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'We Are Having a Very Enjoyable Game': Britain, Sport and the South African War, 1899-1902

In January 1902, a heated debate erupted in the letters columns of *The Times* on the back of the paper's publication of Rudyard Kipling's poem *The Islanders*.¹ Kipling's cutting criticism that a national preoccupation with 'muddied oafs' and 'flannelled fools' had detracted from the successful prosecution of the war against the Boers touched a nerve with *The Times*' largely privileged middle-class readership, many of whom, undoubtedly, retained a deep affection for the sports teams of their schooldays.² The impact of this poetic assault on sport, however, went beyond the confines of a narrow stratum of former public schoolboys. An editorial in the leading French newspaper, *Le Temps*, quoted at length in *The Times*, linked *The Islanders*' condemnation of organised team games with a wider socio-economic revolution that Britain was experiencing:

...between the ideals of sport and the barracks there is an utter antagonism. The England of Liberalism, of trade unions, of peace, and of commercial activity demanded the former. The new Imperialism, with its dreams of conquests, its love of military glory, its scorn of the constitutional law, demands the second. The *Temps* fancies it has discovered that while the partisans of sport are in general robust and healthy men who are or have been sportsmen themselves, the neo-Imperialists school is composed of literary men with excitable nerves and morbid temperaments...the fact that the artists and men of letters have taken this idea up is, thinks the *Temps*, a most significant sign of the times, for the practical campaign to alter the whole basis of military organisation in England is a parallel movement, which, if carried out will, in the opinion of this journal, make a revolution in England involving the whole social and economic structure.³

That Kipling's dismissal of football and cricket should excite such passions gives some indication of the central role sport played in late Victorian society. From the 1870s onwards the codification of games resulted in the development of a truly national sporting life and gave rise to an all-pervading cult of athleticism.⁴ For the emerging middle classes especially sport was, in J. A. Mangan's phrase, elevated 'to the status of moral discipline'.⁵ Educated in the burgeoning public school system where athletic endeavour was regarded as more important than intellectual achievement, Victorian polite society valued character above all else.⁶ And sport was regarded as the major medium for developing character. Courage, discipline, teamwork and, that ill-defined yet catch-all term, manliness were all thought to be cultivated through regular and intensive participation in games.⁷

The veneration of sport, however, was not restricted to the civilian world. As J. D. Campbell revealed in his pioneering study on sport and the army, the military indulged in games to an almost fanatical degree. With the establishment of the Army Gymnastics Staff in 1860, organised sport quickly assumed a central position in the professional and social lives of officers and men.⁸ Athletic endeavour, it was felt, not only improved physical fitness but also helped to build regimental esprit de corps by offering a rare chance for men and officers to mix. In addition, it could be important for career progression. *The Soldier's Pocket-Book for Field Service*, published in 1869 and authored by Garnet Wolseley, the future commander-in-chief of the British Army during the South African War, made abundantly clear how the ambitious officer should expend his energy: 'Being a good sportsman, a good cricketer, good at rackets or any other manly game, is no mean recommendation for staff employment. Such a man, without book lore, is preferable to the most deeply-read one of lethargic habits.'⁹ By the end of Victoria's reign the army's adherence to, and passion for, organised sport had become all-consuming. Campbell notes that the average officer spent more time on sport than any other single pursuit including military duties; even students attending Staff College had their time filled up with a never ending diet of physical activity and team games.¹⁰ This sporting

focus was reinforced by the flood of volunteers who swelled the ranks of the British army in the aftermath of three early reverses against the Boers at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso in December 1899. A significant proportion of these new recruits came from the middle classes, the very stratum of society at the forefront of the cult of athleticism, and they brought to the barrack room and parade ground a civilian fervour for games.¹¹ The coalescing of the civilian and military world's fascination for sport, however, threw into high relief the on-going conflict between the amateur and professional sporting ideal. For the army, this had implications that went far beyond the boundaries of the cricket square or the rugby pitch. If the officer corps adhered to the gentleman-amateur's creed of valuing sport for sport's sake rather than the winning then it raised questions about the efficacy of the amateur-military tradition as a whole and the attitude towards war that it engendered.¹²

Sport also lay at the heart of late Victorian society's attachment to Empire. Notwithstanding the economic imperatives that underpinned neo-imperialism, Britain's imperial drive was presented to the public as a moral crusade, a force for good in which salvation for indigenous populations lay in their assimilation of British values. Central to this cultural transmission was sport. The *Daily Telegraph* was commenting on more than just a national predilection for bat and ball when, in an editorial of September 1888, it proudly declared that:

Wherever we go, whatever land we conquer, we found the great national instinct of playing games. Plant a dozen Englishmen anywhere – on an island, in a backwoods clearing or in the Indian hills – and in a wonderfully short time...the level sward is turned into a cricket field in summer and a football arena in winter.¹³

For the readers of the *Telegraph*, and indeed for the wider public, cricket and rugby were distinctively British and encapsulated many of the qualities that made up their imagined national

identity. Thus, the colonialist's commitment to the propagation of these games could serve as shorthand for the civilising mission at the heart of British imperial expansion. Cricket in particular was thought to symbolise all that was good about Anglo-Saxon culture.¹⁴ Although the cricketing authorities had displayed scant interest in the colonies for the majority of Victoria's reign, the arrival in the 1890s of Lords Harris and Hawke as the controlling voices in the MCC, the sport's governing body, saw the game assume its imperial duty with the fervour of the convert.¹⁵ For Harris, cricket was 'not only a game, but a school of the greatest social importance'.¹⁶ Cricket, it was assumed, fostered discipline, self-abnegation, a sense of fair play and team-work; all the essential attributes that went to make up what, in late nineteenth century Britain, was termed 'character'. And, as J. A. Mangan has noted, 'Late Victorians were committed to the Empire *primarily* (italics in the original) because of the close association that it came to have with the inculcation, demonstration and transmission of valued 'Anglo-Saxon' qualities embodied in the concept of 'character''.¹⁷ As every late Victorian schoolboy versed in the poetry of Sir Henry Newbolt knew only too well, at the forefront of this devotion to character were the cricketing alumni of the English public schools. It was taken for granted that these imperial warriors and sportsmen would, without hesitation, transfer the lessons they had learned facing 'a bumping pitch and a blinding light' to the perils of rallying 'the wreck of a square that broke'.¹⁸

By the time of the South African War then, the nexus between sport, the military and the imperial mission was firmly embedded in the popular consciousness of late Victorian society. The conflict, however, proved to be more protracted and more costly, in both financial and human terms, than anyone anticipated.¹⁹ Sir Redvers Buller's early reverses culminating in the disasters of Black Week in December 1899, the Boer *bitterenders'* stubborn resistance during the lengthy guerrilla endgame of 1901-2 and Roberts' and Kitchener's fierce counter-insurgency measures, including the establishment of concentration camps, all triggered a period of intensive national soul-searching.²⁰

Although there is a rich academic literature on the impact this public introspection had on the army, in much of this work the role of sport has been overlooked.²¹ Thus, Spencer Jones has focused on tactical development in the wake of the war, Stephen Badsey on doctrinal reform in the cavalry and Tim Bowman and Mark Connelly on structural changes in manpower and training.²² On the rare occasion when sport has warranted a mention it has usually been in terms of its function as a recruitment tool.²³ A notable exception to this marginalising of sport, however, came in J. D. Campbell's article 'Training for sport is training for war' published in the *International Journal of the History of Sport* in December 2000. A retired US army officer, Campbell was the first scholar to undertake a serious study of the development of organised sport and physical training in the British army between the outbreak of the Crimean War and the Armistice of 1918. Arguing that the professionalization of the military that occurred in this period was as much a result of internal doctrinal and institutional transformations as it was of externally imposed political reforms, Campbell concluded that, 'instead of detracting from its competence, the Army's sport and physical training programmes were some of its major contributors'.²⁴ In diametric opposition, Anthony Bateman, in a detailed study of the cultural significance of cricket in nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, maintained that the notion that sport had ever served as an ideal training ground for military service was finally exposed as a 'bitter fiction' by the 'carnage' of the First World War.²⁵ In this he is supported by Wray Vamplew who has presented a compelling counter-blast to the orthodoxy that public school athleticism contributed meaningfully to the British war effort between 1914 and 1918.²⁶ A rather less definitive conclusion has been arrived at by Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi, in their wide-ranging examination of the military's involvement with sport. Prepared to concede that the army's fixation with organised games improved general levels of physical fitness and helped build regimental esprit de corps, they felt the evidence was less clear-cut when it came to evaluating the professional benefits, in the age of a new technological warfare, of so much time

spent with bat and ball. What was certain though, according to Mason and Riedi, was that the war against the Boers first brought the whole issue of army sport to the forefront of public discourse.²⁷

The South African War captured the public's imagination as no previous conflict had done. Although the war correspondent had been a fixture of campaigning since the 1850s, the quantity and variety of news items and images emanating from the battlefields of South Africa gives truth to Stephen Badsey's claim that this was the 'first media war'.²⁸ Improved literacy levels on the back of the Education Acts of 1870, 1876 and 1880, lower production costs stemming from the abolition of Stamp Duty in 1855 and Excise Duty on paper in 1861, and the introduction of new print technologies all resulted in a new mass newspaper readership by the end of the nineteenth century. The rush of volunteers to the colours in late 1899 and early 1900, which gave the army, albeit for a very short time, a demographic much more akin to its parent population further fuelled the public's impatience for information from the frontline. Coeval with this all-consuming appetite for war stories was a growing demand for sports reporting. In 1861 there were less than a dozen dedicated sporting journals, by 1881 there were over thirty and by 1901 there were one hundred and fifty-eight.²⁹ Perhaps more significantly, by the outbreak of the South African War the non-specialist press was giving extensive coverage to sport. Fourteen per cent of the total space of the *News of the World*, one of the best selling weeklies catering for the newly literate working-classes, was being devoted to sport by 1900.³⁰ Even an establishment institution like *The Times* was prepared to bend to this trend acknowledging that sport had become 'a positive passion, thanks to the publicity given by the sporting press'.³¹

This thriving press interest in organised games served to disseminate the cult of athleticism throughout late Victorian society and created an imagined community in which sporting values and

characteristics were employed to give meaning and order to the outside world. Glenn Wilkinson has shown, in his study of the depiction of military force in Edwardian newspapers, that imagery focusing on sport and physical well-being was frequently used to portray warfare as both beneficial and desirable. In this reading, even the early reverses against the Boers could be given a positive spin. Just as the sportsman might occasionally need reminding about the deleterious effects of long periods of inactivity, so Black Week had, the readers of *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* were told, provided the country with a salutary lesson by demonstrating that the 'great heart' of the Empire had been suffering 'from fatty degeneration'.³² Further evidence of the role of sport as an essential frame of reference for society at the turn of the twentieth century, and of the importance of the press in developing this phenomenon, can be found in the language exchange between the sporting and military worlds that became an increasing feature of popular journalism of the period. According to Dean Allen, the first manifestations of this transmission of sporting jargon to military reporting, and vice versa, appeared during the South African War.³³ This article, therefore, marks the start of a process to explore more closely this relationship between sport and war during the conflict with the Boers. Utilising Glenn Wilkinson's methodology, the study will focus, not on the finer political debates of the pro-Boer and jingo press, but rather on how the idea of military life and death on the veldt was conveyed to the reading public.³⁴ It was, of course, first and foremost the war reporting of popular newspapers that shaped the domestic population's vision of the fighting in South Africa, but so too did the spate of memoirs and works of fiction that were published during or shortly after the conflict. Increasing literacy rates and exposure in the new mass press afforded many of these authors a wide readership and a popular authority.³⁵ Through an exploration of these literary sources it will be possible to shed light on the role sport was perceived to have played in the lives and work of military personnel and how far the public school ideology that equated sport and war was echoed within the military and civilian worlds.

The press regularly made a point of remarking on the continuing sporting activities of the British army during the war in South Africa. The *Manchester Guardian* noted that Lord Roberts' troops in Bloemfontein in the spring of 1900 enjoyed 'daily cricket and athletic contests', while at Chieveley camp, near the besieged garrison town of Ladysmith, football and cricket filled most of the daylight hours 'unless the stern requirements of war necessitated a call to duty'.³⁶ On the Modder River, so the readers of the *Observer* were informed, a lull in the fighting allowed Lord Methuen's men to engage in boxing contests 'every evening' with the presentation of 'handsome cups for the winners of the heavyweight and middleweight competitions'.³⁷ The army's penchant for marking public holidays with sporting events was a constant feature of war reports in the first year of the conflict. The endless round of gymkhanas and inter-regimental football and cricket matches with which Sir Redvers Buller's troops at Chieveley, Lord Methuen's on the Modder River and General Gatacre's in Sterkstroom greeted Christmas of 1899 was given full coverage in the pages of the daily newspapers.³⁸ Indeed, Julian Ralph, special war correspondent with the *Daily Mail*, rather wearily observed in his collected despatches that, 'with the approaching festivities [British officers] get up an uncommon strong interest in a new subject – sports for New Year's Day. That, I take it, is a topic that never fell flat in a British company.'³⁹

However, it was the predilection for organised games shown by the besieged garrisons in Kimberley, Mafeking and Ladysmith that really captured the attention of the press. The *Manchester Guardian* told its readers that they would be wrong to think that life in Kimberley was 'all work and no play'. Although there were three parades a day, there were also 'two very good cricket grounds' at which matches 'between teams representing the regulars and volunteers' were held.⁴⁰ *The Times* was particularly fascinated by the difficulties that Colonel Robert Baden-Powell, the commandant at Mafeking, had to overcome in order to implement his 'big programme of sporting events'. An article published in February 1900 recounted the reluctance of the Boer commander, General Snyman, to

observe the traditional Sunday truce because of the British propensity to ‘indulge in “unholy practices” such as sports and cricket’. This ‘unctuous announcement’, the correspondent witheringly noted, effectively proscribed ‘all those pastimes by which the beleaguered garrison could gain some relief from the week’s siege’.⁴¹ Sport was also a feature of the reports coming out of Ladysmith. A recently escaped resident detailed for the readers of the *Manchester Guardian* not only the remarkable range of sports available to the besieged troops but also the sang-froid shown by some of the participants:

Every day there is cricket and football and the officers play polo quite regularly, joking if Boer shell-fire interferes with the game. On Tuesday there was an athletic meeting of the soldiers. There were numerous prizes. The sports included foot-racing as well as the usual contests – jumping, tug-of-war etc. There was quite a large attendance of spectators.⁴²

Far from being viewed as evidence of foolhardiness, the insistence on the part of British soldiers to engage in sporting contests, no matter what the risks, was invariably portrayed in a positive light. Typical was an illustration, which appeared in H. W. Wilson’s hugely popular part-history, *With the Flag to Pretoria*, of the Gordons determinedly playing football in Ladysmith despite Boer shellfire.⁴³ Supposedly drawn from a true incident, the troopers’ composed continuation of their game clearly signalled to the reader that these men were made of the right stuff. Cricket, in particular, had a powerful symbolic significance.⁴⁴ When an account of the Battle of Colenso, which featured in the *Manchester Guardian*, described men from the Durham Light Infantry fielding low velocity Boer shells ‘like cricket balls’, it was the moral fibre of the British soldier rather than the shortcomings of the enemy artillery that was being stressed.⁴⁵ A similar line was adopted by the *Observer*. ‘So little was thought of the Boer bombardment [of Kimberley]’, the paper’s readers were informed, ‘that the alarm was not even sounded and business was carried on just the same...the men in the redoubts

were actually playing cricket while it was going on.⁴⁶ Most famously, Colonel Robert Baden-Powell, the defender of Mafeking, was depicted as the archetypal cricketing hero, although, in an ironic twist, it was his refusal to indulge in his passion for the game that excited the interest of the press. In a widely reported anecdote, a Boer challenge to a cricket match during one of the regular Sunday truces in Mafeking was rejected by Baden-Powell with the cutting rebuke: 'Just now we are having our innings and have so far scored 200 days not out, against the bowling of Cronje, Snijman [sic], Botha and Eloff: and we are having a very enjoyable game.'⁴⁷ The newspapers had a field day. The *Daily Graphic* caught the general mood with a cartoon in which Baden-Powell defended his 'Mafeking' wicket wielding a bat labelled 'British Pluck'.⁴⁸

For the British public this love of sport was an important cultural signifier. The committed sportsman was thought to embody all the qualities, moral as well as physical, required by those destined to see through the imperial mission. Even the staunchly anti-war *Manchester Guardian* could report approvingly Baden-Powell's advice to a young admirer that to be a good soldier, 'you must be obedient to the captain of your cricket or football team'.⁴⁹ In addition to obedience, the 'qualities engendered by sport', according to Arthur Conan Doyle in a speech focusing on 'what cricketers had done in the war' made at the Authors' Club in June 1902, included, 'sanity of judgement, good temper and energy'.⁵⁰ For Charles Waldstein, Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge University and a member of Baron de Coubertin's founding Olympic Committee, the moral discipline that sport instilled, a central plank of which was a commitment to fair play, was the key attribute that distinguished the Anglo-Saxon sporting warrior from his Continental rivals.⁵¹ Responding to criticism in the German press about British conduct during the conflict with the Boers, he vigorously defended the nation's integrity and so, by extension, the righteousness of the imperial cause, arguing that:

Cricket, football, rowing and hunting etc. have trained the people of this country, from childhood upwards, from the yokel to the greatest in the land, in the laws and the spirit of fairplay until they have entered in succum et sanguinem of the whole people, and have become a general national characteristic.⁵²

To underline further the sporting probity of the British officer corps, Waldstein recounted the story of a friend, 'a distinguished scholar and public servant', who refused a commission while serving in South Africa because of his lack of sporting experience. "'You see'", Waldstein recalled his friend saying, "'if I had been a hunting man I should not have hesitated; for the experience in the hunting-field produces the qualities which I consider most important in an officer of any grade.'"⁵³

In fiction too sport could be used as an indicator of a man's true character. One of the most popular fictional characters of the late Victorian period was E. W. Hornung's amoral gentleman thief, Athur J. Raffles. The reading public was, in equal measure, entertained and scandalised by this new anti-hero who seemed the antithesis of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.⁵⁴ *The Spectator*, reviewing the first volume of Raffles' short stories, *The Amateur Cracksman*, a few months before the outbreak of the South African War, reflected this ambivalence with the rather prim observation that work was, 'a feat of virtuosity rather than a tribute to virtue'.⁵⁵ Yet, Raffles was also a sportsman. Not only had he been 'the fastest man in the fifteen and athletic champion' at Uppingham School but he was also a first-class cricketer, having played for Middlesex and England.⁵⁶ For Hornung, such a sporting pedigree, especially the gift for cricket, implied integrity and hinted at a character underpinned by an essential decency. In the final story of the second volume, published two years into the war, this was brought to the fore through the deployment of cricketing metaphors to signal Raffles' redemption from a life of crime.⁵⁷ Compelled by sporting instinct to 'do his bit' when news arrives that Sir Redvers Buller has been bowled 'neck-and-crop, neck-and-crop' at Colenso, Raffles

volunteers and eventually finds himself pinned down by a Boer sniper as he attempts to assist a gravely wounded companion. With time running out, the cricketer in him takes control: 'another over...scoring's slow...I wonder if he's sportsman enough to take a hint? Will he show his face if I show mine?'⁵⁸ The inevitable happens and Raffles is shot dead. Hornung's message was clear. In seeking a fair fight and, consequently, dying a sportsman's death in battle, Raffles had adhered to the public school code of manliness and had thus been deemed to have atoned for his earlier misdemeanours.

It was not just in the ranks of the military but also in civilian life that a passion for sport (and, again, particularly a passion for cricket) could be used as the acid test of true character. In the spring of 1900, a concerted attack by some of the more jingoistic elements of the British press on what were deemed the disloyal policies of the Afrikaner Bond, the majority party in the Cape Parliament, prompted a spirited retort from Francis Dormer, the former editor of the *Cape Argus* newspaper.⁵⁹ In a detailed letter to *The Times*, Dormer provided a potted history of the evolution of the Bond, stressing its moderate, imperialist credentials. To underline the validity of his analysis he concluded with a reassuring pen portrait of the Bond's leader, Jan Hofmeyr:

Strange as it may appear to those who have been taught to regard the Afrikaner statesman as the embodiment of everything that is anti-English, he is passionately devoted to every form of manly sport, and more particularly to the essentially English game of cricket. The interest he takes in the pursuit of that game by young Afrikaners is the one relaxation that he has always permitted himself.⁶⁰

The *Manchester Guardian* was equally certain that proof of Hofmeyr's loyalty could be found in the impossibility of cricket and treason ever being bedfellows: 'One has but to consider the personal aspect to realise the absurdity of the notion that Mr Hofmeyr is an anti-English conspirator. He is

passionately fond of cricket and, as like as not, if one calls upon him at night one finds him studying the cricket news'.⁶¹

For the advocates of sport, physical exercise and organised games were not just character-forming but also helped to cultivate important transferrable skills for the battlefield. Addressing a Conservative Party meeting in his home constituency of Penrith, Mr. J. W. Lowther, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, insisted 'that the training which came from games' was eminently 'suitable for war'. Among the skills developed were 'pertinacity, perseverance and courage'. To rally his audience to his viewpoint, Lowther cited the example of a local war hero, Colonel Rimington, 'who excelled on the polo grounds before going to South Africa'.⁶² Field sports in particular were thought to hone practical skills for the battlefield.⁶³ Thus, the hunting correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* was quick to celebrate the military benefits of his sport. Reviewing the 1899/1900 season, he proudly noted that, 'When the crisis came, right well did fox-hunting justify its existence as a national sport. A list of the masters of hounds, past and present, of men well known with various packs who volunteered for active service would fill the rest of this column.' It was, though, the martial aptitude of these volunteers rather than their patriotic enthusiasm that the piece emphasised: 'if we learned anything from the Boer War it should be that the precision and niceties of drill rank second in modern warfare to mobility and straight shooting'.⁶⁴ Another admirer of the rural sportsman was Arthur Conan Doyle. In his populist history of the early stages of the conflict in South Africa, *The Great Boer War*, published in 1900, a charge by the Imperial Yeomanry at Lindley was said to have revealed that, 'there are few more high-mettled troops in South Africa than these good sportsmen of the shires'. Yet, the passage concluded on a note of caution. Hinting at a lack of military professionalism, Conan Doyle observed that the men 'showed a trace of their origin in their irresistible inclination to burst into "tally-ho" when ordered to attack'.⁶⁵

The question over the extent to which the army's adherence to equestrian sports undermined professionalism by perpetuating the amateur military tradition came to a head early on in the war. The disasters of Black Week and, in particular, the lacklustre performance of the cavalry in the first few months of the war, ignited a simmering debate over the cost and efficacy of officer sport.⁶⁶ This dispute coalesced around the issue of polo. Concerned that both the inordinate amount of time spent playing polo detracted from military training, and the exorbitant expense of maintaining polo ponies restricted the pool of potential officers, the Army Council issued a draft order in January 1900 to curb the activities of regimental polo clubs.⁶⁷ *The Times*, ever grateful for an opportunity to advance its campaign for army reform, was quick to bring the perceived scandal to the public's attention. In an editorial of February 1900, the paper railed against the 'expensive habits, mostly connected with amusements', which effectively 'made the Army a close corporation just as in the old purchase days'.⁶⁸ The next day a letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Lockwood, formerly of the Coldstream Guards and Conservative MP for Epping, fully endorsed the editor's stance. The cost involved, he argued, in pursuing the sporting lifestyle demanded of an officer meant that, 'the sons of country gentlemen, the men above all others you want to attract, are unable to join the cavalry'. He supported his case by carefully locating the rural gentry's exclusion from army life within pervading fears about racial degeneration:

These are men used to the ordinary standard of country house living, brought up to hunt and shoot from boyhood, not gamblers or fond of spending money for show. What do we get instead in many regiments of the cavalry of the line? Sons of a certain class, reared in the towns, taught as children the habits of self-indulgence and luxury, that once acquired are difficult to eradicate.⁶⁹

Lockwood's belief in the deteriorating social composition of the officer corps was echoed the following week by another, this time anonymous, correspondent to *The Times*. However, for 'C. O.', any move to discourage the recruitment of young men with an interest in field sports would only serve to exacerbate rather than resolve the problem:

Restrict the sporting instincts of our cavalry officers, forbid them to hunt or to play polo...and in a very short time I venture to predict a very different class of person will offer himself for cavalry commissions: whether this will be to the advantage of the service remains to be seen.

The solution lay, the letter concluded, not in tampering with 'the pleasant social life' of cavalry officers but rather in addressing the 'falling incomes of country gentlemen'.⁷⁰ As these letters suggest, more was at stake here than the fate of regimental polo. With the future direction of the cavalry under discussion as the reverses in South Africa threw into high relief the *arme blanche* versus mounted infantry debate, the equestrian leisure pursuits of a privileged set of officers came to assume a symbolic importance out of all proportion to the time actually spent on them.⁷¹ Polo and hunting were employed as convenient shorthand for an unreformed army culture, in which amateur military ideals stood in diametric opposition to the modernising agenda of meritocratic restructuring.⁷²

Although it was the value of equestrian sport as a preparation for war that generated the most heated exchanges, the deleterious impact of organised games on the professionalism of the army as a whole was also subjected to close scrutiny as the fighting against the Boers revealed serious shortcomings in the military's performance. In the immediate aftermath of the shock of Black Week, the *Manchester Guardian* reported on the German press' ambivalent assessment of British officers' enthusiasm for the games field. The *Post*, it was noted, while full of admiration for the courage

exhibited in South Africa by British forces was, nonetheless, appalled 'that this valiant army, skilled in all branches of sport, should be decimated through circumstances connected with difficulties of climate and territory'. The military correspondent of *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten* was more direct. The sporting instincts displayed by British soldiers when faced by adversity, he declared, couldn't disguise the fact that the nation's reverses were 'due to the disregard of the Boer mode of fighting, which requires special study'.⁷³ This theme was developed further by Charles Savile Roundell, Liberal MP for Skipton until 1895 and former first-class cricketer, in a speech to the Macclesfield branch of the Christian Social Union which appeared in the *Observer* in February 1900. Having made an unfavourable comparison between the 'application to systematised knowledge' which underpinned Germany's recent military success and the 'mental and material decay' which afflicted Britain's armed forces, Roundell set out clearly both problem and solution as revealed by the reverses in South Africa:

We prided ourselves upon our national love of sport, and we attributed their good qualities to the theory that distinction in games at school and in the sports of after life was the sure passport to military excellence. But was that so?... War, like politics, was not a game, but a serious business demanding scientific training and scientific direction.⁷⁴

The scientific training of Germany's military also roused the reforming zeal of *The Times*. A disastrous army exercise at Aldershot in August 1900 prompted a heartfelt rhetorical flourish from the editor: 'The question of questions for the country in the immediate future is, How can we change all this? How can we prevent incompetent officers from entering the Army, and how can we develop the intelligence and the skill of those who enter it?' The answer, he continued, was to be found by embracing a new professional age in which the amateur games ethos had no place:

The Duke's old saying (if he really said it) about the Playing Fields of Eton has done its work, and should be relegated to limbo. Athletics, cricket, and the like are an admirable half-school

for the modern officer, but they are not the whole school. One feels tempted to say that if the battle of Waterloo was won on these playing fields, the battle of Colenso was lost there, and the battle of Sedan was won in the study, the laboratory, and the Kriegakademie.⁷⁵

The publication, in October 1900, of *An Absent-Minded War* by William Elliot Cairns, a captain in the Royal Irish Fusiliers and later secretary to the post-war Committee on the Education and Training of Officers, further fuelled the furore surrounding the role of sport in army instruction. In a tightly argued treatise advancing the case for systemic army reform, Cairns lambasted what he considered to be the anti-intellectual, anti-professional culture that enveloped the military. The new recruit, he bemoaned, quickly realises that, 'keenness is "bad form" and will soon openly manifest his impatience to throw off his uniform – the uniform he was so proud to put on for the first time – and will devote himself to sport'. At the root of the problem, according to Cairns, lay a daily routine of monotonous duties, 'not one tenth of which formed any useful training for war' and that, inevitably, persuaded officers to spend 'most of [their] time in the hunting-field, on the polo or cricket ground.'⁷⁶ Although Cairns, as a serving soldier himself, was at pains not to impugn the courage of his fellow officers by stressing their eagerness to engage in active service, even this apparent virtue was construed as evidence 'that the officer cares for nothing but sport and scorns – as a rule – the serious study of his profession':

Active service is regarded rather as a new and most exciting kind of sport, a feeling which has been heightened by our numerous campaigns against savages, than as a deadly serious business where the stakes are the lives of men and the safety of the empire.⁷⁷

Although a review in the *Spectator* welcomed the work as 'a sane and judicious piece of criticism', there was, predictably, a backlash in the letters columns of the popular press.⁷⁸ Typical was the sentiment expressed by Colonel Lonsdale Hale in *The Times*. Attacks on the army, he fumed, had

‘reached the lowest level’ when ‘a “British officer”, under the safe shelter of anonymity, is not ashamed to describe the regimental officer as one who “cares for nothing but sport”’.⁷⁹ Cairns, however, was quick to defend himself. Far from ‘vilifying his brother officers’, he pointed out in a carefully reasoned response to Lonsdale Hale, he had simply been highlighting the army’s structural weaknesses, for he had ‘attributed every military shortcoming of the British officer to the faults of the system’.⁸⁰

Cairns’ belief that the army officer’s preoccupation with sport was simply a symptom rather than cause of a wider malaise received the support of both Leopold Amery of *The Times* and Colonel G. F. R. Henderson, Director of Intelligence under Roberts during the South African War. In volume II of his hugely influential *Times History of the War in South Africa*, Amery, a relentless campaigner for army reform, was scathing about the standard of officer training. With drill and tests of a ‘mechanical character’ which served ‘only to dull the wits and discourage the zeal’, the response of young officers was, he felt, no more than one could expect:

It need hardly be cause for surprise that the common sense of many officers made them feel that playing cricket and polo, or hunting and shooting were quite as good military training, and infinitely more pleasant, than the ordinary routine duties of their profession.⁸¹

Henderson went even further. Sport was, it was asserted in a posthumously published collection of his writings, not just a consequence of, but a compensation for, the inadequacy of the training regime:

Nauseated by dull theory, cramped by want of responsibility, his energy unawakened by appeals to his intelligence, with no opening offered to him to acquire that higher knowledge which would have aroused his interest and kindled his ambition, and with abundant leisure at his command, it is no wonder [the British officer] sought distraction in other fields. If he

was a mere barrack square soldier, he was generally a sportsman; and in his cricket and in his football, in his hunting, his polo, and his shikar, he was at least hardening his nerve and learning the great lessons of self-control, improving his power of observation, training his eye to country, and acquiring to some extent those qualities which make the Boer so formidable an enemy.⁸²

For other commentators, however, the shortcomings of the military were no more than a reflection of a wider cultural failing. *A Handbook of the Boer War*, written by an anonymous veteran of the conflict and published in 1910, contended that the security provided by Britain's island status had afforded the public the luxury of viewing 'War as a branch of Sport or Athletics'.⁸³ Consequently, it was claimed, the country's priorities had become inverted and sporting endeavour rather than patriotic duty had assumed primacy in the national consciousness:

Thousands of loafers, idlers, and work shirkers live upon the anticipations and recollections of outdoor sports when not actually present at them, and are ready to spend their last shilling at the turnstile of the ground on which a handful of football gladiators are at play: and are more exasperated by the defeat of the team which they patronise in a Cup Tie match than they would be by the loss of a battle by the British Army.⁸⁴

The same note had been struck by *The Times* when reviewing the lessons of the war in an editorial of January 1902. Having decried the 'British passion for sport' which meant 'that a great part of the energy which might be turned to better use is diverted to mere play', the piece had concluded with a stinging criticism of the sporting spectator: 'a great deal too much of the interest in cricket and football is bestowed upon those games by those who do not take any part whatever in them, and who, therefore, derive no physical advantage from the training'.⁸⁵

Such criticisms reveal much about the inherent class bias in British sporting life at the turn of the twentieth century. Lack of space, time and finance restricted the sporting opportunities of a large proportion of the urban unskilled workforce to those of the passive consumer. Thus, with the emergence of sport as a mass spectacle, there was a rapid growth in the number of professional leagues and competitions in the decades leading up to the South African War.⁸⁶ For many from the middle and upper-classes, who had been or still remained amateur players, the professionalisation of the games they loved undermined the very essence of the cult of athleticism. At a dinner held in his honour at the Authors' Club, Lord Alfred Lyttelton, one of the great all-round amateur sportsmen of his generation and soon to be Colonial Secretary, told those assembled how gratified he had been to find that soldiers on active service in South Africa could 'indulge in a game of cricket, and he trusted that cricket would now become a national game with the Boers.' It was, of course, the intrinsic worth of the amateur game that Lyttelton was extolling. Sporting pursuits, he made clear for his privileged audience, were a means to an end and not an end in their own right: 'The intention of sport was to make men fitter, stronger, and better served for the main work of life. It was a misfortune that young men should be tempted from the main work of life to make a profession of any game'.⁸⁷

The concern for the quality press was that it was not only the participant in professional sport who had his moral compass distorted but also the spectator. In January 1902, a *Times* editorial was critical of the passions aroused by the English cricket team's collapse in the second test match against Australia. 'It is surely out of proportion to the importance of the matter at stake', the editor despaired, 'when we see the streets filled with placards about these athletic contests as if issues depended upon them as vital to our race as those decided at Trafalgar and Waterloo'.⁸⁸ The editor of the *Manchester Guardian* was similarly bewildered by the precedence that sport seemed to take over any other matter. As the death toll in the refugee camps mounted in October 1901, he

attempted to prick the conscience of his readers by noting that, 'We are keen on sport; cannot we be keen on this question...so that the fair name of England at least may remain'.⁸⁹ The public's interest in sporting trivia rather than events on the veldt was also noted by P. T. Ross in his often satirical but nonetheless perspicacious reminiscences of his active service in South Africa. A poetic entry dated October 27th 1900 lamented:

At home first China, then elections,
Have claimed their keen attention,
Now football, crimes and other things –
The war they seldom mention.⁹⁰

Just how deeply the culture of athleticism and games was entrenched in the public consciousness can be gleaned from the frequency with which sporting language and imagery was used to portray the war in South Africa. The British army's defeat at the battle of Stormberg on 10 December 1899 was explained away in a J. M. Staniforth cartoon, which appeared in the *Western Mail* on 12 December 1899, as nothing more than one lost round in a protracted boxing match.⁹¹ Later in the war a *Punch* cartoon made light of the Boer *bittereinders'* persistent evasion of Kitchener's massed forces by framing it in terms of the last stand by a nightwatchman in a cricket match.⁹² For readers of *The Times*, operations in Middleberg in May 1901 were presented as a grouse shoot. 'The situation is best understood', wrote a special correspondent, 'if we characterize the Lydenberg and Middleberg columns as beaters driving the game up to the butts – the drifts, held by General Plumer's Bushmen and New Zealanders.'⁹³ Even government communications were not immune from the deployment of sporting jargon and imagery. Typical was an official despatch issued by Kitchener's headquarters on 11 September 1901 and quoted in the *Manchester Guardian*: 'Since 2 September the columns have again got good results, the total bag, including all separately reported, being 681, composed of 67 Boers killed, 67 wounded, 381 prisoners, 43 surrenders'.⁹⁴

Such usage was thought by some to detract from the seriousness of war. The anonymous author of *A Handbook of the Boer War* worried that, 'there are metaphors which impair the dignity of a cause and degrade it in the eyes of those whose duty is to maintain that cause'. The professionalism of the army would, he felt sure, suffer as a result:

When the advances of a British Division at a critical period in the operations is frivolously termed a "drive", and when the men extended at ten paces' interval over a wide front are called "beaters", it is natural that the leaders should look upon their work as analogous to the duties of a gamekeeper; and when an artillery officer is instructed to "pitch his shells well up", he is encouraged to regard failure as no worse than the loss of a cricket match.⁹⁵

Of greater concern for two correspondents to the *Manchester Guardian* was the effect this language exchange would have on the nation's reputation. In a letter published under the heading 'The "Total Bag"', 'Indignant' condemned 'the treatment of the [war] in the language of sport when the issue is the making of widows and orphans', before concluding that, 'It is only another step in the degradation of the honour of our country'.⁹⁶ In the same issue, a pro-Boer sympathiser expressed relief at being informed that it was a subordinate of Kitchener, and not Kitchener himself, who had been responsible for the wording of recent despatches in which hunting terminology had been used. He was, nonetheless, appalled that, 'any Englishman should use such expressions about brave men fighting and dying for the independence of their country'. In fact, the correspondent's faith in Kitchener was ill-founded. In private communications with Schomberg MacDonnell, the principal private secretary of Lord Salisbury, and St John Broderick, the secretary of state for war, in May and September 1901 respectively, the commander-in-chief referred to captured and killed Boers as 'the bag'.⁹⁷

The national angst surrounding the public's passion for sport generally, and the merit of sport as a preparation for war specifically, was propelled to the forefront of the national consciousness with the publication of Rudyard Kipling's *The Islanders* in *The Times* on 4 January 1902. Having witnessed first-hand the fighting in South Africa, Kipling felt compelled to voice publicly his disgust at what he regarded as the nation's failure to respond appropriately to the call of duty. Never an admirer of the public school cult of athleticism, he reserved his most stinging criticism for those who he felt disregarded the value of the military and continued to place sport above the security of the country:

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 judgments 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 land's long-suffering star),
When your strong men cheered in their millions while your striplings went to the war.
Sons of the sheltered city—unmade, unhandled, unmeet—
Ye pushed them raw to the battle as ye picked them raw from the street.
And what did ye look they should compass? Warcraft learned in a breath,
Knowledge unto occasion at the first far view of Death?
So? And ye train your horses and the dogs ye feed and prize?
How are the beasts more worthy than the souls, your sacrifice?
But ye said, "Their valour shall show them"; but ye said, "The end is close."
And ye sent them comforts and pictures to help them harry your foes:
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 souls
With the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals.⁹⁸

This poetic reproof was buttressed by an editorial on the same page which, while maintaining that conscription was 'ill-suited to our needs', was in agreement with the broader call for a realignment of educational priorities. This 'thrilling trumpet-call', the piece insisted, was correct to demand that, 'the proportion of time now spent, practically under compulsion, in games might well be utilized for military training'.⁹⁹

As both Kipling and *The Times* anticipated a heated debate ensued.¹⁰⁰ The editor of the *Observer* was quick to marshal the sentiments expressed in *The Islanders* to launch an attack on what he regarded as a privileged elite who refused to acknowledge their duties to the nation. In an editorial of 5 January 1902 he derided 'England's Idol, the Juggernaut of athleticism and sport which insatiably demanded more and more of her sons' best years and brightest energies' by promoting the 'exaltation of the running path, the playing field and the river as the true...be all and end all of public school and university careers'. The paper's readers were urged make a stand against the received view that 'the rich, the lazy and the otherwise minded need not concern themselves with the problems and duties of national defence, so long as others can be paid and got to do it'.¹⁰¹ In a letter to the editor of *The Times* on 9 January 1902, George Pragnell, the acting president of the largely working-class London Athletic Association, was also keen to use Kipling's verse to admonish the complacency of the middle-class sports supporter.¹⁰² Thankful that *The Islanders* had brought into the open the shortcomings in the nation's treatment of its reserve forces, he carefully selected the archetypal game of the public school to support the main thrust of his argument: 'The millions of people who are keenly interested in cricket do not take the slightest interest in Volunteering during peacetime, and in times like the present shelter themselves behind a small percentage of their fellows who have gone to the front'. Transferring to the reserve forces the attention currently paid to the sporting world was, he concluded, 'the only way to stave off conscription'.¹⁰³ For the headmaster of Rossall School, Dr Way, the outcry caused by the poem's publication was such that he

clearly felt it warranted an immediate response. Having first admitted to a speech day audience on 17 January 1902 that because of their 'many defects' public schools had been 'freely criticised' over the past few days, he proceeded to set his institution apart from its competitors with a vigorous defence of its sporting ethos:

The latest cry was about the excess of athletics, which had been put tersely in a phrase by Rudyard Kipling in his reference to "flannelled fools" and "muddied oafs". Of course they agreed with Kipling that it was suicidal folly to spend time upon athletics which ought to be devoted to preparation for the defence of one's country. At Rossall they were fully alive to this fact, and they not only won both their cricket matches this year but had a fine rifle corps numbering nearly 200. Indeed, one of their number had beaten all the other public school corps in shooting.¹⁰⁴

Unsurprisingly, however, the clamour stirred up by *The Islanders*, with its accompanying frisson of class criticism, offended many. The football correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* leapt to the defence of his sport. Just two days after the publication of the poem, he opened his weekly column for the paper with the dismissive suggestion that the poem must have been written 'after a heavy nightmare' before citing a series of famous football playing officers whose 'devotion to the game of the country has not prevented their doing a man's part in the South African War'.¹⁰⁵ On the same day, the former Middlesex county cricketer W. J. Ford adopted a similar line of argument for the readers of *The Times'* letters columns; although this time the sporting warriors listed came, naturally, from the summer rather than winter game. 'Mr. Kipling's poetry may be above reproach', Ford tersely concluded, 'but he might easily mend his manners without spoiling his rhymes'.¹⁰⁶ One of the most detailed retorts to *The Islanders* was presented by Hely Hutchinson Almond, the proprietor and long-serving headmaster of Loretto School near Edinburgh. Almond, a pioneer of the

belief that physical hardiness underpinned personal as well as national health, viewed Britain's imperial mission as a force for good that could only be achieved by robust and disciplined young men free from the enervating influence of an overly literary or artistic culture.¹⁰⁷ In a letter to the editor of *The Times*, published on 9 January 1902, he treated the paper's readers to a reprise of his lengthy article on the physical degeneration of the nation which had appeared in the journal *The Nineteenth Century* in the autumn of 1900.¹⁰⁸ More emphasis on physical exercise and organised games, Almond claimed, would serve to reinvigorate the country and furnish the army with the sort of recruits it required. By way of support he pointed out that not only had sportsmen volunteered for the war 'out of all proportion to their numbers', but, because of the nature of their training which developed strength, courage and, critically, initiative, they had also proven to be exceptionally effective recruits. Interestingly, though, Almond was at odds with his fellow champions of sport on one critical issue. Cricket, he argued, with its focus on 'personal scores and drawn matches', no longer had any 'educative qualities'. Indeed, in an acidic aside suffused with a superciliousness borne of class, he asserted that the game 'fostered selfishness nearly as much as golf'.¹⁰⁹

The South African War saw a coming together of civilian society's fascination with athletic pursuits and its idealisation of the imperial warrior. The press willingly fed the public's appetite for the romanticised sporting warrior with an on-going diet of war reports featuring athletic endeavour in the combat zone. In this imagining, the army's love of sport and organised games was invested with a moral as well as practical worth. Yet, as the war dragged on, so doubts began to surface. The superior mobility and field-craft shown by Boer commandoes caused many in Britain to question the high Victorian cult of athleticism which equated sporting achievement with strength of character and military prowess. In the immediate aftermath of the war, damning reports by the Committee on the Education and Training of Officers and the Committee to Enquire into the Experiences incurred by Officers prompted the War Office to introduce measures to rein in the scope of army sport.¹¹⁰ As

it was for so many aspects of civilian and military life, the South African War was, then, a moment of transition for the role of sport in the British armed forces. This is not to say, however, that sporting endeavour completely lost its importance as a cultural signifier in the national consciousness.

Although the advent of hostilities in 1914 quickly brought an end to domestic professional football and cricket, organised games and athletic contests continued apace at the fighting front.¹¹¹ More significantly, perhaps, as Simon John has shown, sporting imagery and terminology were once again used by combatants and non-combatants to make sense of what was happening to them.¹¹² The South African War may have delivered a serious, even fatal, blow to the sporting ethos that underpinned Britain's amateur-military tradition, but more research needs to be done on the durability of sport in the wartime imagination.

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¹ *The Islanders* was published in *The Times* on 4 January 1902.

² See *The Times*, 7-10 January 1902. Paula M. Krebs notes that, with a cost three times that of the new penny dailies, *The Times* was largely aimed at a traditional upper-middle class readership. Paula M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), pp. 6-7.

³ *The Times*, 9 January 1902.

⁴ Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: a Modern History* (Oxford: OUP, 1989), chapter 2.

⁵ J. A. Mangan, ed., *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire and Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), p. 2

⁶ H. John Field, *Toward a Programme of Imperial Life: the British Empire at the Turn of the Century* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1982), pp. 26-30.

⁷ Ric Sissons and Brian Stoddart, *Cricket and Empire* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 34.

⁸ J. D. Campbell, "'Training for sport is training for war': sport and the transformation of the British Army, 1860-1914', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17/4 (December 2000), pp. 21-58.

⁹ Quoted in Campbell, 'Training for sport is training for war', p. 25.

¹⁰ Campbell, "'Training for sport is training for war'", p. 23; Tim Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 56.

¹¹ M. D. Blanch, 'British Society and the War', in Peter Warwick, ed., *The South African War. The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* (Harlow: Longman, 1980), pp. 186-209.

¹² Tim Travers, 'The Hidden Army: Structural Problems in the British Officers Corps, 1900-1919', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17/3 (July 1982), pp. 523-544.

¹³ *Daily Telegraph*, 28 September 1888. For readers of the *Daily Telegraph* at the end of the nineteenth century, 'football' meant rugby union.

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- ¹⁴ Brian Stoddart, 'Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30/4 (October 1988), pp. 658-9. Unsurprisingly, colonial administrators took great care in selecting the indigenous groups who were deemed suitable to be in receipt of this sporting cultural transmission. Thus, participation in organised games was, as Stoddart notes, generally restricted to 'local social, economic and political elites who subscribed fully to British philosophies of sport'. Stoddart, 'Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response', p. 661.
- ¹⁵ James Bradley, 'The MCC, Society and Empire: a portrait of cricket's ruling body, 1860-1914', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17/1 (1990), pp. 3-22. Harris, a former Governor of Bombay (1890-1895), became president of the MCC in 1895. Hawke, who captained Yorkshire in England in the 1890s, was an influential committee member at MCC throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian period, eventually becoming president in 1914.
- ¹⁶ Quoted in James D. Coldham, *Lord Harris* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 109.
- ¹⁷ Mangan, *The Cultural Bond*, p. 2
- ¹⁸ Henry Newbolt's *Vitai Lampada* was first published in *Admirals All* in 1897.
- ¹⁹ The war cost Britain £200 million with 22,000 British and imperial troops dying. Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), p. 572.
- ²⁰ Black Week was the name given to the period covering the three defeats of Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso, all of which occurred between 10 and 15 December 1899.
- ²¹ Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi, *Sport and the Military: the British Armed Forces, 1880-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 2
- ²² Spencer Jones, *From Boer War to Great War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); Stephen Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880-1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008); Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: Manning*.
- ²³ For example Edward Spiers, *The Army and Society 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980), pp. 60-83.
- ²⁴ Campbell, "'Training for sport is training for war'", p. 52.
- ²⁵ Anthony Bateman, *Cricket, Literature and Culture: Symbolising the Nation, Destabilising the Empire* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 42.
- ²⁶ Wray Vamplew, 'Exploding the Myths of Sport and the Great War: A First Salvo', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31/18 (2014), pp. 2297-2312.
- ²⁷ Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, pp. 38-42.
- ²⁸ Stephen Badsey, 'The Boer War as a Media War', in P. Dennis and J. Grey, eds, *The Boer War: Army Nation and Empire* (Canberra: Army History Unit, 1999), pp. 70-83.
- ²⁹ Mike Huggins, *The Victorians and Sport* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2004), p. 152.
- ³⁰ Tony Mason, 'Introduction', in Mason, ed., *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 3.
- ³¹ *The Times*, 17 June 1895.
- ³² Glenn R. Wilkinson, "'The Blessings of War": The Depiction of Military Force in Edwardian Newspapers', *Journal of Contemporary History* 3/1 (January 1998), pp. 97-115; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 28 January 1900.
- ³³ Dean Allen, "'Bats and Bayonets": Cricket and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902', *Sport in History* 25/1 (2005), pp. 31-32. See also Campbell, "'Training for sport is training for war'", pp. 21-22.
- ³⁴ Wilkinson, "'Blessings of War'", pp. 97-99.
- ³⁵ Krebs, *Gender, Race and the Writing of Empire*, pp. 143-178.
- ³⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 29 March 1900; 28 December 1899.
- ³⁷ *Observer*, 4 February 1900.
- ³⁸ *Manchester Guardian* 27 December 1899; 2 January 1900; 1 January 1900.
- ³⁹ Julian Ralph, *Towards Pretoria: a record of the war between Briton and Boer to the hoisting of the British flag in Bloemfontein* (London: C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., 1900), p. 249.
- ⁴⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 9 November 1899.
- ⁴¹ *The Times*, 27 February 1900. By the following month the Boers had clearly relented. *The Times* noted on 20 March 1900 that, 'Sunday, as usual, was observed as a day of truce'. Adding, with not a little relish one imagines, 'Cricket was played on the recreation ground'. *The Times*, 6 April 1900.
- ⁴² *Manchester Guardian*, 1 January 1900.

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- ⁴³ H. W. Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria: A History of the Boer War of 1899-1900 Volume II* (London: Harmsworth Bros., 1901), p. 493. Notwithstanding his admiration of the British soldier's sporting pluck, Wilson, assistant editor of the *Daily Mail*, was not one to equate war and sport. In volume I of *With the Flag to Pretoria* he had noted that on the march to Belmont in November 1899 Lord Methuen's men 'were to learn what war was. It was not play. It was not pleasure. It was not sport under the greenwood tree, but a savage encounter with desperate adversaries, who dealt death and grievous wounds with impartial hands.' Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria*, p. 138.
- ⁴⁴ Dean Allen, 'England's "golden age": imperial cricket and late Victorian society', *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 15/2 (March 2012), pp. 209-226.
- ⁴⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 18 January 1900.
- ⁴⁶ *Observer*, 27 December 1899.
- ⁴⁷ Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell: Founder of the Boy Scouts* (London: Hutchinson, 1989), p. 289.
- ⁴⁸ *Daily Graphic*, 19 May 1900.
- ⁴⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 13 September 1900.
- ⁵⁰ *The Times*, 17 June 1902. Conan Doyle, a keen cricketer, played ten first class matches for MCC. Christopher Redmond, *Sherlock Holmes Handbook 2nd edition* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2009), pp. 116-117.
- ⁵¹ Nigel Spivey, 'Walston, Sir Charles (1856-1927)', in H. C. G. Matthews and Brian Harrison, eds, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004); online edition, Lawrence Goldman, ed., May 2008, <http://www.oxorddnb.com/article/48709>. Waldstein changed his name to Walston in the aftermath of the First World War.
- ⁵² *The Times*, 16 January 1902.
- ⁵³ *The Times*, 16 January 1902.
- ⁵⁴ Malcolm Tozer, 'Cricket, School and Empire: E. W. Hornung and his Young Guard', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 6/2 (1989), pp. 156-171.
- ⁵⁵ *The Spectator*, 18 May 1899, p. 20.
- ⁵⁶ E. W. Hornung, *Mr. Justice Raffles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 17.
- ⁵⁷ The second volume of stories, *The Black Mask* was published in 1901; the final story being 'The Knees of the Gods'.
- ⁵⁸ Hornung, *Mr. Justice Raffles*, p. 16; p. 56.
- ⁵⁹ For more on the Bond see Fransjohan Pretorius, *Historical Dictionary of the Anglo-Boer War* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), pp. 3-4.
- ⁶⁰ *The Times*, 12 April 1900. The Liberal leader, Henry Campbell-Bannerman was not convinced by Dormer's line of reasoning. In a reply published in *The Times* the following week, he insisted that, 'Mr. Hofmeyr's loyalty must be gauged by his actions, not by his emotions on Newlands Cricket Ground'. *The Times*, 17 April 1900.
- ⁶¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 4 September 1900. That the *Manchester Guardian* should take issue with anti-Bond sentiments was hardly surprising given its unswerving pro-Boer stance. See M. Hampton, 'The Press, Patriotism and Public Discussion: C. P. Scott, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the Boer War, 1899-1902', *Historical Journal*, vol. 44, No. 1, (March 2001), pp. 177-197.
- ⁶² *Manchester Guardian*, 14 January 1902. During the war, Rimington had come to the public's attention as the commander of Rimington's Guides, an irregular cavalry unit, distinctive for the leopard skin bands they wore on their slouch hats. Before that Rimington had been chiefly known for his prowess on the polo field, as evidenced by that well-established Victorian seal of approval, a G. A. Fothergill lithograph in *Vanity Fair*, in which he was portrayed in full polo gear.
- ⁶³ Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, pp. 67-69
- ⁶⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1900.
- ⁶⁵ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London: Smith Elder and Co, 1900), p. 434.
- ⁶⁶ Edward Spiers, 'The British Cavalry 1902-1914', *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research*, 57/230 (1979), pp. 72-73.
- ⁶⁷ Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, pp. 60-65.
- ⁶⁸ *The Times*, 14 February 1900.
- ⁶⁹ *The Times*, 15 February 1900; Heather Streets, *Martial Races: the Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 106-108.
- ⁷⁰ *The Times*, 22 February 1900.

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- ⁷¹ Stephen Badsey, 'The Boer War (1899-1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine: A Re-evaluation', *Journal of Military History* 71/1 (2006), pp. 75-97.
- ⁷² Tim Travers, 'The Hidden Army: Structural Problems in the British Officer Corps, 1900-1918', *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (1982), pp. 523-44. In the aftermath of the war, despite the Committee on the Education and Training of Army Officers recommending that inter-regimental polo tournaments should be banned, Field Marshal Frederick Roberts, by then commander-in chief of the forces and a great advocate of equestrian sport, permitted the 1903 season to proceed with only a few minor revisions. Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, pp. 74-76.
- ⁷³ *Manchester Guardian*, 19 December 1899.
- ⁷⁴ *Observer*, 15 February 1900.
- ⁷⁵ *The Times*, 18 August 1900.
- ⁷⁶ W. E. Cairns, *An Absent-Minded War: being some reflections on our reverses and the causes which have led to them* (London: John Milne, 1900), p. 32.
- ⁷⁷ Cairns, *An Absent-Minded War*, p. 37.
- ⁷⁸ *The Spectator*, 1 September 1900.
- ⁷⁹ *The Times*, 29 December 1900. Perhaps unsurprisingly given its content, Cairns chose to withhold his name when *An Absent-Minded War* was published.
- ⁸⁰ *The Times*, 4 January 1901.
- ⁸¹ Leopold Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa, Volume II* (London: Sampson Low, 1902), p. 36.
- ⁸² Sir Neill Malcolm, *The Science of War: a collection of essays and lectures 1892-1903 by the late Colonel G. F. R. Henderson CB* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), p. 407.
- ⁸³ Anonymous, *A Handbook of the Boer War*, (London and Aldershot, Gale and Polden Ltd., 1910), p. 26.
- ⁸⁴ Anonymous, *Handbook of the Boer War*, p. 33.
- ⁸⁵ *The Times*, 7 January 1902.
- ⁸⁶ Huggins, *The Victorians and Sport*, pp. 14-15; Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 144-147.
- ⁸⁷ *The Times*, 17 June 1902.
- ⁸⁸ *The Times*, 4 January 1902.
- ⁸⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 23 October 1901.
- ⁹⁰ P. T. Ross, *A Yeoman's Letters* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1901), p. 109.
- ⁹¹ J. M. Staniforth, 'A Round in Favour of Kruger', *Western Mail*, 12 December 1899.
- ⁹² *Punch*, 15 May 1901. *Bittereinders* was the name given to Boers who fought on until peace was signed in May 1902.
- ⁹³ *The Times*, 29 May 1901.
- ⁹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 11 September 1901.
- ⁹⁵ Anonymous, *Handbook of the Boer War*, p. 32.
- ⁹⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 16 September 1901.
- ⁹⁷ Andre Wessels, *Lord Kitchener and the War in South Africa, 1899-1902*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2006), p. 111; p. 153.
- ⁹⁸ Rudyard Kipling, 'The Islanders', *The Times*, 4 January 1902. For more on Kipling's dislike of sport see William B. Dillingham, *Rudyard Kipling: Hell and Heroism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 207-208.
- ⁹⁹ *The Times*, 4 January 1902. Although participation in organised games was not compulsory, the army leadership, as J. D. Campbell has noted, promoted sporting activities 'often to the point of coercion'. Campbell, "'Training for sport is training for war'", p. 27.
- ¹⁰⁰ Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, pp. 160-162.
- ¹⁰¹ *Observer*, 5 January 1902.
- ¹⁰² Bill Mallon and Ian Buchanan, *The 1908 Olympic Games* (Jefferson NC: McFarland and Co., 2000), p. 7.
- ¹⁰³ *The Times*, 9 January 1902.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 18 January 1901. The clothing firm Jaeger also felt that the response to Kipling's charge lay in the shooting range. As 'a quiet answer to Mr Kipling's *The Islanders*', it was noted in the *Manchester Guardian*, the firm set up for its employees a rifle range at Lower Sydenham. *Manchester Guardian*, 4 August 1902.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 6 January 1902.
- ¹⁰⁶ *The Times*, 6 January 1902.

¹⁰⁷ J. A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of Diffusion of an Ideal* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 25-27.

¹⁰⁸ H. H. Almond, 'The Breed of Man', *The Nineteenth Century* 48 (October 1900), pp. 656-669.

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, 9 January 1902. Golf, which by the early twentieth century had become the game of the aspiring middle-class, was regarded with disdain by many contemporary social commentators. Playing the game obsessively had, they argued, accelerated the fall in the moral fibre of the nation as evidenced by the reverses of the Boer War. See Mason, *Sport in Britain*, p. 190. Almond's distaste for cricket extended only to the 'modern game', by which he meant the professional game. He was, in fact, a great admirer of, and keen participant in, the amateur game. Robert Mackenzie, *Almond of Loretto* (London: A. Constable and Company, 1906), pp. 201-202.

¹¹⁰ Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, pp. 61-65.

¹¹¹ Colin Veitch, "'Play Up! Play Up! And Win the War!'" Football, the Nation and the First World War 1914-1915', *Journal of Contemporary History* 20/3 (July 1985), pp. 363-378; Christopher Sandford, *The Final Over: the Cricketers of Summer 1914*, (Stroud: Spellmont, 2014).

¹¹² Simon John, "'A Different Kind of Test Match": Cricket, English Society and the First World War', *Sport in History* 33/1 (March 2013), pp. 19-48.