

IMPERIAL INFLUENCE

The fascinating cricketing relationship between England and South Africa can be traced back to the first British settlers in the country and the emergence of their influence in the region. *Dean Allen explores the history*

By the time the Anglo-Boer War had broken out in South Africa in 1899, the total global area under British control was the equivalent size of four Europes and had a population of around 400 million. Britain's expansionist policies had accomplished control and influence throughout large areas of the modern world and now the focus was upon achieving the same effect throughout Southern Africa. And wherever the empire went, so did its number one sport: cricket.

A key figure of this incredible story is the largely unknown benefactor of South African cricket – the Scotsman, James Douglas Logan. A significant individual in the wider history of cricket and the British Empire, Logan has largely been ignored by the pens of historians and writers.

Cricket's development in Southern Africa

Cricket itself first came to the African continent with the military between 1795 and 1802 in the earliest days of the British regime. Members of the garrison that occupied the Cape in 1806 found time to play cricket and two years later the first known reference to a match being played in South Africa appeared in the *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser* on 2 January 1808. However, it was not until later that century, with the arrival of British settlers, that the game started to spread. 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. The first Transvaal club opened in 1863. As a significant colony for the British, Natal saw cricket being played there as early as 1848 – just three years after the

formation of Surrey County Cricket Club and the famous I Zingari's first match.

Cricket became largely institutionalised in the 1870s and 1880s, coinciding with the rise of sport as a mass leisure activity in post-Industrial Revolution Britain. Following the establishment of cricket, these decades also saw the formation of the first rugby, soccer, athletics, cycling, horse racing (jockey), golf and tennis clubs in South Africa and the inauguration of regular competitions. Then, from the late 1880s, national associations started to be formed to place sport on an organised footing. The timing of all this is significant as the nature of sport was transformed by the discovery of the richest mineral deposits in the world.

The discovery of gold and diamonds within the interior encouraged the development of cricket among a growing workforce, thus creating competition of a higher standard within the mining centres. With the influx of workers, many of them skilled cricketers, Kimberley soon became one of the most important sporting centres in the country and in 1889 the town became the first recipients of the famous Currie Cup.

Cricket in South Africa emulated the English game in every conceivable manner. The link between cricket and literature had been long-standing and on the back of the sport's popularity, a Natal Cricketers Annual was produced in 1885, from which came the short-lived South African Cricketers' Annual, under the editorship of JT Henderson. 1890 also saw the formation of the Natal Cricket Union modelled on the English-style governing body. However, the ultimate commendation was received in 1888 when South Africa played host to Major Warton's touring side – the first English team to officially tour South Africa.



The South African Cricket Association

With the expansion of the game throughout South Africa, it soon became clear that a governing body was needed to co-ordinate the different centres. Formed in the "style of the MCC", draft rules of the new association were passed at the inaugural congress of delegates, held at Kimberley on

Pioneers: Major Warton's English touring side in 1888 (top); HDG Leveson Gower and Pelham Warner bid farewell to JWHT Douglas in 1913 (middle left); James Logan (middle right); Cecil John Rhodes (above)

Tuesday, April 8 1890. "The object of the Association" it was stated, "shall be to foster and develop cricket throughout South Africa" with the onus on promoting cricketing links with the Mother Country. With its headquarters in Johannesburg, the association from the outset expressed its specific duty in "the management of Currie Cup tournaments, and the visits of English teams to South Africa, and South African teams to England."

While colonials looked to 'home' origins for their cultural lead, aspects of this culture was inadvertently transferred to the local population. Although there is relatively little known or recorded about the history of black cricket in South Africa, recent research suggests that its origins date back to shortly after the inauguration of the white game in the country.

In the Western Cape for example, the standard of cricket was such

that a Malay team were awarded a little-known fixture against WW Read's English side of 1891, while in the Eastern Cape, cricket was particularly well developed among the African population after the game had been introduced by missionaries and the first British garrisons. Indeed there were reports of Africans playing cricket in Queenstown as early as 1862 while the first African cricket club was founded in Port Elizabeth in 1869.

While Africans and other groups (such as the Indians of Natal) had proved their proficiency at the game, their involvement in first-class competition was, however, never seriously considered. International fixtures especially remained the realm of the gentleman tourist whose breeding and skin colour were as fundamental as his cricketing ability. The early tours of empire were constructed to demonstrate a white, imperial solidarity over the 'dark masses' and nowhere was this more salient than in South Africa. Revealingly, after meeting Cecil Rhodes at Oxford University in March 1895, future England captain Pelham Warner recounts a conversation about cricket and the debate surrounding the talented Cape Malay player, Krom Hendricks. It shows the attitude and influence of Rhodes in the 'selection process' of the early South African teams:

"I was fortunate enough to sit next to Rhodes, and the conversation turned on the first visit, during the previous summer (1894), of a South African team to England. Rhodes had had a good deal to do with the financing of this side, and he remarked: 'They wanted me to send a black fellow called Hendricks to England.' I said I had heard he was a good bowler, and he replied: 'Yes, but I would not have it. They would have expected him to throw boomerangs

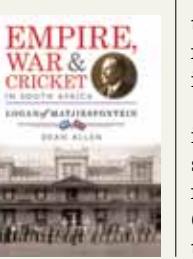
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IT REQUIRED THE INTRUSION OF POLITICS AND THE OUTBREAK OF WAR TO DILUTE AFRIKANER INTEREST

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during the luncheon interval."

Having taken to the game the majority of Africans were left to fend for themselves and to administer and develop their own cricket in the face of increased colonial arrogance and opposition.

Prior to the Anglo-Boer War, Afrikaners had also freely taken to the game. In the north, places such as Krugersdorp, Pretoria and Potchefstroom was regarded as a leading cricket centres for the 'Dutch'. The fact that Afrikaners Arthur Ochse and Nicolaas Hendrik Theunissen appeared for South Africa in the first Test of 1888 and were followed by Jocobus Francois du Toit and Charles Gustav Fichardt in the 1891/92 series (Fichardt played again against the English in 1895/96) suggests the popularity of the game among the traditional 'opponents' of the English. In the Republican heartland of Johannesburg, the town's first cricket team in 1886 was, in fact, captained by and featured an equal number of Dutch speakers, while the 'pioneers' of Cape cricket in the 1860s included players such as van Renan, van der Byl, Cloete and de Smidt. From these surnames and others it is clear that prior to its imperial indoctrination cricket was far from monopolised by the English.

It required the intrusion of politics and the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War to dilute Afrikaner interest in cricket. With benefactors such as Logan controlling cricket around this period, the game became associated with British cultural values and was thus despised by the Boers who were fighting to maintain their own identity and independence.

The decisive event occurred in 1912 when South Africa secured its place within London's newly formed Imperial Cricket Conference. Membership of this body, cricket's regulating

institution, was henceforth confined to cricket-playing countries who accepted the British monarch as head of state. Not only did this have the general effect of stifling the spread of cricket in places like Holland, the Nordic countries and America, but it was particularly offensive to the Afrikaners, who as a people were still recovering from a bitter conflict with British imperialism, and were now most unlikely to adopt a game that had so explicitly chosen to identify itself with that same political ethic.

Imperialist policies throughout South Africa had indeed engendered cricket with an English identity from which the Afrikaners were far removed. Following the war, Test cricket between England and South Africa was considered an 'Anglophile family affair' and it was not until 1927/28 that Afrikaner Jacobus Petrus Duminy represented South Africa at Test level. Few Afrikaner schools played cricket or encouraged the game and most senior cricket was organised around Old Boys clubs which naturally recruited among the English-speaking community. In addition, no significant writing on cricket would appear in Afrikaans for 50 years. Cricket it seems, as the epitome of empire, was unlikely to attract those who considered themselves dispossessed within their 'own' country.

By the 1890s, cricket had assumed a new level of importance within the British Empire and in South Africa it played a significant part in establishing Britain's cultural dominance up to Union in 1910. While the quest for control of Southern Africa would ultimately signal the last major act of British colonisation, the cricket played in South Africa today and, indeed, the current series between South Africa and England, remains a legacy of the empire that once created it. ■