

Cricket and representations of beauty: Newlands Cricket Ground and the roots of apartheid in South African cricket

In January 2010, England played South Africa in the traditional New Year's Test at Newlands in Cape Town. Former England captain Michael Atherton led his story in the London *Sunday Times* with an ode to the beauty of the stadium:

A new year of Test cricket dawns for England at one of the most stunning venues in the world game. Newlands was shimmering on Friday morning under the shadow of Table Mountain, Cape Town's defining feature, as both sets of players prepared for the pivotal Test of the series.¹

England captain Andrew Strauss was equally respectful of the venue and throughout the match the media framed the ground as 'picture perfect'. The *Times* from Johannesburg, its front page dominated by a colour photograph of Newlands, dubbed it the 'Field of Dreams'.

Even the Canon Chancellor of Blackburn Cathedral, Chris Chivers, joined in the reification of this space. In a thoughtful article in the *Cape Times*, he mused on how epic battles on the sports field mirror the real-life struggles against fear, failure and pain that every individual is engaged in. Newlands was his starting point: 'nothing beats a Test match played at Newlands, beneath one of the most spectacular mountains in the world.' Furthermore, watching a game here provides a perfect setting for understanding deeper things about life, for 'aesthetics – as the Ancient Greeks knew only too well – sets the stage for contests which are often of the most epic proportion'.²

Newlands and the mountain that towers over it have been lyricised for over 120 years in this way. Ground and mountain have become part of the romance and folklore of South African and international cricket.

This chapter reflects on the way the Newlands Cricket Ground (today named Sahara Park Newlands for commercial reasons) has been represented in travel descriptions of South Africa by English cricketers and cricket

writers since the first Test match there in 1889, less than five years after Lord's hosted its first international game. It is argued that a subtext of this genre of writing is the representation of Newlands as a place of colonial idyll. Just as a large body of cricket writing has romanticised the village and rural roots of cricket in England (partly as a conservative response to change in the game and in the world),³ so the geography and customs of this cricket ground and the way it has been described came to represent all that was good (and superior) about being 'British' in the colonies. From the start, the stadium and those who ran it developed the most intimate of relationships with 'Home'. These associations were reinforced by close connections between the respective political and cricket establishments, and also the many English professional cricketers who came to winter in Cape Town every season from the late 1880s onwards. Not for nothing did the Club that owned the ground become known as 'the MCC of the Cape Colony'.

However, behind this romanticised view of the Newlands Cricket Ground, its surroundings and its obvious beauty, there was a shadow side that needs to be explored. Those in charge of this most English of social spaces were deeply part of the institutionalised violence of not only colonialism, but also apartheid. In later years, it became fashionable to blame the 'crude' Afrikaners for apartheid (an idea itself rooted in Social Darwinism and imperialistic thinking), but the Newlands-based cricket establishment were in fact directly responsible for racial segregation becoming official policy in South African cricket.

Visiting the colonies

The origins of the cricket ground in Newlands go back to the mid-1880s, when the Wynberg-based Western Province Cricket Club decided to hire and turn into a cricket ground a piece of farmland – bordered by marshes, the railway line and the brewery – in one of the neighbouring suburbs, Newlands. A rugby ground, which also became famous as an international venue, was built at roughly the same time on the other side of the tracks. The cream of colonial society was involved in these parallel developments, including Cape Dutch leaders such as 'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr. Two of the people on the Committee responsible for the developments of the new cricket ground were Major Robert Wharton, who went on to organise and manage the first international team to visit South Africa in 1888, and William Milton, who was to captain South Africa in that series. Both were civil servants from England. Milton, who was educated at Marlborough College and had played rugby for England, became private secretary to Cecil John Rhodes, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony.

The first match at Newlands was the annual fixture between Home Born and Colonial Born on 2–3 January 1888. This match was a highlight in the colonial cricket and social calendar. At that stage ‘Home Born’ meant English in colonial discourse. The locals won. The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers band and a good crowd of spectators were in attendance.⁴

In December 1888, the first English touring team arrived. They were captained by Aubrey Smith (who was to become a Hollywood film star famous for playing the quintessential British gentleman). The whole of Cape Town turned out to greet them and the tourists played the first game involving an international team in Africa at Newlands. The English captain described the scene as follows:

Newlands Cricket Ground was a picture to be remembered, with its surrounding mass of pines, overtopped by the great table mountain on one side, the new stand covered with red cloth standing out prominently against the green background. The picturesque effect given on our own grounds being enhanced by the bright and varied colours of many Malay women in their holiday attire.⁵

Smith estimated the crowd to be 4,000 strong, 400 of whom were accommodated on a temporary grandstand erected especially for the occasion. ‘The weather was beautiful and an excellent matting pitch was laid in the centre of the good grass ground.’ He noted that, ‘Hundreds of people arrived by train every ten minutes to Newlands’. Women constituted ‘a very large percentage’ of the crowd that watched the English lose by seventeen runs to the Western Province XXII.

The English returned to Newlands in March 1889 before they took the boat home. England destroyed South Africa thanks to match figures of 15 for 28 by the Lancashire professional Johnny Briggs, which enabled the tourists to win by an innings and 202 runs.

English tours to South Africa became regular occurrences after 1888–89. South Africa (not yet formally a country) now started establishing itself as one of the handful of test-playing sides. Newlands’s reputation as a cricketing paradise soon became recognised throughout the cricketing world. During the 1905–06 tour, MCC captain Sir Pelham Warner noted that:

... there was a tremendous crowd on Saturday last, when the M.C.C. and South Africa again faced each other. And never did the Newlands ground look prettier. It was a perfectly glorious day, the sun shining with brightness and warmth from an almost transparently blue sky, while above the thousands who sat packed on the terraces and under the oaks towered the great mountain.⁶

The Western Province Cricket Club (WPCC or simply the Club), which built Newlands and organised the first English tour, now found other clubs reacting to their privileged position. In 1890, the Western Province Cricket

Union (WPCU or the Union) was formed by clubs who ‘wished to wrest away control from the Western Province Cricket Club the apparent monopoly which they held in the administration of cricketing matters in the Western Province and obtain equal representation for all first-class local clubs on a duly constituted board’.⁷ The WPCU now became responsible for the organisation of Tests and representative matches at Newlands. Although the Club and the Union sometimes had an uneasy relationship, they were nevertheless in broad agreement about how the ground and cricket in South Africa should be run.

One of the purposes of these early tours, as recent studies have shown, was to extol the virtues of colonialism and the links with Britain. They were accompanied by elaborate social programmes and speeches by political figures emphasising this.⁸ So closely were the projects of cricket and colonialism combined that Monty Bowden, who captained England during the 1888–89 tour, accompanied the Pioneer Column which colonised Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) as a celebrity guest in 1890. William Milton became the Administrator of Rhodesia, and many of his cricket friends became leading officials in the new administration. So brazen were the cricket and political connections that Lord Hawke’s team in 1896 visited the ringleaders of the Jameson Raid in Johannesburg where they were imprisoned following their abortive attempt to overthrow the government of the Transvaal. Moreover, the influential Lord Harris, for a long time an autocratic secretary of MCC, soon afterwards became Chairman of the South African mining company Consolidated Gold.⁹

Sir Pelham Warner, a great figure in English cricket history, was one of those who over several decades developed intimate links with Cape Town. After he had fallen ill with ‘a virulent form of poisoning’ in 1930, he embarked on a holiday to Cape Town and his later description of it clearly shows the friendships that existed between the British and colonial establishments on political, cricket and social levels in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As Warner put it: ‘A voyage to South Africa in company with my daughter followed, and the sea-breezes, plus Jack Rennert’s daily glass of champagne, quickly restored me to health.’ One of his fellow passengers was the magnate and cricket sponsor Sir Abe Bailey, who ‘had brought with him a library of books, to which he kindly gave me access’. Once arrived in Cape Town, J. J. Kotze, the former South African fast bowler, and the then groundsman at Newlands, who had recently laid the first turf there, came on board and ‘insisted on driving me there and then in his car to Newlands to see the grass wicket for which he was responsible’. Warner explained:

We had a glorious time in Cape Town. At first we stayed at a hotel, and later both Sir Abe Bailey and Colonel and Mrs J.J. of my old friends the Van der

Bijls, Mr and Mrs Syfret, and Mr and Mrs Young – made the days pass all too quickly. The Van der Bijls I had known since my first cricket tour in South Africa under Lord Hawke in 1898–99, and I had played cricket on Bearsted Green and in the dockyard at Gibraltar against a son of the Syfrets, now a distinguished Admiral. We went for several motor drives in and around the Cape Peninsula, on one occasion lunching with the Pickstones in their lovely old house, Lekkerwijn, at Groot Drakenstein, in the Paarl Valley.

Warner mixed with leading local celebrities during his visit. He met members of the famous 1906 Springbok rugby team and the Cabinet Minister Piet Grobler. He visited Sir Lionel and Lady Phillips at Vergelegen, ‘the original residence of the first Dutch Governor, with its famous library and organ which Sir Lionel played for us’. He had lunch at Admiralty House in Simonstown with Admiral Rudolf Burmester. He played tennis at the Knollys’ with his Oxford contemporary Charles ‘Strugs’ Strubens and was entertained by the Cartwrights at Fernhurst, ‘with Table Mountain behind the house’, a ‘delightful garden ... round the bathing-pool and zinnias as big as sunflowers’. Warner concluded:

Those happy days in South Africa seem like a dream. Bathing in the sea at Muizenberg, fishing from Sir Abe Bailey’s motorlaunch, tennis at the Van der Bijl’s, and the race-meetings, at one of which we met Captain Bonham-Carter, one of the heroes of Zeebrugge [who] ... invited us to lunch in his ship, H.M.S. Carlisle, and there I renewed my friendship with R.B. Cunliffe and K.A. Sellar, who had played in the Navy v. M.C.C. match at Portsmouth.¹⁰

The great English cricketer Walter Hammond toured South Africa several times and also spent a recuperative summer in Cape Town, raving about its beauty and the climate. He noted that:

Cape Town is one of the few places I have been in that seems to have a definite strata of society which one might term the ‘cricket set’, just as some places have a ‘bridge set’. They were charming to me, and as hospitable as only Colonials can be; one way and another, my enforced visit to Cape Town was one of the pleasantest periods of my life.¹¹

Famous English cricketers such as Lionel, Lord Tennyson, Ian Peebles, Bill Edrich, Godfrey Evans, Alec and Eric Bedser, Denis Compton, Colin Cowdrey, Trevor Bailey, Doug Insole and Ken Barrington all duly reinforced the positive accounts of touring South Africa, visiting Cape Town and playing at Newlands given above by Smith, Warner and Hammond. In many of these accounts, South Africa is described as the most enjoyable country to tour and Newlands as the most beautiful ground in the land.¹²

After the Second World War, some of England’s greatest cricket writers added to the chorus of unrestrained admiration for Newlands. John

Arlott, not the greatest admirer of South Africa, nonetheless described Newlands as ‘one of the loveliest of all cricket settings’.¹³ E. W. Swanton claimed that ‘no cricketer could wish for a happier New Year than to play in or watch a game on the most perfect and most comely of all cricket fields. Newlands ... is a beautiful survival among the world’s great cricket grounds.’¹⁴ The poet and cricket writer Alan Ross painted this picture in his literary way:

Newlands is so certainly, in the popular imagination, the most beautiful Test ground in the world that one half hopes to disagree. But in honesty one cannot. Separated from the sea and the city by Table Mountain, it lies deep under the rocks of Devils Peak. The mountain line is no distant prospect, but an immediate backdrop up to which one has to raise one’s head. The pavilion is full of flowers, the stands painted the blue of the sightscreens at Lord’s. If you sit among the plane trees, with your back to Table Mountain and the railway, you look across at a thick line of oaks, the people under them light as in a painting by Pissarro or Seurat. From every other position Table Mountain flowing into its foothills dominates the eye.¹⁵

The beauty of the ground and its setting has been undisputed for more than a hundred years. The radio commentator Charles Fortune, the voice of cricket for generations of South African cricket enthusiasts in the age before television, summed up the adoration felt for it in South Africa when he said that ‘Newlands has contrived the miracle that can encompass a test [sic] match crowd yet still maintain the image and the atmosphere of a village cricket match ... Peace more perfect than with a glass of beer in hand, looking out across Newlands, you will not find.’¹⁶

This idyllic theme in relation to Newlands recurs over and over again in cricket literature, going beyond mere geographical descriptions to reinforce notions of what was beautiful and civilised about cricket and colonial life, and the relationships and experiences and attitudes that went with this.

The shadow side of Newlands

The people who ran the postcard-pretty Newlands Cricket Ground endlessly extolled cricket’s notion of ‘fair play’, but chose not to practise it. The beautiful place under the mountain, celebrated in the literature of cricket for over a century, also has a shadow side to it. Professed cricket protocols and standards did not apply to those who were not white or ‘European’ here. The underclasses were allowed into Newlands only on certain strict conditions. They could not sit on the grandstand, for example. And, after initially being allowed to play there, they were soon completely excluded from doing so. Their role was mainly to fulfil menial tasks and stay inconspicuous. An

institutional culture of racial and class superiority became infused into the very fabric of the place, and into the muscles and minds of those who played in flannels on its grass.

Jan Morris noted that in Britain's colonies the Club was the place that most represented the superiority of the colonists over the unadmitted millions. Nowhere was this more so than at Newlands.¹⁷

Both the Union (WPCU) and the Club (WPCC) openly practised segregation and racism. For a hundred years the logic of colonialism and apartheid ruled at Newlands. Unlike India or the West Indies, where discrimination in a colonial society evolved into opportunities for the indigenous people to represent their country, by the 1920s and 1930s South Africa followed the opposite direction, hardening the system of racial discrimination rather than gradually relaxing it.

If a more tolerant approach had been followed, things could have been very different at Newlands. The surrounding suburbs of Newlands and Claremont were mixed residential areas at the turn of the twentieth century and flourishing cricket cultures emerged in the Muslim and coloured Christian communities (often lumped incorrectly together as 'Malays' at the time) who lived there.

Aubrey Smith specifically commented on the enthusiasm for cricket in the black communities of Cape Town at the time. Black enthusiasts were among the large numbers that greeted the first English team at the Docks in December 1888 and many turned up to watch the first international game at Newlands.¹⁸ Coming back from Christmas lunch with Admiral Wells on HMS Raleigh moored in Simonstown, Smith observed: 'On our way home we saw as quaint a site as ever cricketers saw at Mowbray. Two or three cricket matches were being played by Malays and Kaffirs and hundreds of Malay women in their many coloured costumes were there to do honour to the friends.'¹⁹

Many of these players and spectators lived in the shadow of the Newlands Cricket Ground. However, because they were not allowed to join the whites-only Club and Union they had to play separately. As early as January 1890, the same month the first-ever white Western Province team took to the field against Natal at Newlands, the local black cricketers hired the ground for an inter-town tournament. Claremont and 'Cape Town Union' played against Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg, which was then only a five-year-old settlement.

Matches were played over three weeks, every Monday and Tuesday when not being used by white cricketers. The *Cape Times* described the scene in a vivid way:

The visage presented to the visitors at Newlands yesterday, could hardly have been rivalled by the most gorgeous of Eastern spectacles, whilst the beautiful background of trees and the lofty mountain rising beyond toned down the daring blaze of colour, the whole forming a picture which must have printed itself indelibly upon the retina of all who made the journey to the ground. The whole of the Malay population appeared to have deserted Cape Town for the sylvan pastures.²⁰

But this event was unfortunately one of the few exceptions. Within a few years the ground became off limits to black cricketers. Excluded from the mainstream, they went on to form their own Western Province Coloured Cricket Union (WPCCU) and in 1898 Western Province won the first inter-provincial tournament for black cricketers in Port Elizabeth. Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, the first black medical doctor in South Africa and a City Councillor for forty years, was the first president.

Palmboom Road in Newlands was one of the venues for meetings of the early WPCCU. Today this is a gentrified area with no trace of its history, but in 1900 Palmboom Road was 'particularly mixed with a high proportion of Coloured residents at the top end'. There was a school for coloured children in Palmboom Road and at the bottom end (near today's Blue Cross Hospital) a Gandhi Memorial School was later built. In 1902, according to Beatrice Law, 'about half of the population [of Newlands village] were Coloured and about half White'. Claremont was similarly mixed. A mosque was built in Claremont Main Road in 1894. (It is still in active use today, although dwarfed by the sea of concrete commercial buildings going up there currently.) A little further down Main Road there was a school attached to St Saviour's Church.²¹

The Western Province Coloured Cricket Union was geographically separated into a 'Town Section', covering the District Six, Bo-Kaap and City areas playing mostly at Green Point Common, and a 'Suburban Section' based in Claremont and Newlands. In the twentieth century, flourishing clubs emerged here, including Vineyards, Violets, Pirates, Alphenians, Primroses and Green Roses.²² These 'Suburban Section' clubs played mostly at Rondebosch Common, a mile or so away from the Newlands ground.

Although discriminated against, the locals remained passionately involved with Newlands. Sir Pelham Warner vividly described the atmosphere at the match in 1898 between Lord Hawke's team and Western Province:

On Boxing Day there was a crowd of over 8000 spectators and the parade during the luncheon interval reminded us of an Eton v. Harrow or Varsity match. The bands of the King's Royal Rifles and the Liverpool Regiment played on the ground, while amongst the crowd there were a large number of

Malays, many of whom are engaged as bowlers by the clubs in Cape Town. They could easily be recognised by their red fez. Some of them bowl well and their keenness is beyond doubt.²³

In his book on the 1905–06 MCC tour, Warner speaks of how the locals participated in the English team's net sessions and how C. J. Nicholls, 'a young Malay with a fast left-hand action hit my middle stump nearly every other ball'.²⁴

A tantalising autobiographical profile of one of these cricketers, known only as Isaac, which appeared in the *Cape Times*, neatly summarised the Newlands and South Africa's colonial cricket set-up in those years. From 1901 onwards, 'Isaac' was closely involved with the Club and helped out the white Western Province and South African teams and their international opponents. As a youngster he would go to Newlands every day after school to 'help to field and pull out the grass'. In addition, 'Isaac often clean[ed] the secretary, Mr Bissett's cricket togs, and this makes it a extra 6 [pence]'. By 1907 he was the 'net boy' at the club. The club's English professional there, F. Tate (father of Maurice), taught him how to bowl 'six different balls'.²⁵ He became 'of great value as a groundsman', ran the scoreboard and 'bowled for 15 years in the nets for Western Province'. Those he bowled to included Jack Hobbs, Jimmy Sinclair, E. H. D. Sewell and Frank Mitchell, the South African captain. According to Isaac, the overseas teams 'whispered that Isaac will be an expert bowler one day'. He 'became a good bowler in the Western Province and his salary was also increased to 10s[hillings] a week besides his other tips'.²⁶

In his other life, away from the master–servant world of Newlands, Isaac was selected for the Western Province Coloured Cricket Union provincial team that played in the Barnato tournaments. This aspect of his career, however, rates no further mention in a long article; his story was only of value to the *Cape Times* because of his novelty value to whites.

After finding work in the then Southern Rhodesia, where he became groundsman at the Queens Club in Bulawayo, Isaac returned to Cape Town to resume his duties as baggage master and 'massage man' of the Western Province team, travelling away with them as well. Isaac is still there in 1946, standing back right, in the team photograph of the first post-Second World War whites-only Western Province team captained by Tuppy Owen-Smith.

This fifty-year-long cricket love story involving a scarcely literate man with no surname was replicated in many different ways by other individuals at sports clubs in Cape Town. The local people became part of the furniture at Newlands, employed as net bowlers, scorers, baggage men, barmen and 'boys' on the ground staff by the ruling classes. And on match

days they would be present in their segregated enclosure following play with colourful mannerisms.

The closeness of locals like Isaac to the white establishment cricket scene as 'skivvies' is reminiscent of the West Indies experience. C. L. R. James, as well as Brian Stoddart and Hilary Beckles, have described how a layer of very skilled black working-class cricketers consisting of 'groundsmen, young men employed as grounds bowlers, and occasionally helpers and hangers on' emerged in Barbados and Jamaica from the 1890s onwards. They were excluded from the Challenge Cup competitions, but a few clubs (like Spartan) gave some opportunities and gradually top black players emerged.²⁷ Similar practices and talent emerged in South Africa as well. But instead of these players becoming South African versions of George Headley and Learie Constantine, their achievements became more invisible over time. In an age where the 'amateur' was idealised as a leisured gentleman, the fact that the black workers at clubs in the Caribbean were 'professionals' was sometimes given as the reason for their exclusion. In South Africa, the white establishment made no attempt to hide the fact that race was the reason.²⁸

Nevertheless, the number of black cricketers in Cape Town continued to grow and by the mid-1940s the Western Province Coloured Cricket Union had thirty-seven teams participating in its first and second divisions.²⁹ In addition to the Muslim-dominated WPCCU clubs, there were also clubs in Claremont playing in the Cape and District Cricket Union, made up mainly of Christian cricketers. They were affiliated to the rival Peninsula and Western Districts Cricket Board (PWDCB), which claimed to have even more players than the WPCCU in Cape Town – over fifty teams in the early 1950s.

Many of these cricketers lived in very close proximity to Newlands. Rushdie Magiet, who became convenor of the national selectors after democracy, remembers that Fridays were a big day in Claremont. First there was mosque and later all the cricketers would walk down Main Road (only a few hundred metres from Newlands) dressed in their whites and blazers in delicious anticipation of the weekend games ahead.

Despite this enthusiasm, the local cricketers could only be part of the side-show at Newlands, working in menial positions or watching from the segregated enclosures. Black cricketers could not play for official clubs, provinces or national teams, or share facilities with white cricketers. The handbook of the WPCU made this clear. It contained a paragraph with a specific prohibition: 'No coloured professionals or members shall be allowed to compete in any matches under the jurisdiction of the Union.'³⁰ South Africa was well on the way to apartheid. There was little the local fans could do to change this

situation at Newlands, but they did find ways to show their dissatisfaction with the way they were treated.

Fixing the colour bar in South African cricket

The Western Province Cricket Club which owned Newlands and the Western Province Cricket Union which organised big matches there not only adhered to the 'traditional' way of doing things, they were also more than anyone else responsible for officially introducing the colour bar into South African cricket in 1894.

The trigger was a once-only match in March 1892 between a local 'Malay' team and W. W. Read's second English touring team at Newlands. After South Africa were thrashed in two days, the local cricketers challenged the tourists to a match before the boat left. H. 'Krom' Hendricks, who had been picked for the first-ever South African Malay team at the inter-town tournament in Kimberley the previous year, so impressed the English that they compared him with 'The Demon' Spofforth, the great Australian fast bowler of the time. They suggested he be picked for the first South African tour in England in 1894. When the time arrived Hendricks was, indeed, included in the fourteen-player squad by the national selectors. Influential sections of the colonial cricket establishment – most notably the journalist and First Secretary of the South African Cricket Association (SACA), Harry Cadwallader – recognised Hendricks's talents and supported his selection. But William Milton, President of the Club and the Union and past South African captain, who was also the selection convenor, made sure Hendricks was omitted. He did so after consulting Cecil Rhodes, with the full backing of both the Club and the Union.

Jonty Winch has detailed, step by step, how Rhodes's supporters in the Club and the Union systematically plotted against Hendricks, despite those arguing in favour of a merit-based system in cricket.³¹ After barring him from the first tour overseas in 1894, the exclusionists again held firm in 1895–96 when Lord Hawke's team made a return visit. They also barred Hendricks from the top local match between Home Born and Colonial Born (1894), the Western Province team to play in the Currie Cup (1895) and, eventually, from local league matches (1897), although he had performed outstandingly at this level before for Woodstock.

The ugliness of the Hendricks case lies in the systematic insistence of the Newlands establishment over a long time that he be excluded. It was not a one-off headline story. Hendricks was still trying unsuccessfully in the early 1900s, ten years later, to get permission to play in the WPCU leagues.

Harry Cadwallader, too, paid a heavy price for supporting Krom Hendricks. Although he had been the main organiser of the tour to England and it was assumed he would be manager, Milton had him ditched and replaced by an official from Milton's circle. Cadwallader subsequently also lost his position as the First Secretary of the South African Cricket Association. He was so sidelined that when Luckin's monumental *History of South African Cricket* was published in 1915, his name was not even mentioned. The cricket establishment airbrushed him out of history as surely as Stalin did Trotsky.

According to Winch and his co-authors, 'Cricket was a key element of the cultural expression of the Colonial establishment' and those in charge had decided unambiguously that cricket in Cape Town and South Africa must be kept lily-white.³² These moves to impose segregation in sport were part of the broader political agenda of Prime Minister Rhodes and Milton, his private secretary and drafter of legislation. They happened at the very same time that Rhodes and his allies set out politically to replace mid nineteenth century 'Cape liberal' notions of individual opportunity and advancement with a clear segregationist policy (via the Glen Grey Act and other measures) that sought to restrict rather than encourage an emerging black middle class. This growing group of black propertied, educated and therefore increasingly skilled people, twenty thousand of whom qualified to vote in the Cape, were now seen as a threat to rather than a precondition for future progress. Following the discovery of diamonds and gold to the north, Rhodes's priority was to secure cheap black labour rather than promote social and political equality.³³

With hindsight, it can be seen that the action against Hendricks fatally fixed the colour bar in cricket. This, in turn, led South African domestic and international cricket into a long cul-de-sac. The pattern for the future was established. Instead of increasingly accommodating black cricketers, as in other British colonies, the white cricket establishment increasingly excluded them. Segregation and later rigid apartheid became the norm.

The Hendricks case coincidentally happened at almost exactly the same time that Western Province Cricket Club also barred women from becoming members. A proposal that they be admitted was put at the Annual General Meeting in 1893 but the stiff upper lip of colonial patriarchy hardly twitched. The club historian's description of the event speaks volumes:

Occasion, annual general meeting. Year, 1893. Attendance, twenty-six.

A TIMID VOICE: 'Mr Chairman, before we close may I propose that – er – ladies be admitted to – er – this club – er – as members? Er – of course – on payment of a small subscription.' A stunned silence. Then growls of 'Heavens ... Ladies ... in a CRICKET club ... What's the man ...?'

CHAIRMAN: 'THE PROPOSAL IS OUT OF ORDER.'³⁴

Newlands and apartheid

In 1948 the National Party won the whites-only general election, inaugurating a new era of intensified institutionalised racism in South Africa. A raft of legislation followed to give effect to the policy of apartheid. The coloured communities in Cape Town were particularly hard hit by the Population Registration Act, which introduced humiliating forms of racial classification, the Separate Representation of Voters Act, which disenfranchised them, and the forced removals under the Group Areas Act, one of the most destructive of all apartheid laws.

On 5 July 1957, Proclamation 180 was printed in the Government Gazette dividing the Magisterial Districts of Cape Town, Wynberg and Bellville into different 'Group Areas' for Whites, Coloured, Indians and Malays. People who had lived in Claremont and Newlands for generations were given notice to sell, pack up and leave. The legal letters followed:

Under the provision of this proclamation it becomes illegal for you to occupy, and illegal for us to allow you to reside on such premises after the 6th July 1959.

Under these circumstances the law compels us to give you formal notice which we hereby give you, to vacate the premises you occupy by the 31st October 1959.³⁵

Beatrice Law explained in her history of Newlands:

People of the non-White race groups were given two years from the date of the proclamation after which they would be considered illegal residents. Houses were valued and Coloured owners were forced to sell up and move. Getting another house was difficult. There were interviews to be endured and Government approval to be won, even for homes in the new areas like Heideveld. If they managed to sell their property at a price above the official valuation, half of the excess was claimed by the government.³⁶

Some 44,000 families were removed from District Six and tens of thousands more from other parts of the City. People went through unspeakable pain, including suicide, rather than leaving their home, and settled communities with their churches, mosques, schools, sports clubs, bioscopes and distinct cultural life were broken up and scattered on to bare patches of land which have become today's depressed, gang-infested Cape Flats townships.³⁷

Many cricketers were forced out of their homes by the removals under the Group Areas Act. The Conrad family, which has produced three generations of Western Province cricketers, had to move from Poplar Street

Newlands (now renamed Arbor Road), right next to the rugby stadium. Nazeem Smith, Western Province women's provincial coach, grew up at number 6 Dreyer Street, Claremont and he had to watch as the landmark Cavendish Square was built over his home. The entrance is on the exact spot, so every time he goes through the front door of this top-end-of-the-market shopping mall he is reminded of the childhood home his family was forced out of. The Magiet brothers, Rushdie and Saaiet, brought up in Stegman Road, a few hundred yards from the stadium, had to pack their bags and the taste it left was bitter. The young Rushdie decided not to watch again at Newlands until he was recognised as a human being with the same rights as everyone else – and he stuck to his word, for thirty-two years, until unity happened in 1991. Rushdie Magiet recalls that what made it hurt even more was the fact that every day he followed what was happening at Newlands in the newspapers, and that the sports columns were a daily reminder of what he had lost. After democracy, he went on to become convenor of the national selectors. The Behardiens lived in a street near today's lovely Norwich Oval and the Galants were from Draper Street. The Vallie brothers, Ebrahim and Ahmedi, remember their big garden with pomegranate trees where the Newlands Sun Hotel (temporary home to many rugby and cricket teams playing at Newlands) now stands. The list of those who had to leave goes on and on.

Former team-mate [of the author] and Western Province bowler Salie Green told me with tears in his eyes in 2009 how he and his mother went around to say goodbye to old neighbours when they had to leave and, 'I can still see the pain in my mother's face as if it were yesterday. That pain also went into my body. She was never the same again and soon got sick out there in the sticks at Grassy Park.'³⁸

All over Cape Town, Claremont included, clubs with long histories collapsed as people were scattered. The black cricket community had totally to reorganise itself in spatial terms and many long-established clubs went out of existence or had to merge with others. The white Western Province rugby and cricket unions made no attempt to defend the rights of the fans being forcibly removed around them; indeed, at an exhibition commemorating the forced removals, a letter from the Western Province Rugby Union supporting the evictions was displayed. For the white sporting establishment life went on as usual.

The cavalier Keith Miller, one of the most flamboyant Australian cricketers of all time, and his ghost writer, R. S. 'Dick' Whittington, observed astutely the protocols that overlay the lifestyle and power relations in this setting in the early apartheid period. Effusive in their praise of South Africa,

to the point of admiring colonial paternalism and racism, they describe in an account of the early 1950s the lifestyle that went with the setting:

The sun is shining brightly on the green grass, and black waitresses are waiting upon white people at the white tabled-clothed tables under the elm and oak trees.

A cup of tea and a cake or sandwich is one of the essential preliminaries to many people's day's cricket at Newlands.

[After play,] society people pause for a cocktail at the fashionable Kelvin Grove Club before collecting their American automobiles.

However, if one reads a little further in Miller's description, you see there was also a hint of menace beneath the pretty picture of Newlands:

Young Cape coloured natives sing as they stroll home in the gathering dusk through the green winding lanes. These natives are happy because the South African whites are getting beaten. They have been cheering for Australia all through the heat of the day. Dark curly-haired Neil Harvey, not blond-headed Cuan McCarthy, is their hero. And tomorrow is another day.³⁹

This resentment, which initially expressed itself in an almost carnivalesque way, started hardening into something tougher after the advent of apartheid, particularly after the devastation of the Group Areas Act.

Given the context, it was no coincidence that the various black cricket bodies in Cape Town amalgamated into a new Western Province Cricket Board with clear non-racial principles in 1959. The new Board dropped all racial labels. It started to become openly 'political' about sport and its relationship to apartheid. It emanated as a reaction to intensifying apartheid.

While all this was happening, the white establishment carried on complacently in its old ways. In 1964, the Western Province Cricket Club celebrated its centenary. For the season's highlight – the Test against England – the Club invited Dr H. F. Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, to be the guest of honour. This was the same year that Nelson Mandela, then universally viewed as a terrorist by white South Africans, was sentenced to life imprisonment for his opposition to apartheid.

Melvin Wallis-Brown, a teacher for nearly half a century at the nearby Diocesan College (Bishops), which produced the most South African schools caps during the whites-only era, recently recalled some of the authoritarian culture and thinking that existed in the early sixties in the close-knit English milieu in Cape Town that the Club was part of. He explained that when he arrived at Bishops the teachers were nearly all men, either old boys or Oxford graduates, and that caning and other Victorian conventions were strongly adhered to. Even the fact that he had a German car was questioned.

It was made clear to him: ‘Young man, we at Bishops drive British Motor Corporation (BMC) vehicles.’⁴⁰

Four years after the centenary of the Club, one of the greatest crises in the history of cricket broke out. The former Capetonian, Basil D’Oliveira, was forbidden from entering the country as a member of the MCC team because of the colour of his skin, leading to the cancellation of the tour and twenty years of isolation from international cricket. On 16 September 1968, the South African Prime Minister declared he would not accept the team with D’Oliveira in it. He said: ‘The MCC team as constituted now is not the team of the MCC but the team of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.’ Next day, E. L. McKay, President of the Western Province Cricket Union, declared emphatically: ‘I am disappointed, but I support Mr Vorster on this.’⁴¹

The Western Province Cricket Club (owners of the ground), the Western Province Cricket Union (the representative regional organisation) and their national body, the South African Cricket Association, actively upheld apartheid and were deeply part of that system. Apartheid was enforced rigidly at Newlands. When Dik Abed asked for press accreditation in the 1970 series against Australia he was refused access to the press box. Instead he was given a table in front of the small ‘Non-European’ section of the ground. Apartheid signs were put up at the ground to indicate where ‘Non-Europeans’ could watch. The first rows of seating were installed in this ‘Non-European’ section only in 1972, as the white establishment sought to counter growing isolation and political condemnation.

One of the fundamental dishonesties still commonly propagated by old SACA players and administrators during the apartheid years is that they were against apartheid. As this chapter shows, that organisation in a deep sense enforced apartheid. Only when faced with isolation after the D’Oliveira Affair did some within its ranks belatedly start questioning apartheid in cricket and start tinkering with it (while still blaming those calling for non-racial cricket and equal rights as troublemakers and ‘politicians’).

In the modern post-1994 context, this hypocrisy has been perpetuated by criticism in injured tones directed at previously disadvantaged cricket people who support transformation and affirmative action. These attitudes show not only an inability to self-reflect, but also a state of denial that somehow hopes to wish away unpleasant facts so things can continue as ‘normal’.

Cricketers and administrators in England were equally complacent and enjoyed a cosy relationship with the apartheid-supporting South African Cricket Association. In a way, this was a natural outflow of the Victorian-rooted ‘culture’ of cricket and the close cricket contacts between the two

countries over the years. Peter Osborne describes ‘the identity of interest, prejudice and approach between white South Africa and the British establishment in the 1960s’. He shows how culpable both the English and South African cricket establishments were in colluding with Prime Minister Vorster and the apartheid government to keep Basil D’Oliveira out of the 1968 MCC touring team. Some of them, like one-time MCC President Lord Cobham, had extensive business interests in South Africa and were sympathetic to the apartheid-supporting white cricket body. Drawing on official and private correspondence from recently opened archives, Osborne convincingly argues that ‘The South African Cricket Association – to all intents and purposes an arm of the South African government throughout 1968 – was party to the intrigue [by the Prime Minister]. At Lord’s, the MCC, advised by the former Conservative Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home, helped make Vorster’s life as easy as it could.’⁴²

Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack has only recently belatedly acknowledged the role played by the cricket establishment in England in giving succour to apartheid sport. In the *Wisden Anthology: 1978–2006*, editor Stephen Moss wrote:

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. With hindsight we can see that the isolation of apartheid South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s did the trick – it helped bring that wretched regime founded on ignorance, stupidity and selfishness to heel. With that hindsight we can also see that *Wisden* was on the wrong side for much of the period. It believed that visiting cricketers, repositories of enlightenment (sic), could bring illumination to that benighted land. Phooey! *Wisden*’s line – with that blessed hindsight – was misconceived. Apartheid in South Africa couldn’t be tempered; it had to be dismantled.⁴³

Indeed, it is important for building new inclusive identities in post-apartheid South Africa that we understand and acknowledge the ugly past of the game in South Africa. This includes the harshness that underlay the beautiful pictures drawn about Newlands. The captivating beauty of the ground was not all that it seemed.

Afterword

In 2002, the Western Province Cricket Association (WPCA), the new governing body for cricket in the province following democracy, bought the Newlands Cricket Ground from the Western Province Cricket Club which had owned it for 114 years. Founded in 1991 on the principles of inclusivity and equal rights with the aim of uniting all cricketers in Cape Town for the first time, the WPCA is made up of 69 per cent black cricketers. Today

all young cricketers can aspire to play at Newlands and their history is recorded in the President's Suite. Western Province has produced nearly half of all the black players so far selected for South Africa. In October 2009, the Cape Cobras, whose headquarters are at Newlands, reached the semi-finals of the inaugural Champions League Twenty20 tournament in India, the new world 'club' championships for cricket. When the Cobras beat the powerful Bangalore Royal Challengers in front of 40,000 Indian fans to qualify, no fewer than eight of the eleven players on the field were black. They would not have been eligible to play at Newlands in the past. The meaning of a place which symbolised in a deep way the dispossession which occurred under colonialism and apartheid is slowly being re-appropriated and changed by those who were marginalised before, even if in uneven and sometimes contradictory ways.

NOTES

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- 6 Pelham Warner, *The M.C.C. in South Africa* (Cape Town: J.C. Juta and Co., 1906), p. 2.
- 7 Parker, *Western Province Cricket*, p. 11.
- 8 For example, Winch, *England's Youngest Captain*, pp. 68–70.
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- 15 Alan Ross, *Cape Summer, and the Australians in England* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), p. 180.
- 16 Andre Odendaal Collection: photocopied quotation in 'Newlands, 1888–2010' file in author's possession.
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- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- 20 'Sporting Intelligence: The Malay Tournament', *Cape Times*, 14 January 1890.
- 21 B. Law, *Papenboom in Newlands, Cradle of the Brewing Industry* (Cape Town: by the author, 2007), p. 60.
- 22 'Western Province Coloured Cricket Union', *The Cape Standard*, 31 December 1945.
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- 25 F. Tate was in fact the WPCC's professional in 1898–99, so Isaac either started earlier than 1903 or the names of the professionals were confused.
- 26 Andre Odendaal Collection: undated *Cape Times* newspaper cutting [c.1935].
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