

‘THE 1901 CONTROVERSY’: SOUTH AFRICAN CRICKET AND THE ANGLO-BOER WAR, 1899-1902

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ABSTRACT

With cricket already established in the colonies of Southern Africa, an intended tour to England during 1900 by a South African team was cancelled as a result of the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War. Underestimating their opponents in the war and believing that the conflict would soon be won, the English cricket authorities requested that the tour be undertaken instead during 1901. Of course the war dragged on but the predominantly ‘Uitlander’² team did go, leaving Cape Town on what was to prove a testing, if somewhat ground-breaking tour. This paper will investigate the background to this tour, the controversy it created and the development of South African cricket during this time of war.

Key words: Cricket; South Africa; Anglo-Boer War; Imperialism; Logan; Conan-Doyle.

INTRODUCTION

Cricket first came to South Africa with the military between 1795 and 1802 in the earliest days of the British regime (Winch, 1997: 16). Members of the garrison which occupied the Cape in 1806 found time to play cricket and two years later the first known reference to a cricket match being played in South Africa appeared in the *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*.³ However it was not until later that century, with the arrival of British settlers, that the game started to spread elsewhere. 1843 saw the first organised cricket club appear in Port Elizabeth, followed a year later by one at Wynberg in the Cape. Further north, the first ‘rush’ on the Diamond Fields swept cricket into the Kimberley region, with the Orange Free State receiving its first cricket club in Bloemfontein during 1855 (*Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 1899: 19). The first Transvaal club opened in 1863 (Archer & Bouillon, 1982: 81).

On the whole, cricket seems to have been regarded with approval. An integral part of the assimilation process and steeped in British tradition, it was encouraged as promoting the manly virtues of courage, patience, endurance, good temper and courtesy (Odendaal, 1988:

¹ This article is derived from the first author’s Master’s study submitted to Stellenbosch University.

² Literally an ‘outlander’ or foreigner, this was the name given to those (mainly British) immigrants who flocked to the Transvaal after the discovery of the Witwatersrand gold-fields in 1886 (Saunders, 1994: 243).

³ The notice read: “A grand match at cricket will be played for 1,000 dollars a side on Tuesday, January 5, 1808, between the officers of the Artillery Mess, having Colonel Austin of the 60th Regiment, and the officers of the Colony, with General Clavering. Wickets to be pitched at 10 o’clock” (*Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*, 1808; in Winch, 1997: 16).

196). Through its promotion in South African schools, the game soon began to flourish in the towns whilst in the country districts a cricket match became an important social event (De Kock, 1955: 79). With such growth during the Victorian era, this paper will explore the development of the game within South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War, as well as the controversy that surrounded the second South African tour to England, in 1901.

CRICKET'S EMERGENCE

In England in the late 19th century cricket was as popular as ever, no longer confined to certain social groups or regions. It had become, as Holt explains, *the* English national sport via its spread from eighteenth century gentry to the growing Victorian middle classes and industrial workers of the cities. Whilst the winter sport of football remained divided from the outset into its 'association' and 'rugby' codes, cricket became *the* universal English summer game with great cricketers emerging as national figures in a way other sportsmen could never achieve (Holt, 1996: 48).

In 1888 the first English tour of South Africa took place. Under the management of Major R. Gardner Warton and captained by C.A. Smith, the team played and won two tests against a representative South African side at the Wanderers Club in Johannesburg (Lee & Stent, [1960]: 61).⁴ The tour at the time was significant. Not only did it raise the profile of cricket in South Africa, but it was also the year when the Currie Cup was born.⁵ Like Australia some years earlier,⁶ South Africa had seemingly arrived as a legitimate cricketing colony.

A South African team had already visited England for the first time in 1894, when Lord Hawke led a troubled tour back to South Africa during the 1895-96 season. Coming at the time of the ill-fated Jameson Raid, Anglo-Boer tensions were at a peak and the tour was constantly shrouded by the political crisis in the country (Pardon, 1897; Hawke, 1924). Three years later Hawke was persuaded by the Honourable J.D. Logan to bring out a second tour to South Africa. The country however, had not regained its stability.

The railway line had been extended from Kimberley to Bulawayo in 1897 and two matches were to be played during this tour for the first time in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). With players such as Jimmy Sinclair emerging, South African cricket had also shown a remarkable improvement since the previous tour (Knowles, 1995: 35). However, the threat of unrest once again loomed menacingly over the country. Cecil Rhodes had resigned as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony as a result of the Jameson Raid but was again involved in Cape politics. Lord Milner, Governor and High Commissioner of the Cape Colony, was in London to discuss the Transvaal problem with the Foreign Minister Chamberlain. The Anglo-Boer War was imminent.

⁴ It would have been common at this time for a team of England's status, to have faced teams who batted more than 11 men. England's first game against Western Province, for example, saw them having to dismiss 22 opponents (Lee & Stent, [1960]: 61).

⁵ Sir Donald Currie, founder of the Castle Shipping Line, offered the cup as a floating trophy to the South African team which showed the best form against the English tourists. Kimberley were the first recipients in 1888.

⁶ For an insight into Australian cricket's colonial past, see Mandle (1978) and Adair *et al.* (1997).

THE EFFECT OF WAR

Despite the increasing political tension, it was a time in South Africa when talk was of arranging fixtures with the world's cricketing powers. At a meeting of the Western Province Cricket Union (WPCU) on 8 June 1899 approval was given to invite the Australian team, at that time touring England, to play a number of matches in South Africa on their return home. In view of this, the WPCU delegate to the South African Cricket Association meeting at Johannesburg was instructed to say that the sending of a South African team to England in 1900 was not advisable (*Cape Argus*, 1899a: 5).

In fact it was not until the Honourable J.D. Logan of Matjiesfontein stepped in to support the England tour, that the enterprise began to receive favour. In an interview that appeared in the *Cape Argus* on 17 August 1899 Logan stated that he would undertake the financial responsibilities of an English tour and that with Lord Hawke's assistance he would arrange a series of first class fixtures. Despite doubts from the Orange Free State Cricket Union that a South African team was ready to test first class English counties, Logan's proposal was adopted at the AGM of the South African Cricket Association (SACA) at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on 31 August 1899 (*Cape Argus*, 1899b: 5).⁷ With peace in South Africa now hanging in the balance, it was agreed that SACA would write to Lord Hawke, asking him to arrange a first class fixture list for the team at a meeting of county secretaries in England.

Despite the outbreak of war on 10 October 1899, a month or so later the *Cape Argus* was still confident that the 1900 tour would proceed:

Notwithstanding the war, it is now almost certain that a South African team will visit England during the next English season. Provisional team already selected (*Cape Argus*, 1899c: 5).

The first few months of the war however did not go as planned for Britain. Shock defeats by the Boers had seriously knocked her imperial agenda. Despite optimism in the South African press and the English cricket programme for the summer of 1900 including the South African fixtures,⁸ by the end of 1899 it was difficult to see how this tour was now possible. By February of 1900, with the reality of the situation clear, the *Cape Argus* reported how:

Little or nothing further has been heard with regard to the South Africa team for England – it seems practically impossible for the team to be got together in view of the turn affairs have taken with regard to the war (*Cape Argus*, 1900a: 5).

Then, on 2 March 1900, Lord Hawke received the cable he had been expecting announcing that the tour by the South Africans would have to be abandoned (*Times*, 1900a: 12).

It was a time too when domestic cricket had to take a back seat to the war effort. Along with thousands of workers of that period, many cricketers had moved to the Transvaal following

⁷ According to Logan's offer, SACA would select the team. The finances would devolve upon Logan who stipulated that he should appoint the manager (*Cape Argus*, 1899b: 5).

⁸ First match scheduled 21 May 1900, versus Hampshire at Southampton. Final match 23 August 1900, versus MCC and Ground, at Lords (*Cape Argus*, 1899f: 5).

the development of the gold fields. With the war imminent however, men living in the South African Republic were required to serve in the burgher forces. As a result, there was a flood of refugees who moved back across the borders into Natal and the Cape Colony to avoid conscription. The test cricketer Jimmy Sinclair was one of these and soon the local cricket clubs benefited by arranging matches against these 'refugee' players. On 7 December 1899 Cape Town Cricket Club played a refugee team that included A.B. Tancred, T. Routledge, J.H. Sinclair, A.E. Halliwell and G. Devenish (*Cape Argus*, 1899d: 5). Nine days later this same team took on the strength of the Western Province Cricket Club (*Cape Argus*, 1899e: 5). For a brief period cricket in the Cape flourished due to the war, but with the call up of players this was not to last.

On 8 March 1900, the *Cape Argus* reflected how "Cricket in the Peninsular has fallen on evil times. For three Saturdays the premier club has not had a fixture" (*Cape Argus*, 1900b: 5). For Cape Town Cricket Club the 1899-1900 season was also a failure with the war being blamed for lack of senior competition and the meagre gates at games (Cape Town Cricket Club, 1900). Not only was there decline in public support for the game but also cricket grounds were at a premium in the Cape as the military moved in. Greenpoint Track for example, was soon being used as a prisoner of war camp. The *Cape Argus*, of 9 October 1900 declared:

We are at a crisis in the history of cricket ... Either some steps must be taken to re-kindle the flame of enthusiasm for our national game, or it will go to the wall completely and we shall be left with a number of second-class clubs struggling along season after season with no hope of advancement (*Cape Argus*, 1900c: 6).

Only the fixture between Western Province and Cape Town Cricket Clubs attracted a modicum of interest, yet by March 1901 even this match had declined in significance: "With half the players away on military duty, the struggle lost most of its importance. Very few cricketers put in any practice – a marked deterioration in the style of play" (*Cape Argus*, 1901a: 4; *Cape Argus*, 1901b: 5).⁹

Later that month South Africa College defeated both Western Province and Cape Town Cricket Clubs in the annual championship challenge. Under ordinary circumstances South Africa College would have had little chance of securing this distinction, but as the senior clubs were weakened due to prominent members serving at the front, the College team were able to seize their opportunity. Cape Town Cricket Club alone was without the services of Rowe, Kuys, Halliwell, Horwood and Jones for the fixture (Cape Town Cricket Club, 1901a).

At the AGM of the Cape Town Cricket Club on 16 August 1901, the chairman, L.B. Smuts, explained that there was no report owing to the unrest up-country, a result of which, a great number of members were absent during the season (Cape Town Cricket Club, 1901b). Similarly, the Western Province Cricket Club reported at their AGM some ten days later, that the second invasion of the Cape Colony by Boer forces gave rise to a general call to arms and many of the club's best players joined the forces to protect the Colony. This led to some

⁹ Reaction to the derby match at Newlands on 9 March 1901 which Western Province won by five wickets (*Cape Argus*, 1901b: 5). A large advertisement for the fixture (along with entertainment from the Band of HMS Doris) had appeared in the *Cape Argus* the day before (*Cape Argus*, 1901a: 4).

difficulty in carrying out the Club's engagements, and mid-week fixtures in the latter half of the 1900-1901 season were abandoned (*Cape Argus*, 1901c: 5).

The war was affecting cricket in different ways. At that same AGM, the Western Province Club debated the matter of having a prisoner of war, who was on parole, as a member. Henry Cloete proposed, and Vincent van der Byl seconded, a motion, "That it was undesirable to have a general rule excluding prisoners of war on parole from membership in the club" (*Cape Argus*, 1901c: 5). This was the outcome of the committee's action in refusing the privileges of the club to C. Fichardt, of Bloemfontein, who was first elected and subsequently had his subscription returned, on the grounds that he was a prisoner on parole. The mover and seconder wished it to be understood that their action was in no sense a reflection on the past committee and the motion was carried by eight votes to five (*Cape Argus*, 1901c: 5).

Going into the 1901-1902 season with the war nearing its end, interest in cricket again slowly began to build. The *Cape Argus* of 27 December 1901 reported how an "immense crowd" and "record gate" had watched a Colonial-Born team defeat a Mother-Country eleven in Cape Town as, by this stage, cricketers were returning from military duty. The teams contesting this particular fixture included such players the calibre of A. Reid, H. Carolin (who was later vice captain of the 1906 rugby Springboks), S. Horwood and Murray Bisset (*Cape Argus*, 1901c: 5).

Then, in October 1902 with the dust of the war barely settled, South African cricket received another boost when the Australians, captained by Joe Darling, toured the country on their way back from defeating England in the Ashes. In the wake of the war, Colonial ties were strengthened here too as Australia won two Tests – the third was drawn (Winch, 1997: 48). Dr. George Thornton, who had occasionally played for Yorkshire and Middlesex, was a member of the South African squad. He was one of the first medical men to volunteer his services when war broke out and who stayed on in South Africa after the war had ended (Wessels, 1992: 19).

THE 1901 TOUR

The fact that organised sport had continued during a time of hostilities sat uneasily with a number of those involved. Dr. Francis Fremantle found time in his busy schedule tending the wounded at Wynberg General Hospital, to go and watch a game between the Refugees and the Western Province Cricket Club at Newlands. He wrote the following in his diary:

Saturday, January 27th: A quiet match like this in the middle of war is like the theatres in the French Revolution, when, as Carlyle puts it, the French nobility were going to the guillotine, and all the while the 'fiddlers were tweedle-deeing on melodious catgut' (Fremantle, 1901: 151-152).

This was of course early 1900, in the midst of the conventional phase of the war when British casualties were high. With regards to the proposed tour of a South African team to England in 1901 Fremantle wrote that the Cape players felt the situation very deeply. Murray Bisset, the secretary and captain of the Western Province Cricket Club had, on several occasions, told

him that quite apart from the absence of Jimmy Sinclair and other prominent cricketers at the front, it would be impossible to get up the proposed South African team to visit England – “the fellows wouldn’t go!” he reportedly said (Fremantle, 1901: 152).

However, as the balance of the war began to swing towards Britain, a team financed by J.D. Logan was eventually selected and Bisset agreed to lead the South African team to England. Due to begin in May the following year, the 1901 tour was announced by Lord Hawke in *The Times* on 1 December 1900 (*Times*, 1900b: 9).

The orchestrator of the 1901 tour was James Douglas Logan. Born in Reston Scotland on November 26, 1859, Logan had emigrated to South Africa where, with an entrepreneurial mind, he had made his fortune securing the catering contract for the South African Railways (see Toms, 1997). Affectionately referred to as the ‘Laird of Matjiesfontein’, after the small Karoo town he had developed, Logan’s deep affection for cricket undoubtedly helped to popularise the game in South Africa (Toms, 1997: 51). A succession of distinguished cricketers were enticed to the new colony by Logan’s almost fanatical devotion to the game. Lord Hawke’s teams came to South Africa as a result and George Alfred Lohmann, an England fast bowler, was brought to the Cape at the personal invitation of J.D. Logan himself (Toms, 1997: 55; *Cape Argus*, 1901d: 5).¹⁰ In September 1899, Logan had said:

I look to the good old English game of cricket to do much towards uniting the different classes in this country ... and it is my ambition that the day will come when a team will go to England as good as they can send from Australia (in Toms, 1997: 125-126).

Despite the outbreak of war a month later, Logan was to eventually get his wish. Following the abandonment of the tour in 1900, approval was given to reschedule for the 1901 English season. The tourists, referred to in the press as ‘the South Africans’, ‘the Colonials’ and ‘Logan’s team’ were captained by Murray Bisset and managed by George Lohmann. Among the fifteen players was a young Jimmy Logan Junior, who went on to play in eight first-class innings, averaging just over 12 runs (MCC, 1901e: 368). Also part of the squad was Johannes Jacobus Kotze, a Boer and one of the fastest bowlers ever to appear in first-class cricket in South Africa (MCC, 1904: 388; Bailey *et al.*, 1983: 608). The team is pictured in Figure 1.

¹⁰ Lohmann (England 1884-1892) was said by many to be the greatest cricketer of his generation. In 1892 however, at the age of 27, Lohmann developed tuberculosis and travelled to Cape Town in search of a cure. In the clear air of the Karoo, Lohmann stayed with Logan on and off until his death on 1 December 1901 (Toms, 1997: 55 & *Cape Argus*, 1901d: 5). His impressive tomb erected amongst others by Surrey County Cricket Club, still pays tribute today in the graveyard at Matjiesfontein.



FIGURE 1. SOUTH AFRICANS, 1901

W. Shalders, L. Tancred, M. Hathorn, J.H. Sinclair
G. Rowe, E. Halliwell, M. Bisset, J.J. Kotze, R. Graham
J.D. Logan, Jun., A. Bisset (Standing, n.d.: 57)

With the conflict in South Africa still raging, Kotze, since described as the ‘Boer farmer who preferred cricket to war’ (Martin-Jenkins, 1980: 292), acknowledged the difficult circumstances under which the tour took place. The previous year the tour had been postponed and when, unexpectedly, the war continued into its second year there were doubts too as to the wisdom of sending a team over in 1901.

It was suggested that the tour should be again abandoned and the English authorities were advised accordingly. The answer was that the team must come under any circumstances, or otherwise the entire county programme would be dislocated for the season (Kotze, 1915: 663).

Even the departure of the team from Cape Town was none too auspicious. Apart from the country being in a state of war, Cape Town was at the time being visited by the bubonic plague. On account of plague regulations in the docks area, the players subsequently left the Cape without even the customary send-off (Kotze, 1915: 663).

Following their arrival at Southampton on 3 May 1901 (*Times*, 1901: 9), the South Africans went on to play twenty-five matches over the next three months. Despite a poor start, in which they lost their first five matches (Tancred, [1915]: 29), the tourists went on to record a total of thirteen victories, nine losses and three draws (MCC, 1901e: 368). Included was the highest total ever made by a South African team in first class cricket – 692 scored against Cambridge University at Cambridge (Winch, 1997: 46).¹¹ Captain Murray Bisset, interviewed at Cardiff, described the tour as having successfully popularised cricket in South Africa, with his side improving immensely owing the experience gained:

The thing which struck us more than anything else ... is the solid, business-like way in which everybody settles down to make runs ... another thing with which we have been greatly struck in England is the excellence of the umpiring. In South Africa we so often have to pick up any enthusiast who happens to be on the ground (MCC, 1901d: 306).

Despite the controversial timing of the tour, the players received lavish hospitality. There were race meetings, theatre, Henley boat races and many other diversions (Toms, 1997: 162). The first victory for the tourists was against the London County Cricket Club who fielded the likes of W.G. Grace and W.R. Murdoch (Hughes, 1989: 14).¹² The London Club marked the occasion by making the South Africans honorary members and entertaining them to an after-match dinner at the Crystal Palace (*Times*, 1901d: 12). Other such invitations were received from the MCC at Lords (MCC, 1901c: 1664) as well as the various counties.

Although the South Africans achieved a good proportion of victories, it cannot be said however that the team's presence in England meant much to the cricket public (Pardon, 1902: 466; Knowles, 1995: 37). Like other travelling teams in England, they were regarded not sufficiently near to the Australian standard to command attention, and their matches were merely viewed on a par with county cricket (Pardon, 1902: 466). Individually however the players did receive recognition. Kotze's fast bowling impressed whilst E.A. Halliwell's displays at wicket-keeper endeared him to the spectators (Knowles, 1995: 37). "The South African's have reason to congratulate themselves" was the cricket writer's response. Indeed the tourists had been strangers to turf wickets prior to the tour and were undoubtedly stronger at the end than at any other period (MCC, 1901e: 368). For J.D. Logan and his players the tour proved vital to the development of the game in South Africa. Not only had they raised the profile of South African cricket, but more importantly, they had managed to complete the tour against a backdrop of criticism from some of Britain's most influential voices.

THE CASE OF CONAN DOYLE

One of the most important propagandists opposed to W.T. Stead (Davey, 1978: 87)¹³ and other anti-war voices in the media at the time was cricket enthusiast Arthur Conan Doyle. The creator of Sherlock Holmes is not however the first Victorian writer we associate with the promotion of the aims of Empire. Rudyard Kipling, with his South African association, and

¹¹ In an innings lasting five hours, Maitland Hathorn top scored with 239 – his country's first double-century abroad (see Winch, 1997: 46).

¹² This was the first victory by a South African side abroad in a first-class match (Hughes, 1989: 14).

Rider Haggard, come to mind more readily with their tales of adventure in India and Africa. Doyle's fiction is, however, often about war, and it is because he is concerned about war that Doyle becomes an important public figure in support of British imperialism at the turn of the century. According to Krebs:

No British literary figure was as engaged with the fate of his country at the turn of the century as Doyle, who spent months fighting an enteric epidemic in a field hospital on the battle front and who would be credited with turning much foreign public opinion around on the question of British conduct in the war (Krebs, 1999: 85).

But rather than support for the policy of imperialism, it was Doyle's conception of the link between personal honour and national honour that pushed him into the role of public spokesperson for Britain. It was in this role, that he sparked the controversy surrounding the 1901 touring cricket team.

For serving his country through propagandising on its behalf during the Boer War, Doyle earned a Knighthood in 1902. Yet early in the war he had yearned for a more practical role as, at the age of forty, he had tried to enlist. After writing to *The Times* to suggest the use of mounted infantry, Doyle had felt "honour-bound to volunteer":

What I feel is that I have perhaps the strongest influence over young men, especially young sporting men, of anyone in England bar Kipling. That being so, it is really important that I should give them a lead (quoted in Carr, 1949: 86).

He was not accepted into the military, but he was able to reach the fighting by another route. Resurrecting his dormant qualifications as a physician, he went out to South Africa as senior surgeon of a hospital for British soldiers funded by a friend, John Longman (Krebs, 1999: 86).¹⁴

After Doyle's return to London in July 1900 (Marix Evans, 2000: 80), he remained deeply concerned about the war and the growth in anti-war propagandists, not least amongst elements of the foreign press. This began what Doyle called his "incursion into amateur diplomacy" (Doyle, 1906: 744), a stance that was to produce very public views on the things he cared about – not least cricket.

The 1901 South African tour to England took place in controversial circumstances. Lord Hawke's announcement of the tour in the *Times* during January of that year (*Times*, 1901a: 9) provoked a passionate response from elements of the public. G. Lacy of Sandgate felt compelled to write:

¹³ Anti-war propagandist and radical journalist W.T. Stead had been regarded as the "loudest voice in the pro-Boer movement" of the period (Davey, 1978: 87). An opponent of Doyle and an avid supporter of women's rights, Stead's anti-war work was a huge undertaking. *War Against War*, sixteen pages of newsprint, came out weekly from 20 October 1899 until 26 January 1900 and included regular articles from Stead as well as new summaries and transcripts of speeches about war issues.

¹⁴ Conan Doyle had abandoned his practice when he became a literary success in the early 1890s (Krebs, 1999: 86).

I observe that a team of cricketers is about to leave South Africa for this country. At a time like the present, with the call for young men to put an end to the deplorable state of affairs there, and when we ourselves are sending out the best of our manhood for that purpose, it is, to say the least of it, the most wretched of taste for these young men to leave it on a cricket tour. I trust the British public will take this view of the matter. Next year we should be delighted to see them, but today it seems quite monstrous (*Times*, 1901b: 10).

The Anglo-Boer War had not as yet ended and passions in Britain ran high. Doyle, himself a keen cricketer,¹⁵ wrote the following letter which appeared in *The Spectator* on 20 April 1901:

Sir, - It is announced that a South African cricket team is about to visit this country. The statement would be incredible were it not that the names are published, and the date of sailing fixed. It is to be earnestly hoped that such a team will meet a very cold reception in this country, and that English cricketers will refuse to meet them. When our young men are going from North to South to fight for the cause of South Africa, these South Africans are coming from South to North to play cricket. It is a stain on their man-hood that they are not out with rifles in their hands driving the invader from their country. They leave this to others while they play games. There may be some question even in England whether the national game has justified itself during this crisis, and whether cricketers have shown that they understood that the only excuse for a game is that it keeps a man fit for the serious duties of life. There can be no question, however, that this South African visit would be a scandal. I trust that even now it may be averted (*Spectator*, 1901: 565-566).

The letter provoked hearty agreement from the editor of *The Spectator*, who wrote:

Unless there are some circumstances unknown to us which put an entirely different complexion on the proposal against which Dr. Doyle protests, we heartily endorse his protest ... the time for South African cricket has not come yet. The men who held Wepener for the Empire showed us that the South African British could stand up to any team in the world in something much nobler and better than cricket (*Spectator*, 1901: 566).

The timing of the tour was unfortunate. When the tour had been arranged, it had not been anticipated that the war would drag on for so long. Pressure was also placed on the South Africans by the English cricket authorities who did not want their programme for the season disrupted by a cancellation (Kotze, 1915: 663). The players themselves were naturally sensitive to Conan Doyle's criticism. They pointed out to the press in their defence that eight of the 14 players had seen active service, whilst others had been members of various town

¹⁵ Arthur Conan Doyle's single wicket in first-class cricket was that of W.G. Grace (Winch, 1997: 46).

defence forces (*Times*, 1901c: 9). Captain Murray Bisset himself had been a sergeant in a Cape Town Guard that became known as the ‘Cricketer’s Corps’ because of the number of eminent sportsmen who made up the ranks (Creswicke, 1901: 141).¹⁶ Whilst the Honourable J.D. Logan had also borne arms, and, as Captain of the Matjiesfontein Rifles, was present at the battle of Belmont (*Times*, 1901c: 9). The 1901 team’s colours – red, blue and orange – were also deliberately identical to those of the South Africa War medal ribbon. The permission of General Sir Forestier Walker had been especially obtained in order that these could be adopted (*Times*, 1901c: 9).

In an article for *The History of South African Cricket* published later in 1915, bowler J.J. Kotze wrote; “I wish Conan Doyle had done his fair share of fighting instead of starting a controversy in the press” (Kotze, 1915: 663). It was an unfortunate statement to have made considering Conan Doyle’s contribution to the war effort, but one born out of the frustrations faced in embarking on the 1901 tour. Acting in the diplomatic role as team ambassador, Captain Murray Bisset attempted to explain the *raison d'être* of the tour, upon its conclusion in August 1901:

Two years ago Mr. Logan arranged with Lord Hawke for the tour of a South African team in England, but the war came and upset everything. Later, when Lord Roberts left South Africa and said that the war was practically at an end, Mr. Logan again arranged a tour. Then came the second invasion of the Cape Colony, and we did not know what to do. But most of the team volunteered for military duties and when the invasion was repelled, and everybody thought that there would be no more trouble, we promised to go with the team. All arrangements had been made in England for the tour, and we did not see how we could back out of it, especially as announcements were continually being made by the authorities, that the war, as a war, was over (MCC, 1900: 306).

The timing of the tour was not the only controversial aspect. The press also criticised the team because it was not a fully-fledged South African side. It was essentially a private venture organised by J.D. Logan, with the tour party largely representative of the Cape (Winch, 1997: 46; *Times*, 1901c: 9). It is significant to point out though that unlike the 1894 team, this side was granted first class status by the MCC (MCC, 1900: 1635; 1901a: 1641; 1901b: 1662). The team went on to win five and tie one of its fifteen first class matches. Had they begun the tour with minor matches in order that they could adjust to the turf wickets, they might have done even better. Five of the opening six first class matches were lost, a record that weighed heavily against the ultimate success of the tour (Winch, 1997: 46). The real significance of the 1901 tour lay, however, in the fact that it had been organised and played during one of the most tumultuous periods in South African history.

¹⁶ Commanded by Lieutenant Feltham (late Protectorate Regiment), the ‘Cricketer’s Corps’ were started with the aid of a £100 donation by Sir Abe Bailey for transport equipment. As well as Murray Bisset, other well known players in the Corps were: T.W. Bell, E. Yates, G. MacFarlane, J. Rushton, D. Howe, C. Bartlett, E. Warren, E. Gill, H. Wensch, C.M. Neustetel, J. Graham, K. Hunter, F.R. Brooke, L.H. Fripp, W. Reid, H. Stidolph, S. Horwood, A. Baker, W. Marshant, J. Fehrsen, R. Solomon, I. Difford, H. Reid and L.J. Tancred. For an account of the Cape Town Guard see Creswicke (1901: 141).

POST WAR EMERGENCE

With the Anglo-Boer War over, and reasonable success against the visiting Australians two years previously (Coleman, 1928: 103),¹⁷ a third tour of Britain was arranged in 1904. Frank Mitchell, the Yorkshire amateur who had stayed behind after Lord Hawke's tour, was chosen as captain, whilst Abe Bailey, the mining magnate and one of the founders of the Wanderer's Club guaranteed the tour's finances (*South Africa*, 1903: 796).

An ambitious programme saw the 1904 side equip themselves well, winning thirteen and losing only three of their twenty-six matches (Powell, 1994: 30). "Undoubtedly the present South African team is stronger than either of its predecessors" was the response of the MCC's *Cricket* journal on the tour's completion (MCC, 1904: 388). The South African's reward a year later was to receive Sir Pelham Warner and the first official MCC team to tour the sub continent. This was the series "that put South African cricket firmly on the map" as the Colonials went on to win the Test series by four games to one (Reader's Digest, 1981: 240). The MCC had clearly underestimated the strength of the South African national side. Despite its troubled past, South Africa had at last arrived in international cricket.

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¹⁷ The 1902-03 Australians were the first fully representative side to visit South Africa (Coleman, 1928: 103).

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