

## = History of cricket to 1725 =

The history of cricket to 1725 traces the sport 's development from its perceived origins to the stage where it had become a major sport in England and had been introduced to other countries .

The earliest definite reference to cricket occurs in 1598 and makes clear that the sport was being played c . 1550 , but its true origin is a mystery . All that can be said with a fair degree of certainty is that its beginning was earlier than 1550 , somewhere in south @-@ east England within the counties of Kent , Sussex and Surrey . Unlike other games with batsmen , bowlers and fielders , such as stoolball and rounders , cricket can only be played on relatively short grass , especially as the ball was delivered along the ground until the 1760s . Therefore , forest clearings and land where sheep had grazed would have been suitable places to play .

The sparse information available about cricket 's early years suggests that it was originally a children 's game . Then , at the beginning of the 17th century , it was taken up by working men . During the reign of Charles I , the gentry took an increased interest as patrons and occasionally as players . A big attraction for them was the opportunity that the game offered for gambling and this escalated in the years following the Restoration . By the time of the Hanoverian succession , investment in cricket had created professional players and first @-@ class clubs , thus establishing the sport as a popular social activity in London and the south of England . Meanwhile , English colonists had introduced cricket to North America and the West Indies , and the sailors and traders of the East India Company had taken it to the Indian subcontinent .

## = = Origins of cricket as a children 's game = =

The most widely accepted theory about the origin of cricket is that it first developed in early medieval times to the south and south @-@ east of London in the geographical areas of the North Downs , the South Downs and the Weald . The counties of Kent , Sussex and Surrey were therefore the earliest centres of excellence and it was from here that the game reached London , where its lasting popularity was ensured , and other southern counties like Berkshire , Essex , Hampshire and Middlesex . As early as 1610 , a cricket match was recorded at Chevening in Kent between teams representing the Downs and the Weald .

A number of words in common use at the time are thought to be possible sources for the name " cricket " . In the earliest known reference to the sport in 1598 , it is called creckett . Given the strong medieval trade connections between south @-@ east England and the County of Flanders when the latter belonged to the Duchy of Burgundy , the name may have been derived from the Middle Dutch krick ( -e ) , meaning a stick ; or the Olde English cricc or cryce meaning a crutch or staff . In what may be an early reference to the sport , a 1533 poem attributed to John Skelton describes Flemish weavers as " kings of crekettes " , a word of apparent Middle Dutch origin . In Samuel Johnson 's Dictionary of the English Language ( 1755 ) , he derived cricket from " cryce , Saxon , a stick " . In Old French , the word criquet seems to have meant a kind of club or stick , though this may have been the origin of croquet . Another possible source is the Middle Dutch word krickstoel , meaning a long low stool used for kneeling in church , the shape of which resembled the two stump wicket used in early cricket . According to Heiner Gillmeister , a European language expert of the University of Bonn , " cricket " derives from the Middle Dutch phrase for hockey , met de ( krik ket ) sen ( i.e. , " with the stick chase " ) . Gillmeister believes the sport itself had a Flemish origin but " the jury is still out " on the matter .

Cricket was probably devised by children and survived for many generations as essentially a children 's game . Possibly it was derived from bowls , assuming bowls is the older sport , by the intervention of a batsman trying to stop the ball reaching its target by hitting it away . Playing on sheep @-@ grazed land or in clearings , the original implements may have been a matted lump of sheep 's wool ( or even a stone or a small lump of wood ) as the ball ; a stick or a crook or another farm tool as the bat ; and a gate ( e.g. , a wicket gate ) , a stool or a tree stump as the wicket . The invention of the game could have happened in Norman or Plantagenet times anytime before 1300 ; or even in Saxon times before 1066 .

All acknowledged subject experts and authorities agree that there is no evidence of cricket having evolved from another bat @-@ and @-@ ball sport and , equally , no evidence that any other bat @-@ and @-@ ball sport evolved from cricket . The authorities include writers Harry Altham , John Arlott , Derek Birley , Arthur Haygarth , David Underdown , Roy Webber and Peter Wynne @-@ Thomas . Their consensus view is that the only thing that can definitely be said about the origin of cricket is that its earliest record is in a late 16th @-@ century court case in Surrey which proves it was played by children in southeast England in the middle of that century . There have been alternative theories of origin but these have been dismissed or ignored by authorities . For example , the writer Andrew Lang claimed in 1912 that cricket evolved from a bat @-@ and @-@ ball game which may have been played in Dál Riata as early as the 6th century and this claim has been dismissed in terms of " Lang 's idiosyncratic belief in the Celtic origin of cricket " . It is true that cricket is one of many bat @-@ and @-@ ball sports existing worldwide which have no known origin . Others are the definitely Celtic sports of hurling and shinty . Golf and hockey are other British ball games involving a club or stick while croquet was apparently imported from France and globally there are games such as Sweden 's brännboll , Italy 's lippa , India 's gilli @-@ danda , Finland 's pesäpallo and Samoa 's kilikiti . However , it is generally believed that cricket essentially belongs to the same family of bat @-@ and @-@ ball games as stoolball , rounders and baseball but whether it evolved from any of these , or vice versa , cannot be determined . There is a 1523 reference to stoolball at a designated field in Oxfordshire ; this may then have been a generic term for any game in which a ball is somehow hit with a bat or stick . 18th century references to stoolball in conjunction with cricket clearly indicate that it was a separate activity .

== = " Creag " == =

On Thursday , 10 March 1300 ( Julian calendar , the Gregorian date would be 19 March 1301 ) , wardrobe accounts of King Edward I of England included refunds to one John de Leek of monies that he had paid out to enable Prince Edward to play " creag and other games " at both Westminster and Newenden . Prince Edward , the future Prince of Wales , was then aged 15 . It has been suggested that " creag " was an early form of cricket . However , creag could have been something quite different . Creag is possibly an early spelling of the word craic , here taken as an Irish word meaning fun , entertainment , or enjoyable conversation . This sense of the word crack is found in Irish English , Scottish English , and Geordie in North East England . In Ireland the spelling craic is now more common than crack .

== = Earliest definite references == =

The earliest definite reference to cricket being played anywhere in England ( and hence anywhere in the world ) is in evidence given at a 1598 court case which confirms that it was played on common land in Guildford , Surrey , around 1550 . The court in Guildford heard on Monday , 17 January 1597 ( Julian date , equating to the year 1598 in the Gregorian calendar ) from a 59 @-@ year @-@ old coroner , John Derrick , who gave witness that when he was a scholar at the " Free School at Guildford " , fifty years earlier , " hee and diverse of his fellows did runne and play [ on the common land ] at creckett and other plaies . "

In 1598 , there was a reference to cricket in an Italian @-@ English dictionary by Giovanni Florio . His definition of the word sgillare was : " to make a noise as a cricket , to play cricket @-@ a @-@ wicket , and be merry " . Florio is the first writer known to have defined " cricket " in terms of both an insect and a game . In a later edition of his dictionary in 1611 , Florio infers that " to play cricket @-@ a @-@ wicket " has sexual associations with references to frittfritt , defined " as we say cricket a wicket , or gigaioggie " , and dibatticare , defined " to thrum a wench lustily till the bed cry giggaioggie " .

== The development of village cricket : 1611 ? 1660 ==

= = = Beginning of adult participation = = =

In 1611 , a French @-@ English dictionary was published by Randle Cotgrave who defined the noun crosse as " the crooked staff wherewith boys play at cricket " . The verb form of the word is crosser , defined as " to play at cricket " . Although cricket was defined as a boys ' game in Cotgrave 's dictionary , as per the Guildford schoolboys above , it was at this time that adult participation is known to have begun .

The first definite mention of cricket in Sussex was also in 1611 and relates to ecclesiastical court records stating that two parishioners of Sidlesham in West Sussex had failed to attend church on Easter Sunday because they were playing cricket . They were fined 12 pence each and made to do penance . In 1613 , another court case recorded that someone was assaulted with a " cricket staffe " at Wanborough , near Guildford .

Also in this period , the first definite mention of cricket in Kent is deduced from a 1640 court case which recorded a " cricketing " of " Weald and Upland " versus " Chalkhill " at Chevening " about thirty years since " ( i.e. , c . 1610 ) . This is the earliest known village cricket match and these contests became popular in the first half of the 17th century . The case concerned the land on which the game was played .

In 1617 , the 18 @-@ year @-@ old Oliver Cromwell played cricket and football in London . In 1622 , several parishioners of Boxgrove , near Chichester in west Sussex , were prosecuted for playing cricket in a churchyard on Sunday , 5 May . There were three reasons for the prosecution : one was that it contravened a local bye @-@ law ; another reflected concern about church windows which may or may not have been broken ; the third was that a little childe had like to have her braines beaten out with a cricket batt ! The latter reason was because the rules at the time allowed the batsman to hit the ball twice and so fielding near the batsman was very hazardous , as two later incidents drastically confirm .

In 1624 , a fatality occurred at Horsted Keynes in East Sussex when a fielder called Jasper Vinall was struck on the head by the batsman , Edward Tye , who was trying to hit the ball a second time to avoid being caught . Vinall is thus the earliest recorded cricketing fatality . The matter was recorded in a coroner 's court , which returned a verdict of misadventure . The tragedy was repeated in 1647 when another fatality was recorded at Selsey in West Sussex , a player called Henry Brand being hit on the head by a batsman trying to hit the ball a second time . When the first Laws of cricket were encoded in 1744 , it was illegal to hit the ball twice and a batsman breaking the rule was to be given out . The record of the 1624 case confirms that two villages , Horsted Keynes and West Hoathly , were involved in the match and provides further evidence of the growth of village cricket .

The issue of Sunday play during the years of Puritan influence , from about 1630 to the Restoration in 1660 , has left several references in ecclesiastical court records . These indicate that inter @-@ parish matches were being played but there is nothing to suggest that any teams representative of counties were formed before the Restoration . There is no evidence of large scale gambling or patronage prior to the English Civil War and it was those factors which drove the formation of " representative " teams in the 18th century . It must be concluded , therefore , that the cricket being played before the war was of minor standard only : i.e. , village cricket .

Village cricket continued to thrive in the 18th century . In 1717 , Thomas Marchant , a farmer from Hurstpierpoint in Sussex , first mentioned cricket in his diary . He made numerous references to the game , particularly concerning his local club , until 1727 . His son Will played for " our parish " , as he often called the Hurstpierpoint team .

= = = Breaking the Sabbath = = =

When the English Civil War began in 1642 , the Long Parliament banned theatres , as they had met with Puritan disapproval . Although similar action would be taken against certain sports , there is no evidence of cricket having been prohibited . Except that players must not " break the Sabbath " , references to the game before and during the Commonwealth suggest that it was approved :

Cromwell himself had been a player as a young man . It was during the second half of the 17th century that " the game took a real grip " especially in the south @-@ eastern counties . The nobility withdrew to their country estates during the Commonwealth and were involved in village cricket as a pastime which , after the Commonwealth expired in 1660 , they took with them when they returned to London .

In 1628 , an ecclesiastical case related to a game at East Lavant , near Chichester in West Sussex , being played on a Sunday . One of the defendants argued that he had not played during evening prayer time but only before and after . It did him no good as he was fined the statutory 12d and ordered to do penance . Doing penance involved confessing his guilt to the whole East Lavant congregation the following Sunday .

There are three further references before the Civil War . In a 1636 court case concerning a tithe dispute , a witness called Henry Mabbink testified that he played cricket " in the Parke " at West Horsley in Surrey . In 1637 , another ecclesiastical case recorded parishioners of Midhurst , West Sussex , playing cricket during evening prayer on Sunday , 26 February . In 1640 , Puritan clerics at both Maidstone and Harbledown , near Canterbury , denounced cricket as " profane " , especially if played on Sunday .

In 1654 , three men were prosecuted at Eltham in Kent for playing cricket on a Sunday . As the Puritans were now firmly in power , Cromwell 's Protectorate having been established the previous year , the penalty was doubled to 24 pence ( two shillings ) . The defendants were charged with " breaking the Sabbath " , not with playing cricket . Similarly , when Cromwell 's commissioners banned sport in Ireland two years later on the grounds of " unlawful assembly " , there is no evidence that the ban included cricket , which had probably not reached Ireland by that time .

= = = The beginning of amateur cricket = = =

The beginnings of cricket 's social division between amateurs and professionals , from which the annual Gentlemen v Players contest ultimately evolved , can be traced to the reign of Charles I. In 1629 , Henry Cuffin , a curate at Ruckinge in Kent , was prosecuted by an Archdeacon 's Court for playing cricket on Sunday evening after prayers . He claimed that several of his fellow players were " persons of repute and fashion " . This statement is the first evidence of cricket achieving popularity among the gentry .

It was the gentry who introduced large @-@ scale gambling into cricket and some of these gamblers subsequently became patrons by forming select teams that would improve their chances of winning . During the Commonwealth , gambling was , of political necessity , low key . The earliest reference to gambling on a cricket match is in the records of a 1646 court case concerning non @-@ payment of a wager that was made on a game at Coxheath in Kent on 29 May that year . Curiously , the wager was for twelve candles , but the participants included members of the local gentry . In 1652 , a case at Cranbrook against John Rabson , Esq. and others referred to " a certain unlawful game called cricket " . Rabson was evidently a member of the gentry but the other defendants were all working class .

Cricket has long been recognised as a sport that bridged the class divide but , in time , the cricketing gentlemen came to be called " amateurs " to emphasise the distinction between themselves and the professionals who belonged to the lower social classes , mostly to the working class . The amateur was not merely someone who played cricket in his spare time but a particular type of first @-@ class cricketer who existed officially until 1962 , when the distinction between amateur and professional was abolished and all first @-@ class players became nominally professional . In terms of remuneration , amateurs claimed expenses for playing while professionals were paid a salary or fee . Amateur cricket was an extension of the game played in schools , universities and other centres of education , both as a curricular and extracurricular activity . The schools and universities formed the " production line " that created nearly all the first @-@ class amateur players .

There are few 17th century references to cricket being played at or in the vicinity of schools but it was noted at Eton College and Winchester College by the time of the Commonwealth . In 1647 , a

Latin poem contains a probable reference to cricket being played at Winchester College ; if so , it is the earliest known mention of cricket in Hampshire . There is a reference to the game at St Paul 's School , London about 1665 concerning John Churchill , 1st Duke of Marlborough , who studied there . In his Social History of English Cricket , Derek Birley comments that school cricket was " alive and well during the interregnum " ( 1649 ? 1660 ) . He speculates that the game " must have been known to every schoolboy in the south @-@ east " of England . However , he doubts that the sport at this time was part of any school 's curriculum . Apart from Eton and Westminster School , all schools in the 17th century had local intakes and no class segregation . Therefore , the sons of rich and poor families played together . As evidenced by the legal cases of 1646 and 1652 , described above , cricket was played jointly by gentry and workers .

The earliest reference to cricket at Oxford University is dated 1673 . In John Phillips ' Duellum Musicum , a 1673 pamphlet concerning music tuition , there is a criticism of a rival author called Thomas Salmon who had boasted of being a graduate of Trinity College , Oxford :

" He shews but a slender sign of his University @-@ Education : Where he seems to have spent his time rather in the more laudable Exercises of Trap and Cricket , than in any sound Reading " .

Depending on when Salmon graduated , it would seem that cricket was a normal activity at Oxford for some time before Phillips wrote his pamphlet . Cricket was apparently well established at Oxford by October 1728 when the 19 @-@ year @-@ old Samuel Johnson entered Pembroke College . He told James Boswell that cricket matches were played during the one year he was at Oxford and this was recorded by Boswell in his Life of Samuel Johnson . A comment by Horace Walpole confirms that cricket was being played at Eton College during the first quarter of the 18th century . The earliest reference to cricket being played at Cambridge University was in 1710 and both of these establishments were attended by William Goldwin who , in 1706 , wrote a Latin poem of 95 lines on a rural cricket match . It was called In Certamen Pilae ( On a Ball Game ) and it was published in his Musae Juveniles .

= = Rules and equipment of early cricket = =

Early cricketers played in their everyday clothes and had no protective equipment such as gloves or pads . A 1743 painting of a game in progress at the Artillery Ground depicts two batsmen and a bowler dressed alike in white shirt , breeches , white knee @-@ length stockings and shoes with buckles . The wicket @-@ keeper wears the same clothes with the addition of a waistcoat . An umpire and scorer wear three @-@ quarter length coats and tricorn hats . Apart from the shirts and stockings , none of the clothes are white and no one wears pads or gloves . The ball is bowled underarm along the ground , as in bowls , at varying speed towards a wicket consisting of two stumps mounted by a single crosspiece . The batsman addresses the delivery with a bat that resembles a modern hockey stick , this shape being ideal for dealing with a ball on the ground . The modern straight bat evolved in the 1760s after bowlers began to " give the ball air " by pitching it . As a result , " the game changed completely and evolved from its pioneering phase into what may be termed its pre @-@ modern phase " .

The record of the 1622 case at Boxgrove contains the earliest reference to the cricket bat . The term " batt " in cricket was peculiar to Kent and Sussex , where coastal smugglers were known as " batmen " because of the cudgels they carried . The earliest reference to a " flat @-@ faced " bat ( i.e. , with a flat surface at the bottom of the stick in ice hockey style ) also occurs in 1622 . The term " bat " remained comparatively rare until about 1720 . The terms in more general use were " staff " , " stave " or " stick " . These tended to have regional usage : for example , " stave " was used in the Gloucester area and " batt " in the south @-@ east ; while " staff " and especially " stick " were more widely used . " Bat " is derived from the French " battledore " , shaped like a table tennis bat , which was used by washerwomen to beat their washing with .

The earliest reference to the cricket ball is found in 1658 in Mysteries of Love and Eloquence by Edward Phillips . The pitch has been 22 yards long ( i.e. , a chain ) since the first known code of laws in 1744 and it is believed this length had been in use since the introduction of Gunter 's chain in 1620 . The over consisted of four deliveries until the 19th century .

The earliest known reference to the wicket is contained in lines written in an old bible in 1680 which invited " All you that do delight in Cricket , come to Marden , pitch your wickets " . Marden is in West Sussex , north of Chichester , and close to Hambledon , which is just across the county boundary in Hampshire . The wicket until the 1770s comprised two stumps and a single bail . By that time , the shape of the wicket was high and narrow after the 1744 Laws of cricket defined the dimensions as 22 inches high and six inches wide . But earlier 18th century pictures show a wicket that was low and broad , perhaps two feet wide by one foot high . The ends of the stumps were forked to support the light bail and there were criteria for the firmness of pitching the stumps into the ground and for the delicate placing of the bail so that it would easily topple when a stump was hit .

There has been a lot of conjecture about the origin of the wicket , but suffice to say that the 17th century outline shape is more akin to the profile of a church stool , which is low and broad . Furthermore , the legs of the stool were called stumps , which adds further credence to the idea that stools were used as early wickets . According to the Churchwarden 's Accounts for Great St. Mary 's Church of Cambridge ( 1504 ? 1635 ) , a church stool was sometimes known in the south @-@ east by the Dutch name of " kreckett " , this being the same word used for the game by John Derrick in 1597 .

There were two main forms of cricket in the 17th and 18th centuries . One was single wicket in which , as the name implies , there is only one batsman , although teams of threes or fives often took part . The converse is the " double wicket " form , with two batsmen , and this has long been associated with eleven @-@ a @-@ side teams playing two innings each .

In early cricket , there were two umpires as now , but the modern square @-@ leg umpire stood close to the striker 's wicket . Both umpires carried a bat which the running batsman was required to touch in order to complete his run . There were two scorers who sat on the field and recorded the scores by making notches on tallysticks ; runs were then known as notches for this reason .

= = The development of first @-@ class cricket : 1660 ? 1700 = =

The Restoration of the monarchy in England in 1660 was immediately followed by the reopening of the theatres and sanctions imposed by the Puritans on sports were also lifted . Cricket was a leading entertainment and " it was ideal for a wager " . Although there are only scattered references to the game in the time of Charles II , it is clear that its popularity was increasing and that it was expanding .

The Restoration was effectively completed during the spring of 1660 and , in the general euphoria which both accompanied and followed these historic events , gambling on cricket and other sports was freely pursued . The large amounts at stake led some investors to try to improve their chances of winning by forming teams that were stronger than the typical parish XI . By now , the nobility had adopted cricket as one of their main sports along with horse racing and prizefighting . This was the beginning of the patronage that sustained and controlled cricket through the 18th century . The first teams representing several parishes and even whole counties were formed in the 1660s and the period saw the first " great matches " as cricket evolved into a major sport .

A significant aspect of this evolution was the introduction of professionalism . Members of the nobility who returned to London after the Restoration were keen to develop cricket and brought with them some of the " local experts " from village cricket whom they now employed as professional players . Within a year or two of the Restoration , " it became the thing in London society to make matches and form clubs " . A kind of " feudal patronage " was established as the nobility took control of the sport , their interest fuelled by the opportunities for gambling that it provided , and this set the pattern for cricket 's development through the next century . Consequently , there was a significant rise in standards of play to the level that is now termed " first @-@ class cricket " .

The Gaming Act 1664 was passed by the " Cavalier " Parliament to try and curb some of the post @-@ Restoration excesses . It limited stakes to £ 100 which was in any case a fortune at the time , equivalent to about £ 14 thousand in present @-@ day terms . It is known that cricket could attract stakes of 50 guineas by 1697 and it was funded by gambling throughout the next century .

The shortage of references in the latter part of the 17th century is due to the Licensing of the Press

Act 1662 which imposed very stringent controls on the newspaper industry . Sport , including cricket , was not a subject to be reported and the few references found are in official records , such as court cases , or in private letters and diaries .

In May 1666 , Sir Robert Paston of Richmond wrote a letter to his wife mentioning " a game of criquett ( sic ) on Richmond Green " which is the first reference to cricket at Richmond Green , a popular venue for first @-@ class matches during the 17th and 18th centuries . In 1677 , accounts of Thomas Lennard , 1st Earl of Sussex , include an item which refers to £ 3 being paid to him when he went to a cricket match being played at " ye Dicker " , which was a common near Herstmonceux in East Sussex . In 1671 , a man called Edward Bound was charged with playing cricket on the Sabbath and was exonerated : an indication that attitudes were changing in the wake of the Restoration . The case was reported in Shere , Surrey . In 1694 , accounts of Sir John Pelham record 2s 6d paid for a wager concerning a cricket match at Lewes .

Mitcham Cricket Club was formed in 1685 , the club playing on what is today known as Mitcham Cricket Green . The site has hosted cricket matches ever since . Mitcham is believed to be the world 's oldest cricket club as there is no evidence of any club being founded before 1685 . Croydon , Dartford and London had all been founded by the 1720s but their dates of origin have been lost , although there was an actual reference to a London Club in 1722 .

London Cricket Club was chiefly associated with the Artillery Ground in Finsbury . This venue was first mentioned in 1725 when the 7 May minutes of the Honourable Artillery Company referred to its being used for cricket : there is a note which concerns " the abuse done to the herbage of the ground by the cricket players " . The Artillery Ground became the feature venue for cricket in the mid @-@ 18th century .

In 1695 , Parliament decided against a renewal of the 1662 Licensing Act and so cleared the way for a free press on the Act 's expiry in 1696 . Censorship had already been relaxed following the Bill of Rights 1689 . It was from this time that cricket matters could be reported in the newspapers , but it would be a very long time before the newspaper industry adapted sufficiently to provide frequent , let alone comprehensive , reports . The earliest known newspaper report of a first @-@ class match was in the Foreign Post dated Wednesday , 7 July 1697 :

" The middle of last week a great match at cricket was played in Sussex ; there were eleven of a side , and they played for fifty guineas apiece " .

The stakes on offer confirm the importance of the fixture and the fact that it was eleven a side suggests that two strong and well @-@ balanced teams were assembled . No other details were given but the report provides real evidence to support the view that " great matches " played for high stakes were in vogue in the years following the Restoration . It was possibly an inter @-@ county match ( i.e. , Sussex versus Kent or Surrey ) and , given the Sussex venue , Charles Lennox , 1st Duke of Richmond may have been one of the patrons involved .

= = English cricket in the early 18th century = =

= = = Patrons = = =

In 1702 , the Duke of Richmond 's XI defeated an Arundel XI in Sussex . The source for this game is a receipt sent by one Saul Bradley to the Duke on 14 December 1702 . The receipt was in respect of one shilling and six pence paid by the Duke " for brandy when your Grace plaid at Cricket with Arundel men " . It is thought the brandy was bought to celebrate a victory .

After the 1st Duke of Richmond died in 1723 , his son Charles Lennox , 2nd Duke of Richmond , quickly succeeded him as cricket 's main benefactor and became a famous patron of Sussex cricket for the next thirty years . The 2nd Duke enjoyed a friendly rivalry with his friend Sir William Gage , another Sussex patron . Their teams played each other many times and their earliest known contest was on Tuesday , 20 July 1725 , five days after Sir William 's team was beaten by unknown opponents . Our knowledge of these two games is based on a humorous letter sent by Sir William to the Duke on 16 July . Sir William bemoaned that he was " shamefully beaten " the previous day in "

his first match of the year " but says nothing of his opponents . He then looked forward to playing the Duke 's team next Tuesday and wished his Grace " success in everything except his cricket match "

The main rival to Richmond and Gage was Edwin Stead of Maidstone , who was the first of the noted Kent patrons . The Sussex teams of Richmond and Gage enjoyed an inter @-@ county rivalry with Stead 's Kent that could have originated the concept of the County Championship .

= = = The terms of the wager = = =

The patrons ensured that cricket was financed in the 18th century but their interest , equally applicable to horse racing and prizefighting , was based on the opportunities that cricket provided for gambling . Every important match in the 18th century , whether eleven @-@ a @-@ side or single wicket , was played for stakes . The early newspapers recognised this and were more interested in publishing the odds than the match scores . Reports would say who won the wager rather than who won the match . Sometimes , gambling would lead to dispute and two matches ended up in court when rival interests sought legal rulings on the terms of their wagers .

On Monday , 1 September 1718 , a game on White Conduit Fields in Islington between London and the Rochester Punch Club was unfinished because some of the Rochester players walked off in an attempt to have the game declared incomplete . This was so that they would retain their stake money . London was clearly winning at the time . The game while incomplete became the subject of a lawsuit where the terms of the wager were at issue . The court ordered it to be " played out " and this happened in July 1719 . Rochester with four wickets standing needed thirty more runs to win but lost by 21 and this is cricket 's earliest known definite result .

In 1724 , Chingford v Edwin Stead 's XI ended early because the Chingford team refused to play to a finish when Stead 's team had the advantage . A court case followed and , as in 1718 , it was ordered to be played out , presumably so that all wagers could be fulfilled . It is known that Lord Chief Justice Pratt presided over the case and ordered them to play it out on Dartford Brent , though it is unclear if that was the original venue . The game was completed in 1726 . This match is the earliest reference to cricket being played in Essex , assuming Chingford was the original venue , and is the first known to have involved an Essex team .

The introduction of articles of agreement , agreed before matches by the stakeholders , largely resolved any problems between patrons and match organisers . The concept was more important in terms of defining the rules of play and eventually these were codified as the Laws of cricket .

= = = Matches of the early 18th century = = =

Periodicals called The Post Boy and The Post Man were useful sources for cricket advertisements during the early 18th century . In 1700 , a series of matches to be held on Clapham Common was pre @-@ announced on 30 March by The Post Boy . The first was to take place on Easter Monday and prizes of £ 10 and £ 20 were at stake . No match reports could be found so the results and scores remain unknown . The advert says the teams would consist of ten " Gentlemen " per side but the invitation to attend was to " Gentlemen and others " . This clearly implies that cricket had achieved both the patronage that underwrote it through the 18th century and the spectators who demonstrated its lasting popular appeal . On 24 July 1705 , The Post Man announced West of Kent v Chatham , an 11 @-@ a @-@ side game at Malling , Kent .

On 1 and 8 July 1707 , Croydon played London twice , the first game played in Croydon , possibly at Duppas Hill , and the second at Lamb 's Conduit Field in Holborn . Both matches were advertised by The Post Man as " two great matches at cricket ( to be ) plaid , between London and Croydon ; the first at Croydon on Tuesday , 1 July , and the other to be plaid in Lamb 's @-@ Conduit @-@ Fields , near Holborn , on the Tuesday following , being the 3rd ( sic ) of July " . No post @-@ match reports could be found so the results and scores are unknown . In the same year , there was a match between London and Mitcham at Lamb 's Conduit Field .

The earliest known match that definitely involved county teams , or teams using the names of



counties , was Kent v Surrey at Dartford Brent on Wednesday , 29 June 1709 . This was advertised in the Post Man the previous Saturday and played for a stake of £ 50 . Dartford Brent was a popular Kent venue in the 18th century and was probably used for matches in the 17th century . It is likely that Dartford Cricket Club , as the foremost Kent club in this period , provided not only the venue but also the nucleus of the team , while the Surrey team would have been drawn from a number of Surrey parishes and subscribed by their patron .

One player who could have taken part in the 1709 match was William Bedle ( 1680 ? 1768 ) , of Dartford , who is the earliest great player whose name has been recorded . He was " reckoned to be the most expert player in England " and must have been in his prime c.1700 to c.1725. Other good players known to have been active in the 1720s were Edwin Stead of Kent ; Edmund Chapman and Stephen Dingate of Surrey ; Tim Coleman of London ; and Thomas Waymark of Sussex .

= = = Dartford v London = = =

The first great rivalry in cricket history was between the Dartford and London clubs who are first known to have played each other in 1722 . On Wednesday , 19 August 1719 , London v Kent was played at White Conduit Fields and Kent won . The report said the teams played for " a considerable sum of money " .

On Saturday , 9 July 1720 , London v Kent at White Conduit Fields was won by London . In this match , two London fielders were badly injured by a clash of heads . H. T. Waghorn wrote that advertising and reporting of cricket ceased for some years after this game and he wondered if that was due to a perception that the sport was dangerous . The South Sea Bubble may have had an economic impact on investment and gambling as , when the South Sea Company was found to be insolvent , its crash in 1720 caused massive repercussions throughout the economy and many formerly prosperous investors were ruined . This could have included cricket patrons , while a potential impact on reporting was the application of stamp duty to newspapers as this increased their publication costs and probably caused publishers to reduce paper size with less room for sports coverage .

On Wednesday , 18 July 1722 , London v Dartford in Islington was the subject of a letter in The Weekly Journal dated 21 July 1722 . The result of the match is unknown . In 1723 , the prominent Tory politician Robert Harley , Earl of Oxford recorded in his journal : " At Dartford upon the Heath as we came out of the town , the men of Tonbridge and the Dartford men were warmly engaged at the sport of cricket , which of all the people of England the Kentish folk are the most renowned for , and of all the Kentish men , the men of Dartford lay claim to the greatest excellence " . It is more than likely to have been Dartford Brent where this game was taking place .

Dartford and London met at Dartford Brent on Thursday , 11 June 1724 and , one week later , a return game was the earliest known match at Kennington Common , near where The Oval is now sited . The result is unknown . On Monday , 10 August 1724 , there was a match in Islington ( result unknown ) which featured the combined parishes of Penshurst , Tunbridge and Wadhurst versus Dartford . This was recorded in a diary entry by one John Dawson , who may have watched it . No details are known but Mr Dawson says it was " a great cricket match " .

= = The growth of cricket in England and overseas = =

The earliest known mention of cricket being played outside England is dated Saturday , 6 May 1676 . A diarist called Henry Tonge , who was part of a British mission at Aleppo in the Ottoman Empire ( now in Syria ) , recorded that " at least forty of the English " left the city for recreational purposes and , having found a nice place to pitch a tent for dinner , they " had several pastimes and sports " including " krickett " . At six they " returned home in good order " .

By this time , cricket had been introduced to India , North America and the West Indies but the first definite references occur in the 18th century . In 1709 , cricket was played by William Byrd of Westover on his James River estates in Virginia , then a British colony . This is the earliest reference to cricket being played in the New World . In 1721 , British sailors of the East India Company were

reported to be playing cricket at Cambay , near Baroda , and this is the earliest reference to cricket being played in India . It was via the East India Company that cricket was introduced to and established in the Indian sub @-@ continent . There had not yet been any English colonisation of Australasia or southern Africa .

It is possible that cricket was introduced to the Americas and India before it had spread throughout the British Isles . For example , there is no record of cricket in Yorkshire , home of the English game 's most successful club , until 1751 . The earliest mentions of cricket in Ireland , Scotland and Wales occur even later in the 18th century .

While Britain 's seafaring and trading concerns ensured the spread of cricket overseas , at home it relied heavily on ease of transport and communications , most of these being waterborne as long journeys tended to be undertaken using coastal or river vessels . Road transport was slowly improving and , in 1706 , Parliament established the first turnpike trusts that placed a length of road under the control of trustees drawn from local landowners and traders . The turnpike trusts borrowed capital for road maintenance against the security of tolls . This arrangement became the common method of road maintenance for the next 150 years and came in time to assist the spread of cricket throughout Britain .