

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE AUSTRALIAN CLUB 1826-68¹

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For many participants and spectators the sporting club is the primary unit of loyalty. It is the institution which gives sport its meaning. The establishment of formally-organised clubs and regular competition were important developments in the rise of organised sport. City, colonial, state and national institutions were also built on the foundations of clubs and inter-club competition.

The 1830s were an important decade in club formation in Sydney. It was during this decade that clubs changed from scratch combinations playing an occasional game and then disbanding to more organised groups with constitutions, rules, management, colours and emblems involved in regular competition with other similar clubs. What is even more important is that issues of club identity who should join and who shouldn't a particular club were first aired.

The rise and development of the Australian Cricket Club (ACC) provides a convenient focus. The ACC; established in 1826, was the first known cricket club in Sydney and Australia.² When the majority of cricket clubs in this era rarely lasted more than a season or two, the ACC had impressive powers of endurance. It was also the most dominant and successful club in Sydney from the 1830s until the mid-1850s before it began to decline. It ceased to exist in 1868. The ACC played an important role also in the establishment of inter-club competition.

Only sketchy details are known about the beginning of Sydney club cricket. The *Australian* of 9 August 1826 made reference to match on 7 August 1826 at the old Race Course, Hyde Park, after which players suggested forming the Australian Cricket Club. It is not known whether this game was an inter-club, intra-club or a scratch game. What is known is that a group of individuals did form a club by this name as the same paper stated on 3 January 1827 that 'The Australian Cricket Club had their periodical meeting on New Year's Day'. After 'some good playing' club mem-

bers dined together. The Sydney Gazette of 12 January stated that 'the Members of the Cricket Club played a grand match, at Hyde Park, yesterday'. Another paper, the *Monitor*, was sceptical about whether the ACC constituted a real club arguing on 1 January 1827 'that a few mechanics of Sydney got together on New Year's Day, and attempted to play a few games at Cricket, but their mode of handling their bats and balls was most unskilful, and worse playing was never witnessed either in England or the Colony'.³

One immediate problem faced by the ACC was to find an opponent. The Windsor Cricket Club, which was in existence at the beginning of 1827 and may have even been founded before the ACC, was reported to have declined an invitation to play the ACC and probably folded soon after. A group of cricketers were reported to have formed a club at Campbelltown in 1827 but it too seems to have collapsed.

The lack of worthwhile competition appears the main reason why there is no reference to cricket in the Sydney press for more than two years from 1 March 1827 to 16 September 1829. The *Australian* of 16 September 1829 provided details of a new club, the Sydney Club, formed to take on the ACC and based on a paddock, the other side of the turnpike, probably on the site of Central Station. The new club included a number of well-known Sydney merchants among its bats: Spyer, Paul, Levey and Mitchell. However, the new club was ejected from government-owned land in October 1829 and collapsed soon after.

Fortunately for the ACC another club had sprung up at Campbelltown and the ACC defeated Campbelltown at Hyde Park on 25 January 1830 which is the first known game of inter-club competition in Sydney and Australia though no details are known of the scores. After the match the victors and vanquished sat down to a substantial supper at 'Mr, Hill's house of good cheer', probably the **Wheelwright's Arms**, kept by ACC player David Hill. The Secretary of the ACC was directed to write to his counterpart to arrange a return match for fifty guineas but, like so many other clubs, there was no further mention of the Campbelltown Club. The problem of raising the stake money of such magnitude appears the central reason why there were so few inter-club games in the

1830s and why so many clubs literally went into liquidation. ACC members continued to practise at Hyde Park on Mondays.

The big games of 1830 were not between the emerging clubs but between 'Military' and 'Civilians'. As a result of a challenge from eleven from all Sydney; for £20 a side matches were played on 26 February before several hundred spectators and on 23 March before an 'immense concourse'. The 'Civilians', referred to in some reports as 'Natives' since eight of the side were 'Currency lads' (colonial-born), won both games. It is likely that the bulk of the 'Civilians' were from the ACC.

It was this game which probably gave rise to a furphy started by F.J. Ironside in 1903 and repeated by just about every cricket historian since that 'the first club to be established in Sydney was the Military; this was about 1826'.⁴ Ironside added that the ACC was founded in 1830. Jas. Scott regards the statement about the Military Club as both 'doubtful' and unsourced in terms of contemporary documents.⁵ No-one has yet established why a Military Club was formed whereas there is a suggestion that the ACC had an interest in competition with another club. There is also no reference to a Military Club as a 'club' in the 1830s when various regiments organised individual cricket teams. When several regiments combined to form the 'Military XI' to take on 'the Civilians', as they did in 1832, it was for the purpose of a particular match. There was no ongoing Military Club. The individual regiment was the core cricket unit.⁶

A distinction needs to be made between a team, organised for a particular match or a series of matches and then disbanded, and a club, a more formal and ongoing institution with a form of management, a financial basis, a defined membership, a constitution and a commitment to participating in a game on a regular basis. The 'Military XI' which played in 1832 and 1835 was a team since in both instances it was made up of two regiments, the 17th and 39th (1832) and the 4th and 17th (1835) respectively. Perhaps clubs existed within individual regiments though there is no reference to any club structure. The 1830 'Military XI' came closest to fitting a definition of a club since it was based on one regiment, the 57th. The regular change of regiments seems to

provide another reason why there was no continuing 'Military' Club structure, the core unit was the 'club' or 'team' within each regiment. Jas. Scott made an implicit distinction between a 'club' and a 'team' because the box scores of 'clubs' such as the ACC are headed 'Australian Club' whereas the regimental teams are listed simply as 'Military' or '4th Regiment'.⁷

Cricket competition had yet to be established on a regular basis. Despite talk of challenges later in the year no matches were reported to have been played from May 1830 to April 1832. During 1831 there was no reference to cricket whatever in the Sydney press.

1832 proved cricket's most successful year although the three big matches were played, ironically, in what is now the football season. The first was between the 17th and 39th regiments for £20 aside. The match played on 7 May 1832 aroused great interest in that an estimated 2,000 attended for more than £00 was said to have changed hands. This was the first match in which a complete scorecard was published. After a return match a fortnight later a game was played between 'Military' and 'Civilian' again before a crowd of 2,000. The 'Military', a combined team from the 17th and the 39th regiments, won the game comfortably by six wickets.

The bulk, if not all, of the 'Civilians' were from ACC. Eight of the eleven can be identified as ACC players, the club identity (if they had any) of the other three is unknown.

The defeat of the 'Civilians' was just the incentive necessary for club cricket to organise itself more formally and efficiently. The most important development was the formation of a second Sydney Club, the Amateur Cricket Club (also known as Maryle-Bone) at the **Freemason's Hotel** on 4 September 1832, which provided the ACC with its first worthwhile club rival even though it was only a force for one season.⁸ The Amateur Cricket Club adopted a constitution of fourteen points which specified the officials of the club, entry costs, rather strict practice arrangements and dress. Some of the rules included:

1. To consist of 22 members, to be increased at discretion.

2. A Treasurer, Secretary, and four Stewards to be chosen quarterly; they forming a Committee for the management of business.
3. Every member to pay 5s entrance to the Treasurer, and 6d per week afterwards.⁹
8. Members to meet in Hyde Park every Tuesday and Thursday at 3 - those not there by 4 to be fined 6d; and a second neglect to be fined at the discretion of the majority.
9. Members to meet the first Tuesday in every month at the Club House, and those not there by 8 to be fined by 2s 6d.
12. Dress to be white, with straw hats and red ribbons.

Most of the members of the club, though not all, were British-born (variously referred to as 'Sterlings', 'Britishers', 'Emigrants' and 'Immigrants') and the Union Jack fluttered above the club match tent. One of the popular names for the Club, Mary-le-Bone, underscored this identity.

Establishing formally-constituted clubs was a popular activity in this era. A group of twenty men met at **John Patrick's Inn** on October 15 to form (or reform) the Campbelltown Cricket Club and adopting a constitution based, with some minor variations on the rules of the Amateur Cricket Club. Although a single-wicket competition was organised by the Campbelltown Club on 26 October a rumoured proposal that the new club would take on the winner of the ACC versus Amateur matches did not eventuate as no more was heard of the Campbelltown Club nor of another formed at Penrith. Clubs based on localities had a very tenuous existence until the 1840s.

By contrast with the Amateur Club the bulk (twenty-six out of thirty-three club members) of the ACC were colonial born (variously known as 'Currency Lads' or 'Natives') and the team flag featured a 'Cornstalk and a small Union Jack on a white background'. By this time the ACC also had its rules, practice day (Mondays), team officials, club colours (blue ribbons in their hats) and club meeting rooms in a pub. When a new code of rules was drawn up for the ACC in July 1832 the ACC was established at the **Australian Hotel** in George Street which was kept by the Club's leading all-rounder, Edward Flood. To prepare its

players the ACC organised an intra-club game between T. Broughton's XIV and G. Stubb's XIV which was for £10 and a dinner.

Innkeepers played a very prominent role in early club cricket. Innkeeper John Beeson was Treasurer of the Amateurs and Edward Flood was key figure for the ACC. When the Amateurs first played the ACC there were four innkeepers in the former side and another two in the ACC and another two players were probably brothers of innkeepers.¹⁰ Given that there were few other suitable public meeting places a pub was essential for club meetings and club dinners as a match was sometimes played for a dinner. Publicans perhaps chipped in a little extra for the stake money which could vary from 20 to 50 guineas and provided the initial deposit (£5 for this game) to bind the match. The number of publicans involved in cricket suggests that cricket sponsorship must have been profitable.

The first match between the two clubs on 15 October 1832 for a stake of £20 was keenly contested with the Amateurs successful. The clash between a predominantly British-born side against a team mostly born in the colony must have generated some heat. During this match there was a dispute after one of the ACC batsmen had been dismissed and 'one of the Amateurs challenged to fight for it, and this created a disturbance which well nigh terminated the game altogether'.¹¹ Two subsequent matches between these clubs, on 29 October 1832 and 1 January 1833 for stakes of £30 and £50 respectively, were both won comfortably by ACC.

In between these three matches there was a game between 'Currency' and 'Sterling' on 26 December 1832 which was a variation on inter-club play in that players from both sides were mixed. 'Currency' was the popular term for colonial-born and 'Sterling' for the British-born. 'Currency' referred to private-issued bills or notes which were convertible into English money ('Sterling*') at a discount. The 'Currency' XI consisted of nine ACC players, one Amateur and another who is unidentified. The 'Sterling XI' comprised six Amateur players, four from ACC and the other is unidentified. The match, which was won by the

very big margin of 163 runs by the 'Currency' side, led to a great deal of boasting in the local press about the superiority of colonial-born cricketers.

Club cricket was one of the many forms of competition around in the 1830s. In addition to 'Civilian' versus 'Military', 'Currency' versus 'Sterling' and 'Natives' versus 'Combined XI' (officers of the 4th Regiment plus British-born civilians) matches were organised between 'Married' versus 'Single' and 'F.H.S.' versus 'The Rest of the Alphabet'. There were also many individual contests: single-wicket games involving one, three and five players. A match was organised, though not actually played, for 16 October 1832, between Beeson of the Amateurs and Flood of ACC for £5 in which each would bowl ten balls at a single stump. The variety of cricket suggests that club cricket was still in the process of establishing itself as the more interesting form of competition. It was not until 1839-40 that inter-club competition on a regular season-by-season basis was established.¹² There was also a practical problem of the lack of clubs to form a competition. Rather than ACC playing the Amateur Cricket Club four times in season 1832-33 someone dreamt up the idea of mixing the twenty two players in a 'Currency' versus 'Sterling' match. Gambling, which was very central to cricket in the 1830s, was another important reason for the variety of cricket contests.

By 1832-33 the ACC had established itself as a successful and well-organised club, a position which it was to maintain for the next two decades. Although the bulk of the club members were 'Currency Lads' ACC could also boast men of status and influence. British-born solicitor Francis Stephen, who became joint editor of the *Australian* on 3 May 1833, came from a prominent colonial family. The Club was bolstered by the arrival of the Hardy brothers, J.R. and William, in October 1832. The former, a Cambridge 'Blue.' who almost certainly introduced round-arm bowling into the colony, became editor of the *Australian* in November 1834. John Rickards, son of a merchant, became a wholesale importer and haberdasher. These men of professional status and education alongside less privileged players such as

self-made publican with little schooling and 'original club member', Edward Flood, born in Sydney in 1805, the illegitimate son of an Irish convict who was to become a successful and prominent builder, pastoralist and politician after he retired from cricket in 1837.¹³ Another notable player was Edward William Gregory, founder of a famous cricket dynasty. E.W. Gregory was an infant when his parents arrived in the colony in 1814. After his mother died in 1819 Gregory's father returned to England leaving him and his two brothers in the Male Orphan Institute. Edward was initially a tradesman and later became a master at Cape's Grammar School.

In view of ACC's earlier and later history as a successful club it is surprising that the Club suffered a major crisis of identity in the mid-1830s which split the Club and threatened its future existence. The argument, which became very public, throws considerable light on the character of sporting clubs in the 1830s.

Tension within the club can be traced back to October 1832 when the Hardy brothers joined the ACC. It is curious, in view of the later controversy, as to why the Hardy's joined the 'Currency-majority' rather than the 'Sterling-majority' club. There are two possible explanations. The Hardy's probably joined the ACC simply because it was the best and longest-established club in the colony. The personal encouragement of Francis Stephen may have been another factor because Hardy took over the editorship of the *Australian* from Stephen and J.R. Hardy later married into the Stephen family.¹⁴

The controversy surfaced after the ACC lost two successive games to the 'Military' on January 30 and February 1834, the second game being lost by the very wide margin of nine wickets. The defeats sparked a public debate in which some club members blamed defeat on the introduction of 'Immigrants' into the ACC side. The ACC side which played the 'Military' had a substantial 'Sterling' component in fact the choice batting positions of three to seven were occupied by 'Sterling' players: the Hardy brothers, Stephen and another solicitor, Edward Dormer O'Reilly and H.F. Gisborne, who became a magistrate in 1837.

'A Player', using the columns of the *Australian*, sprang to the defence of 'Sterling' players on 10 March 1835. The 'emigrants' he argued were superior players because they 'have acquired their powers in a better school' and the majority of them 'have exhibited really a respectable degree of science'. 'A Player' added that while the 'natives' field 'beautifully' their batting and bowling was 'melancholy' and was not likely to improve until they realised their limitations and were willing to learn [from the emigrant players]. Unless the 'natives' changed their attitudes they 'will continue to be, as they are now, very much inferior to the commonest parish eleven in England'.

The attack on the 'currency players' brought a stinging rejoinder from 'Tom, The Native' in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 12 March. While admitting that British-born E.D. O'Reilly was capable of 'scientific play', he had no time for the rest of the ACC 'emigrants' and other 'emigrant' players. 'Tom's* disgust was conveyed by sexist language and a pun: 'The natives will play these **hardy** [sic], immaculate, **lady batsmen**, £100 to £50'. In a subsequent letter on 16 March 'Tom' outlined how and why the arrival of the Hardy's had disturbed the equilibrium of the ACC:

I can now assure "Player" and his partizans that they cannot be more desirous than the natives to see the game of Cricket "what it ought to be", and for the better attainment of this eager object, various rules 'were originally made for the well-based model of their Australian (pure Merino) Club; they commenced with a moderate (not too mean) opinion of their own ability, and their practice kept pace with their union - the bond of good acquaintance became more securely cemented, the science strenuously cultivated, and various friendly matches were won and lost - and nothing disturbed the conviviality of their progress and meetings, until the novelty of straight-arm bowling and its "atrocious" impertinence disunited, in one fell swoop, the whole group. The shock was instantaneous...

The Natives were wrong in admitting Emigrants to their Club, under any circumstances, it being in total violation of their original intention. There is one amongst them, however, whose conduct has always been so frank and sincere, and whose sentiments are so much in unison with their own, that they would cheerfully hail him as one of their body; this gentleman must nevertheless remember that the Natives know when to withdraw their respect.

'Tom's' rejoinder is an interesting document as it throws light on what ACC meant to a significant section of the Club.

Those who joined the Club should either be of 'Currency' status or sympathetic to the 'Currency cause'.

The split in the ACC was made even more public by an advertisement in the *Monitor* of 18 March which indicated that some members wanted to purge the English-born from the ACC:

AUSTRALIAN CRICKET CLUB

A few members of the Australian Cricket Club wishing to remodel their original Establishment request a Meeting of all its Friends, on Monday, the 23rd instant at Mr. Richard Driver's [Three Nuns Hotel], King Street. Any young (Native) Gentlemen, wishing to become a member, will please address himself to the above-mentioned Gentlemen.

'Player' provided his own reaction to these events in the *Australian* of March 27 arguing for a quite different club model.

The plain English of the above [advertisement] is this - "we've had quite enough of the Emigrant part of the cricketing community - and now we'll get up a club which shall consist solely of Natives".

Now this will, for the present, put an end to cricketing, at least as far as the formation of a good eleven, such as might hope to beat the Military.

It will put an end to cricketing, I repeat, for the present, because it will happen here as it has happened over and over again at home, that any attempt at getting up an exclusive club has invariably been a failure; no club of gentlemen has ever been able to compete with a mixed club, and no club of which gentlemen did not form a part, ever subsisted for two seasons together.

The late Australian Club was composed of Emigrants and Natives - amongst them there were players of all classes - and so long as both classes pulled together, so long there was there an interest felt and kept is in the common pursuit.

This aired a classic difference between what might be defined as an eighteenth century notion of a 'mixed' club versus an emerging notion of a more exclusive club based on a narrower definition of birth and, to a certain extent, of class.

The split in the ACC was a fundamental one. 'Tom the Native' is easily identifiable as Thomas Stubbs, who was one of the ACC's principal bowlers up to this time and was a brother of George, the first mentioned Club Secretary (1830). Thomas Stubbs, who was an excellent musician, became an auctioneer and broker in 1836.

'Player' is less easy to identify. Jas. Scott believes that it was probably H.F. Gisborne, who was the son of the Whig M.P. for Derbyshire. Stubbs seemed sure that J.R. Hardy had a role in encouraging 'Player'.¹⁵

The split in the club and the subsequent purge was a drastic one. None of the 'Sterling' players ever played again under the ACC banner. The attempt to form a 'Currency-only' Club appears to have failed initially. ACC went into hibernation for almost three years when it was revived and reorganised to play the Union Club on 28 December 1837. During 1835-36 and 1836-37 ACC members played cricket under other banners in matches 'Immigrants' versus 4th Regiment, 'Civilians' versus the 4th Regiment and 'FHS' versus the 'Rest of the Alphabet'.

The turmoil in the ACC occurred at a number of levels. On the surface it was a conflict between the British- and the colonial-born but this division also had class and political overtones. The British-born had considerably more social, educational and professional status than most of the colonial-born. The lowly-born self-made Edward Flood, who became a radical politician and supported the Emancipist cause in the 1840s, would seem to be the exact opposite. However, it is dangerous to push this difference too far Francis Stephen was 'a lively young spark who hobnobbed with Wentworth, Wardell, Mackaness' and other anti-Darling [Emancipist] figures? There are grounds then for believing that Stephen may have been the Club's acceptable British-born player.

The Club split, like many similar disputes may have been a question of personalities, the British-born hardy brothers may have been too dominant or too patronising. The twenty-five year old J.R. Hardy, who represented Cambridge against Oxford in 1829, may also have been puzzled to find that the round-arm bowling style, which he almost certainly introduced to the colony, was regarded as unfair and resented and that there was a time lag between English practice and colonial acceptance. When the Hardy's left England in 1832 the round-arm style was frequently practised though the law was not altered until 1835. Sydney was not ready for round-arm bowling in 1832 and it did not reappear

until 1843 when another ACC player, Robert S. Still, terrorised opposition with his pace. By that time the heresy of round-arm was on the way to becoming the orthodoxy, helped no doubt by the fact that a colonial-born player introduced it.

When the ACC resurfaced in 1837-38 the Club had the rare experience of a losing season. In fact the Union Club, with a majority of British-born players, beat ACC three times. ACC fielded a relatively inexperienced side because not only had all the 'Sterling' players withdrawn but many of the 'Currency' players had retired or had business commitments.¹⁷ ACC could count on only three players who had represented the Club before: Mountford Clarkson, Richard Gardner and E.W. Gregory.

The results of season 1837-38 were but a temporary setback and by 1839-40 ACC was more dominant than ever when it beat the Victoria Club four times and the Union Club once, mostly by very wide margins. ACC was so strong in 1841-42 that it took on 'The Colony', all the other clubs, and won two out of the three games. During the 1844-45 the powerful country club, Maitland, decided to challenge the premier Sydney club but both two-day games (in Sydney and Maitland respectively) were won by ACC by big margins, 164 runs and an innings and 13 runs.

While the ACC tasted success season after season other clubs came and went. Of the clubs formed in the late 1830s the Union Club lasted four seasons (1836-40), the Prince Albert, one (1840-41) and the Victoria, five (1839-45). After a series of big defeats the Victoria Club finally beat ACC in 1843 but it only did so because ACC agreed to play without its two star bowlers, R.S. Still and Thomas Rowley.

It was only with the formation of the Currency Club in 1843-44, which included William Tunks, Henry Hilliard, W. and A. McKone, that a rival club of some substance emerged. The Currency model was based on the ACC 1835 prototype as it was for 'Currency' players exclusively. The new club performed well against combined elevens from other clubs and even beat 'The Colony' in 1848-49. However, in three matches against ACC between 1845-50 it came off second best, twice by ten wickets and once by three wickets. The Currency Club appears to have folded

by 1850 by which time its best players had shifted to the Marylebone Club, formed in 1847-48. Marylebone and ACC had many close contests in the early 1850s. Although there were many other Sydney clubs by 1856, the first New South Wales side consisted of six players from the Marylebone Club and five from the ACC.

It seems quite clear then that 'Player's' 1835 prophecy that an Australian Club, stripped of its British-born, and an 'exclusive' club would not be a strong and lasting club proved groundless though initial investigation suggests that the post-1837 ACC was a 'Currency-majority' rather than a 'Currency-exclusive' Club.¹⁸ The reformed ACC was not only the most successful club in Sydney it was also the pacesetter. Other clubs modelled themselves on the ACC and were formed to try to defeat the ACC.

It is dangerous to place too much emphasis on traditions, on social reasons, in explaining sporting success. Team success is ultimately a factor of which club has the best players. A tradition of success can also generate more success. However, social factors do contribute to team unity, help define a common enemy and may help a club to survive splits and lean years. So the question needs to be asked, even at an early stage into research on early cricket clubs in Sydney, as to why one club had such strong traditions.

An initial hypothesis is that there was more connection between the 1835 and post-1838 ACC than is at first apparent and that the 'Currency' traditions, which were reaffirmed in 1835, were carried over into late 1830s and 1840s. No-one exemplified this tradition better than Mountford John Clarkson (1812-85) who was born in Sydney, one of the family of seven, and a cabinet-maker by trade became an innkeeper in 1842. Although he first played with the Amateur Club, Clarkson was a core player for ACC from 1833-52 years and played in over fifty club games, which must have been a club record given that there were only two or three games in some seasons. He was a hard-hitting batsman, a reliable field and a useful bowler and was, as Jas. Scott suggested, 'one of the greatest players in the early history of cricket in Sydney'.¹⁹

One of the ACC's new players in 1837 was Clarkson's nephew, Thomas Rowley, who was a grandson of a Thomas Rowley, an officer in the New South Wales Corps who came to the colony in 1792. John Rowley, probably another uncle of Thomas, played in an ACC trial game in 1832. ACC must also have benefited by having friends in high places. Although Edward Flood retired from playing in 1837, he continued to act as an umpire (presumably for ACC games) and his son, James, played for ACC and the Fitzroy Club from 1847-48 to 1853-54. Edward Flood became Mayor of Sydney in 1849 and was an MLC from 1851. The pre and post-1835 ACC also had the support of the influential Driver family. 'Tom the Native' nominated the hotel of Richard Driver, the Three Tuns, as the meeting place of the reformed ACC. The son of Richard Driver, who had the same name, played for ACC and the first intercolonial team and was a dominant figure in New South Wales cricket for a number of decades.

It seems clear then that individuals, and families, had reason to maintain their links with the ACC, as players and supporters. The 'Currency' cause, the social and political issues related to the Emancipist group, appears to have been one important sustaining element of the ACC tradition which contributed in some measure to its success.

The tradition did not last however. From the mid-1850s, the Club appears to have steadily lost ground to other clubs. ACC provided five of the colonial side in 1856 but produced only another two colonial players.²⁰ These figures inflate ACC's contribution because in the late 1850s some of the star ACC players drifted away to other clubs though they still played occasional games for ACC. The reason for disaffection was not hard to discover. In an era of increased inter-club competition ACC seemed to be playing fewer and fewer games. When asked in 1857 to provide a statement of ACC's activities for a cricket guide ACC Secretary, Richard Driver Junior, replied:

I am unable to give you any other information than the bare names of the members [26 were listed], as we have not, I am sorry to say, played **any match** since the season of 1855, and at the present time can scarcely be called a Club.²¹

If the decline was steady in the late 1850s, it was spectacular in the 1860s when ACC failed to produce another player for New South Wales and slipped dramatically to junior status. ACC was not heard of after season 1867-68.²²

It is worth exploring why this once-powerful club collapsed because it may throw light on why one club failed to maintain its tradition, the shifting character of club cricket and the broader question as to why Sydney failed to maintain a dominant club, as did Melbourne. Although there are no known records which would explain the precise reasons for collapse of ACC, some general reasons can be suggested.

The rise of new cricket clubs and the changed character of club competition in the 1850s provide the context to understanding the decline of the ACC. The mantle of the dominant club of Sydney soon shifted to the Albert Club which was founded in 1853 and with its first recorded games in 1855. The Albert Club was a prototype of the more modern club as it was organised along more commercial lines and committed to regular inter-club competition rather than the old pub-based club which played occasional games to settle a stake. By 1859, when the Albert Club printed its thirteen 'Rules' and nine 'Bye Laws', it had ninety-three registered players which enabled it to field a number of teams in Saturday competition.

The Albert Club gained a further advantage over all other clubs with the opening of the Albert Cricket Ground, Redfern, on 29 October 1864. The Albert Ground, run by the Albert Ground Company, was the first enclosed ground with a permanent grandstand. The Albert Club benefited from gate-money revenue (particularly when the major games were transferred there in 1871), it had the best ground in Sydney and was run on more commercial and professional lines, engaging English professional Charles Lawrence after the 1861-62 tour.²³

There was a great expansion in the number and type of clubs in the 1850s, partly stimulated by the beginnings of inter-colonial competition in 1856 but also by the growth of suburbs, the expansion of secondary and tertiary institutions and changes in society and the economy. There was also a proliferation of

suburban clubs in the 1850s. In 1857 there were twelve clubs playing in Sydney.²⁴ Suburban clubs, such as Burwood and Newtown, were now a force to be reckoned with in the emerging Sydney competition unlike the weaker and fragile suburban clubs of the 1830s. Sydney University Club, established in 1852, became another strong club.

Below the major clubs there were also a growing number of junior clubs, in the 1850s and 1860s, based on occupational -or- voluntary groups. Some of the teams were: Attorneys; Barristers; Bricklayers; Brickmakers; Carpenters; Ironmongers; Retail Drapers; Stonemasons; Warehousemen and Wholesale Drapers. Then there were teams from institutions such as Civil Service; Fire Brigade and Registrar General's Office.

While the precise reasons for the fall may never be known - it may have been simply a personality conflict - it is clear and can be asserted that the 'Currency' versus 'Stirling' issues which aroused passions within the ACC in the 1830s and which were probably a factor in its strong tradition up to the 1850s became less important in the 1850s and even dead issues in the 1860s. It also seems likely that those who were efficient and successful in organising a pub-based club, which played occasional games for a stake, mostly on holidays and Mondays in the 1830s and 1840s were unable or unwilling to transform the Club into a more modern club involved in regular inter-club competition on Saturdays. It is clear that a rapidly-changing society created a demand for new types of clubs and for whatever reason the inheritors of the ACC tradition could not effectively redefine the club tradition to suit changed times.²⁵

Notes and References:

1. This article draws heavily on the unpublished manuscript of Jas. Scott whose, 'Early Cricket in Sydney' (NSWCA Library) which is based on a close reading of all newspaper sources of the period. Since this is my first foray into colonial sport, comments are welcome.
2. There may have been earlier clubs but cricket received scanty press notice before this time. The editors of the

- Sydney Gazette* (1803) appear to have been indifferent (George Howe until 1821, then his son, Robert) and unsympathetic (Rev. Ralph Mansfield) to cricket. It was not until other papers appeared, such as the *Australian* (1824), *Monitor* (1826) and *Sydney Herald* (1831) that cricket received worthwhile notice. Cricket's press coverage greatly improved in the 1830s when ACC players, Stephen and Hardy, were editors respectively of the *Australian* in 1833 and 1834. Another ACC member, George Cavenagh, became joint Editor of the *Sydney Gazette* in 1836 though he had ceased playing for ACC by this time.
3. Although the *Monitor* went on further to argue that The "Australian Cricket Club", as puffed off in the "Gazette" and "Australian" does not exist, it appears to have been arguing that the quality of the enterprise did not justify club status. While the ACC may have been a very informal club at this stage, it appears likely that the more formal club of the 1830s was a product of this first resolution.
 4. *Old Times* (April 1903). See for instance A.G. Moyes, *Australian Cricket: A History* (Sydney 1959), p.2,
 5. Jas. Scott, 'Early Cricket in Sydney', Vol. 1, p.15.
 6. There are five grounds for scepticism about Ironside's claims. Ironside was not born until 1836 so his information is second-hand. It was not written down until 77 years after the 'event'. It is unsourced in terms of contemporary documents. The date nominated is an approximate one, 'about 1826'. His dating of the ACC foundation date is wrong.
 7. This distinction was adhered to until 1854 when a military club, Garrison, was formed to play on the Military Ground, behind Victoria Barracks; the site of the Sydney Cricket Ground.
 8. There are references to Amateur Cricket Club for several seasons after 1832-33 but the Club appears not to have-been involved in any major games as a club.
 9. Although no other club figures are available, this would appear to be an expensive entry fee equivalent, later in the century, to a day's wage for a labourer.

10. H.F. Green, R. Tress, J. Beeson and J. Hamilton were innkeepers who played for the Amateur CC and E. Flood and A. Devlin were innkeepers on the ACC side. J. Flood was the brother of E. Flood and R. Hill was probably the brother of publican David Hill who played in other ACC matches.
11. Jas. Scott, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p.64.
12. There were a number of seasons in the 1830s when there appears to have been no inter-club competition whatever.
13. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4, 190-91. Regrettably this entry has no mention of Flood's activities in the 1830s as a publican and an important cricketer in ACC.
14. J.R. Hardy married the sister of Francis Stephen and the youngest daughter of Judge John Stephen on 15 May 1837.
15. Jas. Scott, *Op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p.142.
16. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 1 p.478.
17. Thomas Stubbs, for instance, joined James & Co. in 1836 and became a prominent auctioneer and Edward Flood retired from cricket in 1837,
18. British-born T. Bennett, for instance, joined the ACC in 1840.
19. Jas. Scott, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p.548.
20. J.C. Beal, J.S. Bradridge, R. Driver, R. Murray and R. Vaughan were ACC representatives in the 1856 intercolonial, J.L. Beeston and O.H. Lewis played in intercolonials up to 1860-61, Beeston, Lewis and Murray also played for other clubs during their intercolonial years,
21. Jas. Scott, *op.cit.*, Vol. 2, p.71, 73.
22. ACC matches and results were no longer featured in the press in the 1860s. The last press reference to the ACC can be established due to the meticulous research of Jas. Scott who has a long and exhaustive list of every club mentioned in the press from 1861-62 to 1877-78, listed in an Appendix to Vol. 2.
23. The shift in the focus of Sydney cricket from Hyde Park to the Outer Domain (1856) and to the Albert Ground from 1864 (although major games were not played there until 1871) appears to have been a minor factor in the decline of the

ACC. As the oldest tenant at Hyde park the ACC had practice and playing rights on the Outer Domain, The ACC was almost defunct by the time the Albert Ground was opened.

24. Philip Derriman lists the twelve: Balmain, Pyrmont, Cooks River, Petersham, Glebe, Ryde, Field of Mars, Five Dock, Irish River, St Leonards, Pennant Hills and Newtown.
25. This article has been written with B.G. Andrew's dictum in mind that sports history should be written from a scholarly, though not stodgy, perspective, I have not felt constrained in footnoting because B.G. Andrews published one of the longest footnotes (in *Sport: Money, Morality and the Media*) that I have ever come across even after it was reduced by the editors, I would like to thank Ric Finlay and Stephen Gibbs for their help in writing this piece.