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Cricket, Literary Culture and In-Groups in Early Twentieth-Century Britain

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Abstract

This article posits that team sports can provide fresh insights into the place of leisure pursuits in the lives, networks and outlooks of historical literary figures. The social and literary role of the Authors Eleven, a cricket side of London-based writers active between 1899 and 1912, is explored through three case studies. George Ives was a pioneering campaigner for gay rights, who used cricket to bolster his homosexual identity. E. W. Hornung, creator of the famous cricketer-thief Raffles, saw cricket as the ideal training – and analogy – for imperialism. And P. G. Wodehouse, author of the Jeeves and Wooster stories, first made his name writing cricket-filled magazine pieces. All three writers saw their involvement in cricket, particularly the Authors Eleven in-group, as an essential component of their social status. The Authors Eleven thus presents a potent example of embodied sociability, whereby the specific nature of what these individuals were doing together (in this case, playing cricket) has a bearing on their friendships and their intellectual outlooks. As ways of understanding the lives and cultural significance of historical figures, shared physical activity and embodied sociability need to be accorded much more importance than they have been hitherto.

Keywords: Edwardian culture; intellectual history; embodied experience; literary industries; cricket; Arthur Conan Doyle; P. G. Wodehouse

Since 2009, several of Arthur Conan Doyle's appointment diaries have been publicly accessible in the British Library's special collections. Eight volumes from the years 1898 to 1906 survive intact, available for perusal by cultural historians and Sherlock Holmes fans alike.¹ Yet the diaries seem to have

¹ British Library (BL), Arthur Conan Doyle Papers, Add MS 88924/5/4–12.

disappointed most readers to date; they have not yet received any attention in print.² They are indeed strikingly sparse: Doyle's laconic entries are mostly few and far between. The one major psychological insight provided by the diaries has been neglected.

What researchers have ignored is the diaries' emphatic demonstration of Doyle's great passion for cricket. Although it is widely known that Doyle was a keen cricketer, its place in his life has typically been relegated to the margins: his many biographers only discuss it in passing.³ But in Doyle's diaries, cricket is the central element, prioritised over everything else. It is the one thing that he unfailingly records in the diaries, revealing that his summers were filled with cricket matches. In 1899, for instance, he played in forty-three fixtures; in 1903, he played in thirty-three.⁴ For most of these years, he recorded every match he played in, with his score and the number of wickets he took.⁵ In 1901, cricket formed the only entries in the whole diary.⁶ At the end of each year, he totted up three sets of sums at the back of each volume: his annual income; his annual list of stories written and the total word-count; and his batting average for that year. These were, it would seem, the three sets of figures by which he lived his life.

The failure of scholars to take Doyle's cricket as seriously as he himself did is emblematic of a wider tendency. When historians study intellectual figures, such as writers, they often treat their subjects' cerebral lives as separate from their leisure pursuits – especially if these individuals' chosen recreations were physical activities, such as sports. Current treatment of intellectuals' hobbies regularly implies that their recreation was inconsequential to the serious business of writing. For instance, J. B. Priestley's interwar football-playing has never been considered as part of his construction of a communitarian ideal of Englishness, and the link between Edmund Blunden's pastoral attitude to cricket-playing and his pastoral poetry and prose remains unexplored.⁷ Benjamin Britten's intense love of sports, especially tennis, was a critical and revealing aspect of his psyche, as attested by his intimates; yet his biographers routinely pay it little attention.⁸ Leading works of scholarship examining the social backdrop to intellectuals' lives in Britain, such as William Lubenow's

² The diaries are not even among the 2,110 sources consulted in Brian Pugh's herculean attempt to produce an exhaustive day-by-day chronology of Doyle's life: dozens of Doyle's cricket matches, recorded in the diaries, are therefore overlooked. For instance, Authors XI matches on 1 and 2 July 1902, recorded in BL, Doyle Papers, Add MS 88924/5/7, are missing from the latest edition of Pugh's chronology. Brian W. Pugh, *A Chronology of the Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, May 22nd 1859 to July 7th 1930: Revised 2018 Edition* (2018), 95.

³ For example, Andrew Lycett, *The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes: The Life and Times of Arthur Conan Doyle* (2007).

⁴ BL, Doyle Papers, Add MS 88924/5/5, 8.

⁵ For instance, 22 May 1903: 'Authors V Artists. 28. (Bowled) 1w.' *Ibid.*, Add MS 88924/5/4/8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Add MS 88924/5/4/6.

⁷ For instance, Priestley's football interests are scarcely discussed in John Baxendale, *Priestley's England* (Manchester, 2007). In the one full-length biography of Blunden, cricket gets a few pages within an 'Interlude' section: Barry Webb, *Edmund Blunden: A Biography* (1990), 255–64.

⁸ See 'Britten at Home: Britten's Sports', part of *Britten 100* (2013), BBC Radio 3, 21 Nov. 2013, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrygb> (accessed 21 May 2024). Biographies that ignore

Only Connect and Stefan Collini's *Absent Minds*, overlook sports, especially team sports.⁹ Leslie Stephen's *Sunday Tramps*, including many late-nineteenth-century luminaries, have their own entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, but yet the group has never been systematically scrutinised.¹⁰ Albert Camus, a keen footballer in his youth, once said, 'What I know most surely about morality and the duty of man I owe to sport' – but the Albert Camus Society dismissively assures us that 'People have read more into these words than, perhaps, Camus would want them to.'¹¹ Time and again, it is assumed that what intellectuals like Doyle did with their bodies is separate from what they did with their minds. But this is a fallacy: we know from our own experiences that life is lived holistically, and we carry our outlooks from one sphere of our lives to another. Furthermore, it was these shared leisure pursuits which often underpinned intellectuals' friendships with one another, their sharing of ideas and their sense of belonging to the same in-groups. If we fail to take seriously the pleasurable pursuits of historical figures, then our understanding of them will be impoverished.

Some historians have already begun to redress this – for instance, Paul Readman's demonstration of the central place of walking and mountaineering in the life of the polymath politician James Bryce (1838–1922), as well as his work on the role of walking in the imaginative processes of antiquarians and historians.¹² There is now a considerable body of scholarly literature on both climbing and walking.¹³ This reflects the fact that these particular activities have been presented by their participants as cerebral undertakings since the nineteenth century – we can think of the writings of William Wordsworth and Edward Whymper, as well as more recent examples such as Robert Macfarlane.¹⁴ However, despite a little work on Oxbridge rowing, modern scholarship has not yet looked at the links between physical exercise and book-focused intellectual activity in the case of most team sports.¹⁵ Perhaps the

or skim over Britten's sports include Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (1992), and Neil Powell, *Benjamin Britten: A Life for Music* (2013).

⁹ William C Lubenow, *'Only Connect': Learned Societies in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2015); Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (2006).

¹⁰ William Whyte, 'Sunday Tramps (act. 1879–1895)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB).

¹¹ 'Albert Camus and Football', <https://camus-society.com/2017/11/29/albert-camus-and-football/> (accessed 21 May 2024).

¹² Paul Readman, 'Walking and Environmentalism in the Career of James Bryce: Mountaineer, Scholar, Statesman, 1838–1922', in *Walking Histories, 1800–1914*, ed. Chad Bryant, Arthur Burns, and Paul Readman (2016), 287–318; and Readman, 'Walking, and Knowing the Past: Antiquaries, Pedestrianism and Historical Practice in Modern Britain', *History*, 107 (2021), 51–73.

¹³ For instance, Peter H. Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering after the Enlightenment* (2013), as well as Bryant, Burns and Readman (eds.), *Walking Histories*.

¹⁴ Edward Whymper, *Scrambles Amongst the Alps in the Years 1860–69* (1871); Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (2003). For the links between Wordsworth's walking and his literary output, see Anne D. Wallace, *Walking, Literature, and English Culture: The Origins and Uses of Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1993).

¹⁵ For rowing, see Andrew Warwick, 'Exercising the Student Body: Mathematics and Athleticism in Victorian Cambridge', in *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge*, ed.

most surprising omission is cricket, which— as the example of Doyle illustrates — would seem to be a particularly fruitful line of inquiry in this regard. In the first place, it comes with an unusually rich repertoire of symbolic connotations, and it is associated with a resonant value system that was long believed to underpin particular ideals of Englishness. From the 1870s to the 1950s, cricket was the focus of an extraordinary level of fervour throughout England; drawing vast crowds from many sectors of society, it was something of a national obsession.¹⁶ And yet, outside sports history, this is not adequately reflected in the existing scholarship.

The second advantage of putting cricket at the centre of an investigation into intellectual figures is that the subject offers a clear starting point: the writers who congregated around Arthur Conan Doyle to play cricket with him. Between the 1880s and the 1960s, a tight-knit group of London-based writers played cricket together each summer. I call this phenomenon ‘literary cricket’, taking the term from one of its early participants.¹⁷ Doyle was central to this group until he gave up cricket in 1912. A little has been written about authors who have *written about* cricket; but almost nothing — except for passing remarks and the odd passage about an individual — has been written about authors who *played* cricket, much less played cricket *together*.¹⁸ The closest we come to an exception is Kevin Telfer’s cricket-themed biography of J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan’s First XI*, which focuses on Barrie’s cricket team.¹⁹ Barrie, along with Doyle, was indeed instrumental in establishing the early literary cricket network. However, Telfer’s book was written to entertain and is not an academic study; and it rests on the assumption that only the remarkable Barrie could ever have sustained a literary-themed cricket team. The opposite is the case: the network continued to flourish for sixty years after Barrie retired from literary cricket in 1905.

To participate in a team sport is qualitatively different from being a keen spectator, let alone admiring it in the abstract for its symbolic connotations. Yet time and again, the actual playing of cricket by writers is downplayed or ignored, and cricket’s vast literature is explained away as though its authors simply liked the idea of cricket.²⁰ Although historians of sport generally recognise that the physical experience of participation is highly important, this is not reflected in cricket’s current treatment by cultural historians. Anthony Bateman, for instance — who has written some of the best work to date on the socio-cultural role of cricket literature — treats the game so entirely as a textual phenomenon that he seems completely to lose sight of cricket as a

Christopher Lawrence and Steven Shapin (Chicago, 1998), 288–326; and M. C. Curthoys and H. S. Jones, ‘Oxford Athleticism, 1850–1914: A Reappraisal’, *History of Education*, 24 (1995), 305–17.

¹⁶ Derek Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket* (1999).

¹⁷ Philip Trevor, ‘Literary Cricket’, in *The Lighter Side of Cricket* (1901), 179–92.

¹⁸ For an example of the former, see Anthony Bateman, *Cricket, Literature and Culture: Symbolising the Nation, Destabilising Empire* (2010).

¹⁹ Kevin Telfer, *Peter Pan’s First XI* (2010).

²⁰ For example, this is the implication of anthologies such as *Lord’s and Commons: Cricket in Novels and Stories*, ed. John Bright-Holmes (1988).

real-world, tangible activity.²¹ Cricket (and indeed other sports) cannot be reduced to a textual construct: and while an emphasis on the recovery and analysis of discourse has dominated the past few decades of cultural history, we must balance this with a re-examination of the material and social realities in which these discourses are contained. Cricket is a carefully governed cultural practice, and literary cricket is best understood as a self-conscious enacting of the rituals that comprise this practice. A literary cricket match was a stage-managed performance, which was important for bonding, for establishing an in-group of writers, and for reinforcing particular aspects of its participants' sense of self. What those aspects were, as we shall see, varied from player to player.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital provides a useful theoretical framework. In Bourdieu's terms, social capital depends on one's personal ties to other people, while cultural capital is determined by status markers such as desirable knowledge, skills and rank.²² Sociologists have built on Bourdieu's ideas, for example in the case of Ronald S. Burt's concept of the 'broker' of social capital.²³ According to this model, a well-connected individual gains even more social capital when they act as a broker by providing a fruitful link between two other members of their network. Effective networks therefore act as a multiplier of social capital. And literary cricket also provided cultural capital, through the status markers attached to cricket and literature – both of which were prestigious forms of English cultural activity, until cricket declined after the 1950s.²⁴

The literary cricket network reached its pre-war peak in the years 1899–1912, when it took the form of a team called the Authors Eleven, usually captained by Doyle. The Authors' main opponents were a succession of shorter-lived teams, the Artists, the Actors and the Publishers; and most of their matches were played either at Esher in Surrey, or at Lord's Cricket Ground, 'the home of cricket', in St John's Wood.²⁵ The team was an important phenomenon in the literary culture of the day.²⁶ Contemporary observers believed that the cricket of the Authors was important to what they wrote. 'Men of letters have taken to games', observed a journalist in 1903,

and with so much enthusiasm that they cannot help writing about them. The old idea of the author, as a man with bowed shoulders, wrinkled brow, and long, lean, white hands, cramped by much pen-holding, has passed away. In his stead we have such vigorous figures as Sir Conan Doyle and Mr. J. M. Barrie – both of whom played in the cricket match between Authors and the Royal Engineers at Chatham last week ... They

²¹ Bateman, *Cricket, Literature and Culture*.

²² Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (Westport, CT, 1986), 241–58.

²³ Ronald S. Burt, *Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital* (Oxford, 2005), 7.

²⁴ Birley, *Social History*, 288–300.

²⁵ Sources include Albert Kinross, *An Unconventional Cricketer* (1930), 110–14.

²⁶ For instance, see Alec Waugh, 'Lunching with Plum', in P.G. Wodehouse: *A Centenary Celebration, 1881–1981*, ed. James Heineman and Donald Bensen (Oxford, 1981), 10.

are players of games, men of the open air, keen and vigorous in national sports; and the effect of this life is evident in their books.²⁷

There has never before been an academic study of the Authors Eleven – but when we examine the careers of some of its members in light of this cricket team, we see a new aspect to their lives, their works and their context. I want to look at three of the keenest literary cricketers, men who played for the Authors at every opportunity: George Cecil Ives, E. W. Hornung and P. G. Wodehouse. Through these three case studies, we will see the value of cricket to these men and their work. Their sense of personal and in-group identity, and their intellectual output, were closely tied to their enthusiastic involvement in cricket. It is crucial that they played, rather than simply watched or read about, cricket matches. A study of the Authors Eleven can advance ongoing work on the topics of affective relationships; the history of ideas; the history of British literary culture; and the interconnections between historical subjects' minds and bodies.²⁸ This article will do so by looking at the social connections that Ives, Hornung and Wodehouse made through the team, and the consequences on their lives and careers. It will also explore how their societal attitudes and their writings – including some of their most famous creations – were closely linked to their membership of the team. As such, this article will provide insights into the development and transmission of these three writers' ideas, their sense of their position in Edwardian society, and how this was all tied to the embodied sociability of cricket. In so doing, it can contribute to a substantial broadening of the limits of how we think about intellectual lives.

George Ives: playing cricket, reimagining queer masculinity

As the scholarly literature on masculinities and queer identities continues to grow, the relationship of George Cecil Ives (1867–1950) with literary cricket presents an illuminating example of how individual strategies of identity-building can combine multiple self-conscious roles (poet; sportsman; persecuted homosexual; courageous campaigner) to create a protean sense of self. Ives, the first man to captain a cricket team styled 'the Authors Eleven', was an obscure poet, the illegitimate son of a baronet.²⁹ A pioneer of sexual understanding, an ardent campaigner for penal reform and a gay man himself, he especially cared about crimes concerning homosexuality. He was deeply passionate about his private campaign (which he termed 'the Cause' and 'the Faith') to work against the social stigmas and legal penalties that then accompanied homosexual practices. He co-founded the British Sexological Society to further scientific investigation into 'inverted' sexual practices, and established a secret club called the Order of Chaeronea, the earliest-known support group

²⁷ 'Athletic Authors', *Londonderry Sentinel*, 11 June 1903, 6.

²⁸ For existing work expanding the boundaries of these topics, see Lawrence and Shapin (eds.), *Science Incarnate*, and Laura Forster, 'The Paris Commune in London and the Spatial History of Ideas, 1871–1900', *The Historical Journal*, 62 (2019), 1021–44.

²⁹ Matt Cook, 'Ives, George Cecil', ODNB.

for homosexual British men. Ives kept a diary, writing long, impassioned entries, in which he returned to these themes on almost every page. Ives has occasionally been recognised – principally by Matt Cook – as a figure worthy of serious study for those interested in Edwardian social and sexual attitudes, and the inner lives of those who departed from accepted norms.³⁰ However, nobody has spent more than a sentence or two on his relationship with cricket, despite the fact that it was an integral part of his lived experience – one which sheds light on the man as a whole, and on his relationship with masculinity at a time of tension around this category.³¹

In 1895, 1896 and 1898, the recently established Authors' Club fielded a cricket team, the Authors Eleven, against the Press Club at Lord's. Ives, already a regular in Barrie's literary team, was its captain.³² In 1896, Barrie and Doyle both featured.³³ In the lead-up to the 1896 match, Doyle showed his enthusiasm by sending a letter to Ives listing the writers he ought to pick.³⁴ Doyle won the match for the Authors with 101 not out, an event which Ives excitedly described in his diary as 'somewhat sensational'.³⁵ Discussing Lord's in his autobiography, Doyle wrote, 'I got a century in the very first match that I played there ... My bat, still encrusted with the classic mud, hangs as a treasured relic in my hall.'³⁶

In December 1898, Ives resigned from the Authors' Club. The club secretary, G. H. Thring, who had played in the 1898 match, wrote two letters to Ives urging him to reconsider: 'The Club would specially miss your assistance in the Summer at cricket. Our annual match would not be the same without your captaincy. I hope, therefore, that you will see fit to withdraw your resignation.'³⁷ Ives's mind, however, was made up. He wrote in his diary that he had 'chucked' the Authors' Club:

I have never forgiven a conversation I overheard about *the homosexuals* though it did not touch me personally; the language they used, the blood-thirsty cutthroat malice and spite of the creatures: one said that certain people should be taken into a back yard and have their throats cut: I said not one word, but went on reading; the cad, I thought ... I have never spoken to any of them since.³⁸

³⁰ Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885–1914* (Cambridge, 2003); George Ives, *Man Bites Man: The Scrapbook of an Edwardian Eccentric*, ed. Paul Sieveking (1980).

³¹ On this tension, see John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2005).

³² Rayvern Allen, *Peter Pan and Cricket*, 87. Ives's captaincy is proved by two letters from the Authors' Club to George Ives, Harry Ransom Center, the University of Texas at Austin (HRC), British Sexological Society Records (BSSR), 19.13.

³³ 'Authors v. Press', *Evening Mail*, 18 Sept. 1896, 8. Despite writing a book on Barrie's cricket career, Telfer overlooks this match when he erroneously states that Barrie never played at Lord's: Telfer, *Pan's XI*, 31–2.

³⁴ Doyle to Ives, 30 Aug. 1896, HRC, BSSR, 21.1.

³⁵ HRC, Ives Papers, Diaries, xxix, 40–1, 18 Sept. 1896.

³⁶ Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (London, 1924), 283.

³⁷ Authors' Club to George Ives, 16 Dec. 1898, HRC, BSSR, 19.13.

³⁸ HRC, Ives Papers, Diaries, xxxiii, 106, 8 Dec. 1898.

His enthusiasm for literary cricket was undimmed, however, so presumably none of the players ever made Ives feel unwelcome. The year 1899 saw the emergence of the 'real' Authors Eleven, unconnected to the Authors' Club, and Ives played for this side under Doyle's captaincy until 1911.

Ives's poetry dwells on the struggles of a loving soul to cope with the harshness of existence: he was a man badly in need of an anchor of stability, which cricket seems to have provided for him.³⁹ His diaries certainly suggest that cricket was essential for his mental health. On 16 September 1895, for instance, he wrote one of his frequent passages idealising suicide, addressing 'Beautiful Death'.⁴⁰ His emotional state was fragile after the conviction of his friend Oscar Wilde a few months earlier. Then three days later, on 19 September, Ives's next entry was a much heartier account of the first Authors' Club versus Press Club match the previous day. 'They have put the game in all the big "dailies" and the match was a great success in every way; we hope it will be an annual affair.'⁴¹ Throughout the diary, cricket seemed to put him in a more practical state of mind; his cricket entries did not tend to be accompanied by his usual outpourings of tortured emotion.

Ives played other cricket, but he was highly strung and frequently ill at ease in company; among fellow-writers he clearly felt a sense of belonging and legitimacy, which other teams probably could not offer him.⁴² He was not particularly close friends with the other Authors, and perhaps this separation between his inner life and his cricketing life was what enabled cricket to be a refuge for him. Nonetheless, the Authors network still brought him dividends: on 1 and 2 July 1902, he wrote entries from Esher, where he was playing for the Authors; he records a conversation with Doyle, who as Chairman of the Authors' Club tried to persuade him to rejoin.⁴³ A week later, Ives recorded excitedly, 'I have been asked to play in a first class match!! M.C.C. v. London

³⁹ Ives's poetry is almost unreadable now, but the opening verses of a poem called 'My Soul' are typical:

On eddies swept along life's stream
Now here, now there, upon its course
Helpless as sleeper in a dream
And rolled along with fearful force.

And yet my little will is mine
Though I be God's, my very all
It sees, although it can't confine
The torrent in its fool-tossed fall ...

George Ives, *Eros' Throne* (1900), 30.

⁴⁰ HRC, Ives Papers, Diaries, xxv, 64–5, 16 Sept. 1895.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xxv, 70–1, 19 Sept. 1895.

⁴² *Ibid.*, xxxix, 107, 23 June 1901: 'Meyrick-Jones made 64 the first day & 135 the next, but I fear he is not an author.' The implication that Meyrick-Jones was an outsider shows that Ives, by contrast, self-identified as an insider.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, xli, 69, 1 and 2 July 1902.

County; this is really amazing in my old age' – he was thirty-four – 'for I never dreamed to play in a 3 dayer in this world ...'⁴⁴ This was to be his only first-class match, and he clearly saw it as a highlight of his life.⁴⁵ Doyle was one of his MCC teammates in the match. Considering that Doyle had probably had more opportunity than other MCC players to observe Ives playing, and that the invitation came so soon after their latest weekend in Esher together, it seems likely that Doyle was instrumental in having his fellow Author selected for what Ives considered to be a great honour.

Ives's connection with cricket was closely tied to his adoption of an idealised form of Hellenism – the supposed values of Ancient Greece. Cook notes that according to Ives, the Greeks had prized athletic and intellectual vigour, aesthetic beauty – especially of the male physique – and simple, healthy living, to be identified with the countryside in opposition to the degraded modern city.⁴⁶ Ives declared that 'there seem only two great things in the world: Love and Nature', and he believed that the Greeks had got closer to these ultimate values than any other civilisation.⁴⁷ Ives's professed 'Hellenic' values were tied not only to his sexuality – an explicit link in his diaries, to the point that he used the word 'Greek' whenever he meant homosexual – but also to the appeal of cricket, especially literary cricket, which embodied them all.

Most telling of all is the entry for the 1898 Authors versus Press match. While batting, he caught a ball on the finger and split it open, not realising the damage until the blood started soaking through his glove and dripping onto his bat.

They wanted me to go in 'my boy get it bandaged, said the umpire' [sic] but I kept at my post till the end because I am a soldier of the Faith, nor shall we mind hurt! We with the battles before us, with prison or death (oh may it be the latter, for Death is a dear lover of mine, near whom I had slept so often) in prospect, and the most glorious Cause for which ever poor misguided humanity fought. No, we must be above the terrors of the flesh, for the Faith's sake.⁴⁸

Here, Ives presents us with a striking twist to the discourse that cricket was a test of courage and manly fraternity. He saw it as a chance to hone his spiritual resolve and physical hardiness, precisely because he was a persecuted gay man. The core elements of Ives's approach to cricket – treating it as an invigorating, soul-nourishing form of social occasion; bonding with fellow men with whom he formed an in-group; the prestige to be won from earning cricket honours; and a personal test of manliness and character – were all aspects that his teammates would have recognised and with which they would have identified. But Ives was interpreting these values in his own idiosyncratic way, reimagining

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xli, 72, 10 July 1902.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xli, 75–6, 16 and 17 July 1902.

⁴⁶ Cook, *London Homosexuality*, 122.

⁴⁷ HRC, Ives Papers, Diaries, xxv, 32, 10 Aug. 1895.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xxxiii, 56–7, 16 Sept. 1898.

them so that they served his private, defiant homosexuality. By recasting literary cricket on his own terms, Ives was able to queer it and use it to buttress his own turbulent sense of identity.

E. W. Hornung: brokering cricket networks, reconceptualising the English gentleman

In September 1892, a fledgling writer called Ernest William Hornung (1866–1921) played in an early literary cricket side organised by Doyle. It was to have profound consequences for him: also attending that match was Doyle's sister Connie, who married Hornung twelve months later.⁴⁹ In the months after playing for Doyle's team, Doyle and Hornung became close friends; and in 1895, Doyle was made godfather to the Hornungs' only child, Arthur Oscar, who was named after him.⁵⁰ And while Doyle generally captained the Authors Eleven, Hornung was the team secretary, organising the fixtures. One teammate recorded:

The most delightful of my London (or near-London) matches were those I played in for the Authors. The late E. W. Hornung, of 'Raffles' fame, arranged them and they were mostly played at Esher. I had seen a paragraph in the paper saying that Hornung was getting up a side of Authors to play against a side of Artists, so I wrote and asked whether he had room for me. I did not know him, but cricket is cricket.⁵¹

A reporter for *The Boy's Own Annual* in 1904 agreed that 'the team is really got up by E. W. Hornung', and some newspapers even called the side 'E. W. Hornung's XI'.⁵² Hornung's scanty surviving correspondence bears this out. A postcard to Ives, in April 1904, reads: 'Esher Matches May 20 & 21. Please let me know that I may count on you for both. E. W. Hornung'.⁵³ In 1907, he wrote a letter to Elliott O'Donnell, a junior member of the network, in which O'Donnell's place in the side is linked to Hornung's willingness to do him a professional favour:

I had hoped to get hold of your Book before this, or indeed I would have written sooner ... If I can do so with sincerity, I shall be only too glad to bring it (or cause it to be brought) before the notice of some theatrical manager. Could you bring a copy with you when you come to Esher? So far I have a full team for the first day but not for the second; but we may easily want to play twelve a side, either day; & then again it is

⁴⁹ 'The Literary Cricketers', *Morning Leader*, 7 Sept. 1892.

⁵⁰ Peter Rowland, *Raffles and his Creator* (1999), 97–8.

⁵¹ Kinross, *Unconventional Cricketer*, 110.

⁵² Thekla Bowser, 'Authors and Artists at Cricket', *Boy's Own Annual 1904*, xxvii. An example of 'E. W. Hornung's XI' may be found in *Cricket: A Weekly Record of the Game*, 25 May 1905, 18.

⁵³ Hornung to Ives, 18 April 1904, HRC, BSSR, 23.2.

only too likely that one or two will fail me at the last moment, so that I shall be very glad of a reserve man.⁵⁴

(In the event, O'Donnell was to be disappointed: Hornung wrote apologetically a few months later to say that he thought the book's constantly changing scenery and copious bloodshed made it unsuitable for the theatre.)⁵⁵

Hornung is nowhere referred to as the secretary of the Authors team; but this is certainly what he considered himself to be. He wrote a short story in 1912, 'The Power of the Game', about the secretary of a Surrey cricket club, who is responsible for setting up fixtures and assembling teams for them – just as Hornung had done for the Authors.⁵⁶ Hornung often included such autobiographical elements in his stories.⁵⁷ As his exchange with O'Donnell demonstrates, Hornung was positioned to act as a broker in an important section of the fragmented literary world, providing opportunities for networking and for taking part in culturally prestigious cricket events. The attendant publicity was a major part of the appeal of the Authors Eleven, as we may judge from a titbit of journalistic gossip in 1903: 'The authors played a cricket match at Esher last week, and they are very indignant that only one London paper sent a representative to describe their prowess. So an angry member of the team tells me.'⁵⁸ It was Hornung who dictated which writers made the team and therefore got exposure from this (normally) reliable source of public attention. In Bourdieu's terms, having established plenty of cultural and social capital for himself, he was in a position to bestow them upon other writers in turn. This is a striking degree of power for a man who has been very largely overlooked as a historical figure, and whose only biographer, Peter Rowland, believed Hornung scarcely played cricket at all.⁵⁹ Indeed, besides two books by Rowland, little has been written about Hornung; and Rowland's two principal claims, that he was gay (and in love with Oscar Wilde) and that he had a hostile relationship with his brother-in-law Doyle, are both undermined by the evidence of his Authors career.⁶⁰

In the preface to a posthumous collection of Hornung stories, including three about cricket, Doyle recorded that Hornung

⁵⁴ Letter from Hornung to O'Donnell, 24 May 1907. Portsmouth City Council (Portsmouth), ACD1/G/4/7/20.

⁵⁵ Letter from Hornung to O'Donnell, 5 Aug. 1907. Portsmouth, ACD1/G/4/7/21.

⁵⁶ 'The Power of the Game', first published in *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 6 July 1912, 16.

⁵⁷ Malcolm Tozer, 'A Sacred Trinity – Cricket, School, Empire: E. W. Hornung and his Young Guard', in *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society*, ed. J. A. Mangan (1992), 13.

⁵⁸ 'Our London Letter', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 28 May 1903, 4.

⁵⁹ Rowland, *Raffles*, 157–8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 69–81, 160–2, 251. The diaries of George Ives show that he was keenly aware of suppressed homosexuality among his acquaintances, and as a devotee of Oscar Wilde, he would surely have noticed if Hornung felt similarly; but his diaries are devoid of any hint that Hornung was a potential recruit to Ives's 'Cause'. A rare mention of Hornung in the diaries is entirely neutral, noting a brief batting partnership that they shared at Esher (HRC, George Cecil Ives Papers, Diaries, x, 34, 1 June 1907). As for the fallout with Doyle, Rowland proves that they had their clashes; but his extrapolation that their relationship was constantly and irredeemably strained does not fit with their cheerful joint leadership of the Authors between 1899 and 1907.

was the best read man in cricket lore that I ever met, and would I am sure have excelled in the game himself if he had not been hampered by short sight and a villainous asthma. To see him stand up behind the sticks with his big pebble glasses to a fast bowler was an object lesson in pluck if not in wicket-keeping.⁶¹

Hornung's major literary contribution, begun in 1898, was the character of Raffles, a successful county cricketer who was secretly a thief. Raffles was perhaps the most famous fictional cricketer of the twentieth century. Andrew Lycett even suggests that Raffles's personality may have been modelled on Ives.⁶² The Raffles stories were indebted, in both format and style, to Doyle. In 1891, Doyle had achieved his professional breakthrough with Sherlock Holmes after coming up with the idea of writing short stories in a series, rather than serials of single narratives across several issues. That is, the main characters were constant throughout the series, but each episode could stand alone as a complete story, saving readers the trouble of reading every instalment in order. Doyle claimed to have invented this genre: 'I was a revolutionist, and I think I may fairly claim to the credit of being the inaugurator of a system which has since been worked by others with no little success.'⁶³ One of the most successful of these others was his brother-in-law, whose Raffles stories became a sensation rivalling that of Holmes himself.⁶⁴ The first Raffles story was published by *Cassell's Magazine* in June 1898. Their impact on society was heightened by the moral shock caused by its attractive, yet villainous, antihero, and Hornung found himself 'positively notorious' for the stories' 'breathtaking audacity', breaking Victorian ethical taboos around storytelling.⁶⁵ Much of the shock value of the Raffles stories derived from the idea that a first-class cricketer, of all people, could be a crook – this at a time when 'cricket' was shorthand for the entire British value system of honour and integrity.⁶⁶

The stories are narrated by Raffles's sidekick, Bunny, who is in awe of Raffles's brilliance and always a step or two behind his cunning mind; in this respect, they parallel – and cunningly subvert – the Watson–Holmes relationship. Nor is this unconscious or coincidental: the first edition of Raffles stories was dedicated by Hornung 'To A.C.D. This Form of Flattery',⁶⁷ and Doyle noted in his memoir that 'I think I may claim that his famous character Raffles was a kind of inversion of Sherlock Holmes, Bunny playing Watson. He admits as much in his kindly dedication.'⁶⁸ Hornung had written an earlier story, featuring the death of a well-educated criminal. In 1909 he claimed that Doyle had said to him, 'What a pity you killed that fellow! A public-school

⁶¹ Doyle, Preface to E.W. Hornung, *Old Offenders and a few Old Scores* (London, 1923), vi–vii.

⁶² Lycett, *Doyle*, 229.

⁶³ Quoted *ibid.*, 174. The quotation is from *Tit-Bits*, 15 Dec. 1900.

⁶⁴ Rowland, *Raffles*, 122, 176.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶⁶ Nick Rance, 'The Immorally Rich and the Richly Immoral: Raffles and the Plutocracy', in *Twentieth-Century Suspense: The Thriller Comes of Age*, ed. Clive Bloom (1990), 4–5.

⁶⁷ Rowland, *Raffles*, 131.

⁶⁸ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 259.

villain would be a new figure for a series. Why not revive him?⁶⁹ This, according to Hornung, was the genesis of Raffles. Nor did the chain of cause-and-effect end there: Rowland writes that 'it is, certainly, generally acknowledged by his biographers that the decision to bring Holmes back to the land of the living, in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* ... was prompted simply and solely by his jealousy of Hornung's success with A. J. Raffles.'⁷⁰

Both of Raffles's epithets – 'the Amateur Cracksman' and 'the Gentleman Thief' – use a play on words to link his elite social rank to his upper-class status in cricket. Cricketers were either unpaid amateurs (also known as gentlemen), who were aestheticised as the game's heroic ideal, or professionals (also known as players), paid cricketers of lower social background and correspondingly of lower status. (The Authors were self-consciously proud of their amateur status.) Raffles demonstrates a suave superiority that comes with being an amateur, not a professional, cricketer; and he applies this to his criminal exploits too. A story in which Raffles is playing country-house cricket while outfoxing lower-class professional criminals, whom he scorns, is called 'Gentlemen and Players'.⁷¹ Cricket's two-tier system is thus used as a metaphor to describe the social divide between the public-school thief and his rival professional burglars. By making Raffles a sportsman – a gentleman with an honour-bound code – as well as a thief, Hornung was both expanding and undermining the category of gentleman; a piece of subversion that had a troubling impact on the traditionally deferential Edwardian reading public.⁷² Raffles and the Authors both laid claim to being part of the in-group of cricket's amateur tradition – yet Raffles posed a threat from the inside. Time and again, Raffles uses his social and cultural capital as a member of the English elite to pull off his escapades: the Raffles stories positively revel in the fact that he is able to do what a lower-class man could never get away with.⁷³ Interestingly, Raffles is a bowler, traditionally an art largely left to the professionals, while the heroic amateurs preferred to focus on batting, where more public glory was to be won.⁷⁴ Raffles's preference for bowling is a hint that there is something shady about him: Hornung depicts his bowling as a devious, cunning art, and Raffles openly admits that he uses this skill as a way for him to hone his kleptomaniac wits: another coded social statement.⁷⁵

Cricket, in fact, infused Hornung's whole worldview, and is impossible to disentangle from his moral, political and religious beliefs. The scholarly

⁶⁹ Quoted in Jeremy Lrance, 'The A. J. Raffles Stories Reconsidered: Fall of the Gentleman Ideal', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 57 (2014), 101.

⁷⁰ Rowland, *Raffles*, 137-8.

⁷¹ Hornung, 'Gentlemen and Players', in *Raffles*, 56-79.

⁷² Lrance, 'Raffles Reconsidered', 99-125.

⁷³ For instance, 'Wilful Murder' features a scene in which Bunny, Raffles and a friend of theirs from their club – who has just killed someone in a home invasion – make their getaway from the murder scene. Bunny notes with glee that nobody who saw these three well-bred gentlemen could have suspected a thing, or connected them to the crime. Hornung, *Raffles*, 116.

⁷⁴ Richard Holt, 'Cricket and Englishness: The Batsman as Hero', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 13 (1996), 48-70.

⁷⁵ 'If you can bowl a bit your low cunning won't get rusty.' Hornung, 'Gentlemen and Players', in *Raffles*, 56.

literature of empire is of course vast, but to date, only one published essay acknowledges Hornung's value in providing a way of understanding Edwardian muscular Christianity. Malcolm Tozer demonstrates how public schools, cricket and empire were the three themes that obsessed Hornung; but this has not given Hornung the mainstream academic attention, as an emblematic Edwardian imperialist, that Tozer's conclusions suggest he deserves.⁷⁶ As Tozer recognises, Hornung was an advocate of muscular Christianity *par excellence* – a believer in Henry Newbolt's famous exhortation in the poem *Vitai Lampada* to 'Play up! Play up! And play the game!'

The identification of cricket with empire was not automatic, and Bernard Porter has influentially challenged the view that interest in empire was hegemonic throughout British society.⁷⁷ Indeed, Ives's poetry shows him to have been an ardent critic of imperialism, calling it 'a Devil's gibe that might be right | And that the weak must go.'⁷⁸ But Hornung was more conventional and much more imperialist than his teammate. He enthusiastically subscribed to the then-popular view of cricket as an ideal way for Englishmen – especially schoolboys – to enact society's desired values: it was seen to demonstrate manliness and facilitate male bonding.⁷⁹ His last significant work of fiction, *Fathers of Men*, was about the life of a boarding school based on his own, Uppingham.⁸⁰ True to the genre, its climactic scene was a cricket match.⁸¹ This book reflected Hornung's real-world pedagogical activities. In the years following the Boer War of 1899–1902, Hornung preached Sunday sermons in schools, very much in Newbolt's vein – sometimes using the metaphor of 'the Game of Life', in which life itself was a cricket match.⁸² Often he urged the schoolboys to be willing to die for their country, as some of their predecessors had done in South Africa.⁸³ Hornung even had Raffles redeem himself in this very way: the gentleman thief died a patriotic death in the Boer War, reeling off cricket analogies in his final gunfight. 'I can't see where that one pitched; it may have been a wide; and it's very nearly the end of the over again.'⁸⁴

On 5 July 1914 – a week after Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination – Hornung gave a sermon at Stone House School called 'The Game of Life', in which his three lifelong passions – cricket, empire and religion – were conflated into a single ideal of an English life worth living.

The word 'sportsman', as we use it among ourselves, has come to signify every virtue which is dearest to our hearts. Courage, honesty,

⁷⁶ Tozer, 'A Sacred Trinity', 11–26.

⁷⁷ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004).

⁷⁸ Ives, 'A Song of Empire', in *Eros' Throne*, 35.

⁷⁹ Keith A. P. Sandiford, 'England', in *The Imperial Game: Cricket, Culture and Society*, ed. Brian Stoddard and Keith Sandiford (Manchester, 1998), 14–16.

⁸⁰ Hornung, *Fathers of Men* (1912).

⁸¹ Tozer, 'A Sacred Trinity', 16.

⁸² Shane Chichester (ed.), *E. W. Hornung and his Young Guard, 1914* (Crowthorne, 1941).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

⁸⁴ Hornung, *Raffles*, 216.

unselfishness, chivalry, you can't be a sportsman without all these; and if you *have* all of those, you *must* be a good man. This ideal – this sporting and game-playing ideal – this end and aim and excuse and justification for all the games and sport that they say we think too much about in England – has been finely expressed by one or two of our modern poets ... Who wants an easy victory? Who wants a life of full-pitches to leg? Do you think the Great Scorer is going to give you four runs every time for those? I believe with all my heart and soul that in this splendidly difficult Game of Life it is just the cheap and easy triumphs which will be written in water on the score sheet. And the way we played for our side, in the bad light, on the difficult pitch; the way we backed up and ran the other man's runs; our courage and unselfishness, not our skill or our success ... surely, surely, it is these things above all other that will count, when the innings is over, in the Pavilion of Heaven.⁸⁵

In this and other sermons, Hornung showed how – for him – Christianity, imperialism and cricket were, symbolically, so closely linked as to be almost interchangeable; and they were all tied to a fervent Englishness. For Hornung, ultimately, cricket was subordinate to its greater task, the making of good Englishmen who would die for the empire. And it is essential that we view Hornung's interest in cricket as that of a *performer* – a player in, and an organiser of, matches – rather than as an observer. Hornung was not treating cricket as a convenient analogy that reduced cricket to little more than a text to be read. If we return to Doyle's description of Hornung's cricket as 'an object lesson in pluck', we can recognise that Hornung was physically experiencing the very rhythms of cricket-playing – and enduring the accompanying risk of pain and injury – that he was championing as central to the formation of English gentlemen. He was also serving as the gatekeeper to a prestigious literary coterie that found its form in the Authors Eleven: a broker of social capital. And Hornung's piquant takes on Englishness and gentlemanly values were indeed bolstered by his performing them on the cricket field, before he widely disseminated his attitudes via Raffles and his school sermons. By overlooking Hornung's cricket-playing, Tozer fails to see the form in which Hornung, literally, practised what he preached. A greater understanding of Hornung, his writing, and his use of cricket for a variety of purposes, suggests that he would merit a centre-stage role in studies of Edwardian attitudes towards their social bonds and obligations, as well as towards imperialism and 'manliness'.

For soldiers steeped in Hornung's way of thinking, war sometimes *felt* like cricket – perhaps not often, and not for long, but it helps us recognise that the blurring of cricketing and martial imagery in Hornung's writings was more than just a literary conceit. This is evident in the letters of Hornung's only child Oscar – Doyle's nephew and godson – who fulfilled his father's exhortations with terrible exactness. His high-spirited letters during the First World War showed that he thoroughly subscribed to his father's view

⁸⁵ Chichester, *Young Guard*, 31–7.

of warfare in the name of England. In early 1915, Hornung wrote a poem called *Lord's Leave*, in which the Western Front is depicted in cricket terms, with the German guns aiming at English 'stumps'.⁸⁶ Oscar was working on poetry too: a poem about his prep school, reflecting on the alumni who had fallen in the Boer War – a favourite theme of his father's. The surviving fragments show his filial resolve to 'die as they did, by their schoolboy honour aided'.⁸⁷ On 19 June, Oscar wrote to his father that he had been given 'new Hand-bombs – glorious things, just the size and weight of a *Cricket Ball!*' The previous night, he had led three men on a raid to throw them into the German trench opposite.

I led off with cricket-ball No. 1 – it was just like 'throwing in' from 'cover' (a fast long hop!) – only this time I had 'some' batsmen to run out and there was a price on those stumps! ... The others then stood up and 'threw in' – the wicket-keep put them down nicely – and we made haste back to the Pavilion! – it was a case of 'appealing against the light' – for it was 1.30 A.M. by then and getting uncomfortably light.⁸⁸

This eerily echoes Raffles's last words; and it shows that cricket was not just a tenuous symbolic analogy for war: for participants like Oscar Hornung, the fighting really could remind them of the game they loved. In Oscar's case, this letter is especially poignant: just two weeks later, on 6 July, he was killed. Muscular Christianity had come up against the realities of twentieth-century warfare.

P. G. Wodehouse: building a literary career through playing cricket

P. G. Wodehouse (1881–1975) remains one of the greatest-ever comic writers in the English language. An avid Doyle fan from boyhood, Wodehouse met his hero through the Authors Eleven, debuting in May 1903 at one of the matches organised by Hornung. Within a couple of years, he received invitations to stay at Doyle's house in order to play more cricket together.⁸⁹ Wodehouse was always clear that 'I knew him [Doyle] through playing cricket with him'.⁹⁰ And he was disarmingly frank about how he used this cricketing connection to advance his own reputation. On 9 August 1912, when Wodehouse was visiting England from his new base in the USA, he wrote to Doyle shortly before they both appeared in an Authors versus Publishers match:

Dear Comrade Doyle,
Will you stand by me in a crisis? A New York lady journalist, a friend of

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 27–8.

⁸⁷ E. W. Hornung, 'Trusty and Well Beloved': *The Little Record of Arthur Oscar Hornung, Second Lieutenant, 3rd (attached 2nd) Essex Regiment* (privately printed, 1915), 64.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 39–40.

⁸⁹ N. T. P. Murphy, *A Wodehouse Handbook: The World and Words of P. G. Wodehouse* (2nd edn, 2013 [2006]), 92, 217.

⁹⁰ Sophie Ratcliffe (ed.), *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* (2011), 517.

mine, is gunning for you. She said 'You know Conan Doyle, don't you?' I said, 'I do. It is my only claim to fame'. She then insisted on my taking her to see you at Crowborough, and mentioned next Sunday, the 11th. Can you stand this invasion? ... (I have traded so much in America on my friendship with you that my reputation will get a severe jolt if you refuse it!)

... I was glad to see you on form with the bat the other day. I hope we shall smash the publishers.

Yours ever

P. G. Wodehouse⁹¹

This networking aspect must have been a major part of the Authors' appeal for Wodehouse and many of his teammates. As with Ives and Hornung, he would have seen his role in the team in the 1900s as an essential component of his social status. Not only was he now friends with famous and influential writers, but participation in the team gave him a chance to play cricket matches at the prestigious Lord's – against similarly famous and influential actors. For Wodehouse and others, literary cricket meant prestige and valuable contacts – being part of the in-group. This gives a very different picture of the man from the traditional image of a shy, unworldly oddball – an image constructed in later life by Wodehouse himself, and one which has proved difficult to overturn.⁹²

But it was not just about networking: the topic of cricket had an overlooked significance to his early career, and this was influenced by the Authors. In 1900, when Wodehouse finished at Dulwich College, his father announced that he could not afford to send him to Oxford or Cambridge as expected, so he had found his son a job at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank instead.⁹³ Determined not to become a banker, Wodehouse began seriously to pursue a sideline in writing.⁹⁴ From the time he started at the bank in September 1900, he kept a notebook recording his monthly earnings as a writer.⁹⁵ Cricket was the core of his early output, Wodehouse having won a prize for an article called 'Some Aspects of Game-Captaincy' in February 1900; the article was published in the *Public School Magazine* (*PSM*). That September, his second publication, also for *PSM*, was likewise on cricket: 'Wrote a short article on cricket at Malvern. Price 10/6. Paid December 21st.' His October 1900 entry reads: 'Articles on "Football at Dulwich" and "School Cricket of 1900" (Both 10/6) for the "Public School Magazine".' From this foothold on sports topics in *PSM*, Wodehouse gradually established himself as a freelance writer, specialising in school stories and especially in cricket. In September 1901, for instance, he recorded that he had sold 'Cricket at Dulwich' and 'Cricket in Retrospect' to *PSM*. Though boxing, athletics and rugby also featured prominently – likewise

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁹² Barry Phelps, *P. G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth* (1992), 17–25.

⁹³ Robert McCrum, *Wodehouse: A Life* (2004), 37–41.

⁹⁴ Murphy, *Wodehouse Handbook*, 65.

⁹⁵ Wodehouse notebook 1900–8, BL, Wodehouse Collection, Loan MS 129/1/104.

dependent on Wodehouse's first-hand experiences – Wodehouse wrote in 1901 that for him, 'cricket ranked a long way in front of all other forms of sport'.⁹⁶ By 1902, he was publishing a few pieces a month, including a regular column at the *Globe*.⁹⁷ In September 1902 he published his first book, *The Pothunters*, whose plot concerned the mysterious burglary of a public-school cricket pavilion.⁹⁸ That same month he quit the bank, and began publishing in *Punch*. He later wrote to Owen Seaman, in 1902 the *Punch* Assistant Editor, to say that 'I shall always feel that you gave me the first leg-up.'⁹⁹ Seaman was one of the organisers of literary cricket sides, and probably introduced Wodehouse to the Authors.¹⁰⁰

After debuting for the Authors on 22 May 1903, he played in almost every subsequent pre-war Authors match, even after he had moved to America. On 27 May, *Punch* published a lyric by Wodehouse foretelling the resurrection of Sherlock Holmes.¹⁰¹ Doyle was indeed working on some new Holmes stories at the time, despite having apparently killed him off in *The Final Problem*. Wodehouse had evidently discovered this at Esher, and promptly used the information to publish a humorous scoop in *Punch*.¹⁰² Just over a month later, an interview of Doyle, conducted by Wodehouse and including cricket references, was published in *V.C. Magazine*.¹⁰³ At the time, Wodehouse kept notebooks, titled *Phrases and Notes*, in which he jotted down ideas for stories, dialogue and so on; these notebooks, covering 1902–5, only became publicly accessible when a transcription was published in 2014. In the weeks immediately after his Authors debut, his notebook fills with suggestive cricket-themed entries. One of these unambiguously shows that Wodehouse was imagining ways in which his literary cricket connections could benefit his career:

Mems for 'Punch'

- a) Man who made money by selling literary ideas & titles to authors eg 'Man with the Single Spat' to Conan Doyle. (Might bring this into 'Lodgings in Belgravia')
- b) Advice to Journalists: (Story book) (eg playing v editor in cricket match & bowling to suit him if he'll take article, or offering to run him out).
- c) Song of the Bat.¹⁰⁴

These jottings pertaining to cricket dominate Wodehouse's notebook for the three months following his Authors debut. Either Wodehouse's appearance

⁹⁶ P. G. Wodehouse, *Tales of St. Austin's* (1903), 151.

⁹⁷ Wodehouse notebook 1900–8, BL, Wodehouse Collection, Loan MS 129/1/104.

⁹⁸ P. G. Wodehouse, *The Pothunters* (1902).

⁹⁹ John Adlard, *Owen Seaman: His Life and Work* (1977), 88.

¹⁰⁰ Frankfort Moore, 'More "Old Bangor"', *North Down Herald and County Down Independent*, 20 Oct. 1923, 1.

¹⁰¹ Telfer, *Pan's XI*, 189; 'Back to His Native Strand', *Punch*, 124 (27 May 1903), 368.

¹⁰² Adlard, *Seaman*, 66–7, 88.

¹⁰³ Phelps, *Wodehouse*, 70.

¹⁰⁴ *Phrases and Notes: P. G. Wodehouse's Notebooks, 1902–1905*, ed. N. T. P. Murphy (2014), 39.

for the Authors had directly inspired him to dream about cricket stories; or the two things coincided to a remarkably precise degree. Several jottings relate to a precocious cricketer called 'Young Sammy', who appears to be an embryonic version of his famous character Mike (see below). As such, it was from this fertile period of cricket-related creativity in 1903 that Wodehouse formed one of his most influential literary creations.

A *Punch* article that September showed that the joint themes of cricket and English literature were still in his thoughts: he wrote a mock-proposal for a play about an Ashes cricket match. This included an extract parodying Shakespearean language:

Bowler: Meseemed I heard a click, and lo! the ball
 Rests safely in the wicket-keeper's hands.
 Umpire, how was that?

Hero: Stay, Sir Umpire, stay,
 Nor give your fell decision ere you've heard me.
 I swear by * * * *
 I touched it not. Two inches clear – and more –
 Inside it did I play; the click you heard
 Was but the grass, or else perchance the strap,
 The leathern strap that girds my snowy pad,
 Which, flapping two and fro beneath the breath
 Of Zephyrus, produced a bat-like sound.¹⁰⁵

That same September, *Punch* published another comic Wodehouse cricket piece, called 'The Cricketer in Winter'.¹⁰⁶

Wodehouse's career soon benefitted not just from the inspiration that the Authors provided, but from the contacts he made on the team. In October 1903, Wodehouse started a new school serial in *The Captain* which would be published in 1904 as *The Gold Bat*. This novel, with a cricket reference in its title, starred a rule-breaking schoolboy who was a devotee of Hornung's Raffles stories.¹⁰⁷ It was gushingly reviewed by Wodehouse's Authors teammate, E. V. Lucas, in an anonymous *Times Literary Supplement* column: 'No writer of school tales has so much vigour and realistic spirit as Mr. P. G. Wodehouse.'¹⁰⁸ This review was an important milestone for Wodehouse's reputation: schoolboy magazines were not normally a route to literary recognition. In 1906, he published 'A Benefit Match', a cricket story illustrated by George Hillyard Swinstead, another Authors teammate.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ 'My Cricket Drama', *Punch*, 125 (2 Sept. 1903), 161.

¹⁰⁶ 'The Cricketer in Winter', *Punch*, 125 (30 Sept. 1903), 230.

¹⁰⁷ P. G. Wodehouse, *The Gold Bat* (2nd edn, 1974 [1904]), 23.

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Wild, *Literature of the 1900s: The Great Edwardian Emporium* (Edinburgh, 2017), 107.

¹⁰⁹ Wodehouse, 'A Benefit Match', *Windsor*, 24 (1906), 330–6.

In all, Wodehouse published seven books of school stories between 1902 and 1909, collected from his magazine serialisations.¹¹⁰ Six of these were published while he was playing regularly for the Authors. Cricket is a major staple of these books – a fact that has been taken for granted in the little that has been written on them.¹¹¹ In *Phrases and Notes*, Wodehouse’s ‘school story’ ideas are almost all about cricket. In Wodehouse’s mind, the one meant the other. *Tales of St. Austin’s*, published in November 1903, exemplifies this. It consists of twelve short stories (no fewer than nine of which mention cricket or have cricket plots) and four humorous essays, of which cricket is central to three. In an essay entitled ‘Now, Talking About Cricket –’ Wodehouse insists that cricket is much more than a game, and with cheerful hyperbole he looks forward to the day when it is treated with appropriate reverence and ‘becomes a religious ceremony’.¹¹² In another piece, deploring schools’ focus on classical languages rather than sport, Wodehouse humorously laments,

Our bright-eyed lads are taught insane constructions in Greek and Latin from morning till night, and they come from their holidays, in many cases, without the merest foundation of a batting style. Ask them what a Yorker is, and they will say: ‘A man from York’ ... When we get schools that teach nothing but games, then will the sun definitely refuse to set on the roast beef of old England. May it be soon.¹¹³

Tales of St. Austin’s illustrates how rich a theme cricket was in Wodehouse’s capable hands, and the extent to which it underpinned his major early successes.

Jonathan Wild posits that these stories’ vivacity – their slicker, more realistic depiction of public-school life, and their effective deployment of boys’ slang for verisimilitude and humour – made them a fundamental contribution to the development of the ‘school story’ genre. The genre’s earnestness and piety since *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* had gone stale, and Wodehouse’s updates reinvigorated the formula. His refreshing innovations, Wild argues, directly influenced subsequent writers of the genre – especially the hugely prolific Frank Richards, the most important writer of school stories of the twentieth century.¹¹⁴ In this case, school stories shaped by Wodehouse’s modernising style were to be read by millions of boys and girls at a formative age for the next half-century.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Wild, *Edwardian Emporium*, 104.

¹¹¹ See for instance Tony Ring and Geoffrey Jaggard, *Wodehouse Goes to School* (1997).

¹¹² Wodehouse, *St. Austin’s*, 155.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 136–7.

¹¹⁴ Wild, *Edwardian Emporium*, 104–10.

¹¹⁵ Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys’ Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855–1940* (Basingstoke, 2003), passim.; Eric Midwinter, *His Captain’s Hand on his Shoulder Smote: The Incidence and Influence of Cricket in Schoolboy Stories* (2019), 56–62, 106–24. This argument has an intriguing implication. If Wodehouse’s school stories were instrumental in shaping the national consciousness along the lines of *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, training the British public to respond to stories in which a boy begins to attend a prestigious, storied boarding school; makes friends, absorbs values of fairness and loyalty, and learns to love the school; finds a wise mentor and/or

In 1907 Wodehouse began a serialisation in *The Captain* starring a schoolboy cricketing prodigy, renamed from 'Young Sammy' to Mike Jackson. *Mike*, about the teenage hero's experiences at two public schools, was first published in book-form in 1909; it was the last and greatest of Wodehouse's school stories, and he later said it was his favourite among his writings.¹¹⁶ *Mike* was the most important of the dozens of schoolboy stories that were saturating the childhood imaginations of the age; C. L. R. James, the West Indian nationalist and first-class cricketer, bears this out by singling out *Mike* as one of the formative influences during his Caribbean childhood.¹¹⁷ Strikingly, *Mike*'s contemporary literary references are exclusively about Wodehouse's fellow-Authors. There is an extended passage in which Mike, having sneaked out of bed in his boarding house, identifies himself with the roguish Raffles; at another point, the appearance of Mike's new housemaster 'reminded Mike of Smee in *Peter Pan*'.¹¹⁸ Wodehouse's best lampooning of his teammates is given to Mike's antagonist, Mr Downing; confronted with mysterious rule-breaking, the schoolmaster is upset to discover how much worse a detective he is than Sherlock Holmes, and begins 'to feel a certain resentment against Sir Arthur Conan Doyle'.¹¹⁹ (The perpetrator turns out to be a former pupil who had returned for a cricket match.) Wodehouse enjoyed sending up his literary hero and teammate. He later wrote, 'It is with the feeling that he would not object that I have sometimes amused myself by throwing custard pies at that great man.'¹²⁰ A Wodehouse biographer observes that 'The influence of Doyle, particularly the Holmes stories, permeates the Wodehouse canon'¹²¹ – and certainly his stories contain countless Holmes references.

Mike's second outing as protagonist (or joint-protagonist, with his friend Psmith) was serialised in 1908–9 and published in 1910, under the title *Psmith in the City*.¹²² The links to Wodehouse's life are obvious. The book opens with Mike participating in a cricket week hosted by Psmith's father. Wodehouse, especially early in his career, tended to write only about what he knew, and the only cricket weeks which Wodehouse is known to have attended were those hosted by Doyle in 1905 and 1906.¹²³ Mike, like Wodehouse, is then informed by his father that he will not be going to Oxford or Cambridge, and instead must begin work at the New Asiatic Bank (plainly based on Wodehouse's Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank). The book features the struggles of Mike and Psmith against the tyranny of the bank, and reaches a climax with Mike finding himself playing cricket at Lord's itself;

a mean-spirited antagonist among the teaching staff; and becomes a school hero through his feats for his boarding house in a ball game ... then Wodehouse played a part in creating a culture that was primed to be receptive to Harry Potter.

¹¹⁶ Hedgcock, 'Introduction', 33; Midwinter, *His Captain's Hand*, 60–2.

¹¹⁷ Midwinter, *His Captain's Hand*, 56–60; C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (1963), 35.

¹¹⁸ P. G. Wodehouse, *Mike* (2nd edn, 1924 [1909]), 31, 177.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 269–70.

¹²⁰ Murphy, 'Appendix', in *Phrases and Notes*, 203.

¹²¹ Phelps, *Wodehouse*, 71.

¹²² Wodehouse, *Psmith in the City* (1910).

¹²³ Murphy, *Wodehouse Handbook*, 92; *Sportsman*, 9 Aug. 1905, 2.

something which Wodehouse, thanks to the Authors, had experienced several times. The story ends with Mike – like Wodehouse – triumphantly leaving the bank to pursue his dream: in this case, cricket rather than writing. The stories about Mike are clearly a blend of Wodehouse's fantasies about cricketing brilliance, and his real-life experiences, first at a public school, then at a bank, and finally his cricket exploits with the Authors.

No work to date has explored in such depth the centrality of cricket to Wodehouse's early writing. Murray Hedgcock came closest, in the introduction to a slim collection of Wodehouse's cricket writings.¹²⁴ However, Hedgcock's approach is breezy and superficial – he is introducing an anthology, not producing scholarly work – and although he discusses the Authors, he does not speculate on their influence on Wodehouse's cricket writings. Nor did he have access to Wodehouse's *Phrases and Notes*. N. T. P. Murphy, the Wodehouse expert who edited *Phrases and Notes*, refers to Wodehouse's life from 1900 to 1914 as 'the Hidden Years'.¹²⁵ Murphy, like other recent writers on Wodehouse, cites Hedgcock on Wodehouse cricket matters, without modifying or building on Hedgcock's account.¹²⁶ And yet a reassessment of Wodehouse's literary relationship with cricket opens up interesting historiographical opportunities. For instance, Wodehouse's early career provides striking evidence of cricket's central place in the ideology of the public school.¹²⁷ Where Hornung's 'sacred trinity' was school, cricket and empire, Wodehouse's was school, cricket and humour: the two writers have not been compared before, despite their being teammates.

The cricket writings were not the only Wodehouse stories to have been influenced by his involvement in the Authors. Of much larger cultural significance was the Authors' contribution to Wodehouse's greatest creation, Jeeves and Wooster. Wodehouse stated that the indomitable valet Jeeves was named after a cricketer, Percy Jeeves, whom he had seen playing in a county match in around 1912, and who was killed in the First World War.¹²⁸ This is well known; but the connection actually goes much deeper. Commenting on this, Murphy has written, 'Arthur Conan Doyle once told Wodehouse that he liked naming his characters after professional cricketers, and a Sherlock Holmes Society member has since informed me that Doyle used this method to name 240 of his 300 characters.'¹²⁹ As for the inspiration for Jeeves's personality, Murphy's suggestions include Barrie's real-life butler Thurston; Barrie's fictional character Crichton from *The Admirable Crichton*; and two of Doyle's characters – Ambrose in *Rodney Stone* and Austin in *Poison Belt*.¹³⁰ When we consider that Doyle claims *The Admirable Crichton* was itself inspired by a conversation he had had with Barrie, and that Barrie, Doyle and Wodehouse all met one

¹²⁴ Murray Hedgcock, 'Introduction', in Wodehouse, *Wodehouse at the Wicket* (1997), 25–33.

¹²⁵ Murphy, 'Foreword', in *Phrases and Notes*, v.

¹²⁶ Murphy, 'Appendix', in *Phrases and Notes*, 202.

¹²⁷ Bateman, *Crickets, Literature and Culture*, 31–4; Birley, *Social History*, ix.

¹²⁸ Hedgcock, 'Introduction', 38.

¹²⁹ Murphy, *Wodehouse Handbook*, 128.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

another through literary cricket, Jeeves's credentials as an Authors creation are very strong indeed.¹³¹

And then there is the fact that the early Jeeves stories use the short-story-series format pioneered by Doyle and borrowed by Hornung. When one sets Jeeves and Wooster alongside Holmes and Watson and – especially – Raffles and Bunny, the parallels are striking. Given Wodehouse's willingness to draw from his Authors teammates and yet treat them with irreverence, Jeeves looks very like a parody of Holmes and Raffles. In all three cases, the plodding narrator exists to bear witness to the brilliant mental feats and deft, bold problem-solving of the heroes. The three narrators provide Holmes, Raffles and Jeeves with an aura of wonder and respect, by emphasising to the reader how much they themselves marvel at their remarkable companions. The joke, of course, is that whereas Watson and Bunny are in awe of someone who is roughly their social equal, Bertie Wooster is in awe of someone who is not merely his social inferior but actually his servant. It is inconceivable that Wodehouse designed the structure of his Jeeves and Wooster stories without thinking of Doyle and Hornung, two of the most high-profile writers during his London writing career, and two of his most valuable contacts. This wealth of circumstantial evidence underlines the case that the Authors Eleven provided crucial context for the creation of the immortal characters Jeeves and Wooster.

Conclusion: New Perspectives on Cultural and Intellectual History

Cricket was central to the worldviews exhibited by Ives, Hornung and Wodehouse. The sport's embodied sociability – the particular nature of the activity that brought these men together – fed into the patterns of their lives and the way they understood themselves, their friendships and their place in society. It is evident that there was a two-way connection between their intellectual work and their cricketing activities. The Authors Eleven helped them get on in the literary world, and influenced their sense of literary mission. Above all, cricket helped all three men negotiate in-groups within Edwardian England's hierarchical, homosocial culture: it provided them with cultural and social capital that smoothed the way for them. Hornung, as a proselytiser for empire and for public schools, as well as in his role as the secretary of the Authors, happily exploited cricket's ability to forge such in-groups, working as a broker of social capital. Meanwhile, Ives and Wodehouse – who, at the start of their Authors careers, were outsiders in the literary world – both relished associating themselves with the in-groups that their cricket enthusiasm allowed them to access. All three saw their involvement in cricket as an essential component of their place in the social order. Neither the networking and publicity opportunities of the Authors Eleven, nor the vivid experiential relationship with cricket that was critical to these men's outlooks and aspects of their literary production, would have been achievable had they confined themselves to watching and reading about the

¹³¹ Telfer, *Pan's XI*, 167.

game. For them, cricket was no mere repository of symbols: it was an intense physical and social experience.

It is worth stressing that the three men regularly played in the same eleven: between 1903 and 1907, all three were part of the Authors' annual weekend at Esher for five years in a row.¹³² Not only does this demonstrate how well they knew each other, it also underlines the fact that their different conceptions of cricket were often in relation to the very same matches. Literary cricket matches were dense with cultural significance, interpreted by participants in varying ways. Yet for all of them, playing literary cricket had an important role in their social networks, their sense of identity and the outlook that shaped their written work.

And this pattern was not confined to these three alone – it was repeated throughout the Authors Eleven. For example, A. A. Milne – who played for the Authors between 1907 and 1909 on the strength of his *Punch* contributions – published his first proper book in 1910, full of humorous vignettes about organising a cricket team of his own. Milne sent a copy of the book to J. M. Barrie, who had retired from literary cricket in 1905; Barrie wrote back enthusiastically, having enjoyed the cricket passages, and symbolically appointed Milne the 'last member' of his defunct team.¹³³ When Barrie's literary cricket side was resurrected for a one-off match in 1913, Milne played in it.¹³⁴ Barrie then championed Milne's fledgling dramaturgical career while the younger man was serving in the First World War, arranging for a one-act Milne play to be performed with two of his own as a triple-bill.¹³⁵ Barrie was probably the highest-profile playwright in the country at the time, and Milne's literary career took off from there; a few years later, he created Winnie the Pooh. Barrie's mentorship of Milne was inspired by a shared interest in cricket as well as writing, and was then established on a firm footing through the ritual of a literary cricket match. Milne benefitted professionally from the social opening this gave him, as his cricket captain became a powerful professional asset. Once again, we see how the playing of cricket – and the sense of being teammates with fellow literary cricketers – had an important role in the development of a writing career.

All this has implications far beyond the borders of sports history. In the cases of Ives, Hornung and Wodehouse – not to mention Doyle, Barrie, Milne and others – literary cricket is a valuable analytical perspective that advances our understanding of these men and their intellectual development. We have seen how literary cricket helped Ives shape his self-identity at a critical moment in the history of British queer identity-forming; how Hornung saw cricket as central to his belief system about British gentlemanly behaviour; and how Wodehouse's cricket-playing was intertwined with his early writing career. Yet the Authors Eleven is just one example of the value of cricket as an angle of historical inquiry, and cricket itself is just one example (albeit a

¹³² 'Authors', <https://cricketarchive.com/archive/teams> (accessed 27 Feb. 2024).

¹³³ A. A. Milne, *It's Too Late Now: The Autobiography of a Writer* (1939), 203–4.

¹³⁴ Denis Mackail, *The Story of J. M. B. (Sir James Barrie, Bart., O.M.)* (1941), 457.

¹³⁵ Milne, *Too Late Now*, 207–8, 223–6.

particularly rich one) of the sports and physical activities which have been essential parts of the lives of so many intellectual figures. Doubtless there is more to uncover here. Other sports teams may or may not be identified which exerted similar influences over other networks of prominent intellectual figures. Either way, the methodology of this study also has a much broader application. It shows how social, personal and lifestyle factors can all provide fresh avenues for investigating cultural and intellectual history. Scholarly focus on texts has come to obscure the material and social contexts in which they were produced. To understand intellectual figures from Doyle to Wodehouse and far beyond, we cannot rely solely on what they wrote: we must also imaginatively reconstruct their wider experiences, including the recreations that occupied so much of their time and energies. It is a mistake to gloss over the ways in which they spent this time, on the basis that their leisure pursuits were simply forms of relaxation. Instead, these same forms of relaxation should be interrogated as integral parts of our subjects' lives and outlooks. Team sports such as cricket make the case particularly clearly, but the point holds true across the whole spectrum of recreational activities, from Britten's tennis to Gladstone's tree-felling.¹³⁶ There is plenty of scope to examine these activities anew: scholars who do so will no doubt identify links between people's hobbies and their social and professional networks; and they will surely also find new connections between their subjects' lived experiences and written output.

This article has revealed some of the benefits of reconceptualising sport as a pervasive cultural practice rather than an unserious diversion. It has also demonstrated the value of re-examining the links between individuals' intellectual, social and physical activities. By doing so, we can advance the current effort to update our image of the desk-bound intellectual by expanding our appreciation of how their minds worked. Historical figures' recreations, their social networks and their bodily experiences – all relevant to a cricket match – are vital parts of this more rounded understanding.

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¹³⁶ Peter Sewter, 'Gladstone as Woodsman', in *William Gladstone: New Studies and Perspectives*, ed. Roland Quinault, Roger Swift and Ruth Clayton Windscheffel (Farnham, 2012), 155–75.

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