of their efforts to promote truly 'rational recreation'. This leads us into the culture of working-class sport itself and the kinds of sociability and identity which working men created through playing and watching sports. How did the male industrial working class come to terms with urban life and what role did sport have in this process? This is the central concern of sections 2 and 3 which deal with participation and spectating respectively. Here football as the most popular sport has a specially prominent place, particularly as the working-class forms of cricket and rugby have been singularly neglected by writers steeped in the traditions of southern amateur sport. As Chapter 1 revealed, there were important continuities between traditional and modern sports. Bowls, darts, billiards, fishing, pigeons, and dogs lie within this submerged world of sporting entertainment which is the subject of section 4. Finally, the urban–rural dimension must not be ignored. The city was growing and changing so fast that casual or frequent contact with rural life became increasingly difficult. The desire of workers, male and female, to reverse the process by combining physical recreation with a brief flight from the city provides the theme of the fifth and concluding section of this chapter.

1. RATIONAL RECREATION

Concern over the way the lower classes amused themselves became increasingly acute during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. While there were real efforts to stamp out deliberate cruelty to animals for the purposes of sport, there was little or no idea before the middle years of the nineteenth century of the positive benefits that might accrue from teaching the poor how to play. The very idea of a 'play discipline' would have seemed absurd, utopian in scope, and excessively intrusive, smacking too much of puritan 'enthusiasm' for the Hanoverian gentry. Yet this is what a growing band of bourgeois idealists advocated during the second half of the century. Sports were to play a major part alongside the provision of parks, museums, libraries, and baths in the creation of a healthy, moral, and orderly work-force. Reformers soon learned that homilies were not enough. In fact, the rational recreation movement—as these

broadly linked initiatives came to be known—would hardly have been necessary if either the Established Church or the Nonconformist sects had been able to carry out effectively their former role of moral education. But they were not. The Anglican Church in particular increasingly lost touch with the millions who were born in the new industrial cities. The old controls no longer worked in the sprawling anonymity of the city where squire and parson could never exert the personal influence over church attendance they had done in the countryside. Even before the religious census of 1851 revealed that a large proportion of the new urban working class did not attend any sort of church, there had been something akin to a moral panic. The indifference of the town labourer to the Church (explicit atheism was still uncommon) became of pressing concern because of middle- and upper-class fears for political stability and the sanctity of property. As the textile towns of the industrial north grew at what seemed a crazy pace with the coal, steel, locomotive, shipbuilding, and machine-tool industries also expanding very fast, the world of the small workshop went into decline. Chartism, the movement for radical democracy, was born out of the sufferings of the old handicraft workers and the violent swings in the trade cycle that affected the new industrial economy in the 1830s and 1840s. Fear of urban radicalism, above all, was what galvanized the rich into thinking about the poor and gave weight to the wider programme of moral reform and education that was proposed by a vigorous minority of evangelicals and idealistic political economists. Attention was first concentrated on the cities of the north which were thought to house the most concentrated and potentially disruptive social forces. However, as these areas gradually settled down and built up a distinctive cultural life of their own, reformers came to be more concerned with the capital itself in an effort to separate the potentially respectable and stable work-force from the 'dangerous' classes of unskilled, casual labour so heavily concentrated in the East End.[1]

It is against this background that the diffusion of modern sports, especially football, needs to be understood. Although most sports

[1] J. M. Golby and A. W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd* (1984), ch. 4, provides an up-to-date introduction to rational recreation, but Bailey's *Leisure and Class* remains the best case study. For London see G. Stedman-Jones, *Outcast London*, esp. the preface to the 1984 edn.

clubs rapidly developed along independent working-class lines, the intention of their founders was usually to promote rational recreation under middle-class control. Sport in this context is best understood alongside the wider movement to shape the values and behaviour of the next generation of men through youth clubs. 'Youth', by which commentators usually meant inner-city working-class boys, was defined as a 'social problem' towards the end of the nineteenth century and efforts were made to direct the energies of what came to be called 'adolescence' into acceptable channels. The traditional institutions of youth with their licensed revels had gone, and new forms of control were required. Although the primary aim of the Boys' Brigade, founded in Glasgow in 1883, was to bolster up the appeal of organized religion through offering uniforms and military-style training, sport soon came to play an important part in the strategy of counter-attraction. Boys were to be lured off the streets by the prospect of banging drums, blowing whistles, and kicking balls. As time passed the Boys' Brigade and the Church Lad's Brigade, along with the older paramilitary groups like the Volunteer Force or non-military initiatives such as the Young Men's Christian Association, all were drawn into the use of sport as an instrument of social discipline and a source of recruits. In Birmingham, about a quarter of football clubs and a fifth of cricket clubs were explicitly connected to religious organizations between 1870 and 1885. Aston Villa, founded by young men in a Wesleyan chapel in 1874, is perhaps the best known such club but Birmingham, Everton, Fulham, Bolton, and Barnsley were also originally church-based. However, careful recent research on religion and leisure in Birmingham has revealed that most of these sporting initiatives came from the ordinary church members rather than from the clergy. Anglican congregations, in particular, were enthusiastic, founding approximately two sports clubs for every one set up by the Nonconformists. Most games, after all, had long enjoyed the patronage of the Established Church, though the evangelical revival meant that a change of minister could easily lead to a new stand against frivolity. H. R. Peel, the Rector of Handsworth from 1860–73, was 'an ardent and skilful cricketer' who promoted sport in the Handsworth Working Men's Club but his successor, the Revd. W. Randall, appeared to have no interest

whatsoever in sport. 'Muscular Christians' amongst the clergy were less common than many suppose.[2]

Although some working-class children shunned the discipline and pious rhetoric of these socio-religious groups, the prospect of playing games was attractive, especially as sports were not organized officially as part of elementary education until after 1906. An observer of the industrial north around the turn of the century noted that 'when play is organized for youths of a particular age it is common for those of a higher age to lie and cheat in order to join', not only to get a game but to make sure of winning as well. The state permitted elementary schoolchildren to be instructed in drill through the 1870 Education Act, although it did not require this. It was not until the 1902 Education Act that a wider programme of physical education was recommended and instruction in this for trainee teachers was made compulsory only in 1908. The result was that the working classes did not learn to play in school in the way that fee-paying pupils did. Military drill fleshed out with some general exercise was considered to be all that the ranks required. Outside of school hours, however, dedicated improvers of the young, whether sporting parsons or schoolmasters, often made efforts to organize games of football or cricket. 'Some among the many who take an interest in the young would be glad to give a few hours on a Saturday afternoon, for the purpose of organizing a game of football,' claimed the author of an 'open letter' to the Brighton School Board in 1882. 'As things now are a section of our disbanded army of youngsters prowls around the streets, especially about the market-place, eating rotten fruit and doing themselves no good in any way.' Eventually regular teachers became involved and this led to the formation of the Brighton Schools' Football Association in 1892.[3]

Efforts to encourage sport amongst working-class boys did not extend to allowing them to play casual games in the streets. Such

[2] J. R. Gillis, *Youth and History* (1981), ch. 3, esp. pp. 128–31; D. D. Molyneux, 'The Development of Physical Recreation in the Birmingham District, 1871–1892', MA thesis (Birmingham Univ., 1957), Appendices A and B; D. Reid, 'Labour, Leisure and Politics in Birmingham, c.1800–1875', Ph.D. thesis (Birmingham Univ., 1985), pp. 137–8.

[3] S. Meacham, *A Life Apart* (1977), p. 167; J. Lowerson and J. Myerscough, *Time to Spare in Victorian England* (1977), p. 122.

was the enthusiasm for football in the northern cities of Edwardian England that 'in courts and alleys, on vacant plots of land, on brick-fields, indeed on any open space at all that may be found, attempts are made to play the game, even though the football be but a bundle of tightly rolled up string-bound papers'. What these boys were playing was too close to the older traditions of casual street football for the liking of rational recreationalists. Street football was generally forbidden and these regulations were supposed to be enforced by the policeman on the beat. The battle between the bobby and the local boys entered into the lore of the street and was the source of lingering resentment against authority. 'We used to have a policeman who used to stop us playing football round the back wall,' recalled David Smith, who had grown up in Edwardian Stepney. He and his mates liked to kick around a ball of sawdust and rags until some dockers gave them a proper ball. But 'when old Bloodnut come on . . . he pinched our ball, and he knifed it, pierced it.' To which the boys replied by stealing the heavy cape with which policemen would inflict a painful clip on a youngster's ear ('He done our football, we done his cape'). A Bristol boy had similar recriminations against the police. 'I remember one Bank Holiday Monday I was kicking a ball about in the street' when a little later 'a copper come up to me and said "What's your name? . . . You've been round here footballing." Anyway something was said and he hit me over the head with the bloody truncheon . . . I was done for breach of the peace, footballing in the street.' The police, however, were fighting a losing battle. This, at least, seems to have been the case in Leicester around the turn of the century. Writing to sympathize with the author of an earlier letter protesting about street football, a correspondent to the *Leicester Mercury*, who signed his or her letter 'Orderly', complained that

> in every street of the town nearly, we find these brainless youths annoying peaceable citizens by indulging in this horse-play. I have repeatedly seen people rushed against and nearly thrown down by this latest form of street nuisance. Remonstrance is out of the question . . . the streets seem to be handed over for anything in the evening . . . street government seems to be in a very primitive form yet.

Offenders, according to this source, were simply cautioned and went on playing football in the street. Street culture

was stronger than the ability of respectable opinion to control it.[4]

Inner-city boys, living out on the street for a good part of the time, naturally thought of it as their playground. The high birth-rate meant that Victorian Britain was a very young society with around a third of the population under fourteen, spilling out of their crowded homes and colonizing the roads and pavements with their noisy amusements. From their earliest years children played round the lamp-posts and back alleys carrying on the ancient chasing, catching, and racing games that were passed on over generations. Such games, as the Opies have shown, are still played today despite the traffic and the existence of so many alternative attractions. 'No one used to say anything to my knowledge,' recalled a Newcastle man, '[but] we would find ourselves playing marbles, then marbles would vanish and we would be playing with various-shaped tops and whips, or tops and string.' Boys graduated from leap-frog, blind-man's buff, and British bulldog (where one or more children try to stop others from crossing the street) to the games also played by adults like 'tipcat', a kind of primitive cross between rounders and cricket, where a piece of tapered wood about six inches long (the 'cat') was struck with a stick. This game was so popular in the streets of mid-nineteenth century London that *Punch* remarked 'this mania for playing at cat is no less absurd than it is dangerous, for it is a game at which nobody seems to win, and which, apparently has no other aim than the windows of the houses and the heads of the passers-by'. The writer clearly did not understand the game, but he did reflect the increasing middle-class intolerance of such activities. There was little that could be done to stop the poor turning their children out of doors, but street games obstructed traffic and damaged property.[5]

[4] D. Rubinstein, 'Sport and the Sociologist 1890–1914', *BJSH*, May 1984, p. 21 citing Charles E. B. Russell's *Social Problems of the North* (1913), p. 100; S. Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?* (1981), pp. 203–4; J. Maguire, 'Images of Manliness and Competing Way of Living in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *BJSH*, Dec. 1986, p. 281.

[5] I. and P. Opie, *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (1984), esp. pp. 10–11; J. Walvin, 'Children's Pleasures', in J. K. Walton and J. Walvin (eds.), *Leisure in Britain 1780–1939* (1983), p. 236.

Compulsory schooling was, of course, the single most important means of taming the young and clearing the streets. Looking back fifty years, Helen Bosanquet was impressed by the new respectability of street life in 1891, concluding that 'perhaps the most striking difference with the London of today is the mass of neglected childhood'. The armies of Dickensian waifs and strays were much depleted by 1900. Yet school was often still perceived as an unwelcome and autocratic interference in the lives of the poor both by parents and by children themselves. Instead of the noisy variety of street play, children were forced to sit still without talking and given only a couple of hours a week of physical training. If they were lucky they might have a playground, but a report of 1895 showed that 25,000 children within a mile of Charing Cross had no facilities for play at all. Exercising was often done in the classroom and school-hall. Children were lined up and forced to bend or stretch at the command of drill sergeants, who toured the schools at sixpence a day and a penny-a-mile marching money. Small wonder that children would risk corporal punishment to vary the tedious routine. E. G. Holland recalled his drill class of 1877 in Highgate where the male pupils would enliven the proceedings 'by firing pieces of orange-peel at a line of military drums with a finger catapult. The "ping" or "pong" according to the size of the drum that was hit fully compensated for the dreariness of the lesson.' Children in Liverpool were drilled at elementary school from the 1860s. Drill was easy for teachers to master and the endless 'slow march, quick march, left turn, right turn' was thought both to inculcate discipline and to give basic military training. From the mid-1880s, however, there were efforts to provide sports for children, or, to be more accurate, for boys. The example of Brighton has already been cited. In 1886 the Liverpool and District Teachers' Committee began a football competition which was very successful and in the 1890s the finals were played at the Liverpool FC ground at Anfield. School sports were encouraged in the 1890s. In 1898 there were four gala school-sports days organized for Queen Victoria's jubilee with a total of 10,000 competitors.[6]

[6] Bosanquet cited in J. Walvin, *A Child's World* (1982), p. 149; P. C. McIntosh, *Physical Education in England* (1968), pp. 110, 119; R. Rees, 'The Development of Physical Recreation in Liverpool during the Nineteenth Century', MA thesis (Liverpool Univ., 1968), ch. 10.

Despite these efforts to provide organized games after school or at weekends, the impact of sport on the elementary educational system was fairly restricted. Children did not enjoy most of the exercises foisted on them at school and resented interference with their traditional play in the streets. Adult workers were similarly cautious about attempts from above to provide them with sports, especially when those efforts came from employers. Industrial recreation programmes were not very widespread, although several individual projects were quite ambitious and extensive in themselves. What was later to become West Ham Football Club grew out of the philanthropic industrial policy of A. F. Hills, an old Harrovian just down from Oxford and full of plans for class collaboration through sport. He inherited the huge Thames Ironworks and installed himself democratically in the East End from where he felt he could preach more effectively to his workers. A whole range of improving activities were introduced along with savings and profit-sharing schemes. A magnificent sports stadium was the centre-piece of his vision. The various sports clubs that were set up would 'crown the labours of the Works with the laurels of the road, the racing-track, the field and the public hall'. Similarly the management of the huge railway-works, which turned Crewe from a village of a few hundred to a company town of 40,000 by the end of the century, hoped that 'by encouraging young people in athletic pursuits they assisted to make them healthy and in that way tended to make them better workmen'. At Cadbury's model industrial community at Bournville, the benevolent despotism of George Cadbury required women workers to learn to swim (for cleanliness) and men in heavy jobs to do weight-lifting to protect them from industrial injury. Good sports facilities were provided as part of a company policy which 'rested on the importance of quick, well-executed work. Athletics and swimming, medical and dental care, proper breaks for meals and rest—all that helps to develop manual dexterity and visual awareness which are the commercial object.'[7]

[7] C. Korr, 'West Ham United and the Beginning of Professional Football in East London, 1895–1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, April 1978; A. Redfern, 'Crewe', in Walton and Walvin (eds.), *Leisure in Britain*, p. 122; C. Crossley, 'Travail, loisir et vie communautaire en Angleterre au XIX^e siècle', in A. Daumard (ed.), *Oisiveté et loisirs dans les sociétés occidentales au XIX^e siècle* (1983), p. 27.

As a whole the socio-religious impulse declined at the end of the nineteenth century. Meller's study of Bristol, where there had been a powerful concentration of improving activity amongst high-minded Quaker employers, reveals the growth of commercial, morally neutral forms of amusement. A similar pattern of 'religion and voluntary association in crisis' is evident in Reading. In Crewe the London and North Western Railway Company refused to extend the swimming-baths it had provided in its philanthropic heyday and withdrew support for an eminently 'rational' plan to expand technical education. Part of the explanation for this new hesitancy to promote corporate leisure may in specific cases have stemmed from the collapse of economic optimism and the squeeze on profits that accompanied the Great Depression from the mid-1870s to the mid-1890s. But a change in attitude amongst second- and third-generation employers was probably more important. Firms were increasingly run by managers. Capitalists could still rail against the fecklessness of the poor but they now did so from the golf club bar and the suburban lawn. Comfort and leisure removed from the dirt and danger of the industrial classes was what large shareholders were looking for, and this is what they found in the plush resorts of the south coast or on the Côte d'Azur.[8]

Even for those who retained the desire to foster older middle-class values of thrift, sobriety, and respectability among the poor, the task usually turned out to be too much for them. They retreated in despair and disgust. This was particularly evident in sport, and came to a head over the question of professionalism. The object of encouraging sport amongst the working class was not, as A. F. Hills put it, to 'hire a team of gladiators, and bid them fight our football battles for us'. Similar conflicts arose with the formation of Crewe Alexandra FC as a professional team, and at Reading too. The *Guardian* considered the decision to legalize professionalism and the setting up of a professional Football League in 1888 as 'the beginning of the end of an important social movement'. 'Spectatorism', as it was contemptuously called by many gentlemen-amateurs, was the antithesis of 'sport'. It was perfectly acceptable for keen players to watch others playing for

[8] H. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870–1914* (1976), pp. 237–41; also S. Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Association in Crisis* (1976), ch. 7.

the love of it, but it was quite another matter for thousands of working-class youths and men to shout and swear, roaring their team on to victory by fair means or foul. Far from being 'rational' this was no more than mindless fanaticism, obstinate and arbitrary partisanship devoid of sense, morality, or self-restraint; little different in fact from the mobs that had baited bulls or carried the bladder of a pig from one end of the town to another. Was it for this that the old games had been revised and refined in the best schools in the land?[9]

Nor could those who had seen sport as a means of social improvement come to terms with it as a source of profit. The concentration of population into large units created a market for mass entertainment on a new and hitherto unprecedented commercial basis. Just as taverns with a tradition of singing were turned into music-halls with paid entertainers, so successful football teams were tempted to fence off their pitches and charge admission to the crowds that collected to watch them. This new market for commercialized leisure shocked men like the Revd. Henry Solly, who had set up the working-men's Club and Institute Union (CIU). First drink and then commercial entertainment were brought into the clubs. Paid singers and comedians were hired to entertain men who wanted to drink and laugh after work rather than listen to lectures on bridge-building, religion, or economics. The size of working-men's clubs grew, just as bigger music-halls and stadia were being built for sports. The values of the market-place undermined moral education in sport as in other forms of leisure.[10]

It was not only the diminishing numbers of idealistic employers or evangelicals who were disturbed by this. There was also a good deal of anxiety from the ranks of the educated, radical minority of the working class and in particular from middle-class socialists who had their own dreams of creating a more elevated 'high' culture for the masses. The rise of commercial amusement was met with dismay. For socialists it seemed as if a kind of trivial hedonism, an apathetic consumerism was gripping the people. Hence the common ground between high-Victorian advocates of

[9] C. Korr, 'West Ham United', p. 219; E. Dunning and K. Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players* (1979), p. 195.

[10] T. G. Ashplant, 'London Working Men's Clubs, 1875–1914', in S. and E. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict*, pp. 248–62.

capitalist paradise and the seekers after a socialist utopia. Socialists feared the weakening of the 'membership mode' of popular leisure; that is to say, the idea that working people should run their own lives, devise their own amusements, and build a strong and autonomous culture that would be morally superior to commercialized entertainment. Just as the middle-class wave of moral reform was breaking up, the socialists took over the old vocabulary of decency and self-improvement for a new purpose. John Burns complained that 'the poor were rearing up a race of people who could and did applaud sport in which they could not indulge, as did the Greeks and Romans in their days of degeneration', whilst a contributor to *Justice* complained that 'sport like every other thing is demoralized and damned by capitalism'. It was the mixture of commercialism and passivity that most concerned such critics. Blatchford complained that on seaside holidays the people 'sit for hours huddled like sheep in a pen and gaze blankly at the sea', and there were no doubt plenty of socialists who thought the same about professional football matches. The radical ideal of good recreation was the simple outdoor life, walking the hills, thrashing out the problems of society whilst taking in the beauty of the natural world. Activists in the trade unions or in labour politics tended to adopt either a Fabian seriousness or to cultivate a nostalgia for the earlier intimacy and the radical culture of the workshop. Men like Alfred Williams, the Swindon railway-worker and collector of old ballads, felt that the new generation of workers would even abandon the solemn institution of the Sunday dinner to buy a ticket for a match on Saturday afternoon. Carving the joint, singing old songs, and fighting the good fight for social justice were being sacrificed for tawdry shows or fanatical contests stirring up workers of one town into an irrational resentment of another group of workers like themselves who just happened to live elsewhere and support another team. Socialists refused to accept commercial sport as an authentic element in working-class culture. It smacked too much of bread and circuses, of an evil design to distract the workers from the historic mission of the proletariat. Karl Kautsky, the pre-eminent German Marxist of the late nineteenth century, complained that as far as British workers were concerned 'the emancipation of their class appears to them as a foolish dream . . . it is football, boxing, horse-racing which

move them the deepest and to which their entire leisure time, their individual powers, and their material means are devoted'. Unlike the Social Democratic Party, which had provided German workers with an uplifting and self-sufficient socialist world of music, festivals, and sports, the British Labour Movement was relatively detached from the culture of British labour.[11]

Trade unionists, moderate and revolutionary socialists all made some effort to move into the world of popular leisure between the wars, though these initiatives largely took the form of a kind of radicalized rational recreation—socialist hikes, Co-op rambles, and the like. For the most part left-wing intellectuals like George Orwell detested the crude nationalism and mindless partisanship of sport; they preferred the critique of 'bourgeois' literature to the celebration of football, boxing, or bowls. Rank-and-file union activists remained too deeply embedded within the culture of independence, self-improvement, and respectable domesticity to take much notice of organized sport. In Scotland the strong temperance element in the Labour Movement particularly disliked the association between spectator sport and drink. John Clarke, the Labour MP for Maryhill, opposed the socialist corporation's decision to allow the Kelvin Hall to be used for boxing because it drew together 'an army of bookies, touts, pimps, card-sharks, pickpockets, prostitutes and . . . usually winds up in an orgy of drunkenness, assault and battery'. Dog-racing, which became a major spectator sport between the wars, was similarly regarded by many socialists, who often had only slightly less contempt for professional football. Like the good Victorians who had brought them up, they preferred the playing of football to the watching of it and Scottish Labour leaders endorsed the setting up of a Socialist and Labour Football League in Glasgow in 1922. Whilst moderate socialists maintained the rational recreation tradition in a modest kind of way, the new British Communist Party in the 1920s attempted to politicize leisure explicitly. Yet the British

[11] C. Waters, 'Social Reformers, Socialists and the Opposition to the Commercialisation of Leisure in Late Victorian Britain', in W. Vamplew (ed.), *The Economic History of Leisure: Papers Presented to the Eighth International Economic History Congress, Budapest, August 1982* (1983); Dr J. D. Young kindly provided the reference from Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution* (Chicago, 1902), p. 102; on the leisure provisions of German socialism see V. L. Lidke, *The Alternative Culture* (1985).

Workers' Sports Federation, which successfully agitated for improved rights of way for walkers and against the banning of Sunday sport, according to an internal minute of 1931 had no more than ninety member-clubs, of which only nineteen bothered to pay their subscription. Sport was certainly never a priority for the Labour Movement between the wars. Those who thought about it at all distrusted the growth of commercialized leisure provision but they were powerless to do anything about it.[12]

2. THE LIFE OF THE STREET

Organized sport came to have a central place in the new world of urban industrial culture but the spirit of 'fair play' as advocated in the public schools had little influence on the way the working class played or watched their sport, and the strictures of socialists none at all. The pub and the street were the focal points for those who learned to play in the shadow of the factory or the mine. Reformers had hoped sport would drive men away from drink and several social studies suggested this might be so. Alcohol consumption statistics certainly reveal that really hard drinking was on the decline from the late nineteenth century. Yet the relationship is not straightforward. Social drinking associated with sport may have increased. Most sportsmen had their 'local', and the new generation of publicans seemed to have taken over the role of sporting enthusiasts with as much gusto as the alehouse and tavern-keepers of the past. This was a powerful source of continuity in popular culture. Boxers and professional footballers notoriously looked to the drink trade to give them a living when their fighting or playing days were over. Bowling-greens and boxing-rings were built on to pubs. Football clubs were sometimes organized from pubs. Football, rugby, and cricket were usually accompanied by a few pints afterwards.

Sport provided the main topic of conversation in what was the chief social institution of the male working class. N. L. Jackson observed that spectators would frequently 'adjourn to the

[12] I am grateful to William Knox for drawing my attention to pp. 38–41 of his *Scottish Labour Leaders, 1918–39* (1984); S. G. Jones, *Workers at Play* (1986), esp. chs. 6 and 7, provides the first authoritative survey of both the topic and the period.

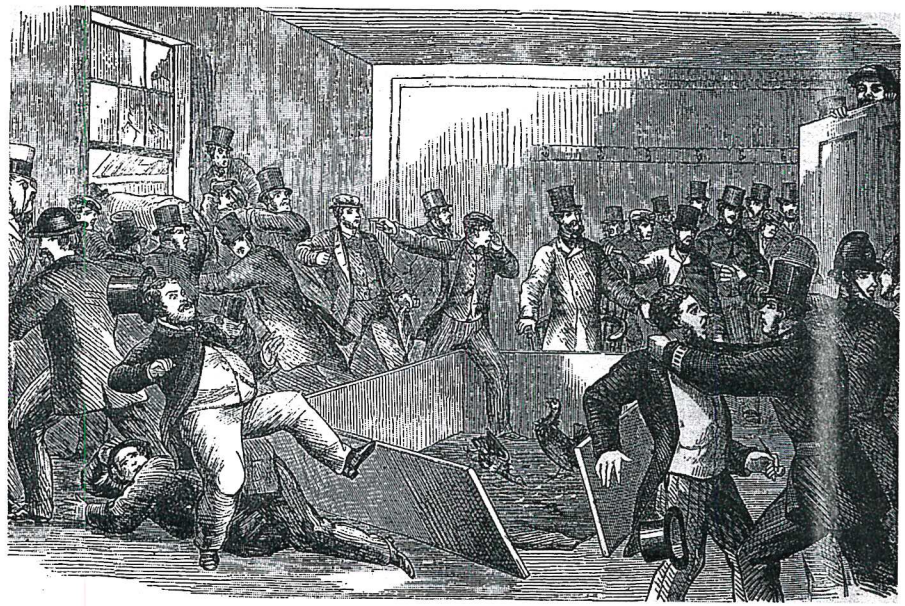
"football pubs" to discuss the results of the latest match, or the prospect of the next'. Tom Causer, an English lightweight champion of the 1890s, was the hero of Bermondsey, taking over the management of the Eight Bells in 1898 and staying a publican for the rest of his life. His son recalled how boxing and drinking went naturally together with his father 'over the bar talking to his friends for hours about boxing. When the pub was shut, say, Sunday dinner-time . . . he used to have customers in there telling 'em all about his life story.' Prize-fighting had normally been organized by publicans and with the increased popularity of boxing with gloves in the last quarter of the century certain pubs became well known for putting on contests. Boxing came to take the place of the old animal baiting, the ratting, and the cock-fighting that had gone on in the upper rooms and the courtyards of innumerable alehouses until the middle years of the nineteenth century. The line between being an amateur and a professional was hazy when it came to pub contests. Fighting, after all, was part of pub culture and some of the matches were little more than regulated brawls, extensions of the street-fighting tradition that was so much a part of the world of the poorer working class. In Bermondsey, which produced six British champions between 1897 and 1914, it was common for boys to fix up fights in the street. The famous referee Harry Gibbs recalled 'one lad Wally Dorney coming round and knocking on our front door. He announced he had come to fight Siddie Gibbs. Now my elder brother was always the diplomat. "Sorry", he said, "I've not got the time just now but our Harry'll fight you." So I went out to do battle.' Life in the Glasgow Gorbals was even tougher. The roughness of the street-corner world was sharpened by the fierce sectarianism of the city. Benny Lynch, who became world flyweight champion in 1935, had his face slashed by a Protestant razor-gang when he was still a boy. He came from an infant school that nurtured three future champions apart from Lynch all within a few years of each other. Fighting was part of the lore of the street in slum areas and spilled over into more organized pub fights. This tradition of hardness will be more fully examined in the discussion of hooliganism in a later chapter. What is important for the moment is to note how strongly working-class society was rooted in the street and the pub. Even residential streets often had several pubs; one in the Gorbals had fourteen, but for the

'festival' of cricket. Lord Hawke, the captain, shored up the strong Yorkshire loyalty of his players with good wages and they rewarded him with a period of sustained success unmatched to this day. Yorkshire played to win, and if that meant a dour, stonewalling stand until the bowling of the opposition was blunted, then so be it. 'Teams of the North of England are not wholly to blame for playing the game in the rather inglorious way they frequently do play it', Cardus explained. 'So long as the public in this part of the world continues to hold the view that championship laurels are "worth while" at any price, the price will occasionally be stiff indeed.' The Boycott tradition goes back a long way; even in the early years of the County Championship there were complaints that cricket was 'becoming a matter of hard work'.[37]

By inverting the amateur maxim that the game itself was more important than the result, northern cricketers incurred the wrath of the southern establishment. 'Average mania is as fatal to cricket as trade unions are to commerce' as one indignant gentleman put it. Cricket reached a peculiarly English accommodation between the upper classes that ruled it and the mixture of middle- and working-class people who watched it. In principle cricket was based on the old institution of the county, though in practice this increasingly meant siting grounds in the most populous areas. Surrey played at the Kennington Oval rather than in the lush heartlands of Dorking or Guildford and Middlesex was to be found in St John's Wood. County teams might maintain a limited number of fixtures in smaller places, but the older idea of cricket as a movable feast was giving way to the commercial logic of the big ground. This was mainly for the benefit of the suburban middle classes, who increasingly took county memberships in the late nineteenth century. So it was in the leafy suburbs of the big cities that the counties made their new grounds. When Warwickshire moved to Birmingham in 1885 despite the protests of small county towns, they set up shop in Edgbaston and were rewarded with a rise in membership from a mere fifty-one county stalwarts in 1885 to 1,225 members in 1893. Working-class people could neither afford to become members of county clubs nor would

[37] N. Cardus, *The Roses Matches, 1919–39* (1982); A. A. Thomson, *Hirst and Rhodes* (1986), esp. pp. 28–9.

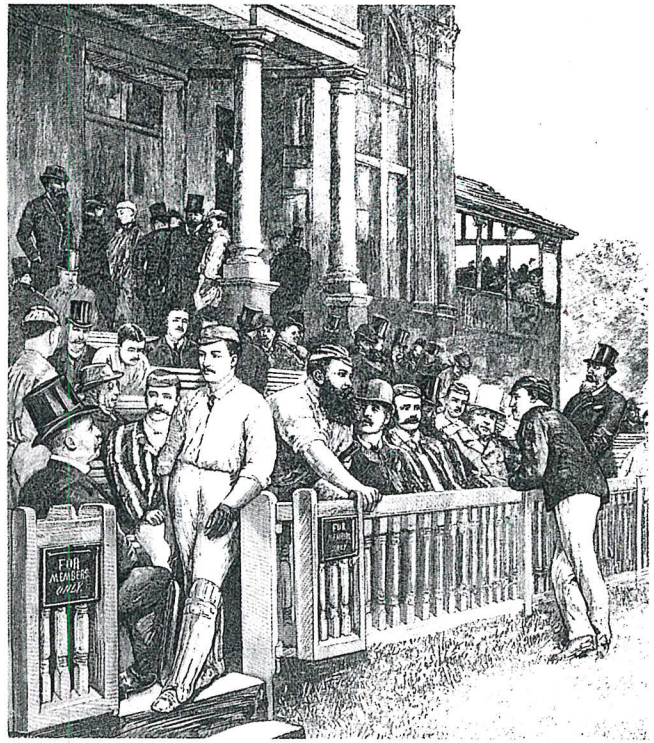
1 The last days of street football: Shrove Tuesday 1846 at Kingston upon Thames



2 Suppressing cruel sports: the police arresting cock-fighters in Great Windmill Street in April 1865

3 The persistence of old sports: Essex farm-hands playing quoits, *c.* 1900

4 Traditions of paternalism: the Master of the Hunt serving out presents at the Chertsey Workhouse, January 1914



5 Amateurism, the Establishment, and 'the Doctor': the Pavilion at Lord's during the Gentlemen vs. Players match, 1891

6 The national game: a keen game of street cricket in London's East End, probably 1920s

7 Sport and the Raj: maharajas mixing with Indian army officers in the Hyderabad Contingent polo team

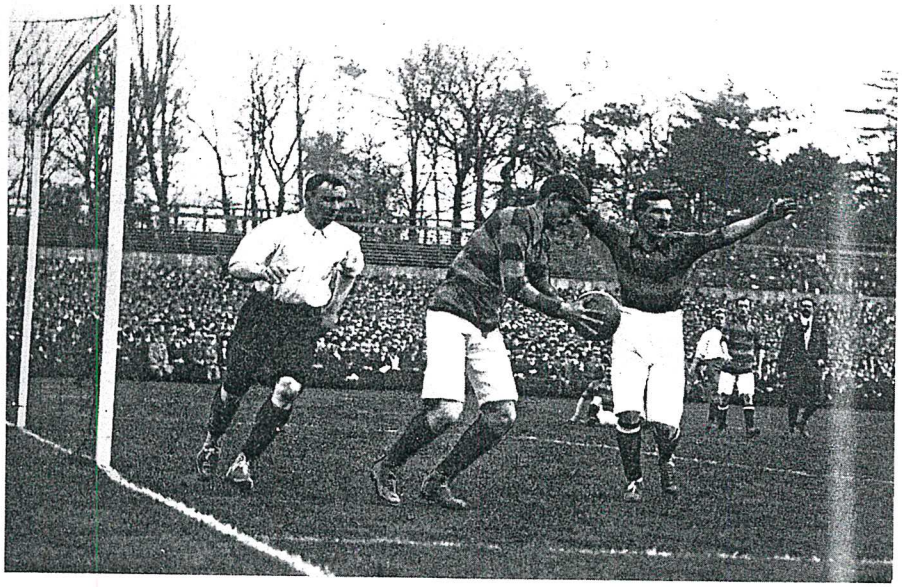
8 Tennis as courtship: bright young things at the Queen's Club, 1918

9 'A good walk spoiled?': the pleasures of golfing at Ganton, 1913

10 'The good life': women joining in the hiking craze of the 1930s

11 Sport and national identity: a passion for rugby shared by Wales and the Springboks, December 1906 at Swansea

12 The heyday of spectator sport: possibly the first Wembley Cup Final, 1923



13 The invention of sporting traditions: the England vs. Scotland game, Crystal Palace, 1905

14 Athletics in a mining village: risking a jump in the streets of Fryston, Yorkshire, *c.* 1950