

'A SPOT SO ELIGIBLE FOR SETTLEMENT':
SPORT, LEISURE, CLASS AND COMMUNITY AT THE SWAN
RIVER COLONY 1829-1890.

by

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DECLARATION

I, Roy Leonard Stanley, declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.

(Roy Leonard Stanley).

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ABSTRACT.

SWAN RIVER COLONY IN 1829.

Most of Britain's overseas colonies suffered many problems, having to negotiate seasons which did not match the accustomed months; hostile indigenous peoples; communication problems with the outside world; and a lack of essential supplies and amenities. The Swan River Colony, however, arguably suffered greater exposure to the above than the rest of Britain's colonies owing to its insular geographical location; being a colony that nobody wanted or wished to visit; very little British government investment; and the existence of thinly scattered settlements with a combined population of fewer than 5000 by 1850, twenty-one years after settlement. A comparative example was South Australia, a colony settled in 1836, which had a population of approximately 40000 by 1850.

The colonisation of Swan River in 1829 was based on James Stirling's ambitious propaganda and exaggerated claims for a spot so appropriate for settlement that it could no longer be over-looked. However, such motives became a recipe for disaster and laid the foundations for impending catastrophe, creating further complications exacerbated by a British government that declined to invest in the project; no short-term economic structure planned; the establishment of a colony administered and based on 'class' and private enterprise; a finite and scattered population; misguided financial speculation; and no skilled labour. Consequently, these reasons explain why the colony was painstakingly slow to project itself onto the colonial map of the British Empire. However, such a scenario did not dampen colonial enthusiasm. Such frequent setbacks only intensified and sustained greater fortitude and resilience that determined the character of the colony between the years 1829 and 1890. Indeed, they embraced a number of values inherent in Australian society today; cultural

continuity, national honour, manliness, sportsmanship, competition, and most important of all, progress.

This thesis examines the development of sport and other leisure time activities at Swan River in the context of the above social and economic issues during the nineteenth century. As the colony progressed, sport and other leisure time activities played an important part in maintaining order in Perth and Fremantle and at the same time became a catalyst for social integration, bringing representatives of all classes together. Using newspapers and the scanty memoirs and diaries of the era, it argues that most sport and other leisure time activities were the sanctuary of the small oligarchical elite and under its control. The lower classes had their own pastimes, but little time to enjoy them. However, by 1890, several 'new' sports had been introduced, and the furtherance of 'high' and 'popular' culture extended the colony's overall repertoire for entertainment.

By the end of the nineteenth century the economic and social context of the colony had changed also owing to self-government and the discovery of gold, which generated unparalleled economic growth and prosperity. This established the benefits of full-employment, higher wages, and surplus leisure time for a rapidly increasing population arriving from the eastern colonies. Hence, with the arrival of more people democracy demanded representation and with it a shift away from an oligarchic society that had been so much a part of early colonial life and politics.

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HISTORIOGRAPHY.

The historical and sociological research into sport, incorporating their social themes has become a growth industry over the last fifty years. The most significant reason for this is the media, especially television, which in its own right has brought most games of sport into countless households and simultaneously played a leading part in advancing the arts and 'high' culture.

It has been observed that sport is an integral part of Australia's history, helping to establish important social mores, traditions and relationships.¹ Indeed, sport on its own has characterised Australia as a nation and its growth towards nationalism.² Thus, Peter Bailey and Joseph Strutt are justified in stating that the character of any particular people or nations can be based upon the investigation of sport and what ordinary people did in the past.³ However, it is important to note that the topic of sport involves wider social themes such as representation, identity, class participation, gender, race and ethnicity. My own designs in researching sport originate from my school days, and although many years have passed since, they have not diminished my desire to investigate how various sports came into existence, how their rules refined them, and their impact on society.

THE SWAN RIVER COLONY AS A SUBJECT.

This raises the first aspect of my thesis that needs explaining, namely, why undertake a programme of research on sport and other leisure time activities at Swan River during a period when the tiny colony was troubled by uncertainty, misgivings and danger? Secondly, given that little research has been published on the colony by Australian academics, why is the Swan River Colony, which was neither wanted nor visited, worth writing about? For me, these questions answer themselves. While Britain was in the process of asserting herself throughout the world, the Swan River Colony was a frontier society on the remote edge of her empire. It was the most isolated settlement in the world's most isolated continent. Devoid of any facilities that are now easily accessible, it took a great deal of courage for those first settlers to assert their

personality and character on an unforgiving land and, simultaneously, suppress a desire to leave. Consequently, early indicators pointed towards many years of hard work and the dream of recreating an English village in the Australian outback was never achieved. However, the pioneering settlers did have faith in their ability at least to make an attempt and simultaneously entertain themselves.

The thesis then focuses on how sport in a frontier society was an important component towards surviving and achieving social order and colonial integration in a colony that was experiencing slow economic development, Spartan conditions, fluctuating economic cycles (until the discovery of gold) and convictism. Given the lack of research on sport at Swan River, a case study of Fremantle and Perth seemed particularly appropriate. Both towns grew at roughly the same rate. The port of Fremantle was the industrial hub of the colony and Perth was the capital and centre of political administration.

PRIMARY SOURCES.

Research at Perth's Battye Library in Western Australia included newspapers, diaries, journals, letters, and public documents. The journals of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society proved helpful, but records from the Western Australian Turf Club did not start until May 1888. A similar situation occurred at the Western Australian Cricket Association owing to records not commencing until 1900. The Western Australian Football Association gave some assistance. However, the four volumes of the *Dictionary of Western Australians* by Pamela Statham and Rica Erickson (editor) was an important source of primary material concerning the early settlers and their families from 1829 to 1888. Having researched many diaries and journals I came to the conclusion that any reference to sport was negligible. Most references to horseracing in diaries, journals, or letters were more concerned with breeding horses for the export markets as opposed to racing them. Cricket was rarely mentioned and given the sparse material offered if sport was written about or discussed, it was done so incidentally. Therefore, owing to the paucity of personal and official

information the principal primary sources concerning sport for this thesis were gleaned from contemporary newspapers and their abundant supply of information.

Throughout the nineteenth century the colony printed several newspapers, notably the *Perth Gazette and West Australian Journal* in the 1830s; the *Inquirer* in the 1840s and 1850s; the *Perth Gazette and Industrial Journal of Politics and News* in the 1850s and 1860s; the *Western Australian Times* in the 1870s; and the *West Australian* in the 1880s. Both the *Perth Gazette* and the *Inquirer* advertised and reported on horseracing, cricket and the regattas, as well as other leisure time activities. Between 1867 and 1886, colonists living in Fremantle had the opportunity to purchase the *Fremantle Herald*. Readership, however, was confined to the working class of Fremantle and became the voice of protest against Perth owing to its editor, William Beresford, and his radical nonconformist views regarding the gentry and the administration of the colony. I will discuss William Beresford later in the main text. Nevertheless, the *Herald* figured prominently in reporting all sport, which suggests sport did interest the working classes, and strongly voiced its opinion in the late 1870s regarding the colony's urgent necessity to acquire a theatre to attract artists from the eastern states and abroad. The *West Australian*, under the editorship of Anglophile John Winthrop Hackett, established itself as the colony's leading newspaper during the 1880s. I will discuss Hackett and his role in sport in the main text. The *West Australian's* coverage of sport and the arts was succinct and informative and, similar to modern day editions, the newspaper offered readers a wide variety of impending sports fixtures and results, concerts, theatrical productions and other modes of entertainment.

Whilst I researched the newspapers I discovered the values and limitations of nineteenth-century newspapers as opposed to the twenty first-century editions. Compared with today's newspapers there was very little news regarding the colony itself or the outside world, the newspaper being an avenue for advertising products and services rendered. By the 1840s, however, the role of the newspaper had changed owing to the introduction of journalism and a sounding board for its readers also. For

the reader, the newspaper was an important reciprocating avenue of information, and letters to the press were a natural way of commenting on all aspects of colonial life. Like the provincial newspapers in Britain, who fed off the main sources of news from the *London Times* for example, a similar situation was evident with the colony's newspapers. Consequently, acquiring news from the eastern colonies and British newspapers was standard practice until the introduction of the telegraph in 1877.

Apart from obtaining news from the outside world, an important role of newspapers was the advertisement of, and the reports on, theatre productions and concerts, which gave the colony the opportunity to witness high culture and simultaneously read about sporting events. Cricket, like horseracing, after 1850 was well documented and reported in detail by enthusiastic reporters. I discovered that in the formative years of the colony the press encouraged all aspects of enterprise, especially wine making and horse breeding. I found that a competitive undercurrent between the Perth press and the Fremantle press was evident also, especially when sport was played between the two towns. This growing rivalry between Perth and Fremantle intensified owing to competition on the field of play, which together with other leisure time activities contributed to a growing sense of community within each town. The Perth press was critical of its cricket team and the state of their wickets, chronically advocating a need for better playing conditions. The Fremantle press, on the other hand, more than encouraged its citizens to compete against Perth, especially at cricket and, later in the century, rugby and Australian Rules football. Furthermore, during the latter half of the century when the age of professionalism was creeping into British sport (association football and rugby) and in the eastern colonies (pedestrianism, swimming and sculling), the colony's press voiced its opinion against the notion of professionalism. I will discuss the role of the press and its contribution to sport and other leisure time activities in the main text.

SECONDARY SOURCES: HISTORIOGRAPHY SURVEY.

Sport as a subject was first mentioned in newspapers, and given further

encouragement owing to the introduction and publication of magazines and books. Most of these magazines and books came into popular circulation from the 1960s onwards and created considerable appeal, generating a growth industry during the last quarter of the twentieth century. During this period many British historians and sociologists, notably Dennis Brailsford, Hugh Cunningham, Jennifer Hargreaves, Richard Holt, John Lowerson, Robert W. Malcolmson, Tony Mason, Stanley Parker, E.P. Thompson, James Walvin and Neil Wigglesworth published works on sport and other leisure time activities in British society.⁴ All of these publications explain the what, when, how and why sport and other leisure time activities took off from the seventeenth century onwards, and the impact it had on the social face of Britain. It is probably correct to suggest that British historians and sociologists laid the foundations for overseas academics to research the origins and growth of sport and other leisure time activities in their own countries. Hence, it was a natural progressive step that they would be transported to the frontiers of Britain's empire in India, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.⁵

My thesis, therefore, briefly acknowledges contributions made by British historians and sociologists, but highlights research completed by Australian academics. The academic interest surrounding sport in Australia exploded during the 1980s and distinguished and significant Australian historians and sociologists such as Daryl Adair, Anthony J. Barker, Geoffrey Bolton, Douglas Booth, Richard Cashman, John E. Daly, Rob Hess, Philip A. Mosely, John O'Hara, Marion Stell, Bob Stewart, Brian Stoddart, Colin Tatz, Wray Vamplew, Tony Ward, Richard Waterhouse, and Bernard Whimpress have all contributed greatly to our understanding of the subject. They have demonstrated the strengths and shortcomings of sport in Australian history as it stands in the new millennium. This serves as a foundation for why sport became part of Australian folklore. But, more importantly, why sport became an essential part of life in Australia. What follows then, is a line of investigation into the impact sport had on class, representation, identity, gender, and race and ethnicity at Swan River from 1829

onwards.

One compelling fact of life is that sport integrates individuals, communities and nations. In the early years of building the Australian colonies communal recreation consisted of foot and horse races, and ploughing competitions. During this period, the aborigine competed with the white European in foot racing and throwing and spearing objects also. Cricket was the first organised team sport to be played in Australia in 1803, in Sydney. At Swan River, I will illustrate how cricket embraced all social groups, and how the labouring class encouraged the game in the west, and why the colonial game suffered from isolationism.

Brian Stoddart, in his book *Saturday Afternoon Fever*, states that the ‘myth of sport being open and accessible to all, irrespective of social and economic station, arose early in the evolution of Australian society’. ‘It took firm root and, despite considerable evidence to the contrary, continues to flourish’.⁶ At Swan River, I will suggest cricket and competitive rifle shooting accomplished colonial blending, but social demarcation lines were evident at horserace meetings and regattas. Hunting and trotting were exclusive to the gentry, and croquet and lawn tennis were played by the middle class. Class and status then was associated with particular sports played, and this was solidly entrenched by the outbreak of the First World War in all Australian states. This, in turn, had a marked effect on membership of sports clubs which, more often than not, excluded the labouring class. For example, athletes coming from the eastern states and those at Swan River, who had or were competing for money, and whose livelihood depended upon fishing or working on the waters, were not admitted to athletic or rowing clubs. Professionalism, according to Stoddart, equated with the lower orders, suggesting that ‘the reality of Australian sport’s social composition early in its evolution was solidly based on class and status’.⁷

The period from 1850 to 1890 was marked by economic growth, and the presence of economic mobility gave impetus to the middle class and their quest to establish parity with the gentry. According to Richard Waterhouse in *Private Pleasure*,

Public Leisure, the manner in which this status was achieved in the colonies was determined by moral and social standards.⁸ The middle class, claims Waterhouse, were insignificant in number before 1850, but subsequent expansion in merchant shipping produced greater wholesale and retail markets that created and encouraged growth in the legal, medical, and the public service and teaching professions.⁹ By the 1870s, Swan River's self-made middle class were aspiring towards 'gentry' status, although the pious teachings of the British middle class were virtually non-existent in the colony owing to an ineffectual church. Unlike their British counterparts, who did not visit the races or gamble, the Swan River middle class were actively involved in all sport and gambling. Moreover, I will show throughout the history of the colony how the gentry and the middle class, through social status, marriage and nepotism, administered the colony, organised and supervised sport, and introduced 'high culture'. According to Waterhouse, for the same reasons the English middle class replicated the gentry, the Australian middle class duplicated them.¹⁰

The establishment of the middle class in the eastern colonies witnessed a growing trend towards domesticity and true womanhood owing to middle-class women supposedly possessing superior moral qualities. Consequently, middle-class Sabbatarian women argued for a religious Sunday on social, moral and religious grounds in addition to playing a key role in temperance movements. At Swan River, I will show how these same self-made values witnessed the introduction of temperance movements, questioned the morality of women performing on the stage, and colonists playing sport on the Sabbath. However, I will demonstrate that decision making at Swan River was male orientated and women had little or no say at all regarding colonial processing. But they did nurture a generous response towards the poor and destitute, and I will illustrate how these women and their charitable organisations were considered the social security system of the nineteenth century.

After 1850, Waterhouse suggests the influence of some working-class women in the eastern colonies was potentially powerful in limiting the time and money men

spent on gambling and drinking. To portray working-class women as zealots of respectability is wrong, because some would have indulged in drinking and dancing. Middle-class women consumed wine at home whilst entertaining their peers and although most working-class women may well have shunned public houses, they probably consumed alcohol at home, and as Waterhouse implies, this was more likely influenced by notions of respectability.¹¹ Most working-class women at Swan River either worked in the homes of the gentry and the middle class or in establishments where positions of rank were respected. Consequently, working-class women were more acculturated towards middle-class trends than their men folk.

In *Elysian Fields*, John Daly states colonial life was unique in South Australia owing to the colony maintaining itself without the aid of convicts. This, he says, had a distinct effect on the development of society and shaped the character of the colony's sporting activities. Like Swan River, South Australia's early settlers created a class structure that reflected English society and used sport to indelibly stamp their superiority on the social structure of the state.¹² Hence, sport in South Australia was used for social vetting to represent social position, class distinction and social mobility.¹³ I will explain how similar circumstances existed at Swan River, and how a number of sports were administered by the gentry or the middle class and considered an avenue for social vetting and conferring status.

In *Saturday Afternoon Fever*, Stoddart gives several good examples of working-class identity and a sense of place within their communities, but one example was prominent. In Melbourne's Collingwood district, the Victorian code was a community sport with a fierce partisan support, so much so, that non-Collingwood community members were ineligible to play for the team, a tradition which persisted until the late 1970s. This represented Collingwood's aspirations as a community and the 'Collingwood spirit' became synonymous with that attitude.¹⁴ I will argue a similar case in the thesis. Like the Collingwood community, supporters of Swan River football clubs were administered by self-made members of the middle-class who, together with

working class support, reflected a sense of loyalty, pride and belonging to their communities.

One of the first books to make an impact on the history of sport in Australia was Wray Vamplew and Brian Stoddart's *Sport in Australia: A Social History*. Similar to Tony Mason's *Sport in Britain*, which was published some years earlier, it examines the 'social' history of thirteen Australian sports and strives to analyse sport as 'social' history. This was first developed in Mason's publication and further recognised by Dennis Brailford's *British Sport: A Social History* and Richard Holt's *Sport and the British*. However, not all of the sports played in Australia are listed here, especially those sports where Australia has achieved great success in the twentieth century, notably hockey and basketball. Those sports which are included have a long history with Britain, notably horseracing and cricket. Although the depth of research is impressive by the various contributors, there are two significant issues which required further research: the representation of sport in the regions and the identification of ethnic minorities. Regional sport and community are adequately dealt with by Richard Cashman in *Paradise of Sport* and in Daly's *Elysian Fields*. The identification of ethnic minorities, especially in the football codes, is explored further in Philip Mosely, Richard Cashman, John O'Hara and Hilary Weatherburn (editors) in *Sporting Immigrants*.

With improved transport many rural areas in the eastern colonies were established after 1850, and sporting institutions such as cricket and horseracing were launched with the birth of country towns. The commencement of horseracing in these towns confirmed social hierarchy and had the advantage of boosting local community business, the town's image, and simultaneously advances the myth of the 'community' also.

Regional or country cricket and football in Australia were always social events and one of the inducements for city teams to travel to rural areas was the offer of good hospitality. As Daly suggests, sport is one of the few topics that cuts across class

boundaries, and identification with local teams did much to strengthen a sense of belonging to a community.¹⁵ One aspect of Daly's research concentrated on metropolitan Adelaide and those small towns that were 'colonial microcosms', and therefore 'symbols of unity and cohesion' against the outside world. Daly illustrates that success or failure in the sporting arena became the yardstick by which many communities judged themselves, particularly when the opponents were from neighbouring locations.¹⁶ I will show how his examples are relevant to Swan River and in what way local unity reflected a desire to compete and achieve sporting success in Perth and Fremantle. Although Daly investigates several issues concerning sport in South Australia, one issue could have been explored further. To what extent did the 'elites' in metropolitan Adelaide encourage subsidies given to horseracing and rifle-shooting? These two sports were given ample financial investment and monetary assistance by the Swan River gentry. Yet, as Cashman claims, although the role of sport in country areas was given sufficient encouragement during the nineteenth-century, sport in these areas has diminished over the last few decades of the twentieth century owing to local talent signing to corporate city clubs, and economic globalisation.¹⁷ Consequently, similarities can be seen between present day regional and country sport, considered a community pastime, and nineteenth-century Swan River.

However, there is still a lack of historical research into local communities throughout Australia, but Martin P. Sharp's thesis *Sporting Spectacles: Cricket and Football in Sydney 1890-1912* is a starting point that shows how Sydney club cricket and rugby league were reorganised on the basis of localities with teams representing suburbs. Furthermore, Sharp's thesis follows the path of former social historians and rightly suggests that the narrow tag of 'sports historian' should assume the broader mantle of 'social historian'. Sharp does so by investigating local working-class 'grass roots' of both sports and simultaneously demonstrates why rugby league as a spectator sport triumphed in Sydney as opposed to the insular Victorian game played in Melbourne.¹⁸

In *Paradise of Sport*, Cashman endorses Sharp's opinions on this particular matter of linking local sporting clubs to communities. According to Cashman, the values of linking sporting clubs to a community were widely recognised by the late nineteenth century. Before the 1890s, for example, many Sydney based sports clubs were not affiliated to a district and, as a result they had 'no following'. Once local leagues were formed and improved transport (railways) took off, local sponsorship and media coverage encouraged further support, and with it a sense of identity, representation and belonging was linked to these clubs.¹⁹

Comparable themes of representation and identity were seen at Swan River, as for example cricket teams were associated with the gentry, tradesmen and the military during the colony's formative years. This continued on a wider scale with the introduction of the first cricket match involving Fremantle and Perth in November 1852, and rugby and Victorian Rules football games in the 1880s. These fixtures evoked emotion and a feeling of belonging and loyalty to their individual towns. Consequently, I will show how support in both towns was antagonistic and deep-rooted towards the other, especially in Fremantle owing to the town's central position regarding convicts and Perth being the seat of government. I will highlight that by the 1880s, the growth of both towns stimulated the formation of several cricket and Victorian Rules football clubs also, each in their own locality, and each representing their social and vocational position in the colony.

Further themes of representation and identity are taken up in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart's *More Than a Game*. In Grow's contribution, 'From Gum Tree to Goalposts', he traces the origins of the game back to the newly devised rules dated May 1859, in Melbourne.²⁰ Although Grow claims the Victorian game had a direct impact on Melbournians and played an integral part in the social history of Melbourne, he fails to identify why the Victorian code lost the opportunity to make a similar impact in New South Wales.²¹ However, in *Sport in Australian National Identity: Kicking goals*, Tony Ward states the key reasons why the Victorian game failed to take off in Sydney was

social, and revolved around Melbourne being bigger and wealthier owing to the discovery of gold and stronger trade union power advocating higher wages and Saturday afternoons off.²² The critical issue therefore, was timing owing to Melbourne playing the popular Victorian code from the 1850s, while the slow introduction of any sort of football in Sydney (where rugby was played) meant large attendances were not achieved until the 1880s. Such a scenario proved potentially threatening to the union game in Sydney with its intricate ‘Off and On Side’ rules and the ponderous and controversial play associated with ‘scrimmaging’. Consequently, the Southern Rugby Football Union made several changes to the game in 1879, which included ‘scrimmaging’, and together with an eight hour working day and free Saturday afternoons off, generated broader social involvement in rugby during the 1880s.²³ I will explain similar reasons why rugby failed to take-up the initiative at Swan River and why the Victorian code became successful.

Rob Hess, in ‘The Victorian Leagues Takes Over’, presents a detailed historical account of the Victorian Football Association and highlights how the effect of continuous codification during the 1880s and 1890s resulted in several clubs breaking away to form the Victorian Football League in 1897.²⁴ A similar episode occurred in English rugby in 1885, after a number of northern clubs caused a schism over the loss of earnings by playing the game during working hours. This eventually saw the formation of two rugby codes, league and union. Correspondingly, at Swan River in 1883, I will elaborate on why the Fremantle Football Club broke away from the rugby code to play the Victorian game. The end product of this saw colonial popularity in the Victorian code increase to the detriment of the union code. The perspective presented here is that all three circumstances emphasised strong local representation and a sense of identity and belonging.

The violent play and unruly crowd behaviour on and off the field was central to the popularity of Victorian football. Supporters through violence symbolically represented identification with their teams. Both Ward in *Sport in Australian National*

Identity: Kicking Goals and Grow's 'From Gum Tree to Goalposts' in *More than a Game* state how violence contributed to the games' popularity from the 1870s onwards.²⁵ Grow cites one good example of travelling British soldiers who were garrisoned in Melbourne and considered the roughest of all. According to Grow, they were always keen to test out the locals in sport.²⁶ I will show how similar psychoanalytical behavioural patterns existed at Swan River and, like the game in the eastern states, violent play and spectators transgressing on and off the field were well documented at Swan River.²⁷

The importance of race and ethnicity are discussed by several writers in Vamplew and Stoddart's *Sport in Australia*. The aborigine had (has) a more difficult time breaking into some sports such as cricket or tennis as opposed to rugby league, horseracing and Victorian football. Anthony Barker's summation in his book on Western Australian cricket, *The WACA: An Australian Success Story* reveals very few players with non-Anglo-Saxon names had or were playing cricket for the state team. Barker suggests that historically the aboriginal population, although small in number, had little impact upon state cricket even though they were making an impression in other sports such as Australian Rules football.²⁸

The aborigine's role in Australian sport has always been uncertain and subjected to the white man's insensibility towards them. A good example of this was the New Norcia cricket team in Western Australia, and I will examine the reasons why they were not invited to join the Western Australian Cricket Association after it was formed 1885. However, in the context of aboriginal involvement in Australian cricket, the 1868 enterprise to England, as Bernard Whimpress reminds us in his book *Passport to Nowhere: Aborigines in Australian Cricket*, 'led to nowhere'. His analysis of this statement is that many Australian first-class cricketers have appeared since the game began as an organised sporting spectacle in 1851, but only a small number have been aboriginals.²⁹ A recurring pattern in the history of aboriginal cricket is the sense of talent denied or thwarted, especially at Swan River. Three good examples were Johnny

Blurton from New Norcia in Western Australia; Jack Marsh, who was murdered in rural New South Wales; and the expulsion of Albert Henry to the remote regions of Queensland for insubordination to white authority.³⁰

Whimpress states that the origins of aboriginal cricket started in the missions, notably by Archdeacon Hale in South Australia and the pastoralists in western Victoria and southern New South Wales, who saw the game in the context of civilising and instilling a cultural ethos. I will relate a similar situation that occurred at Swan River in the 1880s, regarding Bishop Salvado and the pastoralist Henry Bruce Lefroy and their New Norcia cricket team in the main text. Whimpress emphasises the ‘discontinuity’ of the aboriginal experience in cricket. He places the argument of the book between the ‘oppositionist’ historians, who emphasise the status of aborigines as victims, and the ‘revisionists’, who stress the active nature of aboriginal resistance or accommodation to European activity and culture.³¹ Cricket, according to Whimpress, was popular in aboriginal communities, but was destroyed by racism, social prejudice and legal discrimination. A point emphasised by Booth and Tatz, who point out in their book *One-Eyed*, that few aborigines have been given an opportunity to perform on the sporting field.³²

In *The WACA: An Australian Success Story*, Barker points out that although aboriginal players had virtually kept cricket alive at Swan River in the late nineteenth century only one player, John McGuire, came close to securing a place in the state team during the 1980s. Barker claims that many observers felt that McGuire, ‘one of the state’s most prolific batsman in the WACA’s district cricket, had little doubt that colour prejudice was at work’.³³ However, Barker emphasises that it ‘seemed much more likely by the latter years of the twentieth century that it was the continuing disadvantage of aboriginal people, rather than racist selection policies by the WACA, that explained this historical anomaly’.³⁴ In Barker’s *Behind the Play...A History of Football in Western Australia from 1868*, he stipulates that it was still unthinkable that cricket would select aboriginal players in a period when Graham (Polly) Farmer had become

local football's latest talent.³⁵ Barker mentions an interesting appendage to west Australian football that occurred in 1915. George Blurton, a descendent of Johnny Blurton, the New Norcia cricket player, won the Western Australian Football League's 'Cookson Trophy' as a football player with Midland Junction for being 'the most gentlemanly and fairest player for the season'.³⁶ Given the racial prejudice associated with the laws passed in the 1880s and 1890s, and the circumstances which surrounded the New Norcia cricket team, it was, as Barker emphasises, 'scarcely surprising that George Blurton soon disappeared from the scene'. However, as Barker underlines, it brought an aboriginal presence to football that eventually became an important element to the story of west Australian football.³⁷

The slender size and weight of aboriginal jockeys was conducive to good horsemanship and, as the nineteenth century progressed, aboriginal riders appeared more frequently on the turf. In John Maynard's book *Aboriginal Stars of the Turf* he points out that in the eastern colonies aboriginal riders proved popular and were often used for important races. However, Maynard emphasises that they received little prize money, socialised separately and were not allowed to consume alcohol. Racism, according to Maynard, went with the territory and many aborigines embraced other ethnic identities to pursue a career in sport, preferring the characteristics of Islanders, Judaism, Indian, or European races.³⁸ In spite of this, many nineteenth-century aboriginal riders, including Peter St. Albans from the eastern colonies, won prestigious cups and plates, and one aboriginal rider from Swan River, 'Jacky', whom I will discuss in the main text, won several metropolitan races.³⁹

Stoddart, in *Saturday Afternoon Fever*, suggests that the history of aboriginal involvement in sport was one of restrictions imposed upon a race, together with cultural contradictions and anomalies. So much so, that by the end of the nineteenth century the aborigine was increasingly controlled in their rights of movement. Ironically, Stoddart points out how white colonists encouraged aboriginal involvement in sport, but were met by government policies and opposition.⁴⁰ I will reiterate this in the main text

concerning New Norcia cricket team.

The main problem with the aborigine was cultural. The concept of ‘winning’ in addition to rules, team selections, rewards and conventions that were all part of the British ‘civilising’ process were alien to him. Both Stoddart in *Saturday Afternoon Fever* and Jennifer Hargreaves in *Heroines of Sport* confirm the aborigine participated solely for pleasure. There were no rules or rewards in his games owing to their link with lifestyle, which involved nature, the seasons, symbols and religion. Those who did participate in sport were subjected to corrupt managers and entrepreneurs, and enormous social pressures.⁴¹ Cashman suggests in *Paradise of Sport* that the aborigine was embroiled in legalised racism; laws that were passed to restrict aboriginal movement until they were repealed in the 1960s. Cashman further adds that ‘racial politics has long been part of the complexion of Australian sport and manifested itself in various forms’.⁴²

Such pressures existed for aboriginals in rugby league, Australian Rules football and horseracing, but it did not stop many from participating in these three sports, so why was there a difference compared with cricket? Whimpress argues that they were stereotyped; good against fast bowling, but weak against spin bowling, which Whimpress considers was a characteristic of their game. Additionally, team spirit and cricket’s subtle skills involved discipline and intelligence that was missing when batting, and physical, mental and moral requirements were lacking in their game also.⁴³ Although Whimpress incidentally mentions the New Norcia cricket team, evidence suggests that the New Norcia players were considered formidable opposition.

Although the British introduced sport as part of their cultural baggage, ethnic minorities have been a part of Australian history since the early nineteenth century. German people populated South Australia and formed social clubs, played German skittles, and introduced gymnastics and rifle clubs. According to Daly, they arrived as early as 1838, and lived separate from the British settlement, ‘not needing to speak English and prevented from intermarriage by religious decree’.⁴⁴ The Irish brought

their game 'Caid', a forerunner of Gaelic football, to Adelaide in 1843.⁴⁵ There are references to hurling matches from the 1840s in Sydney, but in the long term, cultural Irish sports failed to take off owing to the pressures of other mainstream sports, an implication Cashman emphasises in *Paradise of Sport*.⁴⁶ In Western Australia, Fenian prisoners were transported to Swan River and young Irish women were introduced to redress the colony's gender imbalance. In Kalgoorlie, a handful of Italian migrants worked the gold fields during the 1890s. But, with these two examples in mind, apart from early aboriginal involvement at anniversary celebrations, there is no evidence to suggest white ethnic minorities were participating in 'their cultural' sports at Swan River during the nineteenth century. However, in twentieth century Australian society, the majority of ethnic minorities, as Philip Mosely and Bill Murray state in 'Soccer', in Vamplew and Stoddart's *Sport in Australia*, and further supported by Mosely's collaboration with Cashman, John O'Hara and Hilary Weatherburn in *Sporting Immigrants*, arrived from post-Second World War Europe and their preferences were directed more towards association football than any other sport.⁴⁷

The gender and social problems women negotiated throughout Australian history are well documented by social historians. Stoddart, in *Saturday Afternoon Fever*, claims that in the early Australian education system sport or physical education became obligatory and many schools measured their success against sporting prowess. This, according to Stoddart, provided a foundation for revering physical rather than intellectual success in Australian culture. Secondly, it also moulded the attitudes of Australian girls regarding their place in the sports world, and simultaneously shaped male culture to the detriment of female culture.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Marion Stell in *Half the Race* suggests schools adopted a logical balance between intellectual and physical development at a time many considered both to be harmful to a young woman's health.⁴⁹ However, Stoddart claims that in the evolution of this sexual division social attitudes were developed; men's sport was socially meaningful while women's sport was an adjunct to those male activities.⁵⁰ A detrimental concept, adds

Stoddart, which continued throughout the nineteenth century owing to the requirements of the industrial revolution demanding male production-line staff while women were confined to the home fulfilling their domestic and reproductive roles. Any recreational respite therefore, was reserved for the male worker that reinforced industrial values at the workplace.⁵¹ Douglas Booth's contribution on 'Swimming, Surfing and Surf-Lifesaving' in *Sport in Australia* confirms how social attitudes, especially towards women, regulated bathing and clothing restrictions on the beach and at early swimming facilities.⁵² At Swan River, schoolboys played cricket, rugby and Victorian Rules football, but there is no evidence to suggest schoolgirls participated in sport throughout the nineteenth century. In 'Education of the People', in Stannage's *New History of Western Australia*, Laadan Fletcher states girls at Swan River were offered a 'solid English education' as early as 1849, augmented by the addition of accomplishments such as French, music, drawing and 'plain ornamental works'.⁵³

Middle class Australian women played tennis and croquet, because they were the two perfect games for women to play. Both games were seen as occasions for socialising and invariably adjuncts to men's sports. However, women were not allowed to play cricket owing to the serious and tactical nature of the game. This, Stoddart believes, crystallises the nineteenth-century opinion that women needed tennis and croquet as a diversion, because they neither could nor should attempt to understand intricate and purposeful male games.⁵⁴

In *Paradise of Sport*, Cashman advocates how sport played 'a central role in growing up male in Australia. By implication it has some corresponding negative significance for growing up female'.⁵⁵ He further suggests that since the nineteenth-century, sport was entirely associated with male culture and space. It shaped 'male attitudes towards their bodies and how they communicate with other males', and it became a powerful influence on young boys who were encouraged by their peers, school authorities, parents and the media. Cashman extends his argument further by stating that male bonding through the culture of sport was so strong it excluded women.

Like Stoddart, Cashman implies women may well have been excluded from discussing sport on the assumption they knew nothing about it.⁵⁶

On the whole, in nineteenth-century colonial Australia, sport was determined by men and their sporting organisations. Evidence from sources regarding Swan River reveal this. Women were not 'officially' affiliated to sports clubs and gambling and competitive riding were also prohibited. It was not until the last two decades of the nineteenth century that women participated in sport, and I will discuss their role in the main text. As Vamplew rightly suggests in 'Australians and Sport', in *Sport in Australia*, women over the course of Australian social history have not been given a 'fair go'.⁵⁷

Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz in *One-Eyed* point out Marion Stell's erroneous claim that some 'early' colonial women participated in sport independently of men.⁵⁸ Stell rightly argues how the success of Australian women in twentieth-century sport has been astonishing considering facilities and sponsorship was directed elsewhere. In nineteenth-century Australia, Stell indicates pedestrianism, skiing, swimming (bathing), rowing, side-saddle jumping, croquet, tennis and rifle shooting were popular sports with women before 1900. This is true with regards to croquet, tennis and bathing. However, Stell claims women had an enormous influence on the game of cricket owing to their full dress instigating the round-arm action rather than the underarm style of bowling. Although the concept is charming, it is dubious and counterproductive to Stell's argument.⁵⁹ Jennifer Hargreaves, in *Heroines of Sport*, maintains that women in the nineteenth century participated in sport more so than was previously believed. However, I do have reservations regarding her argument that pioneering women, who came from poor backgrounds, played sport to make contact with people from different classes and ethnic backgrounds.⁶⁰ This may well have applied to working-class women in the twentieth century, but very few women from the lower classes took part in organised sport in the nineteenth century owing to their social position, their vocations, and the expense of participating. However, by the third quarter of the

nineteenth-century historians claim ‘respectable’ women played a supportive or decorative role in sport.⁶¹ The conclusion is that by the 1880s, women’s organised sport was certainly middle class and genteel, neither possessing a competitive edge nor emphasising grace and exertion. The first of these sports was croquet and then tennis, which were usually set in private grounds or on a club court and, as Stoddart and Daly allude, were avenues for social vetting and gossip.⁶² Evidence reveals that at Swan River, middle-class women were participating in croquet (1860s) and tennis and rowing by the late 1880s. In the eastern colonies, women were performing in the theatre and the concert hall, but at Swan River I will point out that apart from private entertainment women did not successfully appear on the colonial stage until after 1869.

Although the rise of women’s consciousness since the late nineteenth century has to a certain degree rectified their situation, old problems still persist today, as for example, with the amalgamation of the Australian men’s and women’s cricket associations. Both Megan Stronach and Daryl Adair in Kristine Toohey and Tracy Taylor’s *Sport in Australia: ‘Worth a Shout’* point out that although amalgamation appears to have been a good idea, the reality has been quite different owing to women competing in a male dominated sport and women’s cricket not receiving the same media coverage.⁶³

RESEARCH METHOD.

The basic tools of my research methodology are collation and comparison, and as in any historical research you can only analyse what evidence is available. Thus, most evidence was gleaned from contemporary newspapers. There are many diaries, letters, papers and journals in the Battye Library that focus on the history of Western Australia. However, most entries relate to early settlement; the everyday problems that confronted frontier farmers and their families; Nyungar insurgency; expeditionary enterprises; the economic and political situation of the times; convictism; the growth of the colony; and the social conventions of the day, but very little information on sport.

Therefore, I narrowed my focus of investigation on those people who were

playing sport and whose names were recorded in newspapers.⁶⁴ Not everybody recorded their daily lives, but those who did afforded very little or no information whatsoever on sport. So, I then researched the biographies of prominent individuals and their lineage.⁶⁵ Again, there was very little information recorded. Any reference to horses in diaries, letters, journals or biographies was, more or less, concerned with breeding good horse flesh for the export market, and cricket was rarely mentioned.

What I did discover in most diaries, letters and journals were the harsh realities of frontier farming and how settlers yearned for the old ways of 'home' (England), and their families and friends. For the vast majority of those people who held and cultivated land, the impression given suggested an intolerable existence owing to the unsuitability of the soil. Sudden changes in climate; the infestation of insects and flies in the summer months; influenza in the winter months; and ophthalmia (irritating inflammation of the eyes) further implied that life was not pleasant. Life then, consisted of hard work on the plough, growing and selling produce, rearing and killing livestock, bartering, or borrowing bullocks from friends to plough the fields. Many sought solace in drink, especially amongst the labouring class. In the early 1830s, the colony staved off intermittent periods of starvation and, on one occasion in April 1833, Georgiana Molloy recorded in her diary that Governor James Stirling issued a scale of rations to prevent disputes arising between servant and master.⁶⁶ Fourteen years after the colony was settled, the Reverend John Wollaston defined and encapsulated the character of the colony:

'People are apt to form in their imagination very beautiful pictures of retired ease and independence in this country, but the pleasing vision is soon dispelled when they come to the rough and laborious realities of colonial life'.⁶⁷

Against this backdrop of hard work, together with the seasons not matching the accustomed months and the daily uncertainty of survival, it is little wonder diaries, journals, or letters do not mention time given to participating in or watching sport.

When reading the diaries we can see how the early settlers, indeed even those that followed, balanced the hard work of living in the colony with the social conventions of the day. For example, George Fletcher Moore entertained friends and on many occasions visited the Brockman, Burges and Leake households. Hence, the only enjoyment available was good conversation over lunch and dinner followed by games of cards, listening to recitals on the piano and singing. Christmas Day reminded most colonials of 'home' and for Moore and others like him the memory was 'too painful to dwell upon'.⁶⁸ Therefore, entertaining and visiting friends was a common theme throughout the diaries and journals. This theme reminded me of the characters in Jane Austen's books. I discovered how the colony's early gentry and later the upcoming aspiring middle class replicated the institutions and elegancies of life similar to Austen's England. Like the characters in her novels, the diaries and journals reveal how these people were a close knit circle of friends and neighbours, who revolved around gentlemanly pleasures, courtship, and marriage. I will show in the main text how the gentry and the aspiring middle class created a world reminiscent of rustic England.

However, for the indentured labouring class and the skilled artisan, the rough and noisy camaraderie associated with public houses was the only way of meeting people and escaping the insecurity, loneliness, and the monotony of colonial life. I will highlight in the main text how the public house was the equivalent of a banqueting hall where impromptu activities such as skittles, billiards, card games, and gambling were common practice.

I discovered some colonials weathered the hard times and prospered accordingly. For example, John Ferguson (who later became Colonial Surgeon in 1846) and his wife, Isabella, bought the Houghton property in 1859, which became famous for its wines.⁶⁹ I will discuss the growth of the wine industry in the main text. Other colonials established hotels and public houses, and some publicans were closely connected to the turf. I will give several examples in the main text concerning those publicans who figured prominently in the history of sport and entertainment in the

colony.

Another common theme that permeated throughout diaries and letters was the anticipated arrival of mail from overseas and the eastern colonies. Once received, news was disseminated quickly either by attending church on Sundays or through invitations to lunch or dinner. I will show the importance attached to receiving mail and give examples of how colonists reacted to this event.

Both Gerald De Courcy Lefroy and Alfred James Hillman shed some light on who and what sport was played in the colony. Lefroy's journal exposes a man who was psychologically scarred by the adversity of farming and living in the colony, referring to Western Australia as 'an abominable place...I wish I was out of it. I will as soon as I can, please God'.⁷⁰ His only means of enjoyment to counterbalance his frustrations and loathing for the colony was visiting friends, racing his horses, playing cricket and watching the rain, which according to Lefroy, was 'the only amusement in this stupid hole'.⁷¹ Hillman's diaries, on the other hand, recount the thoughts of a man who was content with his position in life; his vocation, visiting friends (which included members of the gentry and the middle class), fishing, swimming, watching horseracing, and occasionally playing cricket. Hillman enthusiastically pursued fishing at the 'Point' on Perth's Melville Waters and at Fremantle. In December 1882, for example, Hillman confessed that he had 'the best afternoon's sport (he) ever had', catching fifty good sized pilchards and whiting.⁷² I shall discuss further Lefroy's journal and Hillman's diary in the main text.

Apart from sparse entries in diaries and journals, most information was gleaned from newspapers that detail how the gentry in the formative years and the aspiring middle class in later years raced horses or indulged in trotting, hunting and yachting. These people were distinctly in the minority. However, as in England, the age old practice of the labouring man playing cricket with the gentry continued owing to the sport being part of the cultural baggage that crossed over from England. In April 1846, for instance, Lefroy witnessed members of the 'gents' team practicing for a match

against the tradesmen.⁷³ Cricket was the only sport played in Australia's colonies that had distinct majority support. Nevertheless, cricket apart, the only other sports the labouring class competed in were rowing events at regattas and competitive rifle shooting. Swimming (bathing), hunting and fishing for food were agreeable pastimes. However, once rugby, association football, and Victorian Rules football were introduced during the early 1880s, all three sports attracted various degrees of popular blessing amongst all classes, including women. I will discuss the impact of these sports on colonial society in the main text.

In the colony's formative years the theatre and concert were exclusive occasions distinctly enjoyed by a small minority of colonists who performed for their peers. But as the colonial theatre and concert developed, together with professional entertainment from abroad and the eastern colonies, working-class people became more acculturated and receptive to the arts. I will show how the theatre and concert evolved and how entertainment from the eastern colonies became a new phenomenon for all colonists at Swan River.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.

I have used a conventional chronological framework for my thesis narrative. This serves to develop the study of sport and other leisure time activities from its seminal stage in Britain to the latter years of the colony. Naturally, the nature and availability of evidence has determined the chapter content, but this has not limited the study of sport and other leisure time activities as an important function in the growth of Swan River society during the nineteenth century.

The current introduction to the topic forms the historiography.

The first chapter (preface) deals with the founding of the colony and the premise that any given society is sustained by a particular social structure. Consequently, the intent of this chapter is to show how a rigid class structure at Swan River had a direct social bearing on those who played sport and enjoyed other leisure time activities. In all societies then, one class tends to dominate and influence other classes either by

participation or by administration. At Swan River, the social role of the gentry had a major impact on other individuals and, as such, sport and other leisure time activities played an increasingly important part of Swan River society as it developed. The chapter evaluates who these people were and why they took it upon themselves to behave in a way similar to the British aristocracy. Furthermore, themes of communal development, social stratification, and the role they played in sport and other leisure time activities are examined. Several examples are given, mostly from Britain, but they serve as parameters to what happened in nineteenth-century Swan River society.

The second chapter encompasses the time period from 1829 until 1850 and presents reasons why sport was an influential factor behind the ethos of 'manliness'. This chapter differs from the following chapters in that both sport and other leisure time activities are pooled together owing to a shortage of information during the colony's formative years. Two major themes are developed and examined here. One theme considers the migration of sport from Britain and how it was sustained throughout this period to become a catalyst for social integration, often bringing together representatives of different classes. The other theme refers to the social structure of the colony, showing the diverse activities of the well to do, who introduced 'high culture', and the labouring class, who engaged in 'popular' culture.

The third chapter covers the 1850s, and how the three major sports, horseracing, cricket and the regatta played an increasingly important role in entertaining colonials. Significantly, horseracing occupied those who had the wherewithal to invest in breeding and racing thoroughbred horses. The social and economic apex of the colony is evident here with the formation of the Western Australia Turf Club. Cricket had broad based support throughout the colony and the introduction of the Fremantle-Perth cricket matches gave the supporters of both towns a sense of pride and belonging to their community, especially in Fremantle, where a sense of place replaced a sense of class also. The regatta reflected a social and economic cross section of colonial society, who either sailed their boats or entered rowing events. However, although these three

sports maintained social integration to a degree, social decorum and economic control still remained.

The fourth chapter deals with the growth of other leisure time activities between 1850 and 1890, and analyses how the gentry and the aspiring middle class continued to support 'high' culture. However, the introduction of professional artists from the eastern colonies significantly shows how and why entertainment progressed and how 'popular' culture was introduced to the lower classes during this period.

The fifth chapter covers the period 1860 to 1890 and the social changes which evolved owing to the number of different sports being introduced. The chapter reflects upon the growth of existing sports first introduced by the gentry, who continued to administer *their* sports, but also highlights how the emerging middle class introduced 'new' sports from Britain. Consequently, sport during this period was experiencing a transitional stage of administration by the middle class as well as encouraging working class participation. The chapter also brings to light the gradual social and economic changes by the 1890s, which saw women participating in sport, and a colony that was on the cusp of economic and political deliverance owing to the discovery of gold and self-government.

Chapter six analyses the growth of cricket between the years 1860 and 1890. The intention here is to show how the game developed throughout the metropolitan areas and highlights how the social backgrounds of cricket clubs. The chapter also highlights those members of the gentry who administered the game, and how they steered cricket towards the establishment of leagues, fixtures, the formation of the Western Australian Cricket Association, and the acquisition of land in east Perth upon which to play the game.

The conclusion is a summation of how sport and other leisure time activities were introduced and how they became a catalyst for social integration, bringing together representatives of different classes in nineteenth-century Swan River. The conclusion asks what was distinctive about Swan River sport and other leisure time

activities compared to other Australian colonies? How much did both aspects of recreation contribute to an emerging identity? What did this period contribute to post-1890 sport? What is the relationship between the conclusions reached regarding the histories of the eastern colonies and those of Swan River? What continuities and discontinuities in sport and other leisure time activities are there before and after 1890?

THE INTRODUCTION OF SPORT TO THE ANTIPODES.

As an *entree* to the study of sport it will be useful to sketch a brief introduction as to when, who and why sport was introduced to the Antipodes. The majority of historians agree that apart from trotting and minstrelsy (America) and the indigenous Victorian rules football, most sports and other leisure time activities were part of the cultural baggage that migrated from Britain to Australia after 1788.⁷⁴ Both Waterhouse and Vamplew suggest that in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) the involvement of all classes in sport and recreation presented a homogenous quality about early Australian cultural life. So, although priority was given to establishing settlements, this 'homogenous quality' fostered early colonial self-preservation considered important for the survival of all Australia's colonies. Once settlements were established therefore, a foray of sport and other leisure time activities took off throughout Australia's colonies.⁷⁵

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- ⁷⁰ Bruce and Anne Buchanan, *The Journal of Gerald De Courcy Lefroy*, (Carlisle, WA: Hesperian Press, 2009), Sunday 19th August 1849, p. 189.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid*, Friday 29th May 1846, p. 78.
- ⁷² F.V. Bentley Hillman, ed. *The Diaries of Alfred J. Hillman 1877-1884* (Self-published in Perth: Applecross, 1990), 16 December 1882, p. 774.
- ⁷³ Buchanan, *The Journal of Gerald De Courcy Lefroy*, Tuesday 28th April 1846, p. 75.
- ⁷⁴ Daryl Adair and Wray Vamplew, *Sport in Australian History*, (Melbourne: OUP, 1998), pp. 2-3.
- ⁷⁵ Richard Waterhouse, 'Popular Culture and Pastimes' in N. Meaney, ed. *Under New Heavens*, (Port Melbourne, Victoria: Heinemann Educational, 1989), p. 247; Waterhouse: *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville*, p. 20; Vamplew, 'Australians and Sport' in *Sport in Australia*, p. 1.