lieutenant with the Seaforth Highlanders. Educated at Fettes College, Edinburgh, he had excelled at sport before going on to achieve his international cap for Scotland at rugby football. Present at the actions of Magersfontein and Koodoosdrift, Money Penny (see figure 15)¹⁰⁵ died 19 February 1900 of wounds received in action near Paardeberg the previous day.¹⁰⁶ Other sportsmen were more fortunate:

¹⁰¹ H.P. Valintine, *Ten Weeks a Prisoner of War*, 1901, p. 20.

¹⁰² The Earl of Rosslyn, *Twice Captured*, 1900.

¹⁰³ J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 43.

¹⁰⁴ G. Hughes, *The Veil of War*, 1989, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ S. Lunderstedt (Ed.), *The Summer of 1899*, p. 285.

¹⁰⁶ M.G. Dooner, *The Last Post*, 1903, pp. 266-267.



*2nd Lieut. D.B. Money Penny, Scottish Rugby
International, 2nd Seaforth Highlanders,
killed at Paardeberg.*

Figure 15.

Surgeon Captain Tommy J. Crean

Thomas Joseph Crean was born in Dublin on April 19, 1874, the second son of Michael Theobald Crean and Emma Crean (nee Dunne). His father, a barrister, insisted on having his sons well educated. Tommy was sent to Clongowes School and then to the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin where he qualified as a L.R.C.P.¹⁰⁷ Crean excelled at rugby and was first capped for Ireland at the age of nineteen. He played regularly for his country between 1894 and 1896. In 1896 Crean reached the pinnacle of his career as Ireland won the triple crown that year and five international forwards were chosen to tour South Africa with Hammond's British Isles side. Crean was one of them, and was later acknowledged as the driving force behind the team's successes.¹⁰⁸ The team won nineteen of its twenty one matches in South Africa, losing only the final international.¹⁰⁹

Whilst in Johannesburg the team saw Paul Kruger in the Volksraad, and at the opposite extreme Woolls-Sampson and Karri Davies in prison. The latter were serving two year sentences for their abortive action in the Jameson Raid. They were later to lead the Imperial Light Horse Regiment (I.L.H.) in which Crean and Johnston, a team mate, were to win Victoria Crosses.¹¹⁰

After the conclusion of the tour, Crean and Johnston elected to remain in South Africa as settlers. They joined the Wanderers rugby side in Johannesburg and went on to play for the Transvaal Currie Cup team. The acquisition of the greatest British international forward of the time was a tremendous boost to Transvaal rugby.¹¹¹

Crean settled down to practice medicine in Johannesburg but it was not long before war clouds loomed over the region. Crean threw himself into the *Uitlander* fight with characteristic enthusiasm and when the I.L.H. recruited in Pietermaritzburg, he was one of the first to sign on. Although he could have joined as a doctor, he chose to enter the ranks as a trooper. Shortly after joining, Crean was promoted to Corporal.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 169.

¹⁰⁸ I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 169.

¹⁰⁹ I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933, p. 18.

¹¹⁰ The Imperial Light Horse Regiment arose from the Johannesburg Reform Movement, which ended in the disastrous Jameson Raid. Aubrey Woolls-Sampson, Percy Fitzpatrick, Walter 'Karri' Davies and Charles Mullins, a young Johannesburg barrister, organised the recruiting and financing of the Regiment in September 1899. See I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 119.

¹¹¹ I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 170.

¹¹² G.F. Gibson, *The Story of the Imperial Light Horse*, 1937, p. 322.

Crean got his fill of fighting during the weeks that followed. He was wounded at Elandslaagte and, after recuperating in Ladysmith, took part in the fight on Wagon Hill and all engagements in the defence of Ladysmith.¹¹³ As the siege lengthened, Crean was obliged to revert to his medical duties. The infectious humour of the Irish doctor, author Ian Uys notes, did much to boost the moral of his patients.¹¹⁴ He was commissioned in March 1900 and appointed Captain soon after.

After the siege of Ladysmith was raised, Crean returned to combatant duty, taking part with his regiment in the relief of Mafeking. He was later employed in the Transvaal and Orange Free State operations in command of a troop and, toward the end of 1900, of a squadron. In June 1901 however, Crean relinquished command of his squadron and became the medical officer of the regiment. According to Gibson, his commanding officer had nothing but admiration for the Irishman's fighting qualities, but grew uneasy of his recklessness in battle, so advised him to serve the regiment in his capacity as a surgeon captain.¹¹⁵

On 18 December 1901, Crean found himself part of a column commanded by General Dartnell that was ambushed by General Christiaan de Wet and his seven commandos in the region around Bethlehem (Tygerkloof Spruit). Whilst sharp attacks were made throughout the day, Surgeon Captain Crean entered the firing line to tend the wounded despite heavy fire at close range. Already shot through the left arm he continued his work, but while binding the wound of Lieutenant J. O'Hara, a bullet tore through Crean's stomach from left to right. He half rose, bellowed "By Christ, I'm kilt entirety", and toppled over. As reinforcements arrived, it was believed that Crean had been mortally wounded. General Dartnell obtained sworn statements from the wounded men Crean had succoured at Tygerkloof Spruit, and sent off an immediate recommendation for the Victoria Cross award.

The award of the Victoria Cross to Crean was gazetted on February 11, 1902. By then his splendid physic and fitness had pulled him through and despite the 28-year-old's protests, he was invalided out of the army. Crean returned to London where he set up practice in the West

¹¹³ The I.L.H. comprising mainly *Uitlanders* from Johannesburg, harboured a burning resentment against the Boers. Since the Jameson Raid they had been accused of cowardice and their City mockingly called 'Judasberg'. Ironically they faced General Kock's Johannesburg Commando at Elandslaagte. I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 119; G.F. Gibson, *The Story of the Imperial Light Horse*, 1937, p. 31.

¹¹⁴ I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 172.

¹¹⁵ G.F. Gibson, *The Story of the Imperial Light Horse*, 1937, p. 323.

End. The V.C. was presented to Crean by the King at St. James's Palace on March 13, 1902.¹¹⁶ Figure 16 shows Crean shortly after receiving his award.¹¹⁷

This was not the end of Crean's active service however. After serving as medical officer to the 1st Cavalry Brigade in the First World War, Crean resumed private practice and died in London on March 25, 1923.¹¹⁸

Captain Robert Johnston

A close friend of Tommy Crean's, Robert Johnston was born on August 13, 1872 in Laputa, County Donegal, Ireland, son of Robert Johnston Q.C. He had his schooling at King William's College on the Isle of Man before joining the army at the age of eighteen. Between 1890 and 1894 he served with the 5th Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.¹¹⁹

Johnston proved an extremely capable and versatile rugby player and after representing Ireland in 1893, was selected for the 1896 British tour to South Africa. During the second international in Johannesburg on August 22, he played on the wing instead of in his usual scrum position. From a wheeled scrum, half-back Bell threw a long pass out to Johnston who broke clear before sending a long pass out to Tommy Crean who galloped over for Britain's second try. The final score was 17 – 8 in their favour.¹²⁰

Like Crean, Johnston decided to remain in South Africa after the tour and play rugby for the Wanderers and Transvaal. At the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, he joined the I.L.H. as a Lieutenant and was awarded the Victoria Cross for his involvement in the battle of Elandsplaagte.¹²¹ However, after receiving injuries during the siege of Ladysmith, Johnston was forced to retire from active service.

¹¹⁶ I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 174.

¹¹⁷ I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 171.

¹¹⁸ I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 179.

¹¹⁹ I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 126.

¹²⁰ A.C. Parker, *The Springboks 1891-1970*, 1970, p. 22.

¹²¹ Also awarded the V.C., for his leadership during Elandsplaagte was Captain Charles Herbert Mullins. I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 122. Mullins' brother, Reginald Cuthbert (an Oxford blue), played alongside Johnston and Crean for the 1896 tourists. In August 1891, he had played against the visiting English rugby team in Grahamstown for the district side. D.H. Craven, *Springbok Annals*, 1964, p. 12. There seems to be some confusion here however, as Paul Dobson implies that it was R.C. Mullins who won the V.C., and was therefore the third member of the 1896 team to do so (when in fact it was his brother Charles). See P. Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa – a History 1861-1988*, 1989, p. 48. Ian Uys also confuses the Mullins' brothers and suggests that it was Robert George and not Reginald Cuthbert who appeared on the 1896 tour. See I.S. Uys, *Victoria Crosses of the Anglo-Boer War*, 2000, p. 12. Both Danie Craven and E.W. Ballantine as well as W.J. Carey (Oxford University XV, 1894-1897) are in agreement however that the Mullins rugby player in question did, in fact, hold the initials R.C. and not R.G. as Uys implies. D.H. Craven, *Springbok Annals*, 1964, p. 28; E.W. Ballantine, *The Game in South Africa*, 1921, p. 205 and W.J. Carey, *The British Tour of 1896 in South Africa*, 1933, p. 265.



Figure 16: Surgeon Captain Tommy Crean.

In 1902 Johnston (see figure 17)¹²² was commandant of a concentration camp at Middelburg, and the following year became district commissioner of the Eastern Transvaal. After the war he returned to Ireland and in 1911 joined the prison service there. He died at Kilkenny, Eire, on March 25, 1950, some 27 years to the day after the passing of his great friend and teammate Tommy Crean.¹²³

As this chapter has shown, sport and war were entwined in many different ways. Indeed, the Boers and the British as well as their allies shared a passion for sport that continued throughout and beyond the bitter three year conflict. The next chapter will investigate cricket in particular and how South Africa's emergence on the international stage coincided with this troubled period in the country's history.

¹²² I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 121.

¹²³ I.S. Uys, *For Valour*, 1973, p. 127.



Figure 17: Captain Robert Johnston.

CHAPTER SIX

Flannelled Fools

Cricket first came to South Africa with the military between 1795 and 1802 in the earliest days of the British regime.¹ Members of the garrison which occupied the Cape in 1806 found time to play cricket and two years later the first known reference to a cricket match being played in South Africa appeared in the *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*.² However it was not until later that century, with the arrival of British settlers, that the game started to spread elsewhere. 1843 saw the first organised cricket club appear in Port Elizabeth, followed a year later by one at Wynberg in the Cape. Further north, the first ‘rush’ on the Diamond Fields swept cricket into the Kimberley region, with the Orange Free State receiving its first cricket club in Bloemfontein during 1855.³ The first Transvaal club opened in 1863.⁴

On the whole, cricket seems to have been regarded with approval. An integral part of the assimilation process and steeped in British tradition, it was encouraged as promoting the manly virtues of courage, patience, endurance, good temper and courtesy.⁵ Through its promotion in South African schools, the game soon began to flourish in the towns whilst in the country districts a cricket match became an important social event.⁶ With such growth during the Victorian era, this chapter will explore the ethos and development of the game during the Anglo-Boer War, as well as investigate the controversy which surrounded the second South African tour to England, in 1901.

Cricket’s emergence

In England in the late 19th century cricket was as popular as ever, no longer confined to certain social groups or regions. It had become, as Holt explains, *the* English national sport via its spread from eighteenth century gentry to the growing Victorian middle classes and industrial workers of the cities.⁷ Whilst the winter sport of football remained divided from the outset into its ‘association’ and ‘rugby’ codes, cricket became *the* universal English summer

¹ J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 16.

² The notice read: “A grand match at cricket will be played for 1,000 dollars a side on Tuesday, January 5, 1808, between the officers of the Artillery Mess, having Colonel Austin of the 60th Regiment, and the officers of the Colony, with General Clavering. Wickets to be pitched at 10 o’clock”. *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*, 2 January, 1808. In J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 16.

³ See *The Diamond Fields Advertiser*, Sport and Pastime in South Africa, 1899, p. 19.

⁴ R. Archer & A. Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 1982, p. 81.

⁵ See A. Odendaal, ‘South Africa’s Black Victorians: Sport and Society in South Africa in the Nineteenth Century’ in J. A. Mangan (Ed.) *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture at Home and Abroad 1700-1914*, 1988, p.196.

⁶ V. de Kock, *The fun they had!* 1955, p. 79.

⁷ R. Holt, ‘Cricket and Englishness: The batsman as hero’. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 13(1), 1996, p. 48.

game with great cricketers emerging as national figures in a way other sportsmen could never achieve.⁸

In 1888 the first English tour of South Africa took place. Under the management of Major R. Gardner Warton and captained by C.A. Smith, the team played and won two tests against a representative South African side at the Wanderers Club in Johannesburg.⁹ The tour at the time was significant. Not only did it raise the profile of cricket in South Africa, but it was also the year when the Currie Cup was born. Like Australia some years earlier,¹⁰ South Africa had seemingly arrived as a legitimate cricketing colony.

Pre War Cricket

The English had a considerably easier task before them in South Africa when armed with bats and balls than when provided with the more formidable equipment of bullets and bayonets.¹¹

From the Boer War era right up until the 1950s, both Afrikaners and the English considered cricket an exclusively English sport.¹² “The fact that black cricket became heavily concentrated in areas of strong British influence – the Cape, Eastern Cape and Natal – seems to confirm this view”.¹³ Nevertheless, the history of the game within South Africa during the 19th century shows that during the second half of the century, Boers and blacks also played cricket and the intricacies of the game were far from monopolised by the English. Coloured cricket flourished in the Diamond Fields region for example, where teams such as the ‘Red Crescents’ became affiliated to the local cricket unions (see figure 18).¹⁴ However, whilst black cricket steadily expanded since the 1880s, the Anglo-Boer War at the turn of the century severely marked participation in the game for the Afrikaner population.¹⁵

South Africa had already visited England for the first time in 1894, when Lord Hawke led a troubled tour back to South Africa during the 1895-96 season. Coming at the time of the ill-

⁸ R. Holt, ‘Cricket and Englishness: The batsman as hero’. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 13(1), 1996, p. 48.

⁹ See M. Lee & R.K. Stent, *Southern Africa at Sport*, [1960], p. 61. It would have been common at this time for a team of England’s status, to have faced teams who batted more than eleven men. England’s first game against Western Province, for example, saw them having to dismiss twenty-two opponents. See M. Lee & R.K. Stent, *Southern Africa at Sport*, [1960], p. 61.

¹⁰ For an insight into Australian cricket’s colonial past, see W.F. Mandle, *Going it alone: Australia’s National Identity in the Twentieth Century*, 1979, and D. Adair; M. Phillips & J. Nauright, *Sporting Manhood in Australia*, 1997.

¹¹ P.C. Standing, *Cricket of To-day*, vol. 1. [1902], p. 135.

¹² R. Archer & A. Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 1982, p. 79.

¹³ R. Archer & A. Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 1982, p. 79.

¹⁴ *The Diamond Fields Advertiser*, Sport and Pastime in South Africa, 1899, p. 19.

¹⁵ R. Archer & A. Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 1982, p. 79.



A MALAY CRICKET CLUB: THE RED CRESCENTS.

Figure 18.

fated Jameson Raid, Anglo-Boer tensions were at a peak and the tour was constantly shrouded by the political crisis in the country.¹⁶ Three years later Hawke was persuaded by the Honourable J.D. Logan to bring out a second tour to South Africa. The country however, had not regained its stability. (Both of Lord Hawke's teams are shown in figure 19).¹⁷

The railway line had been extended from Kimberley to Bulawayo in 1897 and two matches were to be played during this tour for the first time in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). With players such as Jimmy Sinclair emerging, South African cricket had also shown a remarkable improvement since the previous tour.¹⁸ However, the threat of unrest once again loomed menacingly over the country. Cecil Rhodes had resigned as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony as a result of the Jameson Raid but was again involved in Cape politics. Lord Milner, Governor and High Commissioner of the Cape Colony, was in London to discuss the Transvaal problem with the Foreign Minister Chamberlain. The Anglo-Boer War was imminent.

The Veil of War

For the next two years there was no cricket ... a more potent force was at work, making history in another and sterner fashion. Transvaal cricketers were transposed into soldiers and fought more serious battles elsewhere.¹⁹

The onset of hostilities in 1899 brought cricket to a halt in much of South Africa, although the game did not disappear entirely from the veldt. During the first phases of the war the British troops were too busy with the war effort to really indulge in their passion for cricket – but they seized the opportunity to play whenever they could. On Deel's Farm near Bloemfontein on Easter morning of 1900, Lumsden's Horse were inches deep in mud. When the rain ceased and sunshine appeared for an hour in the afternoon, they played cricket – reminding them of home no doubt, and of Easter Mondays as 'the day of all others appropriate to cricket'.²⁰

During the guerrilla phase however, they had the time. When the British forces reached Pretoria in June 1900 a cricket match was played on the race course to celebrate. The 14th Brigade Bearer Company defeated the 26th Company Royal Engineers by 17 runs.²¹ In August 1900 Captain F.D. Price of the 1st Durham Royal Engineers witnessed a match

¹⁶ For a first-hand account, see Lord Hawke, *Recollections and Reminiscences*, 1924. See also S.H. Pardon (Ed.), *John Wisden's Cricketer's Almanack*, 1897.

¹⁷ *The Diamond Fields Advertiser*, Sport and Pastime in South Africa, 1899, p. 20.

¹⁸ R. Knowles, *South Africa versus England: A Test Cricket History*, 1995, p. 35.

¹⁹ E.J.L. Platnauer (Ed.), *Sport and Pastime in the Transvaal*, 1908, p.20.

²⁰ H.H.S. Pearse, *A History of Lumsden's Horse*, 1903, p. 130.

²¹ *Pretoria Friend*, 5 July 1900, p. 3.



A. A. White (Umpire). Mr. C. E. M. Wilson. Mr. F. W. Milligan. Mr. A. G. Archer. Geo. Lohmann. W. R. Cattell. A. E. Trott.
Mr. F. Mitchell. Hon. J. D. Logan. Lord Hawke. Mr. H. R. Brogley-Davenport. J. H. Board.
J. T. Tyldesley. Mr. P. F. Warner. S. Haigh.

LORD HAWKE'S CRICKET TEAM, 1898-99.

Figure 19.



LORD HAWKE'S FIRST ENGLISH TEAM.

between Major Robert Poore's XI and Pretoria.²² Poore had played for Hampshire just before the war and was a prolific scorer. From 12 June to 12 August 1898 he had scored 1 399 runs for his county with an average of 116.58.²³ The match of 24 November however, had to be abandoned as the 9th Company Royal Engineers received orders to proceed to Rustenburg. All play ceased as "all hands set to work packing up".²⁴

The MCC's journal, *Cricket: A Weekly Record of the Game*, regularly carried features during the war of the game being played in the far reaches of conflict-torn South Africa. The January 1902 edition for example, highlighted 'cricket at the Modder River', an account submitted by Lieutenant A.U. Udal, a supply officer with the Army Service Corps. Despite problems with boundaries and finding suitable opposition, the game of cricket was clearly important to Udal and the soldiers in his garrison:

We take a great deal of trouble with our pitch, though it kicks a bit at times, but outside the pitch the ground is very, very broken, and full of thorns ... and to stop a hard drive at cover or mid-off with a few thorns in the ball takes some doing.²⁵

Earlier in the conflict, when Ladysmith was first besieged, the MCC Journal reported how a match was "brought to a premature conclusion because the players attracted the shells of the Boers, who did not seem to be of a sporting turn of mind".²⁶

Predictably in the days of amateurism there were a number of well-known cricketers among the allied troops in South Africa. Sir Stanley Jackson who served with the Royal Lancaster Militia during the war reached the zenith of his career in 1905 when he captained England against Australia.²⁷ Inevitably a few cricketers also lost their lives whilst serving in South Africa. Lieutenant Frank Milligan who had represented the Gentlemen versus the Players at the Oval in 1897 and 1898, was killed on duty with Colonel Plumer's force endeavouring to relieve Mafeking, whilst Australian J.J. Ferris died of enteric fever in Durban while he was serving with the Imperial Light Horse.²⁸ Ferris had been out to South Africa with W.W. Read's team in the winter of 1891-1892 and had also played for both Australia and

²² F.D. Price, *The Great Boer War, 1899-1901. Letters*, 1987, p. 132.

²³ B. Green, *The Wisden Book of Obituaries*, 1986, p. 716.

²⁴ F.D. Price, *The Great Boer War, 1899-1901. Letters*, 1987, p. 143.

²⁵ Lt. A.U. Udal, in MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 30 January 1902, p. 2.

²⁶ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 25 January 1900, p. 7.

²⁷ B. Green, *The Wisden Book of Obituaries*, 1986, p. 486.

²⁸ B. Green, *The Wisden Book of Obituaries*, 1986, pp. 262, 624.

Gloucestershire.²⁹ Another casualty of the war was H.T. Stanley of Somerset who died in action at Hekpoort on 16 September 1900.³⁰

Royal Cricketer

Prince Christian Victor of Schleswig-Holstein, an active first-class cricketer was another whose passion for the game continued whilst on active duty in South Africa. Through his father, Prince Christian, he was descended from the Kings of Denmark. A grandson of Queen Victoria, his mother was Princess Helena Victoria, her third daughter. His father – a friend and admirer of Dr. W.G. Grace – was a keen supporter of the game, and once exclaimed: “Cricket, I have no doubt whatever, is among the most valuable possessions of the Empire”.³¹

Cricket influenced Prince Christian Victor’s whole life. His first introduction to the game was at the age of six, whilst one of the last activities of his life was to play in a match at Pretoria, exactly three weeks before his death from typhoid fever at the age of thirty-three on 29 October 1900.³²

The war had taken the Prince to South Africa and he took an active part in most of the fighting during the first twelve months of it. Commissioned to the 1st Battalion King’s Royal Rifles, he took part in both the Natal and Transvaal campaigns, being present at six battles, including Colenso, Spioenkop and Vaalkranz. After going into the army, he was a prolific run-scorer in military cricket and was one of the few men who ever played an innings of over 200 in India in those early years – scoring 205 for the King’s Royal Rifles against the Devonshire Regiment at Rawalpindi in 1893.³³ Destined never to return from South Africa, after his death he was buried at Pretoria – the only member of the Royal Family to be laid to rest overseas.³⁴

Certainly with such famous cricketers on active service in South Africa it was perhaps inevitable that games of cricket would be played and that the fortunes of these players should provoke interest. When a number of eminent South African cricketers volunteered for the defence of the Western Cape during the early phase of the war they formed their own ‘Cape

²⁹ E.M. Wessels, ‘British Army Plays Cricket’. *Knapsak*, 4(1), 1992, p. 19.

³⁰ M.G. Dooner, *The Last Post*, 1903, p. 359.

³¹ In C.H.B. Pridham, *The Charm of Cricket Past and Present*, 1949, p. 49.

³² Ironically, a Boer commandant – Pretorius – who had fought against the Prince shortly before but had surrendered to him, was one of the Umpires in the Princes’ last match.

³³ J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 45.

³⁴ In C.H.B. Pridham, *The Charm of Cricket Past and Present*, 1949, p. 55.

Town Cricketer's Troop'.³⁵ Murray Bisset, Captain of the 1901 South African tourists, was a sergeant in this detachment:

When the second invasion of the Colony took place the Government called on all loyal subjects to go out. It was in the middle of the season, just when our big matches were coming on, but of course this was not to be thought of at such a time, and we talked it over and volunteered; there were twenty five of us.³⁶

Jimmy Sinclair

The war it would seem, would in differing ways have a great effect on South Africa's cricketers. For one in particular though life during the conflict proved to be extraordinary. James Hugh Sinclair had first attracted attention against Lord Hawke's team in 1898-99. With scores of 86 (as an opening batsman) and 106 in a total of 177 – the first Test century by a South African – in the Tests at Johannesburg and Cape Town respectively, he had also achieved figures of 9 for 89 at Cape Town.³⁷ A fine all-round sportsman, he also represented his country at rugby and was rated as an "outstanding" forward by South Africa rugby supremo Mark Markötter.³⁸ Best known for his batting ability however, he first played for Transvaal at the age of sixteen and went on to play for South Africa in twenty-five Tests.³⁹

At the outbreak of war Sinclair joined Little's Scouts at Sterkstroom. Given his stature, the military there it was recorded, found some difficulty in locating a patrol jacket large enough to fit him!⁴⁰ The Boers were no respecters of reputation and Sinclair, along with comrades from his unit, were captured by General de Wet at Honingspruit during July 1900.⁴¹ Captive barely a month however, Sinclair managed to escape from the prisoner of war camp and head back to Pretoria, where the *Cape Argus* reported he had reached safety on 25 August 1900.⁴²

Despite disappointing with the bat, J.H. Sinclair went on to become the most successful bowler of the 1901 tour to England taking 61 wickets at an average of 19.85.⁴³ In South Africa's next Test series, a year later against the Australians, Sinclair regained his batting prowess and was in spectacular form. Having already secured two centuries against the

³⁵ L. Creswicke, *South Africa and the Transvaal War*, 1901, p. 141.

³⁶ Murray Bisset in MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 1 August 1901, p. 579.

³⁷ C. Martin-Jenkins, *The Complete Who's Who of Test Cricketers*, 1980, p. 313.

³⁸ D.H. Craven, *The Legends of Springbok Rugby*, 1989, p. 72.

³⁹ P. Bailey, P. Thorne & P. Wynn Thomas, *Who's Who of Cricketers*, 1993, p. 970.

⁴⁰ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 25 January 1900, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Cape Argus*, 25 August 1900, p. 5.

⁴² *Cape Argus*, 25 August 1900, p. 5.

⁴³ P. Bailey, P. Thorne & P. Wynn Thomas, *Who's Who of Cricketers*, 1993, p. 970.

tourists, his innings in the third Test at Newlands was to be his most acclaimed as it is still the fastest Test century ever scored by a South African and the fourth fastest in history.⁴⁴ Along with Sinclair's imprisonment and escape, these achievements are all the more remarkable given the backdrop of war in the country.

Play Up and Play the Game

One of the more revealing features concerning sport in the late Victorian Army is the entrance of sporting jargon into military language, and vice-versa.⁴⁵ The very close relationship between sports, the public school culture of athleticism and the Army is brought into sharp relief in the famous Henry Newbolt poem, *Vitai Lampada*, where images of a school boy cricket match and a bloody battle in the Sudanese desert are intertwined with the exhortation to 'play up and play the game'. So many instances of this phenomenon still exist, both in the British Army and elsewhere, that this language exchange has become virtually transparent. Some of its first manifestations however appear during the Anglo-Boer War, where the association with cricket in particular is especially noticeable.

The symbiosis between sport and war can be traced in many of the periodicals during the campaign. Language used within the cricket journal produced by the MCC was typical of many publications of the day:

Cricket readers will be pleased to hear that F.S. Jackson is back in England again. He had to retire hurt after facing the bowling of the Boers for a fairly good knock. He is recovering rapidly from the enteric fever which closed his innings, and hopes to be quite fit very shortly.⁴⁶

Earlier that year the same journal had in similar terms described the military service of Jimmy Sinclair, the famous South African all-rounder:

J.H. Sinclair, the young South African who batted so brilliantly more than once in the test matches against Lord Hawke's team in the early part of 1899, had another and more important game to play this Spring. According to the *Times* correspondent at Sterkstroom, he has been doing good service with the South African contingent attached to General Gatacre's force ... He is attached to Little's Scouts; and the *Times* correspondent credits him with a fervent desire to hit the Boer attack as hard as he punished the

⁴⁴ The innings took 80 minutes. J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 47.

⁴⁵ See J.D. Campbell, 'Training for sport is training for war'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17(4), 2000, p. 50.

⁴⁶ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 9 August 1900, p. 330.

bowling of Albert Trott, Haigh, Cuttell, and Mr. Milligan in the test match at Cape Town last April to the tune of 106 runs.⁴⁷

The relation between sport and war was clearly recognised by both the public and the late Victorian soldiers and as Campbell argues, was a major justification for the creation of the Army's sport and physical training programmes.⁴⁸ It would seem only natural then, that as sport was training for war, war would be the ultimate form of sport. This view is amply demonstrated in contemporary literature. Lord Baden-Powell repeatedly referred to sport in his manual for army scouts⁴⁹ and was of course responsible for the sporting retort to Boer Commander Sarel Eloff's cricket offer during the siege of Mafeking.⁵⁰ Cricket, and its terminology, was clearly a feature of Britain's war in South Africa.

Historic Fixture

Interest in cricket however was not totally confined to the British side during the campaign. Next to rugby, cricket emerged as the most popular sport amongst the Boer prisoners of war. In St. Helena the players used the empty part of the Deadwood Camp to lay out a pitch and soon there were matches arranged both internally and externally against the cricketers of Broadbottom Camp as well as the English.⁵¹ Sport and cricket in particular it seemed created a common ground between the Boer prisoners and their British captors.

Whilst the 1901 South Africans were touring the cricket fields of England another, and in many ways more historic, contest was taking place. On the 5th and 6th of July 1901, a match took place between a team of Boer prisoners from Diyatalawa and the Colombo Colts in Ceylon.⁵² This "sporting challenge", made even more historic during a time of war, was the idea of Mr. J. Heyzer, one of the prominent members of the Colombo Colts Cricket Club.⁵³ Despite resistance from some people in the community who were upset about a cricket match against prisoners of war, permission was received from the authorities and the game was

⁴⁷ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 25 January 1900, p. 9.

⁴⁸ J.D. Campbell, 'Training for sport is training for war'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17(4), 2000, p. 50.

⁴⁹ R.S.S. Baden-Powell, *Aids to Scouting to NCOs and Men*, 1994.

⁵⁰ Baden-Powell was also author of *Sport in War*, a 1900 account of his 'sporting' experiences whilst on military service in Rhodesia and South Africa. In this book, the analogy between war and sport is clear. R.S.S. Baden-Powell, *Sport in War*, 1900.

⁵¹ E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!' *Knapsak*, 1(4), 1989, p. 11.

⁵² E.M. Wessels, 'Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!' *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991 and *The Ceylon Independent*, Boer Prisoners in Ceylon, 1901.

⁵³ *The Ceylon Independent*, Boer Prisoners in Ceylon, 1901, p. 1.

played at the ground of the Nondescript Cricket Club in Victoria Park.⁵⁴ Both teams are pictured seated together in figure 20.⁵⁵

The Boers were keen cricketers and there were several useful players amongst their number. Most notably P.H. de Villiers who had played representative matches against the first three English sides to tour South Africa, and G. Sennett, the Orange Free State wicket keeper.⁵⁶ For de Villiers, had “circumstances” been different, it was likely that he would himself have toured England with the 1901 team.⁵⁷ C. Otto, another prisoner of war, was a member of the Jamestown Cricket Club and later also played for the City and Suburban Club in Johannesburg.⁵⁸

The Boers, who were on parole for this particular match, had already established a cricket club at Diyatalawa with a healthy membership of over seventy.⁵⁹ As well as cricket, both forms of football were also keenly played by the Boers within their camp, although as the *Ceylon Independent* pointed out, the game of Rugby had been mastered far more readily than Association.⁶⁰ Opportunities it seems were also there for the prisoners to compete against clubs outside the camp.

The management of the Colts granted 600 Rix-dollars to prepare for all the spectators that were expected. Apart from the four temporary stadiums that were put up, a special stadium was decorated with foliage plants from the nursery of Mr. P.D. Siebel for the Governor of Ceylon, Sir West Ridgway. Accommodation was provided for the players in the form of a marquee tent while the private bar of Mr. A.B. Anthoniez provided refreshments of “excellent quality”.⁶¹ For the duration of the match the Boers travelled every day from Mt. Lavinia to Victoria Park.⁶²

An enthusiastic crowd witnessed how P.H. de Villiers, the captain of the Boers, won the toss and decided to send the Colts in to bat first. The Colts were bowled out for 146 runs. C. Otto

⁵⁴ E.M. Wessels, ‘Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!’ *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991, p. 20.

⁵⁵ From the public collection 6201/11. Anglo-Boer War Museum, Bloemfontein.

⁵⁶ J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 45.

⁵⁷ *The Ceylon Independent*, Boer Prisoners in Ceylon, 1901, p. 3.

⁵⁸ E.M. Wessels, ‘Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!’ *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991, p. 20.

⁵⁹ According to the *Ceylon Independent* as a condition of this parole, the team had “given their word that they would not enter in the discussion of any ‘controversial’ subjects” ... the press included! *The Ceylon Independent*, Boer Prisoners in Ceylon, 1901, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *The Ceylon Independent*, Boer Prisoners in Ceylon, 1901, p. 1.

⁶¹ *The Ceylon Independent*, Boer Prisoners in Ceylon, 1901, p. 4.

⁶² E.M. Wessels, ‘Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!’ *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991, p. 20.



Figure 20: Boer prisoners of war and the Colombo Colts.
Ceylon, July 1901.

took 7 wickets for 50 runs, while C.E. Perera scored 90 runs for the Colts – including 4 sixes and 8 fours.⁶³ The congenial spirit continued as the Boers enjoyed lunch at the Galle Face Hotel as guests of the Colts, after which the match resumed. The Boer's lack of experience however was evident in their first innings when they could only muster 53 of which P. du Plessis scored 25. At the end of the first day the Colts were already standing at 71 for 6 and they decided to continue the match on the 6th.⁶⁴

After lunch the next day, the teams reappeared where “the reception accorded to the Boers was of the most cordial description”.⁶⁵ It appears that the prisoners, who may have expected a chilly reception before the start, had during the game won favour with the crowd - both European and Ceylonese. At 3 p.m. the Colts were all out for 114 runs and the Boers needed 207 runs to win the match. The Boers however, scored only 66 runs and the Colts won by 141 runs. The leading run scorer was G. Kotzé with his 13 runs.⁶⁶

The *Ceylon Independent* had the following to say about the match:

The Boers can bowl and the Boers can field and they are by no means indifferent performers with the knife and fork but at batting, well one must defer final judgement upon this delicate point until the return match which we hope to see, Governor permitting, played in Diyatalawa before many weeks are past.⁶⁷

There was, however, no return match. According to the British press the match was “an example of the influence of the great English game, which made the Briton and Boer forget the dark battlefields of South Africa and join together in cricket's manly toil”.⁶⁸ Tommy Kelaart of the Colts received a souvenir in the form of a paper knife with the following inscription: “To Tommy K. from G.P. Kotzé. A souvenir of the Boer - Colts cricket match”.⁶⁹ In May 1902, nearing the end of the war, the Boers achieved their first victory when they beat Diyatalawa Colts - a team that consisted of government officials in the area – by 9 wickets. This was according to all indications a one-day game.⁷⁰ Cricket it seems, had, in this distant outpost, established a common ground between these two diametrically opposed groups of people.

⁶³ E.M. Wessels, ‘Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!’ *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991, p. 19.

⁶⁴ E.M. Wessels, ‘Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!’ *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991, p. 19.

⁶⁵ *The Ceylon Independent*, Boer Prisoners in Ceylon, 1901, p. 4.

⁶⁶ E.M. Wessels, ‘Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!’ *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991, p. 19.

⁶⁷ *The Ceylon Independent*, Boer Prisoners in Ceylon, 1901, p. 15.

⁶⁸ In E.M. Wessels, ‘Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!’ *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991, p. 19.

⁶⁹ E.M. Wessels, ‘Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!’ *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991, p. 19.

⁷⁰ E.M. Wessels, ‘Tog Speelden wij Jolly Cricket!’ *Knapsak*, 3(2), 1991, p. 19.

Domestic Cricket and the War

Back in South Africa prior to the war all talk had been of arranging fixtures with the world's cricketing powers. At a meeting of the Western Province Cricket Union (WPCU) on 8 June 1899 approval was given to invite the Australian team, at that time touring England, to play a number of matches in South Africa on their return home. In view of this, the WPCU delegate to the South African Cricket Association meeting at Johannesburg was instructed to say that the sending of a South African team to England in 1900 was not advisable.⁷¹

In fact it was not until the Hon. J.D. Logan of Matjiesfontein stepped in to support the England tour, that the enterprise began to receive favour. In an interview that appeared in the *Cape Argus* on 17 August 1899 Logan stated that he would undertake the financial responsibilities of an English tour and that with Lord Hawke's assistance he would arrange a series of first class fixtures. Despite doubts from the Orange Free State Cricket Union that a South African team was ready to test first class English counties, Logan's proposal was adopted at the AGM of the South African Cricket Association (SACA) at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on 31 August 1899.⁷² With peace in South Africa now hanging in the balance, it was agreed that SACA would write to Lord Hawke, asking him to arrange a first class fixture list for the team at a meeting of county secretaries in England.

Despite the outbreak of war on 10 October 1899, a month or so later the *Cape Argus* was still confident that the 1900 tour would proceed:

Notwithstanding the war, it is now almost certain that a South African team will visit England during the next English season. Provisional team already selected.⁷³

The first few months of the war however did not go as planned for Britain. Shock defeats by the Boers had seriously knocked her imperial agenda. Despite optimism in the South African press and the English cricket programme for the summer of 1900 including the South African fixtures,⁷⁴ by the end of 1899 it was difficult to see how this tour was now possible. By February of 1900, with the reality of the situation clear, the *Cape Argus* reported how:

⁷¹ *Cape Argus*, 9 June 1899, p. 5.

⁷² *Cape Argus*, 1 September 1899, p. 5. According to Logan's offer, SACA would select the team. The finances would devolve upon Logan who stipulated that he should appoint the manager.

⁷³ *Cape Argus*, 16 November 1899, p. 5.

⁷⁴ First match scheduled 21 May 1900, versus Hampshire at Southampton. Final match 23 August 1900, versus MCC and Ground, at Lords. *Cape Argus*, 19 December 1899, p. 5.

Little or nothing further has been heard with regard to the South Africa team for England – it seems practically impossible for the team to be got together in view of the turn affairs have taken with regard to the war.⁷⁵

Then, on 2 March 1900, Lord Hawke received the cable he had been expecting announcing that the tour by the South Africans would have to be abandoned.⁷⁶

It was a time too when domestic cricket had to take a back seat to the war effort. Along with thousands of workers of that period, many cricketers had moved to the Transvaal following the development of the gold fields. With the war imminent however, men living in the South African Republic were required to serve in the burgher forces. As a result, there was a flood of refugees who moved back across the borders into Natal and the Cape Colony to avoid conscription. The test cricketer Jimmy Sinclair was one of these and soon the local cricket clubs benefited by arranging matches against these ‘refugee’ players. On 7 December 1899 Cape Town Cricket Club played a refugee team which included A.B. Tancred, T. Routledge, J.H. Sinclair, A.E. Halliwell and G. Devenish.⁷⁷ Nine days later this same team took on the strength of the Western Province Cricket Club.⁷⁸ For a brief period cricket in the Cape flourished due to the war, but with the call up of players this was not to last.

On 8 March 1900, the *Cape Argus* reflected how “Cricket in the Peninsular has fallen on evil times. For three Saturdays the premier club has not had a fixture”.⁷⁹ For Cape Town Cricket Club the 1899-1900 season was also a failure with the war being blamed for lack of senior competition and the meagre gates at games.⁸⁰ Not only was there decline in public support for the game but cricket grounds were at a premium in the Cape as the military moved in. Greenpoint Track for example, was soon being used as a prisoner of war camp. The *Cape Argus*, of 9 October 1900 declared:

⁷⁵ *Cape Argus*, 2 February 1900, p. 5.

⁷⁶ *The Times*, 5 March 1900, p. 12.

⁷⁷ *Cape Argus*, 7 December 1899, p. 5.

⁷⁸ *Cape Argus*, 16 December 1899, p. 5.

⁷⁹ Western Province Cricket Club. *Cape Argus*, 8 March 1900, p. 5.

⁸⁰ Cape Town Cricket Club. Annual General Meeting, 30 August 1900. Cape Town Cricket Club Minute Book.

We are at a crisis in the history of cricket ... Either some steps must be taken to re-ignite the flame of enthusiasm for our national game, or it will go to the wall completely and we shall be left with a number of second-class clubs struggling along season after season with no hope of advancement.⁸¹

Only the fixture between Western Province and Cape Town Cricket Clubs attracted a modicum of interest, yet by March 1901 even this match had declined in significance: “With half the players away on military duty, the struggle lost most of its importance. Very few cricketers put in any practice – a marked deterioration in the style of play”.⁸²

Later that month South Africa College defeated both Western Province and Cape Town Cricket Clubs in the annual championship challenge. Under ordinary circumstances South Africa College would have had little chance of securing this distinction, but as the senior clubs were weakened due to prominent members serving at the front, the College team were able to seize their opportunity. Cape Town Cricket Club alone were without the services of Rowe, Kuys, Halliwell, Horwood and Jones for the fixture.⁸³

At the AGM of the Cape Town Cricket Club on 16 August 1901, the chairman, L.B. Smuts, explained that there was no report owing to the unrest up-country, a result of which, a great number of members were absent during the season.⁸⁴ Similarly, the Western Province Cricket Club reported at their AGM some ten days later, that the second invasion of the Cape Colony by Boer forces gave rise to a general call to arms and many of the club’s best players joined the forces to protect the Colony. This led to some difficulty in carrying out the Club’s engagements, and mid-week fixtures in the latter half of the 1900-1901 season were abandoned.⁸⁵

The war was affecting cricket in different ways. At that same AGM, the Western Province Club debated the matter of having a prisoner of war, who was on parole, as a member. Mr. Henry Cloete proposed, and Mr. Vincent van der Byl seconded, a motion, “That it was undesirable to have a general rule excluding prisoners of war on parole from membership in the club”.⁸⁶ This was the outcome of the committee’s action in refusing the privileges of the

⁸¹ *Cape Argus*, 9 October 1900, p. 6.

⁸² Reaction to the derby match at Newlands on 9 March 1901 which Western Province won by 5 wickets. *Cape Argus*, 14 March 1901, p. 5. A large advertisement for the fixture (along with entertainment from the Band of HMS Doris) had appeared in the *Cape Argus* the day before. *Cape Argus*, 8 March 1901, p. 4.

⁸³ Cape Town Cricket Club Minute Book. 20 March 1901.

⁸⁴ Cape Town Cricket Club. Annual General Meeting, 16 August 1901. Cape Town Cricket Club Minute Book.

⁸⁵ *Cape Argus*, 27 August 1901, p. 5.

⁸⁶ *Cape Argus*, 27 August 1901, p. 5.

club to Mr. C. Fichardt, of Bloemfontein, who was first elected and subsequently had his subscription returned, on the grounds that he was a prisoner on parole. The mover and seconder wished it to be understood that their action was in no sense a reflection on the past committee and the motion was carried by eight votes to five.⁸⁷

Going into the 1901-1902 season with the war nearing its end, interest in cricket again slowly began to build. The *Cape Argus* of 27 December 1901 reported how an “immense crowd” and “record gate” had watched a Colonial-Born team defeat a Mother-Country eleven in Cape Town as, by this stage, cricketers were returning from military duty.⁸⁸ The teams contesting this particular fixture included such players the calibre of A. Reid, H. Carolin (who was later vice captain of the 1906 rugby Springboks), S. Horwood and Murray Bisset.⁸⁹

Then, in October 1902 with the dust of the war barely settled, South African cricket received another boost when the Australians, captained by Joe Darling, toured the country on their way back from defeating England in the Ashes. Figure 21 highlights a contemporary view of Anglo-Antipodean relations.⁹⁰ In the wake of the war, Colonial ties were strengthened here too as Australia won two Tests – the third was drawn.⁹¹ Dr. George Thornton, who had occasionally played for Yorkshire and Middlesex, was a member of the South African squad. He was one of the first medical men to volunteer his services when war broke out and who stayed on in South Africa after the war had ended.⁹²

The 1901 Controversy

The fact that organised sport had continued during a time of hostilities sat uneasily with a number of those involved. Dr. Francis Fremantle found time in his busy schedule tending the wounded at Wynberg General Hospital, to go and watch a game between the Refugees and the Western Province Cricket Club at Newlands. He wrote the following in his diary:

Saturday, January 27th: A quiet match like this in the middle of war is like the theatres in the French Revolution, when, as Carlyle puts it, the French nobility were going to the guillotine, and all the while the ‘fiddlers were tweedle-deeing on melodious catgut’.⁹³

⁸⁷ *Cape Argus*, 27 August 1901, p. 5.

⁸⁸ *Cape Argus*, 27 December 1901, p. 5.

⁸⁹ *Cape Argus*, 27 December 1901, p. 5.

⁹⁰ *Punch*, 20 August 1902, p.111.

⁹¹ J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 48.

⁹² E.M. Wessels, ‘British Army Plays Cricket’. *Knapsak*, 4(1), 1992, p. 19.

⁹³ F.E. Fremantle, *Impressions of a Doctor in Khaki*, 1901, pp. 151-152.



Figure 21.

This was of course early 1900, in the midst of the conventional phase of the war when British casualties were high. With regards to the proposed tour of a South African team to England in 1901 Fremantle wrote that the Cape players felt the situation very deeply. Murray Bisset, the secretary and captain of the Western Province Cricket Club had, on several occasions, told him that quite apart from the absence of Jimmy Sinclair and other prominent cricketers at the front, it would be impossible to get up the proposed South African team to visit England – “the fellows wouldn’t go!” he reportedly said.⁹⁴

However, as the balance of the war began to swing towards Britain, a team financed by J.D. Logan was eventually selected and Bisset agreed to lead the South African team to England. Due to begin in May the following year, the 1901 tour was announced by Lord Hawke in *The Times* on 1 December 1900.⁹⁵

The orchestrator of the 1901 tour was James Douglas Logan. Born in Reston Scotland on November 26, 1859, Logan had emigrated to South Africa where, with an entrepreneurial mind, he had made his fortune securing the catering contract for the South African Railways.⁹⁶ Affectionately referred to as the ‘Laird of Matjiesfontein’, after the small Karoo town he had developed, Logan’s deep affection for cricket undoubtedly helped to popularise the game in South Africa.⁹⁷ A succession of distinguished cricketers were enticed to the new colony by Logan’s almost fanatical devotion to the game. Lord Hawke’s teams came to South Africa as a result and George Alfred Lohmann, England fast bowler, was brought to the Cape at the personal invitation of J.D. Logan himself.⁹⁸ In September 1899, Logan had said:

⁹⁴ F.E. Fremantle, *Impressions of a Doctor in Khaki*, 1901, p. 152.

⁹⁵ *The Times*, 1 December 1900, p. 9.

⁹⁶ See R.N. Toms, *Logan’s Way*, 1997.

⁹⁷ R.N. Toms, *Logan’s Way*, 1997, p. 51.

⁹⁸ Lohmann (England 1884-1892) was said by many to be the greatest cricketer of his generation. In 1892 however, at the age of twenty seven, Lohmann developed tuberculosis and travelled to Cape Town in search of a cure. In the clear air of the Karoo, Lohmann stayed with Logan on and off until his death on 1 December 1901. R.N. Toms, *Logan’s Way*, 1997, p.55 and *Cape Argus*, 4 December 1901, p.5. His impressive tomb erected amongst others by Surrey County Cricket Club, still pays tribute today in the graveyard at Matjiesfontein. See figure 22. Author’s own photograph.



Figure 22: The grave of G. A. Lohmann, Matjiesfontein.

I look to the good old English game of cricket to do much towards uniting the different classes in this country ... and it is my ambition that the day will come when a team will go to England as good as they can send from Australia.⁹⁹

Despite the outbreak of war a month later, Logan was to eventually get his wish. Following the abandonment of the tour in 1900, approval was given to reschedule for the 1901 English season. The tourists, referred to in the press as ‘the South Africans’, ‘the Colonials’ and ‘Logan’s team’ were captained by Murray Bisset and managed by George Lohmann. Among the fifteen players was a young Jimmy Logan Junior, who went on to play in eight first-class innings, averaging just over 12 runs.¹⁰⁰ Also part of the squad was Johannes Jacobus Kotze, a Boer and one of the fastest bowlers ever to appear in first-class cricket in South Africa.¹⁰¹ The team is pictured in figure 23.¹⁰²

With the conflict in South Africa still raging, Kotze, since described as the ‘Boer farmer who preferred cricket to war’,¹⁰³ acknowledged the difficult circumstances under which the tour took place. The previous year the tour had been postponed and when, unexpectedly, the war continued into its second year there were doubts too as to the wisdom of sending a team over in 1901. “It was suggested that the tour should be again abandoned and the English authorities were advised accordingly. The answer was that the team must come under any circumstances, or otherwise the entire county programme would be dislocated for the season”.¹⁰⁴ Even the departure of the team from Cape Town was none too auspicious. Apart from the country being in a state of war, Cape Town was at the time being visited by the bubonic plague. On account of plague regulations in the docks area, the players subsequently left the Cape without even the customary send-off.¹⁰⁵

Following their arrival at Southampton on 3 May 1901,¹⁰⁶ the South Africans went on to play twenty five matches over the next three months. Despite a poor start, in which they lost their first five matches,¹⁰⁷ the tourists went on to record a total of thirteen victories, nine losses and

⁹⁹ In R.N. Toms, *Logan’s Way*, 1997, pp. 125-126.

¹⁰⁰ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 22 August 1901, p. 368.

¹⁰¹ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 8 September 1904, p. 388; P. Bailey *et al.*, *Who’s Who of Cricketers*, 1993, p. 608.

¹⁰² M.W. Luckin (Ed.), *The History of South African Cricket*, 1915, p.666.

¹⁰³ C. Martin-Jenkins, *The Complete Who’s Who of Test Cricketers*, 1980, p. 292.

¹⁰⁴ J.J. Kotze, *The Second South African Team in England, 1901, 1915*, p. 663.

¹⁰⁵ J.J. Kotze, *The Second South African Team in England, 1901, 1915*, p. 663.

¹⁰⁶ *The Times*, 4 May 1901, p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ L.J. Tancred, *Cricket*, 1914, p. 29.

THE SECOND SOUTH AFRICAN TEAM IN ENGLAND. 1901.



G. Rowe, A. Reid, A. Bisset.
L. J. Tancred, J. H. Sinclair, E. A. Halliwell, M. Bisset, M. Hathorn (W. A. Shalders, standing).
C. B. Llewellyn, J. D. Logan, Junr., R. Graham.

Figure 23.

three draws.¹⁰⁸ Included was the highest total ever made by a South African team in first class cricket – 692 scored against Cambridge University at Cambridge.¹⁰⁹ Captain Murray Bisset, interviewed at Cardiff, described the tour as having successfully popularised cricket in South Africa, with his side improving immensely owing the experience gained:

The thing which struck us more than anything else ... is the solid, business-like way in which everybody settles down to make runs ... another thing with which we have been greatly struck in England is the excellence of the umpiring. In South Africa we so often have to pick up any enthusiast who happens to be on the ground.¹¹⁰

Despite the controversial timing of the tour, the players received lavish hospitality. There were race meetings, theatre, Henley boat races and many other diversions.¹¹¹ The first victory for the tourists was against the London County Cricket Club who fielded the likes of W.G. Grace and W.R. Murdoch.¹¹² The London Club marked the occasion by making the South Africans honorary members and entertaining them to an after-match dinner at the Crystal Palace.¹¹³ Other such invitations were received from the MCC at Lords¹¹⁴ as well as the various counties.

Although the South Africans achieved a good proportion of victories, it cannot be said however that the team's presence in England meant much to the cricket public.¹¹⁵ Like other travelling teams in England, they were regarded not sufficiently near to the Australian standard to command attention, and their matches were merely viewed on a par with county cricket.¹¹⁶ Individually however the players did receive recognition. Kotze's fast bowling impressed whilst E.A. Halliwell's displays at wicket-keeper endeared him to the spectators.¹¹⁷ "The South African's have reason to congratulate themselves" was the cricket writer's response. Indeed the tourists had been strangers to turf wickets prior to the tour and were undoubtedly stronger at the end than at any other period.¹¹⁸ For J.D. Logan and his players the

¹⁰⁸ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 22 August 1901, p. 368.

¹⁰⁹ In an innings lasting five hours, Maitland Hathorn top scored with 239 – his country's first double-century abroad. See J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 46.

¹¹⁰ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 1 August 1901, p. 306.

¹¹¹ R.N. Toms, *Logan's Way*, 1997, p. 162.

¹¹² This was the first victory by a South African side abroad in a first-class match. G. Hughes, *The Veil of War*, 1989, p. 14.

¹¹³ *The Times*, 21 May 1901, p. 12.

¹¹⁴ MCC, *MCC Minute Books Main Committee June 1892 – June 1907*, 27 May 1901, p. 1664.

¹¹⁵ S.H. Pardon (Ed.), *John Wisden's Cricketers Almanack for 1902*, 1902, p. 466; R. Knowles, *South Africa versus England; A Test Cricket History*, 1995, p. 37.

¹¹⁶ S.H. Pardon (Ed.), *John Wisden's Cricketers Almanack for 1902*, 1902, p. 466.

¹¹⁷ R. Knowles, *South Africa versus England; A Test Cricket History*, 1995, p. 37.

¹¹⁸ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 22 August 1901, p. 368.

tour proved vital to the development of the game in South Africa. Not only had they raised the profile of South African cricket, but more importantly, they had managed to complete the tour against a backdrop of criticism from some of Britain's most influential voices.

The Case of Conan Doyle

One of the most important propagandists opposed to W.T. Stead¹¹⁹ and other anti-war voices in the media was cricket enthusiast Arthur Conan Doyle. The creator of Sherlock Holmes is not the first Victorian writer we associate with the promotion of the aims of Empire. Rudyard Kipling, as this study has shown with his South African association, and Rider Haggard, come to mind more readily with their tales of adventure in India and Africa. Doyle's fiction is, however, often about war, and it is because he is concerned about war that Doyle becomes an important public figure in support of British imperialism at the turn of the century. According to Krebs:

No British literary figure was as engaged with the fate of his country at the turn of the century as Doyle, who spent months fighting an enteric epidemic in a field hospital on the battle front and who would be credited with turning much foreign public opinion around on the question of British conduct in the war.¹²⁰

But rather than support for the policy of imperialism, it was Doyle's conception of the link between personal honour and national honour that pushed him into the role of public spokesperson for Britain. It was in this role, that he sparked the controversy surrounding the 1901 touring cricket team.

For serving his country through propagandising on its behalf during the Boer War, Doyle earned a Knighthood in 1902. Yet early in the war he had yearned for a more practical role as, at the age of forty, he had tried to enlist. After writing to *The Times* to suggest the use of mounted infantry, Doyle had felt "honour-bound to volunteer":

What I feel is that I have perhaps the strongest influence over young men, especially young sporting men, of anyone in England bar Kipling. That being so, it is really important that I should give them a lead.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Anti-war propagandist and radical journalist W.T. Stead had been regarded as the "loudest voice in the pro-Boer movement" of the period. A. Davey, *The British Pro-Boers 1877-1902*, 1978, p. 87. An opponent of Doyle and an avid supporter of women's rights, Stead's anti-war work was a huge undertaking. *War Against War*, sixteen pages of newsprint, came out weekly from 20 October 1899 until 26 January 1900 and included regular articles from Stead as well as new summaries and transcripts of speeches about war issues.

¹²⁰ P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p. 85.

¹²¹ Quoted in J.D. Carr, *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 1949, p. 86.

He was not accepted into the military, but he was able to reach the fighting by another route. Resurrecting his dormant qualifications as a physician, he went out to South Africa as senior surgeon of a hospital for British soldiers funded by a friend, John Longman.¹²²

After Doyle's return to London in July 1900,¹²³ he remained deeply concerned about the war and the growth in anti-war propagandists, not least amongst elements of the foreign press. This began what Doyle called his "incursion into amateur diplomacy",¹²⁴ a stance that was to produce very public views on the things he cared about – not least cricket.

The 1901 South African tour to England took place in controversial circumstances. Lord Hawke's announcement of the tour in the *Times* during January of that year¹²⁵ provoked a passionate response from elements of the public. G. Lacy of Sandgate felt compelled to write:

I observe that a team of cricketers is about to leave South Africa for this country. At a time like the present, with the call for young men to put an end to the deplorable state of affairs there, and when we ourselves are sending out the best of our manhood for that purpose, it is, to say the least of it, the most wretched of taste for these young men to leave it on a cricket tour. I trust the British public will take this view of the matter. Next year we should be delighted to see them, but today it seems quite monstrous.¹²⁶

The Anglo-Boer War had not as yet ended and passions in Britain ran high. Doyle, himself a keen cricketer,¹²⁷ wrote the following letter which appeared in *The Spectator* on 20 April 1901:

Sir, - It is announced that a South African cricket team is about to visit this country. The statement would be incredible were it not that the names are published, and the date of sailing fixed. It is to be earnestly hoped that such a team will meet a very cold reception in this country, and that English cricketers will refuse to meet them. When our young men are going from North to South to fight for the cause of South Africa, these South Africans are coming from South to North to play cricket. It is a stain on their man-hood that they are not out with rifles in their hands driving the invader from their country. They leave this to others while they play games. There may be some question even in England whether the national game has justified itself during this crisis, and whether cricketers have

¹²² P.M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 1999, p. 86. Conan Doyle had abandoned his practice when he became a literary success in the early 1890s.

¹²³ M.F. Marix Evans, *Encyclopaedia of the Boer War*, 2000, p. 80.

¹²⁴ A.C. Doyle, *An Incursion into Diplomacy*, 1906, p. 744.

¹²⁵ *The Times*, 15 January 1901, p. 9.

¹²⁶ *The Times*, 26 March 1901, p. 10.

¹²⁷ Arthur Conan Doyle's single wicket in first-class cricket was that of W.G. Grace. J. Winch, *Cricket in Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 46.

shown that they understood that the only excuse for a game is that it keeps a man fit for the serious duties of life. There can be no question, however, that this South African visit would be a scandal. I trust that even now it may be averted.¹²⁸

The letter provoked hearty agreement from the editor of *The Spectator*, who wrote:

Unless there are some circumstances unknown to us which put an entirely different complexion on the proposal against which Dr. Doyle protests, we heartily endorse his protest ... the time for South African cricket has not come yet. The men who held Wepener for the Empire showed us that the South African British could stand up to any team in the world in something much nobler and better than cricket.¹²⁹

The timing of the tour was unfortunate. When the tour had been arranged, it had not been anticipated that the war would drag on for so long. Pressure was also placed on the South Africans by the English cricket authorities who did not want their programme for the season disrupted by a cancellation.¹³⁰ The players themselves were naturally sensitive to Conan Doyle's criticism. They pointed out to the press in their defence that eight of the fourteen players had seen active service, whilst others had been members of various town defence forces.¹³¹ Captain Murray Bisset himself had been a sergeant in a Cape Town Guard that became known as the 'Cricketer's Corps' because of the number of eminent sportsmen who made up the ranks.¹³² Whilst the Hon. J.D. Logan had also borne arms, and, as Captain of the Matjiesfontein Rifles, was present at the battle of Belmont.¹³³ The 1901 team's colours – red, blue and orange – were also deliberately identical to those of the South Africa War medal ribbon. The permission of General Sir Forestier Walker had been especially obtained in order that these could be adopted.¹³⁴

In an article for *The History of South African Cricket* published later in 1915, bowler J.J. Kotze wrote; "I wish Conan Doyle had done his fair share of fighting instead of starting a

¹²⁸ *The Spectator*, 20 April 1901, pp. 565-566.

¹²⁹ *The Spectator*, 20 April 1901, p. 566.

¹³⁰ J.J. Kotze, *The second South African team in England, 1901, 1915*, p. 663.

¹³¹ See *The Times*, 4 May 1901, p. 9.

¹³² Commanded by Lieutenant Feltham (late Protectorate Regiment), the Cricketer's Corps were started with the aid of a £100 donation by Abe Bailey for transport equipment. As well as Murray Bissett, other well known players in the Corps were: T.W. Bell, E. Yates, G. MacFarlane, J. Rushton, D. Howe, C. Bartlett, E. Warren, E. Gill, H. Wensch, C.M. Neustetel, J. Graham, K. Hunter, F.R. Brooke, L.H. Fripp, W. Reid, H. Stidolph, S. Horwood, A. Baker, W. Marshant, J. Fehrsen, R. Solomon, I. Difford, H. Reid and L.J. Tancred. For an account of the Cape Town Guard see L. Creswicke, *South Africa and the Transvaal War*, 1901, p. 141.

¹³³ *The Times*, 4 May 1901, p. 9.

¹³⁴ *The Times*, 4 May 1901, p. 9.

controversy in the press".¹³⁵ It was an unfortunate statement to have made considering Conan Doyle's contribution to the war effort, but one born out of the frustrations faced in embarking on the 1901 tour. Acting in the diplomatic role as team ambassador, Captain Murray Bisset attempted to explain the *raison d'être* of the tour, upon its conclusion in August 1901:

Two years ago Mr. Logan arranged with Lord Hawke for the tour of a South African team in England, but the war came and upset everything. Later, when Lord Roberts left South Africa and said that the war was practically at an end, Mr. Logan again arranged a tour. Then came the second invasion of the Cape Colony, and we did not know what to do. But most of the team volunteered for military duties and when the invasion was repelled, and everybody thought that there would be no more trouble, we promised to go with the team. All arrangements had been made in England for the tour, and we did not see how we could back out of it, especially as announcements were continually being made by the authorities, that the war, as a war, was over.¹³⁶

The timing of the tour was not the only controversial aspect. The press also criticised the team because it was not a fully-fledged South African side. It was essentially a private venture organised by J.D. Logan, with the tour party largely representative of the Cape.¹³⁷ It is significant to point out though that unlike the 1894 team, this side was granted first class status by the MCC.¹³⁸ The team went on to win five and tie one of its fifteen first class matches. Had they begun the tour with minor matches in order that they could adjust to the turf wickets, they might have done even better. Five of the opening six first class matches were lost, a record that weighed heavily against the ultimate success of the tour.¹³⁹

Post War Emergence

With the Anglo-Boer War over, and reasonable success against the visiting Australians two years previously,¹⁴⁰ a third tour of Britain was arranged in 1904. Frank Mitchell, the Yorkshire amateur who had stayed behind after Lord Hawke's tour, was chosen as captain, whilst Abe Bailey, the mining magnate and one of the founders of the Wanderer's Club guaranteed the tour's finances.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ J.J. Kotze, *The second South African team in England, 1901*, 1915, p. 663.

¹³⁶ In MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 1 August 1901, p. 306.

¹³⁷ J. Winch, *Cricket In Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 46 and *The Times*, 4 May 1901, p. 9.

¹³⁸ See MCC, *MCC Minute Books Main Committee June 1892 – June 1907*, 10 December 1900, p. 1635; 7 January 1901, p. 1641; 13 May 1901, p. 1662.

¹³⁹ J. Winch, *Cricket In Southern Africa*, 1997, p. 46.

¹⁴⁰ The 1902-03 Australians were the first fully representative side to visit South Africa. W.H. Coleman, *South Africa v England and Australia Test Cricket 1888-1928*, 1927, p. 103.

¹⁴¹ *South Africa*, 12 September 1903, p. 796.

An ambitious programme saw the 1904 side equip themselves well, winning thirteen and losing only three of their twenty six matches.¹⁴² “Undoubtedly the present South African team is stronger than either of its predecessors” was the response of the MCC’s *Cricket* journal on the tour’s completion.¹⁴³ The South African’s reward a year later was to receive Sir Pelham Warner and the first official MCC team to tour the sub continent. This was the series “that put South African cricket firmly on the map” as the Colonials went on to win the Test series by four games to one.¹⁴⁴ The MCC had clearly underestimated the strength of the South African national side. Despite its troubled past, South Africa had at last arrived in international cricket.

Cricket however was not the only sport to have an affect on Anglo-South African discourse during this period. Only three years after Major Warton’s historic tour, there followed the first tour by a British rugby team to the colony. The next chapter will explore the background to these early rugby tours and more importantly, their significance to Anglo-Boer relations during this period.

¹⁴² W.A. Powell, *The South Africans in England 1894-1965*, 1994, p. 30.

¹⁴³ MCC, *Cricket: A weekly record of the game*, 8 September 1904, p. 388.

¹⁴⁴ Readers Digest, *South Africa’s Yesterdays*, 1981, p. 240.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Rugby's Tours of Reconciliation

Everything that South Africa knows about Rugby football was learnt in 1891, when speed and stamina were made subservient to concerted efforts, and our visitors left behind impressions which were retained throughout the years ... When, 15 years later, South Africa invaded Great Britain, and played that identical straightforward game ... the whole of the press and the public of Great Britain went wild with enthusiasm.¹

By 1890 the foundations of the Rugby game had been well laid in South Africa, so it was natural that its players should wish to test their strength against a team from the Mother Country.² The historic 1891 tour by W.E. Maclagan and his team was the first by a British side on South African soil yet would mark the beginning of a turbulent fifteen year period in South Africa's political and sporting history. This chapter will explore the legacy left by those pioneering tours and the effect that the 1899-1902 conflict had on Anglo-Boer rugby relations. Crucially, the post-war tours of 1903, when Mark Morrison's side visited South Africa and 1906, the year of the first overseas rugby Springboks, will be examined as early examples of sport being used to reconcile a disturbed and divided society.

Rugby Pioneers

On the British team's departure 20 June 1891, Sir Donald Currie of the Castle Shipping Line announced that the visits of international teams would do much to cement the friendship of the colonies to the Mother Country. To him, and other imperialists of the day, the political position in South Africa was simply this – “British enterprise was pushing itself forward justly to the natives, with due regard to every interest concerned”.³ Little did he know that eight years later this same ‘British enterprise’ would have contributed to a major imperial war in Southern Africa. But for now, in 1891, talk was of rugby.

The invitation to the British team was initiated, not by the South African Rugby Board, but by the Western Province Rugby Football Union, who carried out all preliminary negotiations. The President W.V. Simkins and Secretary T.B. Herold took a leading part in matters.⁴ The actual suggestion however that a British team should visit South Africa was first made to G. Rowland-Hill, President of the (English) Rugby Football Union, by Colonel John E. Orr, a Scottish international who later settled in Johannesburg and played for both the Pirates and Wanderers Clubs. Orr recalled how impressed Rowland-Hill was by what he told him of the

¹ South African rugby writer L.A. Cox, *Rugby football*, 1914, p. 61.

² I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933, p. 15.

³ Quoted in *South Africa*, 20 June 1891, p. 557.

⁴ I.D. Difford, *Our Rugby Springboks*, 1938, p. 29.

standard of the game in South Africa, that he remarked “We must send a team to test your metal”.⁵

Shortly after, Rowland-Hill began negotiations with J.H.S. McArthur and Jo Richards – a well-known Cape Town cricketer and brother of Alf, South Africa’s famous full back – then on a visit to England.⁶ Agreement was reached between them that a side of twenty one players be sent to South Africa for a programme of twenty matches, including three internationals. Cecil Rhodes, then Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, offered himself as financial guarantor.⁷

The touring party was selected by a committee comprising: G. Rowland-Hill, R.S. Whalley, H. Vassall, A. Budd and J.H.S. McArthur. It was limited to players from Scotland and England and included no fewer than twelve Cambridge Blues. A powerful combination, particularly in the back line, eight of the players, four English and four Scottish, were internationals. The team’s manager was E.H. Ash of Richmond, the first Honorary Secretary of the Rugby Union.⁸

This was an expeditionary tour, a chance to cement Colonial relations and to spread the virtues of rugby football into new British territory. Against such strong opposition the inexperienced South Africans did not expect to win many matches, but they did expect to learn valuable lessons.⁹ The British team played nineteen matches during the tour, winning them all and conceding just one try.¹⁰ Paul Clauss, the Scottish three-quarter who played in the 1891 tour, recalled some years later how the South Africans “played hard and there was some good individual play, but there was a distinct lack of combination”.¹¹ Despite the gulf in experience however, the South Africans were always capable opponents. Following their narrow defeat that year, Kimberley won the distinction of being the first recipients of the Currie Cup – awarded to the team who had produced the best game against the British

⁵ In I.D. Difford, *Our Rugby Springboks*, 1938, p. 29.

⁶ P.R. Clauss, Recollections of the 1891 British Tour in South Africa. In I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933, p. 251.

⁷ A.C. Parker, *The Springboks 1891-1970*, 1970, p. 12.

⁸ A.C. Parker, *The Springboks 1891-1970*, 1970, p. 13.

⁹ See B.H. Heatlie, *The First British Team in South Africa*, 1933, p. 263.

¹⁰ The only try scored against the British was by Charles Versfeld in the first match at Cape Town. C.W. Alcock (Ed.), *The Football Annual 1891*, 1891, p. 161.

¹¹ P.R. Clauss, *Recollections of the 1891 British Tour in South Africa*, 1933, p. 253.

tourists.¹² This trophy, along with the tour, had begun to lay the foundations of a firm rugby alliance between the two countries.

Prior to the visits of international teams to South Africa, the Currie Cup tournaments provided the prestige competition for the country's rugby players. To be the holders of the Currie Cup was the 'blue riband' for which each centre competed every two years; "to gain one's cap for one's centre was the height of ambition of the player".¹³ However, the periodical visits of British teams to the sub-continent created higher and nobler aims. The South African cap became the object of the player's ambition, and the honour of performing best against the visitors was the desire of the different unions.

Following the historic tour of Maclagan's team in 1891, a second squad of predominantly Anglo-Irish players arrived five years later in 1896.¹⁴ At the invitation of the South African Rugby Board, the tourists, captained by John Hammond of Blackheath and England, would play test matches against the full strength of South Africa as well as the regional teams.¹⁵ They were set to discover that South African rugby had improved since the last tour.

The visit of the first touring team in 1891 was seen by many as having a considerable effect on the Rugby game in South Africa. Players all over the country took to heart the lessons they had learned, and within a year or two the standard of play had improved immensely, especially in the Western and Eastern Provinces, the Transvaal, on the Border, and at Griqualand West.¹⁶ Many English players had migrated to South Africa between the departure of Maclagan's team and the arrival of Hammond's in 1896. H.C. Gorton, A. Larard, J.B. Andrew, F.T.D. Aston and W.B. Thomson, the English international, were among those who helped to improve the standard of the game within the Colony during this period.¹⁷

When the second British team arrived in 1896, they encountered opposition of far greater calibre. In the third match of their tour a strong Western Province team played them to a pointless draw and, although they won their first three matches against South Africa, the

¹² When Kimberley held the British to a try to nil, Maclagan presented the Cup to the Griqualand West Rugby Union who in turn, handed it over to the South African Rugby Board in 1892 as a floating trophy for inter-provincial competition. A.C. Parker, *The Springboks 1891-1970*, 1970, p. 7. The Cup had been donated by Sir Donald Currie on the British team's departure from Southampton. *South Africa*, 20 June 1891, p. 558; B.H. Heatlie, *S.A.R.F.B and Currie Cup tournaments*, 1933, p. 216.

¹³ E.J.L. Platnauer (Ed.), *The Springbokken Tour in Great Britain*, 1907, p. 8.

¹⁴ *The African Review*, 27 June 1896, p. 1281. Efforts were made to send out a team fully representative of Great Britain and Ireland, but the Scotch and Welsh players were unable to accept the invitations.

¹⁵ South African Rugby Board, *AGM Minutes*, 1 May 1895, p. 59.

¹⁶ I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933.

¹⁷ E.W. Ballantine, *The Game in South Africa*, 1921, p. 203.

margin of victory was only narrow in their favour.¹⁸ Then, historically, in the final match of the tour South Africa beat the tourists 5-0 at Cape Town, and thus recorded their first international victory.¹⁹

South African rugby had in four or five years made such progress that the authorities were now considering sending their own team overseas. G.A. Parker, Hon. Secretary to the South African Football Association, reflected in 1897 how;

Incalculable good arises from the visits of these English teams. Although more benefits are to be derived by receiving a team than sending a team to England, it is the writer's opinion that a representative combination would now make a favourable impression in the old country. South Africa possesses men that will not be improved upon perhaps for several years, and if the leading players say at the end of this season were requested to prepare for a trip next February, a well-balanced team could be got together that would do justice to the country they would represent.²⁰

The success of South Africa in the final match of the tour continued to arouse great enthusiasm. The project of sending a team to England was brought to a head by the Transvaal delegates to the South African Rugby Board at their meeting held in Cape Town during 1897.²¹ They proposed, with the support of Griqualand West, that a letter be written to the English Rugby Union asking them whether they would be prepared to receive a South African rugby team in the season 1899-1900, and in the case of a positive reply, asking them to arrange fixtures. The matter was discussed at great length, but the feeling of the Board was that the time was not right for such a visit and the plans were eventually postponed the following year.²²

These were turbulent times in the history of South Africa and rugby was being affected. With the Jameson Raid not long thwarted, Hammond's 1896 tour had been played against a backdrop of political instability in the country. During the tour the players visited Krugersdorp and the battlefield at Doornkopf and were even permitted to meet with Sampson and Davies, the two 'raiders' imprisoned in Pretoria.²³ They may have faced the Dutchmen in

¹⁸ First Test: 8-0; Second Test: 17-8; Third Test: 9-3.

¹⁹ Alf Richards, who had captained South Africa in the final test in 1891, was referee for the 1896 victory. D.H. Craven, *Springbok Annals*, 1964, p. 40.

²⁰ G.A. Parker, *South African Sports*, 1897, p. 65.

²¹ South African Rugby Board, *AGM Minutes*, 7 May 1897, p. 125.

²² South African Rugby Board, *AGM Minutes*, 4 May 1898, p. 143. The influential Western Province and Orange Free State Unions were amongst those opposed to the timing of the tour.

²³ See an account by O.G. Mackie, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 30 September 1896, p. 4. Also *South African Review*, 3 October 1896, p. 8.

friendly rivalry on the field but the players were left in no doubt that off the field the rivalry was of a more serious nature.

The Imposition of War

Barely twenty two days before the official end of the Anglo-Boer War²⁴ the South African Rugby Board were to meet at the Royal Hotel, Cape Town.²⁵ The last occasion the Board had met was at Kimberley on the 1 September 1899, at the conclusion of the Challenge and Currie Cup competition.²⁶ At that tournament four Unions competed, viz., Griqualand West (figure 24),²⁷ Eastern Province, Rhodesia and Border. The Western Province (the cup holders), Transvaal, and Midlands Unions also entered, but had withdrawn prior to the start. Natal and the then Orange Free State did not enter.²⁸

War at that stage had yet to break, but the game of rugby, like other facets of South African life, had been gripped by the tensions that engulfed the country. Western Province had already suggested the Currie Cup be abandoned that year due to the “unrest in South Africa” but were met at the time by strong opposition from the centres still involved.²⁹ With the Transvaal also withdrawing, certain administrations were clearly affected by the unstable political climate while others chose to ignore it. During the meeting of the Rugby Board a month before the war there were still discussions about the possibilities of an English tour to South Africa in 1900 given the positive response from the English RFU a few months earlier.³⁰ Conflict was looming but evidently not everyone chose to face it.

The war as history tells us, would break out and continue for the next three years with the Currie Cup and all talk of tours suspended. At its re-launch on 9 May 1902, the South African Rugby Board’s secretary, J. Heynemann, reported that prior to the hostilities East London had been fixed as the next Currie Cup venue but he felt it inadvisable to hold a tournament during 1902 “on account of the circumstances prevailing in the country”.³¹ E.J.L. Platnauer, representative of the Orange River Colony, also had instructions to say that his Union would only lend its support if the competition was moved to Cape Town. President, W.V. Simkins, told the Board that “it would be an absurdity to hold a tournament at the present time” and

²⁴ The signing of the surrender document was completed at Vereeniging on 31 May 1902.

²⁵ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 9 May 1902.

²⁶ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 1 September 1899.

²⁷ From the Public Collection, McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

²⁸ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 21 July 1899, p. 175.

²⁹ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 21 July 1899, p. 175.

³⁰ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 1 September 1899, p. 187. See Rowland-Hill’s letter, South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 5 July 1899, p. 173.

³¹ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 9 May 1902, p. 189.



Figure 24: Griqualand West Currie Cup Team, 1899.

thought plans ought to be shelved for the season. The country was “still in a condition of war” the minutes recorded, and the President, for one, believed that under such circumstances there should be no talk of tournaments. Despite this, R. Beaumont of Natal, said that his Union had instructed him to say that they would like to have the competition played that year. The representatives of both Griqualand West and notably, Transvaal also reported a willingness for the resumption of inter-provincial rugby. It was decided that, “in the present state of the country ... the matter be adjourned for two months”.³² It was two more years however before the Currie Cup would resume, with 1904 witnessing all the Unions, bar Natal and Rhodesia, competing for the first time since the start of Anglo-Boer hostilities.³³

The war may have formally ended but it had left bitter divisions within South African society. The Boer and Briton were now further apart than ever before, with their passion for sport seemingly the one thing they had left in common. Even this however became a point of conjecture for some. Within the 1903 publication *The African Colony*, John Buchan felt compelled to write:

It is worthwhile considering the Boer in sport, for it is there he is seen at his worse. Without tradition of fair play, soured and harassed by want and disaster, his sport became a matter of commerce, and he held no device unworthy... (The Boers) are not a sporting race – they are not even a race of very skilful hunters.³⁴

Sports people however, if nothing else, are optimists and as early as May 1902 the South African Rugby Board had talked of re-launching South African rugby with an invitation to the English to tour in 1903.³⁵ The Association Code also discussed the possibility of receiving an overseas team during this year and soon plans were forged between the authorities to arrange a series of matches.³⁶

1903 and Reconstruction

Twelve troubled years had elapsed since Maclagan’s pioneering rugby tour, when in 1903 Mark Morrison, the Scottish international forward, lead the first fully representative British side to South Africa. The Association Codes had already arranged for an English team, the

³² South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 9 May 1902, p. 189.

³³ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 6 June 1904, p.219.

³⁴ J. Buchan, *The African Colony*, 1903, pp.49-50.

³⁵ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 9 May 1902, p. 189.

³⁶ See English RFU, *Minutes*, Blackheath, 20 December 1902, p. 298 and South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 24 March 1903, p. 191. ‘Association’ football started in South Africa in the late 1880s, with the first Currie Cup tournament held in 1892. The Corinthians, an English amateur side, arrived five years later on an educational tour. M. Lee & R.K. Stent (Eds.), *South Africa at Sport*, [1960], p. 123.

Corinthians, to visit South Africa during the winter of 1903, so with the guns of the Anglo-Boer War fallen silent, little time was lost by the South African Rugby Board in arranging their own set of fixtures.³⁷ At a special general meeting at the Royal Hotel, Cape Town on 6 May 1903, it was decided that representative matches should be played in the Western Province, Griqualand West and significantly within the former Boer Republic, the Transvaal.³⁸ It was, as one home periodical reported, the first historic tour to the new “British United South Africa”.³⁹

The British team, that had been announced in *The Times* on 27 May 1903, embarked from Southampton aboard *RMS Briton* twelve years to the day since the first rugby tourists sailed. Under the management of the experienced John Hammond, the 1903 team, pictured in figure 25,⁴⁰ were reputed to be one of the best-balanced teams to be sent overseas and comprised many famous players including twelve full internationals.⁴¹ However, despite the turmoil of war and instability in the host country, Morrison and his team were to discover a remarkable improvement in the all-round play of South Africa’s rugby men. Out of twenty two matches, the tourists could only win eleven, were eight times beaten, and drew the other three. They lost their first three matches at Cape Town and were also beaten twice at Kimberley, twice at Johannesburg, as well as in the final Test match at Cape Town. The other two Test matches were drawn. As Difford pointed out some years later; “in the short space of a dozen years South African rugby had made immense strides”.⁴²

Despite the relative success of the South Africans, the British tourists were acknowledged to be weakened by an under strength back-line. Strong in the forwards, Morrison’s squad had been depleted by the withdrawal of several top-flight back players prior to departure. Rugby at that stage was strictly amateur and a six month absence from Britain was not lightly undertaken by the players.⁴³ In the light of the recent hostilities a trip to South Africa may even have appeared daunting to some. Despite peace, there were still major divisions in the country created by three bitter years of war and oppression.

³⁷ For an account of the Corinthians tour see *South Africa*, September 12, 1903, p. 796; C.W. Alcock (Ed.), *The Football Annual 1903-1904*, 1903; *The Times*, 27 August 1903, p. 12; 7 September 1903, p. 12; 14 September 1903, p. 12.

³⁸ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 6 May 1903, p. 193.

³⁹ *The Sportsman*, 16 June 1903, p. 6.

⁴⁰ I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933, p. 278.

⁴¹ *The Times*, 22 June 1903, p. 19; F. Marshall & L.R. Tosswill (Eds.) *Football – the Rugby Union Game*, 1925, p.389.

⁴² I.D. Difford, The history of the rise and progress of the rugby football game in South Africa, in Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, (12-26), 1933, p. 19.

⁴³ See F.J. Mordaunt, Prospects of the rugby team. A great side in the making, in L.A. Cox & F.G. Pay (Eds.), *Official Souvenir of the British rugby and association football tours*, 1910, pp. 13-19.

THIRD BRITISH TEAM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1903. *The team in the final Test at Newlands.*



Back Row: (Left to right) H. T. Skrimshire, E. F. Walker, T. A. Gibson, W. P. Scott, G. F. Collett, R. S. Smyth, W. T. Cave, R. M. Neill.
Middle Row: J. I. Gillespie, F. M. Stott, Mark C. Morrison (captain), Louis L. Greig, A. Tedford,
Ground: P. S. Hancock, James Wallace.

Figure 25.

Significantly though, many of the teams that the tourists faced in 1903 themselves fielded British-born players. Several had fought for the Imperial Forces against the Boer Republics and a number of old acquaintances were renewed during the tour. Dr. A. Frew of Scotland was South Africa's captain in the first Test, whilst fellow Scot, 'Saxon' McEwan played in all three Tests.⁴⁴ The Irishman H.H. Ferris represented South Africa in Cape Town whilst the Welsh forward J.E.C. Partridge played for the Colony in the first encounter at the Wanderers.⁴⁵ With so many 'home ties', fixtures were played in a friendly atmosphere and wherever the British team went, they were feted and dined and "never likely to forget the cordiality of their welcome".⁴⁶ The hospitality offered the tourists in centres such as Cape Town, King William's Town, Bloemfontein and Pretoria was widely reported at the time.⁴⁷ Figure 26 shows the South African team prior to the match against the British at Johannesburg, 26 August 1903,⁴⁸ whilst figure 27 shows a slightly altered squad prior to the match at Cape Town.⁴⁹

Within South Africa's ranks, although the likes of Roos, Krige and Morkel were of Afrikaans descent, there was a distinct lack of national division between the two squads. This was fundamentally a colonial tour that had been conceived to avoid confrontation and controversy during what was a highly sensitive period both politically and culturally in South African history. With minimal exposure to the war, the British rugby players did in fact pay homage to a number of military sites. Afforded little coverage in the press, these visits were however treated with obligatory patriotism by writers of the time:

⁴⁴ Both players had settled in Johannesburg after coming to South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War. McEwan as a soldier and Frew to take up an appointment at the Orange River Station Refugee Camp. D.H. Craven, *The Legends of Springbok Rugby*, 1989, p. 21.

⁴⁵ I.D. Difford, *Our Rugby Springboks*, 1938, p. 45 and A.C. Parker, *The Springboks 1891-1970*, 1970, p. 29.

⁴⁶ *The Sportsman*, 5 October 1903. In J. Hammond Scrap Book, Public Collection. England RFU, Twickenham, p.60.

⁴⁷ See pp. 63-67 in J. Hammond Scrap Book for the contemporary newspaper reports of the social side of the tour. Public Collection. England RFU, Twickenham.

⁴⁸ From the Public Collection, McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

⁴⁹ I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933, p. 288.



Figure 26: The South African Team. Johannesburg, 26 August 1903.

SOUTH AFRICA v. BRITAIN. — *Newlands, 1903.* *Result, S.A. won 8 points to nil.*



*Back Row: (Left to right) Joe Anderson, Paul Roos, W. van Renen, P. O. Nel, H. H. Ferris, J. Barry, A. Ield, J. D. Krige.
Middle Row: J. A. Lousser, W. M. C. McEwan, B. H. Beattie (captain), J. Botha, C. Brown.
Ground: T. E. C. Hobson, H. W. Carroll.*

Figure 27.

Of the now happily-concluded war the team saw but little, but they visited the field of Magersfontein, where so many gallant Scots laid down their lives for Queen and Country, and Sanna's Post rendered for ever memorable by the gallantry of Q Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery, and where four Victoria Crosses were won in the space of an hour.⁵⁰

Yet barely a year after peace had been declared it was impossible to ignore all traces of the war. Inevitably many key figures involved in the tour had themselves gained a very 'real' experience of the three year conflict. 'Jackie' Powell for example, who captained South Africa against the British in the second Test at Kimberley and a native of Griqualand, served in the Diamond Field Horse. Charles Brown, resident of Boksburg, who played for South Africa in all three Tests, fought with Roberts Horse during the conflict. Others included Griqualand back 'Bertie' Gibbs, present at the Siege of Kimberley and forward George Crampton, an Irishman who came out for the Mashonaland Rebellion, settled in South Africa and subsequently fought in the Anglo-Boer War. Crampton in fact was captured by the Boers and escaped yet allegedly angered by the way he was treated in captivity, later allowed his farm to be used as a concentration camp.⁵¹

Asides from rugby then, this tour was significant in many ways. Many of the players who represented South Africa during 1903 had volunteered for active service only a year or so previously and were now competing against a team from Britain – an island and ideology for which they had been prepared to lay down their lives.⁵² Fixtures were played at a time when many parts of the country were still reeling from the effects of the conflict. The Anglo-Boer war divided not only South Africa's territories but also communities and families and despite the research, we may still find it difficult today to appreciate the war's effect on both sport and society during that time.

The tour itself has been well documented. In 1914, rugby writer Leslie Cox declared that "in 1903 South Africa had the finest team that it has ever put into the field".⁵³ Certainly results on the tour had demonstrated that South Africa had become a worthy opponent to any combination from the Mother Country. British Captain Morrison on his return home in

⁵⁰ *The Sportsman*, 5 October 1903. In J. Hammond Scrap Book, Public Collection. England RFU, Twickenham, p.60.

⁵¹ P. Dobson, private collection. F.J. Dobbin, J.W. Raaff and W.C. Martheze were among those players to have seen active service in Her Majesty's Forces during the Anglo-Boer conflict.

⁵² "Volunteering for service in South Africa was the ultimate imperial sacrifice. It could, as was commonly thought at the time, imply a preparedness to lay down one's life for the cause of Empire". R. Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*, 1972, p.7.

⁵³ L.A. Cox, *Rugby football*, 1914, p. 62.

October of that year, was keen to describe how rugby in South Africa had “improved out of all knowledge, particularly in the Western Province, where the players were Colonial-born and principally Dutch”. He went on to conclude that “a thoroughly representative team of South African footballers would now fully extend any international fifteen in the Old Country”.⁵⁴

1903 was also a momentous year for South African rugby in other ways. The 1903 team were the first recipients of international caps for representing their country. The decision for this and the cap’s design was a result of the special general meeting of the South African Rugby Board in Cape Town during February 1904. For the first time a "springbuck" would also be incorporated into the design.⁵⁵ The famous green jerseys, worn in the 1903 Test at Newlands, had also been formally adopted that year by the South African Rugby Board.⁵⁶

Despite the timing and significance of the tour however, South Africa’s Rugby Board viewed the success of 1903 strictly in terms of footballing and financial results.⁵⁷ It remains surprising then that very little has been written about it in relation to the Anglo-Boer War. Whether the tour was conceived in terms of reconciliation is open to question. Fundamentally it was organised, financed and played amongst the pro-British, colonial section of South African society. As a result it has been difficult to gauge the significance of 1903 amongst the Boer population.

In purely rugby terms however, there is little doubt that the results of the tour, and specifically the final victory at Newlands, began a legacy of South African success that would lead, within a matter of years, to the first ever overseas tour by a South African rugby team.

1906 – The First Springboks in Britain

Following the triumphs of 1903, it was inevitable that thought should again be given to sending a South African squad to the British Isles. On their return home in 1903, both Mark

⁵⁴ *The Sportsman*, 5 October 1903. In J. Hammond Scrap Book, Public Collection. England RFU, Twickenham, p.60. Also see F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks, History of the Tour, 1906-7*, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁵ South African Rugby Board, *Mimutes*, 26 February 1904, pp. 207-211.

⁵⁶ South African Rugby Board, *Mimutes*, 6 May 1903. It had been claimed that the 1903 Test at Newlands was the first time that South Africa had ever played in green jerseys. Captain Barry Heatlie had reportedly presented his team before the match with a set of green jerseys - property of the then defunct Old Diocesan RFC. See C.F.S. Nicholson, *South African Rugby Football Board*, in I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933, pp.27-39; A.Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.67. Green shirts were in fact worn for the first time in the final Test at Newlands during the 1896 series. For the research into this see L. Laubscher & G. Nieman (Eds.), *The Carolin Papers*, 1990, pp.49-52.

⁵⁷ South African Rugby Board, *Mimutes*, 27 April 1904, p. 213.

Morrison and John Hammond had endorsed the view that a fully representative South African team was now more than capable of testing any international side in Britain and that plans should be made at the earliest opportunity.⁵⁸ In fact in 1895, prior to Hammond's 1896 tour, there had been discussions among the South African Rugby Board about sending a team to England.⁵⁹ War and other circumstances of course delayed these plans but with the advancement of the game and the success against Morrison's team, it was not long before South Africa was again pressing its claim for overseas competition.

Immediately following the war however South Africa's ambitions were met with frustration. Plans to play in England as early as 1904 were thwarted by the RFU as they had already pledged to host New Zealand during that season.⁶⁰ Following a decision by board member Barry Heatlie, a series of letters then appeared in the *Cape Times* expressing South Africa's "extreme regret" that this tour had been prevented. Aimed at the English Rugby Union, the South Africans felt that they had "received little encouragement at the hands of the parent body" and that their aspirations were being ignored in London.⁶¹ However, towards the Autumn of 1905, a letter received by A.V. Solomon, secretary of the South African Rugby Board, sparked a process that was to lead to history being made a year later. The South African Rugby Board Minutes from the meeting in Cape Town on 3 May 1905 read:

The Hon. Secretary read a letter, dated 7th April 1905, addressed to him in his private capacity from Mr. John Hammond, stating that he had thrown out the suggestion to the English Union that a South African team should tour the United Kingdom during 1906-1907, and that this had been so favourably received that he was confident that should the Board make application a most favourable answer would be received ...⁶²

Given this insight and having already lost out to New Zealand, W.V. Simkins, Chairman of the South African Board and L.B. Smuts moved that they repeat their request to the English Union at the earliest opportunity.⁶³

Further encouragement was received the following month from Percival Coles, Secretary of the Rugby Football Union. In a letter to A.V. Solomon, Coles expressed his wish for the

⁵⁸ *The Sportsman*, 5 October 1903. In J. Hammond Scrap Book, Public Collection. England RFU, Twickenham, p.60; South African Rugby Football Board, Souvenir of the South African rugby football team, 1906, p. 1.

⁵⁹ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 19 August 1895, p. 83.

⁶⁰ Backed by the Transvaal Union, the South African Rugby Board were encouraged to submit an application to tour Britain as early as the Autumn of 1904. South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 7 October 1903, pp. 201-203. For the RFU's response see Rugby Football Union, *Minutes*, 8 and 9 January 1904, p. 12.

⁶¹ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 16 February 1904, pp. 206-207.

⁶² South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 3 May 1905, p. 13.

⁶³ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 3 May 1905, p. 13.

success of the game in South Africa and the hope of seeing “a fixture list fixed up in England for 1906”.⁶⁴ John Hammond, a keen advocate of South African rugby, was also a useful ally to the Colonials at this stage of negotiations. Given his experience in the country and now based back in Britain, he was able to exert his influence on the process.⁶⁵ According to Nicholson however, it was the famous wing-forward Lt.-Col. John E. Orr who was again responsible for changing opinion amongst the game’s British hierarchy:

During a visit to England, Orr had a conversation with the late G. Rowland Hill (later Sir), then President of the Rugby Football Union, and told him that the Stellenbosch three-quarter line was the best he had seen, and that the all-round standard of play in this country was very high. The famous Rugby legislator was surprised, and realising the shrewd judgement of his informant, replied: “Is that so, well we have the New Zealanders with us at present, but we must get your people over next year”.⁶⁶

In September 1905, the tour was officially approved in London and in December of that year it was resolved that as well as the English, both the Welsh and Scottish Unions should also be allowed to host matches against the South Africans.⁶⁷ Delighted by the prospect, the South African Rugby Board announced the tour at their Annual General Meeting during April 1906:

The consummation of the desire of all South African footballers has at last been reached, for as you are aware negotiations are now proceeding with the English Union for a representative South African team to tour Great Britain, and unless anything quite unforeseen happens our men will leave Cape Town about the end of August next. A strong list of fixtures is being drawn up by the English Union and your Executive trust that they will be able to submit the programme to you at no distant date.⁶⁸

It was decided that the annual Currie Cup competition, held that year in Johannesburg, be used as the basis for the selection of the squad and at a South African Rugby Board meeting at Long’s Hotel, Johannesburg, Messrs. Van Reenan (Western Province), Crosby (Transvaal), Waymouth (Border), Solomon (Griqualand West) and Heddon (Eastern Province) were elected as the selection committee.⁶⁹ Cecil Carden of Port Elizabeth had already been

⁶⁴ South African Rugby board, *Mimutes*, 30 June 1905, p. 18.

⁶⁵ See a letter from Hammond to A.V. Solomon, Secretary of the South African Rugby Board, dated 31 May 1905 offering his help. South African Rugby Board, *Mimutes*, 30 June 1905, pp. 18-20.

⁶⁶ C.F.S. Nicholson, *The Western Province Rugby Football Union and the game in that Province*, in I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933, pp. 41-76.

⁶⁷ Rugby Football Union, *Mimutes*, 28 September 1905, p. 64; Rugby Football Union, *Mimutes*, 1 December 1905, p. 66.

⁶⁸ South African Rugby Board, *Mimutes*, 27 April 1906, p. 39a.

⁶⁹ South African Rugby Board, *Mimutes*, 12 July 1906, p. 55.

appointed tour manager by the time the squad was announced at the Lutje's Langham Hotel on 28 July 1906.⁷⁰ South Africa's first ever overseas rugby tour had become a reality.

Significance Beyond Rugby

By 1906 South Africa consisted of four separate British Colonies – the Cape Colony, Transvaal, Natal and the Orange River Colony. The politicians were still four years away from uniting these into a single country with the nation racked by division and mistrust amongst its white population. To gain a true perspective on the tour then, one should remember that it took place only four years after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. In what has been described as the 'last of the Imperial Wars', the republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State waged a bitter struggle against a British Empire that included the Cape Colony and Natal. Rugby players, along with sports people from either side, were caught up in this most bitter of conflicts.

In 1908, sports writer E.J.L. Platnauer described the 1906-07 tour as "the most important event that has ever taken place in the history of South African Rugby football".⁷¹ For others however, the significance of the tour went beyond rugby. For the first time, a touring team was fully representative of South Africa. With the exception of W. Neill, all the players were born in the Cape Colony, and although not fully representative of the 'whole' of South Africa, those colonial-born could at last identify with the selection - a point made by Platnauer at the time of the tour:

The men we have sent away to represent us are Afrikaners in the true, in the highest sense of the word. They are sons of the burghers of South Africa; they are brought up in the national schools; almost everyone speaks the language of the country; they are part and parcel of our life and our existence; they are our brothers; their success is our success; their joy is participated in by every one of us.⁷²

More significantly perhaps, the team contained players who had fought on the side of Her Majesty's Forces during the war - men such as Billy Millar who had been seriously wounded, A.F.W. Marsberg as well as three-quarter W.C. Martheze. Yet it also included burghers who had supported the Boer Republics – forward W.S. Morkel for example who had been imprisoned on St. Helena. On the team's departure F.S. Malan, member of the Legislative Assembly pronounced:

⁷⁰ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 11 July 1906. L. Laubscher & G. Nieman (Eds.), *The Carolin Papers*, 1990, pp. 38-40.

⁷¹ E.J.L. Platnauer, *Rugby football; Its Early days*, 1908, p.77.

⁷² E.J.L. Platnauer (Ed.), *The Springbokken Tour in Great Britain*, 1907, p. 5.

Although older generations in South Africa might have been divided, the younger generation has come together in sport and the visit of a team largely composed of born South Africans to England has a higher significance than that of sport.⁷³

This 'united' South African team, pictured in figure 28,⁷⁴ was thus set to begin a tour that many had hoped "would blot out misunderstandings of the past and cement lasting friendship".⁷⁵

Given its status much has already been written about the tour itself, with early accounts by Piggott and Platnauer followed by Difford and more recently, the work of Laubscher and Nieman.⁷⁶ What this study aims to address however is the significance of a representative South African tour to Britain so soon after Anglo-Boer hostilities.

With the exception of two – W. Neill and J.G. Hirsch – the South African players had never even seen England before when they sailed aboard the *Gascon* from Cape Town on the afternoon of 27 August 1906. Landing in Southampton on 19 September they were met by a number of dignitaries including Rowland-Hill and John Hammond of the English Rugby Union.⁷⁷

An identity was needed and soon one was established and promoted within the British press, with the team calling themselves the 'Springboks' and adopting the myrtle green jerseys first worn in 1896.⁷⁸ On the field, the tour was an unprecedented success. In all, South Africa played twenty eight matches in Britain, winning twenty five, losing two and drawing one, scoring 553 points to 79. Narrowly losing to Scotland in the first Test (both teams can be seen in figure 29),⁷⁹ defeats of Ireland and Wales were followed by a draw with England in difficult conditions at Crystal Palace. An easy victory against a naïve French side in Paris at the end of the tour followed the team's only other reverse – a 17 points to nil defeat by

⁷³ Quoted in *The Sportsman*, n.d. In J. Hammond Scrap Book, Public Collection. England RFU, Twickenham, p.69.

⁷⁴ T. Shnaps, *A Statistical History of Springbok Rugby*, 1989, p.163.

⁷⁵ Merrieless, Chairman, at the Union Castle farewell lunch, Southampton 12 January 1907. Cited in F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907, p. 92.

⁷⁶ F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907; E.J.L. Platnauer (Ed.), *The Springbokken Tour in Great Britain*, 1907; I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933 and L. Laubscher & G. Nieman (Eds.), *The Carolin Papers*, 1990.

⁷⁷ *The Times*, 20 September 1906, p. 4.

⁷⁸ As a response to a Fleet Street request that a nickname be given to the team, Captain Paul Roos in agreement with Carden (team manager) and Carolin (Vice Captain) came up with the name 'Springbokken'. Subsequently shortened to 'Springboks', this name was first referred to in the *Daily Mail* of 20 September 1906. See I.D. Difford (Ed.), *The History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933, p. 34 and L. Laubscher & G. Nieman (Eds.), *The Carolin Papers*, 1990, p. 49.

⁷⁹ E.J.L. Platnauer (Ed.), *The Springbokken tour in Great Britain*, 1907, p.223.



Figure 28: The 1906 Springboks.



Figure 29: South Africa and Scotland. Edinburgh, 17 November, 1906.

Cardiff.⁸⁰ By emulating the performances of New Zealand a year earlier, the Springboks had shown they had truly ‘arrived’ as a power in international rugby.⁸¹

Yet the real significance of the 1906 tour went beyond rugby. The players, as members of the Springbok team, were not only mere sportsmen but representatives too for the entire white South African nation. This within a country where only a few years before, the name of South Africa had been tarnished by conflict. Piggott recognised this:

During their stay amongst the British Islanders every man in the team had ingratiated himself in the hearts of the British public, and there are no idle words that speak of the good-fellowship which they, as representatives of the great South African Continent, have been the means of instilling into the British race.⁸²

The tour had indeed caught the imagination of the British public. *The Bystander*, depicted in figure 30, was quick to note the public’s ‘pre-occupation’ with the tour over other matters of the day.⁸³ Within the South African team itself, there was also a togetherness; a unity that many believed led to its success.⁸⁴ Aware of the symbolic importance of his team’s visit, South African captain, the articulate Paul Roos, exclaimed:

The tour had united us ... from Cape Agulhas to the Zambesi, South Africa was one, and all differences had been forgotten. Here, we are one; may it always be the same. (As for the British) We now understand each other better, and if that is going to be one of the results of our tour, we shall be more than satisfied.⁸⁵

Back in South Africa, the team’s progress had seemingly galvanised the rugby-supporting population and each victory was met with great enthusiasm. Following the win in Swansea against Wales, *The Sportsman* reported that “cheering crowds marched through the streets for hours afterwards”.⁸⁶ The media had clearly appropriated the unifying nature of South African sporting success.

The fixture against England in London on 8 December 1906 was particularly significant. Having drawn “a very sporting match” three points each, the South African party were then entertained to a high profile dinner by the Rugby Football Union at the Café Royal, Regent

⁸⁰ C. Greyvenstein, *Springbok Saga*, 1978, pp. 46-47.

⁸¹ For a British perspective of the tour see *The Times*, 3 January 1907, p. 5.

⁸² F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907, p. 90.

⁸³ *The Bystander*, 28 November 1906, p.423.

⁸⁴ F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907, p. 8.

⁸⁵ F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907, p. 96.

⁸⁶ *The Sportsman*, 3 December 1906, p.7.

The Topictator

THE PRE-OCCUPATION OF MR JOHN BULL



Figure 30: The result of the visit of the South African Team

Street.⁸⁷ It was an occasion that allowed both groups, in the presence of the media, to pay tribute to one another. C.A. Crane, Vice President of the RFU in toasting “South Africa” offered his support for tours that “did much to cement the feeling between the Colonies and the Mother Country”.⁸⁸ Ever diplomatic, the South Africans responded through their Manager J.C. Carden who thought that the fact that they had “finished equal that day was a happy omen, an appropriate conclusion to their international fixtures, and one which he hoped would be the outcome in another direction”.⁸⁹ His Afrikaans captain, Paul Roos, then produced perhaps one of the clearest indications that this fixture was not just about sport. *The Sportsman* reported his speech thus:

The draw was perhaps the best result. Does not this teach that they should all be equal and should – Dutch and English – work together side by side? Just as they respected one another so he wished to find things prevail in South Africa. He was proud of his side and the behaviour of his men, who were drawn from all parts and parties, and included men who had fought on each side. They had seen that the Boer was, perhaps, not so bad as he had been painted; on the other hand, the latter had been able to understand things better by making actual acquaintance with this country, and he hoped that in the near future the two races would understand each other better and work hand in hand to noble purpose.⁹⁰

“No touring side that has visited our shores from Greater Britain has secured a larger degree of popularity” was a comment within the press, united in their acclaim of the Springboks on their departure.⁹¹ F.J. Merrieles, of the Union Castle Company, proclaimed in his send-off speech at Southampton on 12 January 1907, “that when the tourists set foot again in South Africa they would find a magnificent reception deservedly awaiting them ... They had taught us lessons which would make us keen for fresh contests against them”.⁹² Back in South Africa, there was also an emerging feeling that the tour had achieved unparalleled feats in dispelling the racial tension that existed in the country and that the South African Rugby Football Board were the architects behind this.⁹³

The significance of the tour, beyond rugby, was evident by the gathering that paid tribute to the team on their return into Cape Town on 29 January.⁹⁴ The company that collected to do

⁸⁷ *The Sportsman*, 10 December 1906, p.8; *The Times*, 10 December 1906, p. 7.

⁸⁸ *The Sportsman*, 10 December 1906, p. 8.

⁸⁹ *The Sportsman*, 10 December 1906, p. 8.

⁹⁰ *The Sportsman*, 10 December 1906, p. 8.

⁹¹ *The Sportsman*, 14 January 1907, p. 8. See also *The Times*, 14 January 1907, p. 11.

⁹² F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907, p. 92.

⁹³ In particular see the comments of J.H. Hofmeyr in F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907, p. 105.

⁹⁴ *The Times*, 30 January 1907, p. 12.

honour to the triumphant Springboks did not merely speak for the local football circles, nor, indeed, of the sporting world, for the Ministry, the Houses of Parliament, the Church, the Bar, and the medical and other professions, the Civic Service, and commerce were all strongly represented.⁹⁵ Letters of congratulation were also sent in from High Commissioner Lord Selborne as well as the Prime Minister, Dr. L.S. Jameson.⁹⁶

The team's success was indeed seen as something from which both sides of South Africa's white society could draw a collective pride. Not for the first time, political leaders too seized upon the unifying qualities of sporting success. Liberman, the Mayor of Cape Town, proclaimed in his speech of welcome to the returning team: "We now understand each other better, and if this is going to be one of the results of the tour we shall be more than satisfied".⁹⁷ In a letter addressed to those gathered at the Drill Hall, Sir J.H. de Villiers, The Chief Justice, added: "I believe in all sincerity that this tour has done more to dispel racial ill-feeling than any other event of recent years".⁹⁸ On the surface, in any case, the 1906-07 tour was being heralded as an unprecedented success.

Appropriation of Sport

A rugby tour to the British Isles was reportedly being discussed in South Africa as far back as 1888.⁹⁹ The visits by British teams to South African shores during 1891 and 1896 prompted debate on the subject again at rugby board meetings during 1897 and 1898.¹⁰⁰ With the Unions split on South Africa's readiness for such a tour, the Anglo-Boer War intervened and plans were shelved indefinitely. But what if a tour to Britain had taken place during those troubled years? Reflecting on the success of the 1906-07 Springboks, Free State rugby writer E.J.L. Platnauer speculated in 1908 that,

had the tour come off in the season 1898-99 it is possible that later occurrences which took place, and shook the whole of South Africa to its foundations, might have been avoided. Such indeed were the results of the tour on both nations, and such the effects of the bloodless contests on the football field, that one is constrained to think that it is possible to settle

⁹⁵ At the South African Rugby Football Board luncheon, held at the Drill Hall, Cape Town on 29 January 1907, the returning players were joined by, amongst others, the Hon. Arthur Fuller (Minister of Agriculture), Hon. V. Sampson (Attorney General), Councillor Liberman (Mayor of Cape Town), and the Very Rev. the Dean, Col. R. Southey and Dr. Hutcheon (Director of Agriculture). F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907, p. 97.

⁹⁶ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 15 January 1907, p. 111.

⁹⁷ Cited in F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907, p. 6.

⁹⁸ Cited in F.N. Piggott, *The Springboks. History of the Tour, 1906-7*, 1907, p. 106.

⁹⁹ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 7 May 1897, p. 125.

¹⁰⁰ South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 7 May 1897, p. 125; South African Rugby Board, *Minutes*, 4 May 1898, p. 143.

one's disputes as well on the field of sport as by an arbitration court, or that sterner arbiter to which resource was taken.¹⁰¹

To suggest that a rugby tournament may have averted the war is a naïve and simplistic view. However the significance of the 1906 Springboks lay in the fact that the side, unlike 1903, contained a greater mix of English-speakers and Afrikaners. Despite several of the players fighting for opposing sides during the war, the tour, for the first time since the conflict, fielded a national rugby side which was fully representative of the whole of white South Africa.¹⁰² Interviewed recently, Dunkin Carolin, the son of 'Paddy', who played for South Africa against the British in both 1903 and 1906, could not recall his father "ever being worried about the relationship between Boer and Brit" during these tours. His father he believed, along with the other players, were well aware of the benefits of reconciliation which these encounters with the British promoted.¹⁰³

The tour had, in the words of Platnauer in 1907, "brought the two nations much closer together".¹⁰⁴ Springbok Captain Paul Roos proclaimed after the England match that; "this tour will do far more to calm the troubled waters of South African life than years of legislation".¹⁰⁵ In the historic *Carolin Papers* co-editor Laubscher, in a reflective chapter, also makes the claim that the unity which developed between the players on the tour and which crossed all boundaries of language and politics, played a major role in preparing people for union in 1910.¹⁰⁶ Four years before a unified South Africa became fact, and only four years after a destructive war, these rugby men had indeed lived and played together in complete unison.

Certainly much was also done to destroy the stereotyped images created by propaganda in Britain during the war. Proof of this is the letter John T. Tulloch, President of the Scotland Rugby Union, wrote to vice captain Carolin just prior to the team's departure. Tulloch commented; "I believe there were many people here who thought of the Boer as a creature who was hardly human and your team have altered that to the other extreme".¹⁰⁷

The significance of this was far reaching. Overseas, the Briton had been offered an alternative impression of an old adversary while in South Africa there was, at last, a common interest

¹⁰¹ E.J.L. Platnauer, *Rugby football; Its Early days*, 1908, p.78.

¹⁰² South African Rugby Football Board, *Souvenir of the South African Rugby Football Team*, 1906.

¹⁰³ D. Carolin, Private Interview, Rondebosch, Cape Town. 18 October 2001. See p. 120 of this study.

¹⁰⁴ E.J.L. Platnauer (Ed.), *The Springbokken Tour in Great Britain*, 1907, p. 228.

¹⁰⁵ E.J.L. Platnauer (Ed.), *The Springbokken Tour in Great Britain*, 1907, p. 231.

¹⁰⁶ L. Laubscher & G. Nieman (Eds.), *The Carolin Papers*, 1990, pp. 224-226.

¹⁰⁷ J.T. Tulloch, letter to H.W. ('Paddy') Carolin. Western Club, Glasgow. 11 January 1907. D. Carolin private collection.

between both factions. So, while Afrikaners may have gone onto imbue rugby with more explicit national and ethnic characteristics than English-speaking whites, both groups were, at least, united in their support of the Springboks and in their identification with Springbok success. The success of 1903 and the 1906-07 tour had certainly gone some way to achieving this.

With the benefit of hindsight it does appear however that the rugby men and politicians had been too sanguine in 1907 when they stressed the unifying effect the rugby tours had had on relations between the white groups in South Africa. Despite the subsequent formation of the Union of South Africa (1910), English - Afrikaner disputes in the political and social spheres did not disappear. In fact they were set to deepen as Afrikaners sought independence from imperial governance; a strategy which would of course have ramifications for all sport within South Africa. For while rugby and Springbok success may have been used to help unify the white groups in the early 1900s, history would show us that by the 1940s,¹⁰⁸ Afrikaner nationalists had taken a keen interest in making rugby at least, distinctly Afrikaner.

¹⁰⁸ It would be the effects of another war that would severely test Anglo-Boer rugby relations. Van der Merwe in particular highlights the divisive effects of World War Two and its impact on South African rugby and Afrikaner nationalism. See F.J.G. van der Merwe, 'Afrikaner nationalism in sport'. *Canadian Journal of the History of Sport*, 22(2): 34-46, 1991.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

This study has been about people. It has attempted to explore the processes that shaped Anglo-Boer sport during a significant period in South African history. Indeed, two models of government and two kinds of society were effectively in competition for mastery during the latter part of the nineteenth century. One was British, industrialist and capitalist, based upon profit and intent on unifying South Africa under its control; the other Boer, patriarchal and agrarian, more segregationist and determined to resist Imperial pretensions and preserve its independence and traditional prerogatives. What resulted was the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. A conflict affecting not only sport but the whole future of South Africa.

Described as the “purest example of an ‘imperialist’ war”,¹ the Anglo-Boer War, which lost its place in public memory in Britain after the more sweeping tragedy of the Great War, still has much to teach us about the workings of imperialism in an empire that was at the turn of the twentieth century struggling with new understandings about race, about the identity of ‘the public’ and about society. The erasure of the Boer War in British history was not paralleled in South Africa however, where the war has an entirely different set of political and social associations. The ‘last of the gentleman’s wars’ changed the rules of war, confusing the categories of combatant and non combatant, and introducing such concepts as the concentration camp system and the wholesale burning of farms and personal property. It was set to leave scars on the South African psyche long after the last shot had been fired.

For Britain and her media, the war was fought for control of a non-European land against a European people. But the Boers were not simply European. They had been in South Africa for generations. In fact sport, as this study has shown, was one of the few things these two civilisations had in common. With a dearth of existing research linking these themes, it was hoped then that a different perspective could be offered here on a period in history that had already been well documented.

Of course there exists the potential dichotomy that sport can create within a conflicting society. On the one hand you have the discourse accompanying the post war tours. The white media and the pro-tour lobbies chanted their virtues that ‘sport brings people together’, ‘sport unites’ and ‘sport is different’, which today of course have become familiar sentiments. However from the other viewpoint, sport can also aggravate racial tensions. Competition tends towards chauvinistic aggression where competitors focus on, and deliberately accentuate, differences between themselves. In the nineteenth century and indeed for the first

¹ R. Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*, 1972, p. 1.

half of the twentieth century, the notion of the sports field as a place of equals did not exist. Only those of the same economic class, social status and race played together. The Boer War was fought at a time when South African sport had already evolved under the influence of the British public school system. Sports extenuated racial division – black and white as well as Boer and Briton – and this was an accepted part of South African society.

James Logan's 1901 cricket tour reflected this ethos and was predominantly colonial in nature, as were the teams who faced the 1903 rugby tourists from Britain. However, despite top level competition remaining almost exclusive during this era, sport in South Africa was popular amongst all elements of the population. Indeed, the sport played by both sides during the war was a feature shown by this study that paid testimony to this.

But what of sport as a tool of reconciliation? Perhaps it is the events of 1906-1907 and the first Springbok tour to Britain which should be seen as fundamental in not only cementing South African rugby on an international scale, but also in addressing the divisions created by the war. Despite several of the players fighting for opposing sides, the tour, for the first time since the conflict, fielded a national sporting side which was fully representative of the whole of white South Africa.

Sport back then was clearly recognised as having implications that went 'beyond the game' in much the same way as it is today. With Mandela alongside Pienaar and other images of sporting unity a recognised feature of contemporary South Africa, then perhaps this was the lesson learnt from this troubled period in the country's past. Further research may indeed go on to reveal this. After all, what is history if we fail to learn from it?

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APPENDICES

Dean Allen – Masters

Interview Number 1: *Mr Dunkin Carolin*

Time: 3.00 PM Date: 18th October 2001

Location: 12 Argyle Rd, Rondebosch, Cape Town. South Africa.

Dean Allen: In the *Carolin Papers* Lappe Laubscher refers to the bitterness that existed between Afrikaans speaking and English speaking inhabitants of South Africa after the war. In your father's opinion did this extend to sport?

Dunkin Carolin: From what my father told me, and we discussed the rugby tour overseas in 1906 often, especially in my youth, I have no recollection of him ever being worried about the relationship between Boer and Brit. I can only say that in his opinion, the 1903 tour to South Africa by Mark Morrison's side was a roaring success, so much so that the English invited the South African board to send a team over as soon as possible, which is why the 1906 side went overseas and on that particular tour in that side there were people who'd fought against each other. I cannot recollect my father ever having said a word about animosity between them or between the British sides or South African sides. Everything seemed to go very harmoniously and in fact, he rated that side as being a very successful one overseas.

DA: So do you think your father was aware of the wider issues, say the reconciliation? The purpose of the tours, and the teams playing each other? Sport for example, used for reconciliation?

DC: I think he firmly believed that. He was a protagonist always throughout his life trying to make sport work in every direction and particularly when it came to politics. Although he wasn't a great politician, he certainly was a sportsman, and as such, he enjoyed his sport and thought that people should be friends.

DA: So as far as you can remember there were never any issues between the two different factions within the teams; both 1903 and 1906?

DC: I know of no incident at all.

DA: Thank you very much.

Dean Allen – Masters

Interview Number 2: *Mrs Melanie Steyn*

Time: 6.30 PM Date: 13th November 2001

Location: Stellenoord, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Dean Allen: Can you tell me about your Grandfather?

Melanie Steyn: My Grandfather Marthinus Steyn was a very good all-rounder cricket player and as a prisoner of war in Dagshai, India, he was selected to play with the British officers. They made him an honorary British officer so that he could play in their cricket team and he toured all over India playing for the British as a prisoner of war.

DA: Do you know what was his cricket background – did he always play cricket?

MS: He always played cricket and he shone at school and so on, but he was very young, and in the Eastern Cape, it wasn't, as far I know, all that developed that there were organised sporting tours or teams or anything like that. He was only 17 when he was captured so I don't think he'd actually represented a Province or anything like that. I just know that he was a good all-rounder.

DA: Was he actually imprisoned at all or, as far as you know, was he given any extra benefits for example?

MS: He was. I think he was imprisoned just like all the other prisoners of war and gradually as they were playing cricket among themselves he was noticed and then they started selecting him. I don't know how many favours he was given but certainly the big favour of touring the country as a British officer.

DA: You mention that he was actually given the status as a British officer?

MS: He was. This is what he told the family when he came back, that he was made an honorary British officer.

DA: Thank you very much.

Dear Sir,

I am a postgraduate student from Britain presently working at Stellenbosch University towards a Masters degree in Sports History/Sociology.

I have previously written work on Afrikaner nationalism and rugby c.1899-1948 and explored the historical relationship between the British and the Afrikaans people within South Africa. My masters study is a continuation of this theme but concentrates on the important period both during and after the 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War and the role that sport (cricket and rugby predominantly) played in the reconciliation and rebuilding of both communities in South Africa.

I would be most grateful if you could publish this letter in your newspaper in the hope that there may be readers who could assist in my study. Perhaps someone may have information or material relating to this important period in the sporting history of Britain and South Africa? Apart from the sporting perspective I am also very keen to illustrate aspects of the Anglo-Boer War – the nature of the conflict, the relationships and the antagonisms.

With your kind permission, I would like to discover if any readers could help in my search for information. Please find attached my contact details, it would perhaps be easier to offer my email address?

Thank you for your help.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. D.C. Allen