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Black Cricket, the College at Haringey and the England and Wales Cricket Board

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Abstract

This article makes a contribution, based on previously unseen archival materials, to debates about the so-called 'decline' of black cricket in England. It discusses the historical context of the development of black cricket in the postwar period and presents a case study of the Haringey Cricket College—1984–1997—a black-led project in and around the deprived areas of Tottenham, north London, which, during the period of its existence, produced more first class cricketers than many of the most expensive, elite 'cricket schools' in England. In so doing, it achieved national and international acclaim. The article goes on to provide detailed evidence regarding the closure of the college, arguing that the college's demise should not be seen simply as part of a wider process of decreasing interest in cricket within England's black communities, but involved active decisions by the cricket establishment not to support the college. The article raises wider questions about when and how it has been possible to be perceived as legitimately black and English in cricketing terms, and how cricket's authorities should respond to these historical problems.

Keywords: cricket, race, racism, England

> 'Black people are not important to the structure of English cricket.' Michael Carberry[1]

QUESTIONS OF POWER and identity resonate far beyond the boundary of cricket, in no small part because the game provides a cultural and historical link to England's colonial past and hence poses challenging questions about legacies of racial thinking and what it means to be English in the twenty-first century.[2]

In recent years, cricket cultures, practices and institutions in England have been the subject of vigorous debate and controversy surrounding issues of race and racisms. Many people in the UK and around the world—even those who have no knowledge of cricket, or perhaps just a passing interest—have now heard of the name Azeem Rafiq, the Pakistan-born Yorkshire cricketer widely acknowledged to have been subjected to racist abuse by players and staff at Yorkshire County Cricket Club between 2008 and 2018. But, well before Azeem Rafiq's story came to light, the marginalisation of South Asian cricketers in professional cricket, alongside racism in both professional and recreational cricket, have been extensively documented in academic research.[3] Even so, when the England and Wales

[1]Wisden Staff, 'Carberry, "The people running the game don't care about the Black people in it"', Wisden.com, 10 June 2020; https://wisden.com/stories/news-stories/carberry-the-people-running-the-game-dont-care-about-the-black-people-in-it

[2]M. Diawara, 'Englishness and blackness: Cricket as discourse on colonialism', *Callaloo*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1990, pp. 830–844; D. Malcolm, '"It's not cricket": colonial legacies and contemporary inequalities', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2001, pp. 253–275; S. Wagg, '"To be an Englishman": nation, ethnicity and English cricket in the global age', *Sport in Society*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2007, pp. 11–32; M. Collins, 'Cricket, Englishness and racial thinking', *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 93, no. 1, 2022, pp. 95–103.

[3]By 'South Asian' this article refers to people from communities that either migrated to or were born in England, but identify culturally and ethnically with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. D. Burdsey, 'That joke isn't funny anymore: racial microaggressions, colour-blind ideology and the mitigation of racism in English men's first-class cricket', *Sociology of Sport*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2011, pp. 261–283; T. Fletcher, D. Piggott and J. North, '"The 'blazer boys' were getting all the chances": South Asian men's experiences of cricket coaching in England', *Sport in Society*, vol. 24, no. 8, 2021, pp. 1472–1492.

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Cricket Board (ECB) launched its fifty-four-page South Asian Action Plan in 2018, 'to better engage with South Asian communities', the word 'racism' did not appear in either past or present tense.[4]

Lord Kamlesh Patel of Bradford, at the time an ECB board member, now chairman of Yorkshire County Cricket Club, has been open about the fact that the South Asian Action Plan was driven in no small part by a consideration of the commercial value of the South Asian cricketing population: 'A third of Britain's three million South Asians want to play/engage with cricket every day. That population will double in the next 20–30 years. This is not about equality and social justice—this is pure business sense.'[5] Precisely because Lord Patel's own life and career display a deep commitment to social justice, the public framing and justification of the plan as underpinned by commercial incentives becomes even more striking.

Where does this leave 'black cricket' and England's black cricketers?[6] There is currently no formal ECB action plan equivalent to the South Asian one for these communities. Despite its past vitality, black cricket has been overshadowed by the more numerous and commercially viable South Asians in much of the ECB's recent public relations work, and certainly in terms of its expenditure. And yet, when the ECB was set up in January 1997, despite a series of racism scandals in the mid-1990s, it inherited a still vibrant and thriving population of black Caribbean cricketers at both the recreational and professional level.[7] A landmark achievement of the black cricket community was the 1984 creation of the Haringey Cricket College. Working in and around the deprived areas of Tottenham, north London, its remarkable success—producing more first class cricketers than many of the most expensive, 'elite cricket schools' in England—brought national and international acclaim.

As of 1995, the college had received no money whatsoever from the Test and County Cricket Board (TCCB), the forerunner of the ECB, though in 1995 an 'emergency grant' of £5,000 had been offered. In the final six months of its existence, Haringey received more money from the European Union (£5,500) than it did from the ECB (no money at all). The college ceased trading on 9 September 1997, having reduced its 1996/97 debts to just £10,000. As the college's financial difficulties mounted in late 1996 and into 1997, trustees begged for financial support from cricket's governing body, but the Haringey project was deemed unworthy of life support.[8]

Since 1997, the number of black professional cricketers in England has dwindled by 75 per cent. A 2020 report by Sport England found that whereas approximately 36 per cent of adult involvement in recreational cricket is 'non-white', black participation was so low as to be statistically irrelevant, apparently lower than golf and tennis.[9] As such, black cricketers in England no longer present cricketing authorities with any obvious commercial

[4]England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), 'South Asian Action Plan', ECB, 2018; https://resources.ecb.co.uk/ecb/document/2021/04/09/8c88033c-a6c4-424e-a980-5574c111338b/Engaging-South-Asian-Communities-An-ECB-Action-Plan-2018.pdf

[5]H. Turbervill, 'How the ECB's South Asian Action Plan might be implemented', *The Cricketer*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2017.

[6]By 'black' this article refers primarily to people from communities that either migrated to or were born in England, but identify culturally and ethnically with parts of the Caribbean colonised by English, later British settlers, who introduced the game of cricket to those territories.

[7]J. Williams, *Cricket and Race*, Oxford, Berg, 2001, pp. 173–194; R. Holden, *Cricket and Contemporary Society in Britain: Crisis and Continuity*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2021, pp. 59–75.

[8]London Cricket College, Honorary Treasurer's Report, Board of Trustees' Meeting, 13 February 1997, Smith Papers; London Cricket College, Presentation to Iain Sproat MP at the Department for National Heritage, Appendix I, Projected Income, 7 April 1997, Rodwell Papers; London Cricket College, Minutes of the Emergency General Meeting called by the Chairman, 9 September 1997, Rodwell Papers; Letter from Tom Rodwell to Claire Hitchcock (Grand Met/Diageo), 'London Cricket College', 17 November 1997, Rodwell Papers.

[9]R. Winder, 'Cricket's Windrush generation: the ship that sailed', in L. Booth, ed., *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 2019*, London, Bloomsbury, 2019; M. Butcher, et al., '"You guys are history": the story of England's black cricketers', *Sky Sports*, September 2021; Sport England, *Sport for All*, January 2020; https://www.sportengland.org/news/sport-for-all; T. Shaw, 'England's black cricketers: a photographic exhibition', MCC Museum, Lord's Cricket Ground, October 2022.

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opportunity, but instead a two-part challenge. On the one hand, an historical problem that requires explanation: how to account for black cricket's decline in England since the mid-1990s, and how to explain the role of the cricketing establishment in this. On the other, an ethical issue: how to address historical wrongs where they might exist and whether to offer apologies, reparations or similar.

The following analysis draws on a range of oral history interviews as well as archival materials previously unseen by any researcher or journalist who has approached Haringey College. Financial reports preserved by the college's last treasurer, Alan Smith (the Smith Papers), and a wider set of correspondence and other documents kept safe by one of the college's most active trustees, Tom Rodwell (the Rodwell Papers), enable this article to highlight the role played by the ECB in the final stages of the college's life.

Black cricket in England

For at least two generations after the war, cricket in the Caribbean held a quasi-religious status. Precisely because the game was so profoundly imbricated with colonialism, it provided an important context for the emergence of cultural nationalism in the Anglophone Caribbean. Moreover, by the early 1970s and up to the mid-1990s, England's black settlers and their children had built an immensely rich ecosystem of cricket: community clubs, workplace teams, leagues and cup competitions. This occurred in phases from the 1940s onwards, in the face of shifting patterns of interpersonal and structural racism, as well as generational change and political conflict within Caribbean communities themselves.[10]

Sojourner cricketers from the Caribbean were numerous enough and often became celebrity figures. Sir Learie Constantine plied his trade to great acclaim in the 1930s Lancashire leagues, before becoming a wartime civil servant and then a Labour member of the House of Lords in the postwar period. Many celebrated West Indian internationals also secured contracts to play in the English county championship from the 1950s onwards.[11] Often fêted, many of them also experienced more or less subtle forms of institutional, societal and interpersonal racism. By the 1980s there was a growing sense amongst some of English cricket's elite players and administrators that 'they' knew too much about 'our' game. Transatlantic cricket networks afforded West Indian players too much knowledge of the English game; and this partly explained why, from 1969 to 2000, England lost every test series against the West Indies, home and away.

The experiences of sojourner cricketers were different from those of black settlers and their children, who had to learn the game and rise through its ranks in a context of metropolitan racism and socioeconomic exclusion. According to Lonsdale Skinner, chair of the African Caribbean Cricket Association (ACCA), it was the small Caribbean clubs—typically formed in the face of overt exclusion and racism from established white cricket clubs—that would produce elite black cricketers in postwar England. His own cricketing career was a case in point: having played for black clubs such as Carnegie in south London, founded in 1955 to escape the unacknowledged but self-evident colour bar, he eventually played for Surrey, where he experienced well-documented racism.[12]

Devon Malcolm was born in Jamaica and settled in Sheffield as a child, but was unable to play for Yorkshire owing to its 'born in county' rules, which were only relaxed in 1992. It was the Sheffield Caribbeans who nurtured his talent before he was signed for Derbyshire and then went on to play for England. David Lawrence—the first England-

[10]C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, Durham NC, Duke University Press, 2013; H. Beckles and B. Stoddart, eds., *Liberation Cricket: West Indies Cricket Culture*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995; S. Lister, *Fire in Babylon: How the West Indies Cricket Team Brought a People to Its Feet*, New York, Random House, 2016; C. Babb, *They Gave the Crowd Plenty Fun*, Watton-at-Stone, Hansib, 2015; M. Collins, *Windrush Cricket: Caribbean Migration and the Remaking of Postwar England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

[11]C. Goodwin, *West Indians at the Wicket*, London, Macmillan, 1986, pp. 188–189.

[12]Author's interview with Lonsdale Skinner, 29 April 2021, cf. B. Ronay, 'Lonsdale Skinner: most of the racism came from the committee room', *The Guardian*, 26 July 2020; https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2020/jul/26/lonsdale-skinner-most-racism-committee-room-cricket-interview

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born black player to win a place in the national team—followed a similar route through the Bristol West Indians to Gloucestershire and England honours. The sporting prowess of these people was nurtured first and foremost by black settlers themselves. They succeeded despite, not because of, the systems in place.

For a while, the English cricket establishment was willing to tap into this black cricket talent pool, turning to black English cricketers to bolster their teams. From 1980 to 1997, fourteen black men (no women) made their debuts for the England national cricket team, only three of them born in England. They played a combined total of 251 test matches (widely considered to be the top level of the game). In the twenty-five years since, only six male players (plus two female players) have made their debuts. Four out of the six male players were born in England. They have only played a total of thirty-seven test matches between them. Throughout, the environment was frequently hostile for these cricketers, and 1995 and 1996—the two years leading up to the creation of the ECB and the closure of the Haringey Cricket College—were particularly notable for the general negativity, as well as blatant racism, directed towards some of England's black cricketers.[13]

For example, Devon Malcolm, who played forty test matches and achieved some remarkable successes as a fast bowler for England, was often portrayed as erratic and unpredictable. In July of 1995, Malcolm was one of two black players, along with Philip DeFreitas, accused in the pages of the venerable *Wisden Cricket Monthly* of being incapable of performing in the same way as his white counterparts because of his 'race'. Robert Henderson's article claimed that 'Norman Tebbit's cricket test is as pertinent for players as it is for spectators.' It is even possible, he continued 'that part of a coloured England-qualified [note the refusal of the term 'English'] player feels satisfaction (perhaps subconsciously) at seeing England humiliated, because of post-imperial myths of oppression and exploitation.' He implies that English cricket's black players could not be 'unequivocal Englishmen' and—with its title asking, 'Is it in the blood?'—conflated older and cruder biological racism with the more insidious cultural arguments about the 'resentful and separatist mentality of the West-Indian descended population in England.'[14]

According to the autobiography of Dermot Reeve, a white member of the England national cricket team, at a training session in Port Elizabeth during England's 1995–96 tour of South Africa, Raymond Illingworth, a retired Yorkshire and England cricketer and then chairman of England's board of selectors—effectively Devon Malcolm's boss—allegedly referred to Malcolm as a 'nig-nog'.[15] More publicly, at a press conference in January 1996, Illingworth decried Malcolm as having 'no cricketing brain'.[16] When Malcolm publicly questioned whether he might have been treated differently had he been white, the governing body threatened him with the charge of bringing the game into disrepute. Such was the culture of English cricket in the mid-1990s.

The creation of a cricket college in Haringey

As indicated, the link between cricket and racialised socioeconomic exclusion in England's inner cities has a long postwar history. In addition to the work being done to establish black cricket clubs, by the 1970s community leaders were also using cricket as a social and cultural activity that, they hoped, might build bridges between local 'black youth' and the police.

[13]M. Marqusee, *Anyone But England: Cricket, Race and Class*, London, Bloomsbury, 2016, pp. 272–324; E. John, '"I'm a cricketer, what makes me different?" England's black players on racism and exclusion', *The Guardian*, 4 September 2021; https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/sep/04/i-just-sat-there-thinking-im-a-cricketer-what-makes-me-different.

[14]R. Henderson, 'Is it in the blood?', *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1995, pp. 9–10; R. Winder, 'Sporting heroes, but on whose side?', *The Independent*, 2 September, 1995, p. 13.

[15]D. Reeve and P. Murphy, *Winning Ways*, London, Boxtree, 1996, quoted in Marqusee, *Anyone But England*, p. 290.

[16]C. Searle, 'Towards a cricket of the future', *Race & Class*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1996, p. 52; Malcolm, '"It's not cricket"', p. 256; B. Carrington and I. McDonald, 'Whose game is it anyway?: Racism in local league cricket', *Race, Sport and British Society*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2002, p. 63; D. Stone, *Different Class: The Untold Story of English Cricket*, London, Repeater Books, 2022, pp. 235–6.

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In the aftermath of the 1981 Brixton riots, cricket development officers in Lambeth founded the London Community Cricket Association (LCCA), creating a series of 'unemployed leagues', which spread to north London and included the creation of a team representing the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham. The LCCA's work drew attention from local politicians and, with the backing of Guyana-born Labour councillor—later Labour MP—Bernie Grant, as well as support from other local Labour MPs such as Jeremy Corbyn, a new and bigger project emerged: a fully-fledged college to train young people in all aspects of the game of cricket.

With Jamaican Reg Scarlett—a former West Indian international cricketer and charismatic coach—as director of cricket, the Haringey Cricket College opened its doors in 1984. The college offered places to roughly ten young men and women (mostly men) each year, often taking them directly from the ranks of the local unemployed. Whilst the main emphasis was on playing the game to the highest standard possible, the curriculum included a strong focus on coaching and management, as well as ground maintenance and finance, things that would provide graduates with a future on or off the pitch. In 1990, severe budget constraints prompted by the Thatcher government's 'rate capping' of local councils saw Haringey's money cut, but it carried on with new funding from the European Union and the Sports and Arts Fund of the Littlewoods Pools.

By the mid-1990s there were thirty-three active professional cricketers who had either come to England from the Caribbean as children, or who had been born in England to parents of Caribbean origin. Half of that total—fifteen first class players—had been trained at Haringey, and other black England internationals such as Philip DeFreitas and Chris Lewis, though not formally registered, trained at the college and benefited from the support network it provided.

These numbers show that, against the backdrop of the Broadwater Farm riots, extreme socioeconomic deprivation and systemic racism, the cricket college at Haringey became a more successful pathway into elite cricket than many of the most famous of England's cricket-playing, private schools during the same period. In total, between 1984 and its closure in 1997, the college produced over 100 graduates. All students gained a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). In the final three years of its existence, the college delivered 100 per cent employment for its students. The Australian Cricket Academy—set up in 1987 and believed by many in the game to be part of the reason for Australia's dominance over England in test match cricket in the latter part of the twentieth-century—had sent a fact finding mission to visit Reg Scarlett and the Haringey project, such was its internationally-recognised success. The Sports Council called it the 'most successful Sports Academy in the world.'[17]

The demise of Haringey

A number of explanations have been circulated to explain the demise of the college. One is that head coach Reg Scarlett's departure was pivotal. Another is that the college was a 'loony left' organisation that was doomed to fail. The most flawed and pernicious of all is the idea that the college folded because national lottery money was taken away, kiboshed by elitist New Labour politicians who preferred to spend money on the arts. This theory, with no basis in fact whatsoever, is perhaps more responsible than any other for diverting attention away from the role played by England's cricketing authorities in allowing the Haringey project to fail.

In 1996, college director Reg Scarlett left England for a job with the West Indies Cricket Board, further testament to the achievements of the past decade. But the college had secured the services of Deryck Murray, an outstanding West Indies cricketer and World Cup winner with impressive leadership credentials. During 1997, college marketing and fundraising material placed considerable emphasis on Murray as a leader and coach.[18] Scarlett was undoubtedly an inspirational figure, but the idea that the college

[17]London Cricket College, 'Inner-city investment in youth and the future', 18 November 1997, Rodwell Papers; London Cricket College, 'To produce good cricketers and good citizens: a case for support', 1997, Rodwell Papers.

[18]Murray's appointment is highlighted in London Cricket College, Presentation to Iain Sproat MP at the Department for National Heritage, 7 April 1997, Rodwell Papers. Murray is also physically present at the meeting of trustees on 15 July 1997. His CV was still being circulated in December 1997 as part of later, failed attempts to resurrect the Haringey project as a national programme that, its sponsors hoped, might attract new funding streams.

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had no future once he left is simplistic and unconvincing.

The 'loony left' argument is more complex. Bernie Grant may well have been a popular hate figure across the Conservative Party, and for fellow travellers on the far right of British politics.[19] However, whilst still based in Tottenham, the college was re-branded in 1990–1 as the London Cricket College. With a new board of trustees, it started to make connections in far more mainstream social circles. Julien Cahn—founder of the Bombay Bicycle Club restaurant chain and grandson of an illustrious businessman and cricket philanthropist of the same name—became chairman of the board of trustees. He worked with a successful marketing and advertising executive, Tom Rodwell, to turn around the college's profile and finances, lobbying at the highest levels.

Conservative Prime Minister, John Major, had taken note of the college's activities, discussed the project directly with Reg Scarlett and expressed a belief that 'both cricket, and the young West Indian generation in the UK, should benefit from its work'.[20] Several elite figures within cricket and politics made positive noises about the college, though they often declined to offer their support at critical moments. Former England cricket captain, David Gower, had agreed to be the college's president in 1996 and featured in glossy advertising materials. But at a key fundraising event at the Kennington Oval on 10 September 1996, to which 'David Gower O.B.E and The Management Committee of the London Cricket College' invited a host of luminaries to launch the college's endowment fund, Gower himself did not show up. Virginia Bottomley—Secretary of State for National Heritage in John Major's cabinet—did attend, but left early, before the scheduled formal announcements. In 1997 Sir Tim Rice, of *Evita* fame, senior cricket correspondent Christopher Martin-Jenkins, and Sir John Major himself, were all asked to replace Gower as college president. Each declined.[21]

Regarding the college's funding, it has recently been suggested that among the factors that led to the closure of the college, despite its successes, were the 'defeat of John Major's government in 1997, and very different cultural and sporting priorities from the incoming New Labour government, [which] saw the halving of lottery funding.' In a 2022 podcast veteran journalist and writer Peter Oborne, musing on the role of New Labour and Chris Smith—Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 1997–2001—had this to say: 'It is quite paradoxical isn't it, um, to put it mildly, that a Conservative government goes out, New Labour comes in, closes down the one gate … significant gateway for really underprivileged people to make their way in county, in English cricket, and gives the money instead to the opera.' Co-presenter Richard Heller, expressing some scepticism about this interpretation and mounting a defence of Smith, comes in to say: 'As I understand it … the official funding came from the national lottery.' But, he adds, '[s]trictly speaking, Chris Smith … and all the culture ministers, were at arm's length from that, it was done by a public body.'[22] Heller is correct that ministers themselves were not supposed to be making individual decisions about who gets what out of the national lottery, but he shares Oborne's assumption that the college was in fact in receipt of national lottery money. This is completely false.[23]

The Haringey project never received any money from the national lottery. The college had been in receipt of £50,000 of funding from the Littlewoods Pools—a private, for-profit entity with a philanthropic arm, entirely separate from government and the new national

[19]P. Gilroy, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures*, London, Serpents Tail, 1993, p. 28.

[20]Letter to this author from Sir John Major, 23 March, 2021.

[21]N. Harris, 'Bottomley promises to be "midwife", but can she deliver?', *The Observer*, 15 September 1996; Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustees, 15 July 1997, Rodwell papers.

[22]P. Oborne and R. Heller, 'Haringey Cricket College—a missing engine of opportunity in English cricket', *Oborne & Heller on Cricket*, no. 88, 22 May 2022; https://chiswickcalendar.co.uk/episode-88-haringey-cricket-college-a-missing-engine-of-opportunity-in-english-cricket/. Oborne at 36 minutes, 19 seconds; Heller at 36 minutes and 49 seconds.

[23]Email to this author from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Freedom of Information Team, 'Freedom of Information Request: Lottery money to cricket, 1994–2000', filed 16 November, 2022, response received 16 December 2022.

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lottery scheme. In the latter part of 1996, Littlewoods Pools revenues declined and the college's funding was withdrawn.[24]

Virginia Bottomley did make positive noises about the *possibility* of future funding from the national lottery, but it was acknowledged in September 1996 that the bid could not even be submitted until April 1997 owing to 'administrative reasons'. The college had also been told by the Sports Council that it was 'well-placed' to win future lottery funding, but that even if it were successful, no money would be available until at least 1998.[25]

This situation was made clear to Bottomley on 7 February 1997, who passed on the inquiry to Iain Sproat MP, Minister for Sport in the Department of National Heritage.[26] A detailed dossier on the college's financial situation and need for help was submitted to Sproat, in person, on 7 April. Parliament was dissolved the next day and, come 1 May, Iain Sproat was no longer an MP, having lost his seat, along with many other Conservatives, as Tony Blair led the Labour Party to a 179-seat majority. Bottomley survived the bloodbath on 1 May and became Shadow Secretary of State for National Heritage from 2 May 1997 onwards, but she was either unable or unwilling to press the college's case further after the general election.

Whilst we might reasonably criticise politicians for publicly and privately claiming to support the college, then failing to deliver any tangible results, the college was never actually in receipt of any national lottery money and—beyond optimistic talk from politicians who were soon to lose their jobs—it had no concrete guarantees it would ever receive any such money.

In terms of Labour Party support, although college trustees petitioned him directly, Lord Smith has insisted that there was 'a cast-iron rule that the secretary of state or any other minister could not under any circumstances intervene in decisions made by the heritage lottery fund (or other lottery distributors) about individual applications.'[27] One may be allowed a degree of scepticism about how far this applied in every case, but the new government did not take anything away from Haringey that had previously been given. The loss of the Littlewoods Pools money left a critical funding gap, and this had been made public, repeatedly, since the third quarter of 1996. In reality, the college could only hope for national lottery money in 1998 if it survived 1997. The unwillingness of anyone to plug the funding gap proved fatal.

At this point, we turn to the ECB, the newly-formed national governing body for cricket, operational from the 1 January 1997, to establish details regarding what the ECB knew about Haringey and how it responded.

The ECB

At the beginning of 1997, the incoming ECB chairman, Lord MacLaurin, had just stepped down as chief executive of the supermarket chain Tesco, in order to take on his ECB role, alongside a non-executive directorship at the telecoms firm Vodaphone. Maclaurin was also drafting a new report for the ECB's first year, *Raising the Standard*. This was a busy time.

Even so, it must be noted that Haringey College trustees had written letters to cricket's top administrators, flagging up their urgent need for funding, at least as early as July 1996. This was followed by an August 1996 lunch with Brian Downing—a TCCB board member who continued his role as the TCCB transitioned to become the ECB, at which college trustees explained the serious need for support.[28] On 15 January 1997, college trustees wrote to Brian Downing, asking him to press the case further at highest levels,

[24]Letter from B. Purgavie to Lord Ian Maclaurin, 22 January, 1997, Rodwell Papers.

[25]Harris, 'Bottomley promises to be "midwife"; Letter from Tom Rodwell to Brian Downing (ECB board member), 15 January 1997, 'Re. London Cricket College', Rodwell papers; Letter from Bruce Purgavie (LCC) to Lord Iain MacLaurin (Chairman, ECB), 22 January 1997, 'The London Cricket College', Rodwell papers. Receipt of this letter was acknowledged when Lord MacLaurin wrote back on 29 January 1997, Rodwell papers.

[26]Letter from Eleanor Street (Assistant Private Secretary to Virginia Bottomley) to Tom Rodwell, 11 February 1997, Rodwell Papers; Letter from Iain Sproat MP to Tom Rodwell, 27 March 1997, Rodwell Papers.

[27]Email from Lord Chris Smith (cc. Richard Heller), 19 November 2022, 'Haringey Cricket College'.

[28]Letter from Tom Rodwell to Brian Downing, 'The London Cricket College', 1 July 1996; Letter from Brian Downing to Tom Rodwell, 'Thanks for super lunch', 13 August 1996.

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which he did.[29] On 22 January, Lord Maclaurin received another detailed letter from a third party, Bruce Purgavie, a contact of Tom Rodwell's also known personally to MacLaurin. Purgavie used a detailed text drafted by Rodwell to make the college's desperate plight abundantly clear. The college was 'an incredibly deserving cause whose need for cash is immediate.' It had good reason to expect a brighter future in 1998, but had to get through 1997 first. The fact that this need was 'immediate' was reiterated; it was a 'dramatic picture, but they're desperate.'[30]

We know that this letter was received by Lord MacLaurin, because he replied, in his official capacity as chairman, on ECB letterhead, on 29 January 1997.[31] His reply was just five lines long and simply referred Purgavie and the college trustees back to previous correspondence from the ECB's finance officer, Cliff Barker, who in earlier letters had suggested that the college should be asking the cricketing counties of London—presumably Middlesex or Essex, considering Haringey's geographical location—for financial support.[32] 'I sincerely suggest you follow Cliff's advice and I wish you well', MacLaurin wrote, in a surprisingly perfunctory fashion.[33]

Although it is difficult to say with certainty how much money would have enabled the college to carry on through 1997, and thus apply for the lottery money it hoped to secure in 1998, the most commonly used figure is £25,000.[34] Upon closure, the college owed about £10,000.[35]

The ECB's annual revenue in 1997 stood at £40 million. The lion's share of this was sent directly to the traditional cricket counties, regardless of their performance.[36] Some £2 million was also supposed to be allocated annually to cricket charities, rising to about £2.5 million by 1999.[37] No effective accounting mechanism seems to have been in place to trace this money, which was passed on in a highly complex chain from the ECB to counties, via the ECB's charitable arm, The Cricket Foundation. The latter organisation evolved into Chance to Shine in 2005 and no records of funding allocations exist prior to 2007.[38] Despite Mr Barker and Lord MacLaurin's suggestion they ask the counties for help, according to the college financial records, no money made its way to Haringey in 1997 from The Cricket Foundation—either directly or via a county cricket board.[39]

The college's trustees approached the ECB chair again in the summer of 1997 to beg for assistance. They were 'congratulated' on their good work, but Maclaurin and the ECB board did not deviate from the original position that Haringey would be given no further financial help.[40] By September the college was closed.

What does this new evidence tell us that we did not already know? It shows beyond doubt that at the very least, the chairman of the ECB board, Lord MacLaurin, the chief finance officer, Cliff Barker, and one other senior ECB board member, Brian Downing, were in receipt of detailed information—repeatedly communicated over a twelve-month period—about the desperate financial situation at Haringey. It was made very clear to Lord

[29]Letter from Tom Rodwell to Brian Downing, 'Thanks for being so understanding in listening to my plea on the phone this afternoon', 15 January 1997, Rodwell Papers.
[30]Letter from Bruce Purgavie to Lord Ian Maclaurin, 'The London Cricket College', 22 January 1997, Rodwell Papers.
[31]Letter from Lord Iain MacLaurin to Bruce Purgavie, 'Thank you for your recent letter', 29 January 1997, Rodwell Papers.
[32]Letter from C. A. Barker to Tom Rodwell, 'Brian Downing has sent me a copy of your fax of 15 January, 1997', 28 January 1997, Rodwell Papers.
[33]Letter from Lord Iain MacLaurin to Bruce Purgavie, 'Thank you for your recent letter', 29 January 1997, Rodwell Papers.
[34]Letter from Tom Rodwell to Ian Scoolar (NatWest Bank), 'The London Cricket College', 24 January 1997, Rodwell Papers.
[35]Letter from Tom Rodwell to Claire Hitchcock, 17 November 1997.

[36]S. Shibli and G. J. Wilkinson-Riddle, 'An examination of the first class county cricket championship as an effective structure for producing equivalently proficient Test match teams', *Managing Leisure*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1998, pp. 85–97.
[37]N. Miller, 'Clean bowl racism? Inner city London and the politics of cricket development', in S. Wagg, *Cricket and National Identity in the Postcolonial Age*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2005, p. 244.
[38]Email to this author from Chance to Shine, 're: Funding distributions in the late 1990s', 18 November 2022.
[39]This author's interviews with Alan Smith, 7 May 2021 and 17 November 2022; cf. London Cricket College, Honorary Treasurer's Report, Board of Trustees' Meeting, 13 February 1997, Smith Papers.
[40]Letter from Tom Rodwell to Claire Hitchcock, 17 November 1997.

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MacLaurin that without an immediate solution, the college's demise was imminent. Given the evidence presented above, it is not reasonable to suppose that the ECB could have been ignorant of the Haringey project's achievements, exemplary as they were, being nationally and internationally recognised. In addition to its cricketing excellence, the college's outreach and social inclusion work was widely known.

The ECB hierarchy can have been in no doubt, either, that the issue of racism was a significant concern within the game of cricket in the mid-1990s. In response to the racism scandals of 1995 and 1996, discussed above, the Hit Racism for Six campaign was launched by writers, journalists and activists in 1996; the pages of its first report are filled with evidence and arguments.[41]

Perhaps Lord Maclaurin chose not to intervene because the Haringey project was not considered significant enough; perhaps he believed it was someone else's responsibility and the matter was being dealt with elsewhere. Either way, even the most generous reading of the situation suggests the ECB's indifference towards the achievements of the Haringey project, and by implication, the present and future value of black cricket in England. The January letter from Lord MacLaurin demonstrated no obvious concern about the college's predicament, nor did it indicate that the chair was interested in the bigger issues at stake in terms of black cricket in England. It is worth recalling, as demonstrated above, that the Prime Minister of the day had found the time to speak directly to the college leadership about its work in terms of both cricket and its engagement with what Sir John Major called 'the West Indian community'. The evidence also shows no inclination on the part of the ECB to resolve the problem in such a way that they could be sure Haringey would survive. The view of Haringey's last honorary treasurer is that this 'is the sobering reality', and that, as a result, 'we have lost a generation of black players.'[42]

Black and English

Echoing this view, the distinguished writer, historian and former editor of *Wisden*, Scyld Berry, has suggested that perhaps the most important single issue confronting cricket in terms of issues of equity is 'why Haringey Cricket College was closed … when it was producing so many Afro-Caribbean cricketers … [t]he college's closure effectively killed Afro-Caribbean cricket in Britain.'[43] The college's closure certainly had a serious material impact on the talent pool of black English players coming through the ranks. For many, it also sent a signal that the cricket establishment did not see black cricket as important.

The ECB's August 1997 report, *Raising the Standard*, known more widely as the MacLaurin Report, offered up the claim on its first page that the ECB aimed to create 'a framework which allows every cricketer at every level—school children, club cricketers, county cricketers and Test players—to perform to their maximum potential.'[44] But readers would gain no sense whatsoever that there was a network of cricket being played by England's ethnic minorities—beyond the framework of schools and established club cricket leagues—that could be engaged with, even nurtured and built upon. The chairman's foreword claimed that 'we have spoken and listened to a great many people and organisations at every level over the last nine months.' At no stage did this include anyone from Haringey.[45]

Key stakeholders detected a more pervasive condescension, confirming what *Hit Racism for Six* referred to as 'the reluctance of the authorities to seek talent in the urban and inner-city areas … the triumph of prejudice and complacency over cricketing acumen.'[46] Even if the college had moved beyond the Bernie Grant, 'loony left' association, trustees developed a

[41]*Hit Racism for Six*, Roehampton Centre for Sport Development Research, 1996.
[42]This author's interview with Alan Smith, 17 November 2022.

[43]S. Berry, 'Why game needs an independent view at watershed moment', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 November 2021, p. 7; L. Skinner, 'ECB's failures on Caribbean cricket in England', *The Guardian*, 21 June 2021; https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2021/jun/21/ecbs-failures-on-caribbean-cricket-in-england-are-worse-than-robinsons-tweets
[44]ECB, *Raising the Standard*, 1997, p. 1.
[45]This author's interviews with Tom Rodwell, 2021/2022.
[46]*Hit Racism for Six*, Roehampton Centre, p. 26.

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growing conviction that the 'black kids' of the Haringey College did not matter, that they were 'not valued'. Indifference and even 'disdain' were felt to be the fore when money became the key issue, which it did—acutely so—by the final quarter of 1996. In fact, the college's extraordinary success 'on a shoestring' was actually 'an embarrassment to the cricketing establishment.'[47] The awkward question asked by one interviewee was: if mainstream cricketing authorities had been doing their job properly over the years, 'why would something like Haringey even need to exist?'[48]

Michael Carberry, the last black, England-born cricketer to play for the men's national team, played six test matches for England between 2010 and 2014. After the 2014 tour of Australia, Carberry was deselected, despite being the team's second highest run scorer. In a June 2020 interview, Carberry went public with his account of racism in cricket. He alleged that 'cricket is rife with racism', that 'the people running the game don't care about black people'. Black people, he said, 'are not important to the structure of English cricket'.[49] This implies not simply that there is anti-black racism in the game, but that structurally, black people do not 'count' or 'belong' within the system.

There is still an all too common assumption that the high tide of enthusiasm for the game within England's black communities simply ebbed away with the West Indies international team in decline and young black people in England embracing football instead.[50] Whilst it is likely that wider patterns of social and cultural change have impacted on the popularity of cricket in England's black inner-city communities, the closure of the cricket college at Haringey wasn't simply part of a 'process' of structural change. The end of the Haringey project involved decisions *not to help*, taken at the highest level within English cricket, by actors who were cognisant of the achievements of the college and should have known what was at stake.

Based on a growing body of evidence, if cricket were deemed to be 'structurally racist', that would imply that the game does not enable people to be black *and* English in the same way as white people. This raises very serious questions about the role of the ECB, its attitudes and its actions towards black cricket at the time of the governing body's inception and since.

The ECB has recently channelled some money into the ACE (African Caribbean Engagement) programme and other community projects. Sport England board director Chris Grant commented that:

> This is called African-Caribbean Engagement but the way I look at it, it's more a re-engagement. The Afro-Caribbean community wasn't engaged to cricket, it was married. When my father came before Windrush, during the war, cricket was a complete part of his life coming from Jamaica. But something happened—there was a messy divorce between the Afro-Caribbean community and cricket in England, and so this is mending that, and putting it back together. I think that is hugely important.[51]

Whilst supportive of this 're-engagement', what the ECB has not done is offer a public view on how the black population in England became 'disengaged', how the Haringey project came to be shut down, or what that 'something' that Grant refers to really was.

More broadly, how should cricket's authorities address issues of structural racism—historical and contemporary—and questions of equality and social justice moving forward? Can public apologies help and should injections of new money be part of a rebuilding of trust? These are problems that the English cricketing establishment needs to address in

[47]This author's interview with Julien Cahn, ex-London Cricket College, 28 February 2021; this author's interviews with Tom Rodwell, 2021/2022.
[48]This author's interview with John Challinor, ex-London Schools Cricket Project, 16 November 2022.
[49]Wisden Staff, 'Carberry, "The people running the game"'
[50]T. Fordyce, 'English cricket's blackout', BBC Sport, 22 May 2007; http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/cricket/6650641.stm; K. Sajad, 'Where are all the black English cricketers?', BBC Sport, 30 May 2019; https://www.bbc.com/sport/get-inspired/44533717
[51]N. Friend, 'ACE programme launches as independent charity', *The Cricketer*, 30 October 2020; https://www.thecricketer.com/Topics/news/ace_programme_launch_independent_charity_sport_england_investment_surrey_warwickshire.html

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all their historical complexity. Moving forward is rarely possible without a reckoning with the past.

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