

# Crazy Sport: The London Asylum Cricket Club 1877- 1902

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The London Ontario Asylum Cricket Club, situated on the grounds of what is now the London Psychiatric Hospital, was acknowledged to be one of the best cricket clubs in Canada in the two decades prior to the turn of the twentieth century. Despite its unlikely location and inauspicious origins, the club developed a competence in internal operations and on-the-field performance that far exceeded that of other clubs in the area. Subsequently, the Asylum club flourished while the other clubs struggled, declined, and then faded into oblivion.

This paper examines the Asylum Cricket Club for the years 1877- 1902 and explains why and how it attained and maintained an elevated level of success in its administration as well as at the wicket.

The years chosen for study mark the tenure of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke as both president of the Cricket Club and as medical superintendent. Bucke was a vigorous and dynamic man despite his physical incapacities and it is his contribution, and that of the bursar, Charles Augustus Sippi, that afforded the smooth running of the administrative

aspects of the club's operation. Bucke's and Sippi's management skills, which gave a stability and continuity to the club, included the compilation of team statistics, the organization of Asylum facilities for matches and "post game bonhomie", the allotment of time off from work for employees to compete, the arrangement of fixture lists, and the organization of intramural and representative matches.

At the crease the team demonstrated a standard of play that demanded that every cricketer "keep mind and body in perfect training." Practice was emphasized and intricate strategies were used to facilitate the desired and appropriate outcome, winning.

From enthusiastic and meticulous administration to the excellence shown on the field, the Asylum Club displayed all the ingredients for success. Initial impressions indicate that the Asylum was a crazy place for cricket, but the club's longevity and winning record dispel this notion.