

In from the Cold: Tom Wills – A Nineteenth Century Sporting Hero

By

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Abstract

Tom Wills was the most important Australian sportsman of the mid-nineteenth century, but it is only in the first decade of the twenty-first century that he has grown in profile as a figure of cultural significance. Although Tom Wills is best recalled as the most important figure in early Australian Rules football, it was cricket that dominated his life. He rose to prominence in cricket during his time at Rugby school in England during the 1850s. When he returned to Australia he became the captain of the Victorian cricket team. On 10 July 1858 he penned what has become one of the most famous documents in Australian sporting history: a letter calling for the formation of a ‘football’ club. Only three years later his father was murdered by aborigines in central Queensland in what is recorded as the highest number of European settlers killed by aborigines in a single assault. Remarkably, only five years after his father’s murder, Tom Wills coached an aboriginal cricket team from western Victoria. Tom Wills’ life ended early, as did so many lives of colonial sportsmen, shortened by the effects of alcohol. Alcohol abuse led directly to the suicide of Wills at the age of 44 years. This thesis is the first academic attempt to uncover and then critically review some of the important parameters that shaped his life.

Declaration

‘I, Gregory Mark de Moore, declare that the PhD thesis entitled ‘In From the Cold: Tom Wills – A Nineteenth Century Sporting Hero’ is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work’.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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I would like to acknowledge Dr Rob Hess, my supervisor at Victoria University, who has guided me patiently through the doctoral process. His care and organisation over many years has been vital in bringing this thesis to its conclusion. Adjunct Professor Richard Cashman at University of Technology, Sydney, co-supervised this project and has offered encouragement and critiqued the thesis at various points for which I am grateful.

In a project of this length there are literally hundreds of people who have assisted with my questions. I can only thank all of them. To name each person and institution would require pages of tributes. Each of these people will know of their assistance and their contributions will be found at different times in the footnotes and in the bibliography. Of all these people I would especially thank Mr Peter Gill who assisted with my search for various materials in the state of Victoria. The Melbourne Cricket Club's wonderful collection and staff were of great help over many years. Finally I would like to thank the descendants of the Wills family: Terry Wills Cooke, Tom Wills and Lawton W. Cooke for allowing me to study their collections of family documents.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Heather and my two children, Eve and Willem. Without their love and support the project would never have been undertaken let alone completed.

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Chapter One

Introduction and Methodology

... [drink], the curse of these colonies – the demon which has desolated so many homes and blasted the fair fame of thousands – got its hold upon him ...¹

Thomas Wentworth Wills was the most important sportsman of his time. He captained the Victorian colony at cricket and was the first hero of Australian Rules football. Although his portrait now adorns the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC), he died in 1880 isolated and rejected by much of his family. An alcoholic, living on the outskirts of Melbourne, he committed suicide by puncturing his heart while in a frenzied delirium. This thesis is a detailed analysis of the key dimensions that shaped his life.

This introductory chapter starts with a biographical sketch of Tom Wills. The purpose of this is two-fold. The first is to establish the chronology of his life and the second, to introduce the social, sporting, family and psychological elements that will be expanded in this study. This is followed by a literature review on Tom Wills; a discussion on the scope and structure of the thesis; and finally an outline of the sources used for this thesis.

1 A Sketch of Tom Wills' Life

1.1 A Sporting Career

When Tom Wills died in 1880 he left behind a story more intriguing than most. Wills is credited with being the champion cricketer of the colony of Victoria and one of the co-founders of Australian Rules football.² Tom Wills was a man consumed by sport. From the time he returned home from Rugby school in 1856, as a 21-year-old man, Wills was a dominant figure in colonial sport. Throughout his short life there was a self-

¹ *Leader*, 8 May 1880, p. 13. This introductory sketch of Tom Wills' life is based upon Gregory M. de Moore, 'The Suicide of Thomas Wentworth Wills', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 171 (December 1999), pp. 656-8.

destructive disregard for the consequences of his behaviour. At times of significant sporting opportunity he was to miss out through poor timing or his own recklessness. In 1861, on the eve of the first English cricket tour of Australia by H. H. Stephenson and his team, Wills was plucked from Melbourne by his father to travel to central Queensland. In 1866-7 he coached the western district aboriginal team but did not travel with the side to England in 1868.³ His great cricketing feats were achieved well before the first Test between England and Australia in 1877.⁴

1.2 A Pioneering Family

Tom Wills was born on 19 August 1835. His birthplace is subject to some conjecture but is generally thought to be on the Molonglo Plains outside modern day Canberra.⁵ In 1840 his father Horatio Spencer Wills, a wealthy pastoralist and strident nationalist, travelled overland from New South Wales (NSW) to the western district of Victoria.⁶ Later to become a Victorian parliamentarian, Horatio Wills was the dominant influence in his son's life. Tom was sent by his father on the long voyage to England in 1850. He attended Rugby school until 1855. There he became not the studious academic hoped for by his father, but a champion all round sportsman.⁷

He returned to Melbourne in late 1856. Wills assumed the position of champion cricketer of the colony, leading Victoria to successes over NSW. It was a time of intense intercolonial rivalry. It was upon the muscular backs of sporting sons that social and political wars were most visibly fought. It was the older NSW colony against the upstart Victorians, the latter blessed and powered by the gold finds of the 1850s.⁸ On 10 July

² G. M. Hibbins, 'The Cambridge Connection', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 6 (September 1989), pp. 172-92. Personal communication with Gillian Hibbins at the beginning of my research gave me some assistance in my early newspaper searches for details on Wills' life.

³ There are numerous references that briefly encapsulate Tom Wills' life. For the above information see, T. S. Wills Cooke, *The Currency Lad* (Leopold: T. S. Wills Cooke, 1997), pp. 201-32.

⁴ For example, see Keith Dunstan, *The Paddock that Grew. The Story of the Melbourne Cricket Club* (Surry Hills: Hutchinson, 1988), pp. 42-50.

⁵ For more evidence on the date and place of birth, see in this thesis Chapter Five 'A Father's Care'.

⁶ In this thesis, modern and nineteenth century geographic descriptors are used interchangeably for ease of understanding.

⁷ See Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, pp. 201-7.

⁸ An example of this rivalry and how it embroiled Wills is covered in the controversies surrounding throwing in cricket in chapter three of this thesis. Cricket was important in Port Phillip society well before Wills returned from England. See, J. W. C. Cumes, *Their Chastity was not too Rigid. Leisure Times in Early Australia* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire/Reed, 1979), pp. 301-3. Cumes gives a

1858, a letter written by Wills was published in the sporting paper *Bell's Life in Victoria*.⁹ This letter changed the course of sporting history in Australia. It enshrined Wills' suggestion that a 'foot-ball club' be formed and gave impetus to a new style of football. Later to be christened Australian Rules football, it is the most popular spectator sport in the country. Wills was an early champion of this game and helped shape its early rules. In a young country feeling its way towards a nascent independence he was the key figure in the creation of this indigenous sport. Independent and a wanderer, he was soon playing cricket and football for clubs throughout the colony.

In 1861 at the beckoning of his father he was summoned from Victoria to the family property of Cullin-la-Ringo in Queensland.¹⁰ On the afternoon of 17 October, his father and eighteen settlers were murdered by local aborigines. It was the largest number of Europeans killed in a single conflict with aborigines in Australian history. Tom Wills was fortunately away from the campsite at the time of the attack and survived. Intriguingly, and despite this traumatic event, he later coached an aboriginal cricket team. This team from western Victoria was captained by Wills on Boxing Day, 1866, on the Melbourne Cricket Ground to the applause of 10,000 spectators. Further games played throughout Sydney and major provincial centres in 1867 created tremendous excitement. As it was to be on numerous other occasions, Wills fell out of favour and by the time this aboriginal team toured England in 1868, he had been usurped as the team's captain and coach. This honour fell to Charles Lawrence an English cricketer who came to Australia with the first English team to visit these shores in 1861.¹¹

1.3 Sport, Alcohol and Suicide

A charismatic, and at times narcissistic man, with a flare for conflict and a prickly creative temperament, Wills' life was consumed by sport. Accusations of throwing in cricket, evidence of alcohol's affect on him on the sporting field and his

brief background to the importance of cricket and its social setting in the colony of Port Phillip in the 1830s and 1840s. Wills, through his talent and English education, helped raise its profile in the colonies.

⁹ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 10 July 1858, p. 3.

¹⁰ There were several ways in which Cullin-la-Ringo was spelt. I have adopted this spelling throughout. Slight variations occur in some of the quotations.

¹¹ For the most comprehensive account of this tour, see, D. J. Mulvaney and R. Harcourt, *Cricket Walkabout: The Australian Aborigines in England*, 2nd ed. (South Melbourne: MacMillan, 1988).

tempestuous public letters were subjects of public gossip and voyeurism. The link between sport and alcohol was never far away. In the late 1870s newspaper reports of Wills thinned as his once transcendent sporting ability started to decay. The last decade of his private life is scarcely recorded in surviving contemporary documents. In the final years of his life he lived with his de facto, Sarah Theresa Barbor. Wills drifted into social decline with little income, removed from a previously adoring public. Whilst in the throes of delirium tremens, Tom Wills committed suicide on 2 May 1880.¹²

2 Literature Review

2.1 Biographies

There have been two books devoted to the life of Tom Wills. These are Martin Flanagan's novel, *The Call*, and Les Perrin's *Cullin-La-Ringo*. Neither are comprehensive or academic works in the sense of providing detailed references and explanatory notes. Perrin and Flanagan are presented with the same core difficulty. How does one shape a motley collection of facts and mythology into a story?¹³

Flanagan takes a creative path and shapes an historical novel based on what facts he has garnered about Wills. *The Call* is an historical imaging into the life of Wills. One of the technical difficulties is how to bring together the morsels known about Wills into a meaningful whole. To do this Flanagan takes the reader through a collage of actual

¹² See de Moore, 'Suicide of Wills', pp. 656-8. More archival evidence on these issues is to be found in the individual chapters on alcohol, family and suicide.

¹³ M. Flanagan, *The Call* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998) and L. Perrin, *Cullin-La-Ringo. The Triumph and Tragedy of Tommy Wills*. (Stafford: Perrin, 1998). See Flanagan's interview about *The Call*, The SportsFactor, <http://www.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/1998/sportsf/sf981106.htm>. Also M. Flanagan, 'Tom Wills, the Original Spirit', *Australian Football*, 'The Spirit of Football', Issue 1, winter 2004, pp. 10-6. *The Call* is now also a theatre play, see, C. Critchley, 'Fall of footy star', *Herald Sun*, 18 October 2004, p. 100; H. Thomson, 'For a Sporting Chance', *Age*, 'Arts', 19 October 2004, p. 6; Rick Kane, 'The Call – More Bone than Flesh', <http://www.australianrules.com.au/2004stories/thecallreview.html> M. Flanagan, *The Call* – Theatre Production, CUB Malthouse, South Bank, 2004. M. Flanagan, *The Call*, Adapted and Directed by Bruce Myles, Education Notes, Playbox. Also J. Pearce, 'G is for a Glorious Past', *Age*, 'Education', 12 September 2001, p. 10. There have also been notes collected in preparation for a biography on Wills but which were never published. See for example the unpublished notes in the possession of Rex Harcourt, Melbourne Cricket Club; see unpublished manuscript of C. E. Sayers, Box 2698, State Library Victoria on the Wills family; also the handwritten script of an anonymous author in the *Victorian Cricket Association*, handwritten notes on Tom Wills – *Blazing Australian Trails. Pastoral and Sporting*. Author unknown. c. 1930. There has also been a proposal for a film script, see, Bob Millington (ed.), 'Trophies Wanted', *Age*, News Diary, 6 August 1987, p. 2, and 'The Saga of the Great Game Gains yet another ...', *Age*, News Diary, 7 August 1987, p. 2.

and fictitious snapshots. It is not orchestrated in strict chronological order. Even when not directly quoting documents, the text is informed by and commonly utilises the same words used by Wills and his contemporaries. The reader is cautioned that material is not always factual but is shaped after the author's own inclinations. The story traverses different time zones. Snatches of fact are stretched into fantasy and the result is the creation of a Wills mythology.¹⁴

At times Flanagan and Wills fuse into a single being and speak as one. Or at least it is ambiguous as to whose viewpoint is being expressed. The author draws parallels with his own life using his personal voyage to reflect on Wills and shared human frailties. Of all the defining threads that run throughout the life of Tom Wills, Flanagan deliberately skews his presentation towards Wills' connections with indigenous Australians. *The Call* is not an academic piece; it is not intended as such. Writing an historical novel allows the author to research certain areas then toss away the cane and embark on creative invention in sympathy with whatever documented evidence has been revealed. It means that crevices can be skipped over without exploration. The task becomes one of artistic creation rather than of comprehensive

¹⁴ By not strictly adhering to the evidence, Flanagan can utilise unsubstantiated information. This perpetuates unconfirmed statements and in several instances distorts the evidence to create a preferred version of Wills. *The Call* is similar to other powerful mythological stories from the same period. These include those of Ned Kelly and the Melbourne Cup both of which Flanagan exploits. The manner in which the Kelly story has been re-told and its mythologising tells a lot about how Wills' history is being shaped. There are common features between the two men. Kelly died young and was defiant towards the ruling authority and there is a sense of being wronged; both were natural born leaders; both identified strongly with the common man; both used bravado and both portrayed a sense of invulnerability. See, Lynden Barber, 'Behind the Mask', *Weekend Australian*, 1-2 March 2003, pp. 4-6, for a discussion on the mythology of Ned Kelly. 'All countries love to suck on the tit of sentimentality and romanticism when it comes to telling their national stories, their foundation myths. At worst these are lies, at best rose-tinged embellishments of the truth. But as social glue their function is powerful. That's why people are attracted to them – not because they really want to know the facts on which the stories are based but because they need to belong, to have a sense of national identity'. Although written about Kelly the same could be said of many of the representations of Wills. Also see, Ian Jones, *Ned Kelly – A Short Life* (Port Melbourne: Lothian Books, 1995). See critiques of *The Call*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, date uncertain, approximately December, 1998; Barry Oakley, 'The Harder they Call', *Weekend Australian*, 5-6 December 1998, p. 14. G. M. de Moore, 'Review of M. Flanagan's *The Call*,' *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 16, no. 1, November 1999 pp. 111-3. Other sportsman have been similarly mythologised. See, for example, Peter Fenton, *Les Darcy. The Legend of the Fighting Man* (Sydney: Ironbark, 1994). Darcy's story was quite different in a number of ways but contained the important moral dimension of his not signing up as part of conscription and the animosity it created. In a similar manner it is the bigger stories around Wills that sustain interest in him. See also, Greg Growden *The Fleetwood-Smith Story. A Wayward Genius* (Crows Nest: ABC Enterprises, 1991) which also explores the themes of alcohol and little sense of responsibility. Other Australian examples that touch upon some similar themes include June Senyard, *Harry Williams. An Australian Golfing Tragedy* (Melbourne: Ryan Publishing, 1998), also see Marnie Haig-Muir, 'Review of J. Senyard, *Harry Williams. An Australian Golfing Tragedy*, *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 18, no. 2 (May 2002). pp. 91-3. Also Rick Smith, *Cricket's Enigma. The Sid Barnes Story* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999).

historical accuracy. Its strengths and weaknesses are those of a novel rather than of an academic history. Caricatures rather than full assessments of personalities are portrayed. These caricatures have been consumed by readers and reproduced without critique.¹⁵ It would not be clear to most readers where the writer embellishes, deviates from or is unaware of the historical evidence.

Perrin takes a more traditional biographical approach based upon strict chronology. One of the chief problems of the traditional biographical approach is the arduous research required to establish even the most basic of details about Wills. Perrin's historical task is more demanding than Flanagan's and this opens his work to a critical appraisal of historical accuracy. Perrin follows the Wills' lifespan without the crisscrossing of Flanagan's chronology. Like Flanagan, he has as the book's centrepiece Wills' links with aboriginal Australia. The core of the book is from chapter five through twelve, which concentrates upon the period where Wills joins his father on his journey to Queensland. The unfolding events are informed by family documentation that climax with the death of Horatio Wills. Perrin importantly adds a number of previously unpublished references.¹⁶

There are several weaknesses in Perrin's portrayal. Perrin's text lacks a critical reflective depth and there is insufficient analysis of material.¹⁷ The context for Wills' life in several key areas is not developed. Thus there is little discussion on issues surrounding suicide, alcohol, English public school education, the culture of early sport and the development of Tom Wills' personality. Despite a limited bibliography, there is no detailed referencing or index. Perrin at times relies heavily upon secondary sources without cross-referencing with primary sources, so he is prone to repeat a number of factual errors perpetrated in previous accounts of Wills.

¹⁵ There are dozens of such examples where material is reproduced from this novel as if it was an accurate historical account. See for example, Peter Roebuck, 'A Man for all Seasons', *Age*, 3 December 1998, p. 6. The mythology on Wills is spreading to art forms other than literature, see, Warwick McFadyen, 'Thomas the Story Engine', *Sunday Age 'Agenda'*, 18 March 2001, p. 12.

¹⁶ G. M. de Moore, 'Review of L. Perrin's *Cullin-la-Ringo. The Triumph and Tragedy of Tommy Wills*,' *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 16, no. 2 (May 2000), pp. 127-8.

¹⁷ For example, Wills had a testy social and playing relationship with the English gentleman cricketer W. J. Hammersley. The latter played for the Melbourne Cricket Club and was later an acerbic commentator on matters sporting. To just state, as Perrin does, that Wills and Hammersley were close friends, does not convey the complexity of shared English and Australian experiences and the developing strains between the two.

2.2 Other References

The starting point for many references to Wills is the brief entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.¹⁸ This encapsulates most of what had been commonly known about Wills, including several errors which have been perpetuated. The most scholarly work on Wills comes from Mancini and Hibbins' reworking of H. C. A. Harrison's autobiography *Running with the Ball*.¹⁹ In the preface to this book, the authors explore many key features of Wills' life. This has recently been extended in a recent comprehensive sporting history of colonial Melbourne by Hibbins.²⁰ Also valuable is Hibbins' work on the origins of Australian Rules football.²¹ Descendants of the Wills family have also written family histories which provide the starting point for any study of Tom Wills' family.²² There have also been numerous short non-academic articles published throughout the twentieth century. The accuracy of these is variable.²³

To date there has been only one thesis that has attempted to analyse some aspects of the life of Tom Wills.²⁴ There are many biographical snapshots of Wills as part of larger articles or compendia on sportsmen.²⁵ The story of Tom Wills has also

¹⁸ W. F. Mandle, 'Thomas Wentworth Wills', in B. Nairn (ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 6 (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1976), 409-10. This reference is the source of oft repeated sound bites on Tom Wills. These catch phrases such as 'the Grace of Australia' and 'a model of muscular Christianity' have caricatured Wills for over 120 years.

¹⁹ A. Mancini and G. M. Hibbins, *Running with the Ball. Football's Foster Father* (Melbourne: Lynedoch Publications, 1987).

²⁰ G. M. Hibbins, *Sport and Racing in Colonial Melbourne. The Cousins and Me: Colden Harrison, Tom Wills and William Hammersley* (Melbourne: Lynedoch Publications, 2007).

²¹ Hibbins, 'The Cambridge Connection', pp. 172-92. School documents provided through Harrow, Rugby and Winchester schools were also helpful in unravelling the early rules of Australian football.

²² For example, Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*; R. V. Pockley, *Ancestor Treasure Hunt. The Edward Wills Family and Descendants in Australia 1797-1976* (Sydney: Wentworth Books, 1976).

²³ One of the better newspaper articles from the last ten years was Tony de Bolfo, 'Shall I Murder Her or Not?', *Herald Sun 'News Review'*, 10 July 1993, pp. 16-7. It is an example of how primary archival material on Wills has slowly come to light.

²⁴ The author has read an honours thesis examining the links between Wills and aborigines. John McPherson, 'Marngrook, Thomas Wills and The Great Australian Silence', Honours thesis, Department of Humanities, Media and Cultural Studies, Southern Cross University, 2005. This issue is further discussed in Chapter Four.

²⁵ Peter Huxford, 'Thomas Wentworth Wills', in R. Cashman, W. Franks, J. Maxwell, E. Sainsbury, B. Stoddart, A. Weaver, R. Webster (eds), *The A-Z of Australian Cricketers* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 329. Also see, Peter Huxford, 'Thomas Wentworth Wills', in R. Cashman, W. Franks, J. Maxwell, B. Stoddart, A. Weaver and R. Webster (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 589-90. There are numerous popular historical references of variable accuracy that give brief biographical information and tend to highlight Wills' role in early football, for example, K. Piesse, *The Complete Guide to Australian Football* (Sydney: Ironbark, 1993), pp. 302-4.

been incorporated into more general histories.²⁶ None of these have attempted to ascertain the scope of archival material and then study these archives in detail.

Nineteenth century English cricket annuals are valuable for an English perspective. They give detail of Wills' cricketing exploits in England during the 1850s. In addition there are annual Australian cricket guides from the period. These guides are a source of specific match details on Wills and recreate the mood of the period.²⁷ General cricket and football histories provide biographical outlines of variable quality. Such references gave hints of undiscovered archival material that were discovered during the study of this thesis. One of the better general histories is Frank Tyson's delightful history of the Richmond Cricket Club which covers aspects of Wills' period with this club.²⁸ A recent extensive general history of the Melbourne Cricket Club offered considerable new information about the history of that club.²⁹ Cricket and football histories of clubs and states provided further information about Wills. These offered historical context and further snippets of Wills' sporting life.³⁰ A biography on Fred Spofforth, a national hero and champion fast bowler soon after the period of Wills' dominance, offered a close study of nineteenth century cricket and further hinted of archival material to be pursued on Wills.³¹ Wills as a key figure in the introduction of Australian football is mentioned in numerous articles on this topic.³² David Frith's *By*

²⁶ For example, see Ken Inglis, *Australian Colonists* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1993), pp. 148-54, 194. Also see, Bruce Moore, *Burra. County of Murray. A History of Burra in the County of Murray in the Queanbeyan District* (ACT: self-published, 1981), pp. 80-4.

²⁷ For example, Frederick Lillywhite (ed.), *Lillywhite's Guide and Companion to Cricketers from 1851 to 1885* (London: W. and T. Piper). A. Haygarth, *Cricketers Scores and biographies. 1855-1876* (London: Longmans & Co., 1876) The fact that Wills did not play against England in the major representative teams meant that he was largely lost to the rich literature of English cricket. There were many Australian annual references. See for example, H. Biers and W. Fairfax (eds), *The Australian Cricketer's Guide, 1856-7* (Melbourne: W. Fairfax and Co., 1857).

²⁸ Frank Tyson, *The History of the Richmond Cricket Club* (Hawthorn: Hudson Publishing, 1987), pp. 45, 152, 167. This reference led to the private collection of Mr. Ivo Kelaart. Also see, Dunstan, *The Paddock*, pp. 19-20. Also, J. Ross (ed.), *100 Years of Australian Football 1897-1996* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1996), pp. 10-30, provides a compilations of several authors views on Wills and his contribution to early Australian football.

²⁹ Alf Batchelder, *Pavilions in the Park: A History of the Melbourne Cricket Club and its Ground* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2005). This was of particular value given Wills' close association with the club.

³⁰ Roger Page, *A History of Tasmanian Cricket* (Hobart: Government Printer, 1957). Also, Robert Coleman, *Seasons in the Sun. The Story of the Victorian Cricket Association* (North Melbourne: Hargreen Publishing, 1993). Also Joseph Johnson, *For the Love of the Game. The Centenary History of the Victorian Amateur Football Association 1892-1992* (South Yarra: Hyland House, 1992), pp. 1-15.

³¹ Richard Cashman, *The Demon Spofforth* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 1990).

³² There are too many such brief references to cite but for a succinct and generally accurate summary of the origins of Australian football see, Richard Stremski in Wray Vamplew, Katharine Moore, John O'Hara, Richard Cashman, Ian Jobling (eds), *Oxford Companion to Australian Sport* (Melbourne:

His Own Hand. A Study of Cricket Suicides, has biographical snapshots of a large number of players who committed suicide. The entry on Wills was one of several starting points for an analysis of this aspect of his life.³³

2.3 Errors

The literature on Wills is littered with errors and unconfirmed statements. It is of some value to reflect upon why there have been so many errors in the depiction of Wills' life. Firstly there is the propagation of errors where secondary sources have not been checked against primary documents. This has been a significant source of mythology for Wills. Secondly, because of the apparently scarce archival evidence and the immense time required to unearth what was available, gaps in the history have been sealed with obedient fiction. Thirdly, the story of Tom Wills has been suited to and prone to elaboration when authors are seduced by the appeal of heroic mythology.

One of the aims of this thesis was to prove or disprove statements made about Tom Wills but for which little or no archival evidence had as yet been forthcoming. There may be stories that have survived and been passed through an oral history which, may be true, but for which there is no corroborative evidence. These stories have been retained with a note that there is no supporting evidence.³⁴

3 Scope and Structure of the Thesis

The data collected for this thesis was systematically coded into the chronology of Wills' life and the identified themes to be analysed. Each chapter addresses one

Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 36-40. Also typical were references that were part of mainstream periodicals, see, Leonie Sandercock, 'Aussie Rules. A Short History of Australian Football', in *This Australia*, autumn, 1983, vol. 2, pp. 41-9.

³³ D. Frith, *By His Own Hand. A Study of Cricket's Suicides* (Crows Nest: ABC Enterprises, 1990), pp. 171-7.

³⁴ There are countless references on Tom Wills that rely on poor historical evidence. These blend fact, claim and fantasy. In the history of football, see for example, Hugh Buggy, 'Tom Wills and Our Football', *Advocate Sports* (c. 1967), from private notes of Rex Harcourt; Piesse, *The Complete Guide*, p. 114, pp. 302-4, giving the date 1855 when Wills first organised football in the Geelong region; 'They Started It!', *The War Cry*, 31 August 1996, pp. 2-3, this article has for the most part many accurate points but has several errors or claims that have not been proved such as Wills being responsible for fostering the game in Bendigo and Ballarat. Also that Wills and Harrison were supposed to have visited Adelaide in 1874 to promote the game and that they attempted to organise a promotional tour of England by Geelong and Melbourne in 1880.

theme in the life of Tom Wills. A thematic approach allowed for a more detailed analysis. A purely biographical format would not have allowed such an in-depth analysis of the factors that shaped his life. However each chapter is written within a biographical framework.³⁵

3.1 The Six Themes of this Study

The body of the thesis is divided into six chapters. Each chapter explores in detail one aspect of Tom Wills' life. These chapters cover the following themes – Rugby school, sporting career, indigenous Australians, family and developmental history, alcohol and suicide. The selection of these dimensions was derived from a preliminary reading of available material. Other themes, such as the role of religion within his family and Wills' relationships with other sportsmen, are touched upon within the above chapters.

Several key themes in Wills' life, which could have been developed into chapters, were excluded. These themes include a study of the amateur-professional sporting division in nineteenth century Australia and analysis of aspects of his family history, such as his relationship with his siblings and mother. Other themes not covered are a study of the resurrection and fall of Tom Wills as a sporting hero late in his career; the period of his life in England after leaving Rugby school; and an analysis of the published letters written by Wills. The above issues are mentioned only in passing. After reviewing the evidence these latter themes were regarded as subsidiary and were excluded as possible chapters.

Although a thematic approach allows a subject to be studied at depth it suffers from an inevitable overlap of information between different themes. The emphasis given to each dimension has been shaped by three main factors: the accessibility of material; the writer's predilections; and areas of expertise. An analysis of the intimate life of Wills as revealed through primary documents was placed within the larger picture of these issues of the day. This approach was adopted for each of the chapters. In

³⁵ By comparison see, K. D. Edwards, 'Black Man in a White Man's World: Aboriginal Cricketer Eddie Gilbert', PhD thesis, University of Queensland, School of Human Movement Studies, 1993, as a sporting biography and thesis constructed along chronological lines.

so doing, an attempt was made to assess to what degree Wills exemplified the issues of his time and to what degree did the contextual issues shape him.³⁶

3.2 Suicide

A death, particularly by suicide, is a pivotal point for an analysis of someone's life. This aspect of the thesis was informed partly by the background of the author as a psychiatrist. While this, as any other attribute, could be viewed as a distorting influence, it nonetheless is likely to bring a realistic and practical assessment of Wills' suicide. Suicide tends to provoke the expression of ill-informed statements which reside in the popular consciousness. This was so in Wills' case. Wills' suicide never lurked far from centre stage when studying all aspects of his life. While it is untrue to conclude that all events in his life led inevitably to his suicide, there is a natural tendency to seek the factors that tilted his trajectory towards self-murder.³⁷

Humans attach meaning to, and look for an understanding of, a person's suicide in a way that tries to make sense of the event. This cultural interpretation though vital in incorporating the event into human affairs, may have little explanatory power for the death itself. Indeed it may miscast and distort the suicide consistent with the prejudice of the day.

The general suicide literature is vast. The literature for this study was selected to give context to, and understanding of, suicide in the late nineteenth century and from a modern perspective. In addition to primary sources, the selection of secondary sources was based on tracking what seemed relevant to Wills' suicide.

The chapter on suicide is partially based on the concept of a psychological autopsy.³⁸ A psychological autopsy is the reconstruction of the biography of an

³⁶ Several texts were consulted to provide a broader context for aspects of his life. For example, Paul de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees. The Upper Class in Victoria 1850-80* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) provided detail on many of the gentlemen with whom Wills associated.

³⁷ Similar conclusions are noted in Gideon Haigh, *Mystery Spinner. The Story of Jack Iverson* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1999), p. 319.

³⁸ For more details on the concept of a psychological autopsy, see, Douglas Jacobs and Marci Ellyn Klein, 'The Expanding Role of Psychological Autopsies', in A. A. Leenaars (ed.), *Suicidology. Essays in Honor of Edwin Shneidman* (Northvale, New Jersey, London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), pp. 207-47. They quote Leston L. Havens, 'The Anatomy of a Suicide', *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 272, no. 8 (25 February 1865), p. 401, '... suicide is the final common pathway of diverse circumstances, of an

individual who has suicided. At its core, is the perspective of trying to appreciate what factors led to the suicide. It assembles a psychological profile from personal documents, official records, and public accounts of his or her life and death. It charts a trajectory that might explain and put into context the person's suicide. The chapter on suicide starts with a description of Tom Wills' suicide and then reconstructs the events, stressors, and illness that led towards his death. There have been various accounts of his suicide, written with variable accuracy, but none of them have been composed with an expert psychiatric view of his mental state and the phenomenology he displayed. Indeed, much of the published commentary of the suicide of Wills can be characterised as extravagant, romantic, inaccurate and distorted.³⁹

The reconstruction of his suicide along the lines of a psychological autopsy relies on recorded evidence and is sceptical of the more romantic notions of his death.⁴⁰ Although social factors were important in Wills' suicide, there is less emphasis in this thesis on a sociological perspective of the cause of his death.⁴¹

3.3 Alcohol

Cricket in the mid-nineteenth century was closely linked to alcohol and local publicans. Professional cricketers often managed local hotels. The commercial connection between publican players and sporting clubs were exploited by both sides.

interdependent network rather than an isolated cause, a knot of circumstances tightening around a single time and place, with the result, sign, symptom, trait or act'.

³⁹ See, Brian Hansen, *The Centurions. The History of Australian Rules Goal Kickers, 1897-1997* (Box Hill: Brian Hansen Nominees Pty Ltd, 1997), pp. iv-vi. Although highly romanticised and historically inaccurate, the claims made are resurrected in more recent publications written with various degrees of sophistication. See M. P. Sharp, 'Australian Football in Sydney Before 1914', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 4, no. 1 (November 1987), pp. 27-45, for discussion on some difficulties faced in establishing Australian football beyond Victoria in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁰ There are some aspects of a psychiatric history that are more robust and able to be translated across time – these include where symptoms and signs are recorded in a language which largely remains unchanged. Other aspects of psychiatric status, such as private thoughts and interpretations of behaviour, are far more difficult to be confident of and require an understanding of cultural and social context.

⁴¹ This thesis does not emphasise the sociological aspects of suicide as it is felt that this has less explanatory power in examining an individual case such as Wills. For further discussion on these issues, the classic text on this aspect is E. Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1966). See also Riaz Hassan, 'One Hundred Years of Emile Durkheim's Suicide: A Study in Sociology', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 32, 1998, pp. 168-71; R. Hassan, *Suicide Explained. The Australian Experience* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1995), pp. 131-45. Also see, Steven Stack, 'Suicide: A Decade Review of the Sociological Literature', *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 4, 1982, pp. 41-66. For further discussion on sociology and social influence pertaining to suicide, R. W. Maris, A. L. Berman and M. M. Silverman, 'The Social Relations

These cricketers tendered for the right to furnish games with refreshments. The income from refreshments, for example, was a major supply of money for the Melbourne Cricket Club. Some of these publican cricketers were compatriots and friends of Wills. It was in this context that Wills and numerous other sportsmen drank heavily. This consumption of alcohol was played out within the broad societal conflict of the time between commercial forces that encouraged the growth of the alcohol related industries and the temperance societies.

Wills embodies a tradition that weds alcohol to sport in Australian culture as prevalent today as it was over 100 years ago. By the 1870s public comments were aired about Wills' alcohol use and its effect upon his sporting performances. The chapter on alcohol places Wills' alcohol abuse within the wider context of alcohol and sport of the day. This dimension was chosen for two principal reasons. The first is that any understanding of Wills' suicide must incorporate a study of his alcohol abuse, as this led directly to his death. Secondly and more broadly, the study of alcohol use amongst Australian sportsman has received virtually no historical academic analysis. This is somewhat surprising given the frequently expressed views on drinking and sport in Australia. There is no definitive text on Australian sport and alcohol.⁴² This deficit in the literature was partly offset by reviewing nineteenth century medical journals and social literature on alcohol abuse to give a detailed context to alcohol consumption in sport.

3.4 Sporting Career

Wills is remembered above all else as a sportsman. Like many other colonial sportsmen, he excelled at cricket and football. He played intercolonial cricket from 1857 until 1876. He was a man who was always the centre of attention. Somewhat prickly and narcissistic he was embroiled in most of the controversies of the day. Wills saw

of Suicide', in R. W. Maris, A. L. Berman and M. M. Silverman (eds), *Comprehensive Textbook of Suicidology* (New York; London: The Guildford Press, 2000), pp. 240-65.

⁴² See Richard Cashman, *'Ave a Go, Yer Mug!* (Sydney: Collins, 1984), pp. 11-37 for an overview of some aspects of alcohol and nineteenth century cricket. See for a review of historical patterns of drinking in Australia, A. E. Dingle, "'The Truly Magnificent Thirst": An Historical Survey of Australian Drinking Habits', *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 75, October 1980, pp. 227-49 and chapter six of this thesis.

himself primarily as a cricketer but in recent years it is Wills' role in Australian Rules football that has come into prominence.

Any analysis of Wills must covers aspects of his sporting life. A comprehensive review of his sporting career is a thesis in itself and would lend itself to a conventional sporting biography. This would not allow the other dimensions of Wills' life to be analysed with thoroughness. As a compromise, three key sporting areas are analysed in this thesis: the controversies surrounding his bowling action; an analysis of the recently proposed link between Australian Rules football and an aboriginal game called Marngrook; and how Wills was remembered with respect to his role in football during and after his life.

3.5 Family and Developmental History

The basis of this chapter is a comprehensive analysis of family letters and other private documents. The first task was to find, collect and then outline the extent of this archival evidence. This task had not been undertaken in any previous research on Wills. In the process a number of previously unknown letters were uncovered. The breadth of this correspondence is seen in the bibliography. Up until this point the most comprehensive collection of letters was that gathered for the family history, *The Currency Lad*.⁴³

The literature emphasises the key relationship between Tom Wills and his father. Given the latter's key role in determining Tom's trajectory this emphasis is well placed. The portrayals of his father have tended to be caricatures rather than full portraits. Horatio Wills has generally been portrayed as a dominating, overpowering figure bordering on the buffoon or a benign loving, powerful family figurehead. This chapter studies the relationship between father and son using more primary material than previous studies. It also reviews aspects of Tom Wills' personality as revealed by private correspondence. The limitations of the size of the thesis mean that

⁴³ Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*. There were several repositories of Wills family papers and early biographical references, such as the essays from State Library of Victoria, MS 9140 MSB 455.

correspondence which details his other family relationships are covered only in passing to highlight relevant issues of the time.

3.6 Aborigines

The fifth dimension to be analysed is Tom Wills' links with indigenous Australians. His relationship with indigenous Australians was notable at four junctures in his life. The first was as a child in western Victoria in the 1840s; the second in Queensland in the 1860s after the murder of his father by local aborigines; the third his contribution to the aboriginal cricket team that toured England in 1868 and fourthly the recent reworking of his life that has seen a mythology grow around his aboriginal links. Again the size of this thesis prohibits each of these issues to be analysed in detail. Hence emphasis has been given to his involvement with the cricket team and his reaction to his father's murder. The evaluation of this dimension Wills' life is hampered by a lack of documentation that recorded aboriginal points of view.⁴⁴

The books by Flanagan and Perrin emphasise this dimension in his life.⁴⁵ Although there are significant works on the aboriginal cricket team to England, which include references to Wills, they are not constructed from the viewpoint of Wills.⁴⁶ Further material was uncovered with respect to Wills' role with the aboriginal team. An early twenty-first-century perspective has endowed Wills with almost a mythological link with aboriginal Australia. This is touched upon at a number of points in the thesis but perhaps most noticeably in the chapter on Wills' supposed links with the early aboriginal game of Marngrook.

3.7 Rugby School and England

Wills arrived in England in 1850 and returned to Australia in 1856. The data gathered from England allows the crucial adolescent period of Wills' life to be placed

⁴⁴ M. F. Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835-86* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1979), p. 1, notes similar limitations in the broader study of relations between aborigines and Europeans of a time period similar to this thesis.

⁴⁵ The spirit of Flanagan's writing resembles a previously undiscovered manuscript mentioned in *The Call*, 'Blazing Australian Trails Pastoral and Sporting', located in the Victorian Cricket Association. This manuscript was written around the 1930s and the author is unknown. Written in a panoramic romantic tradition, its spirit, tenor and sometimes content is reflected closely in *The Call*.

⁴⁶ Mulvaney and Harcourt, *Cricket Walkabout*.

within the context of what is known of sport in nineteenth-century English public schools. Detailed biographical material, much of which was hitherto unknown, was reviewed. New material relating to Wills' academic career, his role in football and cricket, allow a more sophisticated understanding of how his personality and sporting career developed. This period was crucial in organising his thoughts and developing his skills with which he reshaped Australian sport on his return. For reasons of space the non-sporting aspects of his time at Rugby school and his eighteen months in England and Ireland after Rugby school are largely excluded from the thesis.

4 Biography as Historical Enquiry

4.1 The Relationship between Writer and Subject

An examination of an individual who died over 120 years ago must be different from that of someone now living, or if dead, remembered by the living. There is, of course, no one alive who can be interviewed who knew Tom Wills.⁴⁷

The historian's relationship with their subject of biography is hardly a dispassionate one. It has been suggested that the historian should have some intimacy with an aspect of the life of his/her biographical subject.⁴⁸ If this is true, then two aspects of Tom Wills' life are particularly relevant. Wills' suicide is of particular interest because of the author's professional background as a psychiatrist. More personally, the growing recognition of Wills as the most important person in early Australian football is relevant. The author, as a child played, watched and loved Australian football; and like many Victorian children it became incorporated into his identity. The author's relationship with Tom Wills is separated by time and culture. At times during the study Wills became an object of affection, to be protected and idealised. He became a figure of mythical and heroic fantasy. It is only a small step for one to be seduced into portraying his character in extremes to justify preconceived affections or dislikes. There is a potent seductive force exerted on the writer to dramatise and to caricature, rather than align the facts. There is a temptation to extend rather than reflect the evidence and to select words and phrases for literary effect rather

⁴⁷ Lawton Wills Cooke (private communication) recalled his time as a young boy when he knew H. C. A. Harrison, a cousin of Tom Wills.

than accuracy. Nor should one be duped into thinking that, as intriguing as Wills' life was, all manner of explanations can be read into his behaviour or that the wisdom of the time can be distilled from his thoughts.

4.2 Style of Biography

Although this thesis is not a biography, it has a biographical thread that links the chapters. Biography is a common form of historical enquiry.⁴⁹ But it is an approach not without criticism. Critics point out that this method highlights the atypical individual rather than the structures of the time; that it is too narrow in focus; that it is not quantifiable; and is often too simple an option for academic study. However, there is no reason why the study of an individual cannot or indeed should not illustrate broader themes. As to its simplicity or otherwise, this must be judged on the depth of research and the sophistication with which the individual is placed within their time.⁵⁰ Cosentino and Morrow argue that biography can indeed be a legitimate method for sporting historical analysis. In sketching a life or career history, the exploits and context of that individual can be used to expand on 'a larger theme'. Although Cosentino notes that 'Men of action have had little time for letters and papers' and by implication an analysis may be limited, this was not the case for Wills who was a compulsive letter writer to newspapers. His public views and the projection of his personality are laid bare for the reader to review in dozens of letters.⁵¹

Biography is a commonly employed method when writing about sports people. But when this approach does little to provide context and poorly integrates its subject

⁴⁸ See Walter Phillips, 'Historians, Biography and History', in R. Broome (ed.), *Tracing Past Lives. The Writing of Historical Biography* (Carlton: The History Institute, Victoria, 1995), p. 3.

⁴⁹ For one approach to biographical thesis, see Andrew McFadzean, "'I Think He Is a Very Clever Man with Words:": An Intellectual Biography of Robert Richardson Bowie, 1909 - Washington Policy Planner and Harvard Academic', PhD Thesis, School of History, UNSW, 1996, pp. 23-5. As an example of a thesis converted into a biography see, Mike Colman and Ken Edwards, *Eddie Gilbert. The True Story of an Aboriginal Cricketing Legend* (Sydney: ABC books, 2002).

⁵⁰ For example, William McKinley Runyan, 'A Historical and Conceptual Background to Psychohistory', in William McKinley Runyan (ed.), *Psychology and Historical Interpretation* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 33-43.

⁵¹ Frank Cosentino, 'The Use of Biography as an Instrument in Sport History', in Robert Day and Peter Lindsay (eds), *Sport History Research Methodology* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1980), pp. 51-4. Don Morrow, 'Biographical Studies', in Robert Day and Peter Lindsay (eds), *Sport History Research Methodology* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1980), pp. 55-61.

into the broader themes of the day the results are open to sharp criticism.⁵² At the same time, context should not be strained in its relevance with the biographical subject nor should it detract from the central thread of the narrative.⁵³ The historical novel is another widely used biographical method.⁵⁴ Hutchins critiques the historical novel as used in sports writing and highlights its objective of obscuring evidence, myth making and how its emphasis on artistic aims may distort evidence in the search for expression and in its lack of respect for the evidence.⁵⁵

A stricter biographical style is beholden to the available material and does not extend or speculate beyond this material. In a sense, for academic work to have integrity, it must at least begin from this point even if more speculative passages are fashioned. Writing styles vary from those that have running analyses of the material presented to those which simply outline the facts but which convey the writer's views by choice of material and language. Others include more direct intrusions in the form of the author's thoughts and impressions. Regardless of style there are common tasks to be accomplished. These include the identification of nodal points in the subject's life that mark moments of change or decision; identification of the key themes in the subject's life; the description of the patterns and rhythms of the subject's life; the characteristic manner of responding to stressful events; how the biographer's subject reflected the tides and mood of the period; and how the key dimensions of the subject's life mature over a lifetime.⁵⁶

This thesis covers some aspects of abnormal psychology, but is not a psychobiography. Psychobiography is a biographical method that applies the principles

⁵² See Colin Tatz, 'History Lessons', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 16, no. 1 (November 1999), pp. 15-22. Also Martin Sharp, 'The Trumper Biographies', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 2, no. 2 (May 1986), pp. 93-7.

⁵³ Phillips, 'Historians, Biography and History', pp. 1-9. There have been a significant number of Australians who have their biographies incorporated in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, see Michael McKernan, *The Makers of Australia's Sporting Traditions* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press), 1993 for an edited summary, including that of Tom Wills.

⁵⁴ *The Call* is an example of this. Another recent sporting example is Senyard, *Harry Williams*.

⁵⁵ B. Hutchins, *Don Bradman, Challenging the Myth* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 37, 47, 57, 64, 67, 68, 150. Hutchins provides an excellent critique on this issue with respect to sporting figures. He notes the overly heroic descriptions, how myths are constructed, how material is selectively quoted and that it deliberately confuses biography and myth making. He writes, 'The historical novel is a creation of an imagined, as well as a documented past', p. 68 and 'Nationalist heroic myths have a habit of "thinning out" the past, simplifying and accentuating selected events and behaviours, and jettisoning and glossing over others', p. 150.

of psychoanalysis to try and gain a deeper understanding of someone's life. Psychoanalysis is a distinct psychological theory which proposes the existence of unconscious drives and defence mechanisms that shape personality and behaviour. The value of psychobiography as a discipline as defined above has been seriously questioned.⁵⁷

However, it is possible to use psychological concepts in a broader way in biographical writing. In this thesis the chapters on suicide and personality development utilise an understanding of psychological concepts to provide a deeper understanding of these facets of Wills' life. For example, in the chapter on Wills' suicide, the phenomenology of his mental state is analysed. Phenomenology refers to the signs and symptoms of psychological distress which are explicable and recordable. Wills' psychological status prior to his suicide was recorded in official medical documents in the medical language of the day. Non-medical witnesses also described in some detail Tom Wills' mental state in his last days. The best example of this was the evocative description of his delirium in the days before his suicide. Without the benefit or hindrance of medical training the witnesses charted a course and symptoms as immediately recognisable in the early twenty-first century as they were in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁸ Other aspects of Wills' behaviour, personality and inner world are more difficult to describe with confidence. Any interpretation of these facets requires

⁵⁶ See for a detailed discussion on these issues, R. Broome (ed.), *Tracing Past Lives. The Writing of Historical Biography* (Carlton: The History Institute, Victoria, 1995).

⁵⁷ See Simon Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows: A Social History of Suicide in Victoria, 1841-1921', PhD thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1998, pp. 10-1. There are many objections to psychoanalysis not the least the controversy surrounding its legitimate role as a therapy let alone its application to historical figures. For more favourable reviews of psychoanalytic theory and its application to history see, Peter Gay, 'Psychoanalysis in History', in William McKinley Runyan (ed.), *Psychology and Historical Interpretation* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 107-20; and Judy Brett, 'Robert Menzies: Psychobiography and the Public Man', in R. Broome (ed.), *Tracing Past Lives. The Writing of Historical Biography* (Carlton: The History Institute, Victoria, 1995), pp. 23-31.

⁵⁸ Alternative approaches to psychoanalysis are outlined in William KcKinley Runyan, 'Alternatives to Psychoanalytic Psychobiography', in William McKinley Runyan (ed.), *Psychology and Historical Interpretation* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 219-44. He notes that psychology offers more than just analytic causal connections between childhood and adult behaviour. 'It can be useful in identifying patterns in current behavior, for providing concepts and categories for analyzing experience, etc'. The idea of examining aspects of psychology within an historical framework rather than as the main driving force for interpreting the entire biography is more consistent with this thesis and well recognised, see, William McKinley Runyan, 'Reconceptualizing the Relationships Between History and Psychology', in William McKinley Runyan (ed.), *Psychology and Historical Interpretation* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 270. For an overview of the concept of Psychohistory see, Runyan, 'A Historical and Conceptual Background to Psychohistory', pp. 3-60.

that they be placed within their cultural and social context. Descriptions of his personality are based upon family letters and his observable behaviour.⁵⁹

5 Methodological Difficulties

There were many difficulties in undertaking a study of this magnitude on the life of Tom Wills.⁶⁰ The first difficulty related to its cross-disciplinary nature. These disciplines included psychiatry, medicine, sporting history, Australian history, indigenous studies, biography, genealogy and studies in nineteenth century English public school education. One pitfall was the potential skewing of the thesis towards areas the area of expertise of the writer rather than giving scope to all areas. In addition, the writer's background as a psychiatrist may have induced unrealistic expectations in the reader of what a psychiatrist can or cannot read into historical material.

Secondly, there was the logistical problem of researching a topic where archival material was scattered across six states and territories in Australia and in several locations throughout Britain. In Australia, the archives and other sources stretched like an information archipelago from capital cities to outback towns. The majority of the material was not conveniently located in key central libraries but was eked out of many locations.

Thirdly, to give context to his life and to analyse its key themes, necessitated the sifting through a vast amount of material. The main methodological concern was that in the endeavour to cover the various themes, the research would become too thinly spread to study the material in depth.

Fourthly, the time period to be analysed needed to be determined. The span of Tom Wills' life was the focus of this study. That is, from 1835 till 1880. But to give a family perspective required material to be examined from the late 1700s through to the present. To understand how Wills' life has been interpreted required material to be examined from the time of Wills' death up till the present time.

⁵⁹ For a broader discussion on the assessment of personality in historical studies, see, K. H. Craik, 'Assessing the Personalities of Historical Figures', in William McKinley Runyan (ed.), *Psychology and Historical Interpretation* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 196-218.

Fifthly, the most pressing concern at the commencement of the research was the lack of a clear understanding of how much material would be unearthed by the study. No similar study to date had been conducted on such a comprehensive scale. The two larger works on Wills by Perrin and Flanagan do not fully document their sources and it was expected that considerably more material was available for study than had been used for these earlier works.

Sixthly, the material used for this thesis was uncovered by trawling through vast amounts of archives like pitchblende, for the occasional piece of illuminating material. When material was uncovered, because of its age and often lack of preservation, such as family letters, it was often difficult to read. Some documents, poorly conserved, were friable with gaps and tears through the most intriguing parts. There were frustrating gaps in what had been accessioned by institutions around the country; key documents were missing at critical dates, key letters or parts of letters were torn or unreadable. Such are the impediments expected in archival research. Components of letters were sometimes scattered and required assemblage like tectonic plates. There were the usual archival pitfalls such as spelling variations.⁶¹ The secondary sources on Tom Wills contain many errors.⁶² For the purpose of this thesis, only archival evidence was used in reconstructing the narrative to try to avoid reproducing these errors. There was no official process that barred the access of material.

6 The Validity of Reconstruction

How feasible is it to attempt a reconstruction of a sportsman's life 120 years after his death? Even the most comprehensive of studies will suffer from significant gaps. Rather than dismiss such an enterprise, there are two reasons that encourage this

⁶⁰ For a general discussion on the difficulties and pitfalls of archival research see, G. M. Hibbins, C. Fahey, and M. R. Askew, *Local History. A Handbook for Enthusiasts* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

⁶¹ For example, in the list of Victorian inquests, 1867-1881, Wills is filed under Willis; in the inquest papers one of the main deponents has been variously spelled Dunwoodie, Dunwoody, Dunmoodie. Some secondary references confuse Tom Wills with his uncle Thomas Wills. See, 'Jack Hamilton recalls ...', *Northcote Leader*, 25 May 1983, p. 4; Anne Latreille, 'Oak was once Cousin Kate's Acorn', *Age*, 'Melbourne Living', 2 December 1980, pp. 1,18.

⁶² Perhaps the best known of these secondary sources is C. C. Mullen, *History of Australian Rules Football 1858-1958* (Carlton: Horticultural Press, 1958). The work of Mullen was a significant early attempt to synthesise material about the game's origins and development. Unfortunately, for reasons which are not entirely clear, some of the material, particularly on Wills, is prone to confabulation as the

endeavour. With a methodical assessment of the evidence historians will not continue to accept the existing uncritical mythology of Wills, or worse, to further elaborate it according to their own prejudice. Secondly, all biographical constructions, even of contemporary subjects, are to some extent models, with the same pitfalls of reconstruction.

Every effort has been made to enhance the validity of this reconstruction. This was done by clearly defining the issues of importance; by developing sufficient contextual material; and to be as comprehensive as possible in the collection of data. Potential biases were reduced by using multiple sources to cross reference evidence. An example of this cross-referencing in the thesis was the identification of Tom Wills' birth date. Determining his birth date, a seemingly straightforward task, needed several pieces of evidence for it to be convincingly pinned down.

How well can one assess another person's mental state and development separated by time, distance and culture? To what degree can we recreate private experience? Indeed to what degree can anyone understand their own flow of consciousness, their motives and their experiences within the context of their own development? Obviously there is no person alive who knew Tom Wills.⁶³ We are condemned to write from the outer. There is access to some of the intimate details of Tom Wills' life through private letters. But even with this material, how reliable are they in the construction of an inner life of personal experience? In Wills' case, perhaps unusual for a sportsman, we have a significant legacy of public and private letters. Private letters are less prone to censorship and are a particularly precious resource. So while it is important to be realistic about the degree of insight it is possible to be gained, Wills' unusual collection letters gives us a rare opportunity to make a reasonable attempt at understanding his personality and thought processes.

gaps in the historical record are filled. Despite this, the work of Mullen represents a significant advance in the written history of Australian football.

⁶³ Although not an exception to this statement, Mr Lawton Wills Cooke, provided information. As a young boy he lived with H. C. A. Harrison, Tom Wills' brother-in-law, whilst living in Kew, Melbourne.

7 Sources for a Study on Tom Wills

As part of the broad exercise of gathering information, hundreds of letters of inquiry were despatched to private individuals, sporting clubs, academics and various institutions. This was largely an attempt to identify new sources of information on Wills. Most of these endeavours went unanswered or the responses simply repeated already known material.⁶⁴ Occasionally they provided much valuable unknown information or an avenue of research which led to the uncovering of new material.

7.1 Secondary Sources

Secondary sources were initially reviewed to define the main themes in the life of Tom Wills. Further secondary sources that gave context to the themes under study for this thesis were then canvassed, namely Rugby school, sport, his aboriginal contact, suicide, alcohol and his family. The cricket literature of the nineteenth century was widely reviewed in an attempt to uncover previously unknown material about Wills and to establish the sporting context in which he operated. Numerous general histories mention Wills in passing and these generally cover his cricket and football feats.⁶⁵ The clearest account of his intercolonial cricket statistics is that by Webster.⁶⁶ There were no published academic articles on Tom Wills at the beginning of this study. All the articles relating to Wills were in popular literature or newspapers.

⁶⁴ For example, correspondence with Howard Milton and Derek Ufton, Kent County Cricket Club. This provided a brief history of Wills' association with Kent which was generally known but no archival information was available. Similar was a letter from George Griffiths, New Zealand, who had years before collected material on Wills. An extract from his booklet, 'Sale, Bradshaw, Manning, Wills and the "Little Enemy"', no. 4 in a series 'Notes on Some Early Arrivals in Otago', June 1971. Griffiths like many other historians and writers had an interest in Wills. Griffiths ends his letter noting that over the years he has added to these individuals' file if he found anything interesting but says '... I see that the Wills piece in my own annotated volume is still as clean as a whistle'. An outline of an approach to the collection of such material is described in R. W. Cox, *History of Sport: A Guide to the Literature and Sources of Information* (Cheshire: British Society of Sport History, 1994).

⁶⁵ Typical of this are Chris Harte and Bernard Whimpress, *The Penguin History of Australian Cricket* (Camberwell: Viking, 2003) and Philip Derriman, *True to the Blue: A History of the New South Wales Cricket Association* (Mosman: Richard Smart Publishing, 1985).

7.2 Primary Sources

Most primary sources for the period 1830-1880 were not catalogued on computer and it was necessary to sift through voluminous material, sometimes based on card catalogues but often with no catalogue as a guide. An example of this was the large amount of archival material at the Melbourne Cricket Club. This material was not fully catalogued nor was it able to be located electronically. A page by page reading of the minute and letter books was undertaken to find the trinkets of information on Wills. Even when some material was catalogued with an index, the indexing of material was often too coarse to identify the required information. Important information would have been missed if reliance had been placed upon the index to find material.

Several hundred family documents, mainly letters, required transcription. These were handwritten, sometimes using crossing writing and in faded ink. The collection of these and other documents required travelling to Melbourne, Geelong, western Victoria, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Rockhampton, central Queensland, country NSW, Canberra, Tasmania and England. The principal sites in England where material was collected were Cambridge University, various sites in London, Rugby school and Rugby Municipal Library.

7.2.1 *Newspapers and Journals*

The bulk of the systematic research was on nineteenth-century newspapers. However scattered throughout libraries and personal collections were many newspaper articles that recapitulated different aspects of the Wills family.⁶⁷ A comprehensive survey of newspapers was undertaken. A sampling technique was used to select representative newspapers. As Wills lived most of his life in Victoria, Victorian newspapers were the initial focus. There were three Victorian daily papers of the period – *Argus*, *Herald* and *Age*. To review all three papers would have been prohibitive in

⁶⁶ Ray Webster, *First Class Cricket in Australia. vol. 1* (Glen Waverley, Victoria: Self-Published, 1991).

⁶⁷ These articles were written from the time of Wills' death through to the present. See, M. Flanagan, 'Fever Pitch', *Sydney Morning Herald, Good Weekend*, 26 July 1997, pp. 26-31, as an example of more recent references that broadly outline some key elements in his life. Some of these articles provided pointers to where further material may be found, see, de Bolfo, 'Shall I Murder', pp. 16-7. Also

terms of time. Thus all three were sampled to see which paper seemed to be the most comprehensive in terms of sport and the other key dimensions. This perusal suggested that the *Argus* was the most comprehensive. Because of the nature of the work and the expected infrequency of material pertaining to Wills, all issues were examined rather than sampling set years. Weekly newspapers were also reviewed. While weekly papers were less time consuming to review they did not provide the same level of information as the daily papers. Reliance upon weekly papers would have not provided sufficient detail for the story.

While the *Argus* provided a great amount of material it became clear that there were two problems. Firstly, the *Herald* and *Age*, though less comprehensive than the *Argus*, contained at times additional information not in the *Argus*. In the end, the *Herald* and *Age* were covered for short periods of particular interest in the Wills story or where another reference referred to a particular item in those newspapers. Secondly, there was substantial additional information in regional papers. Emphasis was placed on closely tracking the Geelong newspapers where Wills lived for a considerable period of his life. It became apparent from early in the study that no single paper gave a comprehensive account and even significant events could vary enormously in the amount of detail given. Trial and error revealed that a satisfactory assemblage of detail only occurred when multiple newspapers were cross-referenced.

The Victorian papers were supplemented by an extensive review of available newspapers for his Queensland period (1861-4); for his visits to South Australia, (particularly 1873-4); Tasmania and NSW. His period in England (1850-6) necessitated a thorough review of available London and regional Rugby papers. While some of these were accessible in Australia (notably in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra) most of the English information was obtained from the Collindale newspaper repository in London.

Apart from the fact that the newspapers were geographically dispersed, the student of nineteenth newspaper analysis is confronted with several difficulties. Not all the issues of newspapers were available for examination. Sometimes no issues were archived at all or the availability varied from library to library. None of the detailed

see, Garrie Hutchinson (ed.), *Great Australian Football Stories* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1989). This collects together some key newspaper articles of the period.

personal interviews of sportsmen we now take for granted were conducted. Players were rarely quoted. Often the journalist's name was not recorded in the paper and the adjectives used to describe the game sometimes had meanings specific for the time which have not continued to the present day.⁶⁸ It was the custom of the day not to spell out matters to do with poor behaviour and drinking excesses, an issue of importance given Wills' alcoholism.⁶⁹ Some issues were illegible due to print that had faded over the last 150 years. Sometimes this could be overcome by reading the hardcopies rather than microfilm versions.

The sport of football was a minor sport until well into the 1870s. Thus for the period in which Wills played his football, this sport was not as significant as horse racing and cricket. In the first decade or so of its existence it often fared no better than the occasional line or discarded comment scattered somewhere in the body of the newspaper.

The organisation of modern newspapers, which allows one to efficiently search for items was absent in many nineteenth century papers. This varied from paper to paper. Newspapers often did not use headings to draw attention to important items about sport. Sometimes the most telling comment or missing information was found wedged in between completely unrelated items. In some cases it was only a single sentence or obscurely placed paragraph that unlocked an understanding of events or led to further clues. There was a gradual improvement in such organisation over the years from the 1830s to the 1880s. Thus it was necessary to scan most of each newspaper in the early years covered in this thesis. The scanning of papers was time consuming. For example, a daily paper from the period contained anything from four to over ten pages of small faded type. While it may be argued that each paper brought little new information, it was the accretion of small fragments of information that allowed the story to unfold. Photographs were rare and confined to the latter period of study. Few newspapers had indices and those that did screened items at a level that was too coarse for this study.

⁶⁸ Charles Box, *The English Game of Cricket* (London: The Field, 1877). This particular reference is useful for its glossary of nineteenth century cricketing terms.

⁶⁹ For further analysis of newspapers of this period and their coverage of sport, see, Robin Grow, 'Nineteenth Century Football and the Melbourne Press', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 3, no. 1 (November 1986), pp. 23-37. Also personal communication with Robin Grow.

Thus the *Argus* index, while a useful starting point for reviewing Wills and the various dimensions under investigation, was of itself inadequate for any gathering of details.

While the Wills life story was a focus in the thesis, as newspapers were scanned, information relevant to the analysis of the six themes was collected. Thus his father's speeches in parliament, articles on alcohol, suicide and aborigines were reviewed while examining the newspapers for relevance in developing the Wills' history.

Attempts were made to locate anything in newspapers that shed light on his life including verse, images and advertisements. Letters to the Editor were a source of important information. Over 150 published newspaper letters were located that were of relevance to the thesis. These letters were written by Tom Wills or by others about Wills.

Advertisements, perhaps surprisingly, had much to offer. Some of the earliest information about games of Australian Rules football were advertisements about where and when players were to meet. Advertisements for the aboriginal cricket games of 1866 and 1867 captured a carnival air hard to convey in text. Such advertisements also gave a sense of how prominent or otherwise Wills was in the promotion of such games.

7.2.2 *Family Documentation*

Several descendants of the Wills family kindly allowed their archival material to be studied. A large quantity of handwritten material dating from the early to late 1800s was available. These included letters, diaries, scrapbooks, memorabilia and photographs. Family documents were less likely than published letters to be censored. The letters were sometimes in poor condition with torn and missing pieces. Many of the letters were written in cross writing. These letters required considerable effort to decipher and transcribe. Further family letters were located in various libraries and sporting museums around the country.

7.2.3 *Sporting Records*

Archival material was sought from all major relevant sporting organisations around the country. The most fruitful was the material from the Melbourne Cricket Club. It has the most impressive and detailed collection of nineteenth-century sporting life in Australia. In addition material was searched for at the Richmond Cricket Club, the Geelong Cricket Club, Geelong Football Club, and the New South Wales Cricket Association. Materials included minute books, letter books, receipt books, photographs, memorabilia, personal correspondence and reminiscences.

7.2.4 Other Official Documentation

Extensive reviews were undertaken of hospital, asylum and inebriate files. Usually such searches were barren. There were some spectacular exceptions such as the finding of Wills' admission notes to the Melbourne Hospital prior to his suicide.

Material was sought on Births, Death, Marriages (BDM), probate, wills, ratebooks, cemetery records and inquests from around Australia and overseas. This material was sought through the relevant Public Record Offices, Bureaus of BDMs, cemetery records and libraries. Basic demographic information was obtained from multiple sources, namely census data, BDMs, Wills and Probate, ratebooks, directories and shipping records.⁷⁰

7.2.5 Overseas material

Wills lived in England from 1850 till 1856. To gather material from this period it was necessary to travel to England. Material was accessed from Cambridge University, Rugby school archives, Rugby Public Library, London Metropolitan Archives, British Library, Collindale newspaper repository, Lord's Cricket Library and Nottingham Cricket Library. Further searches were conducted on the Internet.

⁷⁰ For example, RateBooks at the Geelong Heritage Centre covering the period 1850-1880.

7.2.6 *Theses*

Theses were sought that researched information on the various dimensions under review. The search targeted Victorian Universities because of the increased likelihood of relevant material being found on a subject who lived most of his life in the state of Victoria.⁷¹

7.2.7 *Drawing/Photography/Painting/Maps/Film*

Photography was in its infancy for most of Wills' life. Hence photographs of Wills and other key sportsmen were uncommon. All photographs of Wills, including at least one newly discovered photograph, were collated. These were sought from private and public collections. Newspapers during Wills' life did not contain photographs but did contain cartoons of relevance. During the writing of this thesis a videodocumentary on Tom Wills was made.⁷² The best known painting of Wills is that by William Handcock. Maps were reviewed of the Molonglo region of NSW, western Victoria for aboriginal clan distribution, metropolitan areas, and local suburbs to help locate genealogical data about Wills.

8 **Conclusion**

Tom Wills was the archetype of the fallen sportsman. He was the seminal figure in the early development of Australian Rules football and the dominant player in

⁷¹ Rob Hess, 'Case Studies in the Development of Australian Rules Football, 1896-1908' PhD thesis, School of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance, Victoria University, Melbourne, 2000.

⁷² See Liz Huf, *The Triumph and Tragedy of Tommy Wills*, for which the author of this thesis was interviewed. Wills is mentioned in passing in a film documentary on the 1868 aboriginal cricket team, 'A Fine Body of Gentlemen', Seedwillow productions, Melbourne, 2002, ABC Television. See Jason Dowling, 'Cricket's Black Trailblazers', *Age*, 3 July, 'Green Guide', 2003, p. 15; also *Rewind*, ABC-TV, 'Tom Wills and the Origins of Australian football', October 2004. Interviews, Gregory de Moore, Rob Hess, Martin Flanagan, Michael Long and SBS radio interview, 2 August 2006. Greg de Moore interview with James Nunez. Topic: Tom Wills, Australian football and Marngrook. Also ABC radio, Alice Springs, 8 November, 2004. Interviewer Barry Nicholls. Greg de Moore interviewed about interest as a psychiatrist in sport, the study of Tom Wills and his mythology surrounding the aboriginal origins of

intercolonial cricket till the early 1870s. There has been no detailed scholarly appraisal of his life and death. Although the themes of alcohol, self-destructive behaviour and sport are regular fare in the contemporary popular press, its historical study in Australia is virtually unknown. This thesis contributes to knowledge in several ways. It provides the most detailed history to date on Tom Wills. This story is reconstructed through a comprehensive review of archival data, a significant amount of which is newly discovered material. The thesis provides an historical context for alcohol abuse and suicidal behaviour in sportsmen. There is no historical study of this kind available in Australia. Apart from its intrinsic interest it provides an historical context in which to place and contrast such self-destructive behaviour in contemporary sportsmen.

To date there has been a limited review of the Wills' archival material. Secondary sources are replete with inconsistencies and errors. Any thorough analysis requires the meticulous reconstruction of the important biographical threads with cross-referencing to primary sources. The role of alcohol abuse and attitudes to suicide are poorly researched as they pertain to sporting figures in the nineteenth century. There is more substantial research on the 1867-8 aboriginal cricket team and the early development of cricket and football in Victoria. This thesis reviews these areas from the perspective of Tom Wills' involvement.

The time is ripe for a review of this magnitude of the life of Tom Wills. Three factors point to this contention. First, technological development has allowed improved storage and collection of data. Ease of travel interstate and overseas; microfilm copies of primary documents; the Internet; the personal computer and; computerised databases have allowed the collection of material over a relatively short time span. Material can be recorded and copied with an efficiency not available in the pre-computer age. Previous attempts or plans to undertake a study of this size were uncovered in several libraries, all in varying stages of completion. It was clear that part of the difficulty in completing the project was the lack of efficient means of collecting and analysing material. This is particularly relevant for this study on Wills because the material is scattered across several countries.

Secondly, in 1996, the Australian Football League celebrated the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Victorian Football League. There was an intellectual and historical gathering of forces to celebrate what was largely a Victorian, especially Melburnian cultural renaissance. From it emerged several publications and a renewed interest in the origins of football and the role of Wills.

Finally a critical mass of material has now been unearthed to allow a full study on Wills. Material has slowly and haphazardly been uncovered over the past 120 years. Some of this has been credited to known researchers but in other cases research has been by unknown parties. A recent family history focussing on Horatio Wills, Tom's father, has been a key element in bringing together a significant body of archival material.⁷³ But despite this, no work has yet attempted to be synthesise all the material or set out to examine in details the key dimensions in his life. This recent body of accumulated work now allows such a task to be undertaken.

⁷³ Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*.

Chapter Two

Tom Wills at Rugby School

The one great purpose for which boys are sent to Public Schools, is to prepare themselves by study, and the cultivation of their minds, for the duties of after life, for the duties of the learned professions, of the statesman, or of the gentleman.⁷⁴

You are aware that he was very backward when he arrived in England and he has much yet to learn.⁷⁵

Letter to Horatio Wills on Tom's progress at school

1 Introduction

Many facets shaped Tom Wills' life, but none so completely set his life's template as did Horatio's decision to send him to Rugby school. After leaving Rugby, his final eighteen months in Great Britain exposed him to the richest sporting experience on earth. Unmoored, and with parental authority diluted by the expanse of the globe, and with a steady supply of money, Wills was free to pursue his interests. This final eighteen months polished an adolescent prodigy into the finest cricketer in Australia. The six years Tom Wills lived in England charted a life that continued to define him until his suicide.

Tom Wills left Melbourne for England on 27 February 1850. He returned on 23 December 1856.⁷⁶ He was fourteen years old when he left Melbourne and 21 when he returned. Rugby school was his centre stage until he departed as a pupil in 1855. Thereafter he played cricket with Cambridge University and was engaged by prominent

⁷⁴ *The Rugby Magazine*, no. IV, April 1836, vol. I, p. 361.

⁷⁵ Letter, Sarah Alexandar to Horatio Wills, 10 May 1854.

⁷⁶ See *Argus*, Passenger Index 1846-1851, p. 151. Also *Argus*, 28 February 1850, p. 2. The Lochnagar was a barque of 300 tons, mastered by Joseph Dalgarno. A Master Wells is recorded as being on board. The letter he wrote on arrival to London, 7 August 1850 clinches the vessel he sailed on. The *Times*, London, 8 August 1850, p. 8. See Ian Nicholson, *Log of Logs*. vol. 2, (Nambour: Self-Published, 1993), p. 375, for description of the vessel in which he returned to Australia. See, Passenger List VPRS 7666, *Passengers to Victoria from British Ports*, 1856, Fiche 117 pages 1 and 2. The passengers included Henry Barkly and his family. The list has Wills as 24 years old which is incorrect. Also see, *Argus*, 24 December 1856, p. 4. This latter newspaper has a full listing of the arrival. The ship is a Royal Mail screw steamship of 2,400 tons; George Hyde was commander. It left Southampton on 19 October 1856. Wills is named Willis.

teams throughout England and Ireland. But of all his influences in England that were to shape his life the most critical was his time at Rugby school.⁷⁷

Rugby in the 1850s was a market town and it circumnavigated its prized possession, Rugby school. The town crowned a 'table-topped knoll' in Warwickshire, 83 miles north west of London, standing upon the River Avon.⁷⁸ Tom Wills lived in a circumscribed world. His radar operated within the perimeter of the Rugby close.⁷⁹ It was a cloistered world in which boys obeyed the Rugby rituals and conducted their affairs according to time honoured constraints. The school calendar was neatly bisected into two terms: a pendulum that swung from February to June and August to December. The boys' lives were planned and lived according to this precise demarcation. The beginning and end point of those halves marked the fixed hour for games and exams. Like all public schools the tenor and direction of the school was shaped by the Headmaster. Reviewers of Rugby school seem lukewarm in their assessment of the conservative leadership of Edward Meyrick Goulburn D. D.⁸⁰

The rules for academic advancement were spelled out each year in the Rugby Book of lists.⁸¹ Details of scholarships, form advancement, and the allure of Oxbridge scholarships were all on display for the academic boy. Examinations and other assessments determined each boy's place in the school and hence their advancement. The archives contain a monthly report of the academic standing of Wills and his fellow students.⁸² The report is a classical rendition of one page stately proclaiming that Wills

⁷⁷ 'Rugby School Register. Annotated. 1842-1874. vol. 2. Revised and annotated by Rev. A. T. Michell. Printed for Subscribers by A. J. Lawrence, Market Place, Rugby. 1902.' Wills is recorded in the rugby school register, 'Wills, Thomas Wentworth, son of Horatio S. Wills, Esq., Australia aged 15, August 19. Returned to Australia, where he was distinguished as a Cricketer. His father was killed by blacks in Australia, 1861. He died 2 May 1880'.

⁷⁸ John Mannering, 'An Appraisal of Sanitary Reform in Rugby 1849-1875', B. A. Honours Thesis, West Midland College of Higher Education, 1985, p. 14.

⁷⁹ The close refers to the grounds of Rugby school upon which games were played.

⁸⁰ Goulburn was Educated at Eton College. Balliol College, Oxford, Scholar, 1834-41, B. A., First Class Classics. Died 3 May 1897. For more details on Goulburn, see Berdmore Compton, *Edward Meyrick Goulburn* (London: John Murray, 1899). Also, J. B. Hope Simpson, *Rugby since Arnold. A History of Rugby School from 1842* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 28 and also a short biographical note at <http://53.1911encyclopedia.org/G/GO/GOULBURN.htm>.

⁸¹ *Rugby School Lists 1850-1855* (Rugby: printed by Crossley and Billington, no year). It is possible to track Wills' academic progress through this and other archives of the time.

⁸² Monthly report of Rugby School students, c. 1853, MCC archives, contains no identifying data that confirm that its source as Rugby. However a review of the Rugby Book of Lists, Tom's letters and the Evans House manuscripts indicate that it is from Rugby. Not all boys can be identified from this Report from the Rugby Book of Lists however it was not uncommon for boys to be present at school for some time before being formally registered as a student at Rugby. It is most likely a report from early

is at the top of this group of students. It has even been defiantly stated that this is evidence that Wills was in fact not the dunce his exasperated father had labelled him.⁸³ Although superficially impressive and probably sent home as evidence of his recent success, in actual fact he was an adolescent in a class of younger boys in the lower school. By this stage he remained a cumbersome 17-18 year old pudding in the Remove which was in the lower school. In *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Thomas Hughes described how older less academically able boys rubbed shoulders with younger students. He described the Lower Fourth, a form lower than the Remove, as:

Young gentlemen of all ages, from nine to fifteen, were to be found there ... The driving of this unlucky lower-fourth must have been grievous work to the unfortunate master ... Here stuck the great stupid boys, who for the life of them could never master the accidence; the objects alternately of mirth and terror to the youngsters ... Then came the mass of the form, boys of eleven and twelve ... mischievous, and reckless ... The remainder of the form consisted of young prodigies of nine and ten, who were going up the school at the rate of a form a half-year ...⁸⁴

In one of his few extant letters from Rugby, Tom Wills summed up his attitude to study: 'I know that if I work too hard that I will become quite ill'.⁸⁵ A close review of the other students in this school report indicates that they would have been in the age range of fourteen to seventeen years. His fellow cricketer and eventually a School XI colleague, Edward Dangerfield, was almost two years younger than Wills.⁸⁶

1853. The first column contains the names of the Boys and the Order in which they stand in their Class. The last column shows the number of Marks total gained by each boy during the past Month, in Lessons, Exercises, etc. according to which they keep their places for the ensuing Month. Wills comes in first with 3265 marks. He excelled in repetition, arithmetic, French. In July 1851 Bloxam had predicted that these subjects would be his strengths, 'Mr. Bloxam writes me in the highest terms of his attentions and says he will shine in French and Arithmetic ... He says he is deficient in Latin translation, and in consequence of this one of Sarah's masters gives him a lesson in Latin, and English reading twice a week, and another lesson three times a week in Geography and writing'. See, letter, 30 July 1851, James Alexander to Horatio Wills.

⁸³ Letter, Horatio to Tom, 1 May 1853.

⁸⁴ Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (London: Ward Lock & Co., 1911), pp. 141-2.

⁸⁵ Letter, Tom to Horatio, 8 August 1851.

⁸⁶ The following are some of the boys identified in Wills' class: Dangerfield, Edward, entered August 1851, only son of Edward Dangerfield Esq., The Hyde, Cheltenham, aged 14 years, 30 May. Trinity College Oxford, 1856. Hutton, Henry Wollaston, eldest son of the Rev. Hutton., aged 14 years, Entered February 1850, Trinity College, Oxford. Prinsep, Frederick Brace, entered August 1852. Son of William Prinsep Esq., London., aged 13 years, 5 April. Captain 21st Hussars Served as Lieutenant 3rd European Light Cavalry, in the Indian Mutiny Campaign, 1858, Medal. Died 22 April 1879.

This chapter will explore two broad aspects of Wills' life at Rugby school. These are Wills' development as a sportsman and the role of alcohol consumption in the life of the school. His brief connection with Cambridge University and cricket teams in England and Ireland after he leaves Rugby are mentioned only in passing. Finally there is a summary of how his period at Rugby school shaped his life in Australia.

It was in sport that Wills made his mark at Rugby. Sport was nostalgically recalled by the boys as more memorable than lessons, 'Horace may be forgotten; Virgil remembered only in a line ...'⁸⁷ Hope Simpson wrote in a history of Rugby school: 'Football and cricket reigned supreme, with running an honourable third'.⁸⁸ Wills was a champion of all three.

2 Cricket

Three things that support genius: prosperity, social acquaintance and applause.⁸⁹

Matthew Arnold

Of Tom Wills' five years at Rugby school, two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, that his life was dominated by cricket. Secondly, Wills in turn, as a sporting prodigy came to dominate the game of cricket. Matches were played weekly, sometimes more often, extending over a season of several months commencing before and extending after the summer vacation.⁹⁰ Games ranged from two to five days. Most were played at the school but the team did travel widely. The name Wills became a fixture, surrounded by other names that drifted in and out with the seasons. Scanning the hundreds of score cards, one's eyes hypnotically arrest upon the name of Wills. He had an immediate and sustained influence on all aspects of the game. Remarkably, given his ceaseless playing, he was never reported as ill or injured. Relentless practice, an indestructible constitution and enthusiasm for cricket marked him throughout his career.

⁸⁷ A. G. Butler, *The Three Friends' A Story of Rugby in the Forties* (London/NY: Henry Frowde, O. U. P., 1900), p. 18.

⁸⁸ Hope Simpson, *Rugby since Arnold*, p. 246.

⁸⁹ Matthew Arnold, *Matthew Arnold's Notebooks with a preface by E. Wodehouse* (London: Smith, Elder, 1902), pp. 5-6.

In published cricket results, he was first mentioned for the school playing in a match dated 22 and 23 April 1852.⁹¹ He batted at number eleven. One week later he decimated the opposition and in a world shorn of individual adulation all attention centred upon the name Wills. His last game for the school was in his final days in June 1855. Between those dates he lived a lifetime of cricket.⁹² After he left Rugby school, he remained a further fifteen months in England and Ireland. Rugby, though, still nourished him. He repeatedly returned to play against the students. In that further fifteen months he bore the polish of a privileged English education. As an amateur of note, and with a stylish Public school grooming, he moved back and forth amongst the finest teams in England. He mixed with the most gifted cricketers in the land but it was Rugby school which created him and forever remained attached to his reputation.

In the first half of 1851 he played in no less than fourteen cricket matches at school. There were various types of cricket matches at Rugby in addition to the interschool competition. One perhaps unique match was the ‘Pie Match’ which typically started the cricket season in which the winning team was rewarded with a banquet.⁹³ He wrote to his father in August of that year. It was a meticulous and fervent analysis of his matches laid out on display for his father. In that letter he revealed a singularity of purpose and discipline that was to mark his cricket.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ The length of the season can be seen from the list of matches in local Rugby School publications and national newspapers.

⁹¹ See Old Rugbeian Society, *Rugby School. Cricket Scores. 1831-1893 (Foreign and Bigside matches)* (Rugby: AJ Lawrence, London: Whittaker and Co., 1894), p. 115. See also ‘The Scores of the Cricket Matches played at Rugby School, from the Year MDCCCXLV’ (Rugby: Crossley and Billington), p. 65. His first published match was from 27 March 1852. This latter was played within the students.

⁹² Prior to this published match, he played numerous unpublished cricket matches at Rugby. Wills most likely started school at Rugby in the second half of 1850 though was formally registered at Rugby school in August 1851. We have no information either way but given that he probably spent some time with his relatives in London before proceeding to Rugby, it is unlikely that he played cricket in the summer of 1850 at Rugby school. There is an extensive statistical trace of his cricket at Rugby. There were numerous minor matches within the school not recorded or published as well as net practice termed ‘ends’ at Rugby. See H. C. Bradby, *The Handbooks to The Great Public Schools. Rugby* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900). For more details, see, G. A. F. M. Chatwin, *Rugby School Cricket Team from 1831 and Football Teams from 1867* (Rugby: George Over Limited, 1938), pp. 25-8.

⁹³ Bradby, *The Handbooks*, p. 206, ‘Peculiar to Rugby, we believe, is the term, perhaps the institution, “Pie Match”. A Pie Match is a match after which the winning side celebrate their victory by a “stodge”, to use the modern slang word, and as far back as 1850 we find a school Pie Match being contested on Bigside. The losing side used to contribute double the amount of the winning to the feast, in which only two of the losers shared, the two who had made the most runs and taken most wickets’.

⁹⁴ Tom Wills to Horatio, 8 August 1851.

By April 1852, at sixteen years of age, he was in the Rugby first XI. In that year he was one half of an opening bowling attack that intimidated other teams. It made Rugby the pre-eminent public school cricket team in England.⁹⁵ The pavilion on the playing fields of Rugby still stands and lists the players of the XI honour boards.⁹⁶ This list, always headed by the captain, was ranked according to seniority. This now derelict cricket pavilion has listed in 1852 the sixteen-year-old Wills as the eleventh player in the team.⁹⁷

By 1852 word was out about Wills as a profligate talent. He played at Lord's for the first time in 1852.⁹⁸ After the match Wills was awarded a bat for his bowling and his coach, the English professional John Lillywhite, basked in the adulation of his Rugby prodigy. He began representing teams beyond the confines of the school. In this as so much of his English experience it was a foretaste of a life to be lived in Australia. The thick pile of score charts allow his performances to be graphed. They tell how often and where he batted. They unflinchingly record his successes and failures. Statistics also provide a similar profile for his bowling. But they rarely shed light on his bowling style. Even less is shed on his captaincy, fielding and behaviour. Fortunately snippets from his own writing, newspapers and books allow us to assemble a partially complete, if stilted profile.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Competition between schools whether it be academic scholarships to Oxbridge, officers in the Crimea or school sports was a battle for prestige. During the 1850s there were references to Rugby's position on the sporting field as deserving to be considered on par with Eton, Winchester and Harrow. See, *Bell's Life in London*, 3 April 1853, p. 7. *Bell's Life in London* was searched between 1852 and 1856.

⁹⁶ Lillywhite, *Lillywhite's Guide and Companion to Cricketers from 1851 to 1885*, p. 58. *The Rugbaean 1850-1852*, p. 48. Describing the Rugby school grounds, 'A splendid pavilion has been erected in the Gothic style; a plinth of brick, about a foot high from the ground is to go round the building as a basis; above that planks one inch and a quarter thick. The view of the cricket ground is commanded from five openings, two with glass windows, the remaining three with wooden shutters, both windows and shutters being made to slide out of sight at will'.

⁹⁷ The pavilion has since been restored.

⁹⁸ The boys' writings suggested that no one ranked as a member of the School XI until he had graced Lord's. See *Rugby Advertiser and Central England News*, 3 July 1852, p. 4, for a description of this match.

⁹⁹ During this period of time the quality of teams Wills played against varied greatly. Also the numbers in teams varied. It is thus difficult to simply examine bald averages of his batting or bowling to arrive at an overall assessment of his performance. The key games were reported by the national newspaper, *Bell's Life in London*. In a rare reference to matters beyond the sporting field, Wills supported the Public school system of fagging as not only enhancing cricket skills but also one's position in society. *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 28 November 1857, p. 3 'When at Rugby the fielding one season became so bad that it was deemed advisable to do away with the nets for one season and the result (that the fielding

He was a gifted and versatile fieldsman. Able to field anywhere, he excelled at short slip and was noted for running out batsmen with brilliant athletic throwing. Hammersley fondly recalled Tom Wills relating a story about his identity as a bowler at school. With the certainty of a religious conversion, Wills recalled that as soon as he grasped a cricket ball at Rugby he knew that bowling was to be his place in the world.¹⁰⁰

There are no detailed descriptions of his bowling style.¹⁰¹ Wills was most noted and feared for his ‘fast round arm’ action but he bowled fast round arm and slow lobs. Both were successful. Many years later, Hammersley reflected on how ‘It was old Clarke who first advised him to try slow bowling and the veteran asked Mr. Wills “to go round with him with his team in 1854 ...”’¹⁰² Hammersley’s reflection is consistent with what is known about the evolution of Wills’ bowling style. His slow bowling was first mentioned in 1855 as he dismembered the opposing Marlborough College team.¹⁰³

Wills was not the only bowler in colonial sport to be accused of throwing but he was by far the most prominent. In the 1852 cricket season, as a seventeen-year-old boy, he was one half of a pair of opening bowlers that obliterated opposing teams. Envious and suspicious accusations were made about his bowling. Murmurs on the field of an illegal style of bowling found voice in *Bell’s Life in London* on Boxing Day 1852. Fingers pointed to Rugby school and there were accusations that its dominance was achieved at the cost of fair play. Wills and Harman, the opening bowlers, were accused of throwing the cricket ball. In a letter on 26 December 1852 it was stated that:

Their collective bowling is much better than ... the others; but (whisper) it is not fair: both the Rugby bowlers this year ought to have been called.¹⁰⁴

improved ... and it is the good old system of fagging at public schools that make numbers of gentlemen who are now at the top of the tree, what they are. Fielding will not come in a day’.

¹⁰⁰ *Australasian*, 8 May 1869, p. 588.

¹⁰¹ For virtually all of his Rugby period there is little information about numbers of maidens or overs bowled. There are games where he takes no wickets but as overs were not recorded against players it is impossible to know if he bowled.

¹⁰² *Australasian*, 8 May 1869, p. 588.

¹⁰³ *Bell’s Life in London*, 1 July 1855, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ *Bell’s Life in London*, 26 December 1852, p. 6.

Old Rugbaeans rallied to the school's defence. John Lillywhite was called upon by 'Old Boys' of the school to publicly defend his protégé and school. Lillywhite acceded to the request. He wrote to *Bell's Life in London* and in terms familiar to this day defended his boys. In 1853, Tom Wills' strongest ally was the English professional John Lillywhite. Lillywhite staked his reputation upon Wills' bowling style. He wrote:

I have received several letters from the old Rugbaeans respecting a remark made by your correspondent 'Wicket' of the unfair bowling of the Rugby School bowlers. I can only say that the bowling of Messrs Harman and Wills, *the* bowlers, was perfectly fair, or the umpires at Lord's would have 'no balled' them; and, moreover, several gentlemen who stood umpires in matches last season at Rugby did not in any way broach the subject. I am professionally engaged by the school, and if gentlemen were less personal in their remarks, especially when they are ignorant of what they are writing about, they would do less injury to us cricketers. Trusting you will find a corner for this, I remain, Mr Editor, your etc Princes-terrace, Caledonian – road, Islington, Jan 12, 1853. John Lillywhite.¹⁰⁵

It was never made clear in the newspapers what aspect of the delivery was thought unfair – whether the delivery was over the shoulder or if the arm jerked.¹⁰⁶ As a boy and a gentleman in England, Wills survived with a powerful professional to shield him from the accusations of envious detractors. Accusations of throwing the cricket ball shadowed Wills until his suicide.¹⁰⁷ It took a further 20 years when the words of an English gentleman cricketer, a one-time ally of Wills, William Hammersley, finally brought down Wills.¹⁰⁸

Batting positions were a more flexible affair than today. There was an egalitarianism about the batting position that is hard to fathom. Batsmen would one day open and the next bat towards the bottom of the order. The typical cricket observer during the reign of Queen Victoria regarded Wills as an ugly batsman. An offence to the eye, his lack of grace singled him out as an unfinished product. With bat characteristically gummed to the turf he was described thus:

¹⁰⁵ *Bell's Life in London*, 16 January 1853, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Until 1864 it was illegal to bowl with the arm above the level of one's shoulder.

¹⁰⁷ *Australasian*, 20 March 1880, p. 364. On this day Wills played in his last known match, five days after his last surviving letters and six weeks prior to his suicide. He is recorded as someone who 'chucks'.

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter Three, 'A Sporting Life' of this thesis for details on his throwing.

Mr Wills, although not a graceful player, is an awkward opponent; by more 'freedom' he would be one of the best gentlemen players in England; the 'half-volley' he does not punish, but contents himself by allowing the ball to play to the bat, instead of the bat to the ball; he is a fine leg-hitter, and has a masterly defence of his wicket.¹⁰⁹

Useful yes, excellent at times, even a match winner with the bat but never pleasing to the eye. A second aspect of his batting was his capacity to smack the ball hard. His characteristic shots were to the leg side and cut shots. One gets the impression that he pruned his repertoire of shots to ensure the primacy of defence. When momentarily freed of this restraint he swung into his explosive shots. His batting prowess was a feature in England and in his first decade back in Australia. Thereafter his performances deteriorated.

Little is known about his gamesmanship in England. The manner in which he baited players, stole outrageous singles and intimidated foes of a feebler disposition are unknown. These features were fingerprints of his colonial play and it is likely that he began the practice in England. The only controversy to mark him during this period in England was the accusation of unfair bowling.

The timing of Wills' entry to Rugby was critical in his trajectory as a cricketer. Rugby school took the then exceptional approach of appointing a professional cricket coach. This coach, John Lillywhite, was to become Tom Wills' mentor. Lillywhite was to mould a gifted and stylish young cricketer. 'If he [Wills] had a little freer style of hitting, which no doubt he will soon attain under the tuition of that excellent cricketer, John Lillywhite, he would be a most useful member in any club'.¹¹⁰ Lillywhite's coaching and organisational links with the elite of English cricket lifted Rugby's national prominence.¹¹¹ Wills played at a time that saw him take part in the first games against Winchester and Marlborough Colleges.

¹⁰⁹ *Bell's Life in London*, 21 May 1854. p. 6. Also see, *Lillywhite's Cricket Scores and Biographies of Celebrated Cricketers* (London: John Lillywhite, vol. 4), p. 367, 'Mr Thomas Wentworth Wills ... Is a very stiff wicket to bowl at, having a peculiar style of play, scarcely moving his bat at all, unless the ball is well pitched up to him, when he hits hard'.

¹¹⁰ *Bell's Life in London*, 13 June 1852, (page number unknown).

¹¹¹ See A. G. Steel and R. H. Lyttelton, *Cricket* (London, 1888), p. 99. This highlights that professional cricketers were in great demand in schools. *Lillywhite's Guide to Cricketers from 1851*, p. 34, in reviewing 1850 they note that 'The Gentlemen of the Rugby School were the first in the field. Having obtained the services of John Lillywhite and his father for one month ...' and p. 58, 'The scholars of this excellent school play on a piece of ground (belonging to the school), which has one great advantage, viz, a good gravelly soil. Owing to this they commence cricket at Rugby on the 1st of March ... John Lillywhite's services are again engaged by this

The nineteenth century newspaper reports that described the game of cricket were stiff, constrained and repetitive. To modern readers these reports present as fossilised and with little nuance. Mechanical ball-by-ball descriptions did little to tap into behaviour and personality. Cricketing language was codified. Newspaper reports also rarely gave type space to an individual cricketer. Perhaps to a reader of the mid-nineteenth century there were cryptic indicators to a more colourful underbelly but compared to the modern gush to broadcast any slight or perversion, the nineteenth century sports writer used a narrow vocabulary which coursed along prefabricated unimaginative creek beds. The urge to detail personal failings or gossip was bridled. When such insights remained in the newspaper trace, they were often oblique.¹¹² Cricket was seen as a team sport in which the individual served a greater good. When a player was mentioned it was significant; when he was accorded several lines he was a star. Wills along with a small cohort of boys played a central role in the resurrection of Rugby school cricket.

The Rugby school archives have left a rare trace of how Wills as an adolescent regarded his cricket. Wills was the Evans House cricket reporter. This archive gives an insight into Wills and some details as to his style. He was a careful thinker about cricket. Nowhere else in the archives at Rugby did he write about sport as he did about cricket. Everything else was an appendage to his life while at school. He spent time on these pages which are headed with elaborate old English calligraphy. Each game has allocated a couple of pages of handwritten description. The writing was in the manner of the day; detailed and somewhat dry. He used the terms of the day.¹¹³ At times he reveals himself to the reader. When this occurred, two features of this adolescent prodigy shine through. These were firstly his competitiveness and secondly his generosity when judging more junior and less capable cricketers.

school ...'. Rugby school cricket was a feature of press and cricket histories, for example, M. Williams and G. Phillips, *The Wisden Book of Memorabilia* (Oxford: Lennard Publishing, 1990), p. 253.

¹¹² See Box, *The English Game*, for a glossary of nineteenth century cricket terms.

¹¹³ Temple reading room, Price's House Score Book MDCCCXLIX – L; Evans's House Score Book MDCCCLI-LVII. Wills was an assiduous historian of the game and documenter of his own feats. See, MCC archives, 10 August 1875, Melbourne when in response to a request from England, the MCC secretary noted that the MCC's request for details of his career. Similar inklings of Wills' enthusiasm for documenting his progress can be seen in his letter to his parents from Rugby school.

In one house match Wills dominated the game making 106 runs over the two innings, more than triple the nearest score. He wrote as a matter of fact, ‘Clement, Wills, Helme ... batting very well in this match’. The document is signed T. Wills, written in his typical ungainly forward slant. The document though untidily written seems carefully and lovingly created for posterity. In another match Evans House versus Bradley House, he noted ‘Bradley winning this match chiefly because I put on slows. But the fielding of Evans’s house was most dis-gusting Sale being missed an easy catch the 3rd ball from me. He played well after’.

He was an analytical cricket writer and a no-nonsense approach took him straight to the heart of the matter. There was a telling piece when he commented on the Evans second team who played miserably against the School House second XI:

The long score of wides bowled by our second Eleven looks very bad indeed. None of our first five wickets did much ... byes being equal to the runs and wides beating the runs by one. Very bad batting considering the bowling being very loose. Glascott and Elley bowled fair for a short time but gradually got wide. But never mind second Eleven you could not have done worse than the first have done.¹¹⁴

This is of interest not simply for its analytical bent but for his capacity to be generous with his encouragement and to embolden the less gifted with his optimism. The genesis of an inspiring captain is clear in these lines. His mark was already made. Everything at Rugby prepared him for his sporting life in Australia.

Wills’ competitiveness came out in almost every line of his carefully documented scores of these matches. In a match against Bradley House he was angered by an umpiring decision. ‘Wills and C. Helme appeared at the wickets. Wills made 58 by some fine leg hits and drives C. Helme made 20 and was unfortunately given out by their own umpire, when he was not out, the ball having hit his foot and not his bat ... and we lost the match by 30 runs. But I certainly think the match is fairly ours as C. Helme was unfairly given out when he had just begun to punish tremendously’. In another competitive statement, ‘Wills made 90 and was then given out by Mr. Soames

¹¹⁴ The underlining is as in Wills’ notes.

who did not know much about it; the ball having first hit the bat'[Wills was given out LBW]. When it came to the cricket statistics of the house, Wills topped everything.¹¹⁵

The captain of the School cricket XI held the highest office in the world of the Rugby schoolboy. The younger boys whispered in awe of the post and acknowledged the captain's eminence. The captain was marked as a young man with the wisdom to lead and his status was obvious to all. There was no other schoolboy office – sporting or otherwise – that was so respected in the boys' writings. In 1856, Thomas Arnold's son, William, gave voice to the Rugby boys' collective thoughts about the influence of the cricket XI and especially the captain. The voice was idealised and heroic: '... just like the Eleven, they think they can do anything'. When opposing groups of boys discussed the time to commence football in entered the Captain of the XI, the boy with the widest sphere of influence, '... then come the opponents, perhaps the head of the Eleven. He is a man of office, and has a right to speak, and is heard respectfully'.¹¹⁶

Evidence for the boys' view of the cricket captain come most tellingly from stories penned by the students. Comments from semi-fictional accounts like *Tom Brown's Schooldays* reinforce these views as do various rugby retrospectives and other non-fictional accounts at the time.

Tom Brown's Schooldays was published in 1857.¹¹⁷ Its author, Tom Hughes, chose to finish the book with the Rugby School XI competing against the Marylebone Cricket Club. It was the height of summer. Tom Brown, the Rugby cricket captain, six feet tall, strode out to bat as a boy to meet the challenge of the rising tide of manhood. Brown harboured inner doubts. Like a dinghy in rough seas, he unsteadily tacked this way and that as he walked to the pitch in the centre of the oval. The walk transformed him from Rugby boy to Oxford man. There seems little doubt that this was based on Hughes' personal experience. Though fictionalised and symbolic, it gives an aperture into the pivotal place of the cricket captain within the school. As was often the case in Wills' life one is left with the words of others to create what Wills may have

¹¹⁵ Wills was also noted as a wicket keeper for his house.

¹¹⁶ *The Book of Rugby School, Its History and its Daily Life* (Rugby: Crossley and Billington, 1856). pp. 149, 151-2.

¹¹⁷ Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, pp. 292-312. For a discussion on *Tom Brown's Schooldays* within the context of schoolboy literature see, P. W. Musgrave, 'From Brown to Bunter: A Sociological

experienced. Tom Wills was a young man of nineteen when he captained Rugby at Lord's against the MCC. Barrister Tom Hughes, more temperate and intellectual than Wills, was closer to Horatio's ideal of a finished product of top-shelf English education.¹¹⁸

It was also the captain's responsibility to square up cricketing accounts, to organise fixtures and attend to scorebooks. It was here that Wills worked as an apprentice and learned the trade of captaincy. But Wills had a less than precise attitude to matters administrative; not being blessed with a mind for neatness but rather one for creative expression. Nonetheless these tasks were part of the working trade of the captain. The familiarity with these tasks allowed him to instantly assume important playing and administrative roles in Australia.¹¹⁹ After Wills left Rugby he was paraded as an exemplar of what Rugby could produce as a sportsman.

In 1854, the year before he left school, the archives of Evans House record him as one of 45 boys in his house. Mumps disabled the house First XI towards the close of the half-year. In a farewell note he was described as captain of the school XI and a 'good punisher' in reference to his batting. He was simply called 'the school bowler'.¹²⁰ His status as a cricketer seemed to define him in the eyes of others. In 1855 when Wills received a letter from a stranger he was simply addressed as a 'fellow cricketer'.¹²¹

3 Football

The chief game here is football, and will be so all the rest of winter ...

EH Bradby, September, 1839
He entered the school that year, eleven years old¹²²

Account of a Minor Literary Genre', in Stephen Murray-Smith (ed.), *Melbourne Studies in Education* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1983), pp. 190-208.

¹¹⁸ W. H. D. Rouse, *A History of Rugby School* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1898), p. 262. Rouse notes that in 1840, with Tom Hughes as captain, the school played the MCC at Lord's but were defeated. Hughes made 30 not out.

¹¹⁹ Butler, *The Three Friends*, p. 111.

¹²⁰ *Ye Annals of Evans House*. Unpaginated. There are records of 1854 onwards. 'Wills – head of the eleven good punisher and school bowler – good back and forward player, and big side runner – second for the cup in Newmans year gone to Australia'. The reference to forward and back players is to positions in football. This can be concluded after looking at several more entries which make it clear that this is not in reference to cricket.

¹²¹ Letter, Reverend Stonehouse to Tom Wills, 6 April 1855.

¹²² 'A New Boy's Letters From Rugby', *Pamphlets IV*, p. 5, Temple Reading Room.

Football was regarded as the most exciting sport at the school. To play in the major games was to be accorded great prestige. The boys' accounts are a tangle of valour and sacrifice; of Christian virtue and Homeric tragedy; and remain a celebration of boyhood.¹²³ Although there was no equivalent of the lofty position such as the cricket XI captain, football was in the collective mind of the Rugby schoolboy their most exhilarating game.

It has to be understood that when Wills was absorbing his sporting experience at Rugby school from 1851 till 1855, there were no football matches played against other schools. The football of the 1850s was an incestuous affair. Schools played football within the confines of their perimeter. It was played and celebrated between the houses of the school.¹²⁴

Interschool matches were known by the xenophobic label 'foreign matches'. The first of these interschool games involving Rugby school took place in 1867. By 1870 a regular school XX was being chosen which tapered to the familiar school XV in 1876.¹²⁵ The first interschool match was over a decade after Wills had left Rugby. Hence, his football influences were purely Rugbaean and confined to the perimeter of the close. As occurred at different points in Wills' life, timing was critical in his sporting development. In about 1850, the year he arrived in England, a regular football competition amongst the houses of the school commenced. Prior to this matches were more sporadic.

The full gamut of football games played at Rugby school in the 1850s is sketchy but certainly more extensive than revealed by the surviving archives. Apart from the matches between houses which provided the structured competition, there were an odds and sods assortment of combinations. In the archives we find a team of debaters, a team of the best cricketers versus the rest of the school and so on. These kinds of social and

¹²³ For example, 'Rugby Games', *New Rugbeian 1858-1861*. vol. 1, no. IX, September 1859, pp. 287-90. And 'Theories of Football', *New Rugbeian*, vol. III, no. VIII, December 1861, p. 293 'We must confess that if there is any single point on which we are more sensitive than another, it is the reverence with which we regard our Rugby Football'. Also, Rouse, *A History of Rugby School*, pp. 265-70.

¹²⁴ Wills is often described as the captain of the Rugby football team but during the 1850s there was no single Rugby school team as such nor a captain of the school team.

occupational groupings were common in sport more generally in the mid-nineteenth century and found their full and eccentric bloom in the world of cricket.

Beyond the world of interhouse matches, of eccentric teams and of matches played within houses, there were three great contests of Rugby School football. Almost all of the literature by the boys and others was focussed on these three matches. The great matches in the world of Rugby school in the 1850s were those between the sixth form and the rest of the school; School House (the most prestigious of all the houses) and the rest of the school; and the school versus Old Rugbeians. As a champion footballer, Wills would have played in the first two and he returned to play in the third in 1855.¹²⁶

The great match of the year was the sixth form versus the rest of the school. The gathering anticipation spread through the school until it became the centre of all activity. A growing hysteria of boys was released from the grip of the schoolroom. They spilled forth from the school buildings, a larval flow to take up every space on the playing fields. White pants whose blemishes were camouflaged with chalk were donned. Before the game there were whispers of Old Boys joining the match. The Sixth were 'illustrious, decorous' while the remainder of the school was just rowdy.¹²⁷

Players sauntered to various pre-designated positions on the field. They assembled like toy soldiers and confronted one another across the midline of the field. On one half of the pitch were the older but smaller in number sixth form. On the other side swarms of younger boys amassed. A small cavity was dug into the Rugby earth. Into it was lodged the ovoid ball. It was positioned until it remained steady beyond human influence. The ball was kicked and the game was on.

Football was, by and large, a cumulative event. Matches were heaving industrial contests. The tidal waves of boys moved back and forth. The mass of boys ploughing across the field was broken only by the occasional brilliant dash, elusive back play and set kicks for goal. An individual's style of play was rarely mentioned. The descriptions

¹²⁵ Bradby, *The Handbooks*, p. 192.

¹²⁶ *Bell's Life in London*, 5 November 1855, p. 6. For more on the anticipation of Rugby football matches see, An Old Rugbaean, *Recollections of Rugby* (London: Hamilton and Adams, 1848), pp. 130-1. There were many such references in the boy's journals.

¹²⁷ 'Meditations', *The New Rugbeian*, December 1861, vol. iii, no. viii, pp. 297- 314.

generally give little sense of the games evolution, its tactics, disputes, umpires or even scores. The games could be played out over many days.¹²⁸ The boys wrote epic tales of these football matches. The depictions are idealised and heroic and the remainder of the school are portrayed as ringed about the perimeter of the ground, small boys cluttering the edges and craning their necks for the best view.¹²⁹

Boys swarmed the fields like nettled bull ants whose mound has been prodded by the inconsiderate and inquisitive. The games were a frenzy of collective activity. The boys moved in a semi-haphazard fashion pushing the ball forward in Brownian motion. All was a chaotic mass with arms lashing and legs kicking, striking an ovoid ball towards goal. The prime directive of this collective consciousness was to swarm as one, and to sweep the ball forward by means fair or foul. Sacrifice was expected. Indeed sacrifice was celebrated. The exhilaration and narcissistic disregard for one's self was casually accepted.¹³⁰

... The kick is made, the ball is off, and the great scrimmage under the Three Elm Trees ... to last for ten minutes ... one long, dense, determined shove of breast to breast, and shoulder to shoulder, while well shod boots were dealing savage hacks upon defenceless shins. And above all rose, in the clear frosty air, a human steam ... Some of the scars of football, it is said, men carry to their graves.¹³¹

The recollections were tinged with romance. The more ferocious the match the more pride recorded by the students. The games were a rare occasion when smaller, bullied boys could inflict pain upon their older persecutors from daily school life.¹³² The pain and drama of the contest was followed by comforting thoughts, leather sofas, open fires and beer. The game of football was a coming of age for the Rugby boy.

¹²⁸ *Bell's Life in London*, 10 October 1852; *Bell's Life in London*, 17 October 1852, p. 6. The playing out of games over many widely separated days by a large number of players was similar to the early games of Australian Rules football in the 1850s. F. G. *Public School Matches and those we meet there* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1867), p. 90, mentions that Rugbaeans count their footy sides by the hundreds.

¹²⁹ Rouse, *A History of Rugby School*, pp. 263-70.

¹³⁰ Rouse, *A History of Rugby School*, pp. 264-5. Sydney Selfe, *Chapters from the History of Rugby School Together with Notes on the Characters and Incidents Depicted in Tom Brown's Schooldays* (Rugby: AJ Lawrence, 1910), p. 157. A Victorian Schoolboy. Tom Burn's School Days. From the School Letters of Thomas Harris Burn. 1841-1852. Ed. Andrew Robert Burn. p. 195. Although one of the descriptions describe the football as a yellow ball, other images suggest it was a brown.

¹³¹ Butler, *The Three Friends*, pp. 5-6.

¹³² Butler, *The Three Friends*, pp. 3-4.

... the consciousness that you have turned over a new leaf in your school life; that you have become in a sort of way the representative of your school and house on the arena of muscular strength or athletic agility ... at football you must possess either muscular strength, or fleetness of foot, or true British pluck (the three points on which a Rugbeian prides himself most), to become even a tolerable player. And so you sit before your fire, looking idly on the genial flame, and occasionally seeking in the bottle by your side an additional stimulus for your imagination; and ... grudges ... raise your eyes to where your cap is suspended above the mantelpiece ...¹³³

The visual depictions of the players and the game are scant. Harwood's 1859 painting 'Football at Rugby' reveals small bands of boys attired in long white pants playing on Big-Side. Teachers circumnavigate the close; the ball is more spherical than oval and the landscape less denuded of trees than today. Barnard's 1852 painting reveals teachers, wives and children sauntering along the dirt path that ring the playing fields; the school clock tower hovers in the distance; capped boys play football in multiple knots on a field that sprawls undefined; a trio of defenders stand in front of the H-shaped Rugby goals; all players don long white trousers whose upper edge is cleanly defined by the sparkle of a shiny thick black belt.¹³⁴

The main newspaper source for football was *Bell's Life in London*. But unlike cricket, football did not have a national focus nor did it have a clearly charted history. There was no predictability to football reports. Football jostled for space with other similar lesser sports. The football reports were reserved for only a handful of Public schools. Rugby was one of these. When they occurred, they barely occupied more than an obscurely placed paragraph. Within this obscurity, as was the practice of the day, individuals rarely rose to prominence. Within the mass of contiguous boys, to be named was to be exceptional. In a game that may have included over 100 boys, verve, courage and skill and the capacity to draw attention to oneself was needed to steal notice. Wills was one such player.¹³⁵

In off-hand remarks in modern secondary sources Wills is often described as having captained Rugby school football team. This cannot be the case as there was no

¹³³ *The New Rugbeian*, November 1860, Vol. III, no. II, pp. 82-3.

¹³⁴ See reproductions of paintings by E. Harwood, 'Football at Rugby', G. Barnard 'School from the Close', and H. Fellows, 'Football Costumes', Temple Reading Room, Rugby School.

¹³⁵ *Bell's Life in London* was examined for the years 1852-1856. In any reference to Rugby school football, he is pivotal to the brief descriptions.

unified school team till 1867. There is no trace that remains in the archives that informs one of Wills' playing style during his first couple of years at Rugby. But there are inklings of his play and stature in the game thereafter. Wills first appeared as a footballer in the national sporting paper *Bell's Life in London* on December 1854:

'Football at Rugby'. A novel match was played on Monday the 20th ult, between the Debaters and the School ... On the School side the play of Wills was excellent, he quite dodged the other side by his *slimy* tricks, which drew applause from the many spectators ...¹³⁶

The italics for the word 'slimy' are those in the newspaper. One benign interpretation of this is that it described his playing style. However, given his history of gamesmanship in Australia there were hints that Wills may have exhibited play that tested the strict interpretation of the laws of the game. For any player to have their playing style highlighted in print was a rarity. His capacity to charm spectators was being honed.

Earlier that year *Bell's Life in London* recorded of a game:

On Wednesday, Nov 1, some fifty old Rugboeans might be seen on their old ground, in football costume, to play the annual match, with about ninety opponents, picked from the ranks of the School. The list of the former comprised the names of most of the heroes at football for the last five years, if we except those who have gone to Cambridge, which we regret to say, from its distance, was not represented on this occasion. Oxonia alone sent forth forty good men and true, under the guidance of a hero of a still earlier date. The day was most beautiful, and the game was played with great spirit ... The School, however played throughout with indomitable pluck, evidently taking pride in shewing old Rugboeans that football has not degenerated since their day ... while Wills, to the admiration of the spectators, and to the great assistance to his side, displayed an eel-like agility which baffled all the efforts of his opponents to retain him in their grasp.¹³⁷

He was a favourite with the viewing public. As a school boy footballer he displayed a combination of speed, endurance and theatrics which were hallmarks of his

¹³⁶ *Bell's Life in London*, 3 December 1854, p. 6.

¹³⁷ *Bell's Life in London*, 12 November 1854, p. 6. It is noteworthy that when early Melbourne footballers recalled the beginnings of Australian football they referred to players who, while running with the ball and dodging others, were given license to extricate themselves from tacklers.

career. Wills was also a champion kick of the football at Rugby. Drop kick competitions were part of the school athletic programme. This was recapitulated when Wills returned to Victoria where he was the longest drop kick of a football in the colony.¹³⁸ Remnants of the Evans House Football book give further clues to Wills' role as footballer.¹³⁹ For example, in 1854, when the champion runner Fairbairn ran the ball in for Evans House it was Wills, the designated kicker for the house XX, who was summoned to kick the goal. Wills and three other boys have the letter 'B' written after their names in this archive. It seems that he was a designated back player, consistent with his elusive and creative play.¹⁴⁰

There is no evidence of Wills having ever played football outside of Rugby school. However Wills continued to play sport on the fields of Rugby for another year after he left school. He was a constant companion of the school until the middle of 1856. On one of these occasions, in November 1855, he returned to play football. Rather than line up with the Old Rugbaean team he played alongside his old running and cricket pals, Bullock and Newman:

Foot Ball at Rugby. Mr Editor: On Wednesday last was played the 'Old Rugboean Match' the grand match of the season. The Old Rugboeans mustered in great force, and it was generally supposed that they would have it all their own way; but the School showed itself by no means unworthy of former years. On the side of the Old Rugboeans Messrs White, Sawyer, Fryer, Parsons, Bowen and others kept up their old reputation. On the School side Messrs Wills, Bullock, Newman and Smythe proved themselves to be players of no small merit. A splendid goal was kicked ...¹⁴¹

The Evans House Annals give a detailed breakdown of the honours held by each boy. Wills had earned his 'school cap'. That is, he had earned the right to play in the

¹³⁸ Rugby School Athletics Games Fixture, 2 November 1852. The prominence and respect accorded the designated kicker is highlighted by Jennifer Macrory, *Running with the Ball. The Birth of Rugby Football* (London: CollinsWillow, 1991), p. 77. Wills competed and was successful in drop kick competitions in Australia, see, *Geelong Register*, 18 April 1865. The prize for the longest drop kick was 3 pounds 3 shillings; won by Tom Wills kicking 163 feet; H. C. A. Harrison kicked 155 feet. *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 and 19 September 1864, p. 2, report of carnival in which Tom Wills won the drop kicking contest, kicking 173 feet.

¹³⁹ 'EVANS'S HOUSE FOOTBALL BOOK MDCCCLIV – LXI. HUTCHINSON'S HOUSE FOOTBALL BOOK MDCCCLXII. [capitals as in archival document]

¹⁴⁰ Macrory, *Running with the Ball*, pp. 96-101, notes that three or four players only were designated as Backs. These were the fastest runners and best exponents of the drop kick. In 1855, Wills was described in the Evans House records as being a good back and forward player.

principal games of football at the school.¹⁴² A painting by H. Fellows', 'Football Costumes' from 1858/9 portrays the different Houses in their uniforms.¹⁴³ The boys are dressed in long white pants. Most don horizontal banded jerseys and wear black shoes. The wooden goal posts, shorter and squatter than modern posts, are unpainted.

4 Athletics

A code of football was born at Rugby School and cricket was a national game with an already impressive historical trajectory. Running, however, did not scale the heights of cricket and football. Athletics had neither the moral philosophy of cricket or excitement of football's physical assault. Athletics, particularly long distance running, was regarded as more virtuous than thrilling; more an earnest test of character than exhilarating.¹⁴⁴ At Rugby there were two stages upon which one could excel at athletics. The first was 'Hare and Hounds'. The second was the annual athletics contests on the School close.

4.1 Hare and Hounds

'Hare and Hounds' referred to cross country runs over the hills and through the meadows of Rugby. The name reflected the influence in the region of game sports such as fox hunting and fishing. The first step in the race was to select two boys from the house as the hares. All the other boys were designated as hounds. These two hares were invariably amongst the best runners in the house. Each hare was required to carry a long canvas bag stuffed with shredded paper. This paper, or scent, was strewn on the ground for the hounds to follow. Prior to setting off, it was typically a fag's duty to fill to these bags to the brim with paper. The hares then synchronised watches and together fled

¹⁴¹ *Bell's Life in London*, 5 November 1855, p. 6.

¹⁴² The awarding of one's cap to play football in major Rugby school games was a matter of great pride. See Evans House archives, Temple Reading Room. See Macrory, *Running with the Ball*, pp. 82, 83 117. Also Butler, *The Three Friends*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴³ H. Fellows, 'Football Costumes', Temple Reading Room, Rugby School Painting, Rugby school archives. An early picture of the School House XX in 1864 reveals an ovoid rather than oval ball; white flannel trousers; skull and cross bones emblem of the cock house school house. They are attired in caps and belts; tight lace-up boots.

¹⁴⁴ This sentiment is expressed in student publications such as *New Rugbeian*. 'Rugby Games', *New Rugbeian 1858-1861*, vol. 1., September 1859, p. 288. 'Amongst Rugbeians cricket and football are the games. There is, to be sure, a time when neither is in season, and although we try to pass this tedious

across the nearby fields. As the hares ran they left a trails of paper as scent. Some minutes afterwards, off would set the remainder of the house as the large pack of hounds, following the scent and in pursuit of the two hares.¹⁴⁵

The attrition rate over the length of a course was high. Boys began in large numbers and boisterous spirits. This rarely lasted. In wet conditions the tracks rapidly became soggy and progress sluggish. Thick hedges acted as natural filters. Brooks were forded, clothes ripped and skin lacerated in pursuit of the hares. Recently ploughed fields, viscous and thick, stopped boys in their tracks: ‘The first good stiff piece of ploughed land reduced the number to one half, and the second or third found very few besides the regular set, amounting to about 8 or 10’.¹⁴⁶ Over the course, the hounds splintered into smaller groups, stopping every now and then to pick up the scent. When one small group located the scent, they bellowed ‘forward’. At that point all the splinter groups merged into a single yelping pack. At the next point of uncertainty the hounds would disperse across the fields until the rallying call was heard again.

Wills was a prominent runner in ‘Hare and Hounds’. As a fine runner he was typically a hare. If not, he was invariably one of the first finishing hounds. The Evans House archives record the running feats of Tom Wills. He is recorded in three runs in 1851, two in 1852, two in 1853 and then he returned as an Old Rugbeian for a final run in 1855.¹⁴⁷ Wills was at his running peak during his first three years at Rugby school. He was a champion distance runner before he made his mark in cricket and football. In 1851 Wills was the fastest runner in the school for the Churchover run, covering this in 56 minutes 45 seconds.¹⁴⁸

period by means of hare and hounds, steeple-chase, and other devices, we nevertheless feel that they are after all, but makeshifts’.

¹⁴⁵ See Hughes, *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, pp. 130-4. For more on hare and hounds, see, *The Book of Rugby School*, pp. 171-81; Bradby, *The Handbooks*, pp. 208-9. Rouse, *A History of Rugby School*, p. 270; A. R. Welsh, *Rugby School Hare and Hounds. Description of the Big-Side Runs* (Rugby: AJ Lawrence, 1902). The runs brought the boys into conflict with neighbouring farmers, An Old Rugbaean, *Recollections of Rugby*, p. 140, ‘Many were the rows which took place between the hare-and-hounds and the neighbouring farmers, who were so obtuse as not to see any just cause why their hedges should be broken down in order to allow us to pass ...’. Also, *The Rugby Miscellany* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1846), pp. 58-60.

¹⁴⁶ An Old Rugbaean, *Recollections of Rugby*, p. 139.

¹⁴⁷ Only fragments of the Evans Manuscript remain. It is a record of runs for Evans House. This is an incomplete record of various Hare and Hound runs. It gives a list of the hares, who started as hounds and who completed the runs. When Wills runs as a hound he is usually first or second in. As an Old Boy in October 1855 he comes in a rather poor seventh in the Shawel Run in torrential rain.

¹⁴⁸ Welsh, *Rugby School Hare and Hounds*, p. 25.

The Evans House archives reveal that running took place between late September to mid-October. In 1852, Wills was the conqueror of the Crick, regarded as Rugby's great running course.¹⁴⁹ The boys' own words summed up the chaos and obstacles:

Start from Quad Gates up the Hillmorton road, and down the road to Whitehall, on reaching which turn to the right down the Lower Hillmorton road as far as the village. Go through it and take the *second* turning to the left, (not the first as in the Hillmorton Run), under the railway and through a gate along a bridle road to the canal. After crossing this, turn to the right, following the road close by a hedge to the end of the field, where you go over a stile and up a long hill diagonally, following a footpath: then down the other side to a gate, just crossing the corner of the next field, and over a stile. In the next, a long ridge and furrow field, leave the regular footpath and go almost straight up, over a ditch, making for the end of a fence which juts out from the left-hand hedge near the top. Get over the railings at this corner and go straight on for two fields, keeping the hedge close on your right; on coming to a farmhouse, turn to the left through a gate of the farmyard, and then sharp to the right down a field close by the hedge. Through a gap in the hedge in front and straight on over the next field till you get over a gate into the Kilsby road, (not Watling Street, which disappears about here, but a continuation of it). Go straight across through a gap by the stump of an old tree, making for the right hand of two sets of rails in front, where you cross a brook
...¹⁵⁰

Tom completed the run in one hour 39 minutes. He was the fastest schoolboy of that year. Wills stole notice in whatever he did. When he was late for a run it was recorded; when he ran brilliantly it was underscored; when the scent was picked up quickly it was done so by Wills.¹⁵¹ As a sportsman and leader Wills was the defining point for all others in the house.

His last recorded run as a pupil in the Evans archives was on 29 October 1853. Starting five to six minutes adrift, having been entangled in French classes, he with ease, gathered in the other runners up the grinding ascent of Barby hill. He strode out and ran 'beautifully all the way'. The runners ended at the Cock and Robin Public

¹⁴⁹ Welsh, *Rugby School Hare and Hounds*, p. 30.

¹⁵⁰ Welsh, *Rugby School Hare and Hounds*, pp. 28, 37. In 1853 he topped the runners for the Lawford run. In 1852, T. W. Wills and fellow cricketer, footballer and housemate A. H. Fairbairn shared equal fastest for the Shawell run in 51 minutes 30 seconds.

¹⁵¹ Barby run, 14 October 1852, Evans House manuscript.

House.¹⁵² There were rewards for those who lasted the distance. Beer, cheese and bread, that trilogy of Rugby schoolboy delights, awaited the hares and the determined hounds that chased them home.¹⁵³ A drink at the local public house was the reward at the end of every run. High quality beer was regarded as an effective incentive for the runners accustomed to the stale brew of their houses. The hares, inside a pub and drinking, left their remaining pile of scent outside the door as a final inducement to the hounds:

There was usually a great difference between the number of those who assembled at the 'meet' and those who were present at the public-house which formed the terminus of every run ... but the muster in the back room of the 'Crown', seldom included more than half a dozen.¹⁵⁴

4.2 Athletics Games

When Wills arrived at Rugby, athletics was not conducted on a regular organised basis. In 1852, W. W. Follet Esq. of Trinity College, Cambridge, an old boy, initiated an annual athletics event for prize money.¹⁵⁵ The name of Wills was ubiquitous in the inaugural 1852 athletics carnival. The programme of that carnival was one of the first items he sent home to his parents in Victoria.¹⁵⁶ Next to each event he scribbled the winner's name or made a comment about his own performance.

That first carnival day in 1852 was notoriously slippery and not fit for athletics. Competitors did not wear spikes. Wills for his part won his heat in the 100 yards, then finished third in the final. He ran the 200 yards flat, 200 yards with twelve hurdles, a quarter mile over 20 hurdles, placed in the fives, threw the cricket ball to see who could cast it farthest but lost and competed in the drop kick. Wills was not often beaten. When he was beaten, it was a feat a boy could crow about to his parents. It was in these games

¹⁵² Evans House manuscript.

¹⁵³ Michael McCrum, *Thomas Arnold Head Master. A Reassessment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 22-3.

¹⁵⁴ An Old Rugbaean, *Recollections of Rugby*, p. 139.

¹⁵⁵ *The Rugbaean* 1850-1852. Prior to these games, on 15 November 1851, *The Rugbaean*, p. 128, Wills is mentioned in the athletics carnival which was mainly running and 'leaping'. Students ran the 127 yards between the football goal posts. A sixteen year old Wills was second in his heat. It became a well known local event and reported in the Rugby town newspapers. Follett stipulated that the Holder of Bigside Bags, a title given to the champion runner, should be instrumental in the planning of this day. Wills was awarded this title during his time at Rugby his role presumably was also an administrative one.

¹⁵⁶ Rugby School Athletics programme, sent to his parents, 1852.

that David Hanbury, a fellow student, wrote about the defeat of Wills over the one mile with a sense of amazement.¹⁵⁷

Seven years later, in Melbourne, this Rugby athletics template was fixed in his mind when he suggested a similar athletic carnival be staged in Melbourne. He wrote:

I would therefore endeavour to arouse all the athletes of Victoria, by suggesting that all the cricket clubs in and around the metropolis should at the termination of the cricket season, join together and form a committee for carrying out games of some sort, and that each club so joining should subscribe according to their means towards the getting up of athletic games on a grand scale; and I feel certain that if such an end could be accomplished and that the use of the Melbourne cricket ground could be obtained, the public would be highly delighted for an afternoon at any rate, and I would also suggest that a programme of certain athletic games be arranged, such as are drawn up at the universities and public schools of England. The Rugby games were as follows ...¹⁵⁸

5 Drinking of Alcohol at Rugby

A pile of scent
Is laid before
A little public-
House's door;
We hustle in
And (funny tale)
We see the hares
Set drinking ale!
As soon as we've all
Had a swig at the jug, we
Start off again
At a trot for Rugby.¹⁵⁹

The six evils in school – profligacy, systematic falsehood, cruelty and bullying, active disobedience, idleness, the bond of evil. The actual evil which may exist in a school consists, I suppose, first of all in direct sensual wickedness, such as drunkenness and other things forbidden together with drunkenness in the Scriptures ... Let these six

¹⁵⁷ Letters of Tom Burn, p. 216, Temple Reading Room, Rugby School, 'I was perfectly thunderstruck as no one ever dreamt of my beating Wills or Fairbairn for a mile'.

¹⁵⁸ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 23 April 1859, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ An Old Rugbaean, *Recollections of Rugby*, p. 137.

things exist together, and the profanation of the temple is complete, -
it is become a den of thieves ...¹⁶⁰

Tom Wills died as a result of the consequences of alcoholism. It is reasonable to suspect that by the age of 21 when he returned to Melbourne that he was familiar with drinking alcohol.

If alcohol consumption at Rugby was a regular feature of the boys' lives it may have had several important influences upon Wills. It may have had a direct biological effect wherein certain patterns of drinking became ingrained from an early age; or he may have been exposed to drinking protocols associated with English sports of the day. Key questions to address in this early phase of his life include if the consumption of alcohol was part of the daily rituals of Rugby school or perhaps confined to celebratory events such as sports. What were the general set of injunctions and strictures set in place by school authorities and teachers? How did the student body regard the drinking of alcohol? Did the structure of Rugby with its relative independent house and monitorial system encourage drinking? And how important was the local water supply as a reason to consume alcohol?

5.1 Sanitary Reforms at Rugby

The period 1849 to 1875 saw great sanitary reform in Great Britain. Under the dual pressure of increasing population and urban concentration, British towns failed to cope with sanitation demands. Deep wells typically supplied water. The needs of the population were met by water carriers. Sewage was the second problem. Birmingham, the largest midlands city near Rugby, '... piped their sewage totally, untreated into local rivers'. Nightsoil was dumped in alleyways and pigs could be legally kept inside houses. Cholera repeatedly struck down men, women and children.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ T. W. Bamford (ed.), *Thomas Arnold on Education – A Sketch from his Writings with Introductory Material by T. W. Bamford* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 86-7. There are numerous references to alcohol in a more recent assessment of Thomas Arnold, McCrum, *Thomas Arnold Head Master*, pp. 23, 69, 71, 74, 80.

¹⁶¹ Mannering, 'An Appraisal', p.3. Cholera outbreaks occurred in 1831-2, 1848-9, 1854 and 1866-7.

Typhus, typhoid, small pox and tuberculosis were endemic in English towns. In 1848 George Thomas Clark examined the state of Rugby sanitation. There was concern that if the town's name was sullied, then the reputation of the school and the economic benefits it returned to the town would suffer. Clark wrote of the foul Rugby environs:

That the mortality of Rugby, infantile and adult, is very much higher than that of the surrounding registration district ... much ... of this excess, is due to a want of the means of cleanliness, as drainage and water supply ... that not only are the open cesspools, pigsties and stagnant ditches within and around the town very numerous, but the number of privies is quite insufficient for the population, and in their arrangement no distinction is preserved between the two sexes.¹⁶²

The refuse from the cesspools drained into the gravel bed of the town, and entered the town's water supply via wells and springs. When Tom Wills arrived at Rugby, it was a town choking on its own filth.

5.2 Beer as a Water Substitute

For a large portion of the early and mid-nineteenth century in England, drinking alcohol was a necessity to quench one's thirst. Water was of poor quality, particularly in country areas. Beverages to which water was added were boiled for safety. Harrison notes that by the 1870s although water supplies had improved in many institutions beer was still favoured over water 'as the staple drink. Eton College continued to brew its own beer till 1875 and Winchester boys were still drinking beer with their meals in 1872'.¹⁶³ The Rugby school of the 1850s was part of this milieu.

The general evidence for poor quality water in rural England; the poor sanitary state of the township of Rugby and most importantly the boys' own writing confirms that beer drinking was an accepted alternative to drinking water at the school. It seems that neither beer nor water was entirely satisfactory. Tom Burn summed up a new boy's dilemma when he wrote to his sister in 1848:

¹⁶² See, Mannering, 'An Appraisal', wherein a copy of Clark's report is enclosed. The investigation by Clark was, according to Hope-Simpson, assisted by Tait, Headmaster of Rugby school, it was reported that Tait was offended by the foul aromas that entered his study requested that the matter be investigated. See Hope Simpson, *Rugby since Arnold*, pp. 20-1.

I drank beer at dinner yesterday and in the Evening I had a headache, today I drank water and am now quite well – so I think that I have given beer a fair trial and must be content to drink water.¹⁶⁴

Burn took water not as a first option but was driven to it after sickness from beer.¹⁶⁵ While water is barely mentioned in the boys' journals, beer is abundantly referenced.¹⁶⁶ There are occasional references to alcohol as a medicine and also to champagne breakfasts.¹⁶⁷

5.3 Alcohol Consumption: Evidence and Protocols

Drinking beer was an accepted practice at Rugby school.¹⁶⁸ Drinking occurred from a young age and it was customary to drink at meal times. Boys dropped nonchalant lines about their beer drinking to parents. It is most likely that such reports under represent the degree of drinking. In the months after Tom Wills left Rugby school, the Evans House archives reveal an insight into the acceptance of drinking by the boys and how this was sanctioned by the House Master, Charles Evans:

¹⁶³ Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 299 does mention Rugby School but gives no details as to how long such a practice may have lasted there. The implication is that such practices were widespread.

¹⁶⁴ Letters of Tom Burn, p. 77.

¹⁶⁵ There were few references to the quality of water in the archival or secondary sources obtained at Rugby School. It is clear that water was consumed to some degree. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp. 207-8 cites the temperance reformer T. H. Green as having drunk only water during his time at Rugby school. The school archivist, Rusty Maclean, also indicated that water was pumped from a well in the Old Quad at Rugby School (personal communication). There were also numerous archival references to the drinking of tea and coffee.

¹⁶⁶ References to beer are in boys' letters home, schoolboy articles, school histories and fictional accounts of life at school.

¹⁶⁷ See, Letters of Tom Burn, 16 March 1850, who to his sister, wrote, '... took a dose of Castor Oil which has done me a great deal of good. The Housekeeper has it so I can get some whenever I like, I took it in some sherry wine cold not warm ...' and on 23 September 1848, to his sister, '... I was invited to a very grand breakfast ... with a good many other boys, this morning, they had hot game and other things, and desert [*sic*] and Champagne, a very odd way of having a breakfast ...'

¹⁶⁸ Butler, *The Three Friends*, p. 19. There were casual references throughout the boys' writings, for example, *The New Rugbeian. 1858-1861*, vol. II, no. VI, April 1860, p. 197, the editors of the *New Rugbeian* were drinking beer while writing, '... jug of good editorial beer'. There was no sense that this information needed to be hidden. See, *The New Rugbeian*, November 1859, vol. ii, pp. 36, 40. Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, p. 200, comments about petite curly headed boys being corrupted by older boys and taught to drink; p. 204 mentions that Tom Brown was thinking of bottled beer; pp. 220-2: '[Tom] ... he dived into his cupboard, and hauled out an old knuckle-bone of ham, and two or three bottles of beer, together with the solemn pewter only used ... bread and cheese ... [then East says to Tom]... "What a stunning tap, Tom! You are a wunner for bottling the swipes."'; pp. 256-8, Tom after his fight with the slogger '... filled him a tumbler of bottled-beer, and he ate and drank, listening to the pleasant talk ...'

After the news had come of the taking of Sebastopol, the Fellows made a bonfire in the yard, and, proceeding to burn the boxes ... they were stopped by the Sixth, on which an extraordinary melee ensued, the Sixth defending, and the rest assaulting the studies – Mr Evans concluded the proceedings with wine all round.¹⁶⁹

The rules that governed drinking at Rugby in the 1850s are less clear.¹⁷⁰ To some extent the house staff monitored beer drinking. These staff tended to the boys and looked after the day to day running of the house. They were local townsmen. It was the house staff who procured and distributed the beer to the boys. House rules, both formal and informal, provided limits to alcohol use. Certain restrictions seem clear. Drunkenness as distinct from drinking alcohol was not sanctioned. It could lead to expulsion from the school. It was not clear from the archives how often such expulsions took place but undoubtedly they did not reflect the extent of drunkenness. Greater liberality was shown towards more senior pupils. Students of the sixth were treated more generously. Praeposters were expected to provide guidance to the younger students in all matters including alcohol consumption. A fondness for drink and a Praeposter class not immune to corruption, conspired to ignore the governing rules.

Given the semi-independent manner in which boys lived and the secretive manner in which they often drank beer outside of meal times, for serious consequences to occur, a boy found drunk would have to be found out by another boy or house servant willing to pursue the matter. The boys' writings suggest that attitudes amongst boys varied to their tolerance of drinking. There were clear injunctions that spirituous liquors were not to be drunk by boys.¹⁷¹

Although Arnold died from a myocardial infarction in 1842, his views on drinking lingered during the 1850s. Arnold had established that certain public houses and the roads that led to them were off limits to the boys. The sixth form had opposed

¹⁶⁹ *Ye Annals of Evans House*. Evans House was the house where Tom Wills lived at Rugby. Charles Evans was housemaster and Tom Wills' personal tutor.

¹⁷⁰ The exact strictures about alcohol are mentioned in various references and probably varied slightly from house to house; as well as between headmasters; not to mention individual praeposters.

¹⁷¹ These were clearly articulated in Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. See the last chapter in preparation for the climactic cricket match in which Tom Brown met the Headmaster Dr Arnold prior to playing the Marylebone cricket team. There was also the remark from young Brooke earlier to new boys that they should stick to beer, pp. 110-1. While such allusions are fictitious it is quite likely that Tom Hughes modelled much of his description upon personal experiences.

this tightening and fell into line only after one of them was expelled after illegal drinking.¹⁷² Arnold seemed torn between the necessity of allowing drinking while his logical instincts concluded that such licence must lead to alcohol abuse and idleness. In Arnold's mind, drunkenness was wedded to 'sensual wickedness'.¹⁷³

Rouse reflected upon a secret drinking society formed by the senior boys. It was called 'The Cocktail Club'. Boys saved their beer from supper. To this they added more beer saved by the fags which was then mixed with spirits, heated and drunk. The Club existed up until Tait's headmastership. Over the Christmas period in 1845 it was banished with some members expelled from the school.¹⁷⁴

The prefect and house system perhaps allowed some drunkenness to remain hidden within the confines of the houses. It is unclear how aware were Masters of the extent of drunkenness. Drinking was not regarded as a free for all by the boys. In their personal letters, some boys recalled drunkenness with moral horror. Charles Kemp, a contemporary of Wills in Evans House wrote:

I regret to inform you of a most disgusting case of drunkenness that happened in our house yesterday. I chanced to be a witness of the awful spectacle and I don't think I shall easily forget it. Goulburn [Headmaster] came up to the house last night and has decreed that both the offenders shall leave on Tuesday, and I hope and trust it will be carried out.¹⁷⁵

The poet Arthur H. Clough in 1834 wrote despairingly:

... but even here at Rugby, the best of all public schools, which are the best kind of schools, even here there is a vast deal of bad. It was but a few nights ago that a little fellow, not more than thirteen at the very most, was quite drunk, and that for the second time in the last year.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² 'A new boy's letters from Rugby', *Pamphlets of Rugby IV*, 7 September 1839. Five Preposters, that is, Sixth Form fellows 'have been sent away, or at least are going to leave at Lawrence Sheriff (ie. Founder's day, October) for being drunk and kicking up a row at a calling over ...'

¹⁷³ Bamford, *Arnold on Education*, pp. 86-7.

¹⁷⁴ The School House Fasti were cited by Rouse as evidence for 'The Cocktail Club'. It is also mentioned by Hughes in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. See, Rouse, *A History of Rugby School*, pp. 273-4. For more on Tait, see Hope Simpson, *Rugby before Arnold*, pp. 10-22. There are numerous brief and accessible biographical pieces on Tait on the internet, for example, <http://www.worldhistory.com/wiki/A/Archibald-Campbell-Tait.htm>

¹⁷⁵ Charles E. Kemp to his mother, 19 March 1854. Charles Eamer Kemp entered Rugby school at fourteen years of age.

¹⁷⁶ A. H. Clough, *Letters and Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough* (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1865), Clough to his brother, 13 October 1834.

Some schoolhouses procured beer through local beer houses. Though not entirely clear in the literature of the time, it seems that brewing occurred within houses. To what extent this was an activity of the boys or house staff is unclear. Tom Brown in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* bottled his own beer which, he hid in his room. Bottling one's own beer was common and called 'bottling the Swipes'.¹⁷⁷

The quality of house beer was regarded as lamentable. Tom Burn in 1848 wrote to his sister to reassure her that the beer was treated to avoid cholera, 'Mrs J Townsend's beer is very clear and she says they always boil it a good deal and put a little salt in it'.¹⁷⁸ The boys sneered at its putrid brew in their journals. Writing three years after Wills left England, one boy wrote:

Then the beer was such a very odd substance, you could only drink it if you were very thirsty, and swallowed it down without tasting it much. I don't think the master of the house saved much though, by giving us bad beer, because we used to avenge ourselves on it by hurling it down the sink, so that if we couldn't drink it, nobody else should.¹⁷⁹

The few letters between Wills and his family while at Rugby school make no mention of alcohol. That he was exposed to drinking is undoubted. The institutional acceptance of beer as a source of hydration and its role in the rights of initiation and in sport saw to that. While not conclusive proof regarding Wills, it is impressive circumstantial evidence for his exposure to and consumption of alcohol at the school.

¹⁷⁷ 'Bottling the Swipes', comment by Rev. S. D. Sandes, *Pamphlets of Rugby IV*, pp. 18-9. '... authorized School House supper consisted of stony Double Gloucester cheese and beer so bad that it was known by us colloquially as "Sudden Death" – (but) exhilarating life-giving ale as good as the best Scotch ale can be made out of "Sudden Death", only try it for curiosity. No one knows the recipe but a schoolboy. Get an ordinary wine bottle, put a funnel into it. Into the funnel put a dessert-spoonful of powdered rice, the same of brown sugar (Demara granulated is the best), half a salt-spoon of powdered ginger, and finally, two raisins. Wire down the cork well. In about three days the raisins will rise to the top, I can't say why. It is a mystery. That shews the ale is fit to drink. If kept too long (schoolboys do not keep it too long), it will burst the bottle, (the fermentation from the rice being so strong). This "improved Sudden Death" was kept in a "mysterious panel in the Study Wall", the secret of which was a hand-me-down from one tenant of each study to his successor'.

¹⁷⁸ School Letters of Tom Burn, p. 78. Burn was in Cotton House. The 1851 census reveals that this house had a family specifically designated to it, at a nearby address where the head of the household was a Mr Townsend, Beer House Keeper. See Census, Temple Reading Room, Rugby School.

¹⁷⁹ 'House Sketches', *The New Rugbeian*, vol. II., no. II, November 1859, p. 39. Another example is D. B. Maclaren 'I like everything here except the beer which is frightful. So you think I might have porter in bottles?' in Hope Simpson, *Rugby since Arnold*, p. 35.

5.4 Links with Sport

To what extent was alcohol associated with sport at Rugby school? There is evidence for schoolboy drinking in all three of the major sports – cricket, football and athletics.¹⁸⁰ There were no reports of drunkenness on the cricket field at Rugby found in the archival research. This does not mean drunkenness on the field did not occur. For example, there is evidence that drinking occurred on the field in cricket, as in the recollections of a fag at Eton. Fags were required to procure bottles of beer for the cricketers.¹⁸¹ Boys were exposed to the drinking and feasting rituals around cricket. The Rugby schoolboys played against older men and after the match the boys regularly dined at local hotels and were handed down the templates of drinking and feasting.¹⁸²

In the 1850s a war of words was conducted in *The Times*. The heart of the argument centred on whether the annual schoolboy cricket games played in London at the start of each summer fostered vice and alcohol abuse amongst the boys by exposing them to the adult evils of London. The schools primarily involved were Winchester, Eton and Harrow.¹⁸³ Australian and English newspapers were replete with ominous

¹⁸⁰ Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 319 notes that ‘... Though Lord Salisbury might argue as late as 1886 that beer had done him no harm after a day’s rowing at Eton, few public schools at that time still favoured beer as a beverage; for the athletic exercise increasingly popular in late Victorian public schools was not compatible with drinking’.

¹⁸¹ Eric Parker, *Floreat An Eton Anthology* (London: Nisbet & Co. 1923), p.280. A. C. Ainger recalled being sent to fetch bottled beer by a member of the Eton Eleven and his fear of meeting a Master and hearing the clinking of beer bottles under his gown. Tellingly he said they had no choice in the matter. This old Etonian was one of a number who were bullied and prevailed upon to procure quarts of bottled beer for distinguished members of the Eleven. There were also suggestions that in the 1880s that beer was taken by football players. ‘I was not the only one who was sent, by a distinguished member of the Eleven, to fetch him bottled beer from the “Christopher”. Apart from the doom impending, if I met a master, going or still more returning, the pocket of a Colleger’s gown was not a convenient receptacle for quart bottles knocking against each other. But we had no choice’. Brooke’s comments in Hughes, *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, pp. 99-100, also suggest that drinking alcohol on the sports field at Rugby was known.

¹⁸² For example, *Bell’s Life in London*, 29 May 1853 p. 3, ‘The Rugby Club v Rugby School’, ‘The School dined each day with the Club, a most excellent dinner having been supplied by Mr Williams of the Horse Shoes Hotel’.

¹⁸³ Rugby was not included in this discussion. See articles in *The Times*, from 20 July 1857 through until 11 August 1857. Parents feared that their sons would be exposed to the nasty underbelly of London. The rallying counterpoint to this argument was that such independence was the making of the boys and the cradle from which sprung fearless English men who would retain Britannia’s grip upon the world. Fred Gale, a prominent nineteenth century writer on English cricket, recalled that in 1841, a member of the Winchester cricket XI was incapacitated by champagne and taken to a police station. Edmund H. Fellowes, *A History of Winchester Cricket Fellowes* (Winchester, 1930), pp. 95-7, claimed it was ‘beyond dispute’ that lack of parental restraint led to exposure to vice and drunkenness of the schoolboys during their week in London for the schools cricket match.

warnings of the need to be on an everpresent footing for war and the role of sport and temperance in such preparedness:

The nation which aims at greatness cannot afford to neglect the example of Greece. The races which have done most for the world have always been those which have attended to their bodily culture. The Goths conquered Rome because they were physically better men – the Turks, the Arabs, for the same reason ... It has been said, with great truth, that to our public school system were we indebted for the reconquest of India under difficulties ... Of all our games, the one which has succeeded in creating the largest national interest is cricket; and it is, in many respects, the model of what a game ought to be ... No game makes so great a demand upon all the higher physical qualities; nor is it enough that the cricketer a quick of eye, strong of arm, and agile of foot. He must be temperate, patient, and self-contained. He must know when to strike and when to forbear. He is trained, indeed, to a mimic war, which (as the game now is) involves just so much of the personal risk as to make the cricket ground no bad practice for the battle field ...¹⁸⁴

Young Brooke's farewell speech in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* warned potential sportsmen to avoid the dangers of alcohol. But the message was ambiguous. It was considered that certain types of alcohol rather than alcohol *per se* was dangerous. Similar catch cries can be found transplanted decades later in the Victorian colony when sportsmen and drink were commented upon. Brooke pleaded with the boys at Rugby school to avoid public houses and drinking of bad spirits and punch:

... such rot-gut stuff. That wont make good dropkicks or chargers of you ... You get plenty of good beer here, and that's enough for you; and drinking isn't manly, whatever some of you may think of it.¹⁸⁵

There is a telling reference to drinking while playing football in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. It hints at dark behaviour looked upon dimly by Tom Hughes. During the half time break fruit vendors distributed oranges as they wended their way through the players. The seniors who 'are past oranges and apples' placed the innocence of

¹⁸⁴ *Argus*, 6 February 1860, pp. 4-5. See for further comment, James Bradley, 'Inventing Australians and Constructing Englishness: Cricket and the Creation of a National Consciousness, 1860-1914', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 11, no. 2 (May 1995), pp. 53-4; M. Connellan, 'From Manliness to Masculinities', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 17, no. 2 (May 2001), pp. 49-63; J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. xxii-xiii, 14-7 and K. A. P. Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), pp. 34-52.

¹⁸⁵ Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, p. 89, 'Brooke ... he's cock of the School, and head of the School – house side, and the best kick and charger in Rugby'.

gingerbeer bottles to their lips but to the knowing something stronger was being swallowed. Hughes made no bones about alcohol's drain on a sportsman's prowess – 'one short made rush, and then a stitch in the side, and no more honest play; that's what comes of those bottles'.¹⁸⁶

Drinking beer after 'Hare and Hounds' was openly mentioned in the boys' writings. The more successful the athlete, the more he was exposed to the life of the inn. Alcohol was a reward for the swiftest of runners. Though this was common knowledge, the literature of the time does not hint at any concern from teachers. There was also no suggestion amongst the boys of this practice being dangerous to an athlete.

The boys openly commemorated, in verse, the ritual drinking of alcohol during sporting occasions. Beer was drunk joyously and deliriously at times of moment; none more so than after a stirring football performance:

Oh! fir a drink of beer,
Oh swipes! for pardon I pray,
Full oft have I cursed, you I know,
But I love and adore you to-day.¹⁸⁷

Such revelry and boisterous singing, though under some guidance from house staff, was open and seemingly plentiful.¹⁸⁸

6 The Rugby Template comes Home to the Colonies: Mr T. W. Wills of English Reputation¹⁸⁹

Every year renders Melbourne more handsome, not only in its buildings, but in its aspect. The natural dingy foliage is replaced by the fresh, vivid, acrid green of English trees, which flourish so gloriously here, like the British people. Especially do the elms and poplars thrive, and it is a pity that more oaks have not been planted.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, pp. 99-100.

¹⁸⁷ From verse, 'Song of a House-Match' *The Crescent* (Rugby: An Arnoldite Publication. Third Series. Part 1. 1867), p. 18.

¹⁸⁸ Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, p. 317, has the most evocative, though not the only reference to drinking after games. The allowance of Saturday night beer in jugs was supplemented by senior boys' reserves of bottled beer. A picture of good times, parched throats and empty mugs to be repeatedly filled is portrayed. Also see p. 100 where boys dreamed about bottled beer after a hard day of physical activity.

¹⁸⁹ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 14 February 1857, p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ *The Imperial Review*, June 1882, pp. 12-5.

Tom Wills could not have arrived in England at a more propitious time. John Lillywhite, the professional cricketer had recently been appointed to coach the Rugby school team. Lillywhite was a mentor to Wills, and became the first in a long sequence of cricketers to defend Wills in public. No boy in Australia and few in England could have boasted such a coach. In England Wills learned the skill of single wicket cricket: a somewhat anachronistic game that failed to develop in later years as the game modernised.¹⁹¹ He learned the importance of the preparation of the playing surface and the preparation of wickets; he was aware of the problem of using a single ground for football and then cricket. Rugby bequeathed him all these gifts. He played with the greatest cricketers of the age. And before he played with them, he watched them strike bat on ball.¹⁹² He played with the likes of Alfred Mynn, William Clarke and John Lillywhite. In Australia these names were hauled up by Wills when making a point to emphasise the quality of his sporting pedigree.¹⁹³

By the early 1850s the football competition amongst the houses had become an organised competition. In 1852 an annual athletics competition was started. All this occurred in the first couple of years that Wills studied at Rugby school. They provided a structure for an extraordinarily talented young man's skills to germinate.

After leaving Rugby school he wandered the length and breadth of England and then Ireland playing cricket. An independent spirit, he owed allegiance to no single club. Some of these activities in England he helped transplant to Australia, such as the 'I

¹⁹¹ Single wicket cricket was popular in the mid-nineteenth century. It had its own set of rules. See *Leader*, 6 January 1872, p. 11, 'Tom Wills, so says the Advertiser is willing to play any cricketer in the colony ... single wicket match'.

¹⁹² See letter, Tom to Horatio, 4 June 1851.

¹⁹³ See, for example, *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 12 June 1858, p. 4. In defending himself Wills says, 'Clarke used to say that he would not give a fig for any bowler that could not bowl on every ground – in fact, an every day bowler'. Rugby school exposed him to a range of influential cricketers. In the year prior to his coming to England the neighbouring Stoneleigh CC, which included influential figures in the game played the school. See Stoneleigh Cricket Club v Rugby School 1849. <http://www.stoneleighcc.org.au/StoneleighRugby1849.htm>. See David Buchanan, *Rugby Cricket Club, its Rise and Progress, from 1844 to 1894* (Rugby: Rugby Advertiser, 1894), pp. 9-10, describes visits by influential teams in the 1840s and 1850s which included names such as Clarke, Mynn and Box. Frederick Lillywhite, *Guide to Cricketers*, 1851, p. 34, 'The Gentlemen of the Rugby School were the first in the field. Having obtained the services of John Lillywhite and his father for one month ...' p.58 'The scholars of this excellent school play on a piece of ground (belonging to the school), which has one great advantage, viz., a good gravelly soil. Owing to this they commence cricket at Rugby on the 1st of March ... John Lillywhite's services are again engaged by this school'. The issue of the quality of soil was important in Wills' career from the start. This was important when he returned to Australia.

Zingari'.¹⁹⁴ The English cricket scene was vibrant. *Bell's Life in London* brimmed with gossip and spats amongst players.¹⁹⁵ By the time he left the Southampton docks on 19 October 1856 the nodal points of Wills' life were set dry. These included – his precocious dominance in cricket; being feted by spectators; being indulged by his parents; the adoption of a nomadic cricketing lifestyle; exposure to the bickering cricket press; accusations about his bowling style; his observance of behaviour of the best professional and amateur cricketers; his failures in the eyes of his family; his profligate and spendthrift lifestyle and his exposure to the development of Rugby school football rules. All these were in place by the time he landed in Melbourne, 23 December 1856.¹⁹⁶

Bell's Life in Victoria was first printed, fortuitously, soon after he arrived in Australia. It gave Wills a perfect forum for his uncontained energies. Wills, more than anyone else, was able to fertilise the barren sporting landscape of Victoria after his time in England. And, if classical education left him floundering in the middle school at Rugby, at least in late 1850s Melbourne a smattering of Latin and Greek was assured to make its way to a less than academic *Bell's Life* in the colony of Victoria.¹⁹⁷

Letter writing became, if not an obsession, then a preoccupation for Wills when he returned to Melbourne. In his most famous letter, 10 July 1858, when he advocated the formation of a foot-ball club, the style of the letter was lifted straight from the pages of *Bell's Life in London*.¹⁹⁸ His football connections are more speculative than cricket. Football was played within the confines of school but unlike cricket lacked a national

¹⁹⁴ For more on I Zingari, J. M. Eldershaw, *I Zingari in Australia: 1888-1988* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989). See series of letters involving Wills, in *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 19 September 1857, p. 3 and 26 September 1857, p. 4, 3 October 1857, p. 4.

¹⁹⁵ *Bell's Life in London* was examined for the years that Wills was in England, 1850-1856.

¹⁹⁶ The dispersal of young men from Rugby School, spreading over the globe was a common romantic theme in the school literature. It was given dramatic emphasis by reference to military conflicts or geographic and climatic hardship. See, Selfe, *Chapters from the History of Rugby School*, p. 158, '... have with brave hearts manfully done their work and borne their load "in country curacies, London chambers, under the Indian sun and in Australian towns and clearings"'. Also *The Book of Rugby School*, pp. 181-2.

¹⁹⁷ Sportsmen from the nineteenth century commonly borrowed from classical literature when writing letters to newspaper editors. The language used by Wills borrowed heavily from muscular Christianity, see for example, D. Brown, 'Muscular Christianity in the Antipodes: Some Observations on the Diffusion and Emergence of a Victorian Ideal in Australian Social Theory', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 3, no. 2 (May 1987), pp. 173-87.

¹⁹⁸ See, *Bell's Life in London*, 4 March 1855, p. 3, where the similarity of the writing about the rifle clubs and Wills' letter to *Bell's Life in Victoria* in 1858 is unmistakable.

focus. Despite this, Rugby school football did attract the occasional paragraph in the national paper, *Bell's Life in London*.

At Rugby the life cycle of cricket and football was well established. Like Smith, Hammersley and Thompson (the three men, who along with Wills, are credited with writing the first set of rules for Australian Rules football), Wills' English experience was crucial when he helped pen the early rules of Australian Rules football.¹⁹⁹ Discussion and criticism of the Rugby school rules were in the air in the 1850s. Thus in an article called 'Theories of football' some of the criticisms of Rugby school football must have been known to Wills.²⁰⁰

There seems little doubt that Rugby School football was influential in Wills' thinking when he helped create Australian Rules football. Firstly, Wills was at Rugby during the initiation and development of a regular inter-house football fixture. Secondly, while the Rugby school rules had been proclaimed in 1846 the boys continued to reflect upon and reshape the rules of football. The Rugby football game was played over days, sometimes with swarms of boys. This was not dissimilar to the game played in Melbourne in the late 1850s. The seeds of this game via Wills passed to Victoria, almost like a form of cultural natural selection, to be adapted to the Australian environment and influenced by other English schoolboy games.

Thirdly, the original rules of Rugby School football bear similarities to aspects of the game developed in Melbourne.²⁰¹ Fourthly, the Rugby school grounds allowed both cricket and rugby to be played. The important role of managing the turf upon

¹⁹⁹ These are the other key early rule writers in Australian Rules football. Hibbins, 'The Cambridge Connection', pp. 172-92.

²⁰⁰ 'Theories of Football', *The New Rugbeian*, vol. III, no. VIII, 1861, pp. 293-6. Also see, Butler, *The Three Friends*, p. 11, '(hacking) ... it spoils football. I'll get rid of it some day, if I'm a swell. It's not the game'. It is almost certain that this conversation in Tait's time, in the years just before Wills arrived at Rugby would have been continued as a point of discussion. Its relevance to Wills and Australian Rules football was that hacking and the protection of players' legs was a key point put forward in the creation of the game in Melbourne.

²⁰¹ See the Melbourne 1859 rules, MCC archives. Pamphlets of Rugby IV. The first pamphlet is called 'The Origin of Rugby Football. Report of the Sub-Committee of the Old Rugbeian Society, Appointed in July, 1895. The Laws of Football as played at Rugby School sanctioned by a Levee of Bigside on the 7th September 1846', pp. 28-31. This similarity has been noted by several authors for example, B. W. O'Dwyer, 'The Shaping of Victorian Rules Football', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 60, no. 1 (March 1989), pp. 34-5, discusses the similarities between rules of early Australian Rules football and Rugby School rules. Also see 1845 rules, Macrory, *Running with the Ball*, pp. 86-90.

which cricket and football was played continued to be an issue of importance for Wills in Australia.²⁰²

Wills likewise sought to influence the development of athletics, first through his 10 July letter and then in the following year.²⁰³ In this letter he set out the games played at Rugby school for Victorians to follow suite. The promotion of athletics was seen as an adjunct to the cricket season. Wills on return to Australia was a runner during cricket games and also partook in athletic carnivals similar to Rugby.

In 1864, eight years after having left England and on the eve of George Parr's visit to Australia, *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, vividly recalled Wills and his Rugby connections:

... private advices informing us that Mr Wills (of Rugbean cricket fame) and Charles Lawrence have effected a material improvement in Australian cricketers since the last visit of English cricketers.²⁰⁴

It later added:

²⁰² References during Wills' time at Rugby to this issue include, *The Book of Rugby School*, p. 148, '... it is September; and cricket is triumphant, and the big-side ground unconscious of the profane heel marks of "places", which are soon to sully its beauty ...'. This reference resonates with Wills and Harrison and the early controversial use of the Melbourne Cricket Ground for football. Also see, School Letters of Tom Burn, p. 218. *Lillywhite's Guide to Cricketers 1855*, p. 104, 'A new foot-ball ground has just been completed at Rugby, in order to preserve that upon which cricket is played'. At Rugby School, Tom Wills' coach, John Lillywhite oversaw the preparation of the ground between cricket and football seasons. This continued to dog players and administrators, see, W. J. Ford, 'Rugby School', in K. S. Ranjitsinhji (ed.), *The Jubilee Book of Cricket* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1897), p. 294. There are many references to this issue in Australia, see, Robert Grogan, *Our Proud Heritage. A History of the South Melbourne Cricket Club from 1862* (Melbourne: South Melbourne Cricket Club, 2003), p. 16, 'By 1878, the South Melbourne ground was fenced in, the surface greatly improved and an excellent pavilion built. The club, despite concerts, sports meetings and debentures, was still unable to reduce its liabilities. "Buck" Wheatley wrote in his memoirs: "I consulted the football committee and asked them if they would agree to play on the SMCC ground provided they received half the profits. They willingly agreed. The cricket club committee objected at first, but I brought expert evidence to prove that the turf on the ground would not be damaged. My old friend Tommy Wills, once captain of Rugby School, informed the committee that football was always played on the great English public school cricket grounds during winter and top dressed early in the spring. When football was finished with, cricket was then played. The wickets played just the same – in fact, even better – according to Mr Wills' statement.'" Personal communication with Robert Grogan, that he copied this statement from the SMCC archives. Also see a similar statement, L. Laurence, *History of South Melbourne Football Club*, from material supplied by C. Cantwell, c1964, p. 17. Susan Priestley, *South Melbourne: a History* (Melbourne University Press: Carlton, 1995), p. 192, and Robin Grow in 'From Gum Trees to Goal Posts', R. Hess and B. Stewart (eds.), *More than a Game. An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998), p. 37. *Leader*, 21 September 1878, p. 12 In discussing the South Melbourne CC, '... the ground had been utilised for football matches during the winter, and that it had been found that no injury resulted to the turf, which had been rather improved than otherwise'.

²⁰³ *Bell's Life Victoria*, 23 April 1859, p. 4.

²⁰⁴ *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, London, Baily Brothers. 1860-70, vol. 7, 1864, p. 151.

Having promised to play in the first match, Mr TW Wills – some few years back Captain of the Rugby Eleven, and a fine cricketer-travelled from the north of Queensland, a distance of nearly 1,800 miles, but unfortunately arrived too late at Melbourne to play.²⁰⁵

The New Zealanders also recalled his association with Rugby school on a tour of New Zealand in 1864:

Mr. Wills, from Australia, who played with the Twenty-Two, was received with many rounds of applause, and said in reply that on no cricket ground in the colonies had he met so many public school men, especially men from old Rugby, as at Canterbury.²⁰⁶

In 1867 the Rugby schoolboy magazine, *The Meteor*, boasted that Tom Wills the ex-Rugbaean, might bring the band of aboriginal cricketers to Rugby for a match:

T.W. Willes [*sic*], Captain of the School Eleven some ten or eleven years ago, has been training eleven aborigines of Australia to play cricket, and so well do they play, their ‘eye’ being marvellous, that they were to leave Sydney on March 1st., and may be expected in England in May, to try their fortunes at Lord’s and the Oval. We are sure Mr Willes would be much gratified if a match could be arranged between his team and the School Eleven.²⁰⁷

Thirty years later a letter published in the *Meteor* recollected with some intimacy the life of Tom Wills in England.²⁰⁸ A previous letter had suggested that Charles Lawrence, the English professional, had first coached the Australian aboriginal team from the 1860s. Someone familiar with Wills, presumably from his period in England, defiantly reminded the English public that it was Tom Wills not Charles Lawrence who first coached the aboriginal team. With considerable insight into the personal life of Wills, the letter reflected upon Wills’ inherent restlessness and his strained relationship with his father Horatio. The letter was defiant and protective of Wills.

²⁰⁵ *Baily’s Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, London, Baily Brothers. 1860-70, vol. 8, 1864, p. 42-4.

²⁰⁶ *The Press*, 12 February 1864, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ *Meteor*, 12 April 1867 no. 4, p. 10.

²⁰⁸ *Meteor*, 19 March 1898, p. 22, this letter is taken from *The Sportsman*. Also see, letter back to C. Mullen from the Temple Reading Room, Rugby, Warwickshire, 1957. Private notes of Rex Harcourt.

Several other Rugby and English publications about the school recall him.²⁰⁹ W. G. Grace recalled Wills as ‘the old Rugbeian’ and of ‘Rugby fame’ when recounting his 1873-4 tour of Australia only then to somewhat backhandedly dismiss him.²¹⁰ In Australia the Rugby pedigree endowed Wills prestige and standing; it was a mark of excellence and of imperial connections. In 1869, *Melbourne Punch* published a poem called *Tommy Wills*. It had six verses followed by a chorus. The poem eulogised Wills and recalled that he was captain at Rugby School.²¹¹ Wills’ connections with Rugby football and cricket were recognised until his death in 1880. In Geelong, where he lived much of his later life, his background from Rugby as a footballer, even if poorly defined, was a pedigree to be respected.²¹²

Wills used his associations in England to his advantage. Although in many ways an archetypal Australian, as in so many other dimensions of his life his allegiances were not fixed. He could dredge some experience from his experience in England to clarify a point of law in sport when back home in Australia. He regarded himself as a cut above the rest because of his English education and experience. Although ever ready to be the Native Son, and seemingly protective of this, he was never shy of pulling rank by drawing on and parading his imperial experience.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Hope-Simpson, *Rugby since Arnold*, p. 64. In a similar vein Rouse, *A History of Rugby School*, pp. 328-9, notes ‘... and for T. W. Wills was reserved a lot still more remarkable. A good wind wafted him to the antipodes, where he so civilised the natives, that in 1868 he brought home an eleven of jet-black aborigines to play in England’. Other Rugby books make no mention of Wills. Finally in 2000, he again was resurrected, *Floreat. The Old Rugbeian Magazine* (September 2000), p. 10, Bob Montgomerie (ed.), reproduces and comments on, de Moore, ‘Suicide of Wills’, pp. 656-8. W. W. Read, *Annals of Cricket* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1896). References to Wills were often incorrect. For example, see Buchanan, *Rugby Cricket Club*, p. 10, ‘A terrible tragedy will ever be connected with the name of Wills, his father, and if memory fail not, two of his brothers being cruelly murdered by the natives whilst exploring some unknown country in Australia’.

²¹⁰ W. G. Grace, ‘W. G.’ *Cricketing Reminiscences and Personal Recollection* (London: James Bowden, 1899), p. 100.

²¹¹ *Melbourne Punch*, 20 May 1869, p. 154.

²¹² *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, 10 January 1857, p. 3, ‘Mr Wills is from that great nursery of cricketers, Rugby, where he was captain of the playing eleven for some time’. *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 July 1875 p. 2. ‘It is said that in addition to treating of cricket in his forthcoming guide, Mr T. W. Wills proposes to deal with the game of football as at present played upon its merits. A more competent authority on either game than on old Rugby captain there could not be’. *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 October 1875 p. 3, ‘We wish the old Rugby captain had given us a few more suggestions about how football ought to be played ...’ *Geelong Advertiser*, 27 January 1873, p. 3, ‘A subscription was however, raised, which will make the compliment paid to Lillywhite’s pupil [Wills] a substantial one’. Even after his death this continued, *Gippsland Mercury*, 4 May 1880, p. 4, ‘He learned to play cricket and football at Rugby’. *Leader*, 22 August 1908, p. 29, 34, in discussing the origins of Australian football, ‘... Wills had captained the famous Rugby School football team ...’

²¹³ For example, see, Gregory de Moore, ‘Tom Wills and the Adventure of the Lost Cricket Ball’, *Baggy Green*, vol. 8, no. 1 (November 2005), pp. 62-72, as an example of how he recalls his English experience when pontificating on matters back in Melbourne.

The hardware of Rugby School still honours him. The now derelict cricket pavilion, more like a dilapidated cubby house than private school pavilion, stands on what was once 'The Island'. The name Wills is painted in gold leaf on four Honour Boards. In 1852, he was in the eleventh position. Each year he ascended until in 1855 he is recorded as captain and the first named of the best XI. This pavilion is now boarded up and listed for national heritage.²¹⁴

7 Conclusion

Alcohol was a part of Rugby schoolboy's life. The evidence suggests that it was plentiful in the celebration of sporting events. The boys who had most access to and the privilege of enjoying these benefits, were the top sportsmen in the school. Although there is no archival evidence that mentions Wills, the circumstantial argument is powerful that Wills was exposed to regular drinking of alcohol at Rugby. Alcohol was often a reward for the better sportsmen and the environmental imperative of avoiding infectious disease encouraged the drinking of beer as an alternative to water.

The period of time Tom Wills spent at Rugby School was probably the most important period of his life. It offered him a sporting template to help redefine sport in Australia when he returned. All the facets of cricket: playing, preparation of turf and administration were observed or conducted by him. With respect to football he learned the skills of kicking, tackling and the brief reports we have of his prowess clearly indicate that he was one of the school's best players. It was this schoolboy football that he brought back to Australia that he helped shape into Australian Rules football in the late 1850s.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ In recent times, Tom Wills' role in Australian football and his links to Rugby School have been recognised by the school, see for example, the school magazine 'News from Rugby School' Summer 2005, p. 14. The pavilion has recently been fully restored.

²¹⁵ Rugby school football along with several other English Public School football games were the key ingredients of the Australian game of football.

Chapter Three

A Sporting Life

‘Genius’ – A man endowed with superior faculties – Addison. This word, though hardly applicable to cricket, is insisted upon by some, therefore has to be recorded.²¹⁶

1 Introduction

Sport was the defining activity in Tom Wills’ life. Some of the more notable themes of his sporting career were: accusations of Wills as a thrower of the cricket ball; his resurrection as an intercolonial cricketer in 1876 after an absence from the team; his decline into peripheral cricket teams in the Geelong region in the 1870s; his relationship with the Melbourne Cricket Club; his transition from amateur to professional sportsman; and his contribution to early Australian Rules football. Most of these issues are touched upon in several chapters of this thesis. In this chapter, several of these themes are specifically developed.

The first theme chosen for this chapter is an analysis of the accusations that Wills threw the cricket ball. The second theme is to do primarily with his contributions to Australian football and is broken down into two sub-themes: a critique of recent suggestions that aboriginal games influenced his thinking in constructing the rules of Australian football and how Wills has been remembered as an instigator of football in the light of his suicide.

2 Tom Wills: Satan’s Little Helper. A Case Study of Throwing in Nineteenth Century Australian Cricket²¹⁷

For Mr Wills to no ball Mr Wardill for throwing is like Satan reproving sin.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Box, *The English Game*, p. 451.

²¹⁷ A version of this section of the thesis has been published in G. M. de Moore, ‘Tom Wills, Satan’s Little Helper: A Case Study of Throwing in Nineteenth Century Australian Cricket’, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 25, no. 1, January 2008, pp. 82-99.

²¹⁸ *Australasian*, 5 April 1873, p. 428.

Avoid throwing. In the first place, it is a melancholy confession that you cannot bowl; and because umpires have no sense or moral courage to stop you *as they ought*, it is not a manly thing to take advantage of their weakness, and to follow a practice which a *majority* of the world disapproves. I have not used many hard words, but throwing is the subterfuge of a coward.²¹⁹

There were many bowlers accused of throwing in colonial Victoria, but it was the name of Tom Wills that became synonymous with throwing. His personal antagonism with the journalist William Hammersley saw their brawls writ large in colonial papers of the day. When throwing became a flashpoint in intercolonial games the drama centred on Wills.

There is no more divisive law in cricket than the law that defines how a cricketer should bowl the cricket ball. By definition, a bowler in cricket is required to bowl the cricket ball at the batsman rather than throw it. At its heart is an understanding that to significantly bend one's elbow, and thus impart undue velocity or twist upon the cricket ball, is not within the law and spirit of the game. Understanding this, the issue of what constitutes a fair delivery has been controversial since the early part of the nineteenth century and probably earlier. Whenever a bowler has been questioned as to his fairness of delivery, regardless of the era, the accusations have soon escalated into a range of well worn areas that extend beyond the mechanics of bowling action. Thus when recent controversies have flared in international cricket, the insinuation of throwing has raised the spectres of racism, cheating, colonial subjugation and to a watching public a confused, divided and not altogether convincing attempt by authorities to clarify what constitutes a throw and thus an unfair delivery. While modern observers of the game might assume that such controversy is new, in fact, the fault lines of dispute have changed little over the last 150 years.

This section of the thesis sets out to study throwing in Australian colonial cricket by analysing the career of Tom Wills. Wills was the greatest Australian cricketer of his day. Although there were many bowlers accused of throwing in colonial Victoria, Wills was the most prominent and his name became synonymous with throwing. He was the

²¹⁹ F. Gale, *The Game of Cricket* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1888), p. 108. Emphasis in the original.

first cricketer to be called for actually throwing the cricket ball in intercolonial cricket matches between Victoria and NSW. This section of the thesis will briefly explain the nineteenth century bowling laws and points of significant change in these laws during Wills' lifetime. His bowling career is then examined from its earliest days as a Rugby school student in England through to his demise as a cricketer in Melbourne in the late 1870s.

It is not simply his career path and bowling action in isolation that is the purpose of this study. Wills became a focus of how administrative bodies struggled to deal with the insubordinate actions of a great individual sportsman and how media and clubs colluded with variable interpretations of the bowling law when it suited them. At varying times in his career, it was widely acknowledged that Wills threw the cricket ball. However, while it was of some advantage for the colony of Victoria to ignore his transgressions, this was done. Only when athletic skills, faded and bent, no longer brought glory to the colony was a concerted and conspiratorial means found to bring down the finest cricketer in the land.

2.1 Nineteenth Century Laws on Throwing

A brief outline of the laws that checked throwing is required to place Wills in context. During his lifetime there were several key changes to the laws of bowling. In the late eighteenth century all bowling was delivered underhand. Whimpress notes Lambert's *Cricketers' Guide* 1816 laws of the game as stipulating that 'The ball must be delivered underhanded, not thrown or jerked, with the hand below the elbow at the time of delivering the ball'.²²⁰ Gradually pressure increased to amend the law to accommodate the introduction of roundarm bowling. The change in the law in 1835 repeated the injunction to bowl and not throw or jerk the ball, but made it clear that the hand must not be above the shoulder in delivery. In subsequent years as bowlers breached this law, the lawmakers attempted to restrict when it was acceptable to raise the hand above the shoulder. In 1858 an attempt was made to clarify this point. This latter change stated that if in the actual delivery of the ball or in the action immediately preceding the delivery, the hand or arm is raised above the shoulder, then the umpire

²²⁰ Bernard Whimpress, *Chuckers. A History of Throwing in Australian Cricket* (Kent Town: Self-published, 2002), p. 8.

shall call no-ball. This served to confuse the matter further. Finally on 10 June 1864 at Lord's, the increasingly untenable situation was resolved when 'all restrictions on the height of delivery were abolished'. This allowed bowlers to raise their bowling arm above the shoulder to its maximum height, called in the parlance of the day, a 'windmill action'.²²¹

Prior to this 1864 law, bowlers could be 'called' for either a high action (raising the arm above the shoulder) or for actually jerking (throwing) the ball. The diffusion of this law through the colonies took some time and even in the 1870s it was unclear whether bowlers were being called for the outdated 'high' delivery or actually throwing the ball.²²² Reflecting upon the rule changes many years later, William Caffyn, the accomplished English player who spent considerable time in Australia, gave the opinion that the early rule which disallowed bowling above the shoulder was absurd and that nine out of ten bowlers broke this rule.²²³ But in the 1850s, in the middle of these rule changes, Tom Wills was a schoolboy at Rugby. It was here that the first suspicions were raised about his action.

2.2 Wills at Rugby School

The first insinuation that Tom Wills' bowling resembled a throw was made through the pages of *Bell's Life in London* in 1852. Wills, then a teenager, opened the bowling for Rugby school. The accusations were publicly rebutted by his coach, John Lillywhite. The motivation for the criticism seems to have been envy towards Rugby's cricketing success, achieved through the potency of the opening bowling attack.²²⁴ It is not clear if the accusations centred on the height of his arm or the straightness of elbow or both. That John Lillywhite defended his Rugby school protégé was significant for the protection and guidance it offered. But it also placed Wills within the orbit of John

²²¹ For a general reference, see Whimpress, *Chuckers. Bell's Life in Victoria*, 6 May 1865, p. 4.

²²² For example, *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 29 May 1858, p. 3. Don Bradman, *Farewell to Cricket* (Sydney: ETT Imprint, 1997), p. 267, 'Finally, the law was changed to allow over-arm bowling. This was probably the most significant advance ever made in cricket'.

²²³ William Caffyn, *Seventy One Not Out. The Reminiscences of William Caffyn* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons., 1899), p. 70. Australian papers acknowledged that bowlers who kept their hand below their shoulder were at a disadvantage, see *Yeoman*, 21 November 1863, p. 123.

²²⁴ See Chapter Two, 'Tom Wills at Rugby School' for details of the accusation and how he and his coach John Lillywhite responded. The theme of envy and hostility directed towards Wills about his alleged throwing is one he encountered throughout his career.

Lillywhite, a man who was to become a key figure in the evolution of laws against throwing.²²⁵

2.3 1856-1864: Return to Australia

From the time Wills returned to Australia in 1856 until his death, barely a year passed without public reference to his throwing.²²⁶ In 1856/57, his first year of cricket back home, the *Australian Cricketer's Guide* pointedly questioned his bowling style. It was to set a scrutiny and challenging tone that did not waiver over 20 years.²²⁷

Wills was in the thick of the colonial interpretation of the rule changes as they rippled from Marylebone. He dismissed the proposed 1858 Marylebone changes to the law and proclaimed to the world that the new law was unworkable. His pronouncements were bold and uncompromising, '... bowlers ought to be allowed to bowl as high as they like, as long as they do not throw or jerk the ball ...'.²²⁸ These 1858 changes acknowledged that bowlers could raise their hand above the shoulder but then unrealistically tried to handicap the bowler by stating that this not occur either in the act of delivery or just before delivery. Comments from players and journalists suggest that no one really understood these changes. On the one hand there was pressure to bow to anything with the Marylebone imprint, but on the other hand, the players saw through it as contrived. Bowlers practised an art that valued pragmatism over theory and disregarded the proposed changes.

²²⁵ See Whimpress, *Chuckers*, p. 9.

²²⁶ There were many instances of this in all the colonies, for example, *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 7 November 1857, p. 4. Also, *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 9 October 1858, p. 4, 'In Wills' case ... some slight suspicions were at times excited that he put in a little one every now and then *rather* high, and with a tendency to a throw ... At all events, he went through the ordeal scathless as far as the umpire was concerned'. Also, *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 March 1872, p. 2, 'Wills ... only does it now and again, and, if closely watched by the umpire, can bowl as fairly as any other man. It must be confessed however, it gives a very sharp umpire all his work to do to watch him'.

²²⁷ Biers and Fairfax, *Guide 1856-7*, p. 23. As was often the case, exactly what part of his action was being questioned is not clear to modern readers though it was probably the height of his arm. It was noted it would take an observant and courageous umpire to call him.

²²⁸ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 26 June 1858, p. 3. *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 14 August 1858, p. 4. Wills wrote that the changes to the law were absurd and it was hard to work out which part of the arm swing was to be monitored. For comments on the confusion and difficulty with the interpretation of the 1858 bowling law, see *Argus*, 4 September 1858, p. 5; 6 September 1858, p. 5; 20 October 1858, p. 5.

The story of Tom Wills and accusations of throwing are most intricately linked with William Hammersley. Hammersley was English by birth but had migrated to the colony of Victoria in the late 1850s. An English amateur cricketer of moderate note, he settled into a self-appointed position as arbiter of all things to do with colonial sport. He played in the Victorian cricket team and was intimately involved in the affairs of the Melbourne Cricket Club. Most importantly he worked as a journalist and it was here that he fought verbal wars with numerous adversaries, most notably Tom Wills. During the late 1850s and early 1860s Hammersley was caught between recognising the absurdity and unworkable nature of the changes to the laws and his deference to conforming to English standards. He contorted himself to make an unworkable rule work:

Although I have always thought it absurd to allow a man to bowl round arm and then fetter him by any regulations as to the height of the arm or hand believing the only thing necessary to guard against is the throw or jerk, yet if it is to be the law it ought to be carried out ... In its present state the rule reads to me much in this way. 'Bowling made easy for the benefit of old and broken down batsmen'.²²⁹

To a lesser extent Wills, like Hammersley, was caught between similar conflicting beliefs.²³⁰ William Hammersley saw himself as a self-appointed defender of standards. He repeatedly reminded readers that the lowering of standards was a colonial failing and that mediocre colonial umpires had fostered throwing.²³¹ The English press praised Hammersley's resolve when he called a bowler in a colonial club match in Melbourne.²³² Hammersley's corrective presence as an umpire restrained Wills' bowling action to within what was considered the legal limits. This tension between the two men was to continue with varying degrees of animosity until public recriminations

²²⁹ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 21 August 1858, p. 3.

²³⁰ See *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 13 August 1859, p. 2, where Wills stated that the will of Marylebone should be followed by colonial clubs. As an example of the way in which Wills recalled and exploited his English experience when in Australia see, de Moore, 'Lost Cricket Ball', pp. 62-72.

²³¹ See for example, *Australasian*, 5 March 1870, p. 300. In fact the same arguments were occurring in England over rule changes. For more on Hammersley, see 'Men who made "The Argus" and "The Australasian"' MS 10727 La Trobe Library, and 'Death of Mr. W.J. Hammersley', *Australasian*, Obituary, 16 November 1886, p. 6.

²³² *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes, 1860-70* (London: Baily Brothers), vol. 6, p. 91. Also see, *Yeoman*, 29 November 1862, p. 131. Hammersley was cast as the colonial equivalent of an uprighteous and duty bound Lillywhite after the former called William Greaves for a high delivery.

in the early 1870s.²³³ Newspapers openly criticised Wills' bowling. In 1860 he played for Collingwood against Melbourne. The normally conservative *Argus* could barely contain its indignant delight when suggesting that Wills bowled unfairly:

Wills, the migratory was found in the Collingwood ranks, and as usual did great execution. A great deal of his bowling was, however, unfair in two respects – it was too high in the first place, besides bearing the closest possible affinity to a throw. The umpire for his side took no notice whatever of these continued improprieties, notwithstanding the repeated cries of 'No-ball' from the pavilion, which was crowded with members of the club and their friends. This is by no means the first time this season that Wills, who ought to set a good instead of a bad example, has transgressed the tenth law. In the Intercolonial Match he put in a shy every now and then, and last week, at Emerald Hill, was frequently much above his shoulder. His motto seems to be, 'Get wickets, honestly if you can, but get wickets'. It is not to be expected that young bowlers, when they find 'the captain' sin [with] impunity will be troubled with any rigid scruples and bad habits will be acquired that will cost a whole season to get rid of.²³⁴

Wills, defiant and provocative, responded to these accusations:

The report in the *Argus* stated that I bowled sometimes high, and at other times shied, yet to neither of these improprieties did the umpire of the MCC pay the least regard. I should like to know Sir which was the greater impropriety my bowling high or otherwise ...²³⁵

This exchange illustrates several aspects of the throwing controversy. Firstly, it reveals how different newspapers became personal vehicles for individual players to conduct spiteful verbal wars. Secondly, he accused his detractors, especially the MCC members, of selectively invoking laws when it suited their prejudice. He mocked their capricious embrace of his talents. He scorned the hypocrisy of the MCC members in their criticising his bowling when he was their opponent but then lauding him when he played for the MCC.

In the 1850s the English professional John Lillywhite had emerged as the man who publicly protected Wills when there were accusations of unfair deliveries.

²³³ *Argus*, 10 April 1860, p. 6. 'The fact of Mr Hammersley being umpire at the end where Wills bowled had, perhaps not a little do with the abstinence from shying and high bowling so carefully observed yesterday ...'

²³⁴ *Argus*, 3 April 1860, p. 5.

Lillywhite was to play another important role in the evolution of the laws of bowling. On 26 August 1862 at The Oval, England versus Surrey, it was John Lillywhite who no-balled Edgar Willshire for the latter's hand being above the shoulder. Amidst controversy Lillywhite was replaced as umpire the next day and Willshire continued to bowl. This finally led to the proclamation on 10 June 1864, by the Marylebone Cricket Club, that Law X now abolished restrictions on the height the bowling arm.²³⁶

2.4 On Borrowed Time: 1864 – 1869

In 1864, Wills returned to Victorian cricket after his sojourn to central Queensland to work on the family property. Immediately upon his return Wills' bowling was condemned as throwing. For the first time the criticism focussed upon what was considered his 'good' bowling, that is, his most threatening balls. His most threatening balls referred to either his wicket taking balls or at other times those balls with which he physically intimidated batsmen. With an irony surely not lost on Wills, his former coach and defender of Wills' action, John Lillywhite, was trumpeted by the colonial press as a model of what was correct and proper. It was claimed that Lillywhite would never sanction Wills' bowling action.²³⁷

An acerbic Hammersley wrote in the *Australasian* after his Melbourne Cricket Club was dismissed for a meagre 29 runs by Wills' Richmond Cricket Club:

We must, however, take exception to Mr Wills's style. He cannot but be aware that though Law 10 has been considerably modified it has not been totally repealed, and still enacts that the 'ball shall be bowled, not jerked or thrown'. He several times acted in glaring violation of this rule, and fairly threw the ball in; and so long as umpires refuse to call him to account, we fear he will continue the objectionable practice. If these officials cannot or will not see this defect in his bowling the only thing will be for batsmen to refuse to play any longer after he has once indulged in it at their expense. He will be a simpleton who allows himself to be made target of for such

²³⁵ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 7 April 1860, p. 4.

²³⁶ Whimpress, *Chuckers*, p. 9.

²³⁷ *Yeoman* was a harsh critic of Wills. It was not uncommon for papers to take a stance which reflected the opinion of their cricket writer, usually unnamed but who almost certainly was closely involved with the players. This paper was particularly hostile towards Wills and his gamesmanship. See *Yeoman*, 30 January 1864 p. 284, and 12 March 1864, pp. 378-80. Wills, a keen student of cricket history recalled the Lillywhite no-balling of Willshire in 1871, in a letter defending accusations of throwing against himself, see *Leader*, 28 October 1871, p. 12.

palpable shies ... there was a plentiful supply of that rough chaff – too frequently moistened with a spice of malice – which is always to be heard on the Richmond ground.²³⁸

On this occasion it was Wills' actual jerking of the ball and not the height of his arm that was called into question. Prior to, and even after the 1864 change by Marylebone, it was often unclear for which aspect a bowler was being criticised. Hammersley felt that umpires were failing in their duty to call Wills and hinted that Wills intimidated umpires.

By mid-1865 when there was widespread speculation on the legality of his bowling Hammersley still, at times, sided with Wills. In a typically superior manner he praised Wills as part of a cohort of bowlers who received their key training in England. Perhaps it was this English connection that rendered it difficult for Hammersley to completely chastise Wills:

... were Mr Wills now in England, his bowling (for it is bowling) would be ranked very high, ... Now, if any three of our best judges of cricket were asked to select whom they considered the best bowler from any of the above, I am sure the choice would fall unanimously on Mr Wills.²³⁹

In 1865 the intercolonial game between Victoria and NSW was much anticipated after a spectator riot during the 1863 match had stopped further contests. With the resumption of these matches in 1865, Wills captained a Victorian team which had suffered the defection of several professionals to the NSW team. As the match unfolded, Wills turned out the most brilliant of performances and was instantly hailed Victoria's hero as he led his side to victory. The colony was jubilant. When it was suggested that Wills' throwing had helped Victoria to the win, the Melbourne newspaper the *Leader* gently chided its counterparts in Sydney over their accusations of Wills' 'shying'.²⁴⁰ A haughty Victorian paper sided with their hero, avoided the question and taunted NSW for their insinuations:

²³⁸ *Australasian*, 5 November 1864, pp. 5-6.

²³⁹ *Australasian*, 5 August 1865, p. 4.

²⁴⁰ A common nineteenth century term for throwing.

We are not going to enter into a controversy about the fairness of Wills' bowling now, but it might be well to remind those who fancy the 'shy' has had anything to do with the defeat, that far higher authorities than Mr Driver have declared his bowling to be fair.²⁴¹

Wills' status as hero of the colony protected him. Newspapers colluded with him and with a shrug of resignation accepted his bowling seemingly because no umpire had yet taken exception to it:

the admirable bowling of Wills – which, by the way, to a spectator looks monstrously like a throw, but which I suppose is 'all right' as no exception was taken to it;²⁴²

In the next few years Hammersley, writing for the *Australasian*, singled himself out as the loudest critic of Wills.²⁴³ Wills was held as corrupting young bowlers and was an increasing focus in intercolonial disputes.²⁴⁴ Despite this, Wills at this point of his career, was not called in intercolonial or club matches.

In May of 1869 the periodical *Melbourne Punch* published a lengthy verse on Tom Wills. The verse reflected the adulation of the public and provides insights into his life – his carefree nature; his Rugby school pedigree; and the accusations of throwing. He may have thrown the cricket ball but while he won prestige for the colony of Victoria it seems that no one in public was going to stop him.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Richard Driver junior was one of the umpires on the day. *Leader*, 30 December 1865, p. 8. It was also thought that Wills might be called for throwing in a single wicket match between four gentlemen cricketers and four professionals, see *Leader*, 30 December 1865, p. 14.

²⁴² *Sydney Mail*, 6 January 1866, p. 7.

²⁴³ See, from a NSW perspective, *Australasian*, 20 March 1869, p. 364. In reporting a letter from *Sydney Sporting Life*, 'If Wills is to be allowed to continue his system of "throwing" the ball, the intercolonial matches had better come to an end, for it is useless for the cricketers of this colony (who have all along carried out a fair principle of bowling) to contend in these matches when they have no chance whatever of scoring a win ... something must be done to prevent the ruinous practice of throwing introduced by Wills. Crush it at once ...' Also, *Australasian*, 19 December 1868, p. 779, 'I never saw Tom Wills trespass so extensively on that debatable ground where "bowling ceases and throwing begins". "Shy 'em out, Tommy", was the irreverent remark of a bystander, and Tommy shied but he could not "shy 'em out", and was obliged to have recourse to his slows'. *Australasian*, 8 May 1869, p. 588, '... but I never saw any one who could disguise a throw better'. *Sydney Sporting Life*, 17 November 1866, pp. 2-3, Sydney letters claiming that Wills threw.

²⁴⁴ See *Australasian* articles, 10 November 1866, p. 1004; 19 December 1868, p. 779; 20 March 1869, p. 364; 27 March 1869, pp. 395-6; 18 March 1871, p. 332. *Leader*, 26 December 1868, p. 9.

²⁴⁵ *Melbourne Punch*, 20 May 1869, p. 154.

2.5 1870-1873: The Plot to Bring Down Tom Wills

On 30 March 1872, Tom Wills became the first Australian cricketer to be called for throwing in intercolonial contests.²⁴⁶ In the two years leading up to this date, events were to unfold which in retrospect make his being called seem inevitable. His fate had been settled by forces that had decided it was time for Tom Wills to be humiliated out of the game.

Up to this point, Victorian and even some non-Victorian newspapers had excused Wills despite tacit acknowledgement that he threw. From a Victorian perspective, self-interest was at play. While Wills remained a transcendent force in cricket and the dominant player for Victoria, the Victorian press was unable to bring itself to assassinate the man responsible for the colony's status. The Victorian press contorted itself to justify its illogical stance. He was forgiven if he threw well enough to defeat the enemy as long as the throws were disguised or infrequent. This led to farcical assessments:

Undoubtedly Wills throws sometimes, but there is some decency about it, some disguise, and for an umpire standing close to him it is no easy matter to distinguish the throw from the bowl ...²⁴⁷

Also,

Throwing, when neatly disguised as by Wills, and only occasionally indulged in, is bad enough and may probably be overlooked, but when it comes to downright undisguised throwing, let the umpires exercise

²⁴⁶ Webster, *First Class Cricket*, p. 8, notes R. S. Still as the first bowler to be called when he raised his bowling arm above his shoulder for Tasmania against Victoria in February 1858. As Whimpress (personal communication) notes, Wills was the first called in intercolonial matches for actually throwing the ball.

²⁴⁷ *Australasian*, 26 February 1870, p. 266. This is interesting not only as an example of the kind of duplicity newspapers indulged in but it was in marked contrast with the aboriginal bowler Twopenny who bowled for NSW. Twopenny's 'throwing' was regarded far more negatively than Wills' 'throwing' because of his inability to disguise it and undertones of racism. Also note Whimpress' comments about the role of Twopenny in countering Wills in intercolonial contests; such assertions were also made by the press of the time. See Whimpress, *Chuckers*, pp. 16-7. *Afternoon Telegram*, 2 March 1870, p. 1, in a report of the intercolonial match, 'Twopenny the aboriginal, who very successfully imitates Wills's throw in bowling ...'. See *Australasian*, 4 February 1871, p. 139, although critical of Wills, there was a chance to claim some kind of perverse Victorian superiority by claiming that the opposition threw better than the locals. "'Wills throws unchecked; we will get a thrower", said the Sydney men and they brought over Dave Gregory and the blackfellow. We won the match, but not by throwing for had it depended on the throwing alone we should have lost. They threw better than we did'.

their functions, and immediately put down this most uncricket like practice.²⁴⁸

In this way Victorian papers colluded with Wills despite the widely accepted premise that he threw. If the popular press seemed troubled by their duplicity it did not show. This state of affairs continued until 1870 when voices hardened. Hammersley seemed determined to undo Wills using his forum as the *Australasian* Sports Editor. Wills and Hammersley had engaged in public taunts through the pages of the colonial papers for years. Proud and thin-skinned neither was willing to allow any public slight to remain unavenged. It was their relationship across this key period of colonial sport that was the most telling in the demise and likely sabotage of Tom Wills' first class cricket career.

By 1870 there were increasing references to Wills' bowling style. While the content had changed little there was a sense that a critical moment had arrived that needed resolution. After NSW was defeated yet again in March 1870, Charles Lawrence at an after match dinner insinuated that Wills' throwing was the difference between the teams.²⁴⁹ After a game against Tasmania, Wills was again singled out for criticism.²⁵⁰ The age-old threads coursed through this criticism – that his throwing was designed to intimidate and then dismiss batsmen; that malice and crude force threatened to corrupt the balance, fairness and decency of the game.²⁵¹ By 1870 Hammersley's resentment still festered but had yet to congeal into complete distaste and vengeance.

A key article penned in the *Australasian* on 4 February 1871, over twelve months before Wills was no-balled, articulated the arguments that inevitably assassinated Wills. Wills became a convenient fulcrum upon which to dump all the grievances with colonial cricketers' behaviour and manners:

For throwing is not bowling, and the tendency to the rising school of bowlers is to copy the most flagrant violator of the laws of cricket that ever had the assurance to impose on an umpire. Of course I allude to

²⁴⁸ *Leader*, 5 February 1870, p. 11.

²⁴⁹ *Leader*, 5 March 1870, p. 11. *Argus*, 1 March 1870, p. 7.

²⁵⁰ *Launceston Examiner*, cited in *Leader*, 26 March 1870, p. 9.

²⁵¹ There were numerous references to the physical danger in facing the bowling of Wills. While it is not always clear if throwing was implied, dangerousness was used by his critics as a reason to call him. See for example, *Weekly Age*, 29 December 1865, p. 4.

Mr TW Wills. There was a time when Mr Wills bowled. It is so long ago now that I expect it would puzzle even him to fix the date. During the last half dozen years throwing owing to the pernicious example set by Mr Wills, has been more or less attempted by every bowler that has come out.

There is no skill or science in sending a ball down on purpose to break a man's knuckles, shins or ribs with the additional chance of maiming him for life. For if a batsman plays a few over well to such bowlers as Wills, Gregory or Twopenny, what may he expect. ... human catapult, increases the pace, shortens the length, and rams the ball down as hard as he can at the batsman, and trusts to providence for the result.

Given a hard uneven ground, pace and bumpiness and a thrower of the modern school argues thus of the batsman: 'If I cannot hit your wicket or make you give a chance soon. I'll hit you and hurt you if I can. I'll frighten you out'.²⁵²

The game of cricket, premised upon order, was threatened by an insubordination of spirit. Wills was chastised as the bowler who introduced this vermin, this corrupt taint into colonial cricket. In reality he was one of a number of bowlers who had been criticised over the years.²⁵³

Hammersley brooded over Wills. Hammersley regarded his own critics as confirming his belief in himself as a standard bearer against colonial mediocrity. With a detached superiority his was contemptuous of those who impugned his motives.²⁵⁴

In March 1871 Wills for the first time in his career was no-balled for throwing, in a club match.²⁵⁵ More evidence of his hesitancy in bowling for fear of being called for throwing came the following month in a single wicket match. In that match Wills did not bowl a single ball. This was an extraordinary occurrence for a man for whom

²⁵² *Australasian*, 4 February 1871, p. 139. The *Australasian* readily published letters written by those criticising Wills.

²⁵³ Wills was criticised as having introduced a style of fast bowling more common in recent times whereby he bowled short threatening batsman directly, forcing them to avoid the ball or defend with a flailing bat.

²⁵⁴ *Australasian*, 29 April 1871, p. 522.

²⁵⁵ *Argus*, 27 March 1871, p. 6. Wills bowled for the MCC against East Melbourne Cricket Club (EMCC). It was reported he was no-balled twice for 'high' bowling, an absurd reason as noted in the paper for this law had been non-existent for seven years. One wonders if this was a soft way for the umpires to signify that he threw without the complete public accusation of throwing. *Australasian*, 1 April 1871, p. 395. '... last Saturday Hopkinson, the East Melbourne umpire no-balled Wills, the MCC bowler ...'

bowling in a match was regarded as indispensable. The papers indicated that it was Wills' concern over being called that led him to take this stance.²⁵⁶

Typically, *Melbourne Punch* took the Victorian viewpoint about Tommy Wills and reflected the common man's affection towards Wills. The verse, under the heading 'town topics', suggests that Wills' bowling was a source of daily gossip:

Folks often ask at cricket why should TOMMY WILLS 'be called,'
And why not GREGORY as well, for throwing, be 'no-balled?'
The tenth law ought to be enforced, and none allowed to throw-
But why all umpires act like muffs. 'No fellah seems to know'.²⁵⁷

Hammersley, unmoved, alluded to the declining physical powers of Wills:

Chucking or throwing is usually resorted to by those who, from some muscular deficiency are unable to keep up the pace of their bowling. There was a time when Mr Wills could 'bowl' almost as fast as Cosstick can now, but, like any bowlers before him have I suppose he is getting stiff in his biceps and cannot put the pace on by legitimate bowling as he once could. A throw enables him to do so, and it is just this increase of pace, from the medium of a fair bowl to the fast of an unfair throw, that so often gets rid of a batsman.²⁵⁸

In 1871 with a looming crisis in his career, Wills wrote to defend himself against Hammersley's assertions. The tone was daringly sarcastic and dismissive. He scarcely bothered about Hammersley's position of power in the press and the Melbourne Cricket Club. Proud, but self-destructive and reckless, Wills openly admitted to throwing in his 1871 *Australian Cricketers Guide* and in so doing taunted those about him to curb him.²⁵⁹

But factors other than Wills' ability and his status were gathering force. By the early 1870s, two NSW bowlers were attracting a similar derogatory press to Wills

²⁵⁶ In this match Wills was intimidated by D. Gregory's bowling before losing his wicket. Ironically, Gregory was called for throwing in this match. See *Evening News*, 10 April 1871, p. 3 and 11 April 1871, p. 3. *Leader*, 22 April, 1871 p. 9, '... even the throwing of Dave Gregory had no effect upon him until he gave Tommy a severe blow on the back of the head, which seemed to unnerve him, for at the next ball he drew away from the wicket ... [and was almost bowled]' *Australasian*, 29 April 1871, p. 522, 'retributive justice overtook Wills at last when Dave Gregory "threw" him out in the second innings – after hitting him on the head'.

²⁵⁷ *Melbourne Punch*, 18 May 1871, p. 160. Capitalisation in the original.

²⁵⁸ *Australasian*, 21 October 1871, p. 523.

²⁵⁹ *Leader*, 28 October 1871, p. 12. T. W. Wills (ed.), *Australian Cricketers Guide*, 1870-1, p. 97.

because of alleged throwing. This apparent multiplication of bowlers, and the fear of younger bowlers being inoculated with this taint, was a key factor that led to an urgency to quash throwing in the upcoming intercolonial match of 1872.²⁶⁰ It seems indisputable that plans were hatched to call Wills for throwing even before he stepped out on to the field in 1872. Wills had previously asserted that when he was no-balled in the 1871 club game, it had been as a result of a conspiracy and that the umpire had been groomed to call him.²⁶¹ Events were to repeat themselves.

A meeting of interested parties was held before the intercolonial match of March 1872 with the design to call Wills. What seems critical at this juncture was a bilateral understanding between Victoria and NSW that throwing was damaging the game.²⁶² Wills was set up to fall. He was no-balled after his first delivery by the Sydney umpire. In being called Wills became the first bowler to be no-balled for throwing in intercolonial matches.²⁶³ There was public disquiet about these machinations prior to the 1872 intercolonial match:

Arrangements have been pending concerning the abolishment of the present unfair system of throwing and endeavours are being made to bind the umpires to carry out the strict letter of cricket law in this respect in the present encounter ... The New South Wales Association has selected its umpire no doubt with the knowledge that he is a competent person who does not need any special instructions as to what shall and what shall not be fair. This is the proper mode of doing business and why cannot Victoria do likewise? After the umpires are appointed they can confer if there is a mutual understanding to that

²⁶⁰ *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 19 March 1870, p. 2. Suggested that Twopenny was included as a foil to Wills' throwing. 'It has done an indirect good, for, I believe all "throwing" in the Intercolonial matches will be finally abolished henceforth'. The other NSW bowler was Dave Gregory.

²⁶¹ See for comment, *Australasian*, 8 April 1871, p. 428 on the club game EMCC v MCC, in which Wills was first called.

²⁶² See for example, *Geelong Advertiser*, 23 March 1872, p. 2, 'The appointment of an umpire was postponed as it is probable that a conference will be held with the view of obtaining umpires who will endeavour to check bowlers from throwing a system permitted in the last two Intercolonial matches'. *Argus*, 22 March 1872, p. 5, '... the selection of an umpire was postponed, as it is probable that a conference will be held with the NSW cricketers, with the view of obtaining umpires who will endeavour to check the very objectionable and unfair system of throwing which has been permitted in the last 2 or 3 intercolonial matches'. *Australasian*, 27 March 1869, p. 395. Throughout the late 1860s and early 1870s the throwing of Gregory was compared with Wills. With respect to clearing this up for both colonies and portending future events it goes on, '... but I think there should be a clear understanding on the subject before the next match'. *Australasian*, 25 February 1871, pp. 236-7, 'In the Sydney match Mr Wills will of course play ... an excellent opportunity to put down throwing ...'

²⁶³ For descriptions of Wills' no-balling see for example, *Argus*, 1 April 1872, p. 6. See *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 April 1872, p. 3. The Victorian papers were indignant that one of their players was called while another 'thrower', Dave Gregory was not called.

effect but not without. If Wills does not bowl fairly why was it no seen before? There are wheels within wheels.²⁶⁴

Despite the consensus about Wills' throwing, the Victorian paper, the *Argus*, managed to deflect criticism. It cited Wills for 'high' bowling rather than actual throwing in the match. To maintain the colony of Victoria's respectability it further claimed that the NSW bowler Gregory actually threw the ball whilst Wills was only bowling with a high action.²⁶⁵ Typically the Victorian newspaper sought whatever edge it might in accepting what it regarded as a lesser vice for Wills and highlighting the more severe transgression of the NSW player. The township of Geelong had long regarded Wills as one of their own. As expected, a more self-righteous indignation emanated from the parochial Geelong papers.²⁶⁶

After this match Wills denounced his detractors and those that conspired to instruct the umpires to no-ball him. Calling on the rhetoric of his father and a long line of 'Native Youth' he howled that the English born were trying to subdue the native Australians.²⁶⁷ He was derisive of 'old women' on meddling committees:

And with the intention of carrying out this object a sort of a meeting was held by certain representatives of NSW and Victoria, but the NSW men could not see it, and said it was virtually wanting them to no-ball Wills at any price, and to have carried out the agreement properly the umpires would have to have signed to written contract (think of that ye wise men, and weep for Victoria). Gentlemen, because they have come from England, think they can force anything upon us poor natives, but thank God we are not such fools as they take us for. What good has this attempt at no-balling done? None at all – in fact throwing in future will be all the go.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ *Leader*, 30 March 1872, p. 10.

²⁶⁵ *Argus*, 1 April 1872, p. 6. 'It is no doubt time that the practice of throwing was put down with a firm hand, but it is by no means clear that the best way of accomplishing this is to "no-ball" the opponents bowler for high delivery and allow one's own bowler to indulge in a deliberate throw. Yet this is in effect what the Sydney umpire did for D. Gregory's palpable shying was not once called in question when he came to bowl against the Victorians and he was not taken off until some time after the Victorian captain had remonstrated'.

²⁶⁶ *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 April 1872, p. 2, this parochial view from country Victoria by default partially excused Wills by criticising the opposition more fiercely for also indulging in throwing. 'Oh! and shame, was the cry that went round the ground when D. Gregory bowled (?) his first ball; it was the most deliberate shy ever seen in an intercolonial match ... Wills' throwing was nothing to his, although much more difficult to play, and it must be admitted that now and again Wills does bowl a fair one'.

²⁶⁷ The term 'Native Youth' was an expression of time that described Australian born citizens.

²⁶⁸ *Leader*, 27 April 1872, p. 11, letter from Wills regarding Hammerlsey and throwing.

Wills was again no-balled when Victoria played a combined colonies team late in 1872. This was widely expected before he stepped on to the field. His behaviour and form in this game resulted in his most damning press to date. Not only was his bowling scorned but also his batting, fielding and most treasured of all his captaincy. For the first time he was ridiculed as an embarrassment to team and colony:

Wills was no-balled twice, and thus compelled to retire. The connexion of the veteran with intercolonial matches must apparently end with this one, unless he chooses to remember that it is never too late to mend. There can be no doubt that the match was lost through the misconduct of Wills.²⁶⁹

Immediately after this game, he was no-balled in another club match.²⁷⁰ His fate was sealed and Hammersley's desire to see him despatched from intercolonial competition was seemingly achieved. All pretence of friendship between Hammersley and Wills was at an end.²⁷¹ After Wills was called, it smoothed the path for other bowlers to be called. In rapid succession Gregory and Wardill were called in intercolonial games.²⁷²

Why did it take until 1872 for Wills to be called, when his action had been controversial ever since his Rugby school days? The calling of Wills required the right environment. It was only possible when there was a bilateral pre-arranged agreement between the colonies of Victoria and NSW to quash throwing; rising public criticism of throwing and the emergence of other prominent bowlers accused of throwing. In the end it required someone to drive the issue repeatedly, to bring it before the public's eyes, to constantly chide, harass and groom public and player acceptance of Wills' fall. Only William Hammersley had the influence and public voice to 'assassinate' Wills. It was Hammersley, overbearing and pompous, and a self-appointed bearer of imperial standards who drove the issue.

²⁶⁹ *Argus*, 30 December 1872, p. 5. Also see, *Leader*, 4 January 1873, p. 10. With respect to Wills it says 'The veteran first of all commenced with as fair a ball as ever was bowled, and gradually increasing his pace under the umpires countenance he at last had his venture and immediately "no ball" was called'.

²⁷⁰ *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 January 1873, p. 3.

²⁷¹ *Australasian*, 11 January 1873, p. 43, 'I think that no man should be elected captain in a cricket match about whose ability to first "captain himself" there is any doubt ... Now that Wills has retired for good I hope throwing will be put down effectually'.

²⁷² Whimpress, *Chuckers*, p. 107.

After Wills was called for throwing, would popular opinion in the colony of Victoria, now tainted with the slur of throwing, isolate and condemn their champion player? Apart from isolated exceptions, this was not the case. In the popular imagination Wills remained a folk hero and was seen as dreadfully wronged by authority. He remained cast as a passionate fighter for his colony; a man of egalitarian cut and a source of eternal hope for those seeking strong leadership on the field. These sentiments rose above the muck raking of others and his self-destructive tendencies.

In a testimonial match in 1872 it was acknowledged that he threw but he was not called, perhaps in sympathy with the occasion. To call Wills for throwing was tantamount to removing his only source of income. That Wills earned his income through cricket may have also cast him sympathetically in the eyes of the public who were moved to protest against those wishing to condemn Wills. Reflecting popular opinion, one reporter wrote, ‘You want to take the bread out of Wills’ mouth’.²⁷³ To others, the topic of Wills and throwing was a subject of mirth.²⁷⁴

After a brief quiescence, volatile opinions on Wills’ throwing resurfaced in 1873 when the colony was a-chatter about the impending visit of W. G. Grace. The possible selection of Wills in the Victorian team was brawled over by newspapers either promoting or denigrating him.²⁷⁵ His bowling and the fear of it being called for throwing, was probably a decisive issue in his eventual non-inclusion in the Victorian team. He did play many times against and sometimes with Grace’s men but was never called for throwing. Wills joined the Grace caravan as it zigged-zagged around the Victorian countryside. He famously captained the local cricketers in the copper mining town of Kadina, South Australia, playing Grace on a rock strewn pitch. Wills’

²⁷³ *Australasian*, 29 April 1871, p. 522. For an English perspective on this, see, Steel and Lyttelton, *Cricket*, p. 177, ‘It is a fact that of late years no professional bowler umpire in a first-class match has no-balled a professional bowler for throwing. This is not to be wondered at: professional umpires themselves have been professional bowlers, and they cannot bring themselves to take the bread out of the mouth of one of their own class by no-balling him, and stigmatising him at one and for ever as a “thrower”’. Tom Wills had effectively been a professional cricketer since 1865-6.

²⁷⁴ *Australasian*, 10 May 1873, pp. 587-8. At a cricketer’s dinner jokes were told about different cricketers. For Wills the joke was, ‘Why is my elbow like yeast? Its bound to get up if it works’. ‘John Whiteman taught me to bowl round arm. I enclose my *carte de visite*’. John Whiteman was clearly a reference to John Lillywhite his coach at Rugby and there were the hints of Wills’ narcissism as seen through the eyes of the cricketing community in the reference to Wills wanting to brandish his *carte de visite*.

²⁷⁵ *Leader*, 29 November 1873, p. 12. *Australasian*, 29 November 1873, p. 683.

mischievousness and accusations of throwing did surface during the Grace tour but it provoked none of the outrage of twelve months before.²⁷⁶

2.6 1875-1880: Drifting to the Periphery

Wills made an unexpected return to intercolonial cricket in the 1875/6 season.²⁷⁷ The response to his selection in some quarters was unforgiving and scornful. This seems unnecessarily vindictive for a man, who now bowling with innocuous middle age speed never threatened to damage as he once did.²⁷⁸ The *Australasian* could not contain itself. Wills was cast as a man who was about to incite another plague of throwing. He had been charged with throwing in a recent club match and the paper drummed up the need to find umpires of sufficient will and determination to call him. A villainous Wills was cast as the culprit who inoculated colonial bowling with the vermin of throwing.²⁷⁹

Even the more moderate papers commented on his ‘suspicious turn of the wrist and bend at the elbow’ but sympathy, context and common sense marked their writing rather than retribution.²⁸⁰ As it turned out, his display as a bowler and batsman was innocuous. Even if he did shy he posed no threat now as a middle-aged man tossing down his medium paced balls.

By the late 1870s his throwing had become a private joke even amongst his most ardent supporters.²⁸¹ In the last decade of his life, he drifted to play most of his cricket

²⁷⁶ *Leader*, 3 January 1874, p. 11; *Argus*, 2 January 1874, p. 5. When Wills bowled, an English player is quoted, ‘If that’s not a throw, I’ll be shot (!)’ There are several secondary references to the Kadina matches which became a celebrated feature of the town’s history. See Keith Bailey, *Copper City Chronicle: A History of Kadina* (Kadina: HK Bailey, 1990), pp. 36-9. Also see, Bernard Whimpress, *W. G. Grace at Kadina. Champion Cricketer or Scoundrel?* (Adelaide: Self-published, 1994).

²⁷⁷ This classical resurrection of a fallen hero was a result of Victoria’s repeated losses to NSW. Lack of leadership was cited as one of the reasons for Victoria’s losses and hence the call for Wills’ return.

²⁷⁸ *Leader*, 22 January 1876, p. 11, ‘... and with a certainty of being no-balled for shying if he is put on, there is some sentimental notion afloat that as a captain he is peerless, and that it only needs him to be at the head of affairs to make victory certain for this colony’. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1876, p. 5, ‘Wills came to the conclusion that he could not get a wicket, and amid no small amount of applause, he “took himself off”’.

²⁷⁹ *Australasian*, 23 October 1875, p. 523.

²⁸⁰ *Leader*, 23 October 1875, p. 11. While playing for Richmond against East Melbourne it is commented, ‘... whilst Wills although he kept his arm lower than he was wont, had a most suspicious turn of the wrist and bend at the elbow’.

²⁸¹ *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 October 1872, p. 2. ‘Mr Wills stood umpire for Geelong and Mr Birdsey for Melbourne and both spectators and players were highly amused when Wills no-balled Highett for throwing’.

in the provincial town of Geelong. It seems that the parochialism of the town protected him and allowed him to bowl despite a tacit acknowledgement of his continuing to throw the ball. In this provincial environment he was fawned over as a sporting idol. His name dominated cricket and football in the Geelong press. Geelong afforded him an opportunity to remain a star. Time and again the quality of cricket pitches suggested that his fast bowling cum throws were lethal and treacherous for visiting batsmen. The provincial town of Geelong allowed Wills license to bowl as he wished. There was little competitive pressure to usurp him and no prying eyes of the metropolitan press.²⁸²

The Geelong press tolerated, indulged and rejoiced in him. Occasionally the local Geelong press took him to task for throwing. In January 1875 on an atrocious wicket Wills was not called for throwing but his action incited his opposite captain to indulge in throwing. The event was small time and unseemly.²⁸³ The Melbourne press by now had for the most part grown tired of the throwing issue with Wills and when raised, it was in the form of gentle derision towards the middle-aged man in Geelong. A tainted, somewhat uncivilised, Geelong was singled out as having indulged throwing which was not tolerated elsewhere.²⁸⁴

And speaking about bowling I would like to inquire from the powers that be whether we are going to have another era of throwing inflicted upon us ... Happily, during the past season there was not throwing in our first class matches, Geelong being the only place where it was tolerated.²⁸⁵

The metropolitan press even coined a neologism for throwing the cricket ball based on Tom Wills. This term, a ‘Geelonger’, had overtones of condescension towards the town of Geelong from a smug capital city, Melbourne, and reeked of far more than

²⁸² For example *Australasian*, 4 September 1875, p. 300, ‘Tommy Wills’s convincing ground – the Corio cricket ground – where he has administered many a bruised knuckle or damaged rib to batsmen who have journeyed pivotwards is at last to receive some attention. For years this ground has been the *bete noir* of all batsmen especially when opposed to the ‘chucks’ of Wills, who knew where to ‘put them down’ to a hair. Some of our best batsmen with big averages to their names have returned from Geelong with their prospects of being among the first flight at the end of the season, seriously damaged’.

²⁸³ *Geelong Advertiser*, 11 January 1875, p. 4. *Geelong Advertiser*, 22 January 1877, p. 3. Towards the end of his time in Geelong Wills was no-balled for throwing.

²⁸⁴ *Australasian*, 31 January 1874, pp. 138-9. ‘By the bye, the 10th law must be altogether unknown in happy Geelong, or else Birdseye doesn’t put on his spectacles when “the veteran” is at the bowling crease’. The veteran refers to Wills.

²⁸⁵ *Australasian*, 23 October 1875, p. 523.

just criticism of a bowler.²⁸⁶ Till the end of his life Wills was recalled for his ‘shying’, but no longer a danger to flesh or batting average he was rarely called.²⁸⁷

3 Football

It was in 1858 that the first real football was seen on the Grammar school ground when T. W. Wills brought a huge sewn many seamed round ball to show his brothers how to play the new English game, and it at once became popular.²⁸⁸

An old boy of Scotch College recalling his school year of 1858

I think the late T. W. Wills (the noted cricketer) ... was responsible for the introduction of this popular game to Geelong.²⁸⁹

There are two sections to this part of the chapter. Firstly, an analysis of the proposed link between Tom Wills, Australian Rules football and aboriginal games. Secondly, how his role in the origin of Australian Rules football was perceived during and after his lifetime.²⁹⁰ Whilst his playing style, leadership on the field, some of the controversies he was embroiled in, umpiring and his role in administration are

²⁸⁶ The ‘Geelonger’ was a name used to describe Wills’ bowling. See, *Australasian*, 23 October 1875, p. 523.

²⁸⁷ See the Corio CC versus Bohemians, *Australasian*, 15 December 1877, p. 747. *The Bohemians* (For club and Private Circulation only), 1877-78 (Melbourne: Mason, Firth & McCutcheon, 1878), pp. 28-29. *Australasian*, 20 March 1880, p. 364.

²⁸⁸ ‘Old-time footballers’, *Australasian*, 9 September 1922, p. 547. This boy gave other details of playing football and cricket that suggest his recollections were accurate.

²⁸⁹ George GlenCross Smith, recollecting Tom Wills in *Australasian* 2 September 1922, p. 493. He was a close friend of the Wills family when he lived in Geelong in the 1850s and 1860s.

²⁹⁰ There have been several reviews of the origin of Australian football. The most detailed of the early years and the most carefully argued is Mancini and Hibbins, *Running with the Ball*, pp. 1-50 and Hibbins, ‘The Cambridge Connection’, pp. 172-92. Geoffrey Blainey, *A Game of Our Own* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2003), also covers this ground but because its scope is broader it does not cover the issue of the origins in as much detail. Other reviews include O’Dwyer, ‘Victorian Rules’, pp. 27-41. The early review of Australian football by Gavin Daws deserves particular notice as a work that foreshadowed interest in this area. A. G. Daws, ‘The Origins of Australian Rules Football’, Honours Thesis. History Department, University of Melbourne, 1954. For a brief overview of the origins of the game see, S. Orivie, *Victorian Rules. Populi Ludos Populo – the Game of the People for the People*. From the collections of the State Library of Victoria, Exhibition held, 4 March 1996 to 28 April 1996. For a comparative analysis of the evolution of all the major football codes, see, John Cordner, *The World of Football* (Self-published: Killara, 2002) and G. M. de Moore, ‘Review of John Cordner, *The World of Football*, *Sporting Traditions* vol. 20, no. 1 (November 2003), pp. 20-1. This reference covers the beginning and evolution of the worlds major football codes.

mentioned as they pertain to the above, they are not in themselves developed as stand alone sections.

3.1 Tom Wills, Marngrook and the Evolution of Australian Football

Tom Wills was the most influential figure in the early history of Australian Rules football. This section of the thesis examines a recent notion that Wills observed an aboriginal game, Marngrook, and incorporated features of this game into early Australian football. It draws upon extensive research of archival documentation. This includes family correspondence, nineteenth century newspapers and primary sources that track the life of Tom Wills.

A fourteen-year old Tom Wills left Melbourne for England on 27 February 1850. He returned in December 1856. During this time, Rugby School was central to his life. At school, football was fundamental to the tides of a boy's life and it was the games from nineteenth century English public schools were the crucible from which evolved Australian Rules football. Of these English games, the Rugby School rules that Tom Wills brought home were the most influential in shaping Australian football in the late 1850s.²⁹¹

It has been suggested that indigenous games contributed to Tom Wills' formulation of a new game of football. Such a link has been recently proposed and is commonly presented as factual.²⁹² In this section of the thesis it will be argued that there

²⁹¹ This idea has been explored in G. M. de Moore, 'The Tree of Life. Tom Wills, Rugby School and the Evolution of Australian Rules Football', Sydney, Rugby Union World Cup Conference, UNSW, 8 November 2003 and published as G. M. de Moore, 'The Tree of Life: Tom Wills, Rugby School and the Evolution of Australian Rules Football', in Mary Bushby and T. V. Hickie (eds), *Rugby History: The Remaking of the Class Game* (Melbourne: Australian Society for Sports History, 2007), pp. 113-9. Also see Hibbins, 'The Cambridge Connection', pp. 172-92.

²⁹² Reports vary in their apparent acceptance of this as fact. Some assume the connection as fact. See photograph and caption in *Age*, 24 May 2004, p. 12. Others imply a connection without claiming it as fact, Jonathan Pearlman, 'Historical Lesson for the Swans to Pass on,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 2002, p. 36. In 'Indigenous Champions,' *Daily Telegraph*, 5 June 2003, pp. 40-1, a possible connection is outlined without ever claiming it as factual. Other references simply outline alternative views, Dave Nadel, 'Marn-Grook. Forgotten Ancestor or PC myth?', *Footy Folklore. Inside Football*, no. 1 (April 2005), pp. 10-1. Also see, Roy Hay, 'How Footy Kicked Off. Origins of our Great Game Unclear.' *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 November 2004, p. 37. G. Wettenhall, *The People of Gariwerd: the Grampians' Aboriginal Heritage* (Aboriginal Affairs, Victoria, 1999), p. 30. Also see the video 'Marngrook. An Aboriginal Perspective of Australian Rules', Written, Directed and Produced by Paul Roberts and Des Kootji Raymond, 1994, which notes 'a striking similarity' between the aboriginal game and modern Australian Rules. See *Rewind*, 3 October, 2004, ABC television documentary on the origins of Australian

is no evidence that Tom Wills played or observed such games; nor evidence that elements from these games were incorporated by Wills into Australian Rules football. While a neglect of the historical evidence has been important in the apparent acceptance of such a connection, the neglect of evidence in itself, struggles to explain why, in the face of contrary, alternative or no evidence such mythology flourishes. Origin mythology is not uncommon in sporting history. Indeed an entire mythology has now been sired on the origins of Rugby Union football.²⁹³

3.1.1 The Beginnings of an Idea

Poulter first raised and then made the case for an aboriginal origin for Australian football in *This Game of Ours*.²⁹⁴ All subsequent authors dealing with this issue have adopted some or all of his ideas. He notes the descriptions of an aboriginal game ‘the distinctive feature of the game being the way natives would leap high in the air over each other’s backs to catch the ball’. The evidence, in the form of direct quotes, draws upon Brough Smyth’s, *Aborigines of Victoria*²⁹⁵ and James Dawson’s *Australian Aborigines*.²⁹⁶ Brough Smyth wrote:

Some of their games were not unlike those which find favour amongst Europeans. The marn-grook, or game of ball, for instance, is thus

football which interviewed proponents of the different views on how important early aboriginal games were in the development of Australian Rules. There are several websites which spawn the mythology of the game as fact. See for example, <http://www.convictcreations.com/football/inventors.htm>

²⁹³ Despite evidence to the contrary William Webb Ellis is popularly portrayed as having a key role in the origin of Rugby Union. Ellis’ statue adorns a public space outside Rugby School, his name is attached to the World Cup and there are numerous articles that blithely accept the mythology as fact. See Sean Smith, *The Union Game. A Rugby History* (London: BBC, 1999), pp. 14-21. Also, Tony Stephens, ‘William Webb Who? Joe Public has let Bill get away with the Ball,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 October 2003, p. 22 and Spiro Zavos, ‘The Great Rugby Hoax,’ *Good Weekend, Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 November 1999, pp. 69 -74.

²⁹⁴ Jim Poulter, ‘Marn-Grook – Original Australian Rules’, in P. Burke and L. Grogan (eds), *This Game of Ours. Supporters’ Tales of the People’s Game* (Victoria: Eatwarflemsd, 1993), pp. 64-7. Poulter also raises this line of thinking in *The Spirit Lives*. State Library of Victoria, MS11958, 2439/9. ‘This game was observed and recorded by early settlers in the 1830s and 1840s, and used a ball made from a possum skin stuffed with charcoal, or an inflated kangaroo bladder. The distinctive feature of this game was the way in which players would leap many feet in the air over each others backs, in order to catch the ball. When one considers that Australian Rules football was established as a code before soccer, rugby, or gaelic football was established in Europe, it seems likely that the origins of Australian rules have strong roots in this traditional tribal game’.

²⁹⁵ R. Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria: With Notes Relating to the Habits of the Natives of other Parts of Australia and Tasmania Vol. 1.* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1878), p. 176. Brough Smyth was Secretary of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines.

²⁹⁶ James Dawson, *Australian Aborigines* (Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide: George Robertson, 1881), p. 85. (Facsimile edition, Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981). Also see various aboriginal words for ball, football, p. ii, xv in vocabulary appendix.

described by the late Mr. Thomas.²⁹⁷ The men and boys joyfully assemble when this game is to be played. One makes a ball of opossum skin, or the like, of good size, somewhat elastic, but firm and strong. It is given to the foremost player or to some one of mark who is chosen to commence the game. He does not throw it as a white man might do, but drops it and at the same time kicks it with his foot, using the instep for that purpose. It is thrown high into the air, and there is a rush to secure it – such a rush as is seen commonly at foot-ball matches amongst our own people. The tallest men, and those who are able to spring to a great height, have the best chances in this game. Some of them will leap as high as five feet or more from the ground to catch the ball. The person who secures the ball kicks it again; and again a scramble ensues. This continues for hours, and the natives never seem to tire of the exercise.

I have seen the natives of Coranderrk amusing themselves in this manner very often, and their skill and activity were surprising. It is truly a native game. The ball, I believe, is often made of twine formed of the twisted hair of the opossum. It is elastic and light, and well suited to be kicked from the instep, as the natives use it.²⁹⁸

In 1858 William Thomas in preparation for a manuscript which was never published wrote:

The aborigines old and young themselves as the civilized have enjoy [*sic*] their games and sports and seasons for them as with the whites. Adults as well as the young among the Aborigines delight in games and play. The aged seldom join in them but sit themselves down seeing the young generation following their footsteps but I may say to the age of 25 or 30 all game alike. The Marngrook (or The Ball) is a favorite game with boys and men, a party assemble one makes a ball of opossum skin or what not of a good size the ball is kicked up and not thrown by the hand as white boys do, the ball is kicked into the air not along the ground. There is a general scramble to catch it in the air. The tall black fellows stand the best chance, when caught it is again kicked up in the air with great force and ascends as straight up and as high as when thrown by the hand. They will play at this game for hours and fine exercise it is for adults or youths. The girls play at Marngrook but throw it up as white children.²⁹⁹

Dawson's account is quoted:

²⁹⁷ William Thomas (1793-1867) was assistant protector and guardian of Aborigines. He was allocated the Port Phillip, Westernport and Gippsland districts. See D. J. Mulvaney, 'Thomas, William', in A. G. L. Shaw and C. M. H. Clark (Section eds), *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 2, 1788-1850* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967), pp. 518-9.

²⁹⁸ Brough Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, p. 176.

One of the favourite games is football, in which fifty, or as many as one hundred players engage at a time. The ball is about the size of an orange, and is made of opossum-skin, with the fur side outwards. It is filled with pounded charcoal, which gives solidity without much increase of weight, and is tied hard round and round with kangaroo sinews. The players are divided into two sides and ranged in opposing lines, which are always of a different 'class' – white cockatoo against black cockatoo, quail against snake, &c. Each side endeavours to keep possession of the ball, which is tossed a short distance by hand, and then kicked in any direction. The side which kicks it oftenest and furthest gains the game. The person who sends it highest is considered the best player, and has the honour of burying it in the ground till required next day. The sport is concluded with a shout of applause, and the best player is complimented on his skill. This game, which is somewhat similar to the white man's game of football, is very rough; but as the players are barefooted and naked, they do not hurt each other so much as the white people do; nor is the fact of an aborigine being a good football player considered to entitle him to assist in making laws for the tribe to which he belongs.³⁰⁰

N. W. Thomas, in 1906, utilising the above references and perhaps others, followed a similar theme. He described various ball games:

In one part of Victoria the ball resembled our own hollow ones; it was thrown or kicked, and whoever caught it oftenest was the winner. Sometimes the ball was made of a bladder, sometimes of rolled hair, sometimes of opossum skin. The women had a game of ball, but they threw it from one to another. In South-west Victoria the ball was solid, of opossum skin, filled with pounded charcoal, and tied round and round with kangaroo sinews; two sides were chosen, who were selected from opposite phratries, white cockatoo against black cockatoo, and the game consisted in kicking the ball as far as possible. The best player had the privilege of burying the ball till it was wanted on the next day.³⁰¹

Poulter asserts that 'a distinctive new feature was gained from tribal football and added to the traditional British games – that of the spectacular high marking'. He claims that the Scotch College and Melbourne Grammar game was only different from the aboriginal game in the incorporation of goals in the schoolboy game. From here he

²⁹⁹ Amusements and War Implements. 15 June 1858. William Thomas, Collected Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney. ML MSS 214/24. Microfilm CY3131.

³⁰⁰ Dawson, *Australian Aborigines*, p. 85.

³⁰¹ N. W. Thomas, *The Native Races of the British Empire. Natives of Australia* (London: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1906), pp. 138-9.

extends the thinking to Tom Wills who lived in western Victoria ‘where Dawson made his observations of tribal football’. He notes that Wills had a close association with the aboriginal community as evidenced by his involvement with the aboriginal cricket team in 1866-7. He implies, though does not categorically argue, that Wills observed such games and incorporated elements into Australian Rules football. Finally Poulter notes that the aboriginal game involved large numbers of players, was played on wide expanses, was a long game and that players were organised in playing lines. He claims that these features are unique to modern Australian Rules football. In addition, he claims that the word ‘mark’ or ‘mumarki’ comes from aboriginal language meaning ‘catch’.³⁰²

James Dawson is at the centre of the evidence. Dawson emerges as a man of rare humanism. Defiant, brave, and of a singular bent of mind, he lived for many years as a settler in western Victoria. He developed a deep abiding love and respect for aboriginal people. An astute observer of natural history and aboriginal culture, his thoughtful and insightful views were often at odds with those around him. In particular he was a constant thorn in the side of an insensitive bureaucracy in its dealings with aborigines.³⁰³ In Dawson’s account of the different ball games played and observed or at least known by him he called the game of football, Min’gorm, as played by the Djargurd (Chaap Wuurong) people in the district where Tom Wills spent a good portion of his childhood in western Victoria.³⁰⁴

3.1.2 Development of the Idea

³⁰² Poulter, ‘Marn-Grook’, p. 67.

³⁰³ Dawson is revealed as a remarkable man. Farmer, taxidermist, ethnographer, natural historian and often an isolated voice for aborigines he was appointed local guardian of aborigines. For more information on Dawson see introduction in *Australian Aborigines*, facsimile edition. Also, see James Dawson Scrapbook. State Library of Victoria, MS 11514. Also see, James Dawson and Djargurd Wurrung people. <http://www.redreaming.info/DisplayStory.asp?id=91>.

³⁰⁴ Dawson, *Australian Aborigines*, p. xv. There have been other descriptions of such ball games. See A. W. Howitt, ‘Notes on Australian Message Sticks and Messengers’, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, London, 1889, pp. 314-32. (Reprinted by Ngarak Press, 1998). The recent discovery of an image of young boys kicking typha roots on the Murray River drawn from the impressions of William Blandowski’s scientific expedition from the late 1850s is a wonderful find. But again the presence of indigenous games of this kind has not been shown in any existing evidence to have influenced the early rule makers of Australian Rules football. See ‘First Football?’ <http://museumvictoria.com.au/MV-News/First-football/> and ‘Kids play kick to kick – 1850s style’ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/21/2039577.htm?section=australia>.

Several authors have recapitulated Poulter's argument. For example, Flanagan does so in *The Call* and more recently in the Alfred Deakin lectures.³⁰⁵ Written with sensitivity, Flanagan does not claim such a connection but rather what he 'would like to think is that his [Wills] familiarity with aboriginal football told him not only that there were different ways of playing such a game, but also that the different ways brought into play completely different skills'.³⁰⁶ It is a beautiful invocation of a relationship between Wills and aboriginal culture. Only a perverse insensitivity could not appreciate why such speculative sympathies have by loose extension hardened into claims of fact.

It is variously claimed that Wills either played Marngrook or at the very least observed it though no primary references are ever cited. An uncritical acceptance of the idea has taken root. It is now a staple in numerous popular accounts of the origin of Australian football. A recent newspaper article, with casual authority, states:

He returned to Victoria in 1856 and made his mark as a state cricketer before returning to a variation of marngrook, the footy he had played with the Aboriginal children with whom he grew up in Moyston.³⁰⁷

The Call is expressly set out as a semi-fictional work as explained by the author. It has in some accounts been mistakenly used as an historical source. This misleading mixture of fact and mythology, is portrayed as an accurate historical record in Ashley Mallet's book *The Black Lords of Summer*.³⁰⁸ Mallet's book is a good example of the propagation of myth. It reincarnates errors or distortions and presents them as historical fact. Mallet claims incorrectly that there is growing evidence that an aboriginal game played for centuries was an embryonic form of Australian Rules. He repeats the claim that Wills was introduced to football in early childhood by observing aboriginal players at Mt William and that he '... took the embryo of Australia's most exciting football code into the white man's world'.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ See, Flanagan, *The Call*, p. 8. Martin Flanagan, 'Sport and Culture', in *The Alfred Deakin Lectures. Ideas for the Future of a Civil Society* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2001), pp. 327-35. Martin Flanagan, 'Fever Pitch,' *Good Weekend*, 26 July 1997, pp. 26-31.

³⁰⁶ Flanagan, 'Sport and Culture', p. 329.

³⁰⁷ Bob Hart, 'Mark Footy's Father Figure,' *Herald Sun*, 10 September 1997, p. 17.

³⁰⁸ Ashley Mallet, *The Black Lords of Summer* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2002), pp. 14-5.

³⁰⁹ Mallet, *Black Lords of Summer*, p. 12.

Hibbins gives a gentle, sympathetic view of the grace and contours of the game as having parallels with traditional aboriginal life, without trespassing on the evidence for the origins of the game.³¹⁰ Not all modern references have incorporated this idea. Blainey cites three obstacles. The first is a lack of direct evidence of an association in the first decade of Australian football; secondly, that the argument erroneously superimposes modern features of Australian football on to the game of the 1850s; and finally, the absence of any evidence of a link with Tom Wills.³¹¹

3.1.3 Evidence

The first point to consider is whether there is direct evidence from archival sources that Tom Wills played or observed football as a child near his family's property in western Victoria. There is no such evidence in any surviving family documentation. This includes examination of over three hundred private letters written by Wills, his family or family friends. These letters cover a span from the time of Wills' birth in 1835 until the early twentieth century. There has been no evidence forthcoming from settlers near the Wills' property at Mt William that a young Tom Wills played or observed football. There is no evidence in published material from the nineteenth century on the development of Australian football that suggests this connection. Over 150 published letters either written by Wills or others about his activities were gathered from an extensive coverage of nineteenth century newspapers. There is no mention in any letter that Wills observed an aboriginal game, which influenced his thinking on the rules of early Australian football. Nor is there any suggestion of a connection in newspaper articles throughout this time. None of the other early contributors to the game mentioned any aboriginal connection. Wills wrote two cricket guides in which he covered aspects of Australian football. In this published material there is also no mention of such a connection. Whenever any of the key instigators of the game referred to Wills either during his lifetime or afterwards there was no mention of Wills being

³¹⁰ Hibbins, 'The Cambridge Connection', pp. 172-92.

³¹¹ See Blainey, *Game of Our Own*, pp. 203-5. Blainey's book was a commissioned work and the revised edition reviews additional evidence. See also Bernard Whimpress' review of *A Game of Our Own*, *JAS Review of Books*, <http://www.api-network.com/cgi-bin/reviews/jrbview.cgi?n=1863953477>; see R. Crego, *Sports and Games of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003), pp. 239-45 for a more general reference on sports. Also see, Bernard Whimpress, 'Australian Football', pp. 19-39 and Richard Cashman, 'Cricket', in Wray Vamplew & Brian Stoddart (eds), *Sport in Australia: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 58-76. Whimpress discounts an aboriginal origin of the game.

influenced by aboriginal games. In summary, there is no published or unpublished material that remains from his lifetime that supports such a link.

The second point to consider is whether there is any indirect evidence for this claim. It is suggested that because Wills lived in western Victoria, and was known to have had contact with the local aborigines, that he observed and played this indigenous game. Wills spent part of his childhood in the Mt William district of Victoria from the years of five to fourteen. Prior to this he lived in southern NSW.³¹² From the age of at least ten, he was living for most of the year in Melbourne and Brighton at Brickwood's Academy where he was a school student. Family letters reveal that Tom Wills was well regarded by the local aborigines and that he spent leisure time with them. He was able to adopt some of their language and custom, not unlike his father Horatio.³¹³ Further indirect evidence is said to be Wills' affinity for aboriginal people. Poulter claims as evidence for such an affinity, Wills' coaching of the aboriginal cricket team in 1866-7. This thread is evoked in more recent commentaries on Wills' life. Leaving aside that Wills' relationship with indigenous Australians was at times less romantic than popularly imagined, the issue of affinity does not support or disprove the argument about football connections.³¹⁴

The third point is to ascertain if there was anything distinctive about the game as it was played during Wills' time that suggests a bridge between Wills and the aboriginal game. The argument goes that the action of men jumping for possum skins was adopted as the high mark, which is observed in modern football. There are problems with this speculation.³¹⁵ The early descriptions of the Australian game, at least for the first two decades, which coincide with Wills' playing period make it clear that the game was characterised by play that was for the most part, close to the ground. The play involved

³¹² See Chapter Five of thesis, 'A Father's Care'.

³¹³ Horatio Wills' relationship with aborigines throughout his life was quite complex. For more discussion on Horatio, see Chapter Four and Five of thesis. For an overall view of Horatio Wills which relies on numerous archival documents, see Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*.

³¹⁴ Wills' romanticised connection with aborigines is noted in recent writings but can also be found much earlier in the twentieth century, for example, see *Blazing Trails. Pastoral and Sporting*, a handwritten account, Victorian Cricket Association archives [unknown author, undated but probably about 1930s and uncatalogued]. In fact, some modern descriptions borrow heavily in both content and passion from these writings, see Flanagan, *The Call*.

³¹⁵ The description of the early game between Melbourne Grammar and Scotch College which in Poulter's eyes is virtually a facsimile of the aboriginal game is so brief that it makes the type of comparison he claims difficult to justify.

repeated scrimmages, and occasional running by individuals to break the monotony of a knot of players moving about the ground. The emphasis was on a bulk of players to move the ball forward. There are repeated references to this from papers of the time where the advantage was given to the team with the greatest mass. There are no references to high marking as a characteristic of the game on any kind of regular basis that suggests it was a key part of the early game. The proposal that the high mark came from the aboriginal game is based on the error of comparing Marngrook with modern Australian football rather than the game as it was played in the 1850s. Such a spectacular feature would surely have figured prominently in early descriptions.³¹⁶ The concept of catching the football and being awarded a kick was already noted in the 1846 Rugby School rules.³¹⁷

Finally the lines of thinking that certain features of the modern game such as the large size of the grounds; its long duration; and the large number of players, all point to a causal link with indigenous football is a weak argument. The early Rugby school football was played over large areas on the close and at times there was a swarm of hundreds of schoolboys who played over several days.³¹⁸ These latter suppositions about the parameters of Australian Rules football being similar to Marngrook clang as late twentieth century intrusions. In the end these arguments are peripheral and somewhat contrived.³¹⁹

The uncritical acceptance of this idea diminishes and distracts from the evidence that points to Rugby School football as the dominant influence in the game as conceived

³¹⁶ Hibbins 'The Cambridge Connection', pp. 180-1, tracks contemporary newspaper reports from the 1850s to highlight similarities of the new game to Rugby. *Geelong Advertiser*, 22 July 1872, p. 3, in a report of Geelong versus South Yarra, in 1872 in which Tom and Horace Wills play, the overall weight of the team was a critical factor in the team's strength. This and other descriptions suggest that like a modern Rugby scrimmage there was a good deal of time spent push and poking the ball forward by as mass of players. A comparison between the rules of Rugby and Australian football has a long tradition, see recently for example, Robert Pascoe, *The Winter Game* (Port Melbourne: Mandarin, 1995), pp. xiv-xvii.

³¹⁷ There have been a number of recent references on the concept of the mark. Macrory, *Running with the Ball*, pp. 118, 151. O'Dwyer, 'Victorian Rules' p. 35, claims that 'The Victorian football mark was taken over directly from the rugby "fair-catch" ...'. Also see, Blainey, *Game of Our Own*, pp. 51, 64. Grow 'From Gum Trees', p. 21 quotes from an 1886 newspaper, which recalled the introduction of the 'mark'. Other references are in Mancini and Hibbins, *Running with the Ball*, p. 30, Pascoe, *Winter Game*, p. 12, and Leonie Sandercock and Ian Turner, *Up Where, Cazaly? The Great Australian Game* (London: Granada, 1981), p. 22.

³¹² For example, see *The Book of Rugby School*, pp. 147-69. There are many descriptions of large numbers of students playing the game over days in the boys' journals of the mid-nineteenth century.

³¹⁹ The imposition of late twentieth century views also distorts analysis of other areas of the Wills' story, such as the response to his suicide in 1880.

by Wills. We know that Tom Wills played football at Rugby during the first half of the 1850s. Wills came back after six years in England and tried to recreate the sporting tides of his time in England alongside other like-minded sportsmen. The rules by which he played were his template when he made his contribution to the new Victorian Rules. This is stated clearly by his contemporaries in Melbourne. James Thompson writing to Wills in 1871 made it clear that the English public school games were at the forefront of the rule framers' minds:

I turn now to football, which I am sorry to see has degenerated into horse play riot. You may remember when you, Mr. Hammersley, Mr T. Smith, and myself, framed the first code of rules for Victorian use. The Rugby, Eton, Harrow and Winchester rules at that time (I think in 1859) came under our consideration, the outcome being that we all but unanimously agreed that regulations which suited schoolboys well enough would not be patiently tolerated by grown men.³²⁰

William Hammersley, co-writer of the 1859 MCC rules, recalled Wills as favouring Rugby School rules. He reflected on the start of football in 1857:

... a rough game ... my shins now show honorable scars, and often have I had the blood trickling down my legs ... hacking was permitted and no objection was taken to spiked shoes ... after a severe fight in the old Richmond paddock when blood had been drawn freely, ... and a leg broken it occurred to some of us that if we had rules to play under it would be better. Tom Wills suggested the Rugby rules, but nobody understood them except himself, and the usual result was adjourn to the Parade hotel close by, and think the matter over. This we did, with the following result: several drinks and the formation of a committee, consisting of Tom Wills, myself, J.B. Thompson, and Football Smith, ... We decided to draw up as simple a code of rules, and as few as possible, so that any one could quickly understand.³²¹

At times during the first two decades there were allusions to Wills' view of the rules, some of which bore the imprint of Rugby school. These included his idea of instituting the Rugby cross bar. Wills also harboured a somewhat anachronistic preference at times for a designated kicker to kick for goal. Wills was the designated kicker for goal during house football matches at Rugby, a position of eminence within

³²⁰ Wills *Australian Cricketers' Guide*, p. 114.

³²¹ *Sydney Mail*, 25 August 1883, p. 363. Tom Wills also referred to 1857 as the start of football, see T. W. Wills (ed.), *The Australian Cricketers Guide for 1874-5* (Geelong: Henry Franks, Printer, 1875).

the team. His preference for allowing a designated kicker to shoot for goal lingered from his Rugby days and influenced his role as an umpire in Australian Rules football.³²²

The rules of Rugby school football, though different in several critical respects, do bear a similarity to many of the features of early Victorian Rules as conceived of by Wills, Hammersley, Smith and Thompson.³²³ These four men who wrote the original Victorian rules had their views clearly recorded in the historical archive. None of the four ever made reference to observations Wills may have made of aboriginal football. There are, however, clear lines of evidence that track the development of Australian football with links to English public school games. The onus of proof is on the proponents of the view that Tom Wills learned key elements from the aboriginal game to furnish evidence and to discount the alternative explanations for which there is evidence.

The aboriginal connection is an appealing story. Mythology can enrich and give hope. But what are the consequences of bending the evidence to fall in line with mythology? There are several consequences. Firstly it conjures a story that Wills observed or played Marngrook [or an equivalent aboriginal football game] and that he adopted features into the early rules of Australian football. There is not one piece of evidence from the period of his life that cites he was influenced by aboriginal games. If one is to accept this level of evidence then any theoretical coincidental connection could be construed as fact. It also supposes that Wills having observed such a game as a small boy goes to Rugby; learns Rugby School football for five years; returns home to Victoria and then melds the two but without mentioning a single word to any one.

Secondly, it chooses to ignore or at least downplay available evidence that does not conveniently fit into this story. It pushes to the periphery the body of evidence that links the Australian game to English public schoolboy games. It downplays the importance of games associated with English public school football and artificially elevates an idea with no evidence.

³²² Throughout the newspapers of the time, there is evidence of Wills' preference for different facets of the game. For example see his arguing for the inclusion of a cross bar. *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 13 May 1865, p. 2.

Thirdly, by highlighting an heroic Wills, it selectively excludes the key roles of other early contributors. By choosing to ignore the evidence that outlines the development of the game, the aboriginal proposal with Wills at its centre diminishes the role of all other contributors. It gives birth to an idealised caricature of Wills and then squeezes this into a preferred version of history.

The choice of words is also important in the implicit downplaying of the historical evidence. By using the word ‘conventional’ to describe the current views on the origins of football, Poulter somehow tars the view as being staid and not open to new ideas. To argue a case successfully for an alternative point of view requires more than claiming the existing view is conventional. The issue is not whether conclusions are conventional or not but how well they reflect the evidence at hand.³²⁴

Margaret Lindley in a recent radio debate supports the connection with aboriginal football. She rejects suggestions that a lack of direct evidence linking Australian football, and Tom Wills, with aboriginal football be taken as evidence of no connection. Dismissive, she implies that such an absence of evidence is simply in keeping with other denials of aboriginal contributions to Australian history. No evidence is forwarded by Lindley to support this view of concealment of the development of the rules. In contrast, previous writers have used Wills’ affinity with aborigines to support the argument of an aboriginal contribution to the game. The lines of thinking are loose and contradictory.³²⁵ Lindley’s comments divert from the history. Its emotional tone appeals to past and present injustices to aborigines. In a recent newspaper article, Inga Clendinnen broached such seductions as exactly the fodder for historians to think through clearly, when unscrambling myths. That is, the historical method should invite scepticism and scrutiny; it should respect complexity rather than diminish it for ease of popular appeal. The writing of history is not fashioned for the purpose to right past wrongs:

³²³ See Hibbins, ‘Cambridge Connection’, p. 178, for a comparison of the rules.

³²⁴ Poulter, ‘Marn-Grook’, p. 64.

³²⁵ The Sports Factor, 26 September 2003. ‘In search of the “real” home of Australian football!’ <http://www.abc.net.au/cgi-bin/common/prin...rn/talks/8.30/sportsf/stories/s951881.htm>. Within this argument Lindley makes several valid points: that football in Victoria prior to the late 1850s is poorly characterised and rightly criticises the popular notion of Tom Wills as ‘inventor’ of the game. The overzealous promotion and caricature of Wills as the game’s ‘inventor’ ignores that the game evolved from precursors and the contributions of other key individuals.

It is the historians' job to unscramble what happened from what the myth-makers were up to, not to play at myth-making, too. We have to resist engagement in the concoction of large inspiring narratives, because they so easily seduce into fantasy or ideology.³²⁶

Having raised that Marngrook may have shaped Australian Rules football, proponents then challenge that this argument be disproved. But it is a converse twist of logic, that if the supposition of an aboriginal connection cannot be disproved, that it then assumes an equivalent status with lines of thinking with far more evidence. It is as though in a pique of egalitarianism, any argument, regardless of evidence, carries equal weight. An assessment of the levels of the quality and quantity of evidence must determine the final assessment.

The popular view that Marngrook was a forerunner of Australian Rules football ignores or dismisses evidence that gets in the way or points in another direction. It eschews a sceptical approach. On the other hand, any assessment that relies on evidence must be open to review, scepticism and the introduction of new material. This latter approach is inherently less appealing than stories, which satisfy our desires rather than reflect historical evidence. In arguing for a connection between aboriginal games and Australian football, Hutchinson illustrates how wanting to believe in something overwhelms, distorts and ignores the appraisal of evidence. This is reflected in his statement: 'So it just seemed to me that it was if not true, then it ought to be true, that's my view of it, that there was an aboriginal contribution to the Australian national game'.³²⁷

3.2 Suicide, Mythology and the Place of Tom Wills in Football History

Tom Wills' suicide has been central to the construction of a mythology in recent years. The mythology has focussed on two aspects: the romantic notion of his suicide

³²⁶ Inga Clendinnen, 'History as a Preferred Past only Hampers the Way to Clearer Future,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 October 2003, p. 11.

³²⁷ See discussion with Robin Grow and Garrie Hutchinson, *The Sports Factor*, 25 September 1998. 'Australian – Invented Sports.' <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/sportsf/sstories/sf980925.htm>. Grow points out the absence of evidence of an aboriginal contribution to the game's origins. C. Tatz, *Obstacle Race* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1995), pp. 150-1. Tatz similarly gives 'more credence' to the theory even though he gives no evidence to support his view. See for a general popular discussion on the issue of assessing the quality of evidence in a broader context and how this can be distorted by prejudicial

and the claim that as a consequence of this suicide that Wills was deliberately excluded from the written history of Australian football. The following is typical of such heroic and romantic writing:

He [Wills] suicided in despair at the failure of football officials to grasp the urgency of his appeal to expand the Australian game on the international market before the new codes of rugby and soccer took a hold on the market ... for many years the name of Thomas Wills and his massive contribution to the game was ignored and his deeds enshrined in the name of Harrison ... It cannot be denied that Wills so loved the game he gave up his life for it ... He had such a far reaching vision for this game that when mortal men hesitated, bumbled and stagnated its expansion, Wills in a pique of frustration suicided ... When his disciples doubted and forsook him as disciples are wont to do, the stress was too much for the impatient Wills. He stabbed himself to death and did not live to see his great dream unfold ...³²⁸

Indeed, much of the published commentary on the suicide of Wills can be characterised as extravagant, romantic, inaccurate and distorted by sporting folklore.

Although a suicide is the culmination of that person's individual history, the death reflects to some degree collective human experience. For some, there is an irresistible appeal in the romantic portrayal of Tom Wills' suicide. The Wills story becomes an illusion, a construct of the imagination unstained by a careful consideration of the events around his death. By portraying Wills as a misunderstood fallen hero it further embellishes his recent triumphant ascension in recent literature.³²⁹ Underpinning such romantic notions is a long western philosophical tradition of the heroic, military death. This idealistic masculine death, typically by the sword and dagger, has its parallels in some of the mythic portrayals of Wills' death. Central to this view is the promotion of the misunderstood individual, defiant heroism and the ideal of self-sacrifice.³³⁰

assumptions see, C. Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World. Science as a Candle in the Dark* (London: Headline, 1997), pp. 6-35.

³²⁸ See, Hansen, *Centurions*, pp. iv-vi.

³²⁹ Mullen, *History of Australian Rules*, p. 37.

³³⁰ Olive Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 160-1. Anton J. L. van Hooff, 'A Historical Perspective on Suicide', in R. W. Maris, A. L. Berman and M. M. Silverman (eds), *Comprehensive Textbook of Suicidology* (New York, London: The Guildford Press, 2000), pp. 96-123. Georges Minois translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, *History of Suicide: Voluntary Death in Western Culture* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1999), pp. 2, 20, 106.

The second area of mythology as it pertains to his suicide, has been the casually accepted notion that the suicide of Tom Wills led to his being excluded in the writing of the history of Australian Rules football. One typical example is as follows:

His suicide, considered an unforgivable sin in those times, also ensured that he would never get due recognition for his part in helping to found Australian football.³³¹

Does this stated view hold up under scrutiny?

The first task is to review how Tom Wills was regarded as an instigator of Australian football in his lifetime and whether any noticeable change occurred after his suicide. During Wills' lifetime, little was written on the origins of the game. Nonetheless whenever the origin of Australian football was recalled, and where individuals were named, Tom Wills was highlighted. There was no attempt during his life to diminish his role in the origin of the game. Having said this, it is true that Wills' contribution was mentioned only in modest detail. For example, his 1858 letter in which he called for the formation of a 'foot-ball' club, was never mentioned again during his life, and there was very little sense of the watermark that was established in the late 1850s, apart from Wills' own writing on this matter. But this modest detail of Wills' contribution is similar to the limited recognition of all of the other signatories to the earliest known rules of Australian Rules football – James Thompson, William Hammersley and Thomas Smith. It was left to each of these individuals to recall their place in history. The limited discussion and analysis of the origins of Australian football in Wills' lifetime reflected the infancy of the game and the lack of historical perspective on the game's origins.

In the immediate aftermath of his suicide, there was no sense that Wills was deliberately written out of sports history or devalued in the public arena. His sporting deeds on the cricket field were covered in immense detail.³³² Far from being diminished Wills was recalled with candour and pride as a great cricket captain and player. If any credence is to be given to the view that he was written out of football's history because

³³¹ Flanagan, 'Sport and Culture', pp. 327-35.

³³² For example, H. W. Hedley, *At the Wickets. NSW v Victoria* (Melbourne: Centennial Printing and Publishing Company Ltd., 1888), p. 22.

of his suicide then one would expect some impact on the recognition of his cricket exploits. Nothing of the kind occurred. When his suicide was raised in the public domain it was with sorrow and respect rather than shame.³³³

Wills was mentioned sparingly in the football literature of the 1880s-1890s. But this was not unique. The men who, alongside Wills initiated the game – James Thompson, William Hammersley and Thomas Smith – also continued to be recognised sparingly. These latter men did not commit suicide, yet were and are continued to be poorly acknowledged for their roles in the beginnings of the game.³³⁴ One does not have to invoke suicide as a reason for the relatively small amount written about Wills and his role in football's origins in the years after his death. The evidence is that all four of the main signatories to the 1859 rules had little written about them during the nineteenth century and for most of the twentieth century. The line of argument that assumes that Wills was selectively obscured in football's history fails to understand that Wills was treated no differently to Thompson, Hammersley and Smith. In fact one may argue that of the four, he was the only to receive any regular acknowledgement.

When James Thompson, who did much to develop the game, died in 1877, there was no fanfare regarding his significant role in the origin of the new code of football. Like Wills, his role was recalled briefly:

... he was one of the select few to introduce the game of football and draw up that simple code of rules which has found so much favour³³⁵

When William Hammersley died in 1886 his obituaries in the *Argus* and *Australasian* contained no mention of his pivotal role in the introduction of Australian football.³³⁶ Newspaper reports about Wills and early football after his death are exactly what one might expect given the lack of historical perspective on the origins of the game. It took time for this historical perspective to develop and early recollections were informal autobiographical memories of players from the early years.³³⁷ This was a very different situation to cricket. Each cricket season was adorned with layers of statistics,

³³³ This is in contrast to some of his family members. See Chapter Seven on the suicide of Tom Wills.

³³⁴ See Hibbins 'Cambridge Connection', pp. 172-92.

³³⁵ *Australasian*, 21 July 1877, p. 76.

³³⁶ *Argus*, 16 November 1886, p. 6; *Australasian*, 20 November 1886, p. 981.

historical reminiscences from England, burgeoning mythologies and pen portraits of local stars. Intercolonial cricket matches were annual festivals for which football had no equivalent. It was only after football became well established and occupied some kind of social niche that any kind of historical perspective eventually developed in the early twentieth century.

In addition to the lack of historical perspective and research on the game's origins by the time of his death, there were three further reasons for the limited material written on Tom Wills and his role in the game's origin. Firstly, cricket was the dominant colonial game and was Tom Wills' preferred game. His preference for and eminence in cricket obscured his football prowess. Secondly, by the time of his death, he was well beyond the peak period of his football career and at that time did not hold any prominent football administrative positions. Finally, he spent most of the 1870s in peripheral Geelong and so he was less in the eye of the metropolitan press.

The final point that needs to be addressed is the memory of H. C. A. Harrison. It has been implied that Harrison deliberately took ownership of the game's origins and wrote out the contribution of Wills.³³⁸ The most important nodal point in the early evolution of the game which offered time and space for reflection was the 1908 Australasian jubilee carnival. When the *Melbourne Herald* covered the 1908 carnival there were only two people photographed for their story – Tom Wills and Harrison.³³⁹ The *Leader* had an article on the game's birth and claimed Harrison as 'the father of the game'. Whilst Harrison's profile was elevated to a position of pre-eminence, Wills was not neglected and was recalled more so than Hammersley, Thompson and Smith. Again the *Leader* had a photograph of Wills.³⁴⁰ In the same year, one Geelong writer recalled Tom Wills as team captain. The article was full of local pride. There was no suggestion of disowning Wills as a result of the sportsman's suicide.³⁴¹ H. C. A. Harrison's autobiography appeared in 1923 and has had a major influence on the memory of Wills:

Till the year 1858, no football had been played in the colony. But when T.W. Wills arrived from England, fresh from Rugby school, full

³³⁷ *Australasian*, 19 August 1922, p. 387.

³³⁸ See for example, Hansen, *Centurions*.pp. iv-vi.

³³⁹ *Herald*, 22 August 1908, p. 5.

³⁴⁰ *Leader*, 22 August 1908, pp. 29, 34.

³⁴¹ *News of the Week*, 27 August 1908, p. 7.

of enthusiasm for all kinds of sport, he suggested that we should make a start with it. He very sensibly advised us not to take up Rugby although that had been his own game because he considered it as then played unsuitable for grown men, engaged in making a livelihood, but to work out a game of our own. It was rather a go-as-you-please affair at first, but a set of rules was gradually evolved, which experience taught us to be the best.³⁴²

There is no evidence that Harrison deliberately wrote Wills out of the script. The comments from Harrison in his autobiography on Wills are far from that of a man who was endeavouring to diminish Tom Wills' contribution. His affection in the book towards Tom Wills is palpable as it was in private life. Harrison was a pivotal contributor to early football and his longevity crossed into the period when football became a mass popular pastime. It seems that opportunism, longevity and insufficient research on the early history of the game over the first 50 years contributed to Wills and others not being sufficiently recognised throughout much of the twentieth century.³⁴³ In retrospect this seems neither malicious nor calculated by Harrison.

Throughout most of the twentieth century Harrison was typically recalled as the key figure in the origin of the game. However, when the origins of the game were raised Wills was invariably mentioned as a significant figure. Wills was featured often in the absence of acknowledgement of the other early contributors. The impression is that this portrayal was a skewed remembrance of the game's origins based on a lack of historical research. This led to the perpetuation of inaccuracies rather than any deliberate denial of Wills' place in the history of the game. The important roles of Thompson, Hammersley and Smith in the origin of the game were relatively neglected during this period.³⁴⁴ Harrison's longevity in the game and his long life were important factors in his early recognition. He was still alive when the first serious reflections on the game's origins

³⁴² Mancini and Hibbins, *Running with the Ball*, pp. 118-9.

³⁴³ Hibbins, 'The Cambridge Connection', pp. 186-7. Blainey, *Game of our Own*, p. 70, also offers a less hostile view of H. C. A. Harrison's acceptance of the title of 'Father of the Game'. His longevity was critical in how he was seen in the development of the game, see *Australasian*, 19 August 1922, p. 387.

³⁴⁴ J. L. McHale, A. E. Chadwick and E. C. H. Taylor, *Australian Game of Football* (Melbourne: C. G. Hartley and Co., 1931), p. 2. See Old Boy, 'Football. The Australian Game', *The Argus and Australasian Football Guide*, 1931 and Old Boy, 'Football. The Australian Game', *The Argus Football Guide. Records and History of The Australian Game*, 1930, pp. 3-4. They offered the familiar recollection of Harrison, Wills, Hammersley and Thompson as the originators of the game. E. C. H. Taylor, *One Hundred Years of Football: The Story of the Melbourne Football Club. 1858-1958* (Melbourne: Melbourne FC, 1958).

were being written. The error, which accorded a place for Harrison as one of the original rule writers, has been redressed in recent years.

As the twentieth century unfolded, Wills' role in football was never forgotten and periodically there were defiant writers who placed him at the forefront of the originators of the game. Typically these voices were indignant and sought to re-establish the name of Wills as the most important name in the history of the game. Sometimes this was with an accurate review of available evidence and at other times it was almost a polemical righting of what was seen as an injustice to Wills without a great deal of evidence provided.³⁴⁵

A clearer picture of the relative contributions of Wills, Harrison, Thompson, Hammersley, Smith and others has emerged in the last part of the twentieth and early twenty first century. Of the more recent analyses, that of Mancini and Hibbins stand out as the most detailed.³⁴⁶ This recent research points to Wills as the most influential of this small group of men. Harrison, though significant in the early years of football, appears not to have been involved in the first games. His main influence came to the fore during the first two decades of the game as a champion player and captain of the Melbourne Football Club and then later as an influential administrator.

The desire to place a single individual at the heart of early Australian football has resulted in a caricature of Wills. Ironically, in this desire to funnel events through one individual, Wills is cast in a similar role to that previously given to Harrison. Wills' life, so rich in its infinite variety and colour squeezes out competitors.³⁴⁷ The resulting

³⁴⁵ Unpublished Manuscript. Montague Grover, 'History of the Australian Game of Football'. 1937, Mitchell Library.

³⁴⁶ Mancini and Hibbins, *Running with the Ball*, pp. 1-50. An earlier newspaper article which foreshadowed the increasing eminence of Wills and football was, Ken Knox, 'Tom was THE father of Aussie Rules', *Age*, 14 May 1971, Special Supplement, p. 4, which promotes Wills as the man who started Australian football and Geelong its birthplace.

³⁴⁷ A typical late twentieth century example which gives credit to Wills but gives little credit to other contributors, is G. Hobbs, *125 Years of the Melbourne Demons: The Story of the Melbourne Football Club from 1858-1983* (Jolimont, Victoria: Melbourne Football Club, 1984). There has been a relative flurry of brief articles on Wills in the last decade which have rapidly elevated his profile. These are of varying degrees of accuracy, for example, M. Flanagan, 'Football's Founding Fathers', *Football Record*, March 29-31, 1996, pp. 21-2. As an example of how rapidly reputations and mythology change, in a recent radio show devoted to the historical origins of the game, it is stated that Wills has always been the recognised Father of the Australian Game, See Sports Factor, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/sportsf/stories/s951881.htm>.

caricature of Wills is based on a loose gathering of evidence and extension of fact. One example of this is:

... when a subcommittee of the MCC a close relative of the politically potent Melbourne Club, met to discuss the subject of establishing a set of rules for the playing of what was then called 'foot-ball' it was widely assumed they would adopt the rules of one of the English school games, the obvious choice being rugby. No, said Wills. Played on hard grounds, he thought rugby would cause too many injuries. With a characteristic flourish, he also declared that the offside rule was for captains who couldn't set a field. What was needed, he said, was 'a game of our own'.³⁴⁸

There is no evidence that the gathering of key players who wrote the original rules did so after a formal directive with the Melbourne Cricket Club. The second statement that it was widely assumed that they would adopt the game of Rugby school football is incorrect. Nowhere in any archive is such an assumption made explicit or even implied. It is incorrect to imply that Wills stood in contrast to the other rule writers in wanting a distinct game from Rugby school football. In fact, Wills, more than anyone else wished to keep aspects of the game of Rugby school football. There were protests from those around him about his desire to retain features of Rugby school football. We know this because of the contemporaneous evidence of people like James Thompson and William Hammersley.

Finally, and to complete the mythology is the oft quoted phrase 'a game of our own'. This phrase comes from Harrison's 1923 autobiography. There is no existing archival documentation in which Wills uses the phrase 'a game of our own'. This does not dismiss Harrison's recollection but it is noteworthy that another of the original rule writers of the game did use similar words. James Thompson announced:

Football, as played in Victoria, is now fit to run alone. I have accordingly omitted the Rugby and Eton rules, because we seem to

Hibbins, 'The Cambridge Connection' p. 190, notes Wills has continued to be promoted at Harrison's expense whilst the other key contributors continue to languish with little acknowledgement. This caricature extends to other areas, see, Greg de Moore, 'Tom Wills, Marngrook and the Evolution of Australian Football', in R. Hess et al (eds), *Football Fever: Crossing Boundaries* (Melbourne: Maribyrnong Press, 2005), pp. 5-15. For a shorter adaptation of this argument see Greg de Moore, Tom Wills and the Birth of Aussie Rules, *Inside Football*, 26 July 2006, p. 12. Also see, <http://www.aboriginalfootball.com.au> for more discussion.

³⁴⁸ Martin Flanagan, 'Fever Pitch' from *Sydney Morning Herald, Good Weekend*, 26 July 1997.

have agreed to a code of our own, which, to a considerable extent, combines the merits while excluding the vices of both.³⁴⁹

The phrase ‘game/code of our own’ has become uniquely associated with Wills. Thompson is never recalled. It was also Thompson who has left us with a clearest impression of the importance of modifying the game to reduce the violence of some of the English schoolboy games. Feisty and abrasive, Thompson and Wills disputed aspects of the early rules with Wills preferring Rugby rules.

4 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at three aspects of the sporting career of Tom Wills: throwing in cricket; claims that he observed an aboriginal style of football which influenced his thinking when helping to draft Australian Rules football; and how he has been remembered for his role in the origins of this code of football in the light of his suicide.

Wills was one of a group of players – amateur and professional, who were called for or accused of throwing over the period from the late 1850s through to the 1870s. Up until 1864, he strained to bowl within the confines of the anatomically bizarre rules that sought to curb a bowler’s effectiveness. But Wills was not to be subdued. He was different to other bowlers accused of throwing. Wills was a defiant letter writer and brought to public notice the pressures upon players. He had the sporting and social prestige to be noticed and was too successful and headstrong to be stymied or bullied out of the game. For a period of over 20 years, Wills’ bowling was held up as inciting others to follow his aberrant path. More than any other colonial bowler, Wills represented the threat of insubordination not tolerable in cricket. Young bowlers, it was suggested, copied the style of Wills. They were fretted over with the concerned indignation of watchful parents. Wills was smeared with the accusation of corrupting youthful talent.³⁵⁰ Although Wills was cited in numerous cases as being a bad influence

³⁴⁹ J. B. Thompson (ed.), *The Victorian Cricketer’s Guide for 1859-60*: Containing an original account of the Late Inter-colonial match with review and synopsis of all the matches. Victoria v NSW (Melbourne: Sands, Kenny and Co., 1860), preface.

³⁵⁰ See *Bell’s Life in Sydney*, 24 November 1866, p. 2. *Australasian*, 4 February 1871, p. 139. Throwing and Wills became entwined in a debate about the fairness of short-pitched bowling. ‘Put the batsman there, and the system is to send down a fast short pitched bumping ball that shall go anywhere but near the wicket, the object being a snick, or chance or a blow. How may bail balls or shooters are

on other bowlers it is unlikely that he directly influenced most of these cricketers. Rather he seems to have become a convenient caricature upon which to pivot complaints. Wills was the most prominent, the most enduring and the most outspoken of all these bowlers and it was always likely that he would be made to endure the burden of his and others throwing.³⁵¹ The collusion between newspapers, clubs, spectators and players saw him too needed for colonial victory. Organisational forces allowed him to operate whilst his success guaranteed colonial prestige for Victoria. His skills were so dominant that at least temporarily clubs and members could rationalise and explain away his throwing action. This alliance became less palatable as his physical skills declined. In the end the demise of Wills was more to do with administrative fear of the insubordinate individual than a high toned moral standing on enforcing the legislation of the game of cricket.

The story that Tom Wills observed an aboriginal style of football has popular appeal and has rapidly become folklore. But the manner in which it has taken root, despite the evidence, bears examining. The propagation of this myth is more a study of market psychology and popular belief than history. It rides a swell of late twentieth century desire to create a mythology of harmonious black and white contributions to the game. But in doing so it distorts, ignores or creates evidence after a fashion to groom acceptance of this notion. It is also propelled by recent views that try to place Wills, the only Australian born member of the early group of sportsmen who penned the earliest known written rules, within an aboriginal context that mistakenly casts his life in a similar light to aborigines. If the strength of the Webb Ellis myth in Rugby Union is any template, then those who prefer this fable as their authentic account need fear little of it being extinguished. To some, its strength lies beyond objective evidence. As the myth

delivered under the present throw-bumping style? Not one in 20 ... And as long as the Wills throwing model is so faithfully copied by all who have the assurance to call themselves bowlers so long will the colony be deficient in that department of the game which when faithfully carried out and not allowed to degenerate into throwing can alone maintain that scientific standard which in my opinion it is fast losing here. Brute force and luck are poor substitutes for precision and skill'. *Argus*, 9 April 1860, p. 6, claims that Wills has 'inoculated' several young players with his high bowling action.

³⁵¹ There were other examples of colonial bowlers called for or accused of either throwing or bowling 'high'. In addition to the above they include William Greaves, *Yeoman*, 29 November 1862, p. 131; George Marshall, *Yeoman* 13 December 1862, pp. 166-7; Jerry Bryant, *Yeoman*, 21 November 1863, pp. 123-4. In *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 30 November 1867, p. 2, in describing Gregory it is noted that a 'smart' umpire would be needed to detect throw; also that 'bumpy' wickets encouraged him to throw more frequently and deliberately. Such themes were also common in descriptions of Wills. Part of the retelling of these stories becomes mythology about Wills and his tricking umpires with his throwing, see, Clarence P. Moody, *Australian Cricket and Cricketers. 1856-1894* (Melbourne: R. A. Thompson, 1894).

gains voice it also gains a physical structure. There is now a statue devoted to Tom Wills and the origin of Australian football in the small country town of Moyston.³⁵²

As Clendinnen notes, popular appeal and the retrospective righting of wrongs are seductive.³⁵³ As she suggests, it is just these very distortions of evidence, and of the required scepticism, which lead to injustices in the first place. It has often been those in positions of power who have imposed such distortions upon minority groups that fashion prejudice and suffering. Poorly constructed arguments with distorted evidence are not without casualties. The deliberate grooming of evidence to create a preferred past plants the seeds of a destructive debate. The onus is upon historians to reproduce the material as accurately as possible. To not do so, provides succour and licence for those who knowingly bend historical information to their own ends. No matter how noble the intent, or wrongful the past, to promote through ignorance or mischief a distortion of the historical evidence, has little to commend it. Regardless of how well intentioned, there is no evidence to date that supports the notion that Tom Wills observed or played an indigenous game of football and later incorporated elements into Australian Rules football.

³⁵² For commentary on the statue at Moyston, see Bob Hart, 'Mark Footy's Father Figure,' *Herald Sun*, 10 September 1997, p. 17. This statue has been promoted as a way of promoting tourism for the town. 'Monumental Claim to Fame', *Herald-Sun*, 18 September 1998, p. 7. 'The one-store town of Moyston near Ararat in western Victoria yesterday honored its famous football founder, Thomas Wentworth Wills, with a monument on the very spot where the game evolved more than 140 years ago. It was here that the teenage Tom Wills played a running, highkicking game with local Aboriginal children'. Also see, Paul Daffey, *Local Rites: A Year in Grass Roots Football in Victoria and Beyond* (Flemington: Black Duck, 2002), pp. 139-45. In addition to the statue at Moyston, the Marn Grook trophy is played for between Essendon and Sydney. In Jonathan Pearlman's, 'Historical Lesson for the Swans to Pass on,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 2002, p. 36, the mythology extends to the original letter Tom Wills wrote, 10 July 1858, which called for a football club. 'Legend has it that in the 1840s, Tom Wills, the founder of Australian football, saw a game of marn grook and thought it would be a good way to keep Australian cricketers fit during the winter'.

Martin Flanagan, 'Wills, the Father of Football, gets a Memorial of his Own', *Age*, 18 September 1998, 'Sports', p. 2. Ben Mitchell, 'Class of the Future Gives the Bush a Push', *Age*, 24 August 1999, p. 3, 'The community is erecting a monument to the man credited as the father of Australian football, Thomas Wentworth Wills, who first played a running, high kicking ball game with Aboriginal children in Moyston'. Local interest in this unsubstantiated claim continues to grow, 'Sponsorship Deal Paves the way', *Ararat Advertiser*, 12 April 2001, p. 2. Also the following from Ararat Genealogical Society, 'Moyston Residents to get say on Wills Rotunda', *Ararat Advertiser*, 27 September 2001, [page unknown]. 'Moyston Art Show Opening', *Ararat Advertiser*, 4 May 2002, [page unknown]. Evans, Libby, 'Town Spirit there for All to See', *Ararat Advertiser*, 7 March 2002, [page unknown].

³⁵³ Clendinnen, 'History as a Preferred Past', p. 11.

The belief that indigenous football games contributed to the earliest rules is just one of several mythical claims. Another myth is the assumption that Tom Wills, because of his suicide, was disowned when the history of the origins of Australian Rules football was recorded. But the evidence on this point is clear: he was not written out of the origins of football history because of his suicide. This last myth seems more a case of imposing a preconceived romanticised template on the history of Tom Wills rather than an examination of the evidence.

Chapter Four

Tom Wills and Indigenous Australians

The conduct of the blacks in the field was such, that it may be well imitated by many of the whites. If they make a large score not one word of boasting escapes their lips, if the score is a small one no complaining is heard and perfect obedience to the commands of their captain is observed ...³⁵⁴

The natives, as it was announced they would do, disguised their handsome features with burnt cork, and several of them really made “stunning darkies” ... (one wore a Fijian grass mantle ... Wills looked like a real Tar(ry) Pot.³⁵⁵

1 Introduction

The story of Tom Wills intersects with indigenous Australia at four points. These were his early childhood in the Mt William district of western Victoria; the murder of his father by aborigines on the family station Cullin-la-Ringo in 1861; his playing with and coaching of, the aboriginal cricket team in 1866-7; and finally the retrospective interpretation of Wills’ life as a bridge between aboriginal and European Australia. This chapter will examine two of these areas – the murder of Horatio Wills and its impact on Tom Wills; and Tom Wills’ relationship with the 1866-7 aboriginal cricket team from western Victoria.³⁵⁶ The terminology of the day used aborigines, natives and blacks interchangeably. These terms have been adopted for this chapter.

2 The Murder of Horatio Wills

Always remember, boys, in an enemy’s country to keep rifles clear
and powder dry!³⁵⁷

Horatio Wills, 12 July 1860

³⁵⁴ *Geelong Register*, 5 January 1867, p. 2.

³⁵⁵ *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 May 1872, p. 2, when Tom Wills and other white players parodied the aboriginal cricketers.

³⁵⁶ The first area, his relationship with aborigines as a child amongst the Djab wurrung language group of western Victoria is briefly explored as it relates to the idealisation of Tom Wills’ relationship with aboriginal Australia and also his father’s more violent contact with western district aborigines. The last of these four issues is perhaps best illustrated by attempts to look at aboriginal contributions to the origins of Australian football. See the thesis chapter ‘A Sporting Life’. Also see, de Moore, ‘Marngrook’, pp. 5-15.

I found out the other day that an old blackfellow named Bobby who was shot about four years ago by the troopers for killing a cow of Schofields, was the last of Pa's murderers that was alive he and four other killed Pa. The particular man had a shrivelled leg we used always to think him such a poor harmless old wretch and were sorry when he was shot. If I had only known it before I should have saved the troopers the trouble. The Black say they went into the camp and spoke to the white fellows and then they got close to them and sprang onto them and held them while others hit them.³⁵⁸

Horace Wills, Cullin-la-Ringo, 1876

Sixty or 70 more of the black tribe have been shot besides the first 30. The squatters seem to have made a general subscription of horses and money and set a body of mounted police on the tracks of the blacks ... The Sydney papers blame the Queenslanders and it does seem a terrible vengeance at first sight but I should like to put the men who write so comfortably from their snug dens at Sydney on a frontier station in the middle of native tribes such as poor Mr Wills's was. Where their lives would not be safe for a moment if the blacks thought they could kill them with impunity and see whether they would sentimentalise them.³⁵⁹

Rachel Hennings, 19 December 1861

On the afternoon of 17 October 1861, Horatio Wills and eighteen of his party were murdered at Cullin-la-Ringo Station, central Queensland. Tom Wills was not present at the camp when the attack occurred. Several days later he returned to the site of the murders to be met by the news of his father's death. This section of the chapter addresses Wills' reaction to his father's death; his attitude to the local aboriginal population and neighbouring settlers; and insights into his family's attitudes towards the Queensland aborigines before and after Horatio's death. The aspects of Tom Wills' period in Queensland that are not examined in detail are: Tom Wills' attitude to being taken to Queensland by his father; how this period in Queensland influenced his sporting career; how Horatio and Tom regarded one another during the long trip from Victoria to Queensland; and the broader context of the Queensland Native Police and

³⁵⁷ Letter, Horatio Wills to his boys, 12 July 1860.

³⁵⁸ Letter, from Horace Wills, Cullin-la-Ringo, 18 April 1876, to his mother recalling the murder of his father fifteen years previously.

³⁵⁹ Letters of Rachel Henning (Manuscript, Dixson collection). See Gordon Reid, *A Nest of Hornets* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 123-40, for a perspective on these murders in the context of the recent murders of the Fraser family. For an early description of these events see, David Carment, 'The Wills Massacre of 1861: Aboriginal – European Conflict on the Colonial Australian Frontier', *Journal of Australian Studies* (June 1980), no. 6, pp. 49-55.

the role of black and white retribution in frontier Queensland. Furthermore, issues to do with alcohol abuse and post-trauma syndromes that were relevant to Tom Wills' reaction are dealt with in the chapter on alcohol.

2.1 Family Attitudes to the Aborigines of Central Queensland

When Horatio Wills left Victoria to establish a station in Queensland there was apprehension in the family. Amusing stories about Horatio's experiences with aborigines were nervously exchanged in family letters. A boyish Horace inquired of his father if he had fought and been injured by the blacks. An uncompromising Emily commented that Horatio had a gun to 'shoot the wild blacks'.³⁶⁰ In the year before Horatio and Tom left Victoria, the younger boys in Europe revealed the prevailing racial stereotypes they were taught in a recent school lesson in Germany:

Mr Thomas said the other day that the most wonderful thing in the world is that the Australian blacks climb up trees by sticking their big toe nails into the bark. And Mr Thomas gave a lecture about Australia and said the blacks were more like monkeys than anything else he said they had no calves to their legs and that they could kill ... with their boomerangs.³⁶¹

Horatio's attitude to the aborigines was more complex than might be thought at first glance. In the western district of Victoria, Horatio was listed as having murdered several aborigines. However, his life circumstance and age were now different. In a letter to his sons before he departed from Victoria, he revealed a conciliatory attitude to the aborigines he might meet in Queensland. 'Mr MacDonald (Peter) tells me that the

³⁶⁰ Horace and Emily were two of Tom Wills' siblings. Letter from Horace, 13 July 1861, 'My Dear mama and papa, I hope papa got on well about the station. You must tell if you had a fight with the blacks and if you were hurt by them'. Letter from Egbert, from Bonn, 1 July 1860, 'I heard that in your last letter that Papa went to botany Bay to get a station there and I heard that he brought the little gun with him to shoot the wild blacks'. Letter from Egbert, writing from Germany, 22 October 1860, 'I heard in Papa's letter that they had great fun with the blacks and about the black trying to kill the gun and the gun went off and shot two of them. I should like to have been with them'.

³⁶¹ Letter, Egbert and Horace to mother and sisters, 2 January 1860. Tom's younger brothers were at school in Germany at the time. Popular literature and newspapers featured articles on the comparison of indigenous peoples to apes. This was at a time when scientific studies about ape anatomy were commonly discussed in the popular press, for example, see, *Argus*, 2 October 1871, p. 5; *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 2 January 1858, p. 2, 'The 150 yards spin between Moran and the Aboriginal, ... Moran wore spiked shoes and the blackfellow only his toe nails'.

blacks he saw on a late excursion beyond our run were a fine lot of fellows and very kind to him and his party. We'll try to keep friends with them'.³⁶²

Nonetheless on a preliminary trip to view the property he seemed wary of danger. To his family he cast himself as a vigilant and lone warrior against the odds, '... look well to their revolvers and keep their powder dry, 2 things of special moment in an enemy's country'. He added, 'We all had revolvers whilst I in addition had Tom's gun slung loosely on my shoulder – a powder flask, shot belt and further we each carried a bowie knife'.³⁶³

Horatio's attitude to indigenous Australians was complex and probably altered over his lifetime. There have been two widely divergent views of Horatio Wills. Both views seek to caricature him in different lights for their own reasons. In *The Call*, Horatio is caricatured as racist, a buffoon and a religious zealot. In so doing, Tom Wills can be sympathetically drawn in counterpoint as defiant and heroic. But these are crude caricatures and skewed in a manner fitting the approach of the novel. When the evidence is examined the pictures of Horatio and Tom are quite different to that used in the novel. The mythology in this novel requires complex portrayals to be reduced to symbolic caricatures. This is what occurs in *The Call*. Likewise, Perrin portrays an impossibly benign and pastoral Horatio in his relations with aborigines without an appreciation of the more unsavoury acts and libidinal aspects of his personality. Neither portrayal does Horatio Wills justice.³⁶⁴

³⁶² 7 January 1861, letter from Horatio to his sons.

³⁶³ Letter from Horatio Wills to sons, 12 July 1860. This is a detailed letter about a preliminary trip to Queensland. It has excellent descriptions of the privations of such a trip. It has several descriptions of encounters with aborigines which are a mixture of benign comment with some hint of condescension but no outright violent thoughts of wanting to kill them: 'As I was descending a gap in the ridge I espied some distance below me a lot of blackfellows passing through the gap. There appears to be perpetual war between the whites and blacks in that district, so that as the blacks had not seen me I got back behind an old ironbark tree, as nimbly as you may suppose wither of you wants to do under the circumstances for I had no weapon with me, not even my Bowie knife ... How stupid of me to forget my revolver but the blacks had not seen me ... But I never went out alone without a revolver or gun after that, you may be sure'.

³⁶⁴ See Flanagan, *The Call*, and Perrin, *Triumph and Tragedy*. The terminology of the day for indigenous Australians varied. Most typically they were referred to as Natives, Blacks and Aborigines. Many other less savoury and racist terms were employed depending on the context. See also, Banfield, *Like the Ark*, pp. 26-33. This is one of several references that trace aspects of the early life of Horatio Wills. It is written in a romantic manner that underscores Horatio's courage and adventurous nature but at the same time glosses over or is unaware of some of the more unsavoury incidents in western Victoria. Also see a short pamphlet in the possession of Mr. Tom Wills, Springsure, which offers a brief biography on Horatio Wills, No author noted, *Life of a Pioneer. Adventures of H. S. Wills. First White Settler in Ararat District* (Rockhampton: City Printing Works, undated).

Surviving family letters do not mention Horatio's killing of local aborigines in Victoria but there is clear evidence that Horatio was implicated in the murder of local aborigines in the Mt William area. He also showed a capacity to understand colonial transgressions from an aboriginal perspective, and mused upon this with an honesty not borne from someone who can be easily dispatched as a single-minded racist murderer. His killing of local aborigines cannot be disputed but to portray this without examining the letters he wrote on the subject is to arrive at a narrow understanding of the man. In March 1842, Horatio wrote to Governor La Trobe complaining bitterly about the incursions by aborigines on to his land. His official correspondence to Governor Latrobe hinted at misdeeds he may have committed. He described a lonely remote district with little law where settlers, in the absence of protection '... are subjected to loss of life and property without redress unless we infringe the laws ... we shall be compelled in self defence to measures that may involve us in unpleasant consequences'. This was as close as Horatio got in surviving documents, to admitting his part in any deaths of aborigines. Horatio recited a list of aggression by the aborigines. But he was not without the capacity to empathise with the aboriginal perspective and their resentment towards the intrusion on their hunting grounds. His language by and large was diplomatic, conciliatory and not without an uncomfortable self-reflection on his own capacity for violence.³⁶⁵

The violent clashes between aborigines and the Wills family are best recorded in the journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector. They portray an ugly landscape; a fear that robbed humans of their understanding of one another; and sickening violent retributions and dismemberment of aboriginal society. Robinson's anger at the callousness of settlers who could boast about their assaults was given rhetorical voice in his diary.³⁶⁶ Robinson first mentioned Mt William, where Horatio

³⁶⁵ Letter, Horatio Wills to Governor Latrobe, March 1842. See discussion on another western district settler, Niel Black in Christie, *Aborigines*, p. 40. Christie notes that even the most open minded of settlers, in the context of the fear and predation of the time, could and would kill aborigines to survive. For a more moderate counterpoint to Christie, see B. Blaskett, 'The Level of Violence: Europeans and Aborigines in Port Phillip, 1835-1850', in S. Janson and S. Macintyre (eds), *Through White Eyes* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), pp. 77-100. See also, B. Blaskett, *The Aboriginal Response to White Settlement in the Port Phillip District, 1835-1850*. Master of Arts, Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, July 1979.

³⁶⁶ Several archival sources record the violence associated with the Wills family. George Augustus Robinson diaries, in Ian D. Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate*, vol. 1-IV (Melbourne: Heritage Matters, 1998). For more on Robinson, see Rae-Ellis, Vivienne, *Black Robinson: Protector of Aborigines* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press,

and his family lived, on 14 December 1840 when he reported the death of a white man. Local aborigines plundered sheep for food. Assaults and counter assaults mirrored one another in their atrocity. Immorality and profanity pervaded the landscape. The language used by settlers was coarse and an affront to Robinson's sensitivities. On Saturday, 10 July 1841 he referred to the Wills family. He rode to the neighbouring Captain Bunbury's station at Mt William. The first entry without warning is rude and pithy. With Horatio absent from his property Robinson, was informed of the attempted rape and abduction of Elizabeth by aborigines.³⁶⁷

Over the next few years he documented numerous cases of aboriginal deaths and implicated Horatio Wills as one of a number of settlers responsible for these deaths. For example, while at Lynot's station he was informed that 'Wills, Kirk and Rutter shot two women who had infants and that the latter were left without milk ... attack was made on the camp ... after Wills' man was killed'.³⁶⁸ Despite this, when Horatio wrote to Tom at Rugby in 1853 and made references to the local aborigines that had befriended his son, there was no suggestion of hostility or distaste in his writing. His attitude was liberal and open.

2.2 Murder and its Aftermath

On a hot afternoon, 17 October 1861, Horatio Wills and his party were resting after lunch having reached their destination of Cullin-la-Ringo in central Queensland.

1996). Newspapers refer to some of this violence. There were rumours of killings which were revealed as false; and there is a pervasive air of hysteria and reflexive violence. *Port Phillip Herald*, 3 April 1840, p. 2. *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 May 1841, p. 2, is an example of the anxiety whipped up in town dwellers and the antagonistic feelings towards Robinson and others of the Aboriginal Protectorate. *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 December 1840, p. 2, refers to tribes that 'barbarously murdered a hutkeeper on Mr Wills' station below Mt William'. Its tone is one of despair at the inevitability of escalating violence perpetrated by aborigines and settlers.

³⁶⁷ Rape is indicated by the phrase 'make connection'. The use of the term elsewhere confirms it as a euphemism for sexual assault. See also Michael Cannon, *Who Killed the Koories?* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1990), p. 64.

³⁶⁸ Robinson, vol. II, p. 336. Also see reference to Horatio Wills, Lindsey Arkley, *The Hated Protector. The Story of Charles Wightman Sievwright Protector of Aborigines, 1839-4* (Orbit Press: Mentone, 2000), pp. 77,78, 287, 288. Records of the Victorian Archaeological Survey, *Journals of G.A. Robinson, May to August 1841*, Edited with an introduction by Gary Presland, October 1980, no. 11, p. 123. See also, Ian D. Clark, *Scars in the Landscape: A Register of Massacre Sites in Western Victoria, 1803-1859* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1995). Several of these killings are reviewed, pp. 73, 77-8. Also see, Jan A. Critchett, 'A Distant Field of Murder', *Western District Frontiers 1834-1848* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1990), pp. 107, 126, 248-9 and J. F. Critchett, 'A "Distant Field of Murder": Portland Bay District Frontiers 1834-1848', PhD thesis, Arts Faculty, University of Melbourne, 1988, pp. 512-3.

Tom Wills was not present at the campsite. He and two other men had been sent to Albinia Downs to collect a dray loaded with provisions which had been left en route to Cullin-la-Ringo. He did not return to the camp for several days. When he returned, his father and eighteen settlers had been murdered.

Tom Wills wrote to H. C. A. Harrison immediately on his return to the campsite: 'I am in a great fix, no men. If we had used common precaution all would have been well, my poor Father and Baker were most brutally murdered'. It was a breathless incoherent letter scribbled by a man in shock. In the opening lines he implicated his father as not being sufficiently well prepared for a possible attack and expressed his desire for revenge.³⁶⁹

The details of what happened next were provided largely by newspaper reports including eyewitnesses who managed to escape detection and murder. Horatio was killed defending himself outside his tent. The others settlers were taken unaware and killed as they undertook domestic and work duties.³⁷⁰

The attack was reported in a disjointed, almost frenzied manner and was replicated in local and intercolonial papers playing out the same slice of time over several weeks.³⁷¹ Tom Wills returned to find the camp overturned, goods plundered and

³⁶⁹ Letter, Tom Wills to H. C. A. Harrison, 24 October 1861. In sources at the time no specific name is given to the group of aborigines involved in the killings. The area involved was that of the Kairi people.

³⁷⁰ The killings were vicious and bloody. The details of the attack can be found in Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, pp. 106-22 or Perrin *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 84-93. Ironically, as Tom Wills' father was being butchered, the All England Team, was given their farewell prior to leaving England. See, G. H. Wayte (ed.), *The 'Great Britain' Miscellany, A Log of the Voyage with H.H. Stephenson. A Weekly Journal* (Melbourne, 1862), pp. 91-3.

³⁷¹ Though an extraordinary story and one that received considerable press, it coincided with the reported death of Burke and Wills. As tragedy and surnames were superimposed, the deaths in Queensland were obscured from the national recollection in favour of the heroic exploits of explorers. For example, *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 November 1861 p. 2, the Burke and Wills story dominated the news. The killings at Cullin-la-Ringo were relegated to one paragraph. There have been numerous popular articles that cover aspects of the murders of Horatio Wills' party. For example, see for a brief discussion on Horatio Wills and the erection of a 'fort' for protection at Rainworth Station, a property near Cullin-la-Ringo, 'Kavanagh's Queensland, "Mass murder in the bush"', *Courier Mail*, 22 September 1994, pp. 32-3. The issue of ownership of land is beyond the scope of this chapter. But some context for Horatio's comments about settlers' attitudes towards aboriginal rights to land is covered in Reynolds, *Dispossession*, pp. 66-95. There have been many accounts of these killings over the years, Roll Boldrewood 'The Truth about Aboriginal Outrages' *Life*, 15 June 1903, pp. 543-4. Also see, 'Caravan Tales' by Our Journalist Photographer, *Queenslander*, 15 January 1931, p. 4. This briefly refers to the killings but its most interesting point is the manner in which it alludes to sentiment and mythology as more appealing to common understanding than historical analysis. Also Mancini and Hibbins, *Running with the Ball*, pp. 140-4, for Harrison's recollection of the Cullin-la-Ringo murders. The news of the

strewn randomly. His father had already been buried. Jesse Gregson, a neighbouring settler offered succour and comfort but more importantly he offered Tom Wills a place to stay and the offer of men to assist if he wished to remain on Cullin-la-Ringo. The thousands of sheep that the settlers had laboured to bring to Cullin-la-Ringo were spread throughout the bush.³⁷²

Tom Wills later wrote of the strange dance between strangers white and black that took place in the days leading to the murders:

A few of the natives then came up to the camp to look at the white “maries” (women) as they call them. One of the black women wanted to exchange her piccaninnie for the overseer’s wife’s baby; but of course the white woman did not see the point at all.³⁷³

The murders were relayed throughout the colonies:

The whole place was a total wreck. The only things left at the camp were the sugar, tea, tobacco, flour, and some pieces of iron and zinc. The boxes and cases were all broken open, and everything was taken away-amongst which were blankets, a quantity of hooks, crockery, tools, axes, adzes, knives, and some white-handled daggers, regatta shirts, trousers, clothing of every description, and other articles ... Some of the women were found with their sewing in their hands. The cook was close by his fire – the children were by their mothers. Immediately outside the camp, one of the bullock-drivers who had been engaged drawing in logs for the sheep-yard, was found dead by his bullocks, with his whip in his hand. The team was still yoked, and three of the bullocks strangled. Another man who was assisting him was also found dead ... Baker and son and third man evidently made a struggle for their lives. They were putting up a tent at the time the attack was made, and they used the tent-poles in defending themselves. Their bodies were very much mutilated, one of the men having his leg nearly cut off with a blow from a sharp instrument.³⁷⁴

murders was rapidly passed on to England, *The News Letter of Australasia; or Narrative of Events; A Letter to send to Friends*, December 1861, p. 4. ‘... Mr. Wills, one of the unfortunate victims, is an old and much-respected Victorian colonist’.

³⁷² Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, pp. 109-18 quotes from ‘Wallaroo’, *The Try Execelsior News*, vol. 3, no. 10, The Try Boys Society, June 1896 [pages unknown].

³⁷³ *Queensland Times*, 28 January 1862, p. 3.

³⁷⁴ *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 9 November 1861, p. 2. Also see *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 30 November 1861, p. 2. This second reference is to P. F. McDonald’s description. He arrived at Cullin-la-Ringo on November 4. ‘The ground was strewn with broken boomerangs, nulla nullas and spears and here too the blood stained grass in several places indicated many sickening marks of savage atrocity. The bodies had been already buried closeby, and a good deal of property lay scattered around but otherwise the place seemed quite deserted, I have been informed by the survivors of Mr Wills’ party that although the men never felt the necessity of carrying firearms for their protection, though requested by Mr Wills to do so ...’. As one might expect the topic found its way into the private letters written at the time, for example

The colony speculated on the causes and events before the murders. The theories for the attack were several and have been recycled with slight variations over the years.³⁷⁵ After the murders Wills stayed at Jesse Gregsons at Albinia Downs. From there he wrote to the Colonial Secretary in Brisbane for native police protection. It was a breathless request for Native Police to ‘...be quartered there as otherwise it would be impossible after the above events to get men to stop unless so protected. The widow and orphans of the late H. S. Wills join me in my prayer’.³⁷⁶

There were various explanations forwarded to account for the murders. Aside from his fear and desire for revenge, Tom Wills, at the time did not articulate his reasons for the attack. However reports years later suggested that his neighbour, Jesse Gregson, may have been responsible for the killings. Tom’s brother, Cedric Wills, who lived on the Queensland property for many years after the departure of Tom Wills recorded what he believed to be the cause of the murder of his father and settlers:

Before the arrival of the Wills’s on Garden Creek, where the murder was committed the blacks were collecting on the Nogoa River at the foot of Separation Creek, with the object of attacking Mr Jesse Gregson, the first owner who stocked Rainworth and who with a detachment of native police had shot some blacks for the supposed stealing of sheep prior to the arrival of our party. My oldest brother Tom, who came out with the party but who happened to be away with two ... and the drivers at the time of the murder told me ‘If the truth is ever known, you will find that it was through Gregson shooting those blacks; that was the cause of the murder.’³⁷⁷

see, Sally Graham (ed.), *A Man about Town. The Letters of James Graham, Victorian Entrepreneur, 1854–1864* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998), p. 259.

³⁷⁵ For example, *Queensland Times*, 28 January 1862, p. 3. These included a wild story of it being retribution for the kidnapping of an aboriginal boy, *Queensland Times*, 20 December 1861, p. 3, quoting the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Also see Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, p. 225, who puts forward a later discredited theory that the killings were in response to the kidnapping of two aboriginal children. In addition to kidnapping, there were accusations of interference with women, sheep, plundering goods, retribution for Native Police atrocities.

³⁷⁶ Letter from Tom Wills to the Colonial Secretary, 26 October, 1861. For a more general discussion on the history of the Native Police Force throughout Australia, see Henry Reynolds, *Black Pioneers* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 103-58. The galvanising effect and retribution by the police after the Wills’ party killings is highlighted on pp. 118-21. See also, Henry Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain* (Ringwood: Viking, 2001), pp. 99-105.

³⁷⁷ ‘Early Central Queensland History’, *Daily Record, Rockhampton*, 8 November 1912, p. 7. Also see, Jesse Gregson, ‘Memoirs and related papers’, Mitchell Library. These include his comments about his early dealings with the aborigines; Native Police force; he mentions Tom Wills several times as a noted cricketer and that Tom was left to look after the stock after the murders. The fifth part has a commentary by James Nisbet which is scathing of Cedric’s version of events.

Cedric recorded that an aboriginal boy confirmed this story. Cedric believed that the attack on Cullin-la-Ringo was an act of revenge for Gregson's action and he speculated that the aborigines mistook Horatio for Gregson:

It makes my blood boil when I start on this subject that Gregson just for the sake of a few sheep committed the act which was the cause of the murder of my father and all his party men, women, and children. My father had a presentiment of something having happened or being about to happen. In his last letter to my mother he asked if anything had happened at home as 'his lady in white had appeared to him,' twice previously. This 'lady in white' had appeared to him just before something serious had happened.³⁷⁸

The remote location of the attack first paralysed, then distorted the way information was received by the outside world. After the news first broke, there followed lulls of various lengths and an urgent desire for confirmation. Private letters and telegrams related the message to an incredulous outside world. A burst of telegrams, part by part, relayed the murders.

There was initial uncertainty as to whether Tom Wills survived the attack.³⁷⁹ Messages were confused and communication infrequent. One telegram read:

The telegram 1 November 1861 for Mr Menzies of the Menzies Hotel. 'Horatio Wills Momas + eight others murdered by blacks at Rockhampton. Send word to friends immediately steamer for Rockhampton next week.'

³⁷⁸ The Lady in White is mentioned in several accounts of the Wills' killing in Queensland. J. T. S. Bird, *The Early History of Rockhampton* (Rockhampton: *The Morning Bulletin*, 1904). Written from a very pro-settler perspective this reference contrasts with the later reference that implicated Gregson in the killings: 'Thanks to the kindness of Mr Gregson and his shearers, all that was possible had been done, and Mr T. W. Wills had moved with his flocks to Norwood, a portion of Rainworth run, where the sheep were shorn, and the party remained there till Cullin-la-ringo was ready for occupation again'.

³⁷⁹ Details were sketchy and sometime incorrect. See *Geelong Chronicle*, 2 November 1861, p. 2, they reported the incorrect number of deaths. The family letters reveal that Elizabeth was reticent to accept the news without confirmation. A similar reported death of another man, later proved to be wrong in the *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 November 1860, p. 3. *Brisbane Courier*, 5 November 1860, p. 2, 'The untimely fate of this gentleman will be widely regretted, more especially in Victoria, in the parliament of which colony he once held a seat, as a member for South Grant ... arrived in this colony in company with his son, Mr. T. W. Wills (the former captain of the Victorian eleven of cricketers) ... Mr. Wills junior, was absent from the station at the time, on his way to the Albinia Downs for loading, and Mr. T. H. Hood, of Brisbane, who has a station in the last mentioned locality, states, we believe, that there can be no doubt as to his perfect safety'. *Queensland Guardian*, 16 November 1861, p. 2, 'The reply was sent of yesterday morning and the confirmed intelligence of the safety of her son must have proved some relief to the distressed mind of Mrs Wills ...'.

WH Aldis.

N. B. Word “Momas” may be “Thomas”.

There was a flurry of newspaper stories. Cloned stories emerged through the Rockhampton, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Geelong press. A single Wills letter might be replayed months after writing. William Roope was urgently summoned to the station. All was chaos and the truth uncertain. A party set out to take revenge upon the aborigines.³⁸⁰ There were many references to the retribution though the precise details were mired in deception and hysteria.³⁸¹ Little is known of Tom Wills’ views about the local aborigines before his father was murdered. But his reaction to the murders was captured through private correspondence and in a public grief. His father’s death was a public fulcrum for debate on broader issues of land, squatters and aboriginal dispossession.³⁸²

Personal depictions of Horatio at this time were almost universally positive. His attitude towards the local aborigines was regarded as being too naïve in its trust. The main accusation against him was of a lack of vigilance that failed to prevent the

³⁸⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 11 November 1861, p. 2, ‘According to Kenny’s statement, the blacks were allowed to come too near the station’. Meetings were held demanding action. A letter of sympathy was to be sent to Mrs Wills. There was an air of vigilante hysteria. There is no remaining evidence that implicates Wills as part of this initial retribution party. There have been occasional claims that Tom Wills was involved in the killing of aborigines in retribution for his father’s death. For example, ‘Horatio Spencer Wills’ by D.R. (undated), delivered to the Kew Historical Society. Also see, McPherson, ‘Marngrook’. McPherson makes several unsubstantiated assertions about Tom Wills being part of the retribution party that killed aborigines. A more thorough review of all the available correspondence does not support the assertion made by McPherson. In none of the surviving archival papers is it stated that Tom Wills took part in this retribution.

³⁸¹ *Leader*, 30 November 1861, p. 8. A vengeful letter from George Crawford, Comet River, copied from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, detailing the attack. *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 November 1861, p. 2, ‘Quite a gloom was cast over the town yesterday by the announcement of the murder by blacks in Queensland, of Horace Spencer Wills, Esq. ...’ The *Geelong Advertiser*, copied many entries from the Queensland papers in the following months. The official response from England also suggested concern about excessive retribution. See letter, Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor Bowen, 8 March 1862.

³⁸² For example see *Queensland Times*, 5 November 1861, p. 3. Also *Queensland Times*, 15 November 1861, p. 3, ‘In all our dealing with the aboriginals of Australia they have been treated as if they possessed no rights; their lands have been taken from them, and they have been driven from one place to another, and hunted about much in the same style as the kangaroo ...’ *Argus*, 13 November 1861, p. 5, ‘Instructions have been issued for the despatch of a large force of native police to the scene of the outrage ... This horrible butchery has had no parallel since the awful massacre at Hornet bank, some years ago, which will long live in the recollection of the settlers in that district. In this case we shall probably never learn the origin of the attack, the merciless savages having performed their barbarous work so thoroughly that no survivor is left to tell the bloody tale’. Also *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 23 November 1861, p. 3; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 November 1861, p. 3 and *Geelong Chronicle*, 20 November 1861, p. 2.

murders.³⁸³ Tom immediately defended his father's memory and honour. With characteristic flair he shot off a string of letters. The letters were dramatic. For once such drama was well placed. Wills' voice was a lone voice for Cullin-la-Ringo and his father. It was a voice of explanation and of anger. He sprang from his corner in pugilistic pose. He thanked those who proffered help and uncompromisingly denigrated those who did not. He took on his father's mantle and set about defending Horatio's honour with verbal flourish. Privately, however, Tom Wills lamented that he had warned his father before the attack to be more careful. In public his stance was mainly to defend his father:

In the first place, without entering into details, the BLACKS *were not encouraged about our place*, and in fact had only been up *once* prior to the final attack, and if there had been a castle on the *Run*, they would have all been killed in like manner, for each man *had* his lot. All the guns, etc were *loaded* and at hand for immediate use. No man would carry them although I asked them to do so-saying that the blacks would not harm a stick.

In the second place, *Mr Cave and his police* were not at the rescue of our property two days after the affair happened – they did not even arrive on the *Run* till nine clear days after. Some people, Sir, have a convenient mode of perverting the truth:- I owe the recovery of my property to seven of Mr Gregson's *shearers*, three of whom were on the *Run* the next day collecting the stock. Give honour, Sir, unto whom honour is due:- their names are as follows James Leather, Peter Benedict, Duncan McLean, William Baxter, Joseph Clarke, George Ghan, and Thomas Hughes. They willingly left off work and would not leave me until I was comfortably settled here at Norwood. Mr

³⁸³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 November 1861, p. 2. There was a broad sweep of explicit and implied criticism of Horatio for not being vigilant and more prepared to use firearms. 'On new runs the blacks are invariably hostile and Mr. Wills fell a victim to placing a mistaken confidence in their apparently friendly disposition'. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 November 1861, p. 3. 'The melancholy tidings of Mr Wills' decease will, we have no doubt produce a painful sensation in the colony of Victoria, where he was held in great estimation ... a man of integrity and of an amiable disposition ... we are also informed that Mr Wills was repeatedly remonstrated with for permitting the natives to come on the station without let or hindrance; but he appeared to have great confidence in their friendly intentions. We do hope that all settlers who may be similarly situated will take warning'. Also *Queensland Guardian*, 9 November 1861, p. 3; *Brisbane Courier*, 9 November 1861, p. 2; *Queensland Times*, 20 December 1861, p. 3; *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 9 November 1861, p. 2. One official letter suggested that Horatio, at least to the administrative eye was regarded as being too lax in keeping the aborigines at bay, 23 October 1861, Letter from John Jardine to the commander of the Native Police detachment. 'I do trust it will prove a warning to the settlers generally as against allowing the Blacks up to the stations and admitting them to too much familiarity'.

Gregson was also indefatigable in his exertions and rendered me, and still continues to render me, all the assistance in his power.

I hear also, Sir, that some *old woman* has been laying down the *law* through your medium as to what we *ought* to have etc. How easy it is, Sir, to put things on paper. We ought to have huts up etc. How much more likely a small party is to be murdered than a large? – and how are these huts to grow without men? I never knew them to fall off trees yet. *Old men*, Sir, must not teach their grandmothers etc.

I hear also, Sir, with regret, that some persons calling themselves gentlemen have already been speculating as to the amount the *Run is to be had for*. Such people must rejoice, then at such an opportunity being given them; but, Sir, in this case, they will not have the pleasure of even seeing the Run, if I can help it. The young bird is not deficient of some of his lamented father's pluck, as they may find, some of these odd days.³⁸⁴

Wills countered what he regarded as mischievous statements about his father's lack of preparedness for conflict.³⁸⁵ He dismissed the accusations that the aborigines were encouraged about the station. He claimed they were told that they could hunt if they did not interfere with the sheep; and that firearms were at the ready in his father's tent and not packed away as had been suggested. However, one of the shepherds who survived, described the attack and the absence of supply of firearms to the men.³⁸⁶

Despite Tom Wills' defence of his father, he implicated his father's dismissive perhaps cocky, disregard for the situation. When Tom Wills left the camp prior to the attack, he wrote, 'I gave my father my revolver ready loaded saying to him, "You may have cause to use it: I can take my gun."' He then said "It is only your boyish fears; there

³⁸⁴ Letter, Tom Wills, 21 November 1861 and quoted in *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 7 December 1861, p. 2. Emphasis in the original.

³⁸⁵ See *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 23 November 1861, p. 2, '... have received a letter from Mr Thos. W Wills, in which he requests them to contradict one or two misstatements which have gone the round of the newspapers. It has been stated that the Blacks were encouraged about the station. Quite the reverse. They were told they would not be prevented from hunting if they did not meddle with the sheep. It has also been asserted in the Brisbane papers, that the firearms were all packed up in a case, - as from the apparent friendliness of the natives, they were through quite unnecessary. But this is also distinctly contradicted by Mr Wills. He says that the arms were all loaded and placed in his father's tent, ready for immediate use ...' Also *Queensland Guardian*, 11 December 1861, p. 3.

³⁸⁶ Statement, 18 October 1861, by Edward Kenny, a shepherd who survived the attack. He noted that the Blacks came up to the station two or three times without incident. 'Mr Wills used to carry a revolver but although he had plenty of firearms none were served out to any of the men ... Mr Thomas Wills and two more men left the station last Sunday morning with the dray on their way to Albinia Downs for loading'.

is no danger”³⁸⁷. This nonchalant misjudgement by Horatio was recalled in conversation with Tom Wills many years later:

The old gentleman was a shrewd man of business and looked well after Tommy ... Tom Wills has frequently told me that he never trusted the natives, but always carried two six-shooters and often warned ‘the governor’ to do the same, but the old man prided himself on being able to manage the blacks from his experience of them gained in Victoria, and said they would never harm him.³⁸⁸

Publicly Wills continued to dress down his father’s critics. His letter on 7 December 1861 contained all the hallmarks of Wills the letter writer. It was written with an exuberant defiance, replete with eye-catching capitals and exclamation marks.³⁸⁹ The family was proud of Tom’s anger and they expressed a desire for vengeance. His sister, Emily, stoked this aggressiveness and in doing so became the flag bearer for Horatio. The family letters reveal a uniform view of their father as a victim of cowardly, unwarranted aggression and saw Horatio’s only fault as being his open and kindly nature towards the local aborigines. Cedric, with the trust of an unquestioning brother, made a remark telling in its naivete and touching in its adoration of Tom. Meant to be comforting, its interpretation could easily have compounded any guilt Tom may have experienced in being absent while his father was murdered: ‘But I am almost certain that if you had been there it would not have happened, poor Papa trusted them too much’. His brother enquired of Tom in an excited adolescent fashion, whether he rode with the others as they slayed the blacks. Emily wrote with relish to her brothers in Germany, that 300 blacks including women had been slain.³⁹⁰

The recollection of Horatio’s death was revived in the family and the Geelong region whenever further deaths or attacks occurred in Queensland.³⁹¹ Drawings in newspapers with eye-catching phrases, depicted the murder of Europeans by aborigines

³⁸⁷ Letter Tom Wills, Rainworth, 2 December 1861, quoted in *Argus*, 8 January 1862, p. 5. In this extract he confirmed again that Horatio had all the guns loaded.

³⁸⁸ *Sydney Mail*, 15 September 1883, p. 508.

³⁸⁹ *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 7 December 1861, p. 2.

³⁹⁰ See Cedric’s letter to Tom, 17 February 1862. See Emily’s letter 21 November 1861 to her brothers in Germany. She viciously says they were hunted like ‘wild dogs’.

³⁹¹ *Geelong Advertiser*, 30 July 1863, p. 3, ‘I fear that the Northern Queensland blacks have to answer for another murder that will cause a painful sensation amongst the people of Geelong, who have such a vivid remembrance of the massacre of their old friend and townsman, Mr HS Wills ...’

in the bush. The metropolitan readers locked on to this with voyeurism and fear.³⁹² In her letters, Elizabeth imagined Horatio standing next to his tent at the moment of his death. These letters detail a mind set upon revenging her husband. There was no trace of uncertainty or remorse. Her warnings to Cedric and Horace not to trust the local blacks on the Queensland property did not attenuate over the years. To each warning she attached maternal admonishments to do as she said in the name of their father's memory. She chided a pampered city press for their moral outrage over the retribution killings of aborigines.³⁹³ Emily commented upon what she saw has Horatio's benign attitude towards the aborigines compared with Tom's more wary vigilant attitude:

Before Tom left the station he loaded all the guns and gave his revolver to Pa as Pa's was damaged. He offered firearms to the men but they would not take them because the natives were so friendly. Tom says that he will shoot every native that ever shows face on Cullinlaringo and he hopes his brothers will do the same as the blood of their father calls for vengeance from the rest of Cullinlaringo ...³⁹⁴

Tom Wills' letters to government officials were angry, vengeful and sought retribution. He was frightened and desired refuge. He requested that a detachment of the Native Police be stationed on his run for protection.³⁹⁵ Describing the local aborigines

³⁹² *Illustrated Sydney News*, March 1865, pp. 1, 3. Picture of blacks attacking an outstation as the frontispiece. *Illustrated Sydney News*, March 1866, p. 4, portrayal of attacks of vengeance by settlers. *Illustrated Sydney News*, August 1866, p. 30, the loneliness of the shepherd's hut is portrayed. *Illustrated Sydney News*, 29 September 1869, p. 263, 269. Pictures of blacks about to kill a shepherd. A typical portrayal for southern readers of blacks attacking an outstation. 'Beseiged by Blacks', *Australasian Sketcher*, 21 March 1874, pp.215, 217, an excellent text and picture of perception of being attacked by blacks. 'Murders by Blacks', *Australasian Sketcher*, 16 February 1878, p. 190. This was a typical description of murders by blacks in Queensland. For further discussion see, Janeen Webb and Andrew Enstice, *Aliens and Savages* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1998), pp. 53-6.

³⁹³ Letter Elizabeth to Cedric, 9 November 1863 '... you will be careful about those horrible blacks – you can't be too watchful'. Letter, Elizabeth to Horace, 4 January 1871, 'I regret to see by that Cedric, as well as yourself, are allowing those murderous wretches to collect in large numbers ... my mind can never rest while any remain near the place'. Elizabeth was critical of the press' sympathy towards the aborigines.

³⁹⁴ This letter is consistent with Tom's communications to the press. Letter, Emily to brothers, 21 November 1861.

³⁹⁵ Letter, Herbert to Tom Wills, Rainworth, Albinia Downs, receiving sympathies and assurances of further Native Police support, 12 November 1861. See also letter, from Herbert to Rockhampton Mayor, 12 November 1861, 'The Govt feels deep sympathy for those who have suffered and who are endangered by the cold blooded and unprovoked hostility of the natives; and will use ever effort to protect life and property against their attacks'. Similar comments about Tom Wills' desire for more police also appear in newspapers, *Queensland Guardian*, 13 November 1861, p. 2. Tom Wills writes to the Attorney General, 16 September 1862, to become a commissioner of the peace protesting that he has not been made one while less qualified settlers have been. He follows this up on 30 October 1862. His manner of writing as always, if one of a sense of entitled umbrage.

as wretches, he accused the local European settlers of conspiring to comfort his father's killers:

I know for a fact that several of the late murderers of my father and party are at this moment in at Mr Dutton's station ... If murderers are thus to be protected I cannot see how a man is to be sure of his life for a minute in a country like – for these men come in for protection and then in a little while sally out and commit some foul deed and then return to where they are safe.³⁹⁶

Several settlers, but most notably Dutton, were the object of Wills' anger. Dutton lived on Albinia Downs, a neighbouring station. While not condoning the murder of Horatio Wills he was an advocate for aboriginal rights. He was critical of the Queensland Native Police whose violence he claimed precipitated aboriginal retribution. Dutton claimed to have warned Horatio about the need for guns but that Horatio dismissed him. Dutton did not single out Tom Wills or indeed his father for criticism beyond the latter's alleged carelessness. Horatio's death became a new focus for Dutton's views on injustice to aborigines. Dutton's views found voice in numerous letters to the Queensland press.³⁹⁷ The views of Dutton and the small number of settlers who publicly sympathised with the injustice meted out to local aborigines only served to nettle Wills. Their public letters were a defiant counterpoint to Wills' own letters damning those who wished to protect the aborigines. Wills' emotional state in the aftermath was reflected in his comments about his fear and isolation. Frightened and angry, he expressed the injustice of his situation and lashed out at those he perceived as his enemies.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ Letter, Tom Wills to Honourable Colonial Secretary, 6 January 1862. Emphasis in the original.

³⁹⁷ Examples of letters written by Dutton, *Queensland Guardian*, 12 February 1862, p. 2; *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 15 February 1862, p. 3; *North Australian Ipswich*, 13 December 1861, p. 3; *North Australian Ipswich*, 21 January 1862, p. 3; *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 10 January 1863, p. 2; *Queensland Guardian*, 12 February 1862, p. 2. See, Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in our Hearts* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), pp. 91-137, for a broader discussion on frontier settlers and their conflicting views on local aborigines and the Native Police force. The Wills massacre is briefly mentioned and Dutton's role in voicing his outrage is highlighted. There were also other voices of support for the aborigines, see, *Queensland Times*, 12 November 1861, p. 3.

³⁹⁸ Letter, Manning to Tom Wills, Norwood, 20 January 1862. Manning responded to Wills' accusation that some of the aborigines implicated in his father's death were on Dutton's property, '... Mr Dutton, who persists in affording his protection contrary to the repeated remonstrances of the NP officers and others who are equally cognizant of the fact. I am to inform you, in reply, that the present is not the first occasion on which Mr Dutton's conduct in this respect has been brought under notice ... trusting solely to the vigilance and determination of the NP to drive back as far as possible the treacherous and vengeful savage'. See Alexander Fyffe who also criticises Dutton, *Queensland Guardian*, 17 March 1863, p. 2.

The newspapers varied in how sympathetic they were to Dutton's view. In general the local papers were hostile to men like Dutton:

and were there fewer men in the colony like Mr D_____n, and some others who protected the wretches there would be little to fear for the recovery of the vast inland territory ... Six of the men who murdered Wills and party were readily recognised by the troopers as belonging to Dutton's station and ten of them from Cameron's another squatter from the Comet Waters, who encouraged them about his place and who is still wantonly crying out for protection to them.³⁹⁹

Wills in his state of acute grief expressed a desire to shoot every black that he came across. There is no evidence that he personally took part in the retribution, though he was encouraged to do so by his family.⁴⁰⁰ Wills reacted with a violent hatred towards his father's killers. He never articulated a conciliatory attitude and was not sympathetic to the plight of the local aborigines near Cullin-la-Ringo Station. The evidence from his private and public comments confirmed his distrust and animosity. Several months later he wrote to his family about a group of settlers who unexpectedly came across a group of aborigines. Wills recorded that the aborigines escaped, implying that they may have been attacked by the settlers if they had not done so, and that the aborigines in their haste were forced to leave behind their fishing nets. Tom Wills' anger suggests a mind bent upon property destruction to inflict suffering for its own sake:

... they came on a mob of black, but they all got away in a crack leaving their fishing nets behind and they did not destroy them – great fools I told them for not doing so.⁴⁰¹

Two years later he sarcastically branded the local aborigines as 'inoffensive blacks' in a bitter personal attack on those who argued for the rights of the local black population.⁴⁰² Five years after his father's murder and only one month after accepting to coach the western district aboriginal team in Victoria, he wrote to Horace at Cullin-la-Ringo. He warned his brother about allowing aborigines close to the Station citing a near escape of other settlers. He expressed no sympathy for those settlers who '... had a

³⁹⁹ *Queensland Guardian*, 17 March 1863, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁰ Letter, Tom Wills to H. C. A. Harrison, 24 October 1861 and Letter, Emily to brothers, 21 November 1861. Emily's letter 21 November 1861 to her brothers in Germany. Cedric's letter to Tom, 17 February 1862.

⁴⁰¹ Letter, Tom Wills to Elizabeth Wills, 17 June 1862.

⁴⁰² *Brisbane Courier*, 9 November 1863, p. 2.

narrow squeak for their lives it would have served them right for allowing the blacks to come in after all the warnings they have had'.⁴⁰³

Wills related a life of fear, loneliness and hypervigilance after the murders. He was ever ready to write to the Queensland press when settlers were killed and, defensively, justified the correctness of his views. Life was dangerous and the threats real. The occasional killings sensitised and stripped back whatever protective coating he had grown since his father's death. His fears of being killed were outlined in a manner that was neither histrionic nor exaggerated.

Wills reported at least three murders of settlers to the newspapers. The first was reported in the *Geelong Advertiser*. He emphasised the disproportionate numbers attacking a single man, that cunning guided the murderers and that their aim was 'blood':

... was murdered on the 13th September (Sunday last) at one of his out stations on Minerva Creek, where he had gone to assist lambing down a flock ... He on Sunday morning went out as usual, and left the shepherd; it is supposed, upon his return to the camp, he had gone down on a small flat to untether a horse which he was in the habit of keeping on a short tether at nights, for it is evident that at the tree where the horse had been fastened he had been first attacked, as there were several spears about the grass, and one had broken off in the tree; the horse, however, had broken the rope and made off; Mr Riddell's sheath knife was found near the tree; he had then made a run towards another horse about 200 yards off, but had been knocked down about 8 yards from him and then speared through the neck just above the collar bone. From indications seen it was evident he had been watched for some days, and his usual habits had been well watched long before the attack had been made. I don't think there were more than 12 men and they had evidently been detached from a body of blacks for the express purpose of killing him. It seems plunder was not their aim, but blood – as they only took some sugar and killed and took away two sheep after having skinned them.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ Letter, Tom to Horace, 11 September 1866. An inkling into what friends of the Wills thought after the killings is in another letter from George Glencross-Smith, 30 March 1863, 'I am sorry to see that the blacks have near your station again and I hope that you keep a good guard against them as they are very sly and cunning ...'. Wills' attitude to the local aborigines has been portrayed in a romanticised way. Wills' boyhood affinity with western district aborigines is at times superimposed on to his relationship with Queensland aboriginal tribes, with little evidence to support this view. For example, see Mallet's *Black Lords of Summer*, p. 16 of his relations with local aborigines after his father's death – 'He had always got on extremely well with Aboriginal people. That he continued those good relations after the massacre provides us with an insight into his character'.

⁴⁰⁴ *Geelong Advertiser*, 29 October 1863, p. 3.

One month later he wrote that another man was killed while shearing. Firearms and ammunition and other items were plundered.⁴⁰⁵ Soon after, Wills reported the constant fear, despair and loneliness he felt:

I have now to watch sheep at night, – having only three hours sleep – and attend from daylight till dark in the shed. If I were to leave at present the station would simply go to “blazes”; in fact, after the murder, shepherds cannot be got, and most likely with all other troubles I shall have to take a flock out myself.⁴⁰⁶

The third murder was that of a shepherd on Cullin-la-Ringo.⁴⁰⁷ His composure began to fray and he voiced his fear of dying in Queensland.⁴⁰⁸

3 The Aboriginal Cricket Team

This will be the most novel event that has ever been offered to the lovers of cricket. A white NSW native having 10 Victorian blackfellows in his company, will show civilised Britons how cricket ought to be played.⁴⁰⁹

If their performances are to be on a par with those we see shown by one-armed and one-legged cricket elevens ... we can only say that it is a great pity the national game should be prostituted to sensational purposes.⁴¹⁰

Tom Wills captained and coached a western district aboriginal cricket team in 1866-7. This team later toured England in 1868. Wills did not captain the team in England, his position having been usurped by the English professional Charles Lawrence. The colonial leg of the tour, which started in mid-1866 continued until early

⁴⁰⁵ *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 November 1863, p. 3.

⁴⁰⁶ *Geelong Advertiser*, 19 October 1863, p. 2; *Argus*, 7 November 1863, p. 7.

The topic of the harsh life of the shepherd in the bush was a regular item in the metropolitan press. For example, see, *Yeoman*, 27 September 1862, p. 10.

⁴⁰⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 October 1863, p. 4. *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 3 October 1863, p. 2, ‘A man who arrived in Rockhampton last evening reports that a shepherd has been murdered by the blacks on Cullin-la-Ringo Station on the Comet-and this news is corroborated by a letter handed to us from Mr T. W. Wills, son of the late Mr Wills, who, it will be remembered, was killed with eighteen other white people by the natives on the same station, about two years ago’. Also see letter from Elizabeth to Cedric, 9 November 1863. At the top of the letter is an extract from a newspaper about the shepherd who was recently murdered by aborigines on Cullin-la-Ringo Station.

⁴⁰⁸ Letter, Tom Wills to Elizabeth Wills, 8 June 1862.

⁴⁰⁹ *Geelong Advertiser*, 19 November 1866, p. 2.

1867, and ended in a financial disaster when the troupe disbanded. Wills played with the troupe from November 1866 until early 1867. The team was resurrected by Charles Lawrence who spirited the team away to England under a new management.

A comprehensive study of these tours has been undertaken by Mulvaney and Harcourt.⁴¹¹ Although there have been several reviews of the 1868 aboriginal tour of England and its unsuccessful precursor, this part of the thesis will examine the tour primarily as it related to Tom Wills.⁴¹² The following areas are covered: the 1866 Boxing Day match at the MCG, the first major game played by the aboriginal team; Tom Wills' motivation for coaching the team; Wills' attitude to the aboriginal team; the common man's perception of Tom Wills and the team; the arrest and gaoling of Tom Wills in Sydney in 1867; Tom Wills' relationship with Charles Lawrence; the perceived influence of Wills and Lawrence on aboriginal behaviour and style of play; and the social issues played out in the press and the symbolic role of Wills. Although the issue of alcohol consumption was important during the tour, this discussion can be found in the chapter on alcohol and colonial sport.

3.1 Events Prior to the 1866 Boxing Day Match

The intention to conduct a cricket match between the MCC and aboriginal team was first recorded on 8 May 1866.⁴¹³ On 7 August 1866 Roland Newbury, the MCC pavilion keeper and entrepreneur behind the scheme, was granted the ground for use on

⁴¹⁰ *Australasian*, 27 June 1868, p. 812.

⁴¹¹ Mulvaney and Harcourt, *Cricket Walkabout*. The second edition adds considerably more information concerning details of the tour.

⁴¹² More recent works have focussed on Wills' links to aboriginal Australia as a symbolic and real meeting point of separate cultures. A recent account while adding some new material is less rigorous in its research and conclusions, see, Mallet, *Black Lords of Summer*; Bernard Whimpress, *Passport to Nowhere* (Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 1999), pp. 76-110, provides analysis of specific aspects of the influence of Wills. There have been many articles and books that make reference to aspects of the tour scattered throughout the last 140 years. For example, Bret Harris, *The Proud Champions* (Crows Nest: Little Hills Press, 1989), pp. 11-6; Ian Howie-Willis, 'Cricket Team', *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*, General Editor, David Horton (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994) pp. 239-40. Neil Cadigan, 'Black Diamonds', in (no editor is named) *Blood, Sweat & Tears: Australians and Sport* (Melbourne: Lothian Publishing, 1989), pp. 133-5. Also see summary in Cashman *et al.*, *Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket*, p. 5.

⁴¹³ MCC minute book, 8 May 1866. 'It was agreed to allow R. Newbury the use of the ground for two days during the month for purpose of a match with the native black eleven'. Subsequent minutes reveal that the match was likely to be deferred until next season but on further application the ground was offered for 1866.

8 and 10 November.⁴¹⁴ On 15 November the match was rescheduled for 26-28 December providing the refreshment contract with the MCC was satisfactory.⁴¹⁵

The man behind this match was Roland Newbury, or ‘Roley’ as he was commonly called. He was a pavilion keeper and sometime cricket player with the Melbourne Cricket Club.⁴¹⁶ The archives and newspapers of the period do not suggest that Tom Wills or indeed the Melbourne Cricket Club had anything to do with the planning or inspiration behind the enterprise.⁴¹⁷ Unfortunately the background to Newbury’s thinking is not recorded in any of the archival documents of the MCC. Why this somewhat peripheral character would undertake this match is not clear but it seems that the motivation was a financial one. To appreciate this one has to understand the need of the professional cricketer to eke out a living. Despite Roley’s pivotal role in the aboriginal team’s fame he was virtually unheralded at the time. As the tour progressed he was discarded and his name is now an obscure footnote associated with the beginnings of the tour.⁴¹⁸

Tom Wills is not mentioned in the archives as someone who was instrumental in organising the tour. Presumably there was a private arrangement between Newbury and

⁴¹⁴ See MCC minutes, the changes were reported in the press, *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, 11 August 1866, p. 2, ‘... granted to Newberry, the keeper of the pavilion, ... use of the ground ... on 8th and 10th November for a match between the black native cricketers and an eleven of Melbourne. We understand that Mr T. W. Wills is likely to go to Hamilton to coach the black fellows, and from the skill already exhibited by them, there is reason to believe they will shew very good cricket on the MCC ground ...’

⁴¹⁵ MCC Letterbook, 15 November 1866. *Australasian*, 8 September 1866, p. 716, Longstop suggests that the reason for at least one of the delays is that ‘... the sable brethren cannot be spared at shearing time’.

⁴¹⁶ There were various and at times confusing permutations of the spelling and naming of Roland Newbury, but all referred to the same individual. The spelling used throughout this thesis is Newbury and Roley. His position within the club was unusual, in that although he was paid for his ground and pavilion work and probably some of his cricket, he was not cast in the same mould or quality as the other players who were professional cricketers with the club. The context and the manner in which he was treated by the club at times provoked others to come to his defence and suggest a meagre living eked out from whatever contingent cricketing enterprises came his way. It was likely that this is how he came upon the idea of the aboriginal cricket team. Wills’ brother Horace, years later, claimed that the idea of the aboriginal cricket team was Tom’s. The evidence indicates that it was Newbury’s idea. Horace also mistakenly thought the aborigines were all from Mt William.

⁴¹⁷ The following was typical both in content also in the condescending attitude towards Newbury’s status. *Australasian*, 29 December 1866, p. 1227, ‘The match originated through the MCC granting the use of their ground to Roland Newbury who has for many years been curator of the pavilion and the ground and whose uniform good conduct and attention to his duties entitled him to such a mark of approbation from the club’. Many popular accounts credit Wills with an instrumental role in recruitment and organisation of the first part of the tour. For example, see, Ross, Hutchinson and Associates (eds), *The Centenary Collection. Sporting Life. Sport in Old Australia* (Noble Park: The Five Mile Press, 2000), p. 74. The evidence is rather that others completed these tasks.

Wills that the latter coach and captain the team. Wills through dint of his presence at the MCC was well acquainted with Newbury. Wills was suitable: he had no ties, was unemployed and in need of money. This season was to be his first as a professional though he was never named as such during the tour. It seems that apart from providing the ground and ensuring that a lucrative refreshments contract was secure, the MCC was satisfied for the venture to be a private speculation. Whatever its broodings on the matter, the Club remained silent. One might have assumed that the MCC minutes would provide a detailed trajectory and discussion of the motives for the Boxing Day match. It does neither. It only clarifies the most basic of dates. There is no record of management issues, political machinations and the behind the scene controversies of the MCC selection policy. Comments are clipped and to the point. The crescendo of anticipation in the broader world is not reflected in the MCC minutes. Neither Newbury nor Wills were in the employ of or instructed by the MCC to undertake the venture. The venture was a commercial endeavour alone.⁴¹⁹

By early August, the Melbourne press announced the possibility of a match. It was Rowley's idea for the match to take place on 9 November, the Prince of Wales' birthday.⁴²⁰ Tom Wills was appointed the team's coach in August.⁴²¹ Hayman, one of the tour organisers later recalled the original contractual arrangements with Newbury.⁴²² Tom Wills travelled to Edenhope, western Victoria around 20 November.⁴²³

⁴¹⁸ There were occasional public comments in the press that applauded Newbury's enterprise at the time of the Boxing Day match but he was soon forgotten.

⁴¹⁹ For example, the MCC refused a request to invite the Governor implying that it was up to Newbury. See, 11 December 1866, MCC minutes, 'A request made by Rowland Newbury to the effect that the club would invite the Governor's attendance on the occasion of the match between the aborigines and the MCC was submitted and it was decided that it was not a matter in which the club could interfere'. The press saw the tour as a commercial enterprise, see, *Hamilton Spectator*, 15 August 1866, p. 2, 'Mr. Rowley, of the Cricket Club Pavilion, has undertaken the care of them, as a speculation'. Also, *Leader*, 11 August 11, 1866, p. 5, '... the speculation will be Mr Rowley's the obliging custodian of the Melbourne Club pavilion ...'

⁴²⁰ *Leader*, 11 August 1866, p. 5.

⁴²¹ *Australasian*, 18 August 1866, p. 620, letter from Hayman, '... shall be happy to cooperate with you in arranging for the black cricketers visit to Melbourne. We have a cricket ground fenced in at the township of Edenhope and will muster the blacks there and pay their expenses whilst at cricket and provide them with the necessary material for playing and also with decent clothing for their visit to Melbourne'. 'Mr Wills has consented to go up to Lake Wallace to prepare the blacks for their first appearance in Melbourne ... A month under Mr Wills's tuition with him as their captain should give them every chance of making a good show in the cricket field on the 8th and 10th November'.

⁴²² *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 4 May 1867, p. 4, letter indicates that all proceeds were to go to Newbury.

⁴²³ *Australasian*, 24 November 1866, p. 1068.

Soon after arriving in the western district, Wills wrote to Hammersley suggesting that there had been outside entrepreneurial interest in the black team. Meanwhile Wills and the team were assiduously practising for their Melbourne debut. In early December Wills wrote, ‘The blacks shape well. I give them six hours a day, good hard work ... This is a fact, not bad, eh? Mullagh is a fine bat. The blacks field splendidly and by the 26th they will be good average bats’.⁴²⁴ He was pugnacious but not histrionic or overreaching. Responding with a short jab, his bravado on the team’s behalf was a psychological weapon to invoke anticipatory fear in their opponents. Hammersley responded:

I have heard from Mr Wills, and he has a very good opinion of his ‘black sheep’, and thinks they will shape well on Boxing Day, and astonish the ‘natives’ a bit. It appears some ‘speculator’ is at work, trying to upset present arrangements and secure the blacks for his own particular ends.⁴²⁵

The press descriptions at times suggest a demeaning domestication of the black team. ‘Mr Wills, it is said, has them under perfect control, and talks to them in their own “lingo”’.⁴²⁶ From this point onwards Wills was forever linked with the team.

3.2 The Aboriginal Team plays the Melbourne Cricket Club

In fact, wherever the native cricketers have gone, they have been treated with kindness and courtesy, with the sole exception of the MCC.⁴²⁷

The Boxing Day match in 1866 between the aboriginal team and the MCC was the defining moment of the entire aboriginal cricket enterprise. No match during the tour or afterwards stirred as much public anticipation and curiosity.⁴²⁸ Nurtured by the

⁴²⁴ *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 December 1866, p. 2.

⁴²⁵ *Australasian*, 8 December 1866, p. 1132.

⁴²⁶ *Geelong Advertiser*, 11 December 1866, p. 2. The quote is replayed through the press, see, *Argus*, 6 December 1866, p. 5.

⁴²⁷ *Weekly Age*, 11 January 1867, p. 2.

⁴²⁸ *Geelong Register*, 24 December 1866, p. 3. ‘The black team of cricketers under Mr Wills’ captaincy made a show on the Melbourne cricket ground today, but only just enough to pique curiosity as to what they may do when called upon to wield the willow in earnest. They are a fine lot of fellows, and it would be a great take down for our British vanity if they should happen to beat us just for once’.

press there was an expectation of the exotic. Like a rare celestial event, nothing like it had been seen in the colony.

The Melbourne Cricket Club was a target for the common man. The MCC was the most powerful sporting club in the country. In many eyes, not least the MCCs, the club was a colonial version of an English sporting aristocracy. On Boxing Day 1866 their opponents were a largely dispossessed people. For most Melburnians this team of aborigines dwelt in their imaginings rather than as real people in their daily lives. When the teams walked out to play the sympathy and tenor of the crowd was with the aboriginal team.⁴²⁹

The game was won easily by the MCC. But there were whispers throughout the colony that spoke of an ungracious and mean spirited MCC. It became known that Wills had requested the MCC, in deference to the black team's anxiety in front of such a large crowd, to allow his team to take the field first. The MCC had refused. What seemed to the average man a most reasonable request became a crucible of discontent. The aloof MCCs refusal to oblige the black team galvanised popular opinion against the MCC and promoted sympathy towards the black team. Wills was defiant after losing to the MCC. He duly informed anyone listening of his disgust with the Club and its treachery. He was not alone in his criticism. Rumours filtered through the colony that the MCC ignored its own rules. Public losses were something the MCC had never taken to with grace. A cowardly MCC was accused of strengthening its ranks with cricketers who were not members of the Club.⁴³⁰

Each year around Christmas, NSW played Victoria. Normally this intercolonial cricket match between NSW and Victoria was the most anticipated match of the season.

⁴²⁹ This sympathy was common wherever the team went, for example, *Sydney Mail*, 26 January 1867, p. 3, 'The veteran Wills never captained an 11 who so thoroughly possessed the sympathies of the spectators and of these some ten or fifteen thousand paid to see the friendly struggle between black and white ... a dark skin suddenly became a passport to the good graces of Victorians'.

⁴³⁰ There were many newspaper references to an ungracious and miserly MCC. In the *Geelong Register*, 5 January 1867, p. 2, Wills expressed his anger at perceived MCC unfairness towards the team. Also *Australasian*, 29 December 1866, p. 1227, 'That they were a very superior lot was at once evident, and that the MCC committee had some dread of their powers was manifest by the strengthening their eleven considerably at the last moment, and even stretching the rules ...'. *Geelong Register*, 7 January 1867, p. 2, 'The treatment they received here is described as being in marked contrast with that experienced at the hands of the Melbourne Club'. *Leader*, 29 December 1866, p. 1 Sarcasm was rife, 'Of

Wills would have normally captained the Victorians but he was unavailable this year because of his captaincy of the aboriginal team. In 1866 the intercolonial match, which was played in Sydney, was a dull affair compared to the exotic aboriginal match in Melbourne. As it turned out the Victorian intercolonial team lost in Sydney. Not only did they lose but they were ugly and boorish. Rumours of players roaming drunk in the streets of Sydney were conveyed to Melbourne. The public wanted nothing to do with its Victorian cricketers. The only name on anyone's lips were Wills and his team. As instant celebrities their daily movements were charted.⁴³¹ The team was feted and invitations received to tour widely.⁴³²

Despite Wills' public criticism of the MCC there seems to have been no lingering anger or resentment towards him. In 1875, almost ten years after the Boxing Day match, the secretary of the MCC received a letter from Marylebone CC. The letter enquired what had become of Mullagh and Cuzens, the two best aboriginal players. In responding, the secretary recalled the role of Tom Wills as captain of the aboriginal team.⁴³³ There was no suggestion of anger towards Wills nor any disrespect towards the aboriginal players.

3.3 Motivation and Family Attitudes

It remains one of the mysteries of Tom Wills' life as to what were his private thoughts on coaching the aboriginal team. In 1866 when he decided to coach the team, his anger over his father's murder, though not in full flight, was still simmering towards the aborigines near Cullin-la-Ringo.⁴³⁴

There is no direct evidence that Wills neglected or was deliberately destructive towards the aboriginal team. The press portrayed him as protective of the team's

course, it was pure chivalry that induced the Melbourne CC to select the pick of the field to oppose the aboriginal champions ... ungenerous and un-English ...'.

⁴³¹ *Geelong Register*, 31 December 1866 p. 2. Such adoration in Geelong was typical.

⁴³² *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 30 March 1867, p. 2. A proposal that the team go to Brisbane.

Weekly Age, 1 February 1867, p. 2, local and regional teams probably vied to get the black team.

⁴³³ MCC minutes, Handfield to R. A. Fitzgerald, Marylebone Cricket Club, 15 June 1875.

⁴³⁴ Letter, Tom Wills to Horace, 11 September 1866. The question has been asked many times why, in the face of his father's murder, Wills coached an aboriginal team five years afterwards. In trying to understand Wills' motives for coaching the aboriginal team one should not make assumptions about his attitudes towards the western district aborigines based upon his statements towards Queensland aborigines after the death of his father.

interests and several times he voiced an opinion if he thought the team was poorly treated. He was also quick to defend the quality of the aboriginal players.⁴³⁵ Wills regarded Mullagh highly as a cricketer:

Mr Wills says that Johnny Mullagh is really a fine bat, as good as any Melbourne don, and that he cannot get him out. His score of 81 was grand.⁴³⁶

In personal or public letters Tom Wills rarely made direct reference to the aboriginal team. Beyond a paying job and an ill-fated attempt at entrepreneurship he never gave the impression through word or deed that he considered the broader social and political context of the tour. In 1870, he used the somewhat vulgar term ‘darkies’ when referring to Mullagh and Cuzens, his professional bowling colleagues at the MCC. He complained that Mullagh and Cuzens, due to ill health, were unable to help with the bowling:

I am awfully tired every day because the two darkies have been awfully bad nearly every day, so I have had to do all the work and the weather has been awful and it fearful today ...⁴³⁷

The attitude of the family to Tom’s coaching of the aboriginal cricketers is of interest in the light of Horatio’s murder. At least one private letter from outside the family expressed astonishment that Tom Wills coached the team, ‘...Tommy Wills whose father was killed by them captaining and coaching them!’⁴³⁸ This single line, in a private letter not subject to any censorship, captured an astonishment that was rarely found in public documents at the time. One might have expected a deluge of public

⁴³⁵ For example, *Sydney Sporting Life*, 13 April 1867, p. 3, ‘there was also a hundred yards flat race in which a member of the Aboriginal team was jostled in such a manner that Mr Wills declined to allow them to contest any further’. William Caffyn, in an offer viewed with repulsion by the press of the day, showed his disdain for the black cricketers by challenging to play the entire black team at single wicket cricket. Wills in response and in defence of his team, backed Mullagh alone for 20 pounds to defeat Caffyn and if Caffyn elected to take on Wills he’d back himself for 50 pounds. See, *Australasian*, 23 February 1867, p. 237.

⁴³⁶ *Australasian*, 8 December 1866, p. 1132.

⁴³⁷ Letter, Tom Wills to his mother, 2 February 1870. In 1870, Mullagh and Cuzens were employed as professionals by the MCC. The term ‘darkies’ was used by other commentators such as Hammersley. While not too much should be read into this single line, and it may have only reflected Wills’ pithy vocabulary, this term did not seem to be used in more sensitive discussions about aborigines. Wills, later in the letter, made a brief reference to Mullagh by name. Compare this with the private writings of Charles Lawrence, who was to coach the team, and who leaves a more thoughtful and considered view of his experiences with the aboriginal team.

commentary about the links with his father's death, but the papers of the day remained silent on the matter.

Given the family's hostility towards aborigines in the vicinity of Cullin-la-Ringo, it might be hypothesised that his family, particularly his mother, would express disappointment, dismay or hostility at Tom's coaching of the Victorian aboriginal team.⁴³⁹ The letters, in fact, are remarkable for their lack of hostility. His mother in December 1866 casually noted to Cedric, 'He (Tom) is away at present beyond Portland. He is training 11 blacks to be played in Melbourne on Boxing Day'.⁴⁴⁰ There was no disgust or animosity. His mother's comments are of particular note given her privations in western Victoria when she and her husband overlanded to the colony of Victoria. Living in a primitive state in the 1840s Elizabeth was exposed to an ugly frontier life and was said to have been threatened with rape by local aborigines.⁴⁴¹ Unlike the repeated venom she directed towards the Queensland aborigines, even many years after her husband's death, her tone with respect to the aboriginal cricket team was neutral and factual. Likewise Tom's brother, Horace, in passing noted, 'I heard the other day that Tom was going to England with the black cricketers, but I don't know if the report is true or not'.⁴⁴² Again there was no tone of hostility that Tom had wounded family sensibilities by taking up the position as aboriginal coach. Family letters expressed a very different, much harsher attitude towards the aborigines near Cullin-la-Ringo.

In January 1867, Tom and the team were in Geelong, and it was with characteristic disregard that Tom dropped in unannounced on his mother and sisters at Belle Vue with the twelve black cricketers for dinner. Elizabeth's disapproval was reserved not for the aborigines but for Tom's thoughtlessness in not informing her of the visit:

⁴³⁸ See Andrew Newell's letter, 24 December 1866, Royal Historical Society Victoria.

⁴³⁹ On numerous occasions Elizabeth Wills warned her sons not to trust aborigines while on the Queensland station. For example, 24 March 1872, Elizabeth to Cedric.

⁴⁴⁰ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 4 December 1866.

⁴⁴¹ See George Augustus Robinson diary, in Ian D. Clark (ed.), *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, Vol.II*. (Melbourne: Heritage Matters, 1998), p. 310.

⁴⁴² Letter, Horace to Cedric, 13 January 1867. Also see, Horace to Cedric, 22 January 1867, when he mentions in passing that the aboriginal team is playing in Geelong and letter from Horace to his mother and sister Emily, 9 February 1867, 'I see by the papers that the Black Cricketers are going to play in Sydney on the 21st of this month'.

You will see by the paper I send that we had the company of the 12 black cricketers to dinner on Sunday. Tom brought about 17 here without any notice so you may be sure we had a good long table besides 2 side ones – they are thinking of taking them to England and Tom will go with them.⁴⁴³

When Elizabeth stated that Tom would travel with them to England it was neither congratulatory nor critical. She mentioned the visit in the general run of conversation of domestic and social patter. The visit to Mrs Wills was also the subject of a local newspaper report which recorded no animosity or tension during the time on the Wills' property. There was a keen interest in the manner and deportment of the black team in what might be considered typically European social activities. Descriptions of them as neat, clean and taking pride in their appearance were well meaning and paternalistic. They dined in a manner which bore the imprint of fine cultivation and won the admiration of onlookers.⁴⁴⁴ Socially acceptable behaviours were denoted as to suggest the importance of subservience. To be described as quiet was a way of suggesting that the team commendably knew their place.

3.4 Matters of Style and Teaching

The influence that Tom Wills had on the style of play of the aboriginal eleven was commented upon. Style was of no small import in mid-nineteenth century cricket. The aperture to assess Wills' influence upon their cricketing styles is limited to brief newspaper assessments. These observations were often linked to assessments of innate aboriginal capacity for mimicry. Wills and later Charles Lawrence were generally admired for their influence as captains and coaches:

⁴⁴³ Letter, Elizabeth to Horace, 10 January 1867.

⁴⁴⁴ The *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 January 1867, p. 2. In a glowing if paternalistic account of the aborigines, 'Our aboriginal friends ... were the guests on Sunday of Mrs Wills at her home. A friend of the writer who was a guest amongst "this low type of humanity", tells us that in demeanour, nonchalance, and adaptability to novel circumstances, they showed out beyond many of their white brethren'. *Sydney Mail*, 23 February 1867, p. 9. 'They are an orderly and intelligent lot of men, and being neatly dressed in European costume, personally had nothing to distinguish them beyond their complexion and physiognomy'. *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 January 1867, p. 2. 'The faces bore the imprint of good breeding. It was suggested that such men would be an instructive exhibit to those who have described the Australian aboriginal race as one of the lowest types of humanity.'

... but the whole team with the exception of Mullagh, exhibits that singular stiff and ugly style of play peculiar to Wills, and which however effective in that fine all round player, is nevertheless neither one conducive to good play generally not impartible beneficially and effectively to others. It is in this particular that Lawrence's services, should he visit England with the team, will prove very efficacious, as he may by degrees free them of their cramped style of batting, and also drill into them a knowledge of how to play the slows. Mullah indeed, from what I saw of his play, is the only one free from this stiffness, and is a fine all round player, who with his ordinary health and strength would prove a puzzler to the best of bowlers.⁴⁴⁵

Wills' dubious bowling style was said to have influenced some players. He was the dominant bowler throughout the tour notwithstanding contributions from Lawrence, Mullagh and Cuzens and his reputation for a vaudeville type entertainment was notorious even while playing with the blacks.⁴⁴⁶

With the initial success of the team, a series of letters was published in early 1867, each letter staking a claim in having taught the aboriginal players the rudiments of the game. Written by residents in the western district, Wills was never mentioned as the architect of their early skills. He was praised as a teacher who completed the work begun by others. The letters descended into public posturing as they squabbled over who deserved most credit for the early cricketing skills of the team.⁴⁴⁷

3.5 On the Question of Identity

Natives (not aboriginal, though there is often very little difference between the two), and those who have been brought up in this colony,

⁴⁴⁵ *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 2 March 1867, p. 2. Also, *Hamilton Spectator*, 26 December 1866 p. 3. Taken from *Ballarat Post*, 'The men are all remarkably careful in their play, and hit freely, seeming to copy from Mr Wills's style. The bowling, or what little we saw of it, is also similar to that of the captain'. It is difficult to know from the limited information whether this was an exaggerated but understandable comparison to make or if there was an implicit belief that the aborigines were incapable of having an independent style. Mullagh certainly was drawn in clear counterpoint to the Wills' style. See *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 29 December 1866, p. 2, several of the aborigines adopted Wills' peculiarities of batting and fielding. *Weekly Age*, 4 January 1867, p. 12, 'Bullocky ... his style very much resembles Wills's'.

⁴⁴⁶ For example, See *Australasian*, 15 December 1866, pp. 1163-4. His capacity to excite and endear himself to the public was unchanged. 'Wills created some fun as last man in running all sorts of runs, keeping the spectators in roars of laughter'. *Argus*, 15 December 1866, p. 5. 'Mr. Wills caused much merriment amongst the spectators while he was at the wickets in making short runs, being ably backed up by his able brethren'.

⁴⁴⁷ *Australasian*, 16 February 1867, p. 203. Letter from Hayman about 'where the blacks first learnt the game'. Also, *Hamilton Spectator*, 6 February 1867, p. 2, *Hamilton Spectator*, 23 February 1867, p. 3, *Hamilton Spectator*, 2 March 1867, p. 3.

have a very vague idea if any at all, of the state of society at home, and the broad line of demarcation that exists between classes ...⁴⁴⁸

It is instructive to examine the question of whether Wills was seen as a separate European member of the team or whether he was identified more closely with the aboriginal players. What were the prevailing attitudes to, and motives attributed to Wills by the public? To what extent was the tour viewed as a novelty act?

Cricket was the English national game, a game of refined masculinity. This was an article of faith in the leading editorials of the day. For those not burdened by complexity, the game of cricket mirrored civilisation. Newspapers blurred race, colour, culture and pre-Mendelian genetics. The incongruity of the imperial game played by noble savages provoked curiosity. The western district team came to symbolise an experiment of what could become of aborigines in others domains of life.⁴⁴⁹

Although there is a temptation to define all that was written about the team within a racist template, there was a breadth of writing that defies narrow categorisation. The tour provoked divergent reactions. Some regarded the team as mere objects of zoological curiosity while others proclaimed cricket as the gilded pathway to aboriginal salvation. Some views were openly contemptuous, while others were more subtle in their smug expectation of failure. Popular opinion rode the back of the underdog without sacrificing an inherent sense of European superiority.⁴⁵⁰ It would be an error to assume that all critiques of this tour dismissed it as an inconsequential novelty. There were deeper reflections on how the tour may have bridged the hitherto unbridgeable between black and white. For these observers, the game of cricket as played by the aboriginal team sang a powerful symbolic message. The Victorian populace basked in the success of the team and proudly identified them as Victorian. The pride and pleasure

⁴⁴⁸ William Hammersley, *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 20 May 1865, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁹ See 'Home Letter' *Geelong Register*, 26 October 1867, p. 2. See Webb and Enstice, *Aliens and Savages*, 1998), p. 67 for a broader comment on these issues. For a more recent general assessment of the place of aborigines within the history of Australian sport see, Richard Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 131-50.

⁴⁵⁰ For example, see *Geelong Register*, 4 December 1866, p. 3. *The Imperial Review*, June 1882, pp. 78-80. In the *Australasian*, 6 April 1867, pp. 427-8, Hammersley dismissed the cricket season and the aborigines as a novelty.

in this team provoked pangs of an unwelcome past. The conscience of European settlement was challenged.⁴⁵¹

Cricket became the centre around which past colonial misdeeds towards aboriginal people surfaced; the better the team performed the more discomfiting was the reflection. These awkward reflections were based on a moral ambiguity. How was it possible to enjoy, and feel at one with this team of Victorians knowing that Melbourne society owed its existence to the destruction of aboriginal life? For some observers this self-reflection rebounded as public displays of guilt and anger at European cruelty. For others, the discomfort was too confronting and it never reached the surface of their thoughts. Rather than confront their own discomfort, they banished the team from conscious thought by attacking them with defensive ridicule. Others took refuge in restating a sense of European superiority. They employed time-honoured lines of self-deception. This self-deception did not invoke any overt ridicule towards the team but rather it allowed any personal guilt to be tidied and packaged away out of reach of one's conscience.⁴⁵²

Wills rapidly became the single point through which public opinion, informed or otherwise, was refracted. His name through dint of his captaincy was forever wedded with the aboriginal team in the mind's eye of the population:⁴⁵³

It has no doubt, been at considerable trouble and by perseverance that Mr Wills has brought his team to such an advanced stage of proficiency in the game of cricket, and if equal trouble were taken to elevate them? Higher in the scale of civilisation a result similarly favourable would no doubt be the result. The progress that these natives have made under careful tuition shows clearly that this

⁴⁵¹ See *Sydney Mail*, 23 February 1867, p. 4. The games were a powerful symbolic message. 'Fellow cricketers must be recognised as fellow men, and it may be discovered, even through the medium of an amusement, that colour does not destroy humanity, and that "blackfellow" is fit for something better than to be shot down or killed by the vices of civilisation'. For more severe criticism of European society see, *Geelong Register*, 7 January 1867, p. 2.

⁴⁵² See for example, *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 23 February 1867, p. 2 for a high handed approach.

⁴⁵³ *Sydney Sporting Life*, 9 February 1867, p. 2, 'As far as the Australian Eleven is concerned the case stands very differently; for not only are they the only cricketers of their race, but they are the first and only ones who have ever made any proficiency in this purely British game. Moreover, they go to England captained by T. W. Wills, who, although educated in Europe, is himself an Australian; and we look upon their trip as one of no small international moment'. Also, *Empire*, 25 February 1867, p. 4. 'Mr Wills has done service to the race by showing, in the instance of these cricketers, how they may be made willing scholars in the acquirement of arts unknown to their fathers. The reputation they have won, under his tuition, will exert a wholesome influence in their favour'.

aboriginal natives of this continent have been ‘more sinned against than sinning.’⁴⁵⁴

Evidence of frank racism was rarely documented. There was an isolated accusation of a prominent Geelong player refusing to take the field which he denied in a public letter.⁴⁵⁵

It is also quite possible that the idea of an aboriginal team travelling to England prompted a hurried meeting in Sydney at the time of the 1866 intercolonial cricket match to promote an all white team to tour England.⁴⁵⁶

3.6 Christianity and the Aboriginal Team

The Boxing Day match took place during the height of festivities celebrating the birth of Christ. In some quarters cricket was seen as the road to aboriginal salvation and Wills was a visionary prophet:

Perhaps without specialising intending it, Wills has more directly reached their moral susceptibilities by first regarding them as mere bodies with only such a latent germ of spirit as might be developed into a soul ... Hayman and Wills have shown ... taught the aborigines self-respect by developing their physical strength and skill but by quickening their ambition in one direction at least have broken down that stolid animal content which is the most stubborn obstacle to the reform of savage life.⁴⁵⁷

Views that give all the credit for the aboriginal tour to Wills are hard to support. Wills did not conceive of the original black matches and the subsequent tour. He wrote

⁴⁵⁴ *Illawarra Mercury*, 9 April 1867, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁵ The alleged player wrote angrily in his defence. This accusation seemed as much about Melbourne’s sense of superiority over Geelong than simply racism. See, *Geelong Register*, 9 January 1867, p. 2; *Weekly Age*, January 11 1867, p. 2; *Geelong Register*, 10 January 1867, p. 3. Also *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 December 1866, p. 2, in which the following may have been a result of the hotelier’s racist attitudes though it is hard to be certain. ‘It seems that they left that place about 5am in two coaches and arrived in Skipton at midnight expecting to find accommodation for the night but as Mr Wills states the landlord of the Ripon Hotel, Skipton, refused to open his house for them at that hour, and they had to shift for themselves as best they could’. *Geelong Register*, 28 December 1866, p. 2, racism was not always directed towards the aboriginal team. This reference sees the Europeans and aboriginal team drawn together in mocking the Chinese.

⁴⁵⁶ It was suggested that the possible success of an aboriginal team to England led certain individuals to try and send a white team beforehand. See *Geelong Advertiser*, 22 February 1867, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁷ *Leader*, 5 January 1867, p. 1. For a satirical piece on Wills, Christianity and the team see, *Sydney Punch* 23 February 1867, pp. 102-3.

virtually nothing of the games to the press or in surviving private letters. There was no sense that he developed a broader social reflection of the significance of the tour and the plight of aboriginal people. But by dint of being their captain, it was upon Wills' shoulders that the hopes, projections and criticism of the public were placed. His profile ensured that it was Wills who became the flash point for every prejudice and opinion on the aboriginal team.

3.7 Visual Imagery and the Aboriginal Team

The physical representation of the aboriginal team in cartoons ranged from the relatively neutral to ugly stereotypes. One such cartoon parodied them as barefooted and stripped of cricketing paraphernalia that might link them to the white players. Comical and dressed in grass skirts, they hurtled about the field with abandon. Their untutored arms and legs were cocked at wild hieroglyphic angles. They seem objects of fun. Wills was noticeably absent from these cartoons.⁴⁵⁸

Visual depictions were not uniformly negative. Photographs of the team were widely displayed and the comments, though at times condescending, were generally positive.⁴⁵⁹ Physical attributes were keenly observed. Admiration of the team's physical courage and physique was also portrayed. The description of physical features was not offensive for the description of fact but rather for its wedded to particular meanings.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁸ *Sydney Punch*, 2 March 1867, p. 112. The players are naked apart from their loincloth. The two white cricketers are dressed and stand imperiously in European clothes. The black players wear vacant, silly grins in the model of a minstrel. They adopt dance-like carefree postures. *Sydney Punch*, 9 March 1867, p. 117. This biting cartoon poked fun at the condescending pidgin English used towards the black team. See Webb and Enstice, *Aliens and Savages*. pp. 67, 91 for discussion on the noble savage and Social Darwinism. For more discussion on the imagery of aborigines, physical appearance and Social Darwinism, see Henry Reynolds, *Dispossession. Black Australians and White Invaders* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), pp. 96-122.

⁴⁵⁹ *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 December 1866, p. 2. Also *Australasian*, 24 November 1866, p. 1068. 'Photographs of the "native eleven" are being struck off, and in their "get up" it must be owned they are quite models. Some them are very intelligent looking men ...'. *Hamilton Spectator*, 18 August 1866, p. 2. 'Mr Hayman, the patron of the "Black Team," has forwarded their photographs to Melbourne, which have astonished the metropolitans who see thereby that they are in proper costume and quite civilised in appearance'. *Geelong Register*, 4 December 1866, p. 2. 'We have seen well executed *carte de visites* of Mr Wills' team and they appear smart active men, just what the natives in other parts of the colony used to be before drink rendered them the miserable creatures they now are'.

⁴⁶⁰ There were dozens of such descriptions, for example, *Geelong Register*, 4 January 1867, p. 2; *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 24 January 1867, pp. 6-7; *Australasian*, 5 January 1867, p. 16; *Australasian*, 2 March 1867, p. 267.

At times otherwise laudatory comments were laced with insinuations of lack of staying power and lack of fight:

From the successful display made by the aboriginals there is no doubt that with practice in field sports and careful bodily training, they would be able to carry all before them. They possess the power of endurance to some extent, but once beaten they seem to lose heart and to give in immediately.⁴⁶¹

Another allusion to this lodged within an otherwise positive account, ‘Judging from appearance, on Thursday, it might well be conceived that something like indolence and waywardness of temper are obstacles of no little importance in their training’.⁴⁶² A distinction between physical capabilities and mental capabilities was drawn.⁴⁶³ An almost voyeuristic curiosity saw references to their intelligence and general demeanour.⁴⁶⁴

3.8 Wills within the Troupe and as a Focus of the Tour

After Boxing Day, an incandescent Wills was on everybody’s lips.⁴⁶⁵ As celebrities the aborigines were feted at local artistic and cultural events.⁴⁶⁶ The intense focus on Wills shone from Boxing Day until the end of February. From then it was rendered less sharp, less insistent by dint of exposure and maladministration of the tour. Wills was the European face of this enterprise and there were obvious reasons for his public status. He was the first prominent cricketer to be linked with the black team. Second, the Boxing Day match, with Wills as leader, was the team’s emergence from

⁴⁶¹ *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 24 January 1867, p. 7.

⁴⁶² *Sydney Mail*, 23 February 1867, p. 9.

⁴⁶³ One of many such comments, *Richmond Australian*, 5 January 1867, p. 3.

⁴⁶⁴ *Geelong Register*, 5 January 1867, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁵ *Geelong Register*, 1 January 1867, p. 2, was typical of the anticipation and top heavy heroic stature immediately accorded Wills.

⁴⁶⁶ *Geelong Register*, 5 January 1867, p. 2, see reports of the team’s visits to the Fitzroy bowls, gymnasium, fishing and opera. The more European the activity the more intense the wonder and curiosity. There is no sense of Wills or others trying to exploit the aboriginal team with unseemly gestures or exhibitions. Rather if anything the nobility of countenance of the aboriginal players was noted whilst relegating others in the troupe, including Wills, to an occasional mention. Also, *Weekly Age*, 4 January 1867, p. 2. The same occurred in NSW, see, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February 1867, p. 4, which notes a public appearance of the aboriginal cricketers at the New Royal Victoria Theatre. Also *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River*, 5 March 1867, p. 2. ‘In the evening at the entertainment of the opera company at the Olympic Theatre, cricket bats were presented to Jellico, the highest scorer in the cricket match among the aboriginals ...’. Also *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River*, 2 March 1867, p. 4. ‘In their dress,

rumour and the distance of western Victoria and so etched a permanent place in the public's consciousness. Third, he was the best cricketer of his day. Fourth, his personal and family past, particularly the death of his father, was public knowledge and must have excited curiosity. Fifth, he was Australian born and accorded the status of a native. Sixth, the match pitted the most maligned and demeaned group in the country against a club that believed it had inherited the English template of cricket.

Wills occupied an ambiguous position. He was part of this troupe most likely for financial reasons. He was also captain of the MCC and its finest player. More importantly the MCC was a fulcrum for popular discontent amongst the public. In a manner for which the evidence seems clear, the popular desire to see the MCC vanquished wedded popular sentiment with the injustices meted out to a dispossessed peoples. Regardless of Wills' motives in joining the troupe he found himself as an aperture to the uncomfortable reflections of colonial society. These uncomfortable reflections and the dishonour of the MCC were relayed back to England.⁴⁶⁷

The Boxing Day match prised open an aperture to a distant world of possibilities. What were aborigines not capable of? Wills, the public nexus with the team, was the container into which every thought, accusation, aspiration and prejudice was decanted. The other Europeans who were more instrumental in bringing about the matches had identities less defined and less public.⁴⁶⁸

Published letters on the team were uncommon. They rarely highlighted Wills' role. The following letter is an exception. It praised and then burdened Wills with the discontent of colonial reflections upon recent aboriginal history. The letter highlighted that Wills, as a native of Australia, had a certain kinship with the writer and the team:

Although you may not be fully aware of the fact, allow me to tell you that you have rendered a greater service to the aboriginal races of this country and to humanity, than any man ... Yours are not picked men; for long ago the men you would have picked have been shot down like dogs by the usurpers of their hunting grounds who led on by the demon of greediness and gain, wantonly destroyed the old occupants

several of them were rather inclined to be spruce – lavender kid gloves not being thought by them to be out of fashion'.

⁴⁶⁷ *Geelong Register*, 26 January 1867, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁸ William Hayman was instrumental in organising the tour but his profile never matched that of Tom Wills.

of their runs, and held humanity so cheap that they proved ... And you will appear to deserve your share of this reproach no more effectually than by continuing the practice of nicknaming your men. Have not these blacks names of their own ...⁴⁶⁹

Similarly, another letter:

I have been residing up country, on the Murray, and have seen a good deal of the missionary efforts (I say efforts, because the success is questionable), the results of which are anything but satisfactory. Mr Wills has, no doubt, discovered their forte – cricket. Would it not be quite as well to expend the funds, hitherto wasted in attempts to Christianise them, in teaching them to play cricket, for it is evident that they make better cricketers than Christians, and it will be admitted on all sides that it is better to be a good cricketer than a bad Christian.⁴⁷⁰

At times Wills' identity was ambiguous. For example, his 'native' status was used interchangeably to either mean a European born in Australia or an aborigine as this private letter illustrates:

Next week on the Melbourne ground there is to be a match between 11 of the MCC and ten aboriginals from the Western district with a native (not black) Tommy Wills for captain. They rejoice in such names as 'Tarpot', 'Bullocky' ... and are said to be great cricketers – their best bat 'Sugar' died recently.⁴⁷¹

Wills' identification with the blacks was emphasised through their shared language. The following is a reference to the aboriginal player Jellico:

On another occasion the same purely colonial Aspinall being talked to by a white man in broken English, indignantly replied, 'What for you no talk to me good Inglis. I speak him as good Inglis belonging to you'. Then turning to Tarpot he observed 'Big one fool that fellow. He not know him Inglis one dam'. One evening the same 'dark party' asked a gentleman to teach him to read and write English, as he was going the grand tour. He was referred to Mr Wills as a good schoolmaster. Jellico promptly replied. 'What usy Wills. He too much along of us. He speak nothing now but blackfellow talk'.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁹ *Empire*, 27 February 1867, p. 5. George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, made references to the many obscene and belittling names given to aboriginals by settlers. Such ridicule can be seen in the names of several of the cricketers.

⁴⁷⁰ *Weekly Age*, 4 January 1867, p. 5.

⁴⁷¹ Letter, 21 December 1866 from Andrew Newell to Albert, RHSV, Black book items. No. 630-Box 181.

⁴⁷² *Hamilton Spectator*, 23 January 1867, p. 3 (taken from *Bendigo Advertiser*).

On many occasions the aboriginal team was called ‘Wills’ team of aborigines’.⁴⁷³ Sometimes Wills was treated quite separately. The XI was sometimes described as ten blacks and a white.⁴⁷⁴ Not all reviews were laudatory.⁴⁷⁵ Wills was not the focus in advertising the team as it travelled around Victoria and NSW. Indeed he was rarely mentioned in advertisements. It was the team that generally topped the bill.

3.9 The Tour in the Light of the Murder of Horatio Wills

Despite the widespread knowledge of his father’s murder by aborigines in 1861, this fact was never commented upon in newspaper reports throughout 1866 and 1867. It is not clear why this was the case. One recently found private letter makes one suspect that it was respect for his father’s death and not ignorance of the fact that led to its absence in the media.⁴⁷⁶ The avoidance presumably reflected an uncertainty in how to deal with this matter as well as perhaps consideration for Tom Wills. Wills was never criticised, either in private letters or in public, for undertaking the tour. But with breathtaking irony, considering the murder of Horatio Wills in Queensland, one correspondent wrote of Tom Wills:

We would hope that the enterprising squatters of the north of Queensland will learn something from the triumph of Mr Wills [Tom] as to the right way of dealing with those whom they may render faithful and useful allies or implacable enemies.⁴⁷⁷

3.10 Early Progress of the Tour

The public appraisal of the tour changed during the first few weeks. As the tour proceeded, the initial voyeurism tinged with self-conscious embarrassment gave way to expressions of warmth and admiration. Colonial society wanted to take ownership of and credit for the development of the team. This pride and self-congratulatory mood infected the small town of Edenhope through to the metropolis of Melbourne. In a rare tribute to equality and emphasising what was common rather than different, the team

⁴⁷³ *Geelong Register*, 4 January 1867, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁴ *Sydney Mail*, 19 January 1867, p. 9.

⁴⁷⁵ *Maitland Ensign*, 23 March 1867, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁶ Andrew Newell’s letter, 24 December 1866.

came to be regarded as Victorians first and foremost.⁴⁷⁸ Skin colour it would seem was relegated when colonial pride was at issue. There were occasional counterpoints to this acceptance. Here were the barbs of ridicule and the mute, cold expressions of hopes for failure.

The success of the team fanned the feud between Melbourne and Geelong. There was a kinship expressed by the Geelong press towards Wills. He was a Geelong man, not just a Victorian cricketer. The prodigal son of a parochial town was bringing the biggest show on earth back home:

Mr TW Wills, the celebrated cricketer left Geelong yesterday ... will accompany the team to England where, as a Geelong man, it is hoped that he will be successful.⁴⁷⁹

After the Boxing Day match, the team left Victoria and disembarked from their steamer in Sydney to be greeted by the English cricketer Charles Lawrence, now stationed at Manly.

3.11 The Arrest of Tom Wills

During the tour of Sydney, Tom Wills was arrested as he walked out on to the Albert Cricket ground with the aboriginal team to play NSW. The arrest of Wills came as a surprise to those around him and certainly to a modern day researcher. The arrest briefly threatened Wills' continuance with the tour. The news of the arrest of Wills was transmitted through the colonies by a series of telegrams.⁴⁸⁰ The initial statements

⁴⁷⁷ *Empire*, 25 February 1867, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁸ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 2 March 1867, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁹ *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 February 1867, p. 2. Also see, *Geelong Register*, 1 January 1867, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁰ Most papers contained variants of these telegrams. As the *Geelong Advertiser* gives the clearest overall account, these are quoted. *Geelong Advertiser*, 28 February 1867, p. 3. 'Wills offers to compromise with Messrs Penman and Jarrett, and in the event of their refusing to do so, threatens to file his schedule'. On 1 March 1867, p. 3, 'Mr Gurnett, agent for the aboriginal cricketers, is under arrest at the suit of his Melbourne creditors. He has filed his schedule, showing liabilities to the amount of L733 and assets L230'. On 6 March, 1867, p. 3, 'A second application was made to the Supreme Court to-day, to set aside the arrest of Wills and to obtain his release, and it was finally refused. His sureties have, therefore, surrendered him'. On 7 March 1867, p. 2, 'Mr Gurnett, agent for the aboriginals, has given notice that he will make application to the Court on the 14th inst. to release his estate from sequestration, as he has satisfied his creditor by paying them ... Mr Wills has compromised with Messrs Jarrett and Penman, and was today released from custody'. See, Insolvent notices in the *NSW Government Gazette*, 4 March 1867, Gurnett intended to apply on the 14 March to have his estate released from sequestration. A second notice that 'in the insolvent estate of William Edward Brougham Gurnett of Her Majesty's Gaol, Darlinghurst ... on the 28th day of February 1867 ...'

indicated that Wills was in breach of a contract and as a result was arrested. Wills responded to the accusations of a breach in contract with perplexity and protests of innocence. This was his characteristic manner when accused of wrongdoings. He ‘disclaimed all liability’. However, the evidence indicates otherwise. He was initially allowed to continue to play but is reported as later being briefly gaoled.⁴⁸¹ This arrest is at first glance a mysterious event and no satisfactory explanation in any of the accounts of the aboriginal tour have been forthcoming. Contemporaneous sources are frustratingly limited in their analysis and none gave an in-depth analysis of the reasons for and repercussion of the arrest.

It is almost certain that money and false promises made by Wills were the cornerstone of his arrest. The year 1866 was a critical turning point for Wills. In that year Wills had tried to exploit his position as a cricketer to raise money. Though not yet a professional in the public eye, in retrospect the aboriginal tour was his first venture as a professional.⁴⁸²

The events that led to Wills’ arrest had their genesis in December 1866. It seems likely that before William Gurnett took over the touring arrangements, Wills had planned his own entrepreneurial activities with the team.⁴⁸³ A newspaper report indicated that Wills had arranged a match on the Domain well before the team was to

⁴⁸¹ *Australasian*, 23 February 1867, p. 237. *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, 23 February 1867, p. 4, ‘during the play Messrs Wills and Hayman were arrested at the suit of Jarrett for alleged breach of contract, the latter having been in correspondence with the two former gentlemen on the subject of bringing the aboriginal team to Sydney. Messrs O’Brien (of Tattersalls) and Laurence (the cricketer) becoming security for them, they were at once released and the game proceeded’. *Maitland Ensign*, 9 March 1867, p. 3, ‘The law suits, F. C. Jarrett and W. Penman versus Wills for breach of contract, were finally settled yesterday, the plaintiffs accepting a compromise rather than compel the sequestration of Mr Wills’ estate, and thereby prevent his proceeding to England with the eleven. Wills was detained in custody after Tuesday morning’s application to the Supreme Court until his offer was accepted by Messrs Jarrett and Penman. Mr. W. E. B. Gurnett, the lessee of the team, has given notice for Thursday next to apply for the release of his estate from sequestration he having satisfied the claims of his creditors by payment’. Also 7 March 1867, *Empire*, p. 4, ‘The defendant (Wills) it appears agreed with one of the plaintiffs to play a cricket match in the domain on the 17th, 18th and 19th January with the aboriginal team, but failing in carrying out his contract he was sued by the plaintiffs immediately on his arrival in the colony and arrested under a writ of *habeas corpus* by Mr. Penman. On Tuesday we believe a similar writ was served upon him by Mr Jarrett’s attorneys. The compromise was effected yesterday morning and the defendant immediately released from gaol’.

⁴⁸² Wills had recently endeavoured without any official sanction to organise a tour of Victorian cricketers to South Australia to earn money. When this was turned down he somewhat desperately offered a much lesser sum which, was also turned down.

⁴⁸³ William Gurnett, alongside Tom Wills and William Hayman, was one of the main European participants in the tour.

arrive in Sydney.⁴⁸⁴ He was in negotiations with at least two local businessmen to that effect. The New South Wales Cricket Association (NSWCA) archives reveal that Wills was negotiating with a Mr Jarrett to use the Domain to stage an aboriginal cricket match. Correspondence with the Minister for Lands over this use is indicated in the NSWCA archives.⁴⁸⁵

Wills, seemingly unbeknownst to the organisers of the tour, had privately arranged for the aborigines to play at the Domain Cricket Ground on 17 January 1867. It was this failed opportunism that eventually led to his arrest in 1867. This was not the first or last time Wills took on entrepreneurial activities to make money. He did so without consultation and in so doing alienated those around him.

As early as 4 January 1867, it was reported in Sydney that the Government had granted the use of the Domain for an aboriginal cricket match. This was before the formal contract was signed between the aboriginal team and Gurnett that mapped out the team's trip through the colonies and overseas. The early report on 4 January is consistent with Wills being involved with Jarrett in early negotiations to use the Domain cricket ground.⁴⁸⁶ In Victoria, the negotiations between Wills and Jarrett for the use of the Domain for a cricket match with the blacks was reported as early as 8 January.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 January 1867, p. 5. Gurnett was aware of and dismissed Wills' proposed deal for a match on the Domain well before the team travelled to NSW. Gurnett made it clear that it was he, not Wills, who was the entrepreneur in charge, 'I am the only person who has any right to make terms ...'.

⁴⁸⁵ *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 12 January 1867, p. 4. Note the misspelling of Wills. The NSWCA recommended to the Domain Trustees to lease the ground to 'Mr Willis' agent' for £60. See NSWCA Minute Book, 7 January 1867. 'Read letter from Mr. Jarrett relative to proposed(?) visit of Aborigines ... Proposed by Mr. Curtis and seconded by Mr Howell that this Association protests against the use of the Domain Cricket ground for such a purpose'. In further minutes an amendment notes that '... the secretary be requested in reply to Mr. Jarrett to state that this Association has no objection to act with Mr. Wills provided a suitable arrangement can be come to'. The negotiations continue to be minuted on 10 January 1867. The arrangement with Jarrett was to be accepted and the Trustees of the Ground were invited to contribute financially to this match which Wills was instrumental in arranging. See Trustees of the Outer Domain – Minute Book (from 5 January 1857 – 16 May 1876). On 4 January, an application was read 'on behalf of Mr Thomas Wills of Melbourne for the use of the Domain Ground on the 17th, 18th and 19th Instant for a match between his Victorian Team of Aborigines and a chosen Eleven of Sydney players. This letter provided to the Trustees for an expression of their opinion by the Honorable secretary in Lands. It was unanimously resolved to reply to the Land Minister as follows: "That as we have no knowledge of any arrangement entered into by Mr. Wills with any body of cricketers in this colony we can only regard the proposal as a private speculation and therefore advise that the application be not complied with. But if Mr. Wills arranges with the Cricket Association of New South Wales for the playing of a match we would then advise that the use of the ground be granted to Mr. Wills prepaying towards the Ground Fund the sum of 15 pounds for each day, the ground is occupied"'.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 January 1867 p. 4. Also see, *Sydney Mail*, 5 January 1867, p. 4. The contract was signed 8 January 1867. See Agreement between W. R. Hayman Esq, Unamurriman and

There was widespread public anger in Sydney when it was revealed that the Domain ground was to be used for the proposed aboriginal match against NSW. There were two reasons for this anger. The first and most important was that the Domain had long been regarded as public land and not to be exploited for private gain. Secondly, the match in some quarters was regarded as a farce: ‘The Government might just as well allow a Circus the use of the Domain or a Punch and Judy Show, as grant it for the use of such a cricket match as that arranged to take place’.⁴⁸⁸

Sydneysiders were offended by the erection of the unsightly Grand Stand and fence on the Domain.⁴⁸⁹ Wills had blithely organised this match and in so doing, stepped into a frenzy of public outrage. It was a clumsy intrusion into a long running dispute over the use of public land. This inept manner of practising business was typical of Wills.⁴⁹⁰ Wills had organised to captain the aboriginal team on the Domain for 17, 18 and 19 January. But for various reasons the aboriginal team did not leave Melbourne in time to meet these dates.⁴⁹¹ On 18 January the Grand Stand and fencing on the Domain was being dismantled because the Victorian aboriginal team had not arrived. Wills’ business partners in Sydney were preparing to take legal action:

The Grand stand which was erected in the Domain for the convenience of spectators on the Intercolonial cricket match, and which was allowed to remain upon the understanding on the part of the authorities that it would be required for spectators of the a match to be played between the eleven Victorian aboriginal cricketers and a team of Sydney whites, is now being removed, together with the fencing the engagement entered into between Mr Jarrett, and Mr

others, and W. E. B. Gurnett relating to engagement of cricketers on 8 January 1867 and letter to Sir Redmond Barry enclosing Deed of Agreement, 11 February 1867. Also see, *Bell’s Life in Sydney*, 12 January 1867, p. 3. ‘A letter from Mr Jarrett, acting on behalf of Mr Wills, was addressed to the Cricket Association to select a team in opposition, and the committee consented to act with Mr Wills, provided suitable arrangement can be come to; since then it has been arranged that Mr Wills is to pay the Trustees of the ground sixty pounds for the purpose of repairing any damage that may be done to and a contract has been entered into with Mr. Penman for erection of fence and Grand Stand, but no dates have yet been fixed’.

⁴⁸⁷ *Geelong Register*, 8 January 1867, p. 3; *Leader*, 12 January 1867, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁸ *Bell’s Life in Sydney*, 5 January 1867, p. 3. It was widely understood by the public that the reason for the game at the Domain is for the purpose of making money.

⁴⁸⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1867, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁰ For example, he proposed a match against South Australia without consulting the Victorian Cricket Association in 1866. He organised single wicket matches to make money and infuriated other players by not letting them know of the arrangements.

⁴⁹¹ Unfortunately for Wills after he made these arrangements, a proposed match between Victoria and Tasmania was postponed to a later date. This may have been a critical factor in his not being able to arrive in Sydney in time.

Wills, to have the aboriginals in Sydney to play a match on the 17th, 18th, and 19th of the present month having fallen through; and we understand that some law proceedings have been commenced by the former to recover from the latter the expenses incurred by entering into a contract for re-erecting the fencing, advertising, etc on the alleged breach of agreement. It appears that the “darkies” are now under the management of Mr Gurnett, and arrangements have been made for playing a match on the Albert Ground in the course of next month. In the meantime, it will be a relief to those of our citizens who are accustomed to promenade in the Domain to find the unsightly structure removed.⁴⁹²

Wills’ breach of contract and humiliation of his business partners in Sydney, Jarrett and Penman, was made public. Taunted and humiliated they took legal action and sought damages from Wills.⁴⁹³ In Victoria it was noted on 26 January that the original Domain plan by Jarrett and Wills had been dispensed with. This was while the aboriginal team was still in Victoria. Even before the team left for Sydney the touring party must have known the likelihood of the legal problems ahead.⁴⁹⁴

As he walked out upon the Albert Cricket Ground Tom Wills was arrested for breach of contract. The best exposition of events came through the *Geelong Advertiser* with its parochial interest in Tom Wills. With the benefit of local knowledge, the paper’s language suggest it was aware of Wills’ inept business acumen:

On the 1st January, Wills by telegram arranged with Mr JC Jarrett, of Sydney, to act as his agent in preparing for a match to be played in the Domain on the 17th, 18th and 19th of January. Mr Jarrett made arrangements with Mr Penman to erect fencing and stand in the Domain but when the time came for playing the match, Wills was not forthcoming. When Mr Wills did arrive in Sydney to play the match in the Albert ground, he was introduced to Messrs Jarrett and Penman, but disclaimed all liability. Mr Penman was the first to take action, and issued a writ for 200 pounds and also a writ of *ca sa*, which were served upon Mr Wills on Thursday during the cricket match. Mr Wills was not long in the hands of the sheriff before mine host Mr J O’Brien of Tattersall’s and Mr Lawrence the cricketer became security for him for eight days, that the match might proceed. Mr Jarrett’s writ was next served upon Mr Wills for 150 pounds, and so at present the

⁴⁹² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1867, p. 4.

⁴⁹³ *Bell’s Life in Sydney*, 19 January 1867, p. 2. ‘The Domain puff is likely to end in only smoke; much I anticipate to the annoyance of Messrs. Jarrett, Penman, and Company. I fear indeed that now Mr Penman’s profits from his Grand Stand will, ere it is down, have become so “remarkably small and beautifully less” as to be invisible’.

⁴⁹⁴ *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, 26 January 1867, p. 4.

matter rests. Both Messrs Jarrett and Penman have, I understand, expressed their readiness to accept any reasonable compromise, and it is to be hoped that Mr Wills will soon be out of his little difficulty.⁴⁹⁵

On 7 March, it was reported that Wills had compromised with Jarrett and Penman and had been released from custody. Gurnett had also satisfied his creditors. Wills paid £35 for breach of contract and paid all costs.⁴⁹⁶

3.12 Charles Lawrence and Tom Wills

From November 1866 until the early months of 1867 the western district team was under the captaincy of Tom Wills. As the tour proceeded throughout NSW, Wills played less of a role and was finally usurped or at least equalled in prominence by the English professional Charles Lawrence. It was Lawrence who, one year later, resurrected the idea of an aboriginal tour and successfully captained the team in England.⁴⁹⁷

When the aboriginal team, with Wills as captain, arrived in Sydney it was Charles Lawrence who greeted the team on their arrival from Melbourne. The team stayed at Lawrence's Manly Beach hotel. From this point Lawrence was an intimate member of the tour.⁴⁹⁸ As the first tour proceeded throughout NSW under Gurnett, it became increasingly disorganised. Lawrence, who seemed a stabilising influence, took on an increasing role in managing the black team. The partition between Wills and the

⁴⁹⁵ *Geelong Advertiser*, 27 February 1867, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁶ Unfortunately no court records pertaining to the matter were available. See for further discussion, *Geelong Register*, 7 March 1867, p. 3. *Geelong Advertiser*, 23 March p. 3. The events surrounding the arrest are complicated by the misinterpretation of the names of one of the complainants. Jarrett, one of the businessmen with whom Wills dealt with has been mistakenly assumed to have been Gurnett in some reviews. For example, see David Sampson, 'The Nature and Effects Thereof Were ... by Each of Them Understood': Aborigines, Agency, Law and Power in the 1867 Gurnett Contract', *Labour History*, no. 74, May 1998, pp. 54-69. In an otherwise carefully crafted and informative article, Sampson is not aware of Tom Wills' role in the breakdown of the relationship between the key antagonists. He goes 'In Sydney in February 1867, a rupture between Gurnett and Hayman, not the efforts of the Board, sabotaged the Gurnett contract and the first attempt at an English tour. Gurnett had Hayman and Wills arrested for breach of contract 'in the middle of the match', and following their release on the security of Charles Lawrence and a Mr O'Brien of Tattersalls ...'

⁴⁹⁷ For more background on Charles Lawrence, see W. J. Goold, 'The Sport of Newcastle-Cricket', *The Newcastle and Hunter District Historical Society Journal*, vol. IX, part X (July 1955), pp. 149-52. Also, W. J. Goold, 'Charles Lawrence—"The Old Master"', *Newcastle and Hunter District Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, January 1951, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 49-53. There are numerous secondary sources that give brief details of Lawrence. For example, see, Derriman, *True to the Blue*, pp. 18-9.

⁴⁹⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 February 1867, p. 4.

aborigines thickened. Within his sphere of declining influence Wills slowly drifted from centre stage. The increasing prominence for Lawrence was reflected in descriptions of the matches and in the equal promotion of Wills and Lawrence in advertisements for matches.⁴⁹⁹ By the tour's conclusion in May 1867, Lawrence was more instrumental in its organisation than Wills. Wills' reaction to Lawrence's ascendance during the tour is not recorded in remaining archives.

The arrest and brief gaoling of Tom Wills in early 1867 afforded Lawrence the opportunity of providing security for the release of Wills from custody. The impression that remains is that Lawrence was a stabilising influence on the tour. By the time of the Illawarra match in April 1867, Lawrence was captain of the aboriginal team. It was an incontestable sign of his growing influence on the field. It was his name, not the name of Wills that was given prominence, in the advertising for this match.⁵⁰⁰

In the early months of 1867 the troupe was touring provincial NSW. It gradually became clear that any trip to England was unlikely. Gurnett was revealed to be a confidence trickster with a record of fraud. With the promised trip to England now a false hope and the tour entrepreneur Gurnett revealed as a shyster, the tour lost its way. The newspaper reports lost their sparkle. The last game in which money was to be earned for the trip home was 'through the instrumentality of Mr Lawrence and Mr Hayman ...'.⁵⁰¹ The troupe limped and tottered back to Melbourne in May 1867. The exotic was now commonplace. Indifference displaced curiosity. The team was almost forgotten by the Melbourne press. A disorganised waterlogged tour concluded with a final dreary affair in cold, gloomy Melbourne in May.⁵⁰² Tom Wills barely rated a mention in the Melbourne press. When the tour folded and Gurnett's humbug was

⁴⁹⁹ *Sydney Sporting Life*, 30 March 1867, p. 3. Quite early on in the tour, it was suggested that Lawrence was to tour England with the team. There was no indication that he was to replace Wills but rather Lawrence was an addition to the team. See, *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 2 March 1867, p. 2. See *Sydney Sporting Life*, 27 April 1867, p. 3. Despite the rise of Lawrence there is no obvious attempt to write Wills out of the tour in favour of Lawrence.

⁵⁰⁰ *Illawarra Mercury*, 9 April 1867, p. 2, Report of Aborigines v Illawarra Club. Lawrence and Wills played. By this stage Lawrence is the captain.

⁵⁰¹ *Illawarra Mercury*, 23 April 1867. It is Lawrence who towards the end of the tour comes in to assist. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 April 1867, p. 5. Broke, the team is to play a Sydney XI with Wills and Lawrence helping the aborigines. Lawrence was seen as one of the real helpers of the tour and now has usurped Wills in prominence. 'Doubtless many persons will gladly assist Mr. Lawrence in his praiseworthy efforts. We wish him success, and hope that ample means may be raised to enable the blacks to get back once again to Lake Wallace'.

⁵⁰² *Weekly Age*, 10 May 1867, p. 3. Only 500 people attended this match. It was dull, it rained and the public was now indifferent to the aboriginal team. There was little or no mention of Wills.

revealed there was no invective privately or publicly directed at Wills. He was regarded as much a casualty as was everyone else. The management of the tour was an incoherence of ambition, greed and haphazard shonk.⁵⁰³

In the middle of 1867, well after the aboriginal team had returned to Victoria, Tom Wills became aware of another attempt to take the team to England. Charles Lawrence was the instigator of this revival. The news was unexpected. The newspapers give a clear indication of Wills' dissatisfaction that Lawrence had now assumed control. Wills, living in the family home at Point Henry, Victoria, received a letter from Lawrence in the spring of 1867. In the letter Lawrence outlined the new 'celebrated' aboriginal tour. The reaction of the parochial Geelong press was thin-skinned and miffed on behalf of their local sporting hero. Taking umbrage at Lawrence's leadership of the team as a personal insult for the people of Corio, the Geelong press came out in defence of Wills. The Geelong view was that Lawrence, having undermined Wills, had now prised the troupe from his care:

Mr Wills of Point Henry has received a letter from Mr Lawrence, who has now the control of the celebrated aboriginal cricketers ... in this match they will have to play against their old captain Mr Wills. Bye the by, we believe this is the first intimation that gentleman has received of Mr Lawrence having control of the aboriginals it appears Mr Wills, having polished the Blacks up, is now to have nothing to do with them, and others are to reap the fruits of his labour. Mr Lawrence is doubtless a good coach, and first rate fellow. With all his cricketing talent we doubt if he will be able to manage them better than one of their own countrymen did.⁵⁰⁴

The reaction in Melbourne was attenuated, less personal and less prone to offence than its smaller self-conscious rival. The second source for Wills' grievance came from the pen of William Hammersley who indicated Wills' anger at Lawrence's taking over the role of sole captain. Neither Wills nor Lawrence made reference to this changeover in surviving letters or diaries.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ At the end of the tour there was almost no analysis of events. Analysis was confined to brief criticism of Gurnett and bemoaning another failure of colonial society in its treatment of aborigines.

⁵⁰⁴ *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 September 1867, p. 2. Sydney comment on the matter was almost non-existent. There was little analysis of this change to Lawrence or even intercolonial angst over the change in the metropolitan papers.

⁵⁰⁵ Hammersley suggests that he had personal contact with Wills over this matter. See, Hammersley in *Australasian*, 14 September 1867, p. 332, 'Mr Wills writes to me, dated Tuesday, to say that he had just received a note from Lawrence, which was the first intimation he had that the blacks were engaged,

There have been suggestions that Wills' alcoholism was responsible for his not being selected for the second tour. There is no evidence to confirm this.⁵⁰⁶ There were most likely several factors that conspired to exclude Wills from the second, more substantial tour. These include the fact that Lawrence had harboured a longstanding desire to conduct such a tour with an aboriginal team and now had an opportunity; Tom Wills' bungled attempt at organising a match at the Domain leading to his arrest had probably diminished his chances; loss of money from the previous venture; that Lawrence probably had more cricketing contacts in England than Wills; and finally a financial source for the tour that second time around emanated from Sydney and did not include a pedlar of deceit like Gurnett.

Charles Lawrence coveted the idea of an English tour by an aboriginal team. He said as much in his diary. In recalling how he wished to remain in Australia after the 1861-2 English tour Lawrence noted:

... for I thought I should soon make a fortune for I had an idea or a presentiment after I had seen the Blacks throw the Boomerang and Spears that if I could teach them to play cricket and take them to England I should meet with success this impression never left my mind until I had succeeded in forming an aboriginal team and took them to England in 1868 previous to this coming off a second all England Eleven captained by George Parr came to Australia and after their departure for home I commenced to collect the Blacks and parted with my business in Sydney and went to Manly Beach and soon after to Lake Wallace in Victoria this was to be the Depot and training ground before our departure for England I remained nearly two months here teaching them and getting them to make Boomerangs and spears and do athletic games which pleased them very much and they soon became proficient and willing to do anything that I would ... to learn.⁵⁰⁷

This recollection of events gave very little credit to the role of Tom Wills and others. It also ignored the fact that personal debt was a probable motivation for Lawrence.

and that he was quite taken by surprise at the news. From the tone of Mr Wills's letter I should fancy he is a little hurt at being quietly thrown over board in the matter, but I may be mistaken'.

⁵⁰⁶ See Chapter Six of thesis, 'The Sons of Lush: Tom Wills, Alcohol and Colonial Sport'.

⁵⁰⁷ Charles Lawrence's diary. My thanks to Bernard Whimpress for access to the diary. No changes to original punctuation made.

There was a limited critique of Wills' role in the first tour and few hints that pointed to reasons for his exclusion the second time round. There was no specific criticism of Wills after the failed first tour, particularly with respect to the way in which he captained and behaved with the team. He was in fact, almost universally praised for his role.⁵⁰⁸

When Lawrence assumed control of the team, certain of his noble characteristics and behaviours were highlighted in a manner that had not been the case when Wills was captain. These sporadic comments about Lawrence's management may be construed as gentle rebuffs to their previous management.

Lawrence took on the role as spiritual adviser and shepherded the team to church services on Sunday. Charles Lawrence's public display of religious devotion was an obvious difference from the period the aboriginal team spent with Tom Wills. There were hints that suggested public approval of an overall improvement in behaviour. When Wills was praised on the first tour it was for his cricket abilities and broader observations of his care were never highlighted.⁵⁰⁹ This implied allusion to a previous lack of religious observance during the initial tour might have cost Wills significantly. When Charles Lawrence assumed control of the aboriginal cricket team, his assiduous attention to their moral upbringing and attendance at church was cited on more than one occasion. It suggests that Lawrence was more caring of the team's overall welfare. Whatever interpretation is correct, there is little direct evidence that Wills was in any way held personally accountable in the public mind for either misbehaviour or the consequences of the first tour. Regardless of the exact motivations, Charles Lawrence

⁵⁰⁸ *Australasian*, 11 May 1867, p. 588, 'With reference to these sable cricketers we are sorry to have to state that Mr Wills has also suffered considerably through the failure of Mr Gurnett to carry out his undertaking'.

⁵⁰⁹ For references to church going and religious influence, see *Weekly Age*, 4 October 1867, p. 4. See *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 30 November 1867, p. 3; *Weekly Age*, 25 October 1867, pp. 4-5, '... a marked improvement in their bearing is noticeable ...'. *Illawarra Mercury*, 12 February 1869, p. 2. 'A number of them attended Divine service at the Congregational Church on Sunday last ...'. *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 30 November 1867, p. 3. 'In general behaviour and conduct these men do great credit to their mentor. They are very temperate, neat and tasteful in their dress, attend Church with Mr Lawrence regularly on Sundays; and are evidently desirous of improving in moral and social standing ... quite aware that they are in good hands ...'. *Weekly Age*, 11 October 1867, p. 4. 'On Sunday morning last nine of the aboriginal players accompanied Mr Lawrence to the Church of England and most of them previously expressed a desire to attend church'. *Illawarra Mercury*, 5 November 1867, p. 4, from the *Warnambool Examiner*, 'The care taken of the blacks by him when they were under his hostelry at Manly Beach created a favourable impression on the minds of the aborigines ... High character borne by Mr Lawrence not only a

resurrected the stillborn aboriginal tour and opportunistically grabbed his chance later in 1867. Lawrence's part in conjuring the release of Wills from arrest in February 1867 marked him as reliable and trustworthy.

Modern writers have tended to uncritically and obligingly cast Wills as being wronged by Lawrence. In so doing, these critiques ignore Wills' own meddling and inept entrepreneurial attempts as a factor in the early part of the tour. Wills is cast as having an idealised relationship with the aboriginal cricketers, which is at odds with some of his crass behaviour. For example, Wills was not beyond blackening his face at the expense of the aboriginal cricketers at a later point in his life. In 1872, he captained a team of 'the natives' who blackened their faces for a pantomime and parodied the aboriginal cricketers to the mirth of spectators. It became another opportunity for the Melbourne press to portray such parody as beneath the metropolitans but perhaps typical of what one may expect in Geelong.⁵¹⁰

Part of this acceptance of an idealised relationship between Wills and the aboriginal team comes from his family's early experiences in the 1840s with the Djab wurrung language group in western Victoria.⁵¹¹ Tom's warmth towards, and affinity with, the local aboriginal people was recalled by three family members – his father, his brother Horace and H. C. A. Harrison. The last two are recollections long after the death of Tom Wills.⁵¹²

Tom Wills and his family lived near Mt William, western Victoria. Horatio had settled the family on land that was lived on by the Djab wurrung language group. The

as a cricketer but in his social capacity is a sufficient guarantee that his charge will be well cared for ...'. Also see Lawrence's diary, for more on Christian influence.

⁵¹⁰ *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 May 1872, p. 2. *Argus*, 7 May 1872, p. 5. *Geelong Advertiser*, 27 April 1872 p. 2. *Geelong Advertiser*, 19 December 1873, p. 2.

⁵¹¹ Communication with Ian Clark, The Djab wurrung people were a language group around Moyston, western Victoria. This word is pronounced with a silent 'w'. The following are used interchangeably in various references, the b=p, and t=d. Clark has written in detail about this area of Victoria, see, Ian D. Clark, *Place Names and Land Tenure - Windows into Aboriginal Landscapes: Essays in Victorian Aboriginal History* (Melbourne: Heritage Matters, 1998). For more detailed context on western Victorian aborigines see, Ian D. Clark, *That's My Country Belonging to Me: Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria* (Melbourne: Heritage Matters, 1998).

⁵¹² See letter, Horatio Wills to Tom, 1 May 1853, where he spoke of the affectionate regard the Mt William aborigines had for Tom. Harrison recalled in his autobiography that Tom Wills learned to speak the local aboriginal dialects, singing their songs and imitating their voices. Mancini and Hibbins, *Running with the Ball*, p. 79. This is repeated in numerous references over the past century, for example, Lorna Banfield, *Like the Ark ... A History of Ararat* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1955), p. 43.

references from his father and brother are telling. Though brief, neither betrayed excessive sentiment or bitterness about Tom's relations with the local aborigines. Seventy years later, Horace, in one of the few reflections by any family member on Tom after his death, recalled Tom's only child status as important in fostering friendships with local aborigines: 'In his boyhood he was thrown much into the companionship of aborigines, having no boy friends of his own age ... he became a thorough linguist in the native dialects'.⁵¹³ While at Rugby Tom Wills requested that his family send him aboriginal weapons. This idyllic link between black and white finds its purest voice in an unpublished document written about 70 years ago, *Blazing Australian Trails Pastoral and Sporting*.⁵¹⁴

In modern critiques, Wills is typically regarded as separate from suggestions of exploitation of the aboriginal team. However, Wills was to be paid for his part as player and coach. In addition he had his own entrepreneurial desires for the team. The notion that Wills was separate from some exploitation of the team is fanciful and promotes a more romantic image of Tom Wills. The financial affairs of a professional cricketer were always a matter of concern. Lawrence was a professional cricketer while Wills, in effect, signalled his intention to become a professional cricketer during this tour. In this as in many other areas there were more similarities than differences between Wills and Lawrence.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹³ Horace Wills reflecting upon his brother, *Evening Sun*, 7 December 1923, p. 5.

⁵¹⁴ See 4 June 1851, letter from Tom to Horatio. This allusion to aboriginal weapons and mimicry at Rugby school is used by subsequent writers. Essentially the writers create a story that Wills used his aboriginal paraphernalia to ward off being fagged at Rugby school. This is first raised in *Blazing Australian Trails Pastoral and Sporting*, Victoria Cricket Association archives, which was copied and adopted by Flanagan in *The Call*. Banfield, *Like the Ark*, p. 43, writes '... this power of mimicry was useful when he went to Rugby, for he was granted release from fagging because of his entertaining ability'. Although this is possible, there is no evidence that supports this story and it is most likely appealing mythology.

⁵¹⁵ Charles Lawrence was in debt and reported as insolvent, *Sydney Mail*, 11 May 1867, p. 12; *Sydney Mail*, 15 June 1867, p. 11. Also see, NSW Government Gazette; published by Authority; Sydney. 1866-7, which indicated that he was insolvent in the first half of 1867. Presumably this was instrumental in his taking up the touring option given concerns over his finances as recorded in his diary. Mallet, *Black Lords of Summer*, writes of Lawrence in a manner of treachery and conspiracy against Wills. Mallet, *Black Lords of Summer*, pp. 23-4: 'He (Hayman) was principally seen as the Aborigines "protector", but subsequent events in 1867 proved beyond reasonable doubt that Hayman was keener on making money than he was on the welfare of the players. Tom Wills saw the peril in exploiting the players for financial gain. The seeds of doubt over Wills' professional commitment were sown early, for the coach of any tour venture would also need to be in full agreement about the need to make the venture pay a handsome dividend'. It is doubtful if any of these assertions can be supported by the available evidence. Subsequent events may have indicated that Hayman along with all the others had an eye to entrepreneurial gain but he perhaps more than the others seemed concerned for their welfare; there is no evidence that Wills saw peril in anything apart from his own inept attempt at financial gain for which he was arrested; again there is a

3.13 The Contract

The contract to take the aboriginal team to England was signed in Melbourne on 8 January 1867. As an historical resource, the contract was largely forgotten until recently.⁵¹⁶ After being fleetingly mentioned in newspaper reports of the time, the contract became a forgotten document until an obscure reference to it was made almost 40 years later. In the last five years the contract has been the subject of detailed legal analysis and mentioned in at least two recent books.⁵¹⁷

Sampson provides a thorough analysis of the legal implications of the contract as they pertained to the aborigines. The agreement was between William Reginald Hayman Esq., Gentleman of Lake Wallace in the West Wimmera district of the colony of Victoria; the second part Messrs Unamurriman and others; while W. B. Gurnett Esq, Gentleman of the City of Melbourne, was the third part.⁵¹⁸ At the time, newspapers reported the contract as between the aboriginal players, Wills and Hayman on one side and Gurnett on the other. When the contract is examined all participants are named except Wills. Wills did not sign the contract. In fact the contract gives no suggestion that Wills was even present. It is not clear at all why this should be the case. There is no suggestion that Wills was not to be part of the tour. It is possible for some reason that he

tendency to elevate Wills in the absence of any evidence or even if there is evidence to the contrary. The black team was repeatedly recalled with varying degrees of accuracy and research. See, 'Murdoch and Bligh', *The Imperial Review*, no. 9, April 1883, p. 7. The degree to which Wills or Lawrence is recalled as associated with the team varies. Here they are both recalled, 'Before this, Wills and Lawrence's Australian Aborigines had played through England'. 'The Aboriginal Cricketers', *Old Times*, April 1903, pp. 33-4. Also see, Jas Scott, *A Cricketing Miscellany* (Sydney: publisher unknown, 1942), p. 113.

⁵¹⁶ Agreement between W. R. Hayman Esq, Unamurriman and others, and W. E. B. Gurnett relating to engagement of cricketers on 8 January 1867. No contract has been cited for the tour conducted by Charles Lawrence. Many early references to Wills incorrectly indicated that he went to England with the team. This has largely been rectified in more recent references.

⁵¹⁷ It next appears in a 1902 article reminiscing about cricket stating that the document exists in the Melbourne Public Library, see, 'Cricket Tour', *The Imperial Review*, 1902, No. 36, pp. 4-6. Its existence is mentioned again in Bernard Whimpress' *Passport to Nowhere*.

⁵¹⁸ For further details as to the legal nature of the contract and its context see Sampson, 'The Nature and Effects Thereof Were ...', pp. 54-69. He notes the inequities faced by the aboriginal sportsman despite the apparently detailed contract and how such inequity was underpinned by racial attitudes of the time. Also the parallels with other colonial exhibitions of indigenous peoples from around the world as a form of circus troupe. He notes, 'Esquire being a courtesy title for those who could not claim a specific title but "were gentlemen by virtue of birth, position or education"' from, Pam Peters, *The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide* (Cambridge; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 251-2. Also see, The Sports Factor, 17 August 2001, 1868 Aboriginal Cricket Team, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/sportsf/stories/s347703.htm>. Sampson claims that it was Hayman, sniffing entrepreneurial expansion who organised for Tom Wills to captain and coach the team. There is no information to support this claim.

was not present at the time of the signing though he is reported by at least one newspaper as being present.⁵¹⁹

Why did Wills not sign the contract? Given the apparent detail of the contract it seems inconceivable that this was an oversight. Pavey, the MCC club solicitor, had scrupulously and meticulously mapped out the details of the aboriginal tour. Wills at this point was by far the most prominent figure associated with the tour and perhaps seen to be an indispensable one. The lack of a signature must have been deliberate either from Wills or from the organisers' side. Despite this there was never the suggestion that Wills was not to be part of the tour. It is known from incidental accounts from family letters and newspapers reports that Wills clearly intended to go to England. It is quite possible that a more informal agreement had been struck between Wills and Hayman.

The contract established Gurnett at the head of the enterprise. It is possible that an early antagonism between Gurnett and Wills might help explain why Wills was not a signatory to the contract. This suggestion is consistent with the culmination of the dispute between Wills and Gurnett which was later voiced in a public letter from Gurnett after the arrest of Wills, Hayman and Gurnett. Wills had aspirations to be the entrepreneur and his actions and Gurnett's retort strongly suggest that he temporarily vied with Gurnett for such a role. Wills may not have signed if he was already in dispute over the course of the tour with Gurnett. Equally Gurnett may have been seeking to squeeze Wills out of the deal. At the end of the failed attempt to take the team to England the financial details of who was to be paid what amounts were outlined.⁵²⁰

4 Conclusion

⁵¹⁹ *Geelong Register*, 10 January 1867, p. 2. This report implies that Wills signed the contract. More recent secondary references incorrectly claim that Wills signed this contract. For example, see how Mallet, *Black Lords of Summer*, p. 24, quotes this from Mulvaney and Harcourt, *Cricket Walkabout*, p. 51.

⁵²⁰ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 4 May 1867, p. 4, this was a letter from Hayman explaining the financial arrangements of the tour, '... I may state that I was to receive no benefit from this match, but that Mr Newberry, the keeper of the Melbourne cricket ground was to receive all proceeds and pay all the expenses ... Mr Gurnett to go with the blacks and him to Europe. He engaged to pay all ... expenses, board ... of the blacks, Mr Wills's travelling expenses, as well as my own, with board etc to Europe and back again to Victoria. The blacks were also to receive a weekly allowance and at the end of the engagement a further sum of 50 pounds each; Mr Wills to receive a weekly allowance with a fixed amount also on our return'.

Two of the main links between Tom Wills and indigenous Australians are examined in this chapter. The murder of his father on 17 October 1861 was the critical point in Tom Wills' adult life. The murder remains the largest recorded killing of European settlers by aborigines in a single battle. Tom Wills was absent at the time, only by chance, and would most likely have died if he had been in the camp that afternoon. Wills responded with extreme fear and anger towards those who committed the murders and those Europeans who he felt were accomplices to the act and who protected local aborigines. Tom Wills maintained this stance for many years in private and public letters. The evidence for his psychological reaction is continued in chapter six on alcohol abuse. It comes as a surprise to then find that Tom Wills was hired to coach the western district aboriginal cricket team less than five years after his father's death. The reasons for his accepting this position are not spelled out comprehensively in any archival source but the context suggests that Tom's need for money was a powerful factor in his accepting the position. The Boxing Day cricket match in 1866 was the high point of the tour throughout Victoria and NSW and was a further opportunity for Tom Wills to berate what he considered was an uncharitable Melbourne Cricket Club. The tour became a focus of European-Aboriginal relations and Tom Wills a focus, probably unintentioned on his part, onto which colonial society placed its diverging views on the management of future relations between the races. Tom Wills' family adopted a perhaps surprisingly benign attitude to his coaching and the suggestion is very much that Tom and his family were quite clear in distinguishing the aborigines in Queensland from the Victorian aboriginal team. The tour started to collapse almost as soon as the Boxing Day match was over. Soon afterwards the entrepreneur William Gurnett was revealed as a confidence trickster. By the end of the tour Tom's place was usurped by Charles Lawrence who took the team to England in 1868.

Chapter Five

A Father's Care

‘My brother was the nicest man I ever met,’ he said. ‘Though his nature was care-free, amounting almost to wildness, he had the sweetest temper I have seen in a man, and was essentially a sportsman’.⁵²¹

Horace Wills, 1923

If you knew how Tom is despised by all who know anything of him ... Poor Ma would be terribly cut up if all her sons turned out like her first born ... I wonder if he intends to loaf on Ma in all ways. He never ever helps in the garden but reads novels and sometimes plays football or cricket.⁵²²

Emily Wills, 1864

1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how aspects of Tom Wills' upbringing and his family, particularly the influence of his father, shaped him at key points in his life. A detailed examination of how other family members influenced him, other than in passing, is not undertaken in this chapter. The chapter commences with a brief review of aspects of his family background and a summary of important genealogical data on Tom Wills. It then moves to a study of Horatio Wills and his aspirations for Tom and his other sons. In turn, it covers the interaction between Tom and his family while at school in Rugby; his return to Australia; his brief flirtation with the legal profession; his trek with Horatio to Queensland and the murder of Horatio. Throughout this chronological journey there are references to Tom's personality and how this shaped family views of him and influenced his life's trajectory. The chapter does not cover in detail his early school years in Melbourne; his relationship with other key sportsmen as revealed in private and public documents; his romance and failed engagements; and his relationship with his family during the last decade of his life. There is only a limited analysis of his relationships with his extended family, that is, his aunts and uncles.

⁵²¹ ‘Wizard Bowler. Stories of T. W. Wills. Brother in Melbourne.’ *Evening Sun*, 7 December 1923, p. 5. Wills was described as 5ft 11in. in height, with great chest development, and handsome.

⁵²² Letter, Emily to Cedric, 26 September 1864. Emphasis in original.

Underpinning this chapter is the relationship between Horatio Wills and his son. The importance of this relationship necessitates a significant detour to give biographical details of Horatio that helps set the stage for an understanding of the most critical force in Tom's life. Flanagan and Perrin note the importance of Horatio in Tom Wills' life as do the many brief biographical references on Tom Wills. Flanagan's view of his father is deliberately caricatured. Horatio is portrayed as an autocratic and bombastic individual whose presence in life and death dominated the family. It is less than complimentary with its doses of religious mania, surges of libidinal fantasy, images of buffoonery and gun-toting evangelism. It seems that Horatio is drawn in such a light to contrast with Tom Wills. In doing so, Tom Wills can then be drawn more sympathetically.⁵²³ Perrin takes a more conservative approach but the analysis of Horatio is less searching.⁵²⁴

The sources for this chapter are primarily unpublished archival family correspondence. This material is supplemented by unpublished official documentation and published documents. These latter sources were accessed to provide corroboration, context or a more complete picture where the family correspondence did not provide sufficient information.⁵²⁵

1.1 Background: Birth Date, Birthplace and Family Name

Tom Wills' name, birth date, birthplace and possible marriage have been disputed. The family correspondence points to 19 August 1835 as his birthdate.⁵²⁶ He was baptised on 11 January 1837 at St Andrews, Scotts Presbyterian Church, Sydney, by the minister who married his parents.⁵²⁷

⁵²³ For example, Flanagan, *The Call*, pp. 68-70. An oft repeated myth is the libidinal tale of his being lost at sea, A. S. Moggridge, 'Shipwreck of H.S. Wills, 2 yrs Among Savages', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, vol. 8, supp., 1923, pp. 419-35. That Horatio went to sea is mentioned in several references without any evidence. Horatio provides the closest to conclusive evidence of this phase of his life during a Parliamentary speech though the fanciful tale of his being kidnapped is not supported, see *Argus*, 21 February 1855, p. 4. In his diary he reflected upon his sins and his less savoury desires.

⁵²⁴ For example, Perrin, *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 16-20.

⁵²⁵ See appendix for details of letters.

⁵²⁶ See letter, 8 August 1851, from Tom to Horatio. Letter, 4 June 1851 from Tom to Horatio. Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 18 August 1864. Also letter, 20 August 1861. Letter, 14 August 1863 Elizabeth to Cedric. Letter, 5 August 1864, Elizabeth to Cedric.

⁵²⁷ There are two baptism certificates. They contradict family letters and give 19 December 1835 and 19 December 1836 as birthdates. His baptism date is consistently 11 January 1837. These certificates seem to be the basis of the modern reissue of his birth certificates which state 19 December 1835 and 19

His place of birth remains unclear, though it was most likely on the Molonglo Plains, NSW. There is an absence of archival information that satisfactorily answers the question of where he was born. His parents' movements are not clear during the period around 1835. It is known that Horatio was in the Sydney region in 1834 as he was living at his brother's property, Varro Ville, and was producing his paper the *Currency Lad*. By 1836 he was preparing to take stock on to the property, Burra Burra, on the Molonglo River. The details of the family's time at Burra Burra are few. Sayers, in his manuscript for a biography on Horatio, has 1836 as the time Horatio took out this property in the Murrumbidgee district. Even if Horatio's precise whereabouts on 19 August 1835 was known it would not necessarily indicate where his pregnant wife was residing.⁵²⁸

December 1836 as his birth dates. When 19 December is by chance mentioned in family letters there is no mention of these being a birth date for Wills, for example, see letter from Tom to father 25 December 1850. There are two handwritten baptism certificates – the original has his birthday as 19 December 1835 while the copy is 19 December 1836. See Archives Authority of New South Wales, AO Reel no. 5016, Register of Baptisms, Burials and Marriages. Registry vol. 45, no. 3071 and AO Reel no. 5017, Registry vol. 47, no. 258.

⁵²⁸ Molonglo is the commonly stated place for Wills' birth. There are no archival documents that unequivocally state his birthplace. William Hammersley in his biographical piece on Wills in the *Australasian*, 8 May 1869, p. 588, in which he claims to have been furnished notes by Tom Wills, gives Molonglo for his birthplace. Even this is not without criticism for the article goes on to make several biographical errors. The main alternative to Molonglo has been Parramatta. For this see, Mancini and Hibbins, *Running with the Ball*, p. 6 and Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, p. 201. Wills Cooke notes that Parramatta was speculation on his part (Personal Communication). 'They started it!' *War Cry*, pp. 2-3, states Parramatta as his birth place. *Australasian*, 8 December 1923, p. 1227, in this retrospective on Wills, it states he was born in Campbelltown. No archival evidence is cited to support these claims. J. Lillywhite, *Lillywhite's Cricket Scores and Biographies* (London: John Lillywhite, vol. 4), p. 367 gives his birthplace as Parramatta, in NSW. *Yeoman*, 23 January 1864, 'Mr TW Wills, late captain of the Victorian Eleven, and who was born within a short distance of Ararat (on Lexington Station), was the captain of the district 22'. This claim that he was born in Ararat is not true.

Varro Ville was the residence of his brother Thomas Wills in Campbelltown. See W. A. Bayley, *History of Campbelltown* (Campbelltown: Campbelltown City Council, 1974), pp. 59-60. Letters help piece some of Horatio's movements at this time but are not conclusive. In 1833, Horace Wills is reported to be residing at Varro Ville, see NSW Despatch from Sir Richard Bourke dated 23 November 1835. List of Applications and Assignments of Male Convicts during the Year 1833, Mitchell Library. The following document, Wills, Thomas, Granting of Land (Norton, Smith and Co. Papers - clients documents), Mitchell Library, dated 2 July 1834, was printed 'at the Gazette Office by H. Wills'. An envelope marked Horatio Wills Esq, Varro Ville, near Campbelltown with perhaps a receipt dated 1 June 1835, if correct suggests that at this point Horatio was perhaps still in the Sydney district. Also see, *The NSW and Port Phillip General PO Directory 1832-1836*; *NSW Calendar and General Post Office Directory, 1837 and 1839* for listed postal addresses. Letters suggest but do not prove that Horatio was living in the Molonglo district by early 1836. Certainly by early 1836 he was preparing to take sheep onto the Molonglo region of NSW. See Correspondence 20 January 1836, Unknown person to Horatio Wills; 8 February 1836, unknown to Horatio Wills (the precise date is unclear in the letter). R. V. Billis & A. S. Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip* (Melbourne: Stockland Press, 1974), p. 161, have Horatio at Molonglo Plains, January 1837. His purchasing of land on the Molonglo River, as detailed in the NSW Government Gazette, took place after Tom's birth but it is possible that Horatio was in the Molonglo region earlier.

There is also some disagreement regarding Tom's precise name. Some secondary references include the family name, Spencer, in Tom's name but as pointed out by Terry Wills Cooke this has no evidence to support it.⁵²⁹ The correct name is usually considered to be Thomas Wentworth Wills.⁵³⁰ The period from Wills' birth in 1835 until 1850 when he departed for Rugby is poorly recorded in the archives. The family lived on the property Burra Burra on the Molonglo Plains for several years before overlanding to the colony of Port Phillip. Tom Wills was four years of age when his family made the trek to the Port Phillip District of NSW.⁵³¹

2 Horatio Wills

'What a beautiful science is that of Phrenology!'⁵³²

Horatio Spencer Wills was the most important family figure in the life of Tom Wills.⁵³³ Family letters reveal a sense that all natural authority resided with the father although his family was comfortable in gently poking fun at Horatio's foibles. Despite Horatio's powerful presence, the family was comfortable in taking such playful liberties

⁵²⁹ See, entry on Edward Wills, J. Selkirk Provis & C. J. Smee, *The 1788-1820 Association's Pioneer Register*, 2nd ed., (Sydney: The Association, 1981), unpaginated, for genealogy of Edward Wills and the incorrect addition of the middle name Spencer for Thomas Wentworth Wills. Wills Cooke points this out in *Currency Lad*, p. 201.

⁵³⁰ The archival evidence also supports his name as Thomas Wentworth Wills. More recently, textbooks used by Tom Wills at Rugby School throw up a query about his name. In two of his textbooks he gives himself the following initials – TWFH Wills. After one he scrawls Thomas Wentworth Franci/es H? Wills. The fourth name is illegible.

⁵³¹ See diary of Horatio Wills, Box 103/6, State Library of Victoria, and comments in Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, pp. 39-44. See Moore, *Burra*, pp. 80-3. In the colony of Port Phillip Horatio lived near Mt William in western Victoria. The properties he owned included, Lexington, La Rose, Mokepilly and Swan Water South. Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers*, p. 161. For further details on Horatio's settlement in this region see Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, pp. 39-96.

⁵³² A sarcastic reference to phrenology in Henry Cockton, *Valentine Vox, The Ventriloquist* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., undated), p. 124, a book loved by Tom. Horatio it seems was very interested in the topic of phrenology, see *Melbourne Punch*, 29 October 1857, p. 105, and his personal diary.

⁵³³ There are many summaries of Horatio's life, see, C. E. Sayers, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1788-1850, Vol. 2, Section Eds. A.G. L. Shaw and C. M. H. Clark (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967), pp. 605-7. See Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, and L. L. Banfield, *Green Pastures and Gold* (Canterbury: Mullaya, 1974), pp. 1-23, for a summary of Horatio within the context of the history of the Ararat region. There have been several unpublished manuscripts on Horatio Wills. These include C. E. Sayers, Box 2698, State Library Victoria on the Wills family and Manuscript on Horatio Wills by Peter Banfield, Librarian, Ballarat Library, 1984 (a. 1-29) at the Ararat Genealogical Society. There have also been many brief accounts in newspapers over the past century. For example, Cheryl Dedman, 'A Homestead of Memories at Moyston', *The Weekly Times*, 6 June 1966. Also see pamphlet *Life of a Pioneer* [No further details are given]. This pamphlet was given to the author by Mr Tom Wills, Springsure.

with him.⁵³⁴ At times Horatio was overbearing and dominating. It is hard to imagine that this sometimes did not spill into outbursts of anger and the letters reveal snippets that indicate Horatio, when pressed, possessed an explosive temper.⁵³⁵

Horatio was a practical man and a man of business. His yeoman-like manner was best revealed in one of his daughter's letters. In this letter, Horatio was uncomfortable and miscast at a Toorak lawn party in the presence of the Victorian Governor Henry Barkly. His daughter surprised and a touch embarrassed, recorded how her father brushed past the elegant crowd to have fowl passed to him which he then proceeded to stuff into his mouth: '... he took a leg in one hand and a wing in the other and ate them behind the people. Some of them were amused at Pa'.⁵³⁶

Money was cornerstone of the prominence that the Wills' family carved out for themselves in the colonies. Thomas Wills, Horatio's brother was a notable merchant and property owner. At times he lent considerable financial aid to Horatio. For his part, Horatio's ledger book reveal him as precise, prudent and methodical in matters of money and in this regard proved to be very different to his son Tom.⁵³⁷

2.1 Horatio's Parliamentary Career

Mr Wills seems to possess in greater perfection than any other member of Council, the art of so framing his motions and his speeches that of necessity they come to nothing. It would be premature to condemn him as a permanently useless politician, indeed, because his faults may be curable, and his motives seem good. Up to the present time, however, he has been emphatically a blunderer.⁵³⁸

Argus, Report of the Legislative Council. 1855

⁵³⁴ For example, see correspondence from 1839 and William Roope to Horatio, 31 October 1851, which has a playful dig at Horatio's apparent habit of not dating his letters. These eccentricities were seen as fair game by the family. Horatio for his part seems to take part without any defensiveness or anger.

⁵³⁵ There are snippets in the family archives that relate to Horatio's anger with aborigines; his frustration and anger towards new arrivals in the colony and their condescension towards currency lads; his pugilism as a teenager; and the aggressive protection of his sheep when threatened by attack.

⁵³⁶ Letter, Emily to brothers, 21 November 1860.

⁵³⁷ See H. S. Wills accounts January 1852-July 1856, in the possession of Lawton Wills Cooke. The ledger books reveal a neat obsessional script unlike his son's wayward, expansive freestyle writing.

⁵³⁸ *Argus*, 2 March 1855, p. 4. See K. Thomson and G. Serle, *A Biographical Register of the Victorian Parliament, 1859-1900* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972), p. 228, for dates of his time in parliament. See Raymond Wright, *A People's Counsel: A History of the Parliament of*

Horatio's public profile was at its zenith when he entered parliament. An analysis of this period, coinciding as it did with Tom's sporting elevation, gives us further insights into Horatio's ideals and how he may have impacted upon his children. Horatio's career as a parliamentarian was brief and reflected his agrarian, hands on approach to matters. Issues that were closest to his heart were agriculture, Chinese migration, penal reform and defence of the colony.⁵³⁹ His public and private comments suggest a man not possessed of the stomach for the theatrics and verbal by-play of politics. Rather he was a man whose thoughts were clear, practical and uncompromising.

There was significant commentary in the colonial press on Horatio's parliamentary career. His clumsy manner and globular form were easy prey for politicians, journalists and cartoonists. At the start of his career the press regarded him as a victim of enthusiastic naivety rather than incompetence; but by 1855 he had become the subject of parody. Parliament was an uncomfortable environment for the often disconcerted and stumbling Horatio. He suffered from prominent social anxiety in the setting of parliament and felt moved to ask parliament if he could read from his notes. His request was met with roars of laughter.⁵⁴⁰ Horatio's earnest toil marked a man without a capacity or interest to indulge in nimble wordplay or the necessary craftiness to protect himself from open attack. His limited capacity to speak publicly became a running subject of amusement amongst commentators. It is not correct nonetheless to say he never spoke in parliament or that he spoke with a stutter as has been suggested.⁵⁴¹

Victoria 1856-1990 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 31-92, for a more general description of the parliament during the time of Horatio's occupancy.

⁵³⁹ There were many references to these matters, for example, *Argus*, 4 November 1858, p. 5 and *Geelong Advertiser*, 11 August 1857, p. 2. Horatio was a key member of various local agricultural societies. See *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 December 1860, p. 3. His comment about the Chinese is from *Argus*, 28 September 1857, p. 6; also see *Geelong Advertiser*, 27 July 1857, p. 2. His comments regarding defence were articulated in parliament, *Argus*, 29 April 1858, p. 5, and were written just over two months prior to his son's famous letter in which he invoked defence as a sound reason for undertaking sport. Horatio on several occasions emphasised the colony's need to be ready to defend itself.

⁵⁴⁰ *News of the Week*, 5 December 1856, p. 2.

⁵⁴¹ His response to this public scrutiny is not recorded in any of his private letters. The symptoms of anxiety he so fully described would be recognised today as panic attacks. Such symptoms certainly affected his ease in speaking in this public setting. He is recorded as speaking publicly elsewhere. *The Call*, presumably in the spirit of caricature, renders Horatio mute in Parliament other than an occasional stutter. The *Argus* mocks his oratory skills, 23 February 1855, p. 4. Also *Geelong Advertiser*, 20 June 1857 p. 2, for Horatio Wills in parliament. *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 July 1858 p. 3, Horatio, in reference to his anxiety in public is sarcastically referred to as 'the eloquent member for South Grant'.

The figure of Horatio in parliament was captured in William Strutt's sketches of the period.⁵⁴² Horatio slouched against the back of his cushioned bench with his right arm draped over the back of the bench and legs crossed in a languid pose. In another sketch he leans forward with intent, hands clasped on his knees seemingly listening with care. He was labelled as 'Wills, the squatter'. Another sketch reveals him as having a healthy mop of hair with luxuriant curls, a thick broom-like moustache and a full bespectacled face.

At the time of Tom's return from England, Horatio was ensconced in parliament and his name featured regularly in the press. Although it may have been of some benefit to Tom to have such a political connection this was not commented upon. The connection between politics and cricket was close. Sittings of parliament were suspended during important games, members of parliament were reported as prominent spectators of games, intercolonial disputes were played out on the field as evidence of superiority and parliamentary members were regular guests at the players' table for the luncheon celebrations. This must have cemented the connection between Horatio the parliamentarian and Tom the colony's cricket captain. It is quite possible that Tom's famous letter published on 10 July 1858, in which he wrote about the formation of a 'foot-ball' club, was influenced by his father's thinking in one respect. Tom wrote of the parallels of preparing young men for the defence of the colony and for sports. Defence and the preparedness of the Victorian colony for war, was a theme of Horatio's letters and speeches during his time in parliament.⁵⁴³

2.2 Father and Son

... rejoices(s) to hear that you have sown 'all your wild oats' and that you are determined to become a sensible, steady, clever fellow ... Stick close to your studies and the rest will be sure to follow. If you go on as you promise to do, you will be a credit to yourself, an honor to your relations, and a benefit to mankind. Persevere!⁵⁴⁴

William Redfern to a young Horatio Wills, 1832

⁵⁴² In the early years of the Victorian Parliament, William Strutt sketched and captured the poses of the members. Horatio Wills is portrayed several times. See, Marjorie Tipping, *Victoria the Golden: Scenes, Sketches and Jottings from Nature by William Strutt* (Melbourne: Library Committee, Parliament of Victoria, 1980), pp. 42, 46, 47.

⁵⁴³ Horatio raises this several times, for example, *Geelong Advertiser*, 15 July 1857, p. 2. See letter from Tom Wills which echoes his father's sentiments in *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 10 July 1858, p. 3.

⁵⁴⁴ Letter, W. L. M. Redfern to Horatio Wills, 31 October 1832. Emphasis in original.

I really believe that the best place after all and the most salubrious will be Fiji ...⁵⁴⁵

Tom Wills speaking to his brother, Cedric, 1870

Tom Wills was a precious baby. Not simply for being the first born male; but his life from an early age was marked by illness and loving parents were aware of the statistical chances of death through infectious disease. Their worries were typical of the age. A three-year-old Tom was so ill, that an anxious family seriously considered the prospect that he might not survive his fourth birthday. In the summer of 1839, Eliza Antill wrote to her brother Thomas Wills in Port Phillip. She informed him that Horatio and Elizabeth were distressed by an illness that had infected the family, rendering ‘poor little Tom ... so dangerously ill that they almost despaired of his recovery ...’. In a manner that reflected the reality of illness in the early nineteenth century, Eliza commented *en passant* that Tom must have lived otherwise they would have heard by now.⁵⁴⁶

Elizabeth experienced more than one miscarriage.⁵⁴⁷ After the birth of Tom, many years passed before Elizabeth was able to conceive and carry a child through complete gestation. Tom Wills remained an only child for the first seven years of his life. From that time, Tom, Elizabeth and Horatio were the points of a triangle that rendered all three, separate in time and experience from the remainder of the children.

Such a near crisis in Tom’s early life may have promoted Horatio’s near obsession with medical matters in the family. His preoccupation with family health was regularly documented in family correspondence. Illnesses, particularly the infectious diseases of childhood, were indiscriminate scythes that wiped out entire families in the

⁵⁴⁵ May 1870, letter to Cedric from Tom (no specific date is indicated in the letter).

⁵⁴⁶ Letter from Eliza Antill to Thomas Wills, 24 January 1839. Medical services in the area were sparse. See A. J. Proust (ed.), *History of Medicine in Canberra and Queanbeyan and their Hospitals* (Gundaroo: Brolga Press, 1994), pp. 1-12. Apart from this illness at three years of age his aunt, in correspondence, reflected the family concern about infectious diseases in her letter to Horatio, 10 May 1854. Illness was a major theme in parents’ letters to their boys at Rugby school where death from infectious illness was recorded in Evans House. Also see letter from Horatio to his half sister Jane, undated but most likely 1849, where Horatio fusses over his family’s health.

⁵⁴⁷ Letter Eliza Antill to Thomas Wills, 24 January 1839, ‘She again has lost the prospect of a little one ...’.

Victorian era. It was a theme that touched Tom Wills' life on more than one occasion.⁵⁴⁸

2.3 Horatio's Aspirations for his Children

While self-deprecating about his own perceived lack of education, Horatio was almost demonic in his desire to see that all his sons received the finest possible education. Circumnavigated by books, Horatio presided over his relentless self-education with the air of a man intent on self-flagellation. He publicly bemoaned his lack of formal teaching while privately he was almost obscene in his single-minded desire to compensate this through self-advancement. He mapped out the many references of specific books for his children to read. Evidence for Horatio's obsession with education can be found in numerous archives.⁵⁴⁹

Tom as the first born male, precious through dint of early deprivation and illness, and named after his uncle and William Charles Wentworth, was burdened before his first steps.⁵⁵⁰ Horatio's diary sets out an unwavering course for his oldest son.⁵⁵¹ Horatio lauded and celebrated Tom's early educational achievements in his diary. He documented with joy Tom's early informal education at home. Horatio's choice of schools for Tom Wills reveals something of his passion for classical education and his desire to bequeath to his son the missed education he so lamented. But in his urgency to guide his sons, his desire mutated into suffocating expectation.

By 1859, Horatio was thrilled to read about '... Tom's great improvement. He will yet be one of the first men in the colony if he tries ... Tell Tom that "the greatest unwarrantable liberty" is not correct "the most unwarrantable" would be proper'.⁵⁵² Horatio's insufferable expectations were coupled with the admission that Tom had yet

⁵⁴⁸ Apart from his illness as described above, infectious disease was notorious as a killer during his time at Rugby school. Scarlet fever, one such illness, was reported to have struck down Wills later in life while preparing for an intercolonial cricket match.

⁵⁴⁹ Horatio's thoughts on such matters are reflected in his many letters to his boys while they studied overseas and also in his personal diary.

⁵⁵⁰ The name Wentworth is regarded by the family as having been taken from Charles Wentworth, the barrister who was legal counsel for Horatio early in life. While this seems most reasonable and is consistent with the legal aspirations he had for his son, there is no other evidence, for or against this proposition. There is much evidence for his uncle's eminence in colonial society. See, for example, Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 138, 162.

⁵⁵¹ See Horatio's diary, Box 103/6, State Library of Victoria.

to live up to Horatio's ideals. Although Tom was 24 years of age and captain of his colony at cricket he was treated like a child.

By any measure, Horatio's aspirations for Tom and his schooling went unfulfilled. How did Horatio respond to this? To what degree did he make his displeasure known? Was there any sense of Tom reflecting upon or acknowledging how he had failed in his family's eyes? Horatio dealt with Tom's academic and legal failures as a practical man might. There were no lengthy anguished recriminations about his failed academic and legal careers. While disappointed, he seemed to understand Tom's waywardness. He charted a more personal involvement with his oldest son as he prepared himself for the trek to Queensland in 1861. There is little doubt that it was Horatio who was in command of the relationship between himself and Tom at this point in their lives. Tom for his part, at least on the surface, seems more than willing to be part of his father's expansive plans to journey to Queensland.⁵⁵³

His parents in moments of private reflection on the waywardness of their son seem to indulge him and forgive his immaturity in the ways of the world. A pragmatic Horatio attempted to construct a new path in life for Tom. Having attempted unsuccessfully to steer him towards the law on two occasions he planned to take him to Queensland. In preparation for this task he wrote glowingly of Tom's aptitude for crafts needed for station life in Queensland.⁵⁵⁴

Tom was not the only child in Horatio's ambitious sights. In his authoritative fashion Horatio charted a clear orbit for each of his boys. All his boys, not just Tom, were to be well educated. However, the letters suggest that the burden of expectation weighed more heavily upon Tom than those who were to follow him:

Now my boys, listen to your father! Cedric attention! Go into ... your chemistry before everything else ... you will be wanted out here once a scholar and gentleman. Horace my boy Horace won't you work for your Papa? Will you be idle when he works so hard for you?⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵² Letter, Horatio to Elizabeth, ?25 September 1859 (exact date uncertain).

⁵⁵³ Other data suggest that Tom continued to plan to travel to NSW and Victoria to play cricket despite the family's and his own proclamation that he had given up playing cricket.

⁵⁵⁴ Letter, 23 October 1860, Horatio to his boys in Europe. This is in reference to Tom learning how to shoe a horse.

⁵⁵⁵ Letter, 23 October 1860, Horatio to boys.

But his love is undoubted:

I am always thinking of you my dear boys – always speaking of you ... I am sure you will all exert yourselves and let me be pleased with you all before I die should it please God. Tom has now retired from cricket⁵⁵⁶

Despite his heavy handedness, it would be inaccurate to dismiss or unfairly parody Horatio without due acknowledgement of his affection for his children. Nonetheless he burdened them with his evangelical patriotism and with words that weighed heavily on their conscience.

Almost 25 years before Horatio demanded excellence from his boys, William Redfern had written to a young Horatio Wills in 1832 using the same language of duty, self-reliance and ambition. In many ways Horatio was simply passing along the family desire for self-improvement. The language that Redfern and then Horatio used, spoke of conquering hardship through work and that it was individual responsibility that lay at the heart of a man's destiny.⁵⁵⁷

There were some obvious parallels between Tom and Horatio – both were restless and wandered; both had tragedy in their lives; both had a fiercely competitive mentality. In their own spheres they were industrious, and indeed, compulsive workers. Horatio's newspaper *The Currency Lad* was his public forum to express his nationalistic desires. He possessed a single-minded, prickly antagonism towards what he regarded as English condescension towards native born sons. It was a trait he passed on to his son.⁵⁵⁸ The fighting language was borne from his sense of the aggrieved:

⁵⁵⁶ Letter, 7/8 January 1861.

⁵⁵⁷ Horatio's exhortations to work hard were echoed in the demands of other family members.

⁵⁵⁸ Tom Wills was later to be vice president of the Geelong Australian Natives Association. See, for a general reference on the Australian Natives' Association, J. E. Menadue, *A Centenary History of the Australian Natives' Association 1871–1971* (Melbourne: Horticultural Press, year not stated). The motto of the ANA was 'Advance Australia'. It was a society constructed along the lines of the British Friendly Societies. Its underlying principles were to support the Australian born and to foster kinship and assistance in times of need amongst this group. It was pivotal in steering the country towards Federation. Horatio's irritation with English condescension was illustrated in this letter, from Richard Driver to H. Wills, Sydney, 8 September 1834, 'I am perfectly aware of the existence of the feeling you speak of but I find after a few months residence in the Colony new comers are apt to be favorably inclined to Currency Lads'.

It is to her sons alone that Australia will hereafter depend for that eminence by which other nations have been distinguished. They alone to whom she has given birth – they who have felt the wild inspirations of Freedom on their native hills ...

Look, Australians, to the high-salaried foreigners around you! Behold those men lolling in their coaches – rioting in the sweat of your brow – while you – yes, you, the Sons of the Soil, are doomed to eternal toil – the sport and ridicule of pettifogging worldings ... WE were not made for slaves!⁵⁵⁹

3 Rugby School

Tom Wills spent the better part of five years at Rugby School. Only six private letters survive from that period that were written either to or from Tom. Of these letters, five were between Tom and his father, Horatio Wills.⁵⁶⁰ Four of these letters, written by a boyish Tom, were written in the first year after arriving in England. Childlike and deferential to his parents he, like other boys at school sought to quell parental anxieties about academic performance and his physical health. The first letter, that survives to this day, was written to his father just before his fifteenth birthday upon arriving in London. It is a child's letter. It is a letter with errors of grammar and spelling. The letter expresses the simple delights of the world. Tom's boyish horizons of the world have rudely expanded, 'I saw more vessels in one day at the mouth of the Thames than I ever did at Port Phillip in twelve months'. Its tone was gentle and its contents brief. He understood and genuinely expressed a concern that his distant family worried about his welfare.⁵⁶¹

Within six months of arriving in England there was a blush of homesickness; his first northern winter confirmed his loneliness and distance from home.⁵⁶² Dutifully, the 15-year-old addressed his father as Papa and with a desire that sought his father's approval he put at the front of the letter that his academic work progressed well: 'I have been put into a higher class and the master says that if I improve as I have done during

⁵⁵⁹ *Currency Lad*, 24 November 1832, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁰ One of the letters to his father has a short note to his mother. A further twelve letters amongst family letters during this time survive which give some commentary and context to Wills' time in England.

⁵⁶¹ Letter, Tom Wills to Horatio, 7 August 1850 from London.

⁵⁶² Letter from Tom Wills to Horatio, 24 December 1850. He continued the homesick theme, 4 June 1851.

the last half I will be one of the top boys'. His developing sense of irony was matched by his adolescent astonishment at new sights of a sophisticated and complex society.⁵⁶³ He launched into a style of writing that revealed an emerging playful and provocative manner. By June 1851, the time of the Great Exhibition, Tom wrote to his father with a style destined to evoke paternal scorn. His script was unusual. It was filled with numerous spelling errors, loose sentence construction, and was a rambling, disconnected scrawl so at odds with his father's demanding neat script. Self-conscious about his ripening physical state Tom proudly informed Horatio of his height and weight.

The small number of letters from this period that make reference to Tom mean that only limited conclusions can be gleaned about his manner and personality. Certainly he was well cared for in England. His aunt and uncle were watchful over their nephew's progress. There were already hints of a style of behaviour that was at once charming and nonchalant but with excuses at hand for matters in which he showed little interest. He hinted at the family burden of expectation of his time at Rugby, recalled his aunt's exhortations for study and declared to the world in self-revelation that he had 'not been working hard enough to please a saint'. This was capped by his judgment that a studious life was injurious to one's health, 'I know that if I work too hard that I will become quite ill'.⁵⁶⁴

Tom revealed an early passion for cricket in his letters from Rugby. Typically, before he unleashed this enthusiasm for cricket on the reader, he was careful to show a dutiful deference to his father. The manner in which he gave his cricket scores was to mark him for the rest of his life. His meticulous gathering of his own statistical feats remained with him a lifetime. His style of writing about his sport was boastful, proud and factual. It was a nascent style of letter writing soon to become familiar to a wider audience through his many newspaper letters in Australia. There is no evidence that Horatio was irritated by his son's sporting attainments. If anything, the evidence is to the contrary.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶³ Letter, Tom to Horatio, 4 June 1851. The issues of Tom Wills' style of writing and its implications for his career was an issue of concern for his father and aunt in London.

⁵⁶⁴ Letter, Tom Wills to Horatio, 8 August 1851.

⁵⁶⁵ Letter, Tom Wills to Horatio, 8 August 1851. He automatically launched into a dutiful pattern of stating that he would copy a sermon at the bequest of his uncle. 'He said it would please you if I sent 2 or

In his letter of 8 August 1851, Tom revealed that he kept a book with his match figures for cricket. In a breathless expanse, once the expected duty of a distant son had been dispensed with, Tom careered into a detailed ball by ball analysis of his recent cricket exploits: ‘I am going to give you my cricket score of runs and how many I have put out during the last six months, as I have a book with all my matches in it’. His attention to detail in sports was in contrast with just about everything else that he did. ‘I can play well now’ he wrote, bringing his bat and ball expectantly to his father’s table. Even at this early age he dominated the batting and bowling figures: ‘you may see although I played less matches than some of them you may see that I have got more runs than any of them’.

Towards the end of his period in England the letters, already scant in number, completely dry up. The reason for the absence of letters is unknown but there is no reason to suspect that Tom Wills did not write regularly, indeed, given his ever present uncle and aunt in London, he would have been almost obliged to write, as did other Rugby boys.⁵⁶⁶ There is one further family letter that exists, written to Tom after August 1851 and before he left England in late 1856. This final letter written on 1 May 1853 from Horatio revealed his father subjecting his wife and young children yet again to the discomfort of tent living and his relish for outdoor life.⁵⁶⁷ He repeated the mantra of hard work to his son in England. After a perfunctory comment that Tom’s last letter ‘gave him considerable satisfaction’ he chastised his son for his errant writing. There were signs of exasperation that things were not turning out the way Horatio had planned:

You still however continue to write with a scrawl that would make a writing master eat his nails, and there are occasional errors in spelling and in the grammatical construction of your sentences at which I am much surprised. If you cannot write correctly now I am afraid you never will and if you should after my trouble turn out a dunce!

3 of them to you’. The parable condemned exorbitant narcissism and vainglory as unbecoming for a Christian.

⁵⁶⁶ For example, see the Rugby School archives.

⁵⁶⁷ Letter, Horatio to Tom, 1 May 1853. This letter was written from the site of the new home Horatio was building, Bellevue. The family was living in tents and was exposed to harsh weather.

Years later the sharp criticism by others of his newspaper letters unwittingly stung the same spot.⁵⁶⁸ Twenty years later, in the midst of their public newspaper brawl, William Hammersley knew how to wound Tom Wills deeply:

Tom Wills indulges in one of his periodical vulgar personal attacks on me in last week's *Leader* ... unless to explain how his parents intended that he should be a lawyer and a gentleman, but that Providence ordained otherwise, as his brains were so shallow and his wits so blunt that nature interposed and resolved on his being a professional cricketer – and a very honourable profession, too, Mr Tom Wills, certainly. I am not at all surprised if you, Sir, have refused to insert Mr Wills's letters if they were at all like what appeared in last week's *Leader*; ... if he cannot do ... better ... In the course of a few years, when Mr Wills has been to school again he may be able to write a decent gentlemanly letter and then perhaps the editor of the *Australasian* may be more kind to him ...⁵⁶⁹

His father not unexpectedly directed him towards the conservatism of law with the stinging reprise 'if you have the brains' and with instructions to return to Australia after five or six years. Wills was meant to stay in England and attend Cambridge University, as did William Charles Wentworth. Horatio pointedly used the word honourable when describing the law and as a second option considered business as a possible career for Tom. His father, a man for whom responsibility for one's actions and achievements lay with the individual, then went on to give the harsh edict that, '... if you do not succeed in life and obtain the reputation of a clever gentlemanly fellow, no one will be to blame but yourself'. This line of thinking was repeated more gently but with anxiety by his mother later in his life.⁵⁷⁰ Despite these Victorian admonitions, there was still deep affection for Tom.

⁵⁶⁸ This humiliation was in the form of public criticism of his writing style and by implication his education and intelligence. This sensitivity was known by several of his peers, such as William Hammersley and James Thompson. This sensitivity rekindled parental criticism from his Rugby years. See, *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 24 December 1859, p. 4, in a letter from James Thompson, 'Mr Wills who I thought had by this time been taught that letter writing was not his forte ... permit me to congratulate Mr Wills upon having acquired something approaching to the first elements of English composition, an amiable eccentricity of which he has never yet been guilty at least in his published correspondence'.

⁵⁶⁹ *Australasian*, 25 January 1873, p. 108.

⁵⁷⁰ This theme of blame for Tom and his behaviour was repeated with anxiety and regret by his mother in later years.

4 Return to Melbourne and a Legal Career

Everything is dull here, but people are kept alive by people getting shot at in the streets ...⁵⁷¹

Tom Wills talking about Melbourne, 1870

A most intriguing change occurred to his writing on Tom's return to Victoria at the end of 1856. It coincided with the greatest period of creativity in his life and when his abundant chaotic energy was without constraint. An excellent example of this was his letter of 17 September 1857 to his sister Emily.⁵⁷² He launched into his letter with characteristic obscurity: 'My dog's name is Nell'. The text is disjointed and the humour is wicked.⁵⁷³ His writing is laced with classical references and allusions to Shakespeare. His voice could not be quenched and his thoughts in the letters are exhilarating and infectious. His punning and disregard for the conventions of sentence structure border on the thought disordered. Cryptic asides clash with bold pronouncements that reflect a chaotic process with no centre of gravity. Histrionics and drama are punctuated by moments of perplexity. Nowhere is there a sense of self-reflection and matters soon career on to the next topic.

The letters from the years of 1857 through 1860 reveal a remarkable mindset and foment of energy and creative passion. They are characterised by a peculiar stream of consciousness so different from the boyish script from the early part of the decade. He could be dismissive, triumphant and brazen all within a single sentence. Whatever his inner world was, he rarely let it be known. Lines of argument or considered opinion were not developed. His stream of thought was in rapid flux and a string of defiant jabs. To give emphasis he underlined his words with a flourish. His punctuation was idiosyncratic. Language was breathless and explosive and he revelled in presenting himself and his motives as mysterious.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷¹ Letter, Tom Wills to Cedric, May 1870.

⁵⁷² Letter, Tom Wills to Emily, 17 September 1857.

⁵⁷³ His impish humour was most evident in the early letters after he returned to Australia but can be found throughout his life. For example see 26 July 1862 where in a harsh allusion to his sister Emily, probably relating to her size he called her Mt Emily; in another humorous aside he flattered his mother calling a nearby mountain Elizabeth a 'beauty'. It was a characteristic of his flippant charm.

⁵⁷⁴ Letter, Tom to Emily, 28 June 1859.

Even the physical form of his writing underwent a metamorphosis from his Rugby school script. It changed radically from a formless scribble to strutting backward sloping letters. There is some evidence that his writing style reflected aspects of his spoken language. Certainly the provocative short jabs and his pithy manner of speaking were similar to his series of sharp written phrases. His language during this period was confronting, physical, vaguely insulting and slippery. Some of his letters speak of a man who barely took himself seriously.⁵⁷⁵

Tom Wills' personal letters had little of the high handed venom that he dished out in his many letters to newspapers. Although consumed by conflicts in cricket, there is little that can be construed as malicious or hateful in his private letters. Forever buoyant and carefree he was seemingly unencumbered with thoughts that he should pursue anything but his own desires. Most, though not all, of his letters of this period were flamboyant. He wrote moderate almost obsequious letters to an older William Tunks when negotiating when and where to play intercolonial cricket matches. These 1857 letters to the New South Welshman, Tunks, were written when Wills was associated with the Melbourne Cricket Club. A rough edged Tunks used language to Wills that was blunt and dismissive. By contrast Wills spoke in the language of a diplomatic courtier.⁵⁷⁶

Prior to his return to Australia and his entry into a law firm there was only the briefest mention of alternative careers for Tom Wills.⁵⁷⁷ Certainly the prospect of pursuing a career as a professional sportsman was not canvassed by the family. Prophetically though, his dislike for hard work and lack of outdoor pursuits was on his mind as early as 1851.⁵⁷⁸ It seems that he entered a legal firm around 1857 and left in 1860. He made only occasional jocular comments about working in a law office. There is no hint that he ever seriously considered it as a career. There is no inkling that Tom was ever interested in law apart from appeasing his father's ambitions. Indeed securing regular paid employment was an anxiety that exercised the mind of his family but was met with implacable indifference by Tom.

⁵⁷⁵ Letter, Tom Wills to Cedric, 15 May 1860.

⁵⁷⁶ There were three letters between a diplomatic Wills and a thin-skinned Tunks in 1857. These were on the 4 and 15 October, Wills to Tunks; and 9 October, Tunks to Wills.

⁵⁷⁷ See comments from Horatio and his Aunt Sarah Alexander about commerce.

It was part of Horatio's elaborate destiny for his family that one son acquitted himself in the legal profession.⁵⁷⁹ Tom was ordained for this path. This was clearly outlined in Horatio's letters and was well known to family, friends and colleagues. Family oral history has it that Tom's middle name, 'Wentworth', was in honour of William Charles Wentworth.⁵⁸⁰ Tom for his part rarely mentioned the law, apart from breezy references that suggested it was of little consequence to him. Some of his closest cricketing colleagues were gentlemen of the accounting, legal and mercantile ilk. The imprimatur of financial and social respectability was never to be one for Tom Wills.

The dull sedentary world of legal clerking, tethered to time and place, was unappealing to a man like Tom Wills. When he left the law office called up by his father to join him on the trek to Queensland it was with little concern that he abandoned the conventions of office life. With charm he informed his brothers that he was leaving the law to head bush.⁵⁸¹ With a characteristic manner, he indicated that he was relieved to be leaving but also slightly distorted the reasons for leaving to one of his brothers. He gave as reasons for leaving that 'the law work wont pay here now' and regarded further study as wasteful.⁵⁸² The fault he seems to inform the world was not his own, rather it was the law that could not pay its way. He expressed no disappointment at leaving and like a Rugby schoolboy, was freed of tiresome homework to take on a cross-country jaunt.

5 Queensland

In 1860 Horatio Wills made preparations for his trek to the family property, Cullin-la-Ringo, in central Queensland. Within days of his arrival he was murdered, along with eighteen others in his party, in a surprise attack by aborigines. Tom was left to struggle with inadequate resources and his own ill-equipped temperament. After a

⁵⁷⁸ Letter, Tom Wills to Horatio, 8 August 1851.

⁵⁷⁹ That this was Horatio's ambition was repeated by those who knew Tom in England as a schoolboy and by William Hammersley. Horatio purchased the following book for Tom Wills presumably in a vain bid to encourage studious endeavour. *A Handy book on Property Law* by Lord St. Leonards to 'Thos. Wentworth Wills from his father. London Sept. 8th, 1859'.

⁵⁸⁰ Personal Communication with Terry Wills Cooke.

⁵⁸¹ Letter, Tom to brothers, 23 August 1860.

⁵⁸² Letter Tom to Cedric, 15 May 1860. Only at one point in the vast archival material analysed was there a mention of where Tom Wills was articled. This was in his obituary notice, *Ballarat Star*, 4 May 1880, p. 3, where it was reported that he was articled to Messrs Smith and Willan, solicitors.

period of vainglorious promises, extreme fear and reckless expenditure of money without authorisation, the trustees of the property expelled Tom from his position. This part of the chapter explores some of the issues of Tom Wills' time on the property and his expulsion from the property. The details of the trek to Queensland are not covered in detail in this thesis. Some of the key questions to be addressed include: Was Tom guilty in the eyes of the family for not being present at the time of Horatio's death? Was he regarded by the family as an unworthy successor to his father? To what extent do we gain insight into Tom through his response to his father's death? Did the family disintegrate after the death of Horatio?

5.1 Leaving for Queensland

The expedition to Queensland was one that had an immense influence on Tom Wills' life. At the time of leaving Victoria, Tom Wills was at the height of his sporting powers. The question arises to what extent was he a reluctant companion of his father? This arises particularly in the light of his father's dominating personality and Tom's subsequent behaviour of spending long periods away from the station to play cricket.

In the first half of 1860, just over three years after returning from England, Tom mentioned that his father had plans to establish a new station in Queensland. With a teasing flourish Tom announced that he had given up cricket and gave the clearest indication that he expected to be part of the expedition.⁵⁸³ On 12 July, Horatio confirmed that Tom was to travel to Cullin-la-Ringo Station.⁵⁸⁴ Nowhere are there any existing letters that indicate a sense of coercion from Horatio or resistance from Tom about heading to Queensland. In surviving letters there is no record of resentment towards his father for the decision to take Tom to Cullin-la-Ringo. Both father and son must have known that Tom, as captain of the Victorian cricket team, and with a prominent public profile would miss out on further establishing himself as a sporting hero. Tom also was aware of the impending visit to Australia of the first English Cricket XI team captained by H. H. Stephenson. The colonies were excitedly awaiting this visit and Wills' anticipation for this event was evident.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ Letter, Tom to Cedric, 15 May 1860.

⁵⁸⁴ Letter, Horatio to his younger sons, 12 July 1860.

⁵⁸⁵ Letter where Tom notes the upcoming All England Eleven, 1 October 1860.

The context suggests that Tom was willing enough to be part of the expedition and like other family members fell into line with their father's sovereign rule. Tom's letters, given his possible expected resentment to missing cricket were surprisingly warm and compliant with his father's desires. Tom did not complain or express anger. Rather there were his usual carefree dramatic farewells and reassurances that he would no longer play in the 'Grand Matches' and that he was lost to cricket forever.

It was not that Horatio did not admire Tom's prominence and skills in cricket and football. In January 1861, he beamed over Tom's cricket in Melbourne. He also announced with authority and with no hint of discussion, dissent or debate that 'Tom has now retired from cricket'. In the same breath, Horatio predicted that the colonials would defeat the upcoming English cricket team, and if any doubt for this proposition was entertained, then there would surely be no doubt if his son was to have played. He also boasted that the Sydney team was relieved that Tom was not playing against them in the upcoming intercolonial match knowing of his departure for Queensland. Horatio obviously knew that he was depriving his son of the opportunity to play against England.⁵⁸⁶

5.2 Trek to Queensland

Horatio Wills left Victoria in January 1861. He and his party stopped at Sydney and Moreton Bay before they overlanded through to central Queensland to the site of Cullin-la-Ringo.⁵⁸⁷

Horatio's affection for Tom, despite the latter's misadventures, was reflected in his letter on the road to Cullin-la-Ringo, 28 February 1861.⁵⁸⁸ The two men spoke to one another as close trusting companions, not a distant father dragging along a reluctant son. They penetrated dense scrub, shot game for food and in their half-starved state gobbled down a paddy melon with plenty of alcohol. On the road to Cullin-la-Ringo,

⁵⁸⁶ Letter, Horatio to younger boys, 8 January 1861. 'Nothing can touch his slows. It was pretty to see how they walked into the wickets ... They just went in and then just went out. I think our men will beat the English 11. They would surely do so if Tom played. The Sydney people are delighted that Tom is not to play against their 11 this year but he will be "bowling over the green" in Queensland'.

⁵⁸⁷ The details of this trip are well preserved through family letters. See Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, pp. 94-106 and Perrin, *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 61-8.

⁵⁸⁸ Letter, Horatio to Elizabeth, 28 February 1861. Other letters from the Cullin-la-Ringo trek that reveal such affection from Horatio towards Tom include 8 February, 18 July and 6 October 1861.

Horatio, in writing to his wife, proudly boasted of the recent Victorian victory over Sydney in the cricket intercolonial. Horatio's letters give an insight into his attitude to Tom's sport. He kept his other sons, who were at school in Europe, abreast of Tom's achievements. Horatio triumphed in his son's success and exhibited paternal pride. He affectionately dubbed Tom the 'Captain'. These were not the words of a man who can be caricatured and dismissed as without affection for his son. Horatio may have been bombastic and overbearing but he was not without love for his oldest son.

Horatio's currency aspirations extended to what he saw as the potential superiority of Australian cricket over the English. Horatio was unbending when he skited about Tom's highest score to his younger boys in Germany. With respect to the upcoming All England Eleven tour of Australia, he boasted 'If they come I think they will get licked!' The language, the defiance and provocative twist were all trade marks he passed on to his son Tom.⁵⁸⁹ The warmth between Tom and Horatio was transmitted through their letters back home to Victoria. Horatio assured his wife that he was protective of her son and reflected the forged links between Tom and his two parents from the days Tom almost lost his life as a young child to infectious disease:

I take care of your son, dear wife, for I am always up very early generally an hour before day, make up the fire boil a pot of tea which we bolt between us go after our horses and then the bullocks after which breakfast and off! ... I just observed Tom showing Jemmy Baker the way to point a revolver. Tom is getting stout.⁵⁹⁰

5.3 Death and Religion

Tom's first letter after the death of his father and the eighteen other settlers in 1861 was to H. C. A. Harrison. In his bewildered and disoriented state Tom turned to his cousin. At the moment of greatest distress in his life it is telling that this was the

⁵⁸⁹ Letter, Horatio to younger boys, March 1860. The term currency was a common term of the period. It was typically used to denote Currency Lads and Lasses, that is, native born Australians as distinct with those born in Britain. Currency aspirations refers to the nationalistic yearnings of people such as Horatio Wills to outdo the English. In this particular case it is his desire for sporting victory. It is clear that he imparted this strident view to his son Tom. Also see as another example, the letters of Rachel Henning, Dixson collection, January 1862 from Bathurst, letter to Mr Boyce, which reflect a commonly held view of English superiority. Even Horatio's younger sons in Germany took on a more deferential, at times inferior, stance on colonial abilities compared with the English. Tom and Horatio were far more alike than anyone else in the family on this matter.

⁵⁹⁰ Letter, Horatio to Elizabeth, 18 July 1861.

man with whom he was able to communicate openly his fear and anger. If nothing else, this letter cemented in place a relationship that seems to have been one of mutual understanding and respect. There was nothing shallow, teasing or cryptic as was the case Tom's usual letter writing. It was the raw distress of a man bereft of his life's coordinates. The script is physically contorted as if in sympathy with the distress of the writer.⁵⁹¹ After Horatio's murder religious beliefs became a powerful explanatory force for the family. Grief collapsed into reassuring religious rituals that bestowed meaning upon a violent and unexpected death. The family, or at least the women in the family, took solace in shared religious convictions. Tom's mother Elizabeth grieved: 'We must learn to look upon it as intended for some wise purpose. Let us pray that some good may come out of it'.⁵⁹²

Day to day activities were immersed in prayer, rituals and religious obedience. Horatio and then Elizabeth invoked the fear of Godly reprisals in spurring their children to moral and industrious achievement. Horatio's trek into the frontier had the hallmarks of evangelical soldiering writ large and his correspondence with Rev. Charles Perry is evidence that he had religious connections of the most eminent kind in the colony. Horatio was not a man simply content to praise God, but saw himself as shaping the world about him, and exercised his influence to bring God closer to him.⁵⁹³ Religious belief as an organising framework was less relevant for Tom in life and death. During his life Tom gave little indication of deep religious belief. This was not for want of the efforts of his family.

⁵⁹¹ Letter, Tom Wills to HCA Harrison, 24 October 1861.

⁵⁹² Letter, Elizabeth to her boys, 21 December 1861. After Horatio's death, the family was besieged by clergy and family bible readings were common. Emily, like her mother, made sense of his death through religious interpretations. See her letter to her brothers 21 November 1861. There is no evidence that Tom saw Horatio's death in such a light or if he did so, he did not commit such thoughts to paper. See letter, Archibald Crawford to Elizabeth Wills, 13 November 1861. This letter gives a clear idea of the religious context of Horatio's death. The family steeped in religion was comforted by Crawford. He urged 'earnest prayers' and that Elizabeth 'seek and find meaning for the fateful blow which has permitted your terrible trial'. He also makes that very Victorian comment that Horatio's 'noble' features were a sign of his readiness for 'being carried away'.

⁵⁹³ Horatio stands out in the family for his almost brutal religiosity. His diary is drenched with religious homilies which at times descended into an almost cathartic masochistic chant. He alluded to his more sinful activities and doubts about religion which he sought to overcome. He was a staunch supporter

5.4 Grief and False Assurances

After Horatio's death, the family's distress and dreams for Queensland were distilled into Tom. It was through Tom that Horatio's legacy was to continue and it was through Tom that the important rituals of burial and death received family sanction. Elizabeth reassured her sons, 'Tom says he will leave his father where he is till Cedric can assist him to bury the bones properly. If your father is permitted to look down upon us it will be pleasing to him'.⁵⁹⁴ When Horatio died so did the most important stabilising influence on his son. Tom declared to his mother:

One of Mr Gregson's men has got the scurvy very bad so I am told. I hope no one here will get it – ... you need not be frightened for me my dear Mother – I shall fear no one and do my best what is my duty ... My Father had trusted me and I only act now as if he were himself present and could approve of what I do ...⁵⁹⁵

The proclamations made by Tom Wills were bold, dutiful and brave. But his assurances became increasingly hollow. In the year after his father's murder Tom's composure was fraying. He maintained the line of the obedient oldest son despite the increasing suspicions of those around him. He boasted of the promising future of the station and assumed the heroic mantle of reviving his father's dreams. This was nurtured and given voice to by his family in Victoria. This continued until the year he was finally forced to resign from the station when his deceptive and financially damaging behaviour could no longer conceal his neglect of his familial duties.

5.5 Struggle on the Farm

After his death Tom Wills found himself on a station vast in size and with a depleted, shocked group of labourers. His time on the station was marked by physical

of local churches and was well known amongst local and early prominent clergy. See his letters 16 October 1851 and 26 December 1851, correspondence with Anglican Bishop Charles Perry.

⁵⁹⁴ Letter, 21 December 1861, it seems as if Horatio was not actually moved from his original burial site. Elizabeth and the other children, apart from those sons who worked on the property, did not as far as records reveal, travel to Queensland to see Horatio's grave. The issue of tending to the grave was dear to Elizabeth, 'I am much pleased to hear that Tom has attended to the poor lone grave since he went back'. Elizabeth to Cedric, 14 August 1863.

⁵⁹⁵ Letter, Tom Wills to Elizabeth, 8 June 1862.

hardship, loneliness, fear, ineptitude, disinclination for the task and repeated pilfering of the station's finances as he ran up personal bills.⁵⁹⁶

Tom Wills was sworn in as a magistrate in 1863 after a series of verbal altercations with the Colonial Secretary.⁵⁹⁷ His longest uninterrupted period on the station was from October 1861 until the end of 1862. After this time, Tom took several trips away from the station until he left permanently in 1864. He made regular steamer trips back and forth to Victoria and also spent time in New Zealand.⁵⁹⁸ His mother and the trustees were exasperated by his absences from Cullin-la-Ringo.

William Roope, husband of Elizabeth's notorious and gossipy sister Catherine, was to be the steadying hand on the property after Horatio's death. Trusted implicitly, and warmly regarded by Horatio and Elizabeth, it was William Roope whom Tom had asked be despatched to Cullin-la-Ringo after the murder. The relationship between Roope and Wills soured as they endeavoured to save Cullin-la-Ringo. Tom spitefully wrote about Roope to his mother and seemingly anyone who wished to listen. He condemned Roope for being too slow, a malingerer and a hypochondriac.⁵⁹⁹ His complaints about Roope seem to have questionable validity and at times appear deceitful. The weight of evidence is that Roope, while perhaps not the most suited of individuals to the physically arduous task, was scapegoated by Wills. Catherine Roope confirmed in her personal diary that her husband left the station as a result of Tom's misconduct.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁶ There are numerous references to this in the family correspondence, for example, Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 12 January 1864.

⁵⁹⁷ Letter 26 May 1863, from GlennCross-Smith to Horace.

⁵⁹⁸ For example see, *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 27 February 1864, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁹ See letter, Tom to Elizabeth, 8 June 1862, when Tom accused Roope of faking loss of sight in his eye. Tom had sandy blight in his left eye. Sandy blight refers to trachoma of the eye, 'Chronic infection with the trachoma organism, *Chlamydia trachomatis*, can lead to blindness ... The early European settlers of Australia brought trachoma with them. Whether the Australian indigenous people had trachoma before colonisation is unclear, but it seems unlikely ... However, with the poor housing conditions of the early settlers, and with the heat, dirt and flies of Australia, trachoma (or 'sandy blight' as it was often called) became widespread and well known'. See, H. R. Taylor, 'Trachoma in Australia', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 175, 1 October 2001, pp. 371-2.

⁶⁰⁰ See Catherine Roope's diary 21 March 1862, 'Tom has behaved exceedingly ill to him'. Although her view may be prejudicial because of the conflict between her husband and Tom, the contextual evidence of letters support her view. There are subtle indications that Roope was displeased with aspects of Tom's behaviour well before this.

Tension over the management of the property developed between Tom and the appointed trustees of the property. This was apparent to him during moments of bitter insight, ‘But the Trustees I suppose won’t trust me with money yet so I must bear it I suppose’. He then continued the self-deception coupled with words that would appease his mother. Not without some cunning he attempted to influence his mother in courting favour with Mr. Morris, one of the trustees of the station, ‘Steer him in what a position Mr. R has left’.⁶⁰¹ Although the evidence points towards Tom’s mismanagement there was not an inkling of such a suggestion in any of Tom’s letters. Seemingly he either lacked insight into his inept ways and its impact on others, or simply deceived others and perhaps even himself. Although it might be argued that without further details this is unreasonable criticism of Tom Wills, it was the repetition of such incidents that gives this argument strength.⁶⁰²

5.6 Idealisation of Horatio

The family wallowed in Horatio’s idealised legacy. Elizabeth invoked his name when urging her children to excel. In response, Tom whined, ‘Really I do all the work and bear the brunt of everything and someone else gets the praise. I know well it will be so but thank God I do my duty to my poor father ...’.⁶⁰³ Catherine Roope sharply observed that ‘none of his [Horatio] children will ever be so agreeable as he was or so kind or good natured’.⁶⁰⁴

Emily, Tom’s sister, thrust her own concept of an idealised successor to her father upon Tom. Cast as the family’s saviour, Tom, in the early days after the death, was seen as manfully struggling in a hostile bush for the family and Horatio’s memory. Emily was vengeful in her identification with the pioneers’ blood lust and revenge over the killings. Tellingly she told her young brothers in Europe of Tom’s vows uttered over Horatio’s grave, words that enshrined and imprisoned Tom as the family’s new head.⁶⁰⁵ The deterioration in Emily’s and Tom’s relationship occurred slowly after their father’s

⁶⁰¹ Letter, Tom Wills to Elizabeth, 17 June 1862.

⁶⁰² See for example, letters Tom to Elizabeth 8 and 17 June 1862 for criticism of Roope. By 21 December 1863, his letter to Cedric was openly disdainful and sarcastic about Roope.

⁶⁰³ Letter, Tom Wills to Elizabeth, 17 June 1862.

⁶⁰⁴ Diary, Catherine Roope, June 17 1862.

⁶⁰⁵ Letter from Emily to her brother in Germany, 21 November 1861. In this letter, Emily described with relish how the aborigines were hunted down.

death. Her letters are gossipy, a bit exasperated and suggest that she was aware of Tom's increasing negligent management of the station.⁶⁰⁶

The idealisation of Horatio in death bequeathed a burden for his sons that was intolerable in life. There was a sense expressed in family letters that the trajectory taken by the boys in the family would not have pleased Horatio. Elizabeth continued to speak on behalf of her dead husband.⁶⁰⁷ Elizabeth admonished them and invoked the sayings of Horatio as she encouraged and goaded them. Tom Wills quoted back to his mother the very lines that she had employed to exhort a greater effort from Tom: 'Go to work Tom, remember your poor dear father's words and work like a man'.⁶⁰⁸ Although Tom regurgitated these words as evidence that he was working hard in the name of his father, the general tenor of his letters and the objective evidence seems more in keeping with platitudes to appease his mother. His promises often went unfulfilled on the farm.

After Horatio's death Tom's aunt, Sarah Alexander, wrote to Tom from London. She was one of the few people for whom Tom seemed to express genuine affection. She continued Horatio's commandments that had become inculcated in the family, 'Let me beg of you to continue to be a dutiful son to her and to remember your dear father's dying instructions to you all to exert yourselves to the utmost for her and your brothers' and sisters' interests'. She advised him to read the Bible. Her letter reminded him of his sense of duty and the morality of right versus wrong:

Will you dearest Tom grant me one request as one that is anxious about your soul's salvation, that part of you that can never die but live for ever in blessedness or misery, it is that you will daily, and as often as it comes to your memory, say 'Oh merciful Father for Thy dear Son's sake grant me Thy holy spirit to help and guide me and mine'.⁶⁰⁹

At times Wills invoked his father's image and catch phrases of religion to influence his mother. Comments about his father seem calculated to add moral weight to his arguments when he pressured his mother in trying to obtain more money from the

⁶⁰⁶ Emily to Cedric, 3 September 1863.

⁶⁰⁷ Letter, Elizabeth to boys, 21 December 1861.

⁶⁰⁸ Tom Wills to Elizabeth, 17 June 1862.

⁶⁰⁹ Sarah Alexander to Tom, 14 April 1864.

trustees, 'I wish you would get him to decide, just borrow by all means, don't sell this great fortune or else I shall say my father's children are not worthy longer to bear his name'.⁶¹⁰

An idealised image of Horatio became the family's reference point. Elizabeth's idealisation was more complex than one might suspect. Elizabeth had suffered greatly during the early years when she and Horatio had set up camp in the western Victorian frontier. Her later comments suggest that she was unprepared to accept life in remote Queensland despite the fact that Horatio had purchased property and made the trek with Tom. She had been hardened and angered by having had to endure a bush life once in her life, in western Victoria, and was little prepared to have this inflicted upon her again.⁶¹¹

Despite this, Elizabeth continued to prod and lumber her children with the memory of their father: 'Had your poor father lived it would have been free from debt in two years'.⁶¹² While not a criticism of Tom in isolation, her criticisms were a clumsy sweep of all before her and diminished the stature of her children. Tom, despite his waywardness, was still an object of Elizabeth's affection at this point.

One view often forwarded is that Tom's waywardness had its roots in the death of Horatio. But there is evidence that Tom's behaviour was already of concern to his parents well before Horatio's death.⁶¹³ In 1860 the private thoughts of Elizabeth about her son to Horatio were laid bare. She referred to an incident where Tom had selfishly whined about being forced to travel far to round up some sheep. His mother indulgently reflected to her husband, '... he does not understand the ups and downs of the world yet and no doubt thinks it dreadfully hard'.⁶¹⁴ His mother's tone was, as it almost always was at this time, one of parental concern marked by patience and affection rather than

⁶¹⁰ Letter, Tom Wills to Elizabeth, 26 July 1862.

⁶¹¹ Also see, Edward Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria: Then called Port Phillip District, (from 1841-1851)*, Mitchell Library, for a first hand description of squatting life in Victoria during this time. Also the archives of the Allan family, neighbours of the Lexington property, gives further insight into life at the time. The Allan family material is from the private collection of Kenly Simpson.

⁶¹² Elizabeth to Cedric, 4 December 1866.

⁶¹³ His 'carelessness' was well known to his family. For example, see letter 15 February 1860, from Emily to her brothers. The quotation marks are employed because sometimes this description seems more apt as a euphemism for his probable stealing and probable selling of family items rather than true carelessness.

⁶¹⁴ Letter, Elizabeth to Horatio, approximately 1860.

anger. Tom Wills' petulant sense of being wronged and his plaintive whining was a common in his private and public letters.

5.7 Expulsion of Tom from the Station

Tom would act for himself in all things so now he must now also bear the blame of all things himself.⁶¹⁵

Elizabeth Wills, 1864

He is really like a child with money. Not to be trusted with it.⁶¹⁶

Elizabeth Wills, 1864

Tom Wills lacked insight into his inept ways and its impact upon others. At times he deceived others and perhaps even himself. When he was criticised or questioned, there was a plaintive quality to his correspondence from Queensland. Throughout all of this he attempted to appease his mother. Dutiful references to the memory of his father punctuated this correspondence but was laced with a quality that makes one suspect its sincerity.

The overall supervision of the property was in the hands of a group of trustees. As management of the farm spiralled out of control and Tom Wills increasingly implicated himself, through deception and poor management, his mother finally relented. She was informed by one of the trustees, Mr Morris, that Tom was deeply into mischief.

Tom Wills had spent considerable periods of time away from the property playing sport and visiting friends throughout the colonies.⁶¹⁷ There was a sense of urgency from the Trustees that Tom should get back to the farm rather than playing cricket. Elizabeth marched to William Ducker, Horatio's old friend, Geelong Mayor and financial counsellor to the Wills family. Ducker was requested to sort out the financial mess on the station and assess Tom's culpability. Tom's elusive and slippery manner to

⁶¹⁵ Letter from Elizabeth to Cedric, 12 January 1864.

⁶¹⁶ Letter from Elizabeth to Cedric, 12 January 1864.

⁶¹⁷ For example, see letter, 1 May 1863, Glencross Smith to Cedric, 'Tom is up the country yet, he is taking a good spell of it'.

date had been met with some degree of forbearance but matters were now at a head. Tom Wills had been drawing cheques for personal use while claiming them as expenditure on the Station. This furtive deceit was now exposed and openly discussed in family letters. The trustees made it clear that Tom, who was in Geelong at this time, was not to leave Victoria until matters were resolved:

Mr Morris was out here on Sunday to tell me something of importance. Mr Anderson had been down to see him and the consequence is Tom is not likely to be married for a very long time to come. Mr A has heard ... not at all in Tom's favour. So Mr Morris wished me to write and advise him to return to the station without any loss of time. I do not expect he will even go to Skipton this time. Tom would act for himself in all things so now he must now also bear the blame of all things himself. I rather pity him but at the same time he is to blame ... For he had not yet given an account of how the money was spent he had given him when last down here. He is really like a child with money. Not to be trusted with it.⁶¹⁸

During the period 1863-4, Tom's excuses seemed to buy him time until the accumulation of discrepancies overwhelmed even an indulgent mother. By early 1864, Elizabeth was coming to the realisation that her son did not measure up to the exacting standard required. Tom's increasingly fragile and lame excuses exasperated her patience. The Christmas period of 1863 and early 1864 saw the crescendo of delaying tactics, deceit and rising debt come to a head. But it was personal misbehaviour that dashed his engagement to a farm girl, Julie Anderson, that catalysed and set his family's anger.⁶¹⁹

Emily wrote the most vindictive lines about Tom during this time. Sarcastic and dismissive, she pointedly contrasted the responsible Cedric, Tom's younger brother, as a counterpoint to the more capricious Tom. She hinted at Tom's sneakiness and his weakness.⁶²⁰ By the time of spring 1863, her venom had not yet congealed and she could still proffer an occasional word of warmth towards her brother:

⁶¹⁸ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 12 January 1864.

⁶¹⁹ It is not revealed in remaining letters what Mr Anderson heard that so angered him and excommunicated Tom from a previously cosy relationship with the Anderson family. Tellingly it was the female members of Tom's family that were most vindictive towards him.

⁶²⁰ See letter, Emily to Cedric, 3 September 1863, although the letter asked Cedric not to be so swayed, the context indicates that it was Tom who had been swayed by disreputable men.

Would you believe me ... that Cullinlaringo will go to blazes if Tom leaves it now. Poor fellow I suppose he wont be able to come down in time for the cricket matches now and really must want some recreations after months of unceasing labour. Such is life.⁶²¹

His mother, Elizabeth, was still unable to condemn Tom with the venom others reserved for him but her view was hardening. There was, even in her most despairing moments, a closeness to Tom and a vestige of pity that remained up until the early 1870s. Her criticism of his financial deceit was cloaked in maternal indulgence. In profound understatement she went on, 'It seems a very difficult matter for Tom to keep accounts'.⁶²² When confronted, Tom repeatedly claimed to be sorting out the money problems of the station. Even when the evidence of his financial ineptitude and deceit was overwhelming Elizabeth's tone was more tolerant than vindictive. Perhaps it was her identification with him as her oldest child and possible guilt that she bore some of the blame for his behaviour that blinded her to an honest assessment. Elizabeth wrestled with these notions and with self-evident pain reflected upon Tom's selfishness when the latter requested that his young brother be despatched to the farm to help. By now his excuses had worn thin, 'Tom states very strongly the benefit it would be to the station if he had Horace but I say no. Tom has had all the benefit of a good education so he must allow his brother a little – there ought to be a little difference in leaving school at 20 and 17 or 18'.⁶²³

By 21 February 1864, Elizabeth's controlled and tolerant anger hardened. In this letter she recalled an idealised Horatio. The comments nestle beside her descriptions of her son's disappointing behaviour. Tom was viewed as less self-sacrificing unlike an heroic Horatio. Tom's ineptitude and deceit with money were matters of which she was painfully aware. Somewhat in vain she regarded marriage as Tom's only hope for the salvation of his character:

Tom is not near the man for work as your poor father was he would never complain of what he did for us all – ... I wish the station was out of debt so that something could be done to the grave and have a coffin made for his poor bones ... Tom has done very wrong in drawing upon strangers when last in town. Mr Ducker told me he was

⁶²¹ Letter, Emily to Cedric, 20 October 1863.

⁶²² Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, undated 1864.

⁶²³ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, undated 1864.

puzzled to know how Tom had paid his way down – for they had written to tell him in case he made up his mind to come down he was to get 20 pounds from Mr Johnston but it appears he came away without it and I suppose this is the result of drawing on the agents in Rockhampton ... Tom is dreadfully childish with regard to money and he knows the many bills both here and in England his kind father had to pay for him, but he cannot expect that indulgence now. He must work for it ... Tom Brinsmeads mother was here today thinking to hear of him through Tom but I could give her no information not having seen my own wilful boy.⁶²⁴

In 1864 Tom Wills was forced to leave the Station. His sister, Emily, was barely able to contain her joy. She tastelessly celebrated his demise. Savage in her assessment, she concluded that his only option was in turning professional as a cricketer. It was not an option she regarded highly. The divide between Tom and his sister was now complete:

Hip Hip Horrah Mr Morris ... on Friday afternoon ... and told Ma that Tom had resigned at least Mr Morris made him and is not going back to the station again. I wonder what he will do? Turn professional cricketer I suppose. I wonder if Ma will say anything to Tom about it? And will Tom loaf here or ... to Melbourne and go to the bad ... I feel so relieved since I have known of his dismissal ...⁶²⁵

With a resignation borne from loss of hope and repeated connivances by Tom, Elizabeth in April 1864 wrote to her son Cedric, that Tom's departure from the station was the best course of action. In this letter, written the day after Tom had written to Cedric about the same matter, she gave a very different version of events to Tom. She excused his faults and did not accept the accusations of others that he was idle 'for, unfortunately for him, he lost his poor Fathers' services too early. Your Father used to say himself Tom worked well but he required one to guide him – who does not? Everyone feels the want of a good one'. In doing so, she seemed to identify with Tom's losses. Her reflection was as much upon her own life as it was upon Tom. Elizabeth after all, had lost both her father as a young girl and husband as a relatively young wife.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁴ Elizabeth to Cedric, 21 February 1864. Punctuation and emphasis in the original.

⁶²⁵ Letter, Emily to Cedric, undated 1864.

⁶²⁶ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 3 April 1864.

Ducker and Morris reviewed the station records to check Tom's version of how money was being spent. Clearly they did not trust Tom. When advising Ced on station management Elizabeth indicated what Tom's problems were: 'But you must be careful to charge not more than your salary for that is what the Trustees are so particular about, for they have drawn so much money from the Bank at Rockhampton that they do not wish to spend one penny more than what is really necessary'. She implied at the end of her letter that she could not entrust Tom to take pistols up the station, '... in case some wrong should happen to them. Your Father's double barrel gun I should think Tom would not think of taking away from the Station'.⁶²⁷

Tom wrote to Cedric and gave his version of events of why he left the Station. It was a brief letter given the circumstances. In an understatement that almost certainly concealed a difficult and accusatory meeting he said, 'Mr Morris, Mr Ducker my mother and self had a grand meeting the other night and it was ultimately decided that I should not return to the station ...'.⁶²⁸ This was a typical Wills explanation – breezy with no details and no sense that responsibility lay at his feet. There was no analysis, no self-reflection and no admission that wrongs were perpetrated by himself. All items from the trivial to the serious in his letter seem equally weighted and equally disregarded.

Two months after Tom had been forced off the Station, Elizabeth was still somewhat protective of him: 'It is Mr Morris himself who thinks that a more competent person is required for manager ... It was to Tom I heard Mr. Morris say it was the worst conducted station up there ... as far as opinion goes I am quite sure Tom worked well while on the station ...'.⁶²⁹

Emily's anger towards Tom was based, it seems, upon three factors. Firstly, the broken engagement to Julie Anderson in her mind reflected poorly upon the entire Wills family; secondly, that the burden of Cullin-la-Ringo was placed upon his younger brothers and thirdly and most importantly was her unforgiving assessment that Tom,

⁶²⁷ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 3 April 1864. It is not clear but this and other similar comments by family members suggest that Tom may have been selling off items for get money.

⁶²⁸ Letter, Tom to Cedric, 2 April 1864.

⁶²⁹ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 10 June 1864.

through his negligence had dishonoured and betrayed the memory of their father. In doing so he condemned the family to hardship. Horatio's image suffocated Tom, Cedric and the other boys. His shadow inveigled its way into the family's life and his words of duty lingered, magnified and inviolate.

Tom continued to spend money and run up debts after he left the property in Queensland. This was not a new problem. While he lived in England he was known for his extravagant spending with Horatio's money. In Australia the records reveal that he ran up debts in Geelong, Tasmania, Melbourne and Queensland. By April 1864 his mother groaned that Tom 'will hardly be able to get from this for debt – someone or the other is continually after [him]. I sincerely begin to think he will never ... earn a shilling ... May you imitate your father in all his good qualities and hate the lie as he also did'. She confronted for the first time that he might never gain respectability through regular employment.⁶³⁰

After the double assault of the breaking of his engagement to Julie Anderson, and dismissal from the farm, he was in the family's eye never to ascend the throne vacated by Horatio. Dismissed as a mischief maker and worse, his family at this point gave up any expectation that their salvation would come through Tom. To some extent always an outsider, Tom Wills from this point was forever on the periphery of the family.

After he left the station, he remained his jocular, gently provocative and boastful self.⁶³¹ Immature, indulged and disinterested in the mundane, he remained at the family home Belle Vue and spent his time reading, playing sport and loafing. He maintained a detached interest in the station. The public revelation of his incompetence on the station did not stop Tom from dispensing advice to his brother Cedric, who was now left to manage Cullin-la-Ringo. At no point did Tom ever admit to misdeeds or even give a sense of self-discomfort over his family's predicament which, partly lay at his feet. His sporting accomplishments transcended everything else in his life and from the time he

⁶³⁰ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, late April 1864. The word 'earn' is likely correct but not able to be read clearly.

⁶³¹ Letter Tom to Cedric, 14 November 1864.

left the station he gradually disappeared from the family's collective consciousness. Gradually the name of Tom Wills appeared less frequently in their letters.

In many ways his behaviour was that of a spoiled indulged child without responsibility or boundaries. He took what was on offer with little appreciation of its effects on others or himself. This was dangerously self-destructive as it was destructive to the relationships about him. He rarely gives the impression of being sensitive to the way his activities may have caused pain for others. Equally though, one does not gain the impression that he was malicious or vengeful. This childish self-gratification seems not calculating in design, nor is there apparent intent to establish a position of power or influence. In one sense it was his unerring sense of lack of responsibility that got him into so much strife, but unencumbered, he continually looked to the future and its optimistic promises. With characteristic adolescent verbal swagger he defiantly sulked, 'I know how to be careful', when all those about him suggested otherwise.⁶³²

After Horatio's death a feature of Tom's writing which had been apparent in his public letters became more prominent in his private letters. This was his increasing tendency for some letters to be platforms of self-centred complaint. He seems oblivious to others concerns and characteristically saw fault in all those around him. Ever ready to point out perceived deficits in others he took immediate offence when he was criticised.⁶³³

Throughout his life Wills was restless and exhibited, at least in a conventional sense, a disregard for responsibility. Perhaps responsibility with its claustrophobic connotations was dealt with by periodic shedding. Tom Wills was a dreamer. Without a centre of gravity his plans were to forever move. Almost always plucked from the blue and casually tossed to whomever he was writing at various times, Tom Wills planned to travel to near and distant places. He seemed discontented with the ordinariness of life and he wearily reflected to Cedric, 'Anything to pass the time away'.⁶³⁴

⁶³² Letter, Tom to Elizabeth, 26 July 1862.

⁶³³ Letter, Tom Wills, to Cedric, 24 September 1864.

⁶³⁴ Letter, Tom Wills, to Cedric, 24 September 1864. Tom Wills planned to migrate to Sydney after he left the property and to earn money there. In a May 1870 letter to Cedric he dreamed of earning his fortune in sunny, faraway Fiji.

Emily's sharp tongue, and Tom's failed promises about Cullin-la-Ringo, saw her sneer at Tom's job prospects. His lack of paid employment was regarded by his mother and oldest sister as the clearest of evidence that he had failed the family. Tom on the other hand gave no hint that lack of work weighed on his mind at all. His references to jobs were whimsical and evaporated from the page almost before they were written. With casual references to jobs in Sydney and elsewhere it seems that he had little interest in the constraints of a clockwork life.⁶³⁵

After the fiasco and public humiliation of the Station he never seems to have pursued seriously any kind of paid employment apart from his cricket. His mother, now having taken over the reins of adviser to the children, bemoaned his lack of income. At one point he loosely offered her consoling bait that he hoped to find a position through a member of the MCC.⁶³⁶ She by now saw fit to dismiss the likelihood of this and was not moved.

Emily, despite her newly found status as Colden Harrison's wife, remained cold and distant.⁶³⁷ Themes of domesticity and children dominated her mind. Niggly, offensive to many and brusque in the manner of her mother, she remained distant from all her family. Although Tom was affectionately regarded by his brothers he remained separate in time and place from them.

6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined several key periods of Tom's life in the context of his family and personality development. In general there is sufficient information available through family letters and other archival documents to be quite clear about the nature of Tom's personality and the factors that shaped him.

The most important determinant of Tom's life was the influence of his father, Horatio. Most of the other important factors that shaped Tom's life can be traced back

⁶³⁵ Letter, Tom to Cedric, 24 September 1864.

⁶³⁶ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 21 February 1865.

⁶³⁷ Colden Harrison, champion footballer, close friend and cousin to Wills was brought even closer to Tom through his marriage to Emily.

to the influence of his father. Horatio's relative wealth and his desire to see Tom well educated set up a trajectory for his son which did not fully succeed in Horatio's eyes. Nonetheless when he returned to Melbourne after Rugby school, a well-connected Tom was given instant access to the Melbourne Cricket Club partly because of his English experiences. Tom it would seem did little more than give passing notice to any career and his brief legal clerking was dominated by extensive periods playing sport, particularly cricket.

The most decisive moment in Tom's life after Rugby school was Horatio's decision to take him to Cullin-la-Ringo in central Queensland. This came at a crucial moment in Tom's sporting career: the first English cricket team was to arrive in Melbourne in the months after Tom left with his father in their trek to Queensland. There is no evidence that Tom was forced into travelling with his father to Queensland and he did not express anger towards his father in the letters that remain. After his father's murder Tom proved to be unsuited to managing the Queensland property. There seem to be several important factors here: his recklessness with money; his lack of preparation for such a task; the huge task of setting up a property; and the undoubted psychological trauma suffered after his father's death compounded by the isolation of the Queensland bush. After his failed Queensland venture, Tom's relationship with his family, particularly his sister Emily, soured and gradually became more distant.

Chapter Six

The Sons of Lush: Tom Wills, Alcohol and Colonial Sport⁶³⁸

Fact is, my dear boy, we were all tight the second day, and I don't think the New South Wales men were much better.⁶³⁹

Captain Hotham, recalling Victoria's loss in the first intercolonial cricket match in 1856

Tom got drunk the other day when he was playing in a match in Melbourne and he kept himself on bowling all the time with his slows. He had a short clay pipe in his mouth and was kicking up a fine to do and making the people laugh.⁶⁴⁰

Egbert Wills, 1865

1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of factors that shaped the perception of alcohol consumption in the Australian colonies during Wills' lifetime. It then moves to an account of the role of alcohol in the death of Tom Wills. The end of his life is examined first because this period provides the strongest evidence that points to the severity of his alcohol abuse. Then there is an examination of the physical and psychiatric syndromes associated with alcoholism and whether there is any evidence that Wills suffered from these syndromes. This is reviewed from a contemporary and nineteenth century colonial perspective. From here his life is examined with respect to the influences and stressors that may have shaped his drinking. Drinking within his family, possible genetic influences and his exposure to alcohol from childhood are reviewed through to his period in England. His time in England and more specifically Rugby school is covered in the Rugby chapter. Evidence is also sought for the effect of

⁶³⁸ For the use of the word Lush as signifying something to do with alcohol, see, <http://onlinedictionary.datasegment.com/word/LUSH>. Lush can refer to alcohol or an habitual drunkard. Also see, <http://www.randomhouse.com/wotd/index.pperl?date=19990519>. This reference notes the extension to the term Lushington in matters related to alcohol. The term was also used in the colonial press, see 'sons of lush' from a poem, *Brewers v Publicans*, *Illustrated Sydney News*, May 1876, p. 15. Also see, G. M. de Moore, 'The Sons of Lush: Tom Wills, Alcohol and the Colonial Cricketer', *Sport in History* vol. 25 (December 2005), 354-74.

⁶³⁹ *Sydney Mail*, 6 October 1883, p. 651.

⁶⁴⁰ Letter, Egbert Wills to his brother Horace, 15 December 1865.

alcohol on his relationship with his family, and his social, financial and sporting trajectory.

Specifically, the following issues are addressed: how others perceived and criticised his drinking; whether Wills' drinking was typical of sportsmen of the period; attitudes of the clubs to drinking; its effect upon those players who drank to excess; how information of its effect upon players was communicated to the public; public attitudes to Wills and other well known players and alcohol's important ceremonial role in the rituals of cricket; and what is known of the role of alcohol within football during Wills' career. To provide context and a basis for comparison, other influential colonial sportsmen, visiting English teams and Wills' association with the 1866-8 aboriginal cricket team are reviewed.⁶⁴¹

2 Background

Instead of sinking under circumstances, I should have shewn more force of character by rising above them.

Henry Kendall, 1875.⁶⁴²

When the poet Henry Kendall admonished himself for his addiction to alcohol, he mirrored the mood of the colonies. Colonial literature emphasised personal responsibility and immorality as the cause of alcohol abuse.⁶⁴³ But as was the case for suicide, there was a gradual shift to perceive alcoholism from a medical perspective rather than a religious and moral one over the course of the nineteenth century.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴¹ This chapter will not review drinking by spectators, but there were references throughout newspapers to this issue, for example, *Geelong Advertiser*, 3 February 1860, p. 2.

⁶⁴² Letter, Henry Kendall to Peter Fagan, 1875, Mitchell Library.

⁶⁴³ See for further discussion, Judith Bowtell, 'Benevolent Despotism; Solving the Problem of the Habitual Drunkard. Victoria 1872-1904', BA honours thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1989, p. ii. Up to 1859 the habitual drunkard was neglected by most nineteenth century charities as belonging to the undeserving poor, a victim of his own moral failing. Kendall is reported to have suffered from 'alcoholism and mental breakdown', see, Michael Ackland (ed.), *Henry Kendall, Poetry, Prose and Selected Correspondence* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993), p. xv.

⁶⁴⁴ There are numerous references in lay and professional literature, see for example, Patrick Smith MD, 'Inebriety – its Etiology and Treatment', Melbourne, Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia, Transactions of second session, 1889, pp. 860-7. For a more general discussion on factors in European and American society in the earlier part of the century see, W. F. Bynum, 'Chronic Alcoholism in the First Half of the 19th Century', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 42, 1968, pp. 160-85.

The temperance movement was a potent force for social and moral reform in nineteenth century Australia. There were four principles of temperance teaching: that alcohol was not a natural substance, that is, it was man made and not God given; that alcohol was a poison; that it was produced through decomposition and that it was not a food.⁶⁴⁵ The temperance voice was strident and unbending. It gave political weight to the stories of wreckage and despair from alcohol abuse. It wedded alcohol to madness, poverty, criminality and corruption of the hereditary line. Its language was unforgiving, obsessive and histrionic. Like an expanse of reclaimed land, men were hoped to be redeemable and made arable once again. Overzealous, the extreme temperance view was an easy target for its enemies in politics, Licensed Victuallers and Brewing Industries.⁶⁴⁶

Reports of excessive drinking in the colonies were daily fare for newspapers and periodicals. Drinking was regarded as a barometer of moral health. Despite the apparent widespread drinking in colonial and English cricket, the game was portrayed as a saviour for those who might otherwise be seduced by alcohol, sloth and sin:

... the habits that cricket renders imperatively necessary are those of studied and continued temperance. No man who has not such habits can long preserve that accuracy of eye and that prompt decision that are indispensable to the cricketer. But needful as these habits admittedly are in England, they are very much more so here. In order to preserve health it is well known that exercise is necessary but this climate is peculiarly enervating, and naturally indisposes to the taking of necessary exercise, therefore to promote the disposition to take exercise it is essential that some interest and enjoyment should be mingled with it. Now there is no game that gives this interest and enjoyment in a higher degree than does the game of cricket. It promotes a wholesome exercise and furnishes an innocent means of enjoyment.⁶⁴⁷

A similar view was expressed in specialist papers:

⁶⁴⁵ Ann. M. Mitchell, 'Temperance and the Liquor Question in Later Nineteenth Century Victoria', Masters thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1966, p. 76.

⁶⁴⁶ Stephen Garton, "'Once a Drunkard Always a Drunkard': Social Reform and the Problem of "Habitual Drunkenness" in Australia, 1880-1914', *Labour History*, no. 53 (November 1987), pp. 38-53. This reference also covers in detail changing attitudes to and treatment of alcohol abuse and the different ways in which police could intervene. The Australian situation was reflected in changes in England, see, R. Macleod, 'The Edge of Hope: Social Policy and Chronic Alcoholism 1870-1900', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, vol. 22 (July 1967), pp. 215-245.

The cadaverous cheek, the sunken eye, the attenuated limbs will quickly vanish, and give place to the bright glow, the cheerful glance, and the sinewy form of robust health. Content will mantle every countenance, and dissipation be banished. The pot-houses of the towns and villages will no longer be inundated with swarms of sottish drunkards, expending their last hard-earned penny in the purchase of maddening liquors; spouting obscenity with inflamed and haggard looks and phrenzied gestures; or endeavouring in their infuriated state to cut, maim, and mangle each other's bodies, until conveyed by the constabulary to a place of safety for the night, and next morning condemned by a magistrate to expiate their folly by months of incarceration. Encourage, we repeat, those manly pastimes, and you will have no cause to repent of a course so politic and commendable but agree with us in opinion that such sports are the germs of sound morality and permanent happiness-of national prosperity, and of national honor.⁶⁴⁸

To define the extent of drinking, its effect upon players and the role of entrepreneurial publicans requires the accumulation of flints of evidence. Most of this is derived from newspapers. This evidence constitutes a strong argument that alcohol was an inseparable part of colonial cricket. The rituals of drink were as integral to the composition of cricket as any piece of physical apparatus. There is evidence of drinking before, during and after matches. Important occasions such as intercolonial matches were festooned with dinners, balls and lunchtime banquets. Less formal drinking took place in the cricketers' tent on the ground during the course of a game.

The more formal occasions fulfilled a number of functions. They provided sustenance for the players as well as an exhibition of courtesy to visiting teams. The offerings of liquor and food were not trivial but were itemised tokens of an elaborate ritual. Invited guests sat down to their banquet alongside players as toasts and speeches

⁶⁴⁷ *Sydney Mail*, 3 February 1862, p. 5. Popular opinion on cricket's role in preventing drunkenness was reflected in this letter from England, *Bell's Life in London*, 11 November 1855, p. 6.

⁶⁴⁸ 'The Influence of Manly Sports upon National Character', *Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer*, 1 August 1857, p. 2. Similar injunctions were found in the sporting manuals of the day, for example see, P. C. Curtis (ed.), *McMahons Cricket and Sports Manual*, Sydney, 1869, p. 2, 'The threefold combination of the MANLY, HEALTHY, and INNOCENT CHARACTER of cricket induces gentlemen to patronize it both by purse and person, the humblest adventures who meet on the village green to play down the sun.' (Capitals in the original). See, Charles W. Alcock (ed.), *James Lillywhite's Cricketers Annual. 1873* (London: George Routledge and Sons and James Lillywhite, Frowd and Co.), p. 24, 'It is scarcely necessary to speak of the moral qualities of an accomplished cricketer.' It criticises the man 'who gorges himself at breakfast and lunch till he can hardly waddle, "nips" at every opportunity till

were made. Guests could and often did include Governors, key sporting and political personnel. In 1861, when the Governor of Victoria trumpeted that no one had ever seen an intemperate cricketer in Victoria there were jubilant assents.⁶⁴⁹

Speeches were not confined to the subject of cricket. This was a forum for pontificating about the links between masculinity, nationalism, sport and heroism. These rituals exemplified the double standards of sporting attitudes to drink. Dignitaries, administrators and players could drink their fill at lunch breaks while extolling the virtues of manliness and athleticism. The mass of evidence constitutes a strong argument that alcohol was an inseparable part of colonial sport. Tom Wills' drinking, whilst severe, was typical of many sportsmen of the day. Despite the abuse of alcohol, alcohol fulfilled its part in the rituals of celebration in sport and symbolised, in less morbid contexts, health, cheer and leisure.⁶⁵⁰

3 The Death of Tom Wills: Delirium Tremens

'The gate o' hell's ajar'.⁶⁵¹

Marcus Clarke.

While I grow half afraid at the shadows I cast.
For it fashions itself into numerous shapes
 Of goblins and devils, and demons and apes;
 And they're up on my knees and they scowl in my face,
 And they're here and they're there and they're every place,
 But when I attempt to lay hold of them, all
 Retreat, and I flatten my nose on the wall;
 And while I am writhing in torture and pain,

he can scarcely see, and finishes by "keeping it up" at night "till all's blue", coming on to the ground next morning as stale and jaded as a costermonger's neddy after a Derby day'.

⁶⁴⁹ W. J. Hammersley (ed.), *The Victorian Cricketer's Guide for 1861-2* (Melbourne: Sands & McDougall, 1862), p. 109.

⁶⁵⁰ There have been no detailed historical analyses of alcohol in sport in Australia. See Cashman, *'Ave a Go*, p. 34, which touches upon this issue in discussing crowds at Australian sport. There have been detailed essays examining other sports in the late nineteenth century, for example, see Glenn Moore, 'The Strong and Ungloved Hand: Baseball, Temperance and Labour Relations in the Gilded Age', in S. Creak *et al.*, *Polemics, Poetics and Play. Essays in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Sporting History* (Melbourne: Department of History, Melbourne University, 1997), pp. 71-102. See R. D. Stainback, *Alcohol and Sport* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1997) for a modern overview of the relationship between alcohol and sport. The importance of alcohol in colonial sport is recognised in Dunstan, *The Paddock*, pp. 15, 18, 23, 26, 38, 43.

⁶⁵¹ Marcus Clarke, 'Bill Jinks', in Stewart, D. & Kessing, M.(eds), *Australian Bush Ballads*, (Hawthorn: Lloyd O'Neill, 1971), pp. 261-3.

The whole blackguard squad gather round me again,
 And they gibber and mock me with laughter and yell,
 Till at length I'm beginning to think I'm in hell.⁶⁵²

The newspapers and periodicals of the day were littered with references to delirium tremens (DTs). It was a condition associated with particularly violent attempts at suicide such as stabbing and the cutting of one's throat. Caricatured in the popular mind, it was linked with religious and demonic overtones. In Wills' case, the intent and lethality of his suicide bear notice. To kill himself as he did required ferocious strength. Such ferocity was a feature commented upon in delirium tremens during the nineteenth century. The newspapers of the day captured the more bizarre and aberrant behaviours of the alcoholic. Of these, the best known was delirium tremens.⁶⁵³

Pictorial caricatures, subtitled with catch phrases of the day, slandered and parodied alcoholics. One such phrase, 'demon drink', was referred to in one of Wills' obituaries.⁶⁵⁴ *Melbourne Punch* devoted many lines of verse to the issue of alcohol abuse. This jocular verse was often bittersweet and some times frankly dark in the images it portrayed of madness, drink and violence.⁶⁵⁵ A vocabulary rose that described the different forms of behavioural manifestations of alcoholic intoxication. For example, *Mania a Potu*, was one such exotic label found in the papers of the day and described as follows:

In their furious excitement they spread around their circle the darkness
 of desolation, fear, and despair ... they strike their dearest friends ...
 they become the dangerous alcoholic criminals ...⁶⁵⁶

It seems that these terms in Wills' obituaries reflected a loose, non-specific, common usage in which tinctures of violence, criminality of alcohol madness were

⁶⁵² 'D. T.'s or The Pleasures after Drinking', *Melbourne Punch*, 19 October 1876, p. 159.

⁶⁵³ Colonial newspapers used the term DTs in a manner that indicated its cause and phenomenology was familiar to the general population, for example, *Argus*, 7 September 1872, p. 4. In the year of Wills' death and admission to the Melbourne Hospital, there were 35 admitted cases of patients in DTs, of whom 27 were men. Despite the emphasis on male drunkenness, in popular parlance it is notable that of the 119 patients admitted for intemperance 53 were women. See *The Thirty Third Annual report of the Committee of Management of the Melbourne Hospital* (Melbourne: Fergusson and Mitchell, 1881).

⁶⁵⁴ This phrase, years earlier, was given pictorial form as the face of death in the form of alcohol preparing itself to sacrifice another human life, *Sydney Punch*, 26 March 1870, p. 129.

⁶⁵⁵ For example, *Melbourne Punch*, 4 October 1877, p. 400; 13 September 1877, p. 367; 19 October 1876, p. 159; 26 August 1875, p. 337; 24 September 1874, p. 388.

⁶⁵⁶ 'Mania a Potu' in Australian Medical Pamphlets. No. 6; The Cantor Lectures on Alcohol 1875, p. 113.

implicit rather than claimed for him. There was an entire nineteenth century vocabulary of terms and phrases with slightly different meanings to convey the different syndromes thought to be associated with alcoholism.⁶⁵⁷

Henry Maudsley's scientific description of delirium tremens remains unsurpassed. He alludes to the chaotic violent self-destructive behaviour that in the end may lead to jumping out of a window or, in Wills' case, stabbing oneself in the heart:

... the patient seeing rats and mice running about the room, snakes crawling over the bed, or having terror striking visions of threatening objects. His restlessness is extreme and he gets no sleep, he talks almost incessantly, but says little that is sensible. His hands, which are in constant tremulous motion, he moves over the bed clothes as if seeking for something or thrusts out as if to push back the vermin that he sees invading his bed. The pulse, which is quickened, is small and compressible at the wrist but full and throbbing in the carotid arteries, the heart's action violent, and the breathing panting and irregular. In general he is manageable, though restless, but sometimes he is violent and hard to be controlled; and he may even jump out of the window, if not prevented, either in pursuit of phantoms whom he imagines to threaten him or in his terrified efforts to escape from them. After three or four days of this delirious horror he falls into a sound sleep and recovers, if the issue be favourable or sinks into a low muttering delirium and dies, if the issue be unfavourable.⁶⁵⁸

While alcohol consumption is shaped by internal and external cues, the alcohol dependent individual drinks in a way defined by a pattern that is increasingly predictable in terms of time, place and quantity. In doing so the individual maintains a relatively stable level of blood alcohol and thereby attempts to avoid as far as is possible the emergence of withdrawal symptoms. To maintain this pattern alcoholics give priority to obtaining alcohol that sees them lie, cheat and distract others to achieve this goal. The wreckage around them whether it be family alienation, unemployment or

⁶⁵⁷ Anachronistic syndromes such as dipsomania, were considered forms of insanity. See J. C. Bucknill MD, *Habitual Drunkenness and Insane Drunkards* (London, Macmillan and Co., 1878), p. 58, where dipsomania is regarded as a rare morbid impulse to consume alcohol for the gratification of the impulse rather than the effects of alcohol. William S Haubrich, *Medical Meanings – A Glossary of Word Origins* (San Diego/NY/London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), p. 70. Dipsomania – ‘the result of combining the Greek dipsa, “thirst”, and mania, “madness”. The term first appeared in English in the mid-nineteenth century to describe “a frenzy to drink”, specifically referring to alcoholic beverages, and was considered a form of insanity’. See, for a modern reference on the concept of dipsomania, Robert J. Campbell, *Campbell's Psychiatric Dictionary, 8th Edition* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 188.

physical illness does not impede the desire to maintain the drinking pattern. Regular drinking renders the central nervous system more tolerant to the effects of alcohol. In such cases the cessation of drinking alcohol leads to a characteristic alcohol withdrawal syndrome which may graduate into delirium tremens.⁶⁵⁹

As alcohol dependence deepens, the desire for drinking earlier in the day becomes apparent. The person wakes in the morning unsettled and slightly tremulous because the blood alcohol level has dropped overnight. Typically withdrawal begins with mild agitation and a subjective craving for alcohol. Slight tremor, increased heart rate, insomnia and hypervigilance are early physical perturbations. A subjective dread is experienced which may give birth to auditory and visual hallucinations wedded to delusions of persecution. Increasingly landlocked in a world of fantasy, neutral objects such as furniture take on frightening interpretations especially at night when clarity of vision is lost. Mocked and provoked, rational judgement is lost as terror engulfs the patient. Disoriented, with an altered level of consciousness, the person, now terrified of their complex hallucinations, seeks to escape their predicament. In full bloom this withdrawal can include hypersensitivity to sound and induced generalised convulsions. The delirium is characteristically worse at night. The DTs classically lasts for two to three days, often ending with a deep sleep after which, the patient has only fragmented memories of the period of delirium.⁶⁶⁰

4 Neuropsychiatric Syndromes Associated with Alcohol

It was a small step for colonial society to view alcohol abuse as a bridge to insanity. Up until the 1880s most habitual drunkards were channelled through the

⁶⁵⁸ Henry Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1879), pp. 484-5. Maudsley was the most influential psychiatrist of his day.

⁶⁵⁹ David Nutt, 'Alcohol and the Brain', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 175 (1999), pp. 114-9, for a modern understanding of how alcohol interacts with the brain at a molecular level including putative mechanisms of alcohol withdrawal. DTs occurs in up to 5% of people with alcohol withdrawal symptoms. See, Marc A Shuckit, 'Alcohol-Related Disorders', in B. J. Sadock and V. A. Sadock (eds), *Kaplan and Sadock's Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry, vol 1* (Philadelphia, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2005), pp. 1168-87. See American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000), pp. 212-23 for a standard reference to alcohol withdrawal.

⁶⁶⁰ See, Jane Marshall, 'Alcohol Dependence and Alcohol Problems', in M. G. Gelder, J. J. Lopez-Ibor and N. Andreasen (eds), *New Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 482-4. Karl F. Mann, 'Alcohol and Psychiatric and Physical Disorders', in M. G. Gelder, J. J.

criminal and lunacy systems. Vice and the taint of madness, were close companions in nineteenth century commentaries. An alcoholic lifestyle was seen as aligned to criminality, madness, fornication and lack of preparation for judgement prior to death.⁶⁶¹ When Dr Thomas, in his Presidential Address for the Medical Society of Victoria insisted that ‘Madness exists to a considerable extent, brought on by the excitements and the vicissitudes of life to which people are subject in this country, but principally to the effects of intoxicating drinks’ he reflected and reinforced a popularly held view.⁶⁶² Alcohol was seen to unleash life’s darker forces:

all the mere animal instincts and sentiments are laid atrociously bare. The coward shows up more craven, the braggart more boastful, the cruel more merciless, the untruthful more false, the carnal more degraded.⁶⁶³

Modern medical classification of the consequences of alcohol abuse includes numerous syndromes whose principal manifestation is altered psychiatric status. The most common is the effect of intoxication with elevated mood, disinhibition, impaired judgement and effects upon social and work functioning. Continued drinking over a period of time may lead to the behavioural syndromes of alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence. The latter includes the spectrum of withdrawal symptoms. There may be damage to cerebral structure and functioning which leads to well defined psychiatric syndromes. These include blackouts or memory impairment for periods during heavy drinking; direct and permanent cerebral damage leading to frontal lobe syndromes and a frank global dementia. These latter degenerative conditions are a direct result of alcohol toxicity on the brain and result in changes to personality and cognition. In particular there may be a lack of judgement and impulsive behaviour.⁶⁶⁴

Lopez-Ibor and N. Andreasen (eds), *New Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 489-93.

⁶⁶¹ The second half of the nineteenth century saw fears in colonial society that madness in the colonies was linked to alcohol abuse. For example, Dr Campbell, Superintendent Tarban Lunatic Asylum, *Sydney Mail*, 18 January 1868, p. 7, referring to alcoholism, says ‘... I am convinced has consigned thousands to the madhouse, and hundreds of thousands to the ever rankling affliction of incurable disease in the stomach and associated organs’. Charles McCarthy, a prominent Melbourne physician, ascribed that alcohol abuse was a key reason for high lunacy numbers, see, Bowtell, ‘Benevolent Despotism’, pp. 13-4.

⁶⁶² Dr Thomas, ‘Presidential Address’, *Australian Medical Journal*, vol. X (1865), Medical Society of Victoria, p. 81.

⁶⁶³ *Australian Medical Pamphlets No. 6*. The Cantor Lectures on Alcohol 1875, p. 55.

⁶⁶⁴ For a full range of neuropsychiatric complications of alcohol see, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*; Shuckit, ‘Alcohol-Related Disorders’, pp. 1168-87; Mann, ‘Alcohol and Psychiatric and Physical Disorders’, pp. 489-93.

Alcohol abuse is associated with high rates of suicide and psychiatric illness. The act of intoxication disinhibits individuals who are contemplating suicide. Alcohol misuse is also associated with a high prevalence of depressive symptoms. Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. It is often a comorbid depressive state that is the mediating psychological state to suicide. However, suicide can also occur whilst in a psychotic, agitated state during delirium tremens which is the manner in which Tom Wills died. His mental state in the months leading up to his suicide is unclear though the little evidence available does not point to any obvious depression. Apart from the direct toxic effects of alcohol on the brain and the behavioural changes induced, alcoholics also suffer from high rates of unemployment, social dislocation, physical illness and poor accommodation. These factors were as true in Wills' day as they are now.⁶⁶⁵

The relationship between depression, anxiety and alcoholism can be quite complicated. In some individuals it may be that an underlying depression or anxiety disorder is driving the alcoholism. In such cases drinking is an attempt to dealing with distressing emotional states. There are a range of psychiatric disorders that exist side by side with alcoholism and these may act as predisposing factors in promoting increased alcohol consumption.⁶⁶⁶ Depression and anxiety are only two such disorders. In the absence of detailed information about Wills, the most likely of these candidates to have fuelled his drinking are the post-traumatic symptoms he suffered after the murder of his father in 1861.

⁶⁶⁵ The link between depression, suicide and alcoholism is robust. Studies find about 40% of alcoholics will have episodes of major depression. See, Peter Tucker, 'Substance Abuse and Suicidality', *Australasian Psychiatry*, vol. 7, no. 1 (February 1999), pp. 23-4; Jan Neeleman and Michael Farrell, 'Suicide and Substance Misuse', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 171 (1997), pp. 303-4 for more discussion on the links between suicide and substance abuse more generally. David Lester, 'Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Suicide', in R. W. Maris, A. L. Berman and M. M. Silverman (eds), *Comprehensive Textbook of Suicidology* (New York, London: The Guildford Press, 2000), pp. 357-75. David Lester, *Why People Kill Themselves* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 2000), pp. 268-71. A. Roy, D. Lamparski, J. DeJong, V. Moore, M. Linnoila, 'Characteristics of Alcoholics Who Attempt Suicide', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 147, no. 6 (June 1990), pp. 761-5.

⁶⁶⁶ Juan C. Negrete, 'Aetiology of Alcohol Problems', in M. G. Gelder, J. J. Lopez-Ibor and N. Andreasen (eds), *New Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 477-82. Adoption and twin studies support the importance of genetics as an important substrate for developing alcoholism. Of the personality subtypes, antisocial personality is the most strongly associated with alcoholism but there is little evidence that Wills satisfies such a description. The range of predisposing psychiatric disorders towards alcohol includes schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression and various anxiety and personality disorders. Although it is speculative, some of Wills' letters particularly early on might be consistent with an elevated mood of bipolar disorder. It should be emphasised that this is speculation at best.

5 The Murder of Horatio Wills and its Role in Tom Wills' Drinking

The murder of Tom Wills' his father and other members of the settlement party is an obvious candidate as a stressor that led to, or exacerbated his alcohol abuse. After Horatio's death, responsibility for the running of the station was prematurely and violently thrust upon Tom Wills. Tom was outspoken in his desire to lead the family and resurrect the property after the death.⁶⁶⁷ But he was, through disposition of personality and economic reality, unable to fulfil his pledge. His captaincy in sport provided little if any preparedness to taken on leadership within his family or station. Just prior to the Queensland trek, his father, despite his obvious affection for Tom, pragmatically wrote Tom out of the Cullin-la-Ringo estate if Tom proved (as he did) incapable of managing the property.⁶⁶⁸ The loss of Horatio was a physical, material and spiritual one for the family, who now seemed to be without direction.

Although the murder of Horatio is self evident as a severely traumatic experience, Wills confirmed the impact upon him to his sister Emily: '... poor fellow he says he never felt so changed in the whole course of his life as he has within the last two months'. Wills was left in a precarious physical environment. His letters of the time reveal his intense fear for his safety.⁶⁶⁹ Nearly three years later he experienced traumatic dreams about aboriginal attacks on the Queensland property: 'Tom dreamt a man was murdered on the station on the 28th March'.⁶⁷⁰

The link between alcohol abuse and the aftermath of trauma is substantial. Modern epidemiological evidence suggests that there is an increased chance of alcohol abuse post trauma mediated by post trauma stress reactions. The most commonly proposed mechanism is that of alcohol as a form of self-medication for post-traumatic reactions. Such self-medication treats the arousal and intrusive features of these reactions. We know from Wills' letters that hyperarousal, hypervigilance and traumatic nightmares were experienced by him up until at least three years after his father's death. It is also well recognised that a sub-group of individuals who drink excessively prior to

⁶⁶⁷ See thesis chapter, 'A Father's Care'.

⁶⁶⁸ The Will of Horatio Wills, Collection of T. S. Wills Cooke.

⁶⁶⁹ Letter, Emily to brothers 21 November 1861. Emily also confirms that Tom did not see his father's corpse and his relief of being spared this sight.

⁶⁷⁰ Letter, Emily to Cedric, early 1864.

trauma respond with worsening of their alcohol abuse. This was the most likely trajectory for Tom Wills.⁶⁷¹

Individuals in a post-traumatic state exhibit an inability to modulate emotional states. One response is to withdraw from the outside world. They may become isolated, have impaired relationships and ‘feel different’ to people around them. They may recall the smells, sounds and sights of the trauma. Memories are intrusive and nightmares recurrent and disturbing. Not all such traumatised individuals develop these symptoms. Clearly the family had hopes for Tom’s performance on the farm which he did not meet. In none of the surviving family documentation is there evidence that he experienced guilt over letting his father down by being absent at the time of the attack. Nor does he dwell on the matter in later letters. Nor is there a sense in the early aftermath, before Tom’s waywardness alienated some of the family, that they held him responsible for Horatio’s death. Rather they were relieved and thankful that he was away from the property and escaped with his life.

The impact of his father’s death on his alcohol use is largely speculative. It is a seductive assumption to attribute his alcoholism entirely to his father’s death. Details of his drinking are sketchy, particularly before the murder. What we know of his later alcoholism, the trajectory of alcoholics and the sporting culture in which he immersed himself, suggest that Wills was an accomplished drinker at the time of his father’s death. His father’s calculated exclusion of his son from the management of Cullin-la-Ringo suggests knowledge of Tom’s waywardness that may have been contributed to by alcohol abuse. Beyond this, Horatio was silent on this issue. It is reasonable to view his later alcohol abuse, in some measure as a kind of self-induced balm for traumatic

⁶⁷¹ A. C. McFarlane, ‘Epidemiological Evidence about the Relationship Between PTSD and Alcohol Abuse: The Nature of the Association’, *Addictive Behaviours*, vol. 23, no. 6 (November-December 1998), pp. 813-25. The evidence is that the trauma is often only one of a number of risk variables that leads to excessive drinking. Numerous models of association between alcohol use and post-traumatic symptoms have been proposed. Although with the limited evidence available it is difficult to classify his reaction as PTSD it could be more broadly described as post traumatic stress reaction or post traumatic grief. Also see, S. H. Stewart, ‘Alcohol Abuse in Individuals Exposed to Trauma: A Critical Review’, *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 120, no. 1 (July 1996), pp. 83-112. This affirms a strong relationship with exposure to trauma and alcohol abuse. It also notes that such an association is likely to be with PTSD symptoms rather than just the severity of the trauma.

memories, excessive dread and physical features of anxiety. It is most likely that this loss was only one of several factors that led to his alcoholism.⁶⁷²

6 Physical Sequelae of Alcohol Abuse

‘And who, again, does not recall the *facies alcoholica*-the blotched skin, the purple-red nose, the dull, protruding eye, the vacant stare of the confirmed sot?’⁶⁷³

Alcohol is absorbed rapidly and unaltered into the body. It crosses quickly into the central nervous system depressing this system almost instantly. The body suffers widespread damage. It has a multitude of acute and chronic effects throughout the body. Cirrhosis and fatty infiltration of the liver, pancreatitis, peripheral nerve damage that impairs sensation and power, muscle damage and pain, skin changes, damage to the frontal lobes of the brain, dementia, direct toxic effects upon cardiac muscle, gastritis and poor sleep are only some of the damaging effects of alcohol abuse. Malnutrition, particularly vitamin deficiency is common in severe abuse.⁶⁷⁴

The caricature of the alcoholic was well publicised in the nineteenth century press. Temperance language coloured the popular view of the alcoholic. Repulsive adjectives blurred medicine and morality in conveying the visual obscenities of extreme and prolonged alcohol abuse. The blood of an alcoholic was not merely abnormal it was ‘depraved’.⁶⁷⁵

There is no specific contemporaneous reference to any alcoholic organ damage Wills may have suffered. He must have suffered tissue and biochemical changes that

⁶⁷² ‘Post trauma syndromes were well recognised at this time (1860s) under a variety of names and in the Napoleonic wars it was referred to as nostalgia. Da Costa and Weir-Mitchell wrote extensively about the problems of American Civil War Veterans. I believe that the link between post-traumatic stress disorder and alcoholism is probably better established than the link between alcohol and anything else.’ Personal communication, Professor McFarlane. Also see, Albert Deutsch, ‘Military Psychiatry’, in J. K. Hall (ed.), *One Hundred Years of American Psychiatry* (New York: American Psychiatric Association, Columbia University Press, 1944), pp. 367-84.

⁶⁷³ Australian Medical Pamphlets, no. 6, The Cantor Lectures on Alcohol 1875, p. 105.

⁶⁷⁴ See, Mann, ‘Alcohol and Psychiatric and Physical Disorders’, pp. 489-93; Shuckit, ‘Alcohol-Related Disorders’, pp. 1172-3; Stainback, *Alcohol and Sport*, pp. 57-8.

⁶⁷⁵ Robert Stirling, ‘On One of the Causes of Sudden Death in Chronic Alcoholism’, *Australasian Medical Gazette*, (June 1883), p. 192. As an example of florid language, see ‘Physiological aspect of Intoxicating Drink’, Victorian District Independent Order of Rechabites. Manuscripts from 1870-80s. Royal Historical Society of Victoria, No. 874, Box 58/4. The terminology of the day shaped perceptions of the drink. Alcohol was claimed to be called ‘firewater’ by ‘untutored savages’ of the South Seas.

would have affected his athletic performance given the evidence of his alcohol abuse. A more recent reference to the 1870 oil painting of Tom Wills by the Irish colonial artist William Handcock alludes to the imprimatur of incipient alcoholism.⁶⁷⁶ The beginnings of a pendulous paunch and an alcoholic blush of his cheeks are suggestive of the early stages of physical deterioration. There are few extant pictures of Wills in the last ten years of life and none that can point conclusively to any physical ailment though the last of these reveals a rapidly aging, balding man looking older than his years.⁶⁷⁷

Physical decline, madness, hereditary taint and fenestration of one's moral fibre were viewed as consequences of drink throughout the second half of the nineteenth century in the Australian colonies. The link between alcohol, brain pathology and madness was regarded as incontrovertible.⁶⁷⁸ The authoritative medical view in Wills' time was highly critical of the excessive use of alcohol. The high death rate in alcohol abuse was recognised, as was a catalogue of abnormal pathological changes that affected the lungs, kidneys and heart. Brain pathology was thought to reside in the layered membranes that wrapped themselves intricately about the brain's contours, the vasculature of the brain as well as the brain substance itself. The brain was most commonly said to have undergone 'softening' or 'shrinkage'.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁶ The painting is held by the Melbourne Cricket Club. See, Flanagan, *The Call*, p. 141. Details about Handcock and the history of the painting are limited. See, *Australasian*, 8 December 1923, p. 1227, for the presentation of the painting to the MCC purchased by Mr Hughie Trumble. The Handcock picture has become the most public symbol of Wills' association with the MCC, it is reproduced as Christmas card memorabilia. For more details on the artist William Handcock, E. M. and D. G. Ellis, *Early Prints of New Zealand. 1642-1875* (Christchurch: Avon Fine Prints, 1978), p.172; Also, <http://tapuhi.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/spyodus>; A. H. McLintock, *The History of Otago* (Dunedin: Otago Centennial Historical Publications, 1949), opp. p. 616; Joan Kerr (ed.), *Dictionary of Australian Artists, to 1870* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 345; Una Platts, 'Directory of New Zealand Artists Part III', *Australasian Antique Collector*, vol. 13, 1972, p. 81; Una Platts, *Nineteenth Century New Zealand Artists: A Guide and Handbook* (Christchurch: Avon Fine Prints, 1980), p. 117; Roger Collins, *Pictures of Southern New Zealand* (Dunedin: John McIndoe, 1979), pp. 20-1, 46, 86. Death Certificate: died 4 August 1871, Gipps Ward, Melbourne Hospital, at 46 years of age, exhaustion from cancer of tongue, born Ireland, 7 years in Victoria, married. I would like to thank Mr John Rose in Auckland for assisting me in gathering information on William Handcock.

⁶⁷⁷ *Leader*, 22 August 1908, p. 29.

⁶⁷⁸ There were many references. For example, Dr Stirling in his article on postmortem after the sudden death of a patient with alcoholism noted the 'wet brain of the drunkard' and 'excess of fluid in the ventricles and in the subarachnoid space'. See Stirling, 'On One of the Causes of Sudden Death', pp. 192-3.

⁶⁷⁹ A barman whose heavy drinking of ale and brandy led to the 'horrors' a euphemism for delirium tremens. Upon the opening of his skull he was found to have the supposed tell tale signs of softening throughout and congested membranes. See Dr Cutts, 'Softening of the Brain', *Australian Medical Journal*, vol. 7, 1862, pp. 122-4. This is one of many examples in the literature of the time. Part of this material as it related to the nineteenth century understanding of this term has been previously presented. See G. M. de Moore, 'Cricketers, Soft Brains and Suicide', Australian Society for Sports History, Australian Catholic University, Sydney, August 2003.

In the lay literature, emotive terms such as softening, shrinkage and congestion blended accusatory images of enfeeblement and moral responsibility for one's plight. Such was the case when Hammersley claimed that Wills had softening of the brain after the latter's death. It conjured in the lay mind, a lack of fibre, substance and morality. The terms made a link between pathology and an accusatory thread of infirmity based on alcoholism or mental imbalance. Even though the nature of the brain pathology was not consistently agreed upon in the medical literature, the population at large had a perception of what terms such as 'softening' meant to them.

7 Developmental History

7.1 Genetics and Family History

The physician describes two great sources, breeders of work for him, in animal vice and alcoholism. It is startling, but the assertion is made that hardly one of us is entirely pure from the physical effects of the sins of our ancestors ... While disease spreads, like a tree, from a diversion of the sacred functions of the body, alcohol is almost as powerful in mischief. The spring of both evils is the same. It is a drawing upon capital, the waste of life's capital stock. The motive is the craving for excitement which characterises an ill-balanced mind.⁶⁸⁰

It was self-evident to the nineteenth century colonial mind that hereditary factors were important in alcoholism.⁶⁸¹ Typical of the period was Melburnian Dr McCarthy's views on the hereditary implications of alcoholism:

It is quite certain that all children inherit some taint or peculiarity of their parents or relatives – some children one thing, some another. When the father and mother are both drunkards before the child's conception, there is great probability that the child's nature will be degraded, so that it may be born an idiot; or, when grown up, become imbecile, consumptive, an inebriate, a drunkard, or a criminal, the source of whose misfortune is never dreamed of. Many of this class inhabit the jails, the lunatic asylums, or end their lives on the gallows.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰ 'British Medical Congress', No. 8, *The Imperial Review* (October 1882), pp. 48-51.

⁶⁸¹ Maudsley, the pre-eminent psychiatrist of his time, concluded that the stain of insanity, or inebriety or crime will commonly be found in the family. See, Smith, 'Inebriety', pp. 860-7.

A modern understanding of the aetiology of alcoholism invokes genetics, personality traits, social and cultural influences as well as psychiatric comorbidity. Although sociocultural factors may groom excessive drinking, it may be that it is only on the background of genetic and personality factors that alcoholism develops.⁶⁸³ George Vaillant's longitudinal study indicated that alcoholism takes from five to 30 years to develop.⁶⁸⁴ We thus might expect to see in Wills' life, a problem drinking pattern from at least his twenties and perhaps considerably before. There are only marginal references to alcohol and Wills in the period prior to his travelling to England in 1850. Horatio in 1843, joked with paternal pride at his son's playful wish to drink beer and that in doing so he took after his mother's drinking pattern:

My wife has just recalled to memory whilst taking ale, that my son Tom when about three years old was in the habit of keeping in his possession a vial, which he occasionally took to his mother, observing "a drop o' beer- long day!" the little guzzler! – Mother's prototype!!!⁶⁸⁵

While there is no evidence of his father or mother suffering from alcohol abuse, nor of his siblings, his maternal aunt, was known to abuse alcohol.⁶⁸⁶

The surviving family documents confirm that alcohol was available and consumed in the family.⁶⁸⁷ This seemingly straightforward information could not have been assumed without these documents. Despite the defining role of the temperance movement in the second half of the nineteenth century and his parents' zealous religiosity, drinking alcohol was part of the family culture. There was no condemnation of alcohol use by his father, Horatio, though one would think Horatio would be aware of

⁶⁸² Charles McCarthy, MD, *Inebriate Retreat*, Northcote, Melbourne. 'A Contribution to the Study of Inebriety.' *Melbourne, Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia, Transactions of second session*, 1889, pp. 867-70.

⁶⁸³ Negrete, 'Aetiology of Alcohol Problems', pp. 477-82. Also, Shuckit, 'Alcohol-Related Disorders', pp. 953-71.

⁶⁸⁴ G. E. Vaillant, *The Natural History of Alcoholism: Causes, Patterns, and Paths to Recovery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

⁶⁸⁵ Diary of Horatio Wills, May 1843, p. 9.

⁶⁸⁶ Letter, Elizabeth to Sarah, 3 July, 1892, for evidence of Mrs Roope's drinking problems. A potent predictor of alcohol misuse is that of alcoholism within the family, particularly first degree relatives. For second degree relatives such as Mrs Roope the association is less but still significant.

⁶⁸⁷ Alcohol was used as a stimulant in childhood illnesses. Horatio regarded himself as the family's doctor and almost certainly would have used alcohol as a medicine. Its legitimate role in medicine was debated by professionals and public alike. Alcohol was also apparently a problem for at least one of

and condemn its excessive use. Horatio's condemnation of vice in the broadest sense found expression in his private diary and bordered on self-flagellation.⁶⁸⁸

7.2 Schooling

Tom Wills attended William Brickwood's School in Melbourne and Brighton from at least 1846 through to 1849.⁶⁸⁹ During this period of late childhood and early adolescence there is little remaining evidence of Wills' exposure to alcohol. However there is evidence of the negative attitude to alcohol he likely encountered whilst at this school. Rev. Brickwood was noted as being a witness against a Brighton landlord after one of his customers died after drinking heavily.⁶⁹⁰ It was likely that Wills, through his playing with the Brickwood cricket team was also exposed to the culture of cricket and alcohol. This schoolboy team played at least twice with the Melbourne Cricket Club. In the custom of the day Wills and the other boys would have sat down to lunch with the adults. Such adult cricketers most likely exposed Tom and the boys to a template of drinking culture.⁶⁹¹

7.3 Social and Financial History

'What a shame of him to go and run up bills at the hotels, I suppose the station will not pay them.'⁶⁹²

The delirium tremens Wills suffered at the end of his life tells us more about his drinking trajectory than any other available piece of evidence. This confirms that he suffered from a syndrome of alcohol dependence. The characteristic features of this syndrome include increasing tolerance to alcohol; withdrawal symptoms; behaviour that

Horatio's shepherds on Lexington Station and was presumably available freely to others, see *Geelong Advertiser*, 25 January 1845, p. 2.

⁶⁸⁸ A theme that runs through Horatio Wills' Diary.

⁶⁸⁹ These dates can be arrived at through analysis of family letters and relevant newspapers of the period.

⁶⁹⁰ Weston Bate, *A History of Brighton* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1983), p. 118.

⁶⁹¹ See the Rugby chapter for more on nineteenth century schoolboy alcohol use. The available evidence does not allow this suggestion to be pushed further but given the documented prevalence of alcohol in cricket this seems reasonable despite no specific mention of drinking by Wills. The issue of drinking and schoolboy cricketers was to become a major issue in England over the next decade. If the English template applied to early colonial cricket then drinking some types of alcohol by the boys would have been sanctioned to some extent. Also see, Forbes Winslow, *The Anatomy of Suicide* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1840), pp. 136-9, on drinking in schools.

is centred around procuring and protecting ones source of alcohol; and the impairment of social and other activities because of excessive drinking.⁶⁹³ Given what must have been a long history of alcohol abuse the evidence for his drinking is remarkably sparse. Impulsivity and recklessness featured numerous times in his life. It is likely that alcohol was implicated but for the most part any specific role for alcohol was not explicitly stated.

In 1864 there appears the first recorded disquiet about Tom's behaviour and alcohol. In February of that year a close family friend in Queensland commented upon Tom's behaviour on the property Cullin-la-Ringo. Wills was exposed as running up debts, drinking at hotels and exploiting the family finances. Seemingly he squandered this money on alcohol without constraint and then disingenuously denied any wrongdoing. As a result the farm continued to slide into financial mismanagement and debt.⁶⁹⁴

Prior to this accusation there were behaviours which may have related to excessive alcohol consumption but for which conclusive evidence is lacking. These included his mother's lament about his profligate lifestyle whilst in England; his lack of graduation to Cambridge; and his sudden departure as Melbourne Cricket Club secretary in September 1858. All bear the hallmarks of impulsivity which may have been spurred by alcohol abuse.⁶⁹⁵ In addition there were the implications of alcohol abuse on the sporting field.⁶⁹⁶

One theme that recurred in family letters was Tom's deceit in matters of money and his lifelong accumulation of debt. He unconvincingly protested his innocence. Debts were recorded in Geelong, Melbourne, Tasmania, England and Queensland. There is evidence of borrowing of small amounts of money from his mother as early as 1863.⁶⁹⁷ His insouciant lack of concern infuriated those around him. It is unknown to

⁶⁹² Letter, Pussy to Cedric Wills, 29 February 1864.

⁶⁹³ *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, pp. 212-23.

⁶⁹⁴ Pussy's 1864 letter supports the argument that the trauma of his father's death led to a worsening of his drinking.

⁶⁹⁵ See thesis chapter on his family for his mother's comments; he departed from the MCC precipitously. Some of the difficulties he had with the MCC are recorded in the family letters through the late 1850s.

⁶⁹⁶ Egbert Wills to his brother Horace, 15 December 1865. This is discussed later in the chapter.

⁶⁹⁷ See Elizabeth's diary, family archives. No other family member is listed as being loaned money.

what extent alcohol abuse and money expended on alcohol contributed to his debts. Although not a gambler of note, he did attempt to secure money through sport on several occasions by offering odds on single wicket matches in which he played.⁶⁹⁸

By early 1864 Tom was embroiled in domestic troubles. His engagement to Julie Anderson was called off after the young woman's father had become enraged with Tom. The girl's father had previously regarded Tom with affection and welcomed him into the family home.⁶⁹⁹ The family letters chirped with gossip and suppressed excitement of Tom's forbidden behaviour. There was little family sympathy for Tom. The exact nature of the behaviour and whether Tom's engagement foundered on his drinking remains unknown. Tom responded by leaving Australia and joining the English cricket team on their trip to New Zealand. His mother commented in passing that by going to New Zealand he could drown his sorrows after the failed engagement. While her comment may have been incidental it might also reveal her knowledge of Tom's intention to drink heavily and perhaps his characteristic response to the strains in his life.⁷⁰⁰

By the mid-1860s he shuttled between Bellevue, the family home near Geelong, and Mrs Harrison's in Victoria Street, Melbourne. There is no suggestion of regular work, saving money or inklings of domesticity. He did not undertake any employment from the time he left the law offices of Smith and Whelan. His mother bemoaned his lack of regular work and blamed his obsession with cricket.⁷⁰¹ It was also this year that his brother Egbert watched him drunkenly cavort on a suburban cricket ground.⁷⁰²

It is possible that he sold family items for money. Certainly on one occasion his mother warned against allowing Tom to take up a firearm to the Queensland property

⁶⁹⁸ For example, *Yeoman*, 23 January 1864, p. 268.

⁶⁹⁹ Julie Anderson was the daughter of Alex Anderson, a friend of Horatio's who owned property at Skipton in Central Victoria. See letter from Alex Anderson to Tom, 13 November 1863, which clearly expresses his warmth towards Tom. See letter, wherein Alex Anderson is said to be in a rage with Tom, 'I suppose you have heard by this time that Tom's engagement is broken off... and that Mr Anderson was in a great rage with Tom'. Letter, Pussy to Cedric, 29 February 1864.

⁷⁰⁰ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 21 February 1864. The newspapers of the day cover to varying degrees this tour to New Zealand and the role of Wills, see for example, *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 27 February 1864, p. 3.

⁷⁰¹ Letter, Elizabeth to Cedric, 21 February 1865.

⁷⁰² Letter, Egbert to his brother Horace, 15 December 1865.

because it would likely go missing. Whilst this may have simply referred to a recklessness with materials, the implication was that Tom might sell the weapon.⁷⁰³

Alcohol may have been implicated in a serious buggy accident in 1877. This was only months before he left Geelong. The circumstances of having just left a hotel make it tempting to think he was intoxicated at the time of the accident:

Mr Wills was thrown out by the violence of the collision, and was found lying under the vehicle in an insensible state. The buggy was knocked about in all directions the hood, splash boards, and shafts being damaged extensively ... Mr Wills was very much shaken by the fall. Fortunately he had left his wife at Coleman's Hotel, or she would in all probability, have been injured by the collision. It has not transpired who was to blame.⁷⁰⁴

There are no recorded convictions or gaolings for Wills as a result of alcoholism.⁷⁰⁵ Whatever his misdemeanours or behaviours they did not descend into violence that resulted in arrest. We have no evidence that Wills was violent as a result of intoxication. There are no recorded physical fights nor does he ever present a physically threatening demeanour. In both family oral history and in a recent publication there are suggestions of domestic violence. None of these suggestions are materially supported by evidence. The important point to be made is that alcohol abuse while associated with increased violence is not synonymous with violence and this should not be assumed in the absence of evidence.⁷⁰⁶

The impression left by casual observations of Wills' life, particularly his death through alcoholism, might imply a life of destitution. As measured by physical appearance Tom Wills' pathway was steadily downwards. Immaculate and stylish in the late 1850s; his pictures in the 1860s reveal him as coarse, unshaven and prematurely

⁷⁰³ Letter, Elizabeth Wills to Cedric, 3 April 1864. The only known physical item that remains of Tom Wills is a small brooch in the possession of Mr Lawton Wills Cooke. Tom Wills' cap was reported as being on display in Melbourne, *Evening Sun*, 16 November 1923, p. 5. Discussions with the archivist at the Melbourne Cricket Club to date has not revealed where it is in the MCC collection, if it is there at all.

⁷⁰⁴ *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 November 1877, p. 2.

⁷⁰⁵ His arrest and reported gaoling during the 1867 aboriginal tour was not a result of alcohol abuse.

⁷⁰⁶ There is a single reference by Wills that if mistreated by a wife he would hit her. It is hard to read too much into this as the tone is light and it is to his mother referring to the hardships of living in isolation in Queensland. See letter, 8 June 1862 from Tom Wills to his mother. The family oral history

balding. His once admired apparel seems ill-fitting in photographs in the last fifteen years of his life. Despite what must have been advanced alcohol dependence he was able to write letters and attend a cricket match in Melbourne up till the last couple of months of his life.⁷⁰⁷ He played his final recorded cricket match six weeks before he died.⁷⁰⁸ Rather than destitute it would be more accurate to describe a life of modest means sustained and kept partially afloat by regular handouts from his family.

In March 1880 he wrote his last two surviving letters.⁷⁰⁹ Wills was a beggar within his family. The measured and dependable Ducker, the accountant of methodical and sober habits, regulated the amount of money expended on Tom. Ducker was the family sieve through which Tom received his nourishing finance. Tom was stripped of financial responsibility and a percentage was siphoned off by Ducker to pay residual debts. He received a stipend of three pounds a week from Ducker. His previous childlike denials of incurred debts were not seen at this point. He sadly confessed to his lot. Melbourne debts piled up upon those from Geelong. Despite moments of characteristic charm his incorrigible optimism was faded. His words ring sadly of a bleak and constricting world.

The final letters are stained with the alcoholic's dreams and laments. He reassured his brothers that he only needed one final handout. He wanted a loan of twenty pounds, ten from each brother. With characteristic flourish he dealt the turmoil by dreams of escaping to Tasmania. He limply complained that he was not being dealt a fair hand with the money. 'If I get 10 pounds from you I will not trouble any of you again and will repay as soon as I can'. His debts were exposed and he seems beyond any flicker of shame:

Mr Ducker told me that I was not allowed enough and so wrote Horace about it asking you both to advance me twenty pounds in all as I wanted to pay off a few debts here (in Melbourne) and clear off to

was from Mr Lawton Wills Cooke; the claim is also made in Perrin, *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 137, that Wills exhibited aggression when drunk. No archival evidence has been found to support this assertion.

⁷⁰⁷ *Sydney Mail*, 3 January 1880, pp. 27-8, 'Near them, chatting on the past, was the veteran Tommy Wills, looking hearty and well'.

⁷⁰⁸ *Australasian*, 20 March 1880, p. 364. Although it is tempting to portray Wills as a vagrant, he was still operating at quite a high level in the last five years of his life. In addition to his continued cricket, he was a founding member and vice-president of the Geelong Branch of the Australian Natives Association, see, Geelong Minute book, 1875-76.

⁷⁰⁹ Letters, Tom Wills to Horace and Cedric, 15 March 1880.

Tasmania. Horace's 10 pounds has been paid away and if I only had the other ten pounds I should be clear to move. I receive three pounds ... old Geelong scores.⁷¹⁰

At the end of his life he was isolated geographically from his family and estranged from his mother and oldest sister. It was Wills' character to move, to be separate and re-enter his family's sphere to satisfy his wants. But the desultory lines from his brothers and Colden express a love and affection for Tom. He remained within their warm embrace of memories despite his alcoholism.

8 Colonial Sport and Alcohol

'The colonial article is to me like colonial beer, much of it beneath mediocrity'.⁷¹¹

'Oh the champagne has been at work ...'⁷¹²

8.1 Drinking and the Intercolonial Player

Organised colonial sport was a seductive and welcoming place for those who wished to drink. Like-minded males from late adolescence, with little constraint, were likely to drink and drink heavily. It was a narrow world of players, administrators and admirers. Time was plentiful and players sufficiently idle for recreational drinking. Explicit documentation of intoxication on the sports field was uncommon. More commonly there was the insinuation of drunkenness. Even when descriptions were candid, individual players were rarely named. This statement was as applicable to Tom Wills as to any other individual during his playing lifetime.⁷¹³

There are numerous examples of former players who recalled drunkenness on the cricket field, beginning with the first match between NSW and Victoria in 1856. William Hammersley played cricket for the colony of Victoria before taking up a career

⁷¹⁰ Letter, 15 March 1880, Tom to Cedric.

⁷¹¹ William Hammersley, *Australasian*, 4 February 1871, p. 139.

⁷¹² *Leader*, 25 March 1871, p. 11.

⁷¹³ For example, *The Hamilton Spectator and Grange District Advertiser*, 3 April 1863, p. 2 and 1 April 1865, p. 2. In the latter reference the losers in a local cricket game are said to have drunk brandy while the winners drank non-intoxicating drinks. This particular reference was located when searching for possible links to drinking and the aboriginal cricket team which will be covered later in this chapter.

as a sports journalist in Melbourne. English by birth, his sense of superiority led him to patronise and taunt his colonial peers. He rapidly became the dominant voice in cricket journalism in Victoria and remained so for nearly two decades. He recalled how a profligate and cocky Victorian team lost to NSW:

Nor can we forget our dismay at being beaten on our own ground when we reckoned victory a certainty, and were inclined rather to look with disdain on our opponents, who wisely slept when others feasted and danced, and preferred their Spartan broth to turkey and champagne.⁷¹⁴

In 1883, in a series of reflective articles, Hammersley recalled a conversation in Melbourne with a member of the Victorian cricket team from that first intercolonial game of 1856. It was a game which was notable for the effect of alcohol upon the players in the field. Vital catches were dropped. Hammersley recorded: ‘It was a curious match, and Captain Hotham told me that many of the Melbourne players were “suffering a recovery” the last day, and it looks as if some of the New South Wales were also’.⁷¹⁵

The second intercolonial game between the two colonies, and the first in which Wills played, took place in 1857. Responding to criticism of another Victorian loss, it marked a rare occasion when Wills defended his players from taunts of drunkenness. He wrote:

It is stated that some six or seven of the eleven, when they appeared on the ground, were not able to stand; in fact, that they were intoxicated. Now I really do not see what good people do themselves or any one else by bringing forward such uncalled for and most ungentlemanly reports, to say the least of it. Now I have played in as many matches as any one in the colony, and know, or ought to know, what cricket is; and I will say I scarcely ever saw an eleven conduct themselves with such propriety as did the Victorians on this occasion.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁴ *Australasian*, 8 July 1865, p. 4. Also see, a similar statement from J. B. Thompson, *Victorian Cricketer's Guide* (Melbourne: Sands and Kenny, 1859) p. 16, ‘Victorian cricketers, having been rare birds at any of the places of amusement the previous night, turned out betimes in the morning with a full determination to make a change in the game. Like the English at Agincourt they had a good night's rest; while their antagonists, also imitating a historical example, indulged in feasting and drinking their victory by anticipation’.

⁷¹⁵ *Sydney Mail*, 6 October 1883, p. 651.

⁷¹⁶ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 7 February 1857, p. 3.

There were some comments upon drinking, the veracity of which is difficult to prove one way or the other. In one such retrospective reflection of the beer-drinking propensity of players in the early intercolonial matches, Harpur recalled a famous occasion when NSW visited Victoria. It was claimed that the drinking patterns of the two teams were widely different. The NSW team was apparently ‘surprised at the beer drinking habit of the Victorians, the beverage frequently being drunk for breakfast’. It claims that when the first match was played in Melbourne the Sydney players had a barrel of tea fitted with a tap brought to the ground.⁷¹⁷

There is evidence that supports such a distinction between NSW and Victoria that is less easy to dismiss. A correspondent recalled that it was drunkenness that led to Victoria’s loss in 1856, saying that NSW only drank tea during the intercolonial match.⁷¹⁸ Referring to the intercolonial match of 1859, when Wills was captain of the Victorian team, Hammersley recalled:

I have often wondered how they managed to win that very close match in 1859, when I think 20,000 persons were present, and our last two men hardly knew what they were about – from excitement, of course. It was a case of tea versus no. 2., and the latter won as it always will.⁷¹⁹

Referring to the sumptuous manner in which the games were played and players treated he continued. In doing so he gave an eye witness account of the manner in which

⁷¹⁷ See, *Cricket Footprints on the Sands of Time* by FM Harpur, *Manuscript, Box 305/1*, State Library of Victoria. This is a hand written exercise book. The author says he started it in 1882. It is also not referenced therefore not all claims can be checked. See, Albert Gregory. *Cricketers and their historic deeds* (newspaper cuttings), Mitchell Library. One article in an unidentified Newspaper on about the second page of this volume is titled ‘Beer v Tea’, Teetotallers win. See recollections of Harry Hilliard, from *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 March 1914, p. 21. ‘In those early days, too, the Welshmen were known as the tea-drinkers, preferring that beverage to ale, with which the Victorians used to quench their thirst’. Also, see Davis sporting collection, Mitchell Library, regarding the fifth intercolonial game. ‘Three natives of NSW played the Victorian team viz Wills, Ross and Huddlestone and the Sydney men were very abstemious and a rallying cry was raised of “British Beer Drinkers” (the favourite drink in Melbourne at that time was beer) v “Tea Drinkers”’. The Sydney men having a large can of the latter beverage on the ground and they tasted of it very freely’.

⁷¹⁸ *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, 30 November 1861, p. 4. ‘How was it the Victorian lost the first match ever played? If report says true, some or our side had a little too much “alcohol”, whilst the Sydney mend rank tea, and tea only’.

⁷¹⁹ *Australasian*, 16 June 1866, pp. 331-2, a somewhat ambiguous reference to the powers of alcohol.

champion players were most likely exposed to drinking as a consequence of their celebrity:

I remember a new chum – a bit of a player in his times, one who had played with good men at home – expressing the most unfeigned astonishment at the way cricket was carried out in Australia. Such crowds to witness a match, such excitement, bands of music, champagne, luncheons and grand dinners to follow at which the representative of majesty was not above presiding. And the cricketers themselves were feted and lionised until it is a wonder there was any cricket left in them; for cricketers have not usually more command over themselves than other mortals, nor are they less vain or less abstemious.⁷²⁰

There were scattered but consistent accusations that intercolonial cricket teams indulged in drinking throughout the 1860s and 1870s. In 1861, a querulous correspondent to *Bell's Life Victoria* repeated accusations that the Victorian cricket team was in a state of chronic intoxication. Two years later, the same correspondent wrote that the Victorians needed to swear off their liquor before going to Sydney to play in the intercolonial match.⁷²¹

Early in Tom Wills' career, youthful and seemingly invulnerable, the effects of alcohol were minimal. The earliest unequivocal evidence we have for Tom Wills being drunk on the sporting field was in 1865. The description was penned by his adoring brother Egbert, then a young schoolboy at Scotch College, Melbourne. Egbert casually recalled a recent club cricket match in Melbourne where Tom, drunk, created havoc. The crowd reaction was not one of condemnation but of mirth as he played up to their expectations. The pantomime unfolded all the while as he puffed on his small clay pipe and self-indulgently tossed down his innocuous slows balls.⁷²²

In the 1866 intercolonial, in which Wills did not play, William Greaves and Sam Cosstick, both professionals with the Melbourne Cricket Club, were accused of misbehaviour and intoxication during the match in Sydney. Their behaviour in Sydney, on the ground and during an athletics meeting, suggested that they were either drunk or

⁷²⁰ *Australasian*, 16 June 1866, pp. 331-2.

⁷²¹ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 7 December 1861, p. 4; *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 31 January 1863, p. 4.

⁷²² Letter, Egbert Wills to Horace, 15 December 1865.

grossly disobedient or most likely both. They were chastised privately by the Melbourne Cricket Club and publicly in the newspapers:

... one of our principal bowlers was out dissipating until four o'clock on the first morning of the match! and that ... other bowlers were never to be found in their hotel, and turned up on match morning evidently very seedy and in need of rest and sleep?⁷²³

A private letter noted after the Victorians had lost the match: 'Victoria's cricket luck is dead out this year-our eleven got beaten in one innings in Sydney having been spreeing too much to play well ...'. This letter is of interest because it was a private letter written by a cricket lover. If typical, it reveals that the average spectator simply agreed with the newspaper reports, that alcohol excess was responsible for such behaviour and poor form.⁷²⁴ Both Cosstick and Greaves continued to play with the Melbourne Cricket Club despite their 'spreeing'.⁷²⁵

The archives of the nineteenth century, though less lurid in its language, reveal bad behaviour and drunkenness similar to episodes in today's newspapers on contemporary sportsmen. In 1868, a champion amateur cricketer, John Conway, and another player were brought before the MCC for misbehaviour after a cricket match. They were severely chastised for drunkenness and lewd behaviour in front of women while taking a buggy trip between Melbourne and Ballarat.⁷²⁶ On another occasion, an intoxicated Conway and the professional Sam Cosstick caused a public nuisance with 'blackguardly and disgusting' behaviour on a steamer on their way to represent Victoria

⁷²³ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 5 January 1867, p. 2.

⁷²⁴ Letter on 27 January 1867. To Wheelock from Andrew Newell, which was located incidentally in a broad search of the archives. The MCC minutes, 15 January 1867, provide a detailed list of accusations. These include drinking and insulting passengers on the steamer going up to Sydney; that they were seen in a drunken state on the streets of Sydney; and that they were unfit to play on the morning of the start of the intercolonial match.

⁷²⁵ Letter, 27 January 1867, To Wheelock from Andrew Newell, RHSVictoria.

⁷²⁶ 21 April 1868, MCC minutes. There are modern Australian parallels with misbehaviour and drinking. See for example, Cheryl Critchley, 'Men Behaving Badly', *Sun-Herald*, 28 August 2004, p. 12. 'Sporting Oafs are a Disgrace', *Sunday Telegraph*, 25 April 1999, p. 56; Jeff Dunne, Stuart Honeysett, 'NRL Tackles Drink Problem', *Australian*, 28 April 1999, p. 20; Roy Masters, 'Test Skipper Found Drunk' *Age*, 'Sport', 27 April 1999, p. 2; Roy Masters, 'Cap'n Fittler's Booze Cruise Sparks Call for Alcohol Ban' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Sport', 27 April 1999, p. 36; Jeff Dunne, 'Sportsmen + Alcohol = ? Why they Head Back to the Bar.' *Weekend Australian*, 23-24 January 1999, p. 62. More on Conway can be found in R. Cashman, W. Franks, J. Maxwell, B. Stoddart, A. Weaver and R. Webster (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 119 and Ronald Conway, 'John Conway and the first Australian Eleven of 1878', *Margin*, no. 30, 1993, pp. 12-7 and no. 31, pp. 11-4.

in an intercolonial match.⁷²⁷ The public expectations of the amateur cricketer, were similar to modern calls for sportsmen to act as role models for the community:

Passengers on board intercolonial steamers will be apt in future to regard Victorian cricketers as undesirable companions, and it is even possible that the directors of steam-boat companies may impose a higher rate of passage money or stipulate that a certain portion of their vessels shall be set apart for cricketers, so that other passengers may avoid any possibility of annoyance ... We may make some allowance at times for professional players, but men who assume the positions of gentlemen should remember what is expected of them, and that it is their duty to set an example to professional players.⁷²⁸

Wills did not record in private or public documents his motivation for drinking. In fact he rarely made any comments about alcohol. The only exceptions to this were his comments about the early intercolonial match where he rejected accusations against the team and his reported concern for drinking within the aboriginal team.⁷²⁹ Regardless of his personal motivations, he was exposed throughout most of his life to an established drinking culture amongst cricketers.

8.2 Alcohol off the Field

To what degree did Wills' drinking damage his sporting career? There were several points in his life where alcohol may have had an influence – leaving the MCC in 1858 amidst disputes with the committee; losing the captaincy of the aboriginal cricket team to Charles Lawrence in 1867; threats to leave for Queensland in 1869; leaving the MCC in the early 1870s; his petulance in losing the Victorian captaincy to Richard Wardill; losing his position on the Victorian team in 1873; and leaving Geelong in early 1878.

It is well known that Wills was secretary to the MCC from September 1857 until September 1858. It is less well known that he threatened to leave the club before his appointment. Writing to his sister Emily in September, 1857 he dashed off:

⁷²⁷ *Australasian*, 15 February 1868, p. 204.

⁷²⁸ *Australasian*, 8 February 1868, p. 172.

I have had a row with some of the Members of the M.C.C. and have resigned my membership and shall join the Richmond Club instead⁷³⁰

Nonetheless he stayed with the MCC until a further round of skirmishes with the club saw him carry out his initial threat. Although heavy drinking was a part of the MCC culture as it was throughout cricket, it is not known if alcohol contributed to any of these early arguments.

In 1867 Wills was usurped as leader of the aboriginal tour. Although there have been suggestions that alcohol was the principal reason for this there is no evidence to this effect.⁷³¹ In 1869 Wills was widely publicised as leaving the MCC for Queensland. Again his threatened resignation from Victorian cricket has been suggested as being related to alcohol. Although this speculation is not unreasonable there is no evidence to support it.⁷³²

Drinking affected players off the field as much as on the field. A brazen exhibition of drunkenness by the Victorian professional, Sam Cosstick, never saw the light of day in the public press. This incident gives some insight into Wills' views of such matters and his affinity with professional players. Sam Cosstick was hauled up before a Melbourne Cricket Club committee for his customary misbehaviour. He was accused by the pavilion keeper of being insensibly drunk and lying unconscious near the bar. Tom Wills was called in as a witness, not coincidentally, by Cosstick. Maintaining a strict policy of evasion and camaraderie with a fellow professional Wills' testimony was farcical and despite evidence to the contrary he refused to condemn Cosstick. An exasperated and frustrated committee dismissed Wills:

Mr Wills was questioned on the subject at Cosstick's request and was also invited to say anything he wished bearing on the matter, but his evidence only went as far as supporting Cossticks' denial of having made any disturbance or said anything disrespectful of any member of

⁷²⁹ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 7 February 1857, p. 3. See later in chapter for reference to aboriginal cricketers and alcohol consumption.

⁷³⁰ Letter, Tom Wills to Emily, 17 September 1857 .

⁷³¹ M. Flanagan, *The SportsFactor*, 17 August 2001, p. 5, on the 1868 aboriginal cricket team, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/sportsf/stories/s347703.htm>. The speculation that alcohol may have been relevant in Wills' loss of the leadership is not an unreasonable one.

⁷³² See Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, p. 218. Certainly it seems from the family letters that he was forbidden to go the family property Cullin-la-Ringo by his mother at this time so hence stayed in Melbourne. See Letter, Ducker to Cedric Wills, 20 September 1869.

the club as far as he knew also in accusing Mr Treen of having made statements at variance with the truth – it entirely failed, did not even attempt, to touch upon the principal charge and the committee after a careful and patient investigation were compelled to believe that Mr Treen’s statements were in substance correct.⁷³³

A close examination of the public documents and private MCC archives reveal that Wills was not like Greaves or Cosstick. Wills’ transcendent sporting powers were highlighted by the MCC secretary Handfield with genuine affection. Handfield, the Honorary Secretary of the MCC in 1868, told Wills with glowing pride in a private letter how much he had learned from him and what he has meant to Victorian cricket:

... I cannot refrain from expressing to you my sense (personally) of the value of your services to the Club during the season now drawing to a close – I myself have derived considerable benefit from your instruction and can testify to your unwearied exertions in the hours of practice- Further I attribute the general success of the Club in matches this season very much to your excellent coaching advantage derived from the fact of your playing for the Club in most of their principal matches and I hope that the Club may be fortunate enough to be able to secure your services again next season.⁷³⁴

These affectionate words were not from someone who was trying to soothe Wills nor the words to someone who had disgraced the Club through drinking or misconduct. The same secretary described other talented cricketers in neutral and at times hostile tones.

On 22 March 1870, a letter was read from T. W. Wills to the committee of the Melbourne Cricket Club. It stated that during a recent trip to Tasmania he had been threatened with arrest for a debt of three pounds nine shillings and six pence incurred for refreshments from four years previously.⁷³⁵ Wills claimed that the bill had been paid. Subsequent action belied this and suggested that Wills’ account was untrustworthy.

⁷³³ Minutes of the Melbourne Cricket Club, 6 April 1869, Match and Ground Committee. The words are underlined as in the original document.

⁷³⁴ Melbourne Cricket Club minute books, 25 March 1868, Letter, W. H. Handfield to Tom Wills. This is not to say that Wills did not have disputes; nor that he was not drunk at times; it is clear that this was almost certainly the case. But despite this there was an affection towards him which rendered Wills quite differently to other cricketers of the time.

⁷³⁵ Melbourne Cricket Club Minutebook, 22 March 1870. Also Coleman in *Seasons in the Sun* refers to Wills being sought for unpaid bills while in Sydney which Flanagan also refers to in a manner that suggests rumour. Neither source gives any archival reference to substantiate the claims. On reading the MCC archives it would seem that these references are actually to the Tasmania debt, Coleman, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 95. Flanagan, *The Call*, p. 140.

It is interesting to consider to what extent the Melbourne Cricket Club chose to keep or dismiss its professionals based upon accusations of intoxication and misbehaviour. In the early 1870s Wills was overlooked for the professional's job with the MCC. Preference was given to Sam Cosstick. Several MCC players, but most notably Sam Cosstick, had a record of intoxicated and unseemly behaviour. But despite the MCC's private condemnation of Cosstick in the minute and letter books, the MCC did not discard Cosstick. In the end, Cosstick's form was superior to Wills and the former's selection was won most likely on these grounds. Despite its moral posturing, the Melbourne Cricket Club seemed more interested in the pragmatics of winning than refusing to employ talented players even when the club had found them guilty of repeated drunkenness.

There were other hints that Wills' behaviour was unmeasured and perhaps influenced by alcohol. In 1869 Wills remonstrated that he would not play if not picked as captain of Victoria. On this occasion public sympathy was not with Wills:

Mr Wills's services to the colony as a cricket have been so valuable that we are slow to find fault with him ... Acknowledging Mr Wills's undoubted right, from a purely cricket point of view to the captaincy of a Victorian eleven in an IC match, yet if he in that capacity has been unable to preserve the good name of Victoria in the cricket field and to hold that moral ascendancy over his men that a captain should have then we say that it is better for the credit of the colony that his place should be filled by perhaps a less able man, but one who, we are convinced, will always be the first to discountenance such conduct as has on several occasions during the past few years conferred an unenviable notoriety on the Eleven of Victoria.⁷³⁶

Prior to the visit of W. G. Grace for the 1873-4 season, opinion was polarised as to whether Wills should be selected for Victoria. It was implied that the reason for his non-selection had nothing to do with his fitness to play but related to '... some unpalatable truths will have to be told, which it would be infinitely more pleasant to leave unspoken. Most cricketers can readily understand why Mr Wills has not been

⁷³⁶ *Australasian*, 13 March 1869, p. 331.

selected to play against the All England Eleven; there is a perfectly valid and sufficient reason ...'.⁷³⁷ The most likely valid reason relates to alcohol abuse.

In 1876, Wills was resurrected to restore an ailing Victorian team. His conduct in his previous intercolonial was not forgotten. It was the period when Hammersley publicly revealed the extent of Tom Wills' drinking problems and its effect upon his playing. The following reference from 1876 implied excessive drinking:

It was not denied that the last time he led a Victorian eleven, in December, 1872, into the field, his conduct was what principally conduced to the loss of the match, but it was imagined, with what reason was known only to the match committee, that he 'had changed all that'.⁷³⁸

There may be an assumption that alcohol contaminated and confounded Wills' entire sporting career. We know from the MCC letter books and minute books that the MCC, in private at least, was not reticent in condemning players who misbehaved and were drunk. But the MCC rarely if ever denied such players to play for the club. The MCC did not discard players who were valuable despite their misbehaviour and drunkenness. Several players, but most notably Sam Cosstick, John Conway and William Greaves displayed more disruptive behaviour than Wills but managed to remain with the MCC in the face of such behaviour. Sam Cosstick's behaviour required at times a clause to be inserted into his contract that payment was contingent upon not only the quality of his play but also his behaviour.⁷³⁹ At times Wills was criticised but in comparison to the above players he was less disruptive and commanded greater

⁷³⁷ *Argus*, 29 November 1873, p. 5; *Australasian*, 29 November 1873, p. 683. Also see *Australasian Sketcher*, 29 November 1873, p. 155. 'The last named player [Wills] has been left out of the practice team, and it is somewhat doubtful if he will be asked to play. Wills, although a veteran, is still a good batsman, he is also a good skipper, and he can bowl at times effectively; but he is not at all times reliable, and he failed, as captain to do justice to his side at a critical time in an important match last season. Still the public would like to see him play, their motto being, "With all thy faults I love thee still, Tommy Wills"'.

⁷³⁸ *Leader*, 4 March 1876, p. 11.

⁷³⁹ Such clauses were not uncommon in a professional's contract. See Melbourne Cricket Club minutes, 2 October 1862. Cosstick was notorious for his behaviour and chastised by various MCC committees for disorderly and drunken behaviour. Despite this, and seemingly as long as his form warranted it, he continued to play. See letter from Brian Wardill to Cosstick, 16 June 1880: 'At a committee meeting held on Monday evening letter of complaint with regard to your conduct on Saturday evening and on previous occasions was considered. The committee in order to prevent a recurrence of the conduct complained of (using foul and beastly language in the Pavilion Bar and fighting there) have given the club caterer instructions ...'

respect. This respect for the most part survived his transition from amateur to professional status during the 1860s and 1870s.

The evidence, meagre as it is, suggests that Wills had a preference for beer amongst the alcoholic drinks available to him. There are at least five references to beer in his life. The first was the playful reference made by his father when a child that Tom was a guzzler of beer; the second was his father's reference in 1861 during their trek to Cullin-la-Ringo where Horatio drank wine and Tom beer, 'Tom and I have fed like fighting cocks whilst here – lots of good living – beer for Tom and wine for me'.⁷⁴⁰ There was the more insistent irritable tone of Tom Wills in the couple of years after the massacre where he angrily decried his Uncle William Roope's not allowing him to drink his porter. Roope planned to sell the porter which Tom regarded as wasteful.⁷⁴¹ There was a further reference Tom makes to drinking beer, when he wistfully longs for the upcoming Christmas while still marooned at Cullin-la-Ringo.⁷⁴² Finally there was William Hammersley caustic reference that Tom Wills avoid colonial beer in 1873. None of this is definitive evidence that beer was his principal drink but in the absence of any other evidence it remains the most supported conclusion.

8.3 The Aboriginal Cricket Team

In 1866 Tom Wills captained and coached an aboriginal cricket eleven from western Victoria. The team was later captained and coached by Charles Lawrence who arrived in Australia with H. H. Stephenson's 1861 English tour to Australia. It was Lawrence, after having usurped Wills as the aboriginal team's leader, who took the team to England in 1868. The fear that alcohol might corrupt the aboriginal team was ever present. Accusations of intemperance were few but did surface at times during the period under Wills then Lawrence.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴⁰ Letter, Horatio Wills to his wife Elizabeth, 28 February 1861.

⁷⁴¹ Letter, 8 June 1862, Tom Wills to his mother. 'He got two casks of porter up and actually gave me a glass full and says he will sell the rest, they are both here and I think he might have given me a few bottles of it as it would do me a world of good ...'.

⁷⁴² Although it might be argued that the references to alcohol by Tom are innocent it is noteworthy that no one else seems to raise the topic of alcohol as frequently in the family letters.

⁷⁴³ There were many newspaper references to the possible dissipation of the aboriginal players, for example, see, *Hamilton Spectator*, 2 January 1867, p. 2, '... if Mr. Hayman's presence can prevent them from running riot at the public houses ...'. This continued well after the tours, for example see, *Wallaroo Times*, 4 February 1874, p. 2. 'The Mortlake Despatch says that Mullagh is alive, but intimates that he is kept out of the way of English cricket and colonial liquor. And a good thing to do, no doubt'. This does

Although evidence of alcohol abuse among the aboriginal team was not highlighted in newspapers of the day, there are suggestions it was a problem in a manner not dissimilar to the broader cricket community. The black team was exposed to a culture of alcohol and sport that seduced and damaged its victims regardless of race. There was no suggestion that misconduct by the black team was magnified, pounced upon and denigrated as a general rule. If anything the description of the team was unrealistically held up as a paragon of temperance. This was contrasted with the popular view of alcohol abuse in aboriginal communities that had rendered individuals to live a life of squalor and humiliation. However, one aspect of the press' response to the aboriginal players was distinctive. When accusations did break through into print, such as with Tiger and Bullocky [two of the aboriginal players], the individuals were stereotyped as either the dissolute and vagrant aborigine, or as exemplifying a race of weak intellect.⁷⁴⁴

In the years leading up to the 1866 tour, the black players, or at least a sizeable proportion of them had some exposure to the drinking culture associated with country cricket in western Victoria. There were several early references to drink and cricket culture from the Edenhope area that predate the aboriginal tour. One early reference is of excessive drinking of champagne and its effect upon the players.⁷⁴⁵ In January 1867,

not necessarily mean Mullagh was affected by alcohol but a more general comment about the threat of alcoholic dissipation within the aboriginal population. Also, *Australasian*, 10 January 1874, p. 44. Public commentary could take the form of lengthy moral admonishments, *Australasian*, 5 January 1867, p. 13, '... but the great danger to those wild visitors will be the grog bottle. It has a peculiarly fatal influence on them not merely from the want of self-restraint but in the effect on the constitution. The healthy savage can from habit sustain many privations which the white man would sink under; but he has after all much less strength, less stamina-due of course, to his irregular means of sustenance and exposure to all vicissitudes of weather; and the firewater acts on him, breaks him down, or kills him off with a rapidity often astonishing'.

⁷⁴⁴ Typically the team was held up in a favourable light compared to the descriptions of other aborigines and the devastation wrought by alcohol, see, *Geelong Register*, 4 December 1866, p. 2. *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 January 1867, p. 2. 'The behaviour of the Victorian Cricketers is perfect. Better gentlemen could not be found, they do not drink spirituous liquors, and during the whole of yesterday no improper language was heard to pass their lips'. Cast as different to the local aboriginal population, the team was purported to make derogatory asides towards aboriginal drunkenness. See also *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 October 1870, p. 3; *Geelong Advertiser*, 23 May 1871, p. 2; *Geelong Register*, 26 October 1867, p. 2. Journals such as *Melbourne Punch* could be vicious in their depictions of drinking and aborigines, for example, in their colonial definition of an aborigine it states 'Something to spit on. A receptacle for beer'. See *Melbourne Punch*, 28 October 1869, p. 137. For further context on the portrayal of aborigines and alcohol, see Webb and Enstice, *Aliens and Savages*, pp. 34-6.

⁷⁴⁵ *Hamilton Spectator*, 3 April 1863, p. 5. 'Whatever it was that so invigorated the Harrow men – it might have been the dinner or perhaps the champagne – it seemed to have quite a contrary effect on their

a contract was drawn up for the proposed aboriginal tour to England in which sobriety and behaviour were highlighted for the aboriginal team.⁷⁴⁶

It has been suggested that Wills' drinking was responsible for his non-appointment as their coach for their trip to England in 1868.⁷⁴⁷ What evidence is there for this point of view and more broadly what evidence is there of drinking amongst the team? Wills coached the team when the corrosive influence of alcohol on aboriginal society was widely commented upon. It was acknowledged that cricketing culture increased the chances of exposing the aboriginal team to excessive drinking.⁷⁴⁸

There were several public incidents during the period 1866 to 1868 where individual black cricketers were intoxicated and reported in the press. The occasional episodes of drunkenness in Australia that were reported were generally not highlighted in the colonial press. Bullocky, one of the aboriginal players had directed towards him mocking and derisory comments that were amongst the most venomous ever directed at an aboriginal cricketer.

In early 1867, Bullocky was arrested for drunkenness in Richmond. A local newspaper report collapsed into the well known drunken aboriginal caricatures of the time and parodied his athleticism:

opponents ...'. While there is no suggestion that the aboriginal players were more or less intoxicated there is also no suggestion that they were seen as distinct from the drinking culture of the time.

⁷⁴⁶ See the contract, 'Agreement between WR Hayman Esq, Unamurriman and others, and WEB Gurnett relating to engagement of cricketers on 8 January 1867'. The contract stipulated that the players '... behave with such sobriety and regularity as shall be necessary to the proper and effectually carrying out and performance of the said cricket matches exercises and sports'. The most detailed analysis of this contract is, Sampson, 'The Nature and Effects Thereof Were', pp. 54-69. Similar though less formal references to the same issues are found in the contractual agreements between the MCC and non-aboriginal professional bowlers in the 1850s and 1860s.

⁷⁴⁷ See The Sports Factor, on the 1868 aboriginal cricket team, 17 August 2001, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/sportsf/stories/s347703.htm>. Against this John Molony, *The Native Born* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2000), p. 144 thinks that this is unlikely to have been a sole source of problems for the blacks citing more the drink culture of cricket of the time. Tatz, *Obstacle Race*, p. 150, also seems to uncritically accept at face value that Wills influenced the black team by his drinking habits.

⁷⁴⁸ For example, see *Leader*, 10 January 1874. There were many comments in the Victorian newspapers that highlighted the damaging effect of alcohol amongst the local aborigines. *Port Phillip Herald*, 15 September 1840. Also see, *Leader*, 26 March 1870, p. 9. There was a protectiveness in many articles about unscrupulous predation upon the black cricketers. Evidence about traditional society being stained and dismantled by alcohol was a common theme that accompanied the black team.

It appeared that Bullocky had been found in the streets by Constable Long, in a state that would have rendered his chance in “a hundred yards race-backwards” extremely slight, his equilibrium showing a decided tendency in a contrary direction although an expert in the cricket field when sober, it was apparent that with liquor in, he was not a whit better than any other drunken aborigine.⁷⁴⁹

The temperance issues of the day were also played out as they were with other cricketers. For example Dick a Dick, another aboriginal player, was supposedly an advocate of temperance.⁷⁵⁰ In personal letters that remain, Wills makes no comment on the blacks’ drinking and its effect upon them or their performance. Moreover he never makes comment upon his own drinking during this period. His only known reference to aboriginal drinking was a reported remark recorded by a newspaper reporter that he was concerned about the excessive drinking of two members of the aboriginal team.⁷⁵¹

After the collapse of the 1866/7 Wills tour there was general condemnation of the conduct of the tour. It is possible that exposure to alcohol abuse was included under this umbrella but if so, it was not specifically raised.⁷⁵² At no point was Wills held responsible for any behavioural problems amongst the team. There is no evidence implicating him in inducing the black players to drink. There is not a single incident where Wills was highlighted as exhibiting drunken behaviour with the black players. During the 1866-7 season Tom Wills was not described in any contemporary source, public or private, as being intoxicated. Given the available longitudinal evidence and the general lack of exposure of alcohol abuse in cricket in newspapers of the time this was probably more a factor of the reporting rather than any evidence that he was not

⁷⁴⁹ *Richmond Australian*, 12 January 1867, p. 3. He was fined five shillings which was interestingly paid the Instructor who is unnamed but may have been Wills. It is notable that such a potentially embarrassing and damaging incident was reported only in the Richmond press and not copied more widely throughout the colony.

⁷⁵⁰ See, *Australasian*, 11 May 1867, p. 588. ‘Dick a Dick is a fine fellow, and would make a good secretary, I should say, to a Temperance Society for it will delight all total abstainers who believe all blackfellows take kindly to their liquor to know that this darky, Dick a Dick has a horror of drunkenness and visits any of his brothers in fact any of the lot, who indulge in a “wee drop too much”’. *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 December 1869, p. 2. ‘Both Mullagh and Cuzens, two of the aboriginal eleven which visited England, played for the Melbourne Club, by whom they are engaged as professional bowlers. They appear to be strict teetotalers, and their quiet and gentlemanly behaviour was as much admired as their really splendid cricketing.’

⁷⁵¹ *Geelong Register*, 5 January 1867, p. 2. ‘From inquiries we made from Mr Wills, we ascertained that only two of his team have yet imbibed anything like a taste for drink, and these two are subjects of considerable anxiety to him.’

⁷⁵² See, *Weekly Age*, 31 May 1867, p. 2, for a report on the death of Watty, another aboriginal player. ‘But “Watty” was fond of grog, and in the habit of having “sprees” occasionally’.

drinking. It is almost certain that he was drinking excessively at the time both on and off the field.

The inquest on the death of one of the aborigines, Watty, opens an aperture into the frequency of intoxication at the end of the first tour of at least one player. The inquest, in Edenhope, was conducted on 15 May 1867. William Hayman recalled for the coroner:

On the 27th of April he left Sydney in good health and spirits, he did not suffer from, seasickness. On the 4th of May about 10 pm, he was very drunk in Melbourne, he had to be carried to bed. On the 7th inst he left for Portland, in good health, - on the 8th inst, he played cricket at Portland, and with a deal of more exercise than usual and got drunk that night. He was then carried to bed. On the 9th started for Coleraine he was then under the influence of liquor, about 10 miles on the road he remains behind the waggon and when he overtook us, he was very drunk – he was abusive to everyone and then got out and walked with Paddy – and Tarpot. The deceased and the two last mentioned did not overtake us but camped with a bullock and came up to us next morning at the Green Hills. He then had a good breakfast at the Green Hills, and came on with the whole party. About 11/2 pm he called at an Hotel on the road side where the deceased eat [sic] apples ... and drank beer, he was not drunk from the effects of the beer, about six pm he had tea at Coleraine ... The next morning he started with the whole party for Lake Wallace. During the whole of that time he did not complain I did not see him alive since. I saw him drunk about six times but not on succession, he was very fond of liquor always and excited when drunk.⁷⁵³

Charles Lawrence took over the team in mid-1867 and immediately there were concerns expressed about past alcohol abuse in the aboriginal team.⁷⁵⁴ Mounted Constable Thomas Kennedy reported on the Wills and Gurnett tour that had just concluded:

However the speculation proved a failure and the Blacks came back penniless – one of them “Watty” died on the road and at the Inquest held on his body the evidence adduced proved that he as well as others of the “team” were continually drunk ... Mr Lawrence is here now collecting the men all of whom are in comfortable employment with the surrounding settlers – clothed well fed and comfortably lodged and

⁷⁵³ Inquest on Watty, 15 May 1867, VPRS 24/P Unit 190 File 1867/373.

⁷⁵⁴ Letters, R. Brough-Smyth to Chief Secretary, 14 October 1867 and Thomas Kennedy to H. R. Barclay Esq., Superintendent of Police, 15 August 1867.

paid for their labor. Twelve of them are now mustered and since their advent here the majority of them have been drunk and consequently a nuisance to the bettered conducted inhabitants. As the promoters of this cricketing scheme take no steps to check the supply of liquor – and the constable very often absent from his station is almost powerless to stop or detect the parties who supply them, the consequence is a great deal of drunkenness and other disorderly conduct – three of them are now locked up on those charges ... in order that some steps may be taken to stop this speculation in the Blacks so that they may return to their several employers – where they will be far more comfortable and at a distance from spirituous liquors ... The Constables remarks may be met by saying that the Blacks are going of their own fee will but he is aware what a potent reasoner a glass of grog is with a blackfellow and he firmly believes that it is this love of grog and the facilities with which he is supplied that prompts the Black to leave his home.⁷⁵⁵

The most notable public example of drunkenness on tour in England when the team was under Lawrence, was the arrest of a player called Tiger, who was charged with assaulting a police officer in Sheffield.⁷⁵⁶ A private letter that recalled the English tour makes it clear that alcohol abuse was at times a problem in the aboriginal team.⁷⁵⁷

Lawrence and Wills were aware of alcohol abuse amongst the team. A direct comparison between Lawrence and Wills' moral care of the aborigines was not recorded at the time. There were suggestions that Lawrence's Christian management included a moral dimension absent in the earlier tour. The aborigines' attendance at church alongside Lawrence implied a closer relationship to God under his care. This was reported with self-satisfaction:

With regard to the ill-natured remarks that have been made about the aboriginal cricketers becoming dissipated etc we can only say they have now resided a week at one of the principal hotels in Geelong, during which time we have not seen one of them under the influence

⁷⁵⁵ Letter, From Thomas Kennedy to H. R. Barclay, Superintendent of Police, Portland, 15 August 1867.

⁷⁵⁶ "Tiger" in Trouble', *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 14 August 1868, p. 3. Also, *Sheffield Times*, 15 August 1868, p. 7.

⁷⁵⁷ Letter, R. C. Hayman to E. E. Bean, 20 December 1933, Melbourne Cricket Club archives. Also note advice given to aborigines on disembarkation in England, Charles Lawrence diary, p. 65. The captain warned the team about behaviour, drinking and low life before they leave the vessel, '... do just what Mr Lawrence wishes you to do ...'. A recent article by Ashley Mallet, 'The Trailblazers', *Age*, 27 February 2000, pp. 18-9, suggests that the 1868 aboriginal team should not be dismissed as a 'drunken rabble'. This is true but the article's assessment that alcohol was not a significant problem in the team is overstated. The problems as recorded by private diaries, letters and publicised incidents during Wills and Lawrence tenure indicate that alcohol abuse, at least for several players, was a real problem.

of liquor. They have behaved themselves in a most becoming manner much better than many white men would do under similar circumstances, they have money in their pockets and are comfortably clad. Is this not better than letting them run wild?⁷⁵⁸

The period under Lawrence has left more examples of alcohol abuse by the aboriginal team than while under Wills. This is largely because Lawrence led the team for a longer period of time. Drunkenness was an apparent problem with the most notable public example the arrest of Tiger in England.⁷⁵⁹ After the second aboriginal tour headed by Lawrence, there was one further accusation of drunkenness. In 1870, Bullocky, who was one of the more accomplished aboriginal players, was accused being intoxicated on the cricket field while playing for Victoria several years earlier. The writer, critical of the selection of the aboriginal players, used language that was euphemistic and knowing in its implication of alcoholism:

Cuzens acquitted himself decently but Bullocky, who had not evidently the strictest regard to the centre of gravity (attributable to a cause then too apparent) missed 2 very simple catches at the most critical part of the game.⁷⁶⁰

There is no evidence to suggest that the aboriginal team was somehow sheltered from the rituals of alcohol consumption of the cricket team of the mid-nineteenth century. It seems as if drinking was a significant problem amongst some of the team members and that there was an undercurrent of ongoing concern. One may have expected more reporting of this but there were probably several reasons why this did not occur. Firstly, there was a general body of sympathy for the team. Secondly, given the inevitability of some drinking in this sporting environment it was perhaps considered redundant to state the obvious. Thirdly, by introducing the aborigines to cricket and as a consequence to alcohol, to then criticise aboriginal drinking would have necessitated a more honest appraisal of the wider drinking problems in cricket, an admission perhaps

⁷⁵⁸ *Geelong Advertiser*, 18 October 1867, p. 2.

⁷⁵⁹ Tiger was charged with assaulting a police officer while drunk in Sheffield. Considering amongst other things his 'weak intellect' he was fined. See "'Tiger" in Trouble', *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 14 August 1868, p. 3. Also, *Sheffield Times*, 15 August 1868, p. 7. There were also accusations that Sundown was neglected by Lawrence and the management, *Australasian* 19 December 1868, p. 780. This is of note because it pinpoints Lawrence, perhaps unfairly, but in a manner not paralleled in Wills. '[Sundown] ... from occasionally getting drunk and sleeping in wet clothes under paddock fences'.

not able to be made at this time. Fourthly, drunkenness, which was probably common amongst cricketers, was not widely reported regardless of whether cricketers were aboriginal or not.

8.4 English Tours of Australia

The English tours of the 1860s and 1870s offer a unique opportunity to scrutinise player habits. The first tour by H. H. Stephenson in 1861 was sponsored by Spiers and Pond, the ‘eminent purveyors of nobblers’.⁷⁶¹ A nobbler was a common mid-nineteenth century slang term for alcohol. Stephenson’s tour and that by George Parr in 1864 revealed the English players’ propensity to drink and their seduction into ‘high living’ by the locals. Tom Wills, absent from Victoria in 1861, did not play against the English that year, but he did play against them in 1864 and in 1873-4 when W. G. Grace toured. Commentary was often critical of local players while the English were met with a degree of deference:

We have heard much of their doings in the field; and more of their performances at the festive board. They have shewn what English muscle can do ... our colonial men have only indicated their ability to play better than their antagonists in ‘heavy ballast’, and under certain unsteady conditions of hand and eye.⁷⁶²

It was the anticipated tours by W. G. Grace in the 1870s that exposed most clearly the wanton drinking by players. The team was closely examined for their play and behaviour and offered an aperture into cricketing culture that illuminated the general environment in which all cricketers operated. The team drank alcohol and dined on game meat at breakfasts in fashionable hotels. For example, the team’s breakfast menu at Tattersalls Hotel, Sydney, included game food and a wide array of alcohols. These breakfast beverages included champagne, colonial wines, hock, claret, sherry and

⁷⁶⁰ *Leader*, 26 March 1870, p. 9. Having said this, there are no references to drunkenness or misbehaviour for Mullagh or Cuzens in the MCC minutes books and letters. This compares with numerous examples of drunkenness in non-aboriginal players.

⁷⁶¹ *Geelong Chronicle*, 19 October 1861, p. 3.

⁷⁶² *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, 22 February 1862, p. 4. Also see *Argus*, 8 January 1862, p. 4, for an example of commentary on the local players against the English. ‘The frequent “refreshment” required by the eighteen was the object of pretty general remark, and the apology that it was warm weather would seem an insufficient excuse, when it was seen that the visitors from a colder clime were not so much inconvenienced by the heat as to require such frequent libations’.

liqueurs.⁷⁶³ James Southerton who toured with Grace, was an English professional of acute intellect and fine sensibilities. Southerton's handwritten diaries give graphic accounts of drinking amongst the visiting English cricketers in the 1870s. The diaries comprise five small (10 cm by 5 cm) notebooks handwritten by the professional bowler during the 1873-4 and 1876-7 tours of Australia. With an ironic twist it was Southerton the professional who was contemptible of the low life and habits of his colleagues. Drinking and debauchery were variously described in the language of the day as 'on the spree' and 'knocking about'.⁷⁶⁴

One of these profligate cricketers was Henry Jupp. Jupp came to Australia twice, the first time in 1873-4 with W. G. Grace. He was at centre stage of one of the most conspicuous allegations of drunkenness in cricket of the period. Jupp was hospitalised in Adelaide with what was reported as 'Delirium Tremens'. Southerton nursed Jupp through the most florid of visual hallucinations and fragmented delusions. Southerton gives a dramatic account of Jupp's hospitalisation. Jupp exploded into delusional accusations against those around him and was 'so evidently mad' that he was taken to the Adelaide Hospital with 'the assistance of two policemen ... and put him in a padded room ...'⁷⁶⁵ The admission register from the hospital states that Jupp suffered from alcoholism.⁷⁶⁶ It was later queried whether he did indeed suffer from DTs.⁷⁶⁷ Regardless of Jupp's precise diagnosis he was repeatedly affected by excessive alcohol consumption during the tour. The casual acceptance of Jupp's diagnosis of delirium tremens by Southerton, and by the press tells us a great deal about attitudes to, and knowledge of, alcohol consumption in sporting circles. There were no apparent repercussions for Jupp, nor was his hospitalisation commented upon in detail in the press despite such a graphic and harrowing illness.

⁷⁶³ See Breakfast Menu, 22 January 1874, Tattersalls Hotel, on display at the NSW Cricket Association. The Tattersalls Club was founded in 1858 and was a centre for Sydney sport. For more on the Tattersalls Club, Sydney, see Joseph Andersen, *Tattersall's Club Sydney, 1858-1983* (Koorana, 1985). Caffyn recalled, 'We once more had high jinks at Sydney during our second stay there. Scarcely a day passed without our being entertained to champagne breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners'. Caffyn, *Seventy One*, 1899, p. 180. There are many references to Grace, his team and the problems of alcohol. For example, see, *Sydney Punch*, 15 March 1879, p.187, which suggests the reason for Grace's falling standards included drinking champagne at the luncheon break.

⁷⁶⁴ James Southerton diaries, Trent Bridge Library, courtesy of Peter Wynne-Thomas.

⁷⁶⁵ Southerton Diaries. The Jupp event is also recorded in Rick Smith and Ron Williams, *WG Down Under: Grace in Australia 1873/4 and 1891/2* (Tasmania: Apple Books, 1994), pp. 59-60.

⁷⁶⁶ GRG 78/49, Admission register for Adelaide Hospital 1840-1900, 1874/414, State Records of South Australia.

⁷⁶⁷ *South Australian Register*, 25 March 1874, p. 5.

Increasing contact with English teams led to familiarity with the human frailties of the English cricketers. The colonial press found it harder to offer obsequious excuses for imperial misdemeanours and poor form on the field. The colonial press was emboldened to write about the English as they saw them:

In the first place, they were not in a fit state to play, having partaken too freely of the generosity or mistaken kindness of the Stawellites [citizens of the Victorian town of Stawell], who were very anxious to show that their love of mother country had not diminished ... The cricket ground was surrounded by tall trees, and a halo of dust raised by the vehicles. The Englishmen said that the shadows from these trees themselves prevented them from seeing the pitch of the ball. Others give a very different reason for their dullness of vision but it is very likely that it was a little bit of both ... If the AEE [All England Eleven] turn teetotallers, I think I could predict a complete victory for them were they to play at Stawell again, ...⁷⁶⁸

Wills had a close association with the English team during the two tours of 1864 and 1873-4. He played with and against them on dozens of occasions. He travelled to New Zealand and around the country towns of Victoria. His association was both social and sporting. There are many public documents as well as some private documents such as the Southerton diaries that give the opportunity for one to ascertain if Wills' behaviour was singled out for alcoholic misdemeanours. Wills was never singled out by the English players for such behaviour. There was no sense that his reputation was sheltered by them because of his past English associations, as Grace and others at times lampooned his efforts on the field. They did single out other players for criticism of their behaviour. The clear suggestion is that whatever Wills' behaviour and drinking may have been and it can be assumed, from other evidence, that he was drinking heavily and almost certainly affected by alcohol on the field, that this was probably no different to the colonial and English players around him.

⁷⁶⁸ *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 January 1874, p. 2. Also, see, Eric Midwinter, *W. G. Grace. His Life and Times* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 48; Smith and Williams, *W. G. Down Under*, p. 13; *Melbourne Punch*, 21 April 1864, p. 132, sarcastically portraying the cricketers reclining in couches having had too much hospitality and food for their own good.

8.5 The Publican Cricketer

‘Lets adjourn to Rowley’s bar and have a drink’.⁷⁶⁹

‘... no one ever saw an intemperate cricketer in Victoria’.⁷⁷⁰

The publican cricketer was a conspicuous figure in early colonial cricket. These professional cricketers had close commercial and playing links with prominent clubs such as the Melbourne Cricket Club. In the 1850s to 1860s this group of entrepreneurs was influential in shaping the drinking culture of cricket.⁷⁷¹ Although Wills was not a publican, he was closely associated with all the principal publican cricketers in the colony of Victoria. It was a group with whom Wills had many affiliations. The most prominent of these publicans, all of whom played for the colony of Victoria, were James Bryant, Gideon Elliott, George Marshall and William Greaves. Wills drank and celebrated at their hotels. He sat down to post cricket match dinners at their tables and used their facilities to convene meetings as he contemplated the rules for football.⁷⁷² In 1876, a writer recalled how in 1859, Tom Wills had helped to formulate the rules of

⁷⁶⁹ *Sydney Sporting Life*, 16 March 1867, p. 4.

⁷⁷⁰ Hammersley, *Cricketer’s Guide*, p. 109.

⁷⁷¹ Publicans were the target of bitter public criticism for their role in what many perceived as the pernicious assault on colonial morality by the loose supply of intoxicating drinks. R. Cashman *et al.* (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket*, p. 10. This entry has less than a column on the role of alcohol but it does bring out the link with publicans and hotels in the development of Australian cricket. The number of hotels and alcohol outlets was a contentious issue. See, Mitchell, ‘Temperance and the Liquor Question’, p. 8. Lionel Frost, *The Old Dark Navy Blues. A History of the Carlton Football Club* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), p. 5, claims that the Carlton area had no less than 95 hotels in the late nineteenth century. The role of publicans in English sport was also significant. See, G. T. Vincent, ‘“Stupid, Uninteresting and Inhuman” Pedestrianism in Canterbury, 1860-1865’, *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 18, no. 1 (November 2001), pp. 43-55. For a more general discussion on the relationship of pubs, publicans and sport in an English context, Tony Collins and Wray Vamplew, *Mud, Sweat and Tears* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 5-38. I would like to thank John O’Hara for his thoughts on the role of pubs in early Australian sport (personal communication).

⁷⁷² Bryant’s Parade Hotel was wistfully recalled in 1874 as the drinking venue where the first rules for Australian football were hatched. Elliott held various publican licences in the Richmond area. His hotel was a common rendezvous for the Richmond CC. Marshall ran a highly successful venue in Swanston street. Lawrence ran a hotel in Manly and also a sporting establishment in George Street, Sydney. For most publican cricketers, their frequency of moving hotels along with the occasional conviction for breaching licensing rules suggest that this was not an easy source of income. These hotels were regularly mentioned in newspapers of the day, for example, *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 11 October, 1862, p. 3 and *Australasian Sketcher*, 28 November 1874, p. 138. ‘Many is the time Wills has bowled, Huddleston batted, and old George Marshall kept wicket there, and many the pint of ale has been drunk at Jerry Bryant’s hotel, just across the old Punt-road, in the hot summers of yore, when the Melbourne Cricket Club essayed in vain to wrest the premiership from the Richmond Cricket Club’.

Australian football at the Parade Hotel, a local watering hole near the Melbourne Cricket Ground.⁷⁷³

Although Wills was for much of his career an amateur, he displayed an affectionate regard for these professionals. Despite this affection for the professional cricketer he, at times, betrayed his amateur origins. For example, he wrote, ‘The members of the MCC must know that he [Gid] has ever been a good and sober man on the ground and is always to be found at his post when wanted by any member to bowl hot or cold all the same’.⁷⁷⁴ Despite his undoubted affection for the professional bowler Gid Elliott, in noting his sobriety and willingness to bowl to the MCC members, Wills adopted the condescending language and manner of the amateur.

Young sportsmen required a venue for their social and sporting meetings. There was a natural convenience in plying the trade of drink within the midst of young male sportsmen needing a venue to meet. Publican cricketers promoted local games, provided venues for dinner and entertainment and in so doing allowed their business to infiltrate sporting clubs. During intercolonial matches Elliott and Bryant had prominent advertising flags in the crowd while they bowled for Victoria. The link between sport and alcohol was reinforced through newspaper advertisements which emphasised the name of the hotel, the name of the proprietor and how the hotel catered for sporting functions. There was also an inherent suggestion that these establishments would cater to the particular needs of sportsmen. Brewers and publicans sponsored cricket publications, games and trophies. All of this provided an amniotic culture of sponsorship and camaraderie for cricketers.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷³ *Australasian*, 26 February 1876, p. 269.

⁷⁷⁴ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 13 February 1858, p. 3. Sometimes Elliott is spelled with a single ‘t’. I have used double ‘t’ as used on Elliott’s death certificate. The issue of professionals and drinking was a topic in itself. See the following for a somewhat idealistic English perspective, and also how fame encouraged drinking, Steel and Lyttelton, *Cricket*, pp. 104-5. ‘He is a great favourite with the crowd, and when his side is in maybe seen walking round the ground surrounded by a body of admirers, any one of whom is ready and willing at any moment to treat his ideal hero to a glass of anything he may wish for’. See, *Yeoman*, 28 March 1863, p. 403, ‘We heard from one who could speak feelingly of a players life, that Redgates love of the flowing cup was rather encouraged than checked by those who coveted his fame and fortune as a bowler’. See Hammersley’s, allusion to drinking alcohol while professional bowlers were practising at the Melbourne Cricket Club, *Australasian*, 6 April 1867, pp. 427-8.

⁷⁷⁵ *Richmond Australian*, 3 October 1863, frontispiece, Advertisement for J. M. Bryant and the Cricketer’s Arms Hotel. Hammersley, *Cricketers Guide*, at the end of this guide is a full page advertisement for J. M. Bryant now of the Cricketers Arms Hotel, Punt Rd. Wills *Australian Cricketers’ Guide* was sponsored by Pickersgill and Col: Wine and Spirit Merchants. The *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 25 April 1863, p. 10, describes a match between the Gentlemen and Players. After the game there was

These cricketers sought to press home their commercial advantage through their association with prominent clubs. They did so by linking their playing position with favourable consideration for the provision of alcohol to players, administrators and spectators. The minute books of the MCC contain detailed information about these negotiations for refreshment booths at cricket matches. For example, in 1859 J. M. Bryant was granted the tender to cater for the ground for three years ‘on condition that he put up a bar subject to the approval of the committee on the ground apart from the Pavilion, and serve liquor and provide refreshments to the satisfaction of the committee be accepted. The committee to have the power to dismiss him from the office of caterer for any just complaint, without notice’.⁷⁷⁶ The harsh conditions were typical of the manner in which professionals were treated. The MCC was protective of its capacity to earn income from alcohol sales and was high handed towards those who disputed contractual arrangements. It sought the best commercial deal for itself. Professionals who sought such an alliance clearly knew they bargained from a vulnerable position. This extended even to the English cricketer, William Caffyn, who stayed in Australia after George Parr’s 1864 tour. When contracted as a professional to the MCC it was stipulated that he was, ‘Not to keep a house licensed for sale of spirituous liquors at any time during the engagement’. As far as is known, this was not in response to any specific accusations of intemperance towards Caffyn but rather a more general stricture the MCC came to adopt.⁷⁷⁷

The dubious liaison between public houses and professional cricketers was reflected in Hammersley’s musings on the Richmond CC. In doing so, he made the points that the MCC wanted clearer control over its income from alcohol and that publicans who doubled up as players were less available and fit for the task of playing cricket:

dinner at Greaves Royal Hotel on Punt Rd. *Richmond Australian*, 12 December 1863, p. 2. Such local games were often various trades playing one another and could contain some of the best professional cricketers in the colony.

⁷⁷⁶ 28 November 1859, MCC Minutes. Also see handwritten minutes, Melbourne Cricket Club library, of various intercolonial cricket committees, when tenders were sought for the supply of alcohol, for example, December 1859-February 1860.

⁷⁷⁷ Handwritten contract, MCC minutes, The Terms of Agreement are between Thomas F Hamilton, President of MCC and William Caffyn Professional cricketer, 23 April, 1864.

It has suffered, like many other clubs, from want of funds; and, in consequence, the professional assistance it has been able to obtain has generally been given in return for the privilege of selling refreshments on the ground. This is anything but satisfactory; for it is well known that a publican's business and the business of a professional cricket do not harmonise; and that men who are continually called away to 'the bar' and who seldom get to bed before the small hours of the morning, are not generally in good trim either for a match or for practice. On the Melbourne ground the refreshment department is not in the hands of a cricketer and the professionals there engaged are in no way now connected with the 'bar trade' ...⁷⁷⁸

8.6 Newspapers

The attitude towards alcohol and sport in newspaper reports was at times ambiguous and contradictory. Only rarely was there direct comment on the effect of alcohol on individual players. When this did occur, it was the players' performance rather than their health and morality that were commented upon. This was in contrast to the preoccupation on the moral depravity of alcohol abuse in the general community. Apart from occasional high-toned moral edicts the press seemed to play a conveniently collusive role when it came to alcohol and sport.

For most of his career, an inquisitive press did not unduly molest Wills over accusations of drinking. There was little in the way of direct comment upon Wills' drinking as it affected his sport either in personal documents or published material at the time. Given that many of the public commentaries were by players who themselves indulged in the rituals of alcohol use, it is possible that this lack of evidence related to a reluctance to tarnish the sport more widely; or that it was a matter that was not recognised within sport as being a problem despite the heavy toll of alcohol; or that it was simply a matter of self-preservation in that criticism might find its way back to the writer.

The private spats when fought out publicly, between Hammersley and Wills in the early 1870s, were rare examples of open accusations of drunkenness. Hammersley knew that he could wound an ageing Tom Wills by such accusations. For his own part it

⁷⁷⁸ *Bell's Life in Victoria*, 30 January 1864, p. 4.

seems that Wills was unable to reconcile himself to the acceptance of fading athletic power.

Newspapers varied in how openly they criticised the practice of drinking on the field. In one of the more vociferous attacks, the *Yeoman*, still acknowledged that there was a place for drinking: ‘The notorious habit of leaving the field so often for the purpose of “nobblerizing” is another evil which requires a remedy’. Drinking *per se* for the purpose of refreshment during play was not condemned but rather the degree to which it was indulged in: ‘No one would complain at a reasonable quantity of “clearance” for the purpose of refreshment, but the extent to which the practice has been heretofore carried is perfectly ridiculous’. They further described the use of the nobbler as a tactic to dislodge a troublesome batsman. Such a batsman or ‘sticker’ after having a few drinks would find his judgement askew and become an easier target to dismiss.⁷⁷⁹

In various guises drink was claimed to unsettle, lull or stupefy the opposition before or during a game. Apart from the general effect of drunkenness it was the impact on one’s sight of the ball that was regarded as most important, ‘Leave the field for a “nobbler,” and the chances are that, upon returning to his wicket, he will find he has lost his “sight” of the ball, and so become an easy victim’.⁷⁸⁰

Alcohol was often portrayed as emblematic of male bravado or even hypocritically to demean a team who refused to drink alcohol. This was usually done through insinuation. Journals such as *Melbourne Punch* were able to poke fun with seeming impunity at the Bacchanalian pleasures of cricketers. Thus references to alcohol were most typically puns, asides, hints and innuendo. There was an entire vocabulary to convey attitudes to alcohol in sport. Euphemisms abounded. Inventive adjectives and puns like ‘nobbler’, ‘swiper’, ‘licker up’ and ‘swingers’ were used knowingly by journalists and public alike. The terms ‘nobbler’ and ‘swipes’ referred to alcohol. A swiper was someone who drank alcohol. Licker was a play on liquor. Swingers referred to the lack of balance of an inebriated individual.⁷⁸¹ The term ‘jolly’

⁷⁷⁹ *Yeoman and Australian Acclimatiser*, 13 September 1862, p. 11.

⁷⁸⁰ *Yeoman and Australian Acclimatiser*, 13 September 1862, p. 11.

⁷⁸¹ For example, *Sydney Mail*, 6 January 1866, p. 9. *Argus*, 28 June 1860, p. 3. See, *Melbourne Punch*, 19 February 1863, p. 240, poem about beer ‘Song of a Swiper.’ *Melbourne Punch*, 14 April 1864, p. 127. A snippet about greedy cricketers gives an insight into what was consumed or thought to be

was knowingly used in reference to intoxication.⁷⁸² Vaudevillian exchanges poked fun at what the public considered was going on with their cricketers: ‘Why ought some of the Victorian Cricketers to be hard hitters? Because they are such swipers’.⁷⁸³

Cartoons that caricatured drunkards were common though rarely did these relate to sport. But there were exceptions. *Sydney Punch*, drew a cartoon of dissolute sportsmen; while *Melbourne Punch* pictured a drunken husband returning home to a troubled wife at the start of the cricket season. The latter was a rare depiction that highlighted the role of sport in the link between alcohol and domestic neglect.⁷⁸⁴

Verse was a medium whereby scandalous descriptions of Wills and other cricketers could be made by stealth. By such means, journals such as *Punch* under the cover of humour, could skewer hypocrisy and give voice to the public imaginings about alcoholic players. This was not a luxury afforded to the more conventional newspaper descriptions where sensitivities about etiquette and legality may have deterred frank portrayals of alcohol abuse. When a NSW periodical wanted to lampoon Wills and Victorian cricket it could do so by the following verse:

I think it was stuttered the Melbournites led,
And hiccuped, “Our fellows re going ahead
In spite of (*hic*)Wills and his ‘swingers.’”
...
But I cannot wind up without hinting of pale
Bottled brandy and liquors like porter;
Ye knights of the bat with a droop in the tail,
If ye wish for the future to win without fail,
Remember when next in a match you regale,
Though the “swells” of the senate grow gay upon ale,
‘Tis wiser to stick to pure water.⁷⁸⁵

consumed. It mocks the excessive drinking of the Victorian cricket team. It also gives an indication that ale and a biscuit might have been standard fare as a snack. ‘The delays occasioned in Melbourne by the guzzling propensities of our men were bad enough ...’. *Melbourne Punch*, 31 December 1863, pp. 2-3, poem about how drinking affects cricketers and prose about moral view of cricket. Poking fun at the concept of players and gentleman. *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, 6 September 1862, p. 4, report the MFC versus GFC game, after the game, ‘... “to liquor up” ... to take some refreshment ...’. *Yeoman*, 31 January 1863, pp. 275-6, this is a typical allusion to drinking and its influence. ‘Considerably weakened by these defections, the team is still a strong one; and supposing the “uncertainties” not to interfere unduly with the game, and the players to be proof against Sydney “hospitality”(!), we think the Sydneyites will find that it will take some whipping’.

⁷⁸² *Australasian*, 16 June 1866, p. 331.

⁷⁸³ *Melbourne Punch*, 14 January 1864, p. 20.

⁷⁸⁴ *Sydney Punch*, 10 September 1864, p. 124; *Melbourne Punch*, 19 September 1867, p. 92.

⁷⁸⁵ *Sydney Punch*, 11 March 1871, p. 165.

The word ‘hic’, is strategically placed next to Wills to hit its mark. It suggests his drunken state on the field in a way that conventional papers found impossible to convey. ‘Swingers’ referred to his state of wayward alcoholic lurches rather than the aerodynamic trajectory imparted to the ball. While somewhat tongue in cheek there was little doubting its intent to highlight Wills and take a swipe at alcohol consumption by cricketers. An earlier less pointed reference to Wills and other cricketers, suggests that it was customary for cricketers to practise and drink alcohol at the same time:

With furious bowling Wills assails
 His rivals, and knocks o’er their bail;
 His ball comes like a stone,
 From some huge catapults hurled,
 In sieges of that earlier world
 You read of as a boy,

Their footsteps back towards Terry’s tent,

While freely dauntless Wills perspires-
 And “point”, “slip” “long-stop”, each desires
 To quench is raging thirst.

While thus engaged in peaceful wise,
 Each chief his fav’rite liquor tries,⁷⁸⁶

This use of verse was not restricted to Wills. In 1864, during George Parr’s English tour of Australia, verse from *Melbourne Punch* had Parr giving advice to young cricketers in the colonies. No less than three verses was devoted to the detrimental effects of alcohol:

Aye strive to keep your mental sight
 Particularly clear,
 And if you want some stimulant,
 Just take a “ginger beer”

And so defy sarcastic hints
 Flung out by Mr. PUNCH,
 That some of you may sometimes play
 Less steady after lunch.

For after six and twenty years

⁷⁸⁶ *Melbourne Punch*, 21 January 1858, p. 1.

I've little cause to doubt,
That cool champagne and curly slows
Get many a batsman out.⁷⁸⁷

Teams were publicly warned not to drink to excess before games. In 1860 the NSW players were entreated to keep a 'steady eye and a sure arm' and to 'beware of the assiduous attention of friends, whose politeness might lead to unpleasant results. Quiet, healthy habits will greatly conduce to their chances of success. Let these be *strictly observed*, for then, if beaten, no fault will be fairly attributable to the eleven'. This overly polite but unmistakable warning regarding alcohol was typical of the period.⁷⁸⁸ The abuse of alcohol by players was also a common excuse for a poor team performance. This excuse was used by journalists and public alike. Regardless of its validity, it was perceived that alcohol could determine the course of games.⁷⁸⁹

8.7 Alcohol as Stimulant and Tonic

There was a voluminous medical and lay literature in the nineteenth century dedicated to the deleterious effects of alcohol. But these same effects in sportsmen were rarely articulated. When they were, it often centred not upon the serious physical and psychological damage, but the effects upon performance. The broad effect on health was curiously ignored for the most part. There was no concerted push to alter athletes' pattern of drinking. Clubs and organisations were silent on the matter.⁷⁹⁰ Certain types of alcohol, more than others were considered a hindrance to performance. James Thompson, intercolonial cricketer, co-author of the first written rules of Australian Rules football, wit, journalist and sporting comrade of Tom Wills wrote:

During a match be abstemious. A hearty dinner of all kinds of mixtures will seriously affect your sight. Avoid stimulants; the game

⁷⁸⁷ *Melbourne Punch*, 7 January 1864, p. 16.

⁷⁸⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 January 1860, p. 8. For another reference to a steady eye, see *Melbourne Punch*, 2 February 1860.

⁷⁸⁹ For example, *Leader*, 25 March 1871, p. 11.

⁷⁹⁰ For example, see *Cricketers Guide: A Complete Manual of the Game of Cricket* (No date). At the end of this treatise summoning all its worldly wisdom before bidding the reader to try his skills on the cricket field it states, 'Everything depends on the spirit and activity of the player; but there are two things a true cricketer will never indulge in during a game or match – he will not smoke, neither will he dim his eye nor weaken his energy by the abuse of intoxicating liquors'. See Collins and Vamplew, *Mud, Sweat and Tears*, pp. 91-118 for a general discussion on the history of how alcohol has been viewed as affecting sporting performance in an English context.

is too exciting for calm play with many; and especially wine and beer induce a careless state of mind.⁷⁹¹

Thompson's view that certain alcoholic drinks were more dangerous was reflected in other literature of the time. Claret and sherry were regarded as less dangerous to the cricketer and boys in particular were advised to refrain from drinking other types of alcohol.⁷⁹²

The use of alcohol as a stimulant in sport was not unusual when one considers that it was used in a similar vein to treat the sick by the medical community. On a blistering hot Australian day in 1866, with a wind and dust to parch the throat, the players went off the field 'to liquor'. After one break, Wills emerged from the tent 'like a giant refreshed with claret negus'.⁷⁹³ Claret was commonly held to invigorate flagging sportsmen. The description of Wills as being refreshed after consuming claret during a cricket match was not just a turn of phrase. It was believed to possess restorative powers that enabled batsmen, refreshed, to face the bowling again. An 1888 English text on cricket gave advice to young cricketers on drinking during a match:

In hot weather something must be drunk, and the question is, What? Our experience is that beer and stout are both too heady and heavy, gin and ginger beer is too sticky, sweet, etc, to the palate. In our opinion, shandy-gaff, sherry, or claret, and soda are the most thirst quenching, the lightest, and the cleanest to the palate ...⁷⁹⁴

This reference further highlighted that it was the effect upon the batsman's eyesight for the ball that was of most concern. Questions regarding long term physical

⁷⁹¹ Thompson (ed.), *The Victorian Cricketer's Guide 1858-59*, p. 94. Thompson's views are ironic in that he died young, like Wills, from the effects of alcoholism.

⁷⁹² The diary of Charles Lawrence, pp. 14-6, copy from Bernard Whimpress, South Australian Cricket Association, when playing cricket as a boy. Also see, Fellowes, *Winchester Cricket*, pp. 95-6.

⁷⁹³ *Sydney Mail*, 6 January 1866, p. 7. There are references during this period that cold alcohol was part of lunch for players, see for example, *Geelong Advertiser*, 28 December 1865, p. 2. 'After partaking of lunch at the Cafe de Paris booth, where everything except the iced wines was hot, play was resumed ...'. *Australasian*, 3 March 1866, p. 5. As an example of the contradictory attitudes to alcohol, where the absence of alcohol for a batsman was regarded as instrumental in a batsmen getting out. 'Wilson, after getting but two short of top score, was bowled by one of Ree's slows a catastrophe he attributed to his being compelled to imbibe cold water instead of *eau de vie* after so much hard running, the purveyors to the club not being in attendance, and the grog department under lock and key'. Also see *Australasian*, 30 December 1865, p. 5, for another reference to iced claret and '... the cricketers must be excused by any humane individual for their frequent visits to Bryant's booth in search of iced claret and other cooling fluids ...'.

⁷⁹⁴ Steel and Lyttelton, *Cricket*, pp. 212-3.

health, effect upon performance other than eyesight, and the broader commercial marriage of alcohol and sport were never raised.

That beer improved a player's ability, particular that of a bowler, was a subtext repeated at times in the literature. There seems to have been a genuine belief, at least in some quarters, that a combination of beer and beef was requisite for a fast bowler. This thinking was allied to the belief that fatness of the beer drinker was a sign of physical robustness. Thus when the Victorian fast bowler, Frank Allan, lost form it was duly noted prior to the next season that as he had undertaken the appropriate diet of beef and beer that the Victorians could expect an improved performance. Although one may be tempted to doubt this, the tone of the text suggest it to be a genuinely held view:

... and as for the crack bowler (Allan), he, I should imagine, has taken a new lease of the game, for he has given up being a vegetarian and drinking cold water, and has taken to good solid beef and beer. If this does not more than place him on his old pre-eminence I shall be very much mistaken.⁷⁹⁵

The staple drink of the professionals' diet, by class and probably predilection, was beer. The evidence, meagre as it is, suggests that Wills had a preference for beer. The importance accorded the type of alcohol consumed was most clearly seen when the English team visited the colonies in the 1860s and 1870s. Beer was portrayed as the professionals' drink while champagne was that of the gentleman amateur. The evidence was that professionals and amateurs alike, exhibited drunken behaviour during the English tours of the 1860s and 1870s. Despite this egalitarianism of drunkenness it was the amateurs who staked the higher moral ground when it came to matters of alcohol:

⁷⁹⁵ *Leader*, 4 September 1875, p. 12. Further references to the role of beer, see, 'The Pavilion and the Links: The Old Order and the New', *Blackwoods Magazine. Australian Excerpts*. vol 2, 1899, pp. 247-59. In discussing the physically imposing English cricketer Alfred Mynn, William Caffyn, goes on to relate that he has 'often seen him [Mynn] eat a hearty supper of cold pork, and retire to bed almost directly afterwards, taking with him a tankard of light bitter beer to bed with him to drink during the night ... "Beef and beer, my boy, are the things to play cricket on" was his observation'. It is of note that Mynn almost certainly had an influence upon the young Tom Wills whilst at Rugby and soon afterwards. See, Caffyn, *Seventy One*, pp. 31-2. William Caffyn also tells the story of George Parr and Julius Caesar reducing by half the amount of alcohol they took before going to bed. As a result they both had unsuccessful innings for two days and promptly attributed this to a lack of alcohol and resumed their usual quantities. It is difficult to know the truth of this, but importantly it illustrates at least the rationale that some cricketers may have used to justify drinking alcohol. See St George, 'Julius Caesar and George Parr', *The Australian Cricketer* (January 1934), p. 307. See Gideon Haigh, *The Big Ship. Warwick Armstrong and the Making of Modern Cricket* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2001), pp. 173-4 which

The reason the [English] professionals did not attend the farewell dinner was through a remark heard by Humphrey. Mr Pickersgill ... said second class was plenty good enough for us; at home we travelled third class, and were glad to get a glass of beer, consequently we could not appreciate champagne given to us by these liberal minded men.⁷⁹⁶

By early 1873 in the Melbourne press, William Hammersley and Wills were engaged in an increasingly virulent public feud played out through an exchange of letters published in the metropolitan newspapers. In a series of attacks and counterattacks Wills' fondness for colonial beer was publicised. Wills was humiliated and his drinking exposed to public criticism. Wills was dismissed as needing to take the 'Pledge'. Those who, unable to defend themselves from the inexorable alcoholic tide, were said to be given strength by joining a union and pledging themselves as abstinent. Signing a pledge book was the material evidence of their commitment. Wills' demise from the Victorian cricket team was intimately linked to this dispute:

You are played out now, the cricketing machine is rusty and useless, all respect for it is gone. You will never be captain of a Victorian Eleven again that you may be sure of ... Eschew colonial beer, and take the pledge and in time your failings may be forgotten, and only your talents as a cricketer remembered. Farewell, Tommy Wills.⁷⁹⁷

When Hammersley in his newspaper column publicly shamed Wills by asking him to eschew colonial beer, this was not a vacant rebuke. It was a considered insult that took aim at Wills' colonial origins, his fall from the rank of amateur and the popular nineteenth century view that linked colonial beer with violence, insanity and suicide.

continues this theme with the possible role of alcohol in the expanding girth of Warwick Armstrong, a player of the early twentieth century.

⁷⁹⁶ *Argus*, 17 March 1874, p. 4. For more on the lifestyle of the professional cricketer see, W. F. Mandle, 'The Professional Cricketer in England in the Nineteenth Century', *Labour History: Bulletin of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, 1972, no. 23, pp. 1-16, '... the waywardness of the professional cricketer whose life style only too often included partiality for drink, for which he was not entirely to blame. Denied a lunch, he often took it at the bar where well meaning supporters were always willing to but him a drink'.

⁷⁹⁷ *Australasian*, 25 January 1873, p. 108. References to the pledge were common in the press of the day, for example, Letter, 'Anti-Teetotal' to Editor, *Geelong Chronicle*, 1 May 1861 p. 2, for the popular understanding of taking the pledge and a response, 11 May 1861, pp. 2-3. *Melbourne Punch*, 11 February 1858, p. 25, the pledge was in common parlance and could appear in many guises such as verse in this satirical periodical.

Accusations of the adulteration of beer were rife in the colony.⁷⁹⁸ Colonial beer was synonymous in many minds with inferiority. Hammersley's comments about colonial beer reflected a deeper war waged between colonial and imperial origins.

9 Conclusion

The direct evidence of the extent of Tom Wills' drinking is slim. However, his death from the consequences of delirium tremens proves that he had been a heavy drinker for many years. There are scattered items of evidence from his childhood, through to his years at Rugby School and then throughout his years as a cricketer that point to Tom Wills living within an environment where alcohol was freely available.

Although there has been no comprehensive historical study of alcohol use in sportsmen in Australia it is possible to piece together a fairly convincing view of the manner of alcohol exposure for the nineteenth century colonial cricketer. The press and private letters provide many instances, though sometimes oblique, of players drinking to excess. Alcohol was consumed before, during and after games. It was rarely commented upon by clubs as a negative factor in the performance of players. Certain types of alcohol were thought to be more suitable for the nineteenth century cricketer, notably so called 'light' alcohols such as claret. Indeed close reading of newspapers at the time reveals instances where players are cited as leaving their tents during a game having sipped upon refreshing claret. But this was by no means the only drink available.

Professional cricketers, almost to a person during the career of Tom Wills, were often publicans who cultivated favour with the major clubs in Victoria to win contracts

⁷⁹⁸ See, *Argus*, 3 March 1875, p. 6; *Argus*, 10 March 1875, p.10. 'The coroner said he did not know of any poison more effective than colonial beer when taken in excess'. This topic was the subject of satire and scientific discourse in the papers of the day. Although the evidence did not always support the popular view, *Argus*, 1 July 1871, p. 7. See antagonistic letters *Argus*, 3 and 4 March 1875, p. 6; *Age*, 2 March, 1875, p. 3; *Hamilton Spectator*, 12 December 1866, p. 4. See *Richmond Australian*, 8 April 1871 p. 2, for an article on alcohol which condemns the adulteration of alcohol as a cause of crime and madness in the community. *Melbourne Punch*, 29 September 1881, p. 127 prose on adulteration of alcohol. See Mitchell, '*Temperance and the Liquor Question*', p. 41 and opposite p. 41, 'Early Victorians depended upon import for a high proportion of their liquor supplies. This partly accounts for the distinction invariably made between "beer" and "colonial beer"'. Colonial beer was drunk for want of something better. The usual verdict on colonial wines and spirits was that they were not worth drinking at any price'. Also see *Melbourne Punch*, 11 July 1867 p. 11 for verse that while slightly condescending towards colonial beer but also sees it as the common man's beverage. For a brief review of some of the difficulties in and the development of brewing beer in Australia and its broader culinary and social

to supply alcohol. The nineteenth century press had a somewhat contradictory view of alcohol consumption. In the general press alcohol consumption and its excesses was clearly identified with many social and medical ills. But for the greater part this was ignored in sportsmen. Drinking problems occurred in colonial cricketers, visiting English teams and the 1866 aboriginal team. Early deaths were common and the death of Tom Wills by suicide in the throes of delirium tremens was in keeping with such deaths.

Chapter Seven

In from the Cold: The Suicide of Tom Wills

But, when immature death
Beckons too early the guest
From the half-tried banquet of life,
Young, in the bloom of his days;
...

Fuller for him be the hours!
Give him emotion, though pain!
Let him live, let him feel: *I have lived*.
Heap up his moments with life!
Triple his pulses with fame!⁷⁹⁹

1 Introduction

In the twenty-first century, the act of suicide is largely explained by a medical model. This was not the case in the nineteenth century. No single domain – religious, medical or legal – could stake proprietorial claim on the causes and ramifications of suicide. These domains were often authoritarian and antagonistic towards one another. This chapter describes in detail the events that led to Tom Wills' death, the death itself and its aftermath. The nineteenth century perspective of his death is contrasted with a modern appraisal of his medical and psychiatric condition. The chapter then turns to his burial, the religious context of the day, the differing reactions to his suicide and the legal sequelae. Finally, a comparison is made with another nineteenth century sportsman who suicided.

2 The Death of Tom Wills

Tom Wills committed suicide on the Sunday afternoon of 2 May 1880. Previously, in an urgent attempt to save his life, Sarah Barbor, his de facto, escorted him by coach to the Melbourne Hospital on Saturday morning, 1 May.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁹ Extract from 'Early Death and Fame', Matthew Arnold, *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 199-200.

⁸⁰⁰ Inquest, Thomas Wentworth Wills, 3 May 1880. VPRS 24/Unit 406/File366. This material was first presented as G. M. de Moore, 'The Suicide of Tom Wills', Conference at Victoria University, Melbourne, July 1999.

The Melbourne Hospital was alternately lauded and mocked by the press of the day.⁸⁰¹ In 1876, Stanley James penned a graphic and colourful account of the hospital's outpatients.⁸⁰² He noted the overcrowded, dirty conditions and the less than time consuming consultations. The average time given to each patient was less than one minute. The Outpatients concrete floor was of a 'beautiful dirt colour'. Outpatients provided their own bottles for medicine and with a caustic aside Stanley noted that there seemed to be a rule that what cured one would cure another.⁸⁰³ With characteristic medical reserve, but unmistakable censure for its flagship institution, the prime medical organ of the day, the *Australian Medical Journal*, noted the insufficiency and imperfect organisation of the professional staff of the Melbourne Hospital.⁸⁰⁴

By autumn the characteristic summer swell of typhoid fever had settled.⁸⁰⁵ The wards now bulged with the victims of typhus, measles, erysipelas, gonorrhoea, and syphilis. The hospital was flushed with consumption whose bacterial agent of cause was not revealed for a further two years in 1882.⁸⁰⁶ It had only been five years since the ever-present scarlet fever had been reported to have afflicted Wills.⁸⁰⁷ He was admitted to the Melbourne Hospital at a time of momentous discoveries regarding the

⁸⁰¹ For example, *Australian Sketcher*, 15 January 1881, p. 44; 17 December 1881, p. 406. Despite descriptions of a charitable and noble institution for the relief of suffering, there were lurid descriptions of abysmal patient care, non-attending doctors and managerial disputes. The uncle of Tom Wills was an annual subscriber to the hospital and contributed financially to its construction. See *Port Phillip Herald*, 6 March 1845, p. 1. For more nineteenth century perspectives on the early development of the hospital see, James Edward Neild, *Victoria and its Metropolis. Past and Present. Vol. II., The Colony and its People in 1888* (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird & Co., 1888), pp. 779-85.

⁸⁰² Stanley James, 'The Vagabond', wrote a series of articles about Australian life, including the Melbourne Hospital, for the *Argus*. See John Stanley James, 'A Morning at the Hospital', in M. Cannon (ed.), *The Vagabond Papers* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1969), pp. 19-26.

⁸⁰³ James' comments are discussed in A. Gregory, *The Ever Open Door: A History of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, 1848-1998* (South Melbourne: Hyland House, 1998), pp. 48-50. Graeme Davison, 'R.E.N. Twopeny and Town Life in Australia', *Historical Studies*, vol. 16, no. 63 (October 1974), pp. 292-305. Davison notes Stanley's natural sympathy with victims of authority as shaping his manner of writing. It should be noted that Stanley had a tendency to caricature and exaggerate what he saw.

⁸⁰⁴ 'The Out-Patient Department of the Melbourne Hospital', *Australian Medical Journal*, 15 February 1879, pp. 70-1. Also 'Medical Annual', *The Imperial Review*, no. 17 (January 1886), p. 45, '... this hospital has been fiercely denounced by Dr Youl, the city coroner, as "saturated with erysipelas and pyoemia". The poor of Melbourne have a great dislike to the institution, but then every hospital is a place where the poor are experimented on for the benefit of the rich'. For an insight into some of these internal difficulties see *Thirty Third Annual report*, pp. 5-7.

⁸⁰⁵ James Barrett, 'Some Incidents in the History of the Melbourne Hospital from 1879-1883', *The Melbourne Hospital Clinical Reports*, vol. I., no. 2 (November 1930), p. 109. This is a reminiscence from Sir James Barrett who commenced as a medical student there in 1879.

⁸⁰⁶ The discovery by Robert Koch of the tubercle bacillus agent of tuberculosis.

⁸⁰⁷ The reported attack of scarlet fever suffered by Wills in 1875 was reported in the press of Geelong and Melbourne. See *Australasian*, 15 January 1876, p. 76; 22 January 1876, p. 107; *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 January 1876, p. 2.

microscopic agents of pestilence. Joseph Lister's radical notion of antiseptics and Pasteur's theory on germ causation of illness confronted established medical practices.⁸⁰⁸

James Barrett, a medical student recalled that up until 1880 wounds were largely treated without any regard for antiseptics:

Whilst a student I do not recollect a single abdominal perforating injury or operation wound which did not end fatally ... Surgeons kept operating coats of which they were proud, as they were a mass of blood stains. Gloves were unknown, and the instruments were often held in the mouth.⁸⁰⁹

The hospital awoke to domestic duties between four and five o'clock in the morning. At this time '... beds were made; floors swept then covered with beeswax and turpentine ...'. Patients if fit enough would help; stimulants would be given at 9 am, typically four to eight ounces of brandy but for 'bad cases' up to sixteen ounces. Young ladies distributing flowers and religious pamphlets would console the ill.⁸¹⁰

Wills was admitted to the Melbourne Hospital on a Saturday morning, 1 May 1880.

2.1 Admission to Hospital

Delirium:

Latin – *de*, from, plus, *lira*, a furrow; thus to go out of the furrow while plowing and so, generally, to wander from the normal. Used first in the sense of madness by Celsus. Used for a state of mental agitation and incoherence, the word first appeared in English in 1599.

Delirium Tremens:

Delirium due to alcohol and accompanied by tremors. The condition was described and the term introduced by Thomas Sutton in 1813.⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁸ Gregory, *The Ever Open Door*, p. 52.

⁸⁰⁹ Barrett, *Melbourne Hospital*, pp. 103-4.

⁸¹⁰ Gregory, *The Ever Open Door*, pp. 69-70.

⁸¹¹ Henry Alan Skinner, *The Origin of Medical Terms*, 2nd Ed. (NY: Hafner, 1970), p. 136. Also see, Haubrich, *Medical Meanings*, p. 66.

The mental state of Wills had been deteriorating for days and he was placed under close observation in late April 1880. His local medical practitioner, Dr Bleeck, attended Wills at his Heidelberg residence the day before admission.⁸¹²

Sarah Theresa Barbor reported that on the morning of 1 May, Wills was unable to sleep. In fear of her own and others lives, she whisked him to the Melbourne Hospital. She left him at the hospital, with ‘the authorities there promising they would keep him under restraint until he recovered’.⁸¹³ Tom Wills was one of the 3786 new inpatients admitted through the busy doors of the hospital that year.⁸¹⁴ The events that occurred at the hospital in that short time span, have, until recently, remained a mystery.⁸¹⁵ It was not clear whether he was admitted, what treatment he received or how he returned to his Heidelberg residence, a full eight miles away, while apparently seriously ill. The previously undiscovered entry of his hospitalisation, records in a mere half page his mental state less than 24 hours before his death. In a half page, not indexed, and with layers of grime, flecks of dry blood, and ink, it is scrawled that Wills was admitted – ‘Thomas Wills age 45[in fact he was 44 years 9 months], admitted 1/5/80’. Then under 2/5 is written:

Patient admitted in a semi Delirium Tremens state tremulous movements of hands – was ~~very~~ rather obstinate – refused to remain in hospital.⁸¹⁶

The medical record reveals that he was admitted under Dr Moloney, Ward 21 for Males only. By the year of Wills’ admission, 1880, Patrick Moloney was a prominent Melburnian figure and co-editor of the *Australian Medical Journal*. A member of the Melbourne Cricket Club, he had been a critic of football’s effect on both body and

⁸¹² Inquest, Thomas Wentworth Wills. Although all descriptions of this doctor refer to him as Dr Black, in fact, a closer examination of the script and local history clearly indicate that this was a Dr John Bleeck. The author also made this error in an earlier paper, de Moore, ‘Suicide of Wills’, pp. 656-58. See, *Argus*, 27 May 1890, p. 1; *Victorian Doctors in the Nineteenth Century*, Dyason, Diana J. GMF107/Box 1; more information on a Dr Black/Bleck from Heidelberg is available from Brownless Medical Library, Melbourne University.

⁸¹³ Inquest, Tom Wills.

⁸¹⁴ *33rd Annual Report*, pp. 6-8, noted that of those inpatients discharged 886 are reported as cured, 2070 as relieved; those incurable as 246; and deaths 573; leaving 321 still under care at the end of the year.

⁸¹⁵ Newspaper reports and his inquest detail that he was taken to the Melbourne Hospital but there is no indication as to whether he reached there, and, if so, what was his diagnosis or how he was treated. See also de Moore, ‘Suicide of Wills’, pp. 656-8.

mind. Recalled as somewhat of dreamy, literary, non-conformist, Moloney had been popular amongst subscribers to the Melbourne Hospital.⁸¹⁷

The ferocity of the behavioural manifestations of delirium tremens was well recognised at the time of Wills' admission. A Melbourne Hospital doctor noted its 'great restlessness, [and] frightful mental illusions' whose excitement required the patient to be guarded with scrupulous care and if necessary 'the force of several attendants to control'.⁸¹⁸ The clinical notes suggest that Tom Wills presented himself as querulous and defiant. The need for and absence of suitable accommodation for such noisy delirious patients as Wills was recognised by the medical superintendent at the time. It is not possible to know if he was manacled or restrained with the means of the time.⁸¹⁹ Ward 21 was probably similar to staged contemporary photographs taken from the hospital. These portray a ward of immaculate beds and starched linen attended by dutiful female nurses ministering to commendably deferential patients.⁸²⁰

There was no consensus on treatment for DTs though all were aware of its potential path to fatality. It was a commonplace problem, a staple illness and with no hint of the exotic. Professional recommendations for treatment varied from the sensible to the bizarre. Central to all treatments was to calm the body and tranquilise the mind's erratic discourse. This was usually achieved with potassium bromide, opium, chloral

⁸¹⁶ Patrick Moloney casebook, no. 21 Ward, 2 January 1880-1 May 1880. It would seem from the description of 'semi delirium tremens' that the syndrome was not fulminant at that point.

⁸¹⁷ Dr Patrick Moloney is entrenched in Australian medical history. He was one of the first two graduates in 1867 from the new Melbourne University School of Medicine and along with his fellow graduate was the first to be fully trained in Australia. He was also well known as an author, poet and classical scholar. See, Leonard J. T. Murphy, 'Patrick Moloney', in F. Forster, H. Attwood and B. Gandevia (eds), *Occasional Papers on Medical History Australia* (Medical History Society, AMA, Victorian Branch and Medical History Unit, University of Melbourne, 1984), pp. 1-33. Also, Obituary, *Catholic Advocate*, 1 October 1904, p. 15. *South Melbourne Record*, 5 December 1879, p. 2. Lecture from Dr Moloney, who ironically, notes that of the various sports 'Football was the most reprehensible and no youth should be allowed to engage in it without first having procured a medical certificate to the effect that he was capable of undergoing the fatigue'. Also see, F. E., Littlewood, 'A Memorable Year', (1887), p. 6, Royal Australasian College of Physicians History Library, Sydney.

⁸¹⁸ J. Black, 'On Delirium Tremens', *The Australian Medical Journal* (April 1856), pp. 119-24. Also see Richard Quain (ed.), *A Dictionary of Medicine* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1884), p. 723.

⁸¹⁹ *Australasian Sketcher*, 11 March 1882, p. 68, illustrated a Melbourne Hospital patient with wrists ringed by metal bracelets chained to the bed illustrative of the manner in which violent patients were 'prevented from injuring themselves and others'. Ironically these scenes of incarceration were parodied and vilified in one of Wills' favourite books, *Valentine Vox*, in which a character is unjustly hospitalised for insanity. The imagery of the work is vivid. With the patient strapped to the bed, he is tickled by grotesque and evil figures into a state of madness. See Cockton, *Valentine Vox*, p. 175.

hydrate or morphia. Digitalis was administered to soothe the turbulent flow of blood. The prominence of the cranial pulse, like a form of vascular phrenology was regarded as evidence for disturbed brainpower and somewhat dramatically called ‘brainicular excitement’.⁸²¹ Thus the application of leeches behind the ears or incising scalp arteries to expunge the toxic serum were amongst early treatments. The application of ice to the scalp and base of the back were also used. Agents as unusual as strychnine were canvassed alongside a variety of nourishing broths and homely milk preparations. Restraints were ambivalently regarded but probably used extensively. They ranged from hand ‘muffs,’ which were small leather pouches at the front for hands, to ‘camisoles’. If it was possible delirious patients were nursed in isolation to other patients.⁸²²

In the 1850s, the *Australian Medical Journal* reviewed common treatments for delirium tremens.⁸²³ Australia’s warm climate was postulated to encourage imbibing and the induction of a ‘peculiar condition of the blood’ which promoted delirium tremens. The wide array of treatments included ‘morphia, chloroform, aperients, strong beef tea and application of cold water to the head and spine’. Wills was immediately given the following treatment – iron salts, potassium bromide and digitalis. These treatments reflected the prevailing views of the time about sedation and sustenance in DTs. Sedation was thought quite rightly to be the key component of managing delirium tremens. Potassium bromide was reported as a potent sedative and hence a staple in managing agitated patients as in the Wills case.⁸²⁴

⁸²⁰ The author wishes to thank Gabrielle Haveaux, archivist, Royal Melbourne Hospital for these photographs.

⁸²¹ J. B. Clutterbuck, ‘Delirium Tremens’, *Australian Medical Journal*, vol. 16 (December 1871), pp. 358-61. ‘The two terms, delirium tremens, simply refer to a wandering of mind, and a slight trembling of muscular fibre ... there is no end to the degree of brainicular excitement ...’

⁸²² Maurice J. O’Connor, ‘The Treatment of Delirium Tremens’, *Australasian Medical Gazette*, vol. 2 (February 1883), pp. 93-4, and F. P. Atkinson, ‘Treatment of Delirium Tremens’, *Australasian Medical Gazette* (May 1883), pp. 178-9.

⁸²³ J Black, ‘Delirium Tremens’, pp. 119-24. Many treatments were canvassed in both professional and lay articles. See, *Geelong Chronicle*, 2 November 1861, p. 2, for treatment using fresh air and the frequent use of cold water applications. *Sydney Gazette*, 2 July 1839, p. 2, ‘... this complaint does not admit of depletion by general blood letting ... Leeches, however, are occasionally useful ... to soothe and support the nervous system and ... procure sleep’. A range of treatments are suggested – opium, alcohol, purging, warm water and vinegar sponging of the body, morphine and castor oil.

⁸²⁴ Potassium salts were widely used for many disorders such as syphilis and gonorrhoea. Digitalis – a drug first used in the sixteenth century comes from the Latin *digitus*, ‘finger’. The allusion is to the shape of the flower suggesting the empty finger of a glove. It was used in a variety of medical conditions. See Skinner, *Medical Terms*, pp. 142, 334; Haubrich, *Medical Meanings*, p. 70. Also see, Quain, *A Dictionary of Medicine*, p. 182.

Dr Motherwell, an honorary physician of the Melbourne Hospital and contemporary of Moloney remarked:

... we have heard and read lately of the good effect of digitalis as an
antidote to alcoholism ... I have used the digitalis in half ounce doses
every fourth hour in cases of delirium tremens, with great success⁸²⁵
...

Despite the ministrations of the day, Wills disconsolate, aggravated and sufficiently disagreeable to excite comment, absconded at 5.00 pm that Saturday evening.⁸²⁶

2.2 Death in Heidelberg

Information on the manner and circumstances of his death is found in the official inquest, family letters and obituaries. The different participants of the Saturday evening and Sunday assembled the components from their unique points of view. Of the letters the most detailed is the letter by Tom's younger brother, Egbert, which outlined the last 24 hours of Tom Wills' life.⁸²⁷

Wills, with his de facto, rented a house in Jika Street, Heidelberg, for the last year of his life.⁸²⁸ Heidelberg was a peaceful, rustic setting for such an act of violent finality. Idealised by the Melbourne press of the late nineteenth century, the hamlet was Victoria's patch of old England – 'a quiet little village', pleasant for picnics and wedding parties from the city. Coaches travelled from Swanston street two to three times a day. The surrounding country was dotted with market gardens and grapes for cultivation. Its principal link with Melbourne was the Heidelberg road winding past the Yarra Bend asylum.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁵ Motherwell, *Australian Medical Journal* (October, 1861), p. 299. Also see, *Leader*, 28 March 1863, p. 4.

⁸²⁶ A perusal of the casebooks of that year reveals that absconding from the hospital, sometimes while delirious was not an uncommon method of discharge. In 1880, 35 patients were admitted to the Melbourne Hospital with delirium tremens, three of whom died – see 33rd Annual Report, p. 12.

⁸²⁷ Letter, Egbert Wills to Horace Wills, 9 May 1880. Egbert, hitherto a largely absent family correspondent, gives the most detailed and intimate account of Tom's last hours. Touchingly and lovingly adumbrated with a sketch of the wounds from the stabbing, his portrayal of Tom is unlike the distant socially awkward appraisal by Egbert's wife.

⁸²⁸ Heidelberg ratebooks, PRO, VPRS 3823. The local Heidelberg directory also indicates that Wills lived in Heidelberg at this time.

⁸²⁹ See, Rex Harcourt, 'The Heidelberg Road', *Heidelberg Historian*, no. 184, (February 1998), pp. 2-4; and 'A Visit to Heidelberg in 1869', *Heidelberg Historian*, no. 105, (December 1984), pp. 6-7. See

Sarah had taken Wills to the Melbourne Hospital on Saturday morning only to find his chaotic, frantic form back at Heidelberg that evening. At 9 pm, 1 May, to his de facto's surprise, he was found in an agitated state by a neighbour on the veranda of his residence in Heidelberg. On return to his home, he experienced tormenting paranoid delusions and was heard to mutter threats to himself and others. Sarah's description makes it clear that in Wills' severely disturbed mind he harboured not only suicidal intentions, but murderous ones as well. Egbert's letter written soon after the suicide corroborates this. He argued with nonexistent companions, hid beneath his bed, and experienced visual hallucinations. A labourer, David Dunwoodie, was employed to closely guard him.⁸³⁰

Sarah Barbor described the events of that Saturday evening:

I took him to the hospital because he could not sleep and I was afraid he would do harm to himself. At nine o'clock on Saturday night I was in bed. I was woken up by a woman who told me that my husband was on the verandah. I got up and found him there. He was standing there waving his hand to some imaginary persons. I got him into the house. He went to bed after awhile. He did not sleep. I was afraid he would do himself an injury and at three o'clock I called in Constable Hanlon. Hanlon advised me to get some one to take care of my husband who remained with him until I got a man named Dunwoody [*sic*] to take care of him. He never slept and remained in the same state all yesterday. At about one o'clock my husband was walking in the garden. Dunwoodie told him he was going to dinner. Soon after Dunwoodie left my husband went into the kitchen. The first thing I saw him do was to open a pair of scissors. I do not know where he got them before I could prevent him he stabbed himself three times in the breast the wounds did not bleed much he died immediately and before any assistance could be got.⁸³¹

On the day of his return, Anne Jane Heddle, was staying with Sarah for company whilst her husband was ill. She reported that Sarah was in bed at the time Wills returned

Melbourne Punch, 5 August 1869, p. 43. A summer destination for Melburnians, Heidelberg's annual races intruded into the city papers and was the final resting place for F. A. Powlett, former Melbourne CC President, who had fifteen years beforehand entertained Tom Wills at Heidelberg. The cricket ground photographed some 20 years later reveals a ground of charm that had been described as the most attractive in the colony. In March 1880, six weeks prior to his suicide, Wills played on this ground; his last recorded sporting event. See *Australasian*, 20 March 1880, p. 364.

⁸³⁰ There are various spellings of this labourer's name. Most of the obituaries name him as Dunmoody but local directories only indicate a Dunwoodie. This name is also used by T. S. Wills Cooke in his family history on Horatio. See Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, pp. 230-1.

⁸³¹ Inquest, Wills.

from the hospital and determined that Wills must have arrived on the 7.00 pm coach. She confirms Wills' violent behaviour and his attempts to choke himself. It was she who went for the constable at 3 o'clock in the morning. David Dunwoody, labourer, recalled being summoned at this time as well:

He was quite out of his mind and suffering from Delirium Tremens. He heard persons speaking to him and was constantly looking under the bed. He tried several times to suffocate himself by holding his mouth and nose. At about one o'clock he seemed a good deal better. He was walking about feeding the fowls. I went at one o'clock to get my dinner before I left. I put away all weapons by which I thought he might injure himself. I left him in charge of his wife and servant girl.⁸³²

Thus fearing that a calamity was at hand, all objects with which it was considered he could harm himself or others were removed. In this climate of apprehension and swirling misperception he managed at 1.00 pm the following afternoon to elude his attendants. Grasping a pair of scissors he plunged them into his chest three times despite his de facto's frantic attempts to curb him.⁸³³ Egbert's letter is the most moving description of these events:

Then all night he spoke in a very queer way he told S that they had to die soon it was no use they both had to go. He then asked S whether she would rather he killed her or for someone else to do so, he said (pointing to his left side) I am to be struck here you in the back – but she took no notice of all this. Then during his ravings in the night he began praying for himself and S to be forgiven for all their sins. In the morning he washed himself and put on all his best things and told S to put on her black dress to be ready for their maker. After he got up in the morning and while S was in a drunken sleep the little girl heard him saying to himself “Shall I murder her or not – no I wont”. After breakfast he went and fed fowls, his birds and dogs and as he fed each he said “Now that is the last feed you will get from me” talking and acting to all appearance in a sensible way. He then kept telling S to go and put on her black dress and be ready – while S was preparing the dinner he kept saying “It is no use doing it neither of us will be here for it”. About 12 the old man who was watching him said “Mr Wills, I am going to dinner” Tom said all right and went into the kitchen where S and the girl were. Before this they had hidden every sharp instrument about the house when in the kitchen the girl saw him pick up and try two small knives but they bent too easily he then seemed to

⁸³² Inquest, Wills.

⁸³³ Inquest, Wills.

be looking for a short strong table knife but could not find it, he then went and stood by the mantelpiece for a few moments then went out of the side door passing S's back. When S looked up she saw him with his arm raised and a scissors in his hand he then struck himself in the chest, she ran and caught his arm then struck twice more falling at the last and on to his elbow. They laid him on his bed and he died in 2 minutes he must have touched the heart he never spoke after he fell. Colie, Emmy and I went out on Monday to see him and arranged for his burial. He looked very calm but very much altered, decomposition set in on Tuesday morning. Buried at Heidelberg cemetery Addie and Amos attended but as it was all done privately no one but Cameron was there. Tom told S to write and tell Ma and to go to Ducker to arrange her affairs. The proposal is to allow S one hundred pounds a year to keep her away. I send you a paper with remarks about Tom. Three wounds through vest and shirt bled very little.⁸³⁴

It was notable that at times he appeared to act in a more normal manner and this was the case just before taking his life. This almost certainly refers to the fluctuating levels of behaviours that can occur in delirium and its sometimes misleading message to an observer that the patient is improving.⁸³⁵

2.3 Restraint and Role of the Police

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* notes: 'In later years he had to be put under restraint'.⁸³⁶ This is misleading as it links the idea of restraint with chronicity through the casual use of the phrase 'later years'. It is perhaps one of the reasons his supposed mental infirmity is often implied as being more chronic one.⁸³⁷ It is true that there are gaps in knowledge of what happened to Wills over the last few years of his life but there is no evidence to suggest that he was physically restrained or incarcerated. In the period just prior to his suicide he was placed under close observation but no physical restraint is recorded. The inquest confirms that he was to be guarded by a local labourer in the hours leading to his death.

John Hanlon, a 43 year old Irish police officer, and his junior, Australian native Thomas Murphy, were the officers summoned to the rented premises in Jika Street by

⁸³⁴ Egbert Wills to Horace Wills, 9 May 1880. Though not particularly religious, Wills reverts to prayer seeking atonement for his sins. 'S' refers to Sarah.

⁸³⁵ See for example, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, pp. 136-8, 146.

⁸³⁶ Mandle, 'Thomas Wentworth Wills', pp. 409-10.

Anne Heddle. The attending constable advised Sarah that Wills be sent to the lock up which Sarah refused. It was after this refusal that Dunwoody, a local labourer, was summoned to take care of Wills. The reports of Hanlon and Murphy confirm that Wills ‘had been drinking heavily up to Wednesday the 28th April’.⁸³⁸ Wills and his de facto were described by the police as drinking to excess. The police suggestion for the local lock up was one of several courses of action available to the police to managed the drunk and disorderly. These included the police lock up, general hospital, psychiatric hospital or observation at home.⁸³⁹

There were no suspicious circumstances surrounding his death. His de facto in vain tried to prevent the stabbing which was witnessed by a young woman, Jennie McKewin. The remains of Wills were left at the residence of the deceased at Heidelberg.

There is no suggestion of family complicity in the manner of his care. Nor any suggestion that as a previously famous sportsman from a once prominent family that his care was anything but that expected for mid-late Victorian times. There is nothing to suggest in any way that Wills received special or secluded treatment because of his reputation. In fact, his family was absent from these final events both geographically and emotionally.⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁷ This is implied or stated in numerous documents, see for example, Richard Bouwman, *Glorious Innings: Treasures from the Melbourne Cricket Club* (Melbourne: Hutchison, Australia, 1987), p. 52.

⁸³⁸ Inquest. Further details on Hanlon and Murphy is available through the Police Historical Unit, Victoria.

⁸³⁹ See, Bowtell, ‘Benevolent Despotism’, p. ii-xi. The lockup was probably the most likely repository for a range of aberrant behaviours such as DTs, attempted suicide or mental illness. The *Mercury* and *Weekly Courier* (Collingwood and Fitzroy), 14 December 1878 notes that, ‘At Heidelberg on Wednesday a lunatic named McLeod who had been wandering ... was arrested ... drove the unfortunate madman to his destination at the Heidelberg lock-up.’ See, *Argus*, 30 May 1860, p. 7, for article on contemporary ideas that alcoholics should be treated as suffering from an illness and not as criminals. The police had a central role in the day to day management of drunkards. A treatise from 1903 outlines the police role. See A. J. Sims, *An Elementary Treatise and Guide to Police Duties with References to Acts of Parliament, Police Gazette Notices, and Manual of Regulations* (Bairnsdale Advertiser, 1903), pp. 64-5. Typically police were called to deal with drunkards who were threatening themselves or others, or where through recklessness harm may occur or while in delirium tremens. Also see Garton, ‘Once a Drunkard’, pp. 38-53.

⁸⁴⁰ See Anderson, *Suicide*, p. 379 for more on the idea that those with private means might wish to avoid hospital and publicity. Cooke, ‘Secret Sorrows’, p. 36, explains that there was some reluctance to become involved with police and this is perhaps reflected in Sarah’s reluctance to use the lock up. We also know that those who attempted suicide or completed it were sometimes directed away from the police particularly in families where public shame was to be particularly avoided. There is no other suggestion official documents were obscured or changed for Tom Wills. It has been implied that given the wealth and influence of his family that this was done to conceal and reduce the shame surrounding his

3 Victorian Medical Perspective on Insanity and Suicide

Over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the causes of mental disorders were increasingly viewed as diseases of the natural world rather than spiritual damnation. By the late nineteenth century this gradual secularisation was well advanced. Mental illness was viewed as less enslaved to religious belief and conceived within the framework of medical illness such as brain disease.⁸⁴¹ By 1880 there was little doubt that a suicide such as Wills', while in the throes of psychosis, was regarded as a result of serious mental aberration.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Australian colonies feared a rising tide of insanity, suicide, alcohol abuse and syphilis.⁸⁴² Apparent outbreaks of suicide were dubbed suicidal mania by a histrionic press.⁸⁴³ Notions of the hereditary transmission of insanity were crude but widely canvassed. The privations of such a new land, particularly its rural life, its unforgiving sun, consumption of alcohol and servile attitudes to England were relevant factors in shaping European fears about a new land. Numbers of lunatics were carefully collated and compared with previous data as a colonial barometer of acclimatisation to the new land.⁸⁴⁴

The medical causation of insanity in the nineteenth century was divided into moral or physical agents. The former included domestic conflict, affairs of the heart and isolation, while physical factors included alcoholism, sexual intemperance, venereal disease, masturbation, sunstroke, overwork and pregnancy.⁸⁴⁵

suicide but this is not supported by the evidence. By the time of Wills' death, his family did not have the influence and status that they possessed during the mid-1850s. By 1880, Wills was a faded isolated figure.

⁸⁴¹ See, for example, more detailed discussion on the changing medical views on suicide in M. MacDonald, 'The Inner Side of Wisdom: Suicide in Early Modern England', *Psychological Medicine*, 7 (1977), pp. 565-82.

⁸⁴² Frederic Norton Manning, 'The Causation and Prevention of Insanity', *Australian Medical Pamphlets*, vol. 10 (1880), pp. 1-17. Also, Frederick Norton Manning, 'Is Insanity Increasing?' *Australasian Medical Gazette*, vol. 1 (October 1881), pp. 1-3.

⁸⁴³ For example, *Daily Telegraph*, 1 January 1876, p. 2. Also see *Lee's Pictorial Weekly Budget Police News*, 7 October 1876, p. 3. 'Self-destruction is fast becoming almost as much a regular business as any other ... it is a vulgar jump into the water, the pop of a pistol, a gulp of laudanum, or the opening of an artery'.

⁸⁴⁴ See Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', pp. 247-71.

For Wills, alienation from his family, alcohol abuse and lack of a cohesive social and employment network were important in his decline. Two other factors may have shaped contemporary thinking about Wills' suicide. Neither, though, are specifically stated in any accounts of the time. The first was that of excessive periods of loneliness and privation in the bush. Wills wrote poignantly of his period of isolation and fear for his safety while in Queensland.⁸⁴⁶ The second was excessive sun exposure as a cause of insanity and alcohol abuse. There was a commonly held view that sunstroke, predisposed individuals to 'have their irritable and unstable brains upset by slight alcoholic excesses and to do very strange and eccentric things in consequence, or even to compromise themselves by some act of impulsive violence ...'⁸⁴⁷

Dr F. Norton Manning, an eminent figure in late nineteenth century Australian psychiatry, described what he saw as unique Australian factors in the causation of insanity. The bad quality of food, adulterated beer, geographic isolation and sunstroke were seen as more important causative factors in mental illness than in Europe:

The sun here is responsible for much brain disturbance ... and there is a large number of cases due to heat stroke in the NSW asylums ... five per cent of the total cases (of insanity) are attributed to it ... after an attack of sunstroke alcohol is an absolute poison, and cannot be taken with impunity in even small quantities. A person who has once suffered from sunstroke must be either a teetotaler or a lunatic. There is, I believe, no middle standpoint.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁵ Manning, 'Causation of Insanity', pp. 1-17. For another reference to the link between alcohol and insanity in colonial society, A. W. Martin, 'Drink and Deviance in Sydney: Investigating Intemperance, 1854-5', *Historical Studies*, vol. 17, no. 68, April 1977, p. 351.

⁸⁴⁶ Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', pp. 247-71, touches on this issue when discussing the expectations on immigrants in a new land. Wills wrote of such privations to family and newspapers. Also see de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees* pp. 179-88.

⁸⁴⁷ Maudsley, *Pathology of Mind*, p. 483.

⁸⁴⁸ Manning, 'Causation of Insanity', p. 7. Also see E. Reeves, 'Clinical Illustrations of Acute Softening of the Corpora Striata', *Australian Medical Journal* (July 1861), pp.155-67 for clinical illustration of the combination of sunstroke and alcohol and brain softening. This relationship was being articulated as early as the fifth century AD by Caelius Arulianus. See Graham Edwards, 'Sunstroke and Insanity in Nineteenth Century Australia', Adelaide, 3rd National Conference on Medical History and Health in Australia, November 1986. Also see from an English perspective, Bucknill, *Habitual Drunkenness*, pp. 24-5, 'Thus, a man who has suffered from sunstroke may be quite rational, if he is exposed to no active cerebral excitement; but to the end of his life a very moderate amount of drink will make him maniacal'. There were numerous contemporary references to the purported link between sun exposure, alcohol and insanity. See also, Chas. T. Mackin, 'Some Observations on Insanity and Delirium Tremens', *Australian Medical Journal* (April 1861), pp. 88-94. Also, McCarthy, 'Inebriate Retreat', pp. 867-70. 'As inebriety is a frequent cause of insanity, so may it also be a symptom of insanity. Sunstroke,

At different times Tom Wills and other cricketers were cautioned about exposure to harsh sunlight and in several cases allusions were made to its effect upon their brains. Wills' mother expressed concern for her son as he toiled as a bowler for the MCC for extended periods beneath the sun.⁸⁴⁹ Wills warned another cricketer, somewhat sarcastically, not to suffer from sunstroke.⁸⁵⁰ In 1876, when Wills' intercolonial career was controversially resurrected, there were doubts about his capacity to cope with a Sydney sun that may have unduly excited him.⁸⁵¹ While not necessarily a reference to insanity, there is the impression that sun exposure for a somewhat aging frame may have constituted a poisonous influence leading to irrational decision making from a disturbed brain.

Although it may seem a strained relationship to modern observers the link between sun exposure, alcohol and insanity was seen as a serious problem by alienists, the press and seemingly recognised by sportsmen themselves.⁸⁵² Given these reasons, Wills is seen to be particularly vulnerable through Victorian eyes to the effects of alcohol.

4 Brain Structure and Insanity

He was attacked with softening of the brain, induced by his not taking that care of himself which he should have done, and gradually became irresponsible for his actions, and in a fit of frenzy stabbed himself in the left side with a pair of scissors he snatched from the table. He sleeps quietly in the cemetery at Heidelberg, about eight miles from Melbourne.

shock, grief, melancholy, remorse, debilitating disease, injury to the brain, in fact any cause that may produce insanity, may be the cause of inebriety'.

⁸⁴⁹ Letter, Elizabeth Wills to Cedric Wills, 27 October 1870.

⁸⁵⁰ Letter, Tom Wills to Cedric Wills, [specific date unknown] May 1870. Wills flashily describes it as 'coup de soleil'.

⁸⁵¹ *Argus*, 8 February 1876, p. 6.

⁸⁵² Alienist refers to nineteenth century psychiatrists. See *Australasian*, 18 January 1868, p. 75, '... regret to learn that the services of George Marshall are irretrievably lost to the cricketing community ... He is now suffering from a softening of the brain, caused by slight sunstroke received while playing his favourite game under a midsummer sun ...'. Also *Argus*, 23 January 1860, p. 5, which refers to Marshall being affected by the sun during a cricket match and *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 March 1868. Also see Hammersley referring to Wills after being affected by the sun, *Sydney Mail*, 15 September, 1883, p. 508. 'I remember one practice match, just before an Intercolonial, he and several other players, including George Marshall and Gid Elliott, were very nearly killed by sunstroke. A hot wind blew with a blazing sun; and, as there were a lot of spectators, they did not like to retire, but at last Phoebus triumphed. I thought, really it was all up with Tommy, as we put wet towels on his head as he lay stretched on the table in the pavilion ...'.

William Hammersley on Tom Wills⁸⁵³

While my memory is going, and my hair is turning grey.
 All my soul is slowly melting, all my brain is softening fast,
 And I know that I'll be taken to the Yarra Bend at last.

Marcus Clarke, *The Wail of the Waiter*⁸⁵⁴

In the solitude of death Wills was chastised by Hammersley. The alteration of brain structure and its possible links to insanity was a topic of medical literature but also of popular conception for the lay person.⁸⁵⁵ Hammersley's depiction of softening of the brain did not represent the medical findings on Wills because no post mortem was performed. There also was no comment on the nature of Wills' brain in either the coronial records or obituaries.

Scattered throughout the nineteenth century medical literature are references to observable brain changes as viewed during post mortems. It was claimed that these changes explained disordered mental states when the person was alive. One predominant view of the day suggested that the evidence for mental illness could be seen in observable changes to the cerebral membranes, the consistency of brain matter and in the disordered vascular supply to the brain. However there was no clear medical consensus of brain appearance and consistency to symptoms of mental illness.⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵³ William Hammersley, *Sydney Mail*, 15 September 1883, p. 508. In a series of reminiscences Hammersley recalls a lost Tom Wills. See also Harpur, 'Cricket Footprints', which describes Wills as thus '... poor Wills committed suicide with a pair of scissors whilst suffering from softening of the brain'.

⁸⁵⁴ Marcus Clarke, 'The Wail of the Waiter', in R. F. Brissenden and Philip Grundy (eds), *The Oxford Book of Australian Light Verse* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia, 1991), pp. 3-4. Yarra Bend was a Melburnian lunatic asylum. Clarke's words indicate that this phrase was in the parlance of the day.

⁸⁵⁵ For example, in the *Leader*, 8 September 1866 p. 2, a woman who cut her throat revealed at *post mortem* congestion in the membranes and substance of the brain, and more softening than should exist in a healthy organ.

⁸⁵⁶ J. L. C. Schroeder Van der Kolk, *The Pathology and Therapeutics of Mental Disease* (Melbourne: Samuel Mullen, 1869), pp. 60-123. Henry Maudsley, the doyen of psychiatrists of his day doubted the existence of these brain changes, see Maudsley, *Pathology of Mind*, pp. 489-511. Henry T. Green. *An Introduction to Pathology and Morbid Anatomy* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1875), pp. 56-9. Australian medical articles of the time examined symptoms of impending insanity and post mortem findings in-patients who died at Yarra Bend Asylum. See Patrick Smith, 'On Premonitory Symptoms of Insanity', *Australian Medical Journal*, vol. 18 (1873), pp. 39-47. See J. T. Rudall, 'Report of Post-Mortem Examination at the Yarra Bend Asylum, 1861', *Australian Medical Journal*, vol. 7 (1862), pp. 252-7.

The non-medical references described a layman's concept of softening rather than a technical one. Implicit were the notions of lack of substance, structure and resilience that evoked doubts on the person's character or his manner of living. Thus although there was dispute as to what softening of the brain meant within the medical community with respect to suicide, alcohol use and insanity, there was nonetheless a popular understanding in the general community that suicidal behaviour was reflected in such cerebral changes. As the Hammersley quotation suggests, softening of the brain became synonymous with aberrant behaviour regardless of whether a post mortem had been performed.⁸⁵⁷

5 A Modern Conceptualisation of Wills' Death

5.1 Psychopathology

There seems little doubt that Wills was suffering from delirium tremens and that this led directly to his suicide. The Melbourne Hospital diagnosis, even without a detailed case history, was unequivocal. Delirium tremens was a condition well known both in and out of hospital. Wills had a clearly documented history of drinking excessively for at least 20 years and regular exposure to alcohol from childhood. There is documented evidence that he was treated by a local doctor for alcohol withdrawal in the days before his death. He had ceased drinking several days before his suicide and the development of DTs is consistent with this time course.

DTs is a syndrome characterised by physical and psychological symptoms produced directly as a result of alcohol withdrawal in someone with a history of alcohol dependence.⁸⁵⁸ It starts within 24 to 72 hours of cessation, and begins with symptoms such as irritability, restlessness, sweating and agitation. Sarah's initial concern, insomnia, is a typical feature of delirium. The syndrome may progress to cognitive

⁸⁵⁷ Three other contemporary cricketers were similarly described as having brain changes at death. It is with irony that Hammersley's death certificate pronounced him as having 'softening of the brain', death certificate - Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Melbourne. Also Billy Midwinter had a brain whose 'substance was softer than natural and the brain was congested. There was large excess of serum.' See post mortem examination in the Coroner's inquest, in Rex Harcourt's collection, MCC. Also see details concerning George Marshall, *Australasian*, 14 March 1868, p. 331.

⁸⁵⁸ *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, pp. 212-6.

changes such as disorientation and later psychosis. If untreated, it represents a distinct threat to life from physical sequelae as well as recklessness and suicide.⁸⁵⁹

There can be relatively lucid periods in delirium. One of these was referred to in Egbert's final letter. This may have tragically reduced the concern for Wills' welfare by momentarily lowering the vigilance of those observing him, thinking that he was on his way to recovery. There is nothing to suggest that Wills' suicide was a considered decision but rather one that was impulsive, opportunistic and violent.⁸⁶⁰ Wills was psychotic at the time of his death. That is, he was suffering a loss of reality characterised by hallucinations and delusions. He almost certainly killed himself in response to either auditory hallucinations that commanded him to stab himself or to intrusive, harassing delusions that rendered the world an overwhelming threat to his sense of safety. These delusions may have taken one of several forms. He may have imagined that he was being persecuted and hence took his life as a form of refuge; or he may have experienced passivity delusions where the afflicted person believes that his body is under the control of some outside force which guides them to commit suicide.⁸⁶¹

It was the juxtaposition of chaotic phenomenology and the seizing of a pair of unguarded scissors that led to his stabbing. His threatening demeanour rendered him impossible to deal with on a rational basis. Although described as obstinate in the Melbourne Hospital files, this may not have reflected his character but rather the gathering forces of delusions and hallucinations that were to culminate in his act of self-destruction.

The chest is a common site for those who commit suicide by stabbing. Obviously there is an attempt to pierce vital structures such as the heart or principal major blood vessels. Modern suicidology and forensic pathology have only a handful of studies on the topic of suicide by stabbing. Classically there are several tentative stab

⁸⁵⁹ Marshall, 'Alcohol Dependence', pp. 482-4. Shuckit, 'Alcohol-Related Disorders', pp. 1168-87.

⁸⁶⁰ There are suggestions in Egbert's letter of a conviction to suicide and chaotic planning in the final hours. He points to the left side of his chest and makes pronouncements about suicide.

⁸⁶¹ See B. J. Sadock, 'Signs and Symptoms in Psychiatry', in B. J. Sadock and V. A. Sadock (eds), *Kaplan and Sadock's Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry, vol 1* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2005), p. 851, for details on command hallucinations; delusions of control and persecution. While the lay witnesses at the inquest could not be expected to have detailed medical diagnostic knowledge their conclusions carry some weight. Far from being unusual, police in their daily course of work would regularly be exposed to alcohol abuse and its consequences. Dunwoodie's clear assertion of

marks prior to the lethal thrust.⁸⁶² Although stabbing is an uncommon method of self-destructive behaviour, psychotic symptoms such as voices instructing patients to harm themselves and alcohol abuse are common features.⁸⁶³ Delirium tremens is a condition that can produce ferocious behavioural changes that must assist with the force and singularity of purpose of stabbing oneself in the chest.⁸⁶⁴

There are, of course, numerous other causes for a delirium *per se* but the circumstantial evidence is strongly in favour of alcohol as the most important and probably only relevant factor for Wills. There was a prevailing medical view at the time that linked epilepsy, alcohol and madness. There is a hint in one of Wills' early letters that he may have had periods of confusion and derealisation which Flanagan astutely marks as possibly related to epilepsy.⁸⁶⁵ Repeated seizures can induce a psychotic state such as Wills experienced.⁸⁶⁶ But one would have expected this cause to have been identified during the inquest. This was not the case. There is no evidence that at any other time in his life Wills was psychotic.

There is also no clear evidence that Wills had been suffering from schizophrenia or manic depressive illness.⁸⁶⁷ It is less clear whether, prior to his DTs, he was suffering

it being DTs, regardless of its medical accuracy, illustrates that in the late nineteenth century, delirium tremens was a diagnosis familiar to the general population.

⁸⁶² P. Saukko and B. Knight, *Knight's Forensic Pathology* (London: Edward Arnold, 2004), pp. 235-9. The description of more than one stab wound often with initial tentative punctures is consistent with the three puncture marks in Wills' chest. Also see Lester, *Why People Kill Themselves*, pp. 224-5.

⁸⁶³ Vikram Patel and Greg de Moore, 'Harakiri: A Clinical Study of Self-Stabbing', *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, vol. 55 (1994), pp. 98-103. In Simon Cooke's PhD thesis, the year 1880 was probably the peak year for male suicides in the nineteenth century. The use of a sharp weapon to commit suicide was used with increasing frequency from the professional to the labouring classes, the professionals preferring to use guns and poison.

⁸⁶⁴ Stabbing oneself through the thoracic cavity is an explosive and physically demanding method of suicide. Communication with Professor Peter Ellis, Forensic Pathologist, Westmead Hospital, Sydney. Wills stabbed himself through the clothes he was wearing.

⁸⁶⁵ In this letter, Wills gives a most curious description of his subjective sense of his world in this letter, 'I have felt beastly bad this last week I do not know what I am standing on - and when anyone speaks to me I cannot for the life of me make out what they are talking about - everything seems so curious.' Whilst this may be a turn of phrase, its unusual presence may in a more speculative vein indicate pathological states such as epilepsy or even amnesic periods from heavy drinking. Flanagan, *The Call*, p. 73. It is also possible to have seizures as a direct consequence of alcohol withdrawal. See Neil Kessel and Henry Walton, *Alcoholism. A Reappraisal - its Causes, Problems and Treatments* (London: Penguin, 1989), p. 20. See for another comment that linked epilepsy with inebriety and insanity. Smith, 'Inebriety', pp. 860-7.

⁸⁶⁶ Psychosis in epilepsy, see M. F. Mendez Ashla, 'Neuropsychiatric Aspects', in B. J. Sadock and V. A. Sadock (eds), *Kaplan and Sadock's Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry, vol 1* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2005), p. 380.

⁸⁶⁷ Numerous of Tom Wills' letters are open to the interpretation that they exhibit features of manic like thought disorder. Particularly his letters from the late 1850s are marked by histrionicity, thoughts that

from a depressive illness. It may well have been that prior to alcohol withdrawal his mood had been quite euthymic (neither depressed nor elevated). Indeed it is unnecessary to postulate that he had any further psychiatric problems other than alcohol abuse and subsequent withdrawal to explain the final act of suicide. Although numerous references in the late twentieth century suggest that he was depressed, they do not provide such evidence.⁸⁶⁸ The remaining archival documentation is lean for the months leading up to his suicide. It is known that he played for a local Heidelberg cricket team and that he was seen at the recent intercolonial match.⁸⁶⁹ Although regarded as healthy at that match, this hardly provides the quality of evidence to decide if one is harbouring a depressed mood. Nonetheless it does reveal that he was not invalided in the early part of 1880. The best potential sources for evidence of depression are the obituaries and inquest. But even these are largely mute on this question. Only one obituary cites that Wills had indeed been suffering from depression in recent times but without further evidence.⁸⁷⁰

With respect to genetic loading, the only suicide in the family appears to be his paternal uncle Edward Wills.⁸⁷¹ There is no evidence that suggests that Wills had made previous attempts to end his life.⁸⁷²

jump from topic to topic and an exhilaration not typically seen in most letter writing. It is possible that this is evidence of a type of bipolar illness though there is no other evidence from the other archives that help support this speculation.

⁸⁶⁸ It seems most likely these references use the term depression in a loose, generic sense as indicative of anyone who commits suicide. See Westcott's late nineteenth century linkage of suicidal behaviour to alcohol in particular the view that certain types of alcohol such as light wines, were less prone to induce such behaviour. Wynn Westcott, *'Suicide' Its History, Literature, Jurisprudence, Causation and Prevention* (London: HK Lewis, 1885). For further discussion on the links amongst alcohol abuse, depression, suicidality and post trauma syndromes see the chapter on alcohol in this thesis. The link between alcohol abuse, depression and suicidal behaviour is robust. For detailed modern views, see, K. P. Pages, J. E. Russo, P. P. Roy-Byrne, R. K. Ries and D. S. Cowley, 'Determinants of Suicidal Ideation: The Role of Substance Use Disorders', *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, vol. 58, no. 11 (1997), pp. 510-5. Roy et al, pp. 761-5. M. A. Schuckit, J. E. Tipp, M. Bergman, W. Reich, V. M. Hesselbrock and T. L. Smith, 'Comparison of Induced and Independent Major Depressive Disorders in 2945 Alcoholics', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 154, no. 7 (July 1997), pp. 948-57. A. S. Nielsen, E. Stenager and U. Bille Brahe, 'Attempted Suicide, Suicidal Intent, and Alcohol', *Crisis*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1993), pp. 32-8. Lester, 'Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Suicide', pp. 357-75. Lester, *Why People Kill Themselves*, p. 268. Reports on the study by Murphy and Wetzel, 1990, that the average age of alcoholic suicides was 49 years.

⁸⁶⁹ *Sydney Mail*, 3 January, 1880, pp. 27-8. 'Near them, chatting on the past, was the veteran Tommy Wills, looking hearty and well.'

⁸⁷⁰ *Bendigo Independent*, 4 May 1880, p. 4.

⁸⁷¹ Letter from Sarah Alexander to her brother Thomas Wills, 20 September 1837. See also Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, p. 27.

⁸⁷² Ten to fifteen percent of people who deliberately harm themselves but survive go on to commit suicide. See R. W. Maris, A. L. Berman and M. M. Silverman, *Comprehensive Textbook of Suicidology* (New York, London: The Guildford Press, 2000), p. 284.

It has been put forward that it was despair over his father's death that motivated his suicide. This holds little credence. Some of the reasons for his suicide in the popular literature are based on fantasy and sporting romance. This was no act of bravado or one last act of native cunning by the captain of the team. Delirium tremens locks an individual within their inner world. His suicide was a lonely act by a lonely man perversely surrounded by others but impotent to help.⁸⁷³

5.2 Post Trauma Syndromes

Tom dreamt a man was murdered on the station on the 28th March.

Tom's sister Emily, 1864.⁸⁷⁴

The most traumatic stressor in Wills' life was the violent death of his father in 1861. Immediately after the killings, a shocked and disoriented Wills wrote to his cousin H. C. A. Harrison to inform him of the murder of the settlers.⁸⁷⁵ An understanding of how Wills responded to this is crucial when assembling a picture of how he lived his life from then until 1880. A key question to answer is whether he suffered some type of post trauma syndrome.⁸⁷⁶ The first modern descriptions of post trauma syndromes were being penned at the time of his father's death by Jacob Mendes Da Costa (1833-1900) who described the classic features of post trauma from the battlefields of the American Civil War.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷³ See Hansen, *Centurions*, pp. iv-v, as an example of these fanciful explanations. There is no evidence whatsoever that at the time he was depressed over the failure of Australian Rules football to spread more widely nor is there evidence that he was ruminating over his father's death. This is not to say that in a longer term sense that the death of his father did not result in changed behaviours partly secondary to depression. It says simply that firstly we do not have this evidence and secondly that with respect to the actual act of suicide the DTs is sufficient to account for the suicide without invoking a history of depression.

⁸⁷⁴ Letter, Emily Wills to Cedric Wills, [no date] 1864.

⁸⁷⁵ Letter, Tom Wills to H. C. A. Harrison, 24 October 1861. This letter is telling in that at the point of greatest distress in his life he writes and confides and seeks comfort from Harrison.

⁸⁷⁶ Post trauma syndromes can take several forms, the most well known being post traumatic stress disorder characterised by re-experiencing the trauma, numbed emotional expression, flashbacks and nightmares. Such syndromes are by no means inevitable after trauma. For further discussion, see the thesis chapter on alcohol.

⁸⁷⁷ See J. M. da Costa, 'On Irritable Heart: A Clinical Study of a Form of Functional Cardiac Disorder and its Consequences', *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* (January 1871), pp. 17-52. Da Costa described it as a malady common amongst soldiers during the American Civil War. In what he described as irritable heart he outlined the key features of shortness of breath, dizziness, palpitations and chest pain though most externally appeared 'well and healthy'. Distress, disturbed sleep and unpleasant dreams were common.

There are three pieces of evidence, at least, that suggest Wills experienced an ongoing reaction to the trauma that influenced his life. The first major line of argument emerges from evidence that links alcohol abuse to those who suffer a traumatic experience.⁸⁷⁸ The second piece of evidence is a letter written by his sister in 1864.⁸⁷⁹ In that letter, Emily wrote that during one of his visits to Belle Vue in Victoria, he suffered from traumatic dreams that the Queensland station, Cullin-la-Ringo, was under siege from aborigines. This is noteworthy because the dream was of sufficient vividness and impact for Tom to relate this to another family member who was concerned enough to document it. Such a sequence leads one to believe that the dream was anything but trivial. Whether these dreams were frequent and how long they continued is unknown. Given that this dream occurred three years after Horatio's murder it indicates that Wills had a prolonged period of re-experiencing traumatic fears. This letter, hitherto an unrecognised piece of evidence, is the clearest indication we have of a deep ongoing psychological disturbance. Third, was the severe isolation and Wills' reports of his intense vigilance and fears in Queensland. After his father's death, Tom Wills was required to undertake the lonely, at times frightening task of a shepherd's life in remote bush which, in his own words, reinforced his fears.⁸⁸⁰ Contemporary newspapers also shaped perceptions of a frontier life fraught with fear and anticipatory anxiety about further attacks by aborigines.⁸⁸¹

5.3 Series of Losses

Life events are significant stressors that are influential in shaping a person's emotional and behavioural responses. Such events may be immediate precipitants to illness or suicide or may act over a longer period of time to shape behaviour. They are significant factors in trying to explain why individuals commit suicide.⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁸ See Chapter Six of this thesis, 'Sons of Lush: Tom Wills, Alcohol and Colonial Sport'.

⁸⁷⁹ Emily to Cedric, [undated] 1864.

⁸⁸⁰ See Chapter Four of this thesis, 'Tom Wills and Indigenous Australians'.

⁸⁸¹ There are numerous examples. See, for instance, *Australasian Sketcher*, 21 March 1874, p. 215.

⁸⁸² See, Danuta Wasserman, 'Negative Life Events (Losses, Changes, Traumas and Narcissistic Injury) and Suicide', in Danuta Wasserman (ed.), *Suicide. An Unnecessary Death* (London: Martin Dunitz, 2001), pp. 111-7, '... George Murphy (1992) has noticed the crucial importance of object loss among alcoholic suicides. Murphy found that 48% of all alcoholic suicides had experienced an interpersonal loss within one year of their suicides; 32% had a loss within 6 weeks of their suicides'.

The principal stressors usually put forward to explain Wills' decline are the traumatic loss of his father, loss of his sporting career and alcohol abuse. To this list can be added losses of wealth, identity, and purpose through his decline in sport; the shift from amateur to professional cricketer; and loss of family and social integration.

His financial plight, linked to a series of life events in the 1870s, was central to Wills' decline. It is through the revelation of his numerous failed grasping attempts to gain employment that his waning fortunes can be tracked. Apart from his brief and aberrant diversion into law, Wills never had any regular paid employment outside sport. A despairing mother wrote:

Tom went to Sydney with the Melbourne team or XI – but I have not heard if he returned by the steamer that came back on Saturday. He told me when he left this just before Christmas that he was going to see one of the members and try to obtain [a] situation – but it is impossible for anyone to interest themselves for him so long as he gives himself up to the cricket field. I do despair of Tom ever doing any good for himself – it is really a pity for I do not think he is in reality bad – but mixing with bad companions and I only wonder by this time he does not see the folly of it – I have no doubt but your brother Tom would have been thoroughly reclaimed had your poor father been spared – indeed you would all have been benefited by it.⁸⁸³

His sporting decline can be traced with accuracy, as this was publicly chronicled. In the last decade of his life he ceased to make any of his previous major individual batting or bowling contributions in intercolonial matches. In 1872, Wills was dropped from the Victorian side. Poor captaincy, hints of alcoholism, self-centred and reckless behaviour and private murmurs which for some time had been public taunts about his bowling action, were the justifications for dropping him as his on-field performances declined.⁸⁸⁴ He was overlooked for the Victorian team to play W. G. Grace in 1873-4, amid rival cricketing factions squabbling in public over his potential inclusion.⁸⁸⁵ During the 1870s he was not hired as a trainer for cricketers at the MCC

⁸⁸³ Letter, Elizabeth Wills to Cedric Wills, 21 February 1865.

⁸⁸⁴ There are numerous newspaper allusions to this. This assessment is taking all of these into account. Perhaps the best is the *Australasian* over this period.

⁸⁸⁵ This was well covered in the Melbourne press, see for example the *Leader*, 28 June 1873, p. 11; 8 November 1873, p. 11, 15 November 1873, p. 11.

(1873);⁸⁸⁶ turned down for intercolonial umpiring duties (1874);⁸⁸⁷ overlooked as a coach for the fledgling South Australian Cricket Association (1874);⁸⁸⁸ sought coaching positions in provincial Victoria;⁸⁸⁹ was overlooked for the secretaryship for the MCC (1877);⁸⁹⁰ withdrew without public murmur from the provincial cricketing ranks of the Corio Cricket Club (1877)⁸⁹¹ and rejected as an MCC ground bowler (1878).⁸⁹²

His association with the MCC thus lingered long after he left Melbourne in 1871 to live in Geelong. There he resided in modest accommodation as a professional cricketer with the Corio Club. Wills made a forlorn request of the Melbourne Cricket Club to prepare cricketers in the early 1870s for their upcoming battles with visiting English teams. To do so, he requested return payment for the train fare from Geelong to Melbourne. The MCC declined his offer as follows:

Mr Biddle reported that TW Wills had expressed his willingness to come up to Melbourne frequently for the purpose of coaching the players chosen to compete in the English cricket matches, if provided with a free Railway pass from Geelong. It was resolved that the Committee would do nothing in the matter.⁸⁹³

His failed application for secretary of the Melbourne Cricket Club in 1877 was a pivotal loss. It was a position he held in 1857 as a boastful 22 year-old, whose swagger had no match. In September 1877 he wrote and applied for this position in response to a newspaper advertisement.⁸⁹⁴ Two of the most important aspects of this application have been previously overlooked and give a deeper understanding to the application and also Wills' mental state:

⁸⁸⁶ Minutes of the MCC, 7 October 1873.

⁸⁸⁷ Letter requesting position as umpire, from Tom Wills to Handfield, 8 December 1874. The MCC referred it to the Intercolonial Match Committee. Wills was not selected.

⁸⁸⁸ See South Australian Cricket Association minutes, 22 December 1874. Also South Australian newspapers of the time which expressed disappointment in Wills not obtaining the position.

⁸⁸⁹ For example, *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 September 1873, notes that Camperdown was interested in obtaining Wills as a cricketer. Geelong, in response was determined to retain him.

⁸⁹⁰ Letter, Tom Wills to W. H. Handfield, 19 September 1877.

⁸⁹¹ There was no fanfare in the local newspapers.

⁸⁹² MCC minute books, 1 and 15 October 1878.

⁸⁹³ MCC minutes, 7 October 1873. Wills' departure from Geelong was a quiet one. Other prominent sports people received more acknowledgement if they chose to leave Geelong, for example, see, *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 July 1876, p. 3.

⁸⁹⁴ Letter to Handfield, 1877, MCC secretary application. This is further evidence that he was preparing to leave Geelong for Melbourne; it also is the year in which he makes his Will.

Seeing by advertisement that applications are to be sent in to you for the Office of Secretary to the MCC I herewith apply for same. I am well up in the duties attached to the office and do not fear work, and I trust that the Committee will give my application a favourable consideration, owing to my many years devotion to Colonial Cricket.⁸⁹⁵

Never to eschew self-belief, Wills trotted out this brief, pointed entreaty clinging to the back of his colonial exploits. Perhaps a little entitled and bombastic, it was written with Wills' unquenchable belief in self. At the bottom of this 1877 letter and for some reason never cited, he instructed Handfield to turn over and read his brief postscript. This is a rare sliver of an opening into his inner thoughts. With a revealing mix of defiance and beseeching, he added:

P.S. It is not often that old cricketers through cricket have a chance of obtaining a billet and even then they are left in the cold.
T.W.W.⁸⁹⁶

These few words are a distillation of innumerable Wills letters – defiant, needy, shameless, entitled and unrepentant. Boastful and vainglorious; a defiant postscript without shame; and heroic self-immolation were characteristics of Wills down to the core. While in terminal descent and without the protective layer of political canny, he could not resist an unmistakable backhander for the club. To see Wills simply as a beggar would be to misunderstand him.

Wills gave voice to a generation of exiled, lonely professional cricketers without shelter and into the void asked the question of clubs, their obligation to servant. Hammersley in his reflective articles of 1883 in the *Sydney Mail* portrayed the life of another old battered retired professional cricketer, Dick Coulstock. Hammersley feelings are unmistakably proletarian and he shares his sympathies with such destitute cricketers:

I remember this club and its ground well, when its pavilion was a mere shed, in which old Dick Coulstock lived as 'curator'; if, indeed, such a term could be applied to the position he filled. He had a cow or

⁸⁹⁵ Letter to Handfield, 1877.

⁸⁹⁶ The reason it is probably not quoted is that this letter is generally a photocopied one which only includes the front half. It is only by examining the original that this insight into the writer's emotional state can be ascertained.

two, and used to sell milk to make both ends meet, for poor Dick, I think, got very little salary. I often used to have a chat with him. All alone, except with his big dog Sandy, poor Coulstock passed the long winter nights there. He used to complain to me of a pain in his chest at times, 'not much', he said, 'but a curious pain'. One day he was having a ball or two, and made a sudden movement back to escape being hit in the chest. The ball, however, did hit him, and in a quarter of an hour from that time it was all over with poor Coulstock. Dr Duret was called in time to see him and tell him there was no hope. I think Jack Conway was present when he died; and, if I remember right, Tom Wills also.⁸⁹⁷

The second aspect of his application for the secretaryship that has been overlooked was the large number of responses to this advertisement. The MCC minute and letter books remain mute on any response to his application. Having said this, and gathering hints of the desperation in Wills' life at this time, it is equally noteworthy that Wills' application was specifically mentioned in the MCC minutes. The archives of the MCC entomb over 50 applications for the secretary's position. There are testimonials from men of prominence for cricketers here and overseas; a reference for one cricketer came from George Parr, captain of the unbeatable English XI who toured the colonies in 1864; another from a prominent politician. They remain in the MCC coffers largely unmentioned in the minutes. None of these aspiring secretaries were plucked from the bunch. Wills did not succeed but nor did many other well credentialled applicants. Seemingly he never had a chance. Perhaps his unfulfilled threat to leave the club in 1869 or his public and noisy departure in 1871 were too fresh to risk it. Or perhaps an unsteady mental state, his self-serving manner and recollections of his fickle, at times incoherent management while secretary two decades previously told against him. No known written response to his application exists.⁸⁹⁸

The misleading and oft quoted supposed incarceration of Tom Wills at Kew Mental Asylum portrays unfairly a chronic picture of destitution and madness, the very

⁸⁹⁷ William Hammersley, *Sydney Mail*, 29 September 1883, p. 603. The theme of exiled old cricketers was a familiar theme. Charles Lawrence, the coach of the aboriginal cricket team to England, late in life and earning his keep at the MCC was advised that 'Employment during the winter not recommended'. See, 27 March 1893, Minutes of match and ground committee in Pavilion at 5 pm.

⁸⁹⁸ Letters in application for secretaryship, see MCC minutes. MCC minutes, 18 September 1877. 'Mr Handfield reported the receipt of an application from Mr TW Wills for the position of paid secretary, that he had received other overtures for the post ... It was decided to fix the salary of the Secretary at 250 pounds per annum and to advertise for applicants'. On 2 October 1877, 'Thirty two applications for the position of paid secretary were read and four viz those from Messrs BB Cooper, C Reid, Hamilton McKinnon and James Thomson were selected for further consideration'.

convenient stereotype of a fallen sportsman. The uncritical implication is that Tom Wills, (*a la* Fleetwood-Smith of generations later), was a cricketing vagrant and a drinker of ill-repute and was hospitalised at the Asylum. Wills was never hospitalised at the Asylum. In fact, Wills was still umpiring in the newly formed Victorian Football Association until at least the middle of 1878 without a hint of incarceration in a psychiatric unit.⁸⁹⁹ The evidence is sketchy and no previous references have given really any indication as to his life or activities during 1878-9. But Wills made one last overture to the MCC in October 1878. By this stage he had left his modest home in Geelong for a rented four bedroom weatherboard cottage in Emerald Hill, only a short distance from his adversary and life chronicler, William Hammersley. He sought a position as an MCC ground bowler. A ground bowler was often a player beyond his peak who provided regular bowling practice for the members. This application was rejected by the MCC.⁹⁰⁰ While not effusive, the MCC minutes provide an aperture of how his application was considered. Although he was initially rejected, this was suspended and reconsidered at the next meeting at which time a letter was sent to him with a final rejection. The committee remained mute on the reasons for its decision. Whether out of generosity of spirit, pity or genuine regard for his fading skills, why he was considered a second time is not revealed. Nor is it known if Wills was aware that his application had been treated seriously and considered twice. The club against which he had played as a boy and whose vice president had been his first coach had rejected him for a final time. His last paltry stream of income was whittled and finally asphyxiated. His sporting alienation was now complete.

He drifted to Heidelberg sometime after his final ground bowler application to the MCC was refused. His life in 1879 is all but forgotten and unrecorded. His brother, Cedric, was affectionately moved to ask Colden Harrison in an otherwise neutral letter

⁸⁹⁹ For example see Bouwman, *Glorious Inning*, p. 52. Frith, *By His Own Hand*, p. 175. It is quite possible that this link to Kew Asylum is an extension of the fact that the Wills family played a significant role in Kew. See Dorothy Rogers, *A History of Kew* (Lowden: Kilmore, 1973), pp. 1-5. A detailed search of the actual clinical records of the Kew Asylum did not uncover an admission for Wills nor did a search of other asylums in Victoria of the period reveal Wills. See Growden, *Fleetwood-Smith* for a similar scenario with another famous cricketer. Kew Asylum as a cricket venue and as a team was commonly mentioned in the 1870s. Perhaps this is another source for the error. For example, see *Bohemians. 1877-78*, p. 9.

⁹⁰⁰ MCC archives, Match and Ground Committee, 1 October, 1878. 'Letter was read from TW Wills applying for situation as a ground bowler. This offer was refused.' 'It was subsequently considered desirable to withhold the letter to TW Wills (as per minute above until his application had been further considered'. On 8 October, 'Reconsideration of Wills application as a ground bowler postponed for a

about business dealings, if Harrison had any knowledge of Tom's whereabouts.⁹⁰¹ His family had little contact with him and letters of that period do not mention Tom. We do know however that he was not admitted to any asylum in Victoria nor was he gaoled as the mythic lurid caricature implies.⁹⁰² His decline was a private one. The last surviving letters from Wills are dated 15 March 1880. They are to his brothers with his usual insouciant but insistent entreaties for money.⁹⁰³ He received dribs and drabs from his brothers and the occasional dollop of money from Ducker, the family's financial ballast. Debts hounded him and Ducker skimmed a share of his weekly allowance 'till some old debts are paid off in Geelong'. Worn out Wills seemed no longer to care who knew of these debts. He wailed about his isolation in Heidelberg and his rare trips to Melbourne – twice since moving there. In his isolation he fantasised about travel to Tasmania. Empty and fed up, he was adrift. His letter to Cedric has the hallmarks of an alcoholic's lament. Pathetically he chimed in with the false promise of the alcoholic, 'If I get 10 pounds from you I will not trouble any of you again and will repay as soon as I can'. The following six weeks until his death is a continent of ignorance. By 1880 the accumulation of his losses and alcohol dependence culminated in suicide. In a life dulled by the pettiness of daily existence and numbed by alcohol, he dreamt of his next goodbye. In a mythic sense his suicide was the most exultant and triumphant of all his departures.

6 Legal Sequelae to Tom Wills' death

Among the black catalogue of human offences, there is not, indeed, any that more powerfully affects the mind, that more outrages all the feelings of the heart, than the crime of suicide.⁹⁰⁴

week.' On October 15, 'Wills application as ground bowler was again considered. Resolved that as arrangements at present stand his services are not required.'

⁹⁰¹ Letter, Cedric Wills to H. C. A. Harrison, 1879. This echoes the numerous times as boys Horace and Egbert asked 'Have you heard of Tom yet ...' For example in Horace's letter to his mother, 13 February 1864.

⁹⁰² Bouwman, *Glorious Innings*, p. 52. Also see for mythology Harte and Whimpress, *Penguin History*, p. 107, 'The team arrived home to find that Tom Wills was no longer coaching in the western districts but was in an outer Melbourne asylum, being kept under restraint because of his alcoholism. (Two years later he managed to elude the asylum attendants and stabbed himself to death with a pair of scissors.)'

⁹⁰³ Letters to Cedric Wills and Horace Wills, 15 March 1880. Lending money to Tom Wills was not new to his brothers. See Horace's diary, April 1863, for one pound given to Tom. No other family members are indicated as being lent money.

⁹⁰⁴ Winslow, *Anatomy of Suicide*, p. 36. This reference is one of the earliest reviews of suicide.

6.1 English Historical Background

There is a rich historical literature that examines the legal context of suicide. The legal debate centred on what any given society deemed an appropriate legal punishment for suicide. There was a perception that not all suicides were the same; that some demanded greater retribution. Particularly reprehensible were those suicides, where the act was deliberate, planned and without evidence of physical or mental disorder; and where a crime, such as stealing money, was the motivation. Increasingly the perception was that one's mental state at the time of death was important, which then influenced how such legal penalties were decided upon.

The person who was deemed sane at the point of suicide, was regarded as a self-murderer and termed a *felo de se*. From Medieval times, a finding of *felo de se* had harsh and uncompromising consequences. Intense shame encouraged families to lie or at least evade the issue of how a family member died in circumstances that suggested suicide. What remaining property was forfeited to the crown and the stain of corrupt heredity burdened the family.

MacDonald notes the usual common law punishment as best described in Edmund Wingate's handbook (1661):

He is *felo de se* that doth destroy himself out of a premeditated hatred against his own life, or out of a humour to destroy himself, forfeits all his goods and chattels to the King, and also his debts real and personal, with specialty and without, and all simple contracts.⁹⁰⁵

In such a case a person could be charged with being *felo de se* after suicide. However if the person was thought to be *non compis mentis* then no charge ensued. Increasingly such unforgiving legislature was seen as cruel and juries endeavoured to find just reason not to come to a conclusion of *felo de se*.

⁹⁰⁵ Cited in MacDonald, 'The Inner Side', pp. 565-82. Further summaries of these changes can be found in, M. MacDonald, 'Madness, Suicide, and the Computer', in Porter R & Wear A. (eds), *Problems and methods in the History of medicine* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 218-22; George Rosen, 'History in the Study of Suicide', *Psychological Medicine*, vol. 1 (1971), pp. 267-85. Rosen succinctly summarises the key changes in attitudes towards suicide. In particular he notes the desecration of the

In early England, as in other European countries, the corpse of someone having committed suicide could be subject to degrading and violent desecration.⁹⁰⁶ Although it is unclear how often it occurred, people were buried in unconsecrated ground at a crossroad with a stake driven through their body as a punishment for suicide. Such rites of desecration were abolished in England in 1823, but private night time burial between 9.00 pm and midnight continued. Clergymen could decline to perform the customary rites over the bodies of suicides or could amend them. The forfeiture of property was repealed in 1870.⁹⁰⁷ After 1700 an increasing aversion developed towards savage penalties, which included forfeiture of all property and goods, denial of Christian burial, and harsh rites of desecration of the corpse. Coroners' juries in the eighteenth century influenced by Enlightenment ideas objected to the penalties and increasingly applied the *non compos mentis* verdict.⁹⁰⁸

6.2 Victoria in the Nineteenth Century

Legal tradition informed by religious and social understandings sought to clarify the state of mind of an individual prior to death. There had been broad agreement that while many suicides were suffering from a mental aberration and could not be held accountable for their actions, other individuals were sane and for these individuals severe punishment should ensue.

In the colony of Victoria, if someone was found to be sane at the point of suicide they were regarded as a *felo de se*. The state of mind determined whether suicide was held to be a crime or not. Cooke notes that 'In the years 1843-1853 only 11% of suicides were found to have been sane at the time of their deaths'.⁹⁰⁹

corpse during the Middle Ages and the changes during the nineteenth century which saw statistics and medicine applied in the understanding of suicide.

⁹⁰⁶ See Minois' detailed description of desecration of corpses throughout European countries. Minois, *Suicide*, p. 36.

⁹⁰⁷ See, Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 70-4. See, Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', for a review of how this English law was translated into colonial law, pp. 89-90. There were letters in the colonial press about *felo de se*, for example, see *Argus*, 4 November 1872, p. 7.

⁹⁰⁸ Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, p. 70.

⁹⁰⁹ Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', p. 84.

When one considers the extent of popular discussion on suicide, public scholarly opinion on the topic was limited in the colony of Victoria.⁹¹⁰ The clearest description of legal matters as they pertained to nineteenth century Victoria is that given by Simon Cooke.⁹¹¹ Cooke outlines the three broad legal punishments that had applied. The Deodand, abolished in New South Wales in 1849, saw the Crown receive the cost of the item (for example a knife) that the individual used to commit suicide. Second there was a long tradition of the threat of forfeiture of belongings. If found sane at the inquest, the person's property could be forfeited to the Crown. Although still invoked occasionally in England in the nineteenth century, it was essentially not practised in Victoria by the second half of the nineteenth century. It was abolished in England in 1870 and Victoria in 1878. The third legal arm of potential retribution was that of the profane burial. Prior to 1896, the inquest, apart from ascertaining the state of an individual's mind at the point of suicide, also had powers of punishment in terms of burial rites. After the dramatic publicity surrounding one suicide, The Coroners Act of 1896 forbade coroners to issue directions regarding private internment, the hours of burial, or to restrict Christian Rites. The edict about burial hours was to forbid the uncommon but still occasionally practised public humiliation of burying a suicide corpse at night.⁹¹²

Cooke notes '... night burial, [in Victoria] was practised rarely, but consistently, during the nineteenth century. It was practised in strict accordance with the law, as a state practice, carried out by the police, with only a minimum of popular involvement'.⁹¹³ Other than orders for a night time burial, the law left the burial procedure in the hands of the Church. Cooke sums up that, despite the Church's harsh theoretical interpretation of who should receive burial rites, there seems to have been a

⁹¹⁰ See the pamphlet, Sir George Stephen, *Suicide in Victoria* (Melbourne: Samuel Mullen, 1874), pp. 1-24. He takes an uncompromising view. He attributes the apparently high suicide rate to an adventurous, ill-equipped youth travelling to the colonies to be confronted by the harsh reality of colonial life and not its dreams. This is linked to rigid Christian themes. 'Let it be remembered that the whole tenor of our Saviour's human life was to inculcate the fact that this is a life of suffering to be borne with resignation and humility ...'. Patrick Moloney described what he called the suicidal stage of existence whereby he said it was so common in young men that it was 'natural and necessary'. Patrick Moloney, 'The Suicidal Stage of Existence', reprinted from the *Melbourne Review*, no. 7, July 1877, pp. 265-72 in *Australian Medical Pamphlets*, vol. 30. See also Henry Keylock Rusden, in F. B. Smith, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1976), Section Eds. Geoffrey Serle and Russel Ward, vol. 6, pp. 73-4, 'Rusden ... defended suicide on compassionate grounds and as a means of removing social liabilities ...'

⁹¹¹ Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', pp. 84-7.

⁹¹² Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', p. 103.

⁹¹³ Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', p. 106. Cooke, p. 94 claims that Candler ordered five night burials during his time as coroner.

liberality of approach from different denominations and amongst individual clergy. There were, however, records of individual clergy refusing to attend the funerals of suicides.⁹¹⁴

By 1880 there was a reluctance for the law to pronounce *felo de se*, although technically there was nothing to inhibit a coronial jury in coming to this conclusion other than custom. Although it was not until 1896 that legal directives regarding burial procedures were formally revoked in Victoria it would seem that for a long time they had rarely been acted upon. Despite this, there was a collective consciousness that feared suicide: that it contaminated those left alive and established in the minds of the living a tenacious doubt that suicide might lead to eternal damnation. Only slowly, was there a reconciliation of legislature with modern notions of mental illness in the State of Victoria. This extended well into the twentieth century.⁹¹⁵

6.3 The Inquest

An English coronial template provided the basis for Victorian inquests. It was during the inquest that an opinion was formed on the mental state of the deceased. Thus, given the history of punishment for suicide, this was a point of great concern, although actual punishment for suicide was long in decline and commonly avoided. Police coordinated the initial investigation and reported to the coroner. Inquests were commonly held in local public houses. There was no standard requirement for postmortem or medical witness. The inquest on Wills had neither. His inquest appears to have proceeded in a manner typical of the times. The jurors started by being sworn in and then viewing the body.⁹¹⁶ In Wills' case there is no record of his body being viewed

⁹¹⁴ Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', notes The Roman Catholic Church forbade burial to 'Those who kill themselves because of despair, or anger (but not as a result of insanity), unless before death they gave a sign of repentance'. The Anglican Church adopted a similar position. See Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', pp. 96-102 for a discussion on the attendance of clergy at funerals. Newspapers at times commented with anger on these practices, *Geelong Register*, 8 May 1867, p. 3, records a letter about a burial without a Christian service of a lonely man who died from 'excessive drinking'. The man was 'bundled into the earth without the benefit of clergy' ... and 'lodged in a grave, as you would bury a cat, dog, or other inferior animal'.

⁹¹⁵ Sir John Vincent Barry, 'Suicide and the Law', *Melbourne University Law Review*, vol. 5, no. 1 (May 1965), pp. 1-16. Attempted suicide was not removed from the Victorian statute books until 1967, though the police had long since stopped charging those harming themselves.

⁹¹⁶ The 1856 Police Manual instructed police to remove the body to the nearest Public House. This was changed in 1877 to nearest morgue, police station, public-house or other place suitable for the purpose. Cooke, 'Secret Sorrows', pp. 45-7, sample reveals that venues were often unknown. Inquests were held as soon as possible, often on the same day as the suicide. The majority were buried within a

or the exact place of the inquest in Heidelberg though it appears to have been his home. The coroner was Dr Richard Youl. There was no suggestion of adulation nor recognition of Wills' sporting fame during the inquest. The witness statements range from distressed eye witnesses to the matter of fact depositions from the police.

The Wills' inquest is a ten page document. There were several deponents – Sarah Theresa Wills [*sic*], Constables Hanlon and Murphy, David Dunwoody and Ann Heddle. All were key witnesses before and after his death. There were three notable absentees, namely Dr Bleeck, the Heidelberg doctor who ministered to Wills two days before his death, Dr Moloney from the Melbourne Hospital, and Tom Wills' family.⁹¹⁷

The inquest sheds light on Wills' recent history. Sarah confirmed his long history of drinking, but she failed to mention her own drinking. She stated that Wills had left no family. This comment along with the family's lack of concerted attendance at his funeral plus subsequent events underscore Tom Wills' displaced status. She maintained the ruse as that of his wife and defiantly described her 'husband's' status as that of 'a gentleman'.⁹¹⁸ Alcohol abuse, unemployment, financial despair and poverty were common themes at inquests.⁹¹⁹ All could be said to have contributed to Wills' suicide, though only alcohol was highlighted. No other stressors were alluded to. Wills left no suicide note that is known and given his delirious state may not have been capable of composing one.

Protocol dictated that the coroner questioned the witnesses to lay before the jury the material for consideration. The coroner then summed up the matter. The process of questioning and summation enabled the coroner to shape the verdict though the actual

day of the inquest. For further discussion on inquests, see, Tracey Stephens, 'Societal Reactions to Suicide in Victoria, 1881 and 1892', Honours thesis, History Department, University of Melbourne, 1988, pp. 4-38. For more on Dr Richard Youl, see his obituary in 'Obituary. Richard Youl.', *Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australasia*, vol. II (20 August 1897), pp. 557-61.

⁹¹⁷ Inquest, Wills. Jurors could request a medical witness to attend if matters were unclear. This clearly did not appear to be the case here.

⁹¹⁸ Inquest, Wills. Tom's correspondence with family, their monetary assistance to him and the arrival of some of his family soon after the death clearly indicate that this is a deliberate deceit by Sarah. Whether this is out of a sense of defiance on behalf of her husband or her response to the treatment she received from her family is unknown.

⁹¹⁹ Stephens, 'Suicide in Victoria', p. 25.

decision was the job of the twelve jurors.⁹²⁰ At this time, suicide verdicts on the state of mind of the deceased, with ‘rare exceptions’ came to one of two conclusions: that of ‘unsound mind’ or ‘temporarily insane’.⁹²¹ The twelve jurors found that ‘... at Heidelberg in the second of May current the deceased Thomas Wentworth Wills killed himself when of unsound mind from excessive drinking’.⁹²²

7 The Burial

Tom Wills’ death certificate reported that his parents were unknown.⁹²³ This seems strange given he was the son of a prominent Victorian family and a ‘household name’ even if he was no longer in the public eye. While this may have reflected the shame surrounding his suicide, the more likely prosaic reason was lack of information or informants at the time. It is hard to understand why Sarah did not give this information but it was likely she was banished from the entire burial process. The death certificate also states that Sarah and Tom were married. This ruse was seemingly for a sense of propriety within the Wills family. His corpse for a period was left at his Jika street residence in Heidelberg. Egbert reported upon its early decomposition which to early twenty first century observers may seem ghastly but the Victorian experience of death was less sanitised than now.⁹²⁴

Tom Wills was buried at Heidelberg cemetery with an Anglican service.⁹²⁵ Further details of the service are not recorded in any remaining documentation. There is

⁹²⁰ Prior to 1887 the minimum number of jurors was twelve. See Stephens, *Suicide in Victoria*, pp. 9, 13. Jurors were chosen randomly. Cooke, ‘Secret Sorrows’, pp. 71-2, notes that questions were often asked about the deceased’s family history of insanity, suicide or institutionalisation. There is no evidence that this was done for Wills; rather there is the false evidence given that indeed he had no remaining family.

⁹²¹ Stephens, ‘Suicide in Victoria’, p. 15.

⁹²² Dr Youl preferred verdicts of insanity in cases of suicide. Note this in comparison with Candler who, without medical qualifications, ordered several night burials. See Cooke, ‘Secret Sorrows’, p. 94.

⁹²³ Death Certificate, Tom Wills, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Melbourne.

⁹²⁴ Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, pp. 210-3.

⁹²⁵ Burial certificate, see handwritten and computer generated version, Cemetery Management. Although Flanagan describes Wills’ burial as that of a pauper this is not strictly so. The burial was paid for by his family, there was a religious service and he was not buried simultaneously with others. If there was secrecy it was his family’s own. Flanagan’s use of the term is more in sympathy with the negligent manner of remembrance of such an important figure. The modern computerised recording of his death details was alleged by Flanagan, *The Call*, to contain the wrong date of birth as evidence of the irreverence, ignorance and shame around such an important historical sporting figure. The figure for his death 01-01-1836 is simply a computer generated date based on his age of 44 years and his year of death 1880 thereby working backwards to generate the 1836. The specific date is one used by default. For more

no evidence that Wills was buried in an obscure, shameful part of the cemetery, nor of a night burial or altercation with clergy to perform the service.⁹²⁶

In the Victorian era, the status of the funeral week as a focus of grief was uncertain in the case of suicide.⁹²⁷ Viewing the body, the expression of grief and acknowledgement of death, were means whereby a family could reintegrate as a social group. In the case of Tom Wills such reintegration did not occur. Rather there was a skewed and desultory attendance by his family at his funeral. There was no family union in sympathy nor were the rituals of grief such as selecting the burial plot an opportunity for idealising Tom. The former Lord Mayor of Geelong and family financial confidante, William F. Ducker, was entrusted with purchasing the plot for Tom's burial.⁹²⁸ Neither the custom of family selection of a gravesite or tombstone were observed for Wills. The Victorian period was particular about such matters and it cannot be seen that such a slight was incidental. The tombstone was to be the material emblem of the family's lost one forever and around whose sacred words family could congregate.⁹²⁹

The reaction to his suicide was perhaps predictable. His funeral was private and attended by only a handful of people.⁹³⁰ His brother Egbert, Colden Harrison, and another member of the MCC attended. Sarah Theresa Barbor was not present. His sister Emily did arrive at Heidelberg and perhaps viewed his corpse at Jika Street but probably did not attend the funeral. It was not that uncommon for women to be excluded from such services. The ambivalent caustic relationship this younger sister had with Tom was less compassionate than that of her husband, Colden. There was no sentimentality or celebration around Wills' burial. There is no record of a church service, funeral

on pauper burials, P. Jalland, *Australian Ways of Death. A Social and Cultural History. 1840-1918* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 215-8.

⁹²⁶ Egbert's letter clearly indicates that the burial was private and gives some idea of the family's view about the suicide. There were criticisms scattered in the press about burials and how clergy conducted some services. See, for example, *Argus*, 5 February 1877, p. 5.

⁹²⁷ Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, pp. 69-76.

⁹²⁸ The handwritten burial records from the time of his death list the plot as 42, a Church of England Grave site and the purchaser of the burial site was in the name of Ducker & Wills. No other burials occurred in this plot in subsequent years. Ironically, the handwritten documents also reveal that Richard Youl, the coroner presiding over Wills, was buried only a few plots away. Also see plan of Heidelberg cemetery, Banyule Cemeteries Trust.

⁹²⁹ Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, pp. 291-9.

⁹³⁰ Letter from Mary Wills 1880. Mary Wills was Egbert's wife.

procession or celebration of his life. There is no record of his mother Elizabeth having attended the gravesite at the time of his funeral or at any time thereafter.

We have no recollections of Sarah Barbor at all. Her status of relative poverty in a relationship seemingly not sanctified by marriage gave her little influence. Sarah was paid money by the family to keep away after his death.⁹³¹ When she died 27 years later her final place of rest was not adjacent to Wills but in another cemetery.⁹³² Surviving family correspondence in the following years make no acknowledgement of his existence nor of his relationship with Sarah.

8 Reaction to Wills' Death

To appreciate the response to Wills' death one must probe the different responses according to geography, family, sporting fraternity and newspapers all within the evolving attitudes to suicide over the late nineteenth century. It is only when it is understood that there was no universal response but rather a spectrum of responses to his death that exploring motives for these responses can begin.

8.1 Newspaper Reports

8.1.1 *Reports on suicide in general*

The burial was not mentioned in the newspapers although a reasonable amount of space was given to the report of the suicide and the coronial inquest.⁹³³ Lunacy and suicide were common fare in all papers, from the serious middle class *Argus* through to comic portrayals in *Melbourne Punch*. Moralising articles about colonial fate, insensitive punning on words and lurid caricatures were common.⁹³⁴ Motives for this writing varied from a genuine, moralistic but educative one through to flippant, derisive comical pieces. Satirical verses abound in this period, including plays on words related to mental illness to parody all classes including sportsmen. In more serious pieces there

⁹³¹ Letter Egbert to Horace, 1880.

⁹³² Boroondara General Cemetery grave location for Sarah Barbor.

⁹³³ According to Cooke's sample the lack of mention of burials was typical in newspapers, so in itself could not be used as evidence to state that it represented a shunning of Wills.

⁹³⁴ In this sense the term Yarra Bend (in reference to Yarra Bend Asylum) or simply The Bend came to be synonymous with anything 'loopy' – see etymology of 'Around the Bend' in A Leff, 'Clean Round the Bend – The Etymology of Jargon and Slang Terms for Madness', *History of Psychiatry*, xi (2000), pp.155-62.

was a concern to provide for the mentally ill even when mixed with the commonly accepted fear of the unpredictability and violence of those afflicted.

The papers reflected the complex and at times contradictory response to suicide. Although a taboo subject in terms of its history and religious and social stigma it was strangely and shamelessly exploited as a topic of newsworthiness. Alcohol was a common focus in these reports. If, in reporting a suicide, it was noted that the person was temperate it seemed to lessen the burden of guilt.

Suicide stories captured popular imagination. The reporting of suicide was a public spectacle and voyeuristic entertainment. Reports combined intrigue, romance and vengeance. Headlines in such cases were designed to catch the eye. To publicise a suicide, an angle could be taken on one of four things – the method, the ‘derangement’, cause or occupation. While some individuals were castigated, in general there was not a hostile attitude in the popular press. While clergy, doctors and lawyers debated the meaning of suicide, the popular press had decided upon their own interpretation. Generally people were seen as suffering and were accorded due sympathy. Some were ‘more likely to be prefaced by terms such as “Determined” or “Deliberate”, indicating both a note of censure (as it did at inquests) and the widely felt distaste for any kind of suicide which showed elements of rational decision’. The verdict of the individual’s state of mind helped shape the public’s moral assessment.⁹³⁵ The intemperate, neglectful, reprehensible male was little pitied. Other references were to the cunning aspect of those that bided their time to commit suicide and awaited an opportunity to execute themselves. Such notions bespoke of a lunatic cunning which defied rational assessment and reinforced fears of violence and unpredictability. Reports also hinted at the corruptibility of the hereditary line.

Graphic accounts of suicides were common in some sections of the press. Lurid caricatures had wretched individuals slitting their throats while horrified spouses stumbled across the victim; or women flinging themselves from bridges into the Yarra while men were perceived as more violent in their self-murderous intentions.⁹³⁶ Its

⁹³⁵ Stephens, ‘Suicide in Victoria’, p. 49.

⁹³⁶ For example, words such as rum, misery, suicide and murder were jumbled together in the sensation seeking part of the press. Shamelessly exploitative, it sought to maximise the shock value of suicide. *Lee’s Pictorial Weekly* – a police newspaper, featured sensational accounts of suicides. For

narrative could inform, frighten and was used unrepentantly as a moralistic vehicle for instruction of the population. But it would be wrong to dismiss it as simply a weapon for moral instruction. These depictions had a major role in informing the populace about the incontrovertible link between suicide and mental illness.⁹³⁷

8.1.2 *Wills' obituaries*

... (drink), the curse of these colonies – the demon which has desolated so many homes and blasted the fair fame of thousands – got its hold upon him.⁹³⁸

Obituaries were the most fruitful source for commentary on how the Wills public persona was regarded. In general the inquest was accurately portrayed in the papers. Occasionally pieces of information about his life were recalled that were not recorded anywhere else. The Victorian papers typically described where and how he died. They detailed some of the events of the last 24 hours including his brief trip to the Melbourne Hospital and evidence of hallucinations and delusions. There were candid descriptions of his stabbing and no attempt was made to obscure or overly dramatise his death.

In most Victorian papers a considerable amount of information was provided, typically half a column, though some papers provided more. In others the death was only noted in passing. News reports often were headed by an eye-catching title such as 'Suicide of Wills, The Cricketer' or 'Suicide of an Old Cricketer'.⁹³⁹ There were no lurid grasping headlines. In life, and now in death, his name and image were in perpetuity encrusted with 'Wills the cricketer'.

No obituary condemned Wills. Rather there was genuine regret that such a free spirit should disintegrate and implode in a violent and miserably lonely way. There was moralising about the destructive role of alcohol in Victorian society but no comment or

example, see *Lee's Pictorial Weekly*, 14 July 1877 frontispiece, Picture entitled 'Determined Suicide at Collingwood', 2 June 1877, frontispiece, picture entitled 'Shocking Suicide at Castlemaine'.

⁹³⁷ Stephens, 'Suicide in Victoria', pp. 39-57. Attempted suicide was another offence. Up until 1880 about 2% charged with attempted suicide stood trial. Often they were kept for one week's remand. Stephen's thesis is an excellent account of how suicide in Victoria was handled by the law, how inquests were conducted and the public reporting of suicide.

⁹³⁸ *Leader*, 8 May 1880, p. 13.

sense of recognition of the role of sport in this or of the fate of professional sportsmen after retirement.⁹⁴⁰ Typically there was the intimation of hero worship and an all too eager public:

... 'Tommy' Wills in those halcyon days of success was a public favorite of the most pronounced type. Budding cricketers thought it a high honor indeed to obtain recognition from the hero of the hour. Staid old fogies, who had perhaps in their younger days been engaged in the Varsity or public schools or country matches at home, delighted to grasp his hand, slap him on the back and congratulate him on his achievements. Unhappily, these congratulations too often assumed the shape of about the most ill-judged kindness that could have been offered to one of 'Tommy's' temperament. The sad effects of this dangerous popularity are now recorded. The great fault of Wills was that he had not the moral courage to say 'No,' He was naturally kind and genial, and fond of lively company ...⁹⁴¹

He was one of those men of whom it could most certainly be said he was an enemy to no one as much as to himself. His life has not been such as it promised.⁹⁴²

These words were not about a man despised, to be forgotten or ridiculed. The newspapers did not shame Wills nor did they seek to blame or taint his family. Sorrow was universally expressed through the papers. If anything his faults were neglected in this process of idealisation, and as on occasions during his turbulent career there was the public idolatry that served to protect him in life. Within Victoria all the city papers covered the story often with prominence though the reports were commonly facsimiles of one another. Most major country towns in Victoria reported the suicide.⁹⁴³

The local suburban paper, the *Observer, City and Suburban Advertiser (Collingwood)*, of Melbourne, freed from the restraint of polite language, echoed the

⁹³⁹ There were numerous such reports, for example, *Bendigo Advertiser*, 4 May 1880, p. 2.

⁹⁴⁰ This absence of reflection is unlike the analysis of the fate of modern sports people. For a revealing view from a modern perspective on the fate of a retired sporting champion, see Shane Gould, *Tumble Turns* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1999). Also see, Martin Blake, 'Life after Footy can be the Toughest Opponent of All', *Age*, 'Sport', 5 April 2003, p. 5, as an example of how this issue is reported in modern newspapers.

⁹⁴¹ *Bendigo Advertiser*, 4 May 1880, p. 2. For another reference to the perceived link between popularity and alcohol abuse, see, *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 8 May 1880, p. 5, 'His kindly, genial off-hand disposition made him friends with all, and this very popularity tended no doubt, in a great measure, to the contraction of that fatal habit, unhappily so prevalent in this country, which brought about the melancholy and tragic event at Heidelberg on Sunday, the 2nd inst'.

⁹⁴² *Herald*, (Melbourne), 3 May 1880, p. 2.

sentiments of sadness, of Wills' place of honour in colonial cricket and with colloquial honesty noted: 'He had given way to drink to such an extent that his mind was unhinged'. Nowhere had the language of the streets been used to frankly describe the state of Wills' mind at his death. The *Gippsland Mercury* called him demented.⁹⁴⁴ These vulgar terms were not typical of the veneration and respectful language of most reports.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported his death but without the detail or colonial pride expressed in the Victorian papers. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, unlike the Melbourne papers, contented itself with a cursory note about Wills. In fact, the despatches from Melbourne regularly contained reports of suicides, so the Wills report really did not seem to be out of the ordinary at all.⁹⁴⁵

His cricketing career dwarfed any mention of football. In fact while all obituaries retraced to some extent his cricketing career, often with Rugby as a reference point, football was rarely mentioned. The idea that he was deliberately excluded from football's history is not supported by the evidence. There is no reason why his cricket career should be remembered in such detail but not football, if shame about his suicide was important to the public memory. When he is recalled for his contribution to football, it highlighted both his skill and his key role in the game's early development.⁹⁴⁶

The famous Victorian fast bowling duo of Boyle and Scott published a series of annuals. In their *Australian Cricketers Guide for 1879-80*, there was an obituary on Tom Wills.⁹⁴⁷ Like the newspapers it was warm, generous and not compromised by his suicide. It openly mentioned that Wills suicided. There was not the slightest hint of

⁹⁴³ Towns and areas where papers were examined included Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Warnambool, Hamilton, Gippsland. The Geelong papers were the *Advertiser*, *Register* and *Chronicle*.

⁹⁴⁴ The *Observer*, *City and Suburban Advertiser*(Collingwood), 6 May 1880, p. 3. *Gippsland Mercury*, 4 May 1880, p. 4; Leff, 'Etymology', pp. 155-62. See this reference for the way in which metaphors for madness are constructed 'by the public in a more playful, and at time blunter fashion'. They convey a street level version which some of the more polite obituaries only hint at.

⁹⁴⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May 1880, p. 5.

⁹⁴⁶ For example, see *Australasian*, 8 May 1880, p. 589, 'he was also one of the best football players the colony has ever had ... of those early times did much to foster that love of the game which has led to its present popularity ... the rules he assisted to draw up, is now the recognised game of all the colonies'. For further discussion on this topic see the chapter on sport in this thesis.

retribution, envy or hysteria. If this obituary reflected the general view of the sporting public, and there is no reason to doubt this, then Tom Wills was remembered well. Far from forgetting his contribution to football, this was highlighted, even if the details are ignored.

His coaching of the aboriginal cricket team while mentioned was not emphasised. The importance of Horatio in Tom's life and the burden of expectation were not forgotten.⁹⁴⁸ The reports are also notable for using phrases that have since remained encrusted to Wills. Typically these include – ‘for one who had been called “the Grace of Australia” and “a model of muscular Christianity” it was a sad end’. There was no critique about suicide and its sense of place within the religious or social beliefs of the day. Tom Wills' personality was reified and idealised. Blemishes were neglected or only hinted at. Even though his throwing was raised in some obituaries, his supreme abilities as an all round player and captain were emphasised. He was affectionately regarded by the sporting public as a champion Victorian sportsman, a native and a champion of egalitarianism. The language was generally gracious, circumspect and respectful. This public idealisation was in contrast to his family's limited portrayal of grief.

8.1.3 *Other Publications*

Apart from private letters, the death certificate and newspapers there were few other avenues for the disclosure of his death. The handwritten minutes of the MCC remain silent on Wills' death.⁹⁴⁹ In the published Annual General Meeting minutes of 1879/80, on September 4, it was announced:

On the 2nd of May last Mr Thomas Wentworth Wills, one of the earliest members and office bearers of the club, died at Heidelberg. The committee regret exceedingly the loss of this brilliant cricketer. His connection with the club commenced as early as 1857, and from that time (with a short interval) up to the year 1876 he did yeoman's

⁹⁴⁷ Boyle and Scott, *Australian Cricketers' Guide for 1879-80* (Melbourne: Kemp Brothers, 1880), pp. 156-7.

⁹⁴⁸ See, *Hamilton Spectator*, 8 May 1880, p. 3. ‘Poor Tom Wills the cricketer; how sad a fate and mournful an ending to a career that opened with the brightest promise ... His father, Mr Horatio Wills, was an old Geelong resident ... He sent his son Tom home to Rugby, and afterwards to Cambridge. He had set his heart, I believe upon his son making a name for himself for he had a high opinion of his talents’.

⁹⁴⁹ Melbourne Cricket Club minute book, 1880.

service in intercolonial matches. As a bowler, field, batsman and captain he has shed a lustre on the cricket-field which will not soon be dispelled. In view of his great services your committee recommend that subscriptions be invited from the members of the various clubs to erect a suitable monument over his grave.⁹⁵⁰

Even in death, his final departure, Wills could provoke a passing around of the cap. A wistful Hammersley in 1884 recalled the suicide of Adam Lindsay Gordon and in doing so, alluded to Wills. He recalled the wildness and incipient madness common to both sportsmen. When Hammersley annoyed Gordon the latter's '... eyes flashed fire, his nostrils distended, and I was afraid he would brain me ... Indeed, I always felt convinced that at times he was not quite right in his mind'. He then refers to Wills, 'There was another man well known amongst sporting circles, whom I knew very well indeed, and who came to an end similar to that of Gordon; and curiously enough I detected frequently in him that same peculiar expression in the eyes to which I have alluded. It is a look something like what is termed the evil eye'.⁹⁵¹

It is sometimes implied that many of the travesties to affect Tom Wills later in life were screened or left unrecorded in deference to his family partly because of the apparent high profile of the family. In fact the family's high point financially and public prominence were extinguished by the time of Tom Wills' death. His once influential uncle of the early years of Melbourne had been dead for eight years; Horatio's parliamentary days were forgotten and his widow Elizabeth now lived in relatively modest circumstances. The Queensland property, no longer an emblem of frontier expansion and wealth, remained a burdensome Horatian legacy and financial drain for the family. Given this evidence, in 1880 when Tom Wills died it was unlikely that

⁹⁵⁰ MCC Annual General Meeting, 4 September 1880. The only other mention of the subscription in the MCC minutes was small contribution from one suburban club on 8 November 1880. 'Secretary reported receipt of one pound from the Keilor C Club for memorial stone over the grave of the late T. W. Wills'. See *Australasian*, 9 October 1880, 'It is proposed to erect a monument over the grave of TW Wills – subscription ... in cemetery at Heidelberg'.

⁹⁵¹ Although Hammersley did not mention Wills by name, the closeness of their relationship and his other comments on Wills after his death point conclusively towards Wills. See W. J. Hammersley, 'Personal Reminiscences of the Late Adam Lindsay Gordon', *Victorian Review* (May 1884), pp. 66-9. See Vivian Smith in Leonie Kramer (ed.), *The Oxford History of Australian Literature* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 289-95 for a discussion on Gordon's poetry. See fellow poet, Henry Kendall's poem on Gordon after his suicide, in Michael Ackland (ed.), *Henry Kendall. Poetry, Prose and Selected Correspondence* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993), pp. 88-9. For a biography on Gordon see, Geoffrey Hutton, *Adam Lindsay Gordon. The Man and the Myth* (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1978). There is also an oft quote stanza from Gordon which mentions Wills. 'Ye Wearie

material was unrecorded or deliberately obscured because of a long forgotten family eminence.

8.2 Family and friends

tell him it's against creation to commit suicide and tell him if he dies he will be tried for it and if found guilty sentenced to punishment for life⁹⁵²

Tom Wills, 1859.

... I prayed to God the first time for years ... I think it better that I should make away with myself but if I do I have been taught that I shall be consigned to everlasting punishment and I dare not⁹⁵³

Richard Wardill, 1873.

8.2.1 Background

There is a long religious tradition underpinned by philosophical argument that suicide is morally wrong. Minois argues that the churches' position hardened with St Augustine's (AD 354-430) uncompromising view that suicides were cowardly, vain and an escape from temporal difficulties. St Thomas Aquinas (1225-274) restated that all arguments in favour of suicide were wrong. The trilogy of arguments were that suicide was an '... offence against nature ... an attack on society because we belong to a community ... offence against God'.⁹⁵⁴

The devil was seen to have inveigled his way into the lives of those who had suicided. His evil whispers were protean and could be seen in the writings of those who attempted suicide as they personalised their struggles as a private spiritual war with the devil. Suicide was evidence of straying from God's path. Conservative views held that

Wayfarer', Fytte IV, Gordon, A. L., *The Poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon*. Arranged by Douglas Sladen (London: Constable and Co., 1912), p. 23.

⁹⁵² Letter, Tom Wills to Emily Wills, 28 June 1859.

⁹⁵³ Inquest of Richard Wardill, a sporting contemporary of Wills, PRO, VPRS 24/P, Unit 293, File 761/1873.

⁹⁵⁴ Minois, *Suicide*, p. 33.

the perceived increase in suicides in the late nineteenth century reflected a decline in Christian influence.⁹⁵⁵

Religious precepts were interwoven with those of the law and medicine in defining how suicide was viewed during the nineteenth century. As Jalland notes ‘In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, doctors, theologians and philosophers debated whether suicide could best be explained in traditional moral terms as a sin against God, or by broader socioeconomic forces or by mental depression’. Jalland continues, ‘But suicide continued to be regarded with fear and aversion, as the converse of the good death. Most Christians in the nineteenth century still considered suicide a sin against God, and wished to deter potential suicides’.⁹⁵⁶

An ideal death in the Victorian era was one where the dying retained clarity of thought; and where the death was gradual, expected and permitted the attendance to spiritual tasks. The key components of a good death were spiritual preparation, piety, repentance of earthly sins, courage in the face of death and meticulous and loving farewells to family. Such deaths were surrounded by a loving family with the dying viewed as courageous in the face of suffering prior to their ascendant soul leaving earth. Such a shared family experience of death and Christianity foretold of a reunion in the afterlife and was rooted in an unquestioning acceptance of Christian faith.⁹⁵⁷

In contrast, suicides were bad deaths. They were sudden and allowed little time for spiritual preparation. The soul, unsettled, would not be ready for salvation and the sins of life would result in eternal punishment.⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁵ See Minois, *Suicide*, p. 27, this line of argument is in contrast to heroic interpretations of suicide often culled from ancient Greek and Roman literature. For a broader analysis, the following references comprehensively review the changing social, religious and legal attitudes to suicide, see Minois and Anderson, *Suicide*. See, Anderson, *Suicide*, p. 163, citing Jervis, *On the Office and Duties of Coroners* (3rd edn., 1866), pp. 358-62. Also, Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, pp. 69-70, ‘... suicide was the negation of the good death which could test them beyond endurance. Suicide was traditionally regarded as a form of murder, seen as a felony in criminal law and as an offence against God ... Most Christians in the nineteenth century still considered suicide a sin against God, and wished to deter potential suicides’. Jalland cites MacDonald and Murphy, ‘Even if Victorians were unwilling to resume the punishments that their ancestors had inflicted on suicides and their families, they still believed that self killing was bad. The families of suicides shrank from the stigma such a death attached to them; they tried as hard as ever to conceal suicides whenever they could’.

⁹⁵⁶ Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, pp. 70-1.

⁹⁵⁷ Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, pp. 17-58, for more on the concept of the good death.

⁹⁵⁸ Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, pp. 59-76, ‘Sudden deaths could be bad deaths for Christians because they allowed no time for spiritual preparation and contrition for past sins. Suicides were terrible deaths for all concerned, and the most appalling for committed Christians’. And, ‘The concept of the bad death was intimately linked to traditional Christian fear of judgement at the moment of

Bereavement from whatever cause sets in train emotions and behaviours that have been carefully studied in an attempt to record patterns of response. While individual reactions should not be blindly formularised, a broader analysis offers guidance to understanding individual bereavement. Bereavement after suicide reveals these same reactions of shock, feelings of guilt, disbelief, isolation, depression and anger.

The reconciliation of a suicide in the minds of the survivors can be difficult to achieve if at all. There may be anger and guilt directed at the lost person or indeed themselves, if they view themselves as responsible for the death in any way. There may be frustration at missed opportunities to save the individual or a complete loss to explain the dead person's action.⁹⁵⁹

8.2.2 *Family*

The question remains to what extent do these societal views inform us about Wills' family reaction. We know that his family, particularly his mother, father and oldest sister, were conservative in religious matters. The consoling religious discourse of well-worn hymns and biblical tracts were staples in the Wills family after the death of Horatio in 1861.⁹⁶⁰

There are three issues to be aware of, prior to describing and interpreting the family's reaction. First, there is minimal family documentation for the period leading up to and after his death. One gains the impression from the fragments of evidence that remain that Tom Wills had so repeatedly extinguished hope in his mother's breast that his family links were severed before his death. Second, the family's attitude towards the

death on the sins of life resulting in eternal punishment in hell'. The literature of the Victorian era caricatured heroic farewells with dignity and sinners dying ignominiously.

⁹⁵⁹ Norman Farberow, 'Bereavement After Suicide', in A. A. Leenaars (ed.), *Suicidology. Essays in Honor of Edwin Shneidman* (Northvale, New Jersey. London: Jason Aronson Inc, 1993), pp. 337-40. There are many described patterns of response in friends and family. These include a search for something that makes the suicide more understandable. 'The fact that the descendent chose to die, to leave behind all loved ones, to sever irreparably all ties with family and friends, to deliver an unanswerable message, and to deprive the survivors of any opportunity to help or to change his mind, makes the fact of suicide very hard to reconcile'. In Wills' case, given that he was so obviously disturbed there was probably less of a search for why he killed himself.

⁹⁶⁰ See Chapter Five, 'A Father's Care'.

suicide was as much and probably more about Wills' alienation of them in life as any reaction to his death. Third, the family response was not uniform.

By 1880, it was routine for juries in suicide cases, to find the person of unsound mind or temporarily insane. While this may be conceived of as face saving implying that the action of the victim was beyond mortal control, it smote the family with the taint of madness. Family letters in the immediate aftermath of Wills' suicide give little indication of their understanding of suicide, mental illness or attribution of cause.

We can conclude that Tom Wills was not in the thoughts of most family members towards the end of his life. This comes from several pieces of evidence. First, his gradual estrangement through his de facto relationship with Sarah. Second, his geographic isolation while living in Heidelberg over the last twelve months of his life. Third his pestering of family for money, no matter how kindly perceived by his brothers, suggest that he was a nuisance within the family. Fourth, of the family letters that do survive from this period there is no mention of Tom, unlike earlier family letters. Fifth, the poignant query to Colden Harrison, from his brother Cedric while on Cullin-la-Ringo, as to what had happened to my 'brother Tom' suggest that his whereabouts was not known to some of his family.⁹⁶¹ The family oral history as recorded by Terry Wills Cooke indicates that he was disowned by his mother after death. This has been repeated by Flanagan and Perrin. There is no written archival evidence to confirm this oral history.⁹⁶²

The quotation from Tom Wills at the head of this section of the thesis, although spoken in jest, reflected a prevailing fear of religious punishment. A fear tenaciously held by some despite the secularisation of suicide, as it moved from a religious to

⁹⁶¹ Letter from Cedric to Harrison, 7 March 1879. 'Do you ever hear anything of brother Tom and where he is living?'

⁹⁶² This is not to say such an oral history is inaccurate, in fact, it is consistent with the meagre information available. See Terry Wills Cooke, personal communication which is also noted in Wills Cooke, *Currency Lad*, p. 231, 'I was told by my grandmother Rene that Elizabeth Wills refused to attend nor would she acknowledge Tom after his death as she was very religious and considered it a great sin. She further told me that a reporter asked Elizabeth about her son "Which son?" she asked. "Thomas" said the reporter "I have no son called Thomas" was the old lady's reply'. Also, personal communication March 1999, Terry Wills Cooke, Lexington, '... and I remember going to my grandmother and saying to her in the 1960s. And I said to her 'What ever happened to your uncle Thomas?' She looked at me and simply said 'He died dear'.' [Terry's] "grandmother was Horace's daughter. So she would have had her information from Horace. It was years and years before I ever got her to talk about it. She was quite

medical discourse. In 1867 in a similar vein, his brother Horace equated suicide with madness.⁹⁶³ After the suicide of Tom's uncle Edward, who cut his throat in England decades earlier, the family's reaction was sympathetic and restrained.⁹⁶⁴

In death, Tom Wills received almost universal acknowledgement in the press but from his family only cryptic words that reflected awkwardness as much as sadness. There remain several documented responses from family members to Wills' suicide. One of the most revealing is the following passage from a more distant family member:

... fancy last Sunday was the day that poor Tom Wills killed himself – it was dreadful. Egbert was there two days he felt it very much in such a case we are only going into complimentary mourning for a short time. I did not know what to do about it until I went to Mrs. Norcott's and Mrs. Harrison's and they told me what to do. Of course Emmy I do not have anything to do with she and Addie met at Tom's death but did not speak to each other. Egbert will write on the other side so I will not turn over.⁹⁶⁵

The funeral became a focus for social patter and twitter as trivial family spats were played out. There was little sense of any depth of feeling and insensitive reactions were governed by a timid observance of protocol. Although the ceremony around the grave and subsequent visits should have been important, no letters signify this was the case for the family.

Unlike his father, there was little mention of Tom Wills' death by the family. In Tom's case it seems clear that there was little interest from some family members in coming to terms with his death. There was no headstone for his gravesite and when the MCC public subscription was organised there was no mention of his immediate family as contributors. A headstone was finally constructed by the Melbourne Cricket Club in the late twentieth century.

religious as was Elizabeth and it was because he committed suicide. To them suicide was sinful and shameful'. Also see, Pockley, *Ancestor Treasure Hunt*, p. 57.

⁹⁶³ Letter, Horace Wills to Cedric Wills, 13 January 1867. The two brothers' views on suicide give some insight into a family perspective on suicide.

⁹⁶⁴ Letter, Sarah Alexander to Thomas Wills, 20 September 1837.

⁹⁶⁵ Letter from Mary Wills, 9 May 1880.

Egbert's final lonely letter represented a brother's counterpoint who 'felt it very much'.⁹⁶⁶ It was a sad farewell to an older brother. To the end and beyond Tom was the older brother who was a cricket hero; to whom younger brothers wrote letters from Bonn; the colonial gun who took on and beat the English born in the colony; the brother who would send back to them photographs of victorious Cricket XIs and who could get Egbert into the grand cricket games. Egbert, Horace and Cedric seemed loyal to his memory and exquisitely saddened by his early death. Despite their knowledge about Tom's dalliances, his unreliability and observing his drunken pantomime on the cricket field, the brothers remained forever fond of Tom. No amount of venom from sister Emily or disavowal by the rest of the family seems to have fully displaced a brotherly adulation that dated from boyhood.

In 1880, in the aftermath of the suicide, Colden wrote to Cedric in Queensland expressing his dismay about Tom's death. Harrison, referring to Sarah, knowingly winked to Cedric about Tom's 'housekeeper [the public description of Sarah Barbor]'. There was not the slightest hint of malice or anger towards Tom. There was only tenderness and gratitude towards Tom.⁹⁶⁷

Colden Harrison in conjunction with brothers Cedric and Horace undertook an unstated plan to apparently assist Sarah. It is not known what Harrison did, but the context and intent were sympathetic and seemed to acknowledge the plight of Sarah and a consideration for Tom's memory. After his death there is no mention of Sarah other than one brief dismissive remark. Widows, particularly those without income could face difficult times.⁹⁶⁸ Her status already compromised was further threatened. Her complete alienation was underscored by her comment at the inquest that Tom Wills left no family. Although she clearly was aware of the incorrectness of this statement, it illustrates the now complete lack of connection with his family. The traditional sources of consolation of religious faith, memories of Tom, the rituals of grief, condolence letters from family and friends and love of children were all denied her. She was paid a

⁹⁶⁶ Mary Wills letter, 1880.

⁹⁶⁷ Letter, 18 August 1880, Cedric to Harrison. Sarah had been called a 'housekeeper' in several of the obituaries, as well as Tom's 1877 Will. It seems clear that Harrison was at times regarded a figure of strength and solidity in the family. For example, he was the trustee in the Will of Thomas Wills (uncle), VPRS 259 Unit 23 File 634.

⁹⁶⁸ W. D. Rubinstein, 'The Distribution of Personal Wealth in Victoria 1860-1974', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 19, (March 1979), p. 35, the mean estate for women in 1908-9 was £286, significantly lower than men.

regular sum, which may have been the compassionate plan hatched by Colden and the brothers to remain away from the family. It is known from Harrison's comments that he, Cedric and Horace were most likely making provisions for Sarah Barbor.⁹⁶⁹ Seemingly there was a need to ward off some of the antagonism of some of the family members towards Sarah, particularly his mother and sister Emily. The issue of propriety was probably important in driving the issue of how Sarah was managed by the family.

Emily's taunts about Sarah and her unsuitability in the eyes of the family seem never to have been tempered. Her husband, Colden Harrison, on the contrary, exhibited a sensitivity and forethought that was never her preserve. Despite Colden's apparent assistance to Sarah, he maintained manners by never mentioning her in his autobiography in 1923.⁹⁷⁰

Reviewing available family letters till the early 1900s revealed no further mention of Tom. There was no family adulation or reminiscences. Rather there is an emptiness and the rustle of manners to tidy things over as silently as possible. The sympathetic asides of his brothers and Colden seem almost whispered and in breach of family ordinance as an apparent otherwise family disdain hardened over years. There was no idealisation of the lost object and the cherishing of memories; at least none publicly sanctioned by the family. In the 1920s Horace echoed Egbert's and Cedric's thoughts with sweet reminiscences about Tom Wills.⁹⁷¹ There are no letters at all that record the thoughts of any of the women of the family.

9 Will and Probate

Tom Wills drew up his only known Will on 22 February 1877.⁹⁷² It is a creased one-page document signed with his expansive, optimistic signature. He was described as a gentleman even though he had been a professional cricketer with the Melbourne and Corio Cricket Clubs throughout the 1870s. By 1877, restless, he had drifted into peripheral cricket teams in the Geelong region.

⁹⁶⁹ Sarah Theresa Barbor was not buried near Tom Wills, but rather in the same location as Sarah Heddle, her friend.

⁹⁷⁰ Mancini and Hibbins, *Running with the Ball*.

⁹⁷¹ Horace Wills reminiscences, *Sun*, 7 December 1923, p. 5.

The Will reveals he was not in great debt but lived modestly. The balance of Tom Wills' estate was £425.⁹⁷³ He detailed his bequests. All of his income was to go to Sarah whom he disingenuously called his housekeeper.⁹⁷⁴ It confirms that they were not married. It also reveals Wills' possessiveness and concern that Sarah's husband, now a farmer in the Gippsland region, may prey upon her acquired belongings and that this be specifically forbidden. His brother Cedric was one of his trustees. But for the most part the family was simply ignored. There was neither religious sentiment in this Will nor any suggestion of forgiveness or making peace with his family.⁹⁷⁵ Not a single family member was a recipient of any of his possessions, meagre as they may have been.

Probate, the official proving of a Will, was not applied for in Tom Wills' case until the early twentieth century.⁹⁷⁶ This means that his de facto, for whom he had intended to leave what possessions he had, did not prove the Will and thus gain his possessions. The reason for this is unknown. It was only after Sarah Barbor's death when her own Will was being proved by her friend Sarah Heddle that this came to light.⁹⁷⁷ Sarah Heddle then made application in 1908 for Tom Wills' Will.⁹⁷⁸ With respect to Tom Wills the documents of 1908 go on to say:

⁹⁷² Will of Thomas Wentworth Wills, 22 February 1877, PRO, VPRS 7591/P2 Unit 422 File 107.728.

⁹⁷³ Rubinstein, 'The Distribution of Personal Wealth' p. 35, quoted in Cooke, p. 253, calculates the average value of the estate left by Victorian men in 1880 was £473.

⁹⁷⁴ Note that the description of his de facto is variously given as wife or housekeeper after his death. The housekeeper label was to one that presumably allowed some protection of social propriety.

⁹⁷⁵ The making of a Will became more secular over the centuries with religious sentiment little expressed by the Victorian period, see Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, p. 224. Certainly there was little piety in Tom's Will in contrast with his mother's Will which mentioned numerous religious figures and churches in the distribution of her estate, see, the Will of Elizabeth Wills, VPRS 7591/P2 Unit 417 File 105/932.

⁹⁷⁶ Probate documents. After Sarah Heddle obtained administration of Barbor's Will in 24 July 1907, she then sought to administer the wills of Tom Wills. She confirms that Tom Wills was a bachelor when he died. She then says that Barbor did not prove the Will of Wills.

⁹⁷⁷ Will of Sarah Theresa Barbor, VPRS 759/P2 UNIT 408 FILE 102/963. Sarah Barbor gave all her remaining estate to her close friend Sarah Heddle. There is no mention of the Wills family or W. F. Ducker's role as trustee. Tom Wills, her de facto of over a decade, is not mentioned.

⁹⁷⁸ This application took place after an advertisement regarding probate for Tom Wills was placed in the *Argus*, 11 March 1908, p. 5. Probate papers for Sarah Barbor, VPRS 28p2 Unit 803 File 102/963 and Accounts in the Estate of the late Sarah Theresa Barbor VPRS 28P Unit 1332 File 102/963. At the time of her death she had no assets other than the 425 pounds from the interest in Thomas Wentworth Wills' estate. She had no real estate. With respect to her personal estate there is no land, rent, crops, live stock, farming implements, carriages, harness, furniture, watches, jewellery, money in hand or house, current account, interest, debentures, mortgages, life policies etc. She had liabilities of over £80 from her recent homeopathic hospital stay, ambulance services, expenses from proving the Will of Tom Wills and medical attendances. All debts were paid. There is a series of letters starting from 25 July 1907 – The first is from Sarah Heddle and is a statement by her starting 'In the Will of Sarah Theresa Marie Josephine

That the said deceased was not at the time of his death possessed of or entitled to any real or personal property outside the State of Victoria other than possibly a share under the Will of Horatio Spencer Wills late of Geelong ... in the proceeds of sale and ... of real and personal estate in Queensland left by the said HS Wills deceased but whether such share exists is a question to be determined.⁹⁷⁹

Over 20 years after Wills' death a belated battle was waged by Sarah Barbor's closest friend to retrieve Tom Wills' inheritance. The probate papers indicate that the Wills family sought legal advice and finally agreed to pay what was required. The papers also reveal that W. F. Ducker was trustee to Sarah Barbor after her death, presumably referring to the money to be paid to her on a regular basis. The legal firm attempted to unravel the nature of Sarah's financial relationship with the Wills family after Tom's death, but till the end family secrecy was not breached:

The Miss Duckers will give no account in connection with settlement moneys for which the late WF Ducker was Trustee for the late Mrs SJ Barbor.⁹⁸⁰

Within this document is an interesting anonymous handwritten note 're Wills ... write to Perpetual Trustees ... cannot ascertain amount of interest in fathers estate – quote gift to son in old mans Will and same in sons? Will ... Thos W Wills shall not participate in the final distribution of any estate but instead 100 pounds per annum'.⁹⁸¹ Nearly 50 years after Horatio's Will had been made, Tom's seeming lack of trustworthiness was brought to the surface again.

It was only after Sarah's death in 1906 that it was revealed that Ducker had been trustee and managing the financial flow to Sarah after Tom Wills' suicide. It was over two years before the family it seems finally relented and having taken legal counsel paid what was presumably their money to Heddle.

Barbor ... I hereby undertake that in the event of any moneys being received or receivable under the Will of the late Thomas Wentworth Wills deceased to forthwith file with the Officer for duty a statement setting out the amount so received or receivable'. On 14 October 1908, 'The executors of the Will of HS Wills deceased have recently taken Counsel's opinion as to the rights of TW Wills under the will of their testator and Miss Heddle has the papers in connection with TW Wills' affairs at the present time ...' Finally it is arranged that '... 425 pounds is to be paid to the representatives of TW Wills deceased'.

⁹⁷⁹ Probate papers on Tom Wills, VPRS 28/P2 Unit 847 File 107.728.

⁹⁸⁰ Accounts in the Estate of the late Sarah Theresa Barbor, VPRS 28P Unit 1332 File 102/963.

⁹⁸¹ Probate papers on Tom Wills, VPRS 28/P2 Unit 847 File 107.728.

10 Comparison with the Death of a Contemporary Sportsman⁹⁸²

I have been a frightful scoundrel but have suffered dreadfully during the last two years and I feel better now I have told you all ...⁹⁸³

Richard Wardill, 1873, just prior to his suicide

Richard Wilson Wardill was a contemporaneous amateur sportsman who, like Wills, excelled at cricket, football and athletics. He had a high public profile and was the first cricketer to hit a century in intercolonial matches. Wardill committed a very public suicide on 17 August 1873. Like Wills, Wardill's career was centred with the Melbourne Cricket Club. Richard Wardill's death can be seen through the eyes of the papers of the day; through his inquest and most importantly via the prism of his inner thoughts penned right up until his death. He died by drowning himself in the Yarra after defrauding his firm, The Victoria Sugar Company, of £7000. After being confronted with the evidence, Wardill absconded. He scribbled a note in pencil 'I am gone to the Yarra it is best for all'.⁹⁸⁴ Wardill had been depressed, answering in all but barely audible monosyllables. He was found floating on the Yarra River after eighteen days. Wardill's suicide was played out over this time and was a talking point for Melburnians. Wardill was seen as having defiled and dishonoured a position of public trust in wantonly seeking ugly selfish gain through gambling. This unleashed a mob mentality channelled through a judgemental media which pilloried without compassion. His perceived lack of manliness in facing the consequences was sneered at.⁹⁸⁵

⁹⁸² It is instructive to review the deaths of many of Wills' sporting contemporaries. In contrast to Wills' death H. C. A. Harrison and Henry Searle received large public funerals. Harrison's links were with football, in particular, and also as a champion runner. He continued as an administrator in football for a lengthy period. Searle died a very public death at the pinnacle of his sporting powers. See Scott Bennett, *The Clarence Comet. The Career of Henry Searle* (Sydney: SUP, 1973). It is unlikely that Wills' suicide was the only reason he did not receive a larger funeral. By the time of his death Wills had ceased to hold any pre-eminent positions. A sense of football history and preoccupation about its mythology that placed Wills at its centre, had not yet developed. *Argus*, 3 September 1929, p. 7, Harrison's coffin carried a wreath of violets in the shape of a football. 'Father of the Game', by Old Boy, 7 September 1929, 'Sportsmen all over Australia will be grieved at the news of the death of Mr. H. C. A. Harrison, by common consent described as "the father of Australian football" ... at his residence, Molonglo, Kew'. (from unidentified newspaper, notes of Rex Harcourt).

⁹⁸³ Inquest of Richard Wardill, PRO, VPRS 24/P, Unit 293, File 761/1873.

⁹⁸⁴ Inquest, Wardill.

Wardill's last thoughts on that Sunday afternoon were recorded in a tragic, reflective letter when he vacillated as to the correct course of action. He outlined his embezzlement and in his confessional state wished to disinfect his soul. Only hours before his suicide Richard Wardill, even in his moment of utter despair, penned his fears for salvation and redemption.

The inquest gives the most graphic unfolding of circumstances. Convened on 5 September 1873 at the Morgue, Melbourne, Dr Richard Youl was coroner. The jury found Wardill, the late accountant to The Victorian Sugar Company, to have, '... drowned himself in the night of the seventeenth of August last when of unsound mind'.⁹⁸⁶

While on the surface this is what one might have expected, there are hints of public censure that come from the newspaper reports of the inquest. The inquest was described in detail. It was reported that there was 'no evidence one way or the other to show the state of mind he was in'. This non-committal judgement was the manner in which members of the jury or the coroner could express some disapproval of the suicide.⁹⁸⁷ Such condemnation was not reserved for Wills.⁹⁸⁸

Wardill in his public portrayal was exposed as deceitful to family, friends and company. Gambling was the traditional mythical way for nobility to cast shame upon oneself and family.⁹⁸⁹ His privileged amateur sports status accentuated his fall from grace. Although not commented upon, drowning was regarded as less noble as a means of suicide for men. It was regarded more as a female method for killing oneself.⁹⁹⁰ His funeral was largely attended by personal friends.

Wardill's suicide reveals many differences to that of Wills. Wills' suicide was impulsive, without preparation and perpetrated while under the inexorable influence of psychotic phenomena that compelled him to take his life. Wardill's was a more

⁹⁸⁵ See newspaper reports, for example, *Leader*, 23 August, 1873, p. 16.

⁹⁸⁶ Inquest, Wardill.

⁹⁸⁷ Stephens, 'Suicide in Victoria', p. 17.

⁹⁸⁸ Wills Inquest.

⁹⁸⁹ Minois, *Suicide*, p. 262.

⁹⁹⁰ See more on perceptions of drowning and method of suicide, Minois, *Suicide*, pp. 194, 277, 327; Anderson, *Suicide*, pp. 196-200.

considered suicide with consequent family shame and public humiliation. The inquest indicated that he was profoundly depressed, but not obviously psychotic. Both suicides involved addiction – alcohol in one, gambling in the other. Wardill’s letter of torment indicates an ambivalence regarding taking his life and its impact upon his wife and child. There was also, in the custom of the day, some attempt to find peace with his maker. Wardill’s suicide involved duplicity, absconding and embezzlement. Themes of deceit, disloyalty, and dishonour, all time honoured descriptors of suicide in the nineteenth century were publicly emblazoned across his suicide. This led to public expressions of disdain. There were no such public expressions of anger, shame or dishonour after Wills’ death.

Wardill’s diaries, it was said, contained the names of his gambling mates and there were calls for them to be made public ‘in the interests of morality’. There was a tincture of sadness regarding his death but little more. There was no mention of his football prowess and all that he had done for colonial sport.

11 Conclusion

A suicide transfixes a life history. It compels one to think of what influences led to the death. The more romantic notions of Tom Wills’ death, particularly those that seek to place this death as a reaction to failed sporting achievements, have little validity. The phenomenology of DTs is unlikely to have changed over time and his medical notes leave an indelible trace of the day before his death. Tom Wills did not commit suicide because of romantic notions that Australian Rules football had not spread more widely, as has been suggested. His suicide was preceded by years of significant losses that left him isolated and with little support. After his suicide the public responded with an idealised remembrance while his family, to a large part, sought to bury him privately and with haste. His suicide whilst in the throes of delirium tremens was a manner of death well known to nineteenth century medical and lay communities.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Tom Wills was the archetype of the fallen sportsman. He was the seminal figure in the early development of Australian Rules football and the dominant player in intercolonial cricket until the early 1870s. There has been no detailed scholarly appraisal of his life and death. Although the themes of alcohol, self-destructive behaviour and sport are regular fare in the contemporary popular press, its historical study in Australia is virtually unknown. This thesis contributes to knowledge in several ways. It provides the most detailed history to date on Tom Wills. This story is reconstructed through a comprehensive review of archival data, a significant amount of which is newly discovered material. The thesis provides an historical context for alcohol abuse and suicidal behaviour in sportsmen. Apart from its intrinsic interest it provides an historical context in which to place and contrast such self-destructive behaviour in contemporary sportsmen.

The most important influence in the life of Tom Wills was his father, Horatio Wills. Almost all other factors that influenced Tom Wills, like tributaries, can be traced back to his father. Of these latter influences this study reveals that the five years Tom Wills spent at Rugby School was the decisive period of his life that established a template from which he did not deviate until the day of his suicide. Tom Wills returned to Melbourne and became the most well known and influential sportsman in Australia over a period of 20 years.

This thesis examines three aspects of his sporting career. His bowling action in cricket is examined in detail. He became the first player in intercolonial matches to be called for throwing the ball. This section of the thesis illustrates how players can be used by clubs and administrators while their prowess is of value in winning games but can just as easily be disposed of as their physical abilities decline. The thesis also examines the oft-repeated claim that Tom Wills incorporated features of indigenous games into Australian Rules football. There is no evidence of any kind that came to light in this research that supports this assertion. This thesis offers an historical framework into which this piece of football mythology can be placed. Finally, with

respect to the sport of football, another of the commonly purported notions about Wills is put to rest: that his suicide led to his exclusion from early histories on the origin of the game of Australian Rules football. This erroneous conclusion has been put forward based on limited research juxtaposed with preconceived notions of how suicide might have been dealt with in the nineteenth century.

There is much in the Wills story that remains open to speculation. For example, his exact motivations for his bowling style are never entirely clear. It seems unlikely that Tom Wills set out to cheat his opponents but rather he used what he had available to defeat opponents. His over-competitiveness seems more the motivation for his suspect action rather than contrivance on his part of take on an action which some found objectionable. His action was called into question when age made him less attractive to the Victorian selectors. Overarching all of the controversy regarding his bowling action, as for much of his sporting career, was his distinguished background from Rugby school. It was a distinction that he used to impose a sense of superiority upon some of his colleagues when he returned to Melbourne.

Future research that flows from this thesis could follow many directions. There is no general study of the role of alcohol in an historical context in Australian sport. This in itself is a little surprising given the frequency with which alcohol is commented upon in contemporary sources. This could be undertaken on a sport by sport basis; a series of case histories of individual athletes or perhaps a more general enterprise across numerous sports. Given the proliferation of substance abuse – both natural and human made – future research should go beyond alcohol abuse. The second broad area of research would be an examination of the role of mental health issues that sportsmen and sportswomen face. The obvious candidate here would be to examine the post-career course of eminent athletes but there are numerous other possibilities. These other directions include how athletes with mental illness or substance abuse manage these problems while playing sport; the response of professional and administrative bodies to players with mental illness or substance abuse; and perhaps in a more speculative vein if there may be links between a player's creativity on the field of play and mental illness. The field is largely untapped.

It is likely that Tom Wills will continue to emerge as a significant cultural and sporting figure nationwide as his story is further publicised. It is possible that further archival information not located during this study will be found and will add to the existing body of knowledge.

The research into the early history of Australian Rules football still has several areas that could be usefully studied. The most obvious is perhaps a detailed examination of the types of football played before the late 1850s. Although this thesis has explored the suggested link with aboriginal football and Australian Rules football and found it to be wanting, a study of indigenous games as a topic in its own right has much to offer.

Tom Wills lived a remarkable life. Although this life was lived over 100 years ago the understanding of personality, influence of family, the role of alcohol in sport and the factors that surrounded his suicide are still relevant. His case study illuminates many of the issues that confront sportsmen and women today where substance abuse, public idolisation, unscrupulous clubs, and mental health issues are all themes easily identifiable.

Appendix

Errors and Mythology

Introduction

The existing literature on Tom Wills is littered with errors. This appendix lists some of the more common errors.

Errors where there is clear evidence to the contrary

Football

1/ Many errors, quoted in dozens of references, spring from Mullen's *History of Australian Rules Football 1858-1958*. These include:

a/ That Wills was in Geelong earlier than at the end of 1856. This has been repeated in many references, for example, Piesse, *The Complete Guide to Australian Football*, p. 99.

b/ That Wills spread the game personally through Ballarat, Bendigo.

c/ That Wills was present as a Geelong delegate in 1877 at the inaugural meeting of the VFA

d/ Exaggerating or fabricating Wills' personal involvement in the early spread of the game throughout South Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania and New Zealand.

g/ Claims that there was a Champion of the Colony during Wills' playing period which he supposedly won 5 times. This is also claimed in Flanagan's 'Footballs founding fathers', *Football Record*, pp. 21-22. There is no evidence for such an award at that time. Gavin Daws notes this error as emanating from Mullen's work, Honours thesis, p. 21.

2/ Although the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* on Tom Wills is generally regarded as an accurate source, it repeats a number of errors. These include the incorrect

statements that he retired from playing football in 1876 and that he played over 210 games of football. There is no way of accurately calculating how many games he played given the lack of information over his lifetime. As for his retirement date this is probably based on the *Australasian*, 20 May 1876. The article almost certainly referred to the younger brothers of Tom Wills who retired in this year. The brothers were Egbert and Horace. The evidence from contemporaneous newspapers suggest that Tom Wills played his last game of football in 1874.

3/ Wills was not part of the 1866 codification of rules though this is commonly assumed in numerous references. For example, Orivie in *Populi Ludos Populo – the game of the people for the people*.

4/ At times it is mentioned that Wills, through the *Argus* in 1857, suggested that Rugby tackling should be outlawed because of the hard grounds in Melbourne. No 1857 *Argus* reference has been found to date to confirm this assertion. It seems that this reference probably relates to a claim in the book, Graeme Atkinson, *Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know About Australian Rules Football But Couldn't Be Bothered Asking*, p. 191.

5/ *100 years of Australian football*, p. 15 states that Wills returned from England in 1869 rather than 1856.

Cricket

1/ Some secondary references state that Wills introduced round arm bowling to the colonies. There are many primary sources that show this to be incorrect. For example, nineteenth century newspapers indicate that numerous bowlers were using round arm prior to Wills returning to Australia. See, for example, Gid Elliott in the *Leader*, 20 February, 1869, p. 9. Also see, a summary by Webster, *First class cricket in Australia. Vol. 1* on early cricket matches.

Aborigines

The reports of the murder of Wills' father have contained numerous errors over the last century.

1/ See, for example, Bouwman. *Glorious Innings. Treasures from the Melbourne Cricket Club Collection*, p. 52, in which it is stated that all but two members of his family were killed in the attack.

2/ See, Buchanan, *Rugby Cricket Club, its rise and progress, from 1844 to 1894*.

'A terrible tragedy will ever be connected with the name of Wills, his father, and if memory fail not, two of his brothers being cruelly murdered by the natives whilst exploring some unknown country in Australia.'

This latter version was also repeated in, Lord Harris, *The History of Kent County Cricket*, pp. 361-2 and Frith, *By his own hand*, p. 173.

3/ There are several errors with respect to Wills' relationship with the aboriginal cricket team of 1866-67. Such errors range from incorrect initials of his name through to ethnographic ones such as the claim he coached New Zealand Maoris that toured England:

Mr TW Wills, who died in 1880, had an interesting cricket career. He played for Cambridge v Oxford in 1856, although he was never in residence, either before or after the match. He returned to Australia in 1857, and was one of the Victoria Eleven from 1857 to 1876. He was one of the leaders in Australian cricket, if not the pioneer. He went over to New Zealand and taught the game to the Maoris with such success that he was able to bring a team of them to England in 1868. One of the Maori XI, by name "Mullagh", scored 75 v MCC and 33 and 73 against a Surrey XI, and was approached by more than one county to remain in England and qualify by residence.

Taken from Andrew, *Scores of the Cricket Matches between Rugby and Marlborough*, from 1855, p. 61.

4/ That Wills captained the aboriginal cricket team after their return from England, Pockley, *Ancestor treasure hunt. The Edward Wills Family and Descendants in Australia 1797-1976*, p. 56.

Rugby School & England

1/ That Tom Wills went to Rugby school in 1852, rather than 1850. For example, see Mandle, W.F. 'Thomas Wentworth Wills' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, pp. 409-10.

2/ Many references claim that Wills was captain of the Rugby school football team. There was no school football team while Wills was at school. See, for example, Hibbins, 'The Cambridge Connection', pp. 172-92.

3/ That Tom Wills was dux of his year at Rugby school, for example, Frith, *By his own hand*, p. 171 and Bouwman *Glorious Innings. Treasures from the Melbourne Cricket Club Collection*, p. 52. Wills struggled academically and was not dux of his year.

4/ There are numerous references that incorrectly regard Wills as having been educated at Cambridge. Wills never entered Magdalene College, Cambridge although he did play several games of cricket for the College and Cambridge.

Family

1/ At least 3 different dates for his birth are given in the literature. The correct date is 19 August, 1835.

2/ Mandle, W.F. 'Thomas Wentworth Wills' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 409-10, repeat the error that he had a middle name Spencer. It claims Sarah Teresa, nee Barber, was his wife whom he had married at Castlemaine aged 32. All the archival evidence indicates that he was in a de facto relationship with Sarah Theresa Barbor

Suicide

1/ There is no evidence that Tom Wills was incarcerated in Kew Asylum or any other asylum.

2/ Frith, *By his own hand*, p. 175, says that Wills killed himself with a bayonet. In some references this seems to be a deliberate reinterpretation perhaps with the idea of a more militaristic, heroic end rather than one using scissors. Also see, Dunstan, *The Paddock that Grew. The Story of the Melbourne Cricket Club*.

3/ In the lead up to the suicide of Wills, all references, including one by the author 'Suicide of Thomas Wentworth Wills', p. 656-58, state that he was cared for by a Dr Black at his Heidelberg home. More detailed research revealed this person to be Dr Bleeck.

Other

1/ There are numerous errors when it comes to identifying Tom Wills in photographs, for example, Tatz, *Obstacle race*, p. 64. Wills is identified as Charles Lawrence.

2/ Moore and Hall, *Australia. Image of a nation 1850-1950*, Wills is described as 'TW Wills, an Englishman and captain.'

Errors where there is a lack of evidence

Football

1/ Mullen's *History of Australian Rules Football 1858-1958*.

a/ Mullen's claimed that 'Tom Wills strongly advocated the game being known as "Australian" or "Australasian", or "Ausball" for short, owing to it being played in other Colonies than Victoria, ...' I did not come across any reference in which Wills is recorded as saying anything along these lines.

b/ That Wills and Harrison proposed to take Melbourne and Geelong teams to England to play exhibition matches. No evidence for this assertion has been found.

2/ There are further claims that Tom Wills wanted to take a football team overseas. These include the claim that in the months before his death Tom Wills and HCA Harrison had prepared a plan whereby the Melbourne and Geelong clubs would visit USA and England. Stephens, *The Road to Kardinia. The Story of the Geelong Football Club*. There is public mention in 1880 of a football team planning to travel overseas but no mention of Wills or Harrison in the enterprise, see *Leader*, 7 February, 1880, p. 13. Also, see, *Geelong Advertiser*, 23 October 1878, 'As we have lately vied with the old country in rifle-shooting, and taught them a few wrinkles in rowing and cricket, would it not be possible to take advantage of the notoriety Australia has gained, and send home a team to instruct them a little in football, and especially in the essential differences between the Rugby and Victorian game?'

3/ There is considerable confusion surrounding Wills' letters to newspapers. Blainey, *A Game of Our Own*, p.60 quotes a letter which he argues is written by Wills. The information, it seems, is based on material from Mancini and Hibbins and refers to a 1864 letter from a writer with the pseudonym 'Free Kick'. Turner and Sandercock queried if 'Free Kick' was Wills but as Mancini and Hibbins note this is incorrect. There is no evidence that Wills called himself 'Free Kick' for the reasons cited by Mancini and Hibbins. Daws, Honours thesis, p. 16 also wondered if "Free Kick" referred to Wills or Harrison.

Robin Grow queried whether Wills was the correspondent who used the pseudonym 'Mark', Robin Grow, 'From Gum Trees to Goal Posts', p. 29. Again, there is nothing to substantiate this. Some of the letters that have been attributed to Wills were written while he was away in Queensland and so could not have been penned by him.

Cricket

1/ In February 1864 Webster, *First class cricket in Australia*, claims that Wills convened a meeting at the Freemasons Hotel in Melbourne resulting in formation of the Victorian Cricketers Council, a forerunner of the VCA. As yet this has not been substantiated.

2/ Tyson, *The History of the Richmond Cricket Club*, p. 22 claims that Wills brought up the idea of an English touring team when he returned from Rugby.

3/ *Harpur's footprints in sand*, State Library of Victoria,

Harpur claims that Wills introduced the idea of tossing the coin. However this is far from clear. The claim that Wills introduced tossing the coin is often made but with no substantiating evidence, see Dunstan, *The Paddock that Grew. The Story of the Melbourne Cricket Club*, p. 18.

4/ That Wills helped sponsor in 1878 the first Australian team to England as a speculative venture, see, Pollard, *Australian Cricket. The Game and the Players*. No evidence has been found to support Wills' role in this tour.

Bibliography

Several items in this bibliography are included that are not referenced in the thesis. These references are primarily in the manuscript section so that future researchers will have a clearer idea of the scope of material available for a study on Tom Wills.

Manuscripts, Official Documents, Archival Material

Archives in the possession of Wills family

Accounts of H. S. Wills, January 1852-July 1856.

Diary of Catherine Roope.

Diary of Horatio Wills.

Exercise Writing Book, Elizabeth McGuire, 1833.

Flier of The Melbourne Cricket and Football Clubs Spring Meeting of Athletic Sports, November 1881.

Letter to K. Harrison from Secretary of VFL, 18 September 1929.

Map of Molonglo region.

Retirement letter to H. C. A. Harrison.

School Books/law book used by Tom Wills.

- 1/ Histoire de la Revolution Francaise. 1844.
- 2/ Graecae Grammaticae
Rudimenta In Usun Scholarum
1851.
- 3/ Hamel's Grammar and Exercises. Lambert.
- 4/ A Handy book on Property Law
Lord St Leonards.
- 5/ A History of Greece.
- 6/ Whittaker's History of Greece.

Terms and conditions of sale of Cullin-la-Ringo, 1881.

Will of Horatio Wills.

Family Letters

Where a precise date is not given this is because it is not recorded in the letter. Some of these letters were torn and in some cases it was impossible to determine either who wrote the letter or to whom it was addressed. There are several letters which are not family letters but included here for sake of a complete record of personal letters.

Date	Document	From	To
1 May 1808	Letter	Sarah Wills	Her mother
16 March 1823	Inquest of Michael Wyre		
31 January 1826	Court		
13 October 1832	Letter	William Redfern	HS Wills
18 December 1832	Statutory Declaration		
6 December 1833	Diary	HS Wills	
8 September 1834	Letter	Richard Driver Snr	HS Wills
20 January 1836	Letter	Unknown	HS Wills
8 February 1836	Letter	?Spencer	HS Wills
20 September 1837	Letter	Sarah Alexander	Thomas Wills
24 January 1839	Letter	Eliza Antill	Thomas Wills
March 1842	Letter	HS Wills	Governor
1849	Letter	HS Wills	Sister, Jane
18 October 1848	Letter	W. Roope	HS Wills
24 December 1850	Letter	Tom Wills	HS Wills
7 August 1850	Letter	Tom Wills	HS Wills
28 March 1851	Letter	W Roope	HS Wills
18 April 1851	Letter	W Roope	HS Wills
4 June 1851	Letter	Tom Wills	HS Wills
9 June 1851	Letter	James Alexander	HS Wills
23 June 1851	Letter	James Alexander	HS Wills
30 July 1851	Letter	James Alexander	HS Wills
8 August 1851	Letter	Tom Wills	HS Wills
11? October 1851	Letter	James Alexander	HS Wills
16 October 1851	Letter	Bishop	HS Wills

		Perry	
31 October 1851	Letter	W Roope	HS Wills
26 December 1851	Letter	Bishop Perry	HS Wills
29 January 1852	Letter	W Roope	HS Wills
13 February 1852	Letter	Redfern & Alexander	HS Wills
1 May 1853	Letter	HS Wills	Tom Wills
10 May 1854	Letter	Sarah Alexander	HS Wills
6 April 1855	Letter	Stonehouse	Tom Wills
28 March 1857	Letter	Cedric	Emily
17 September 1857	Letter	Tom Wills	Emily
4 October 1857	Letter	Tom Wills	W Tunks
9 October 1857	Letter	W Tunks	Tom Wills
15 October 1857	Letter	Tom Wills	W Tunks
3 November 1857	Letter	Tom Wills	Marshall
1859	Letter	HS Wills	Boys
15 May 1859	Letters	Emily, Horatio, Elizabeth	Boys
28 June 1859	Letter	Tom Wills	Emily
25? September 1859	Letter	HS Wills	Elizabeth
5 November 1859	Letter	HS Wills	Elizabeth
1859/60?	Letter	HS Wills	Boys
2 January 1860	Letter	Egbert & Horace	Mother & sisters
8 February 1860	Letter	Cedric	Mother & Emily
15 February 1860	Letter	Emily	Brothers
27 February 1860	Letter	Unknown	HS Wills
March 1860	Letter	HS Wills	Boys
15 May 1860	Letter	Tom Wills	Cedric
13 June 1860	Letter	Horace	Lizzy, Ducky, Mother
13 June 1860	Letter	Cedric	Sisters
13 June 1860	Letter	Cedric	Parents
15 June 1860	Letter	GlennCross Smith	Cedric, Horace, Egbert
25 June 1860?	Letter	A Brake	Cedric
1 July 1860	Letter	Egbert	Family
12 July 1860	Letter	HS Wills	Boys
15? July 1860	Letter	Egbert	Emily, Papa, Lizzy
20 August 1860	Letter	Emily	Brothers
23 August 1860	Letter	Tom & HS Wills	His Brothers
22? September 1860	Letter	Emily	Boys

28 September 1860?	Letter	Anne Brake	Cedric
1860	Letter	Egbert	Emily & Lizzy
1 October 1860	Letter	Tom Wills	HCA Harrison
22 October 1860	Letter	Egbert	Parents
23 October 1860	Letter	HS Wills	Boys
21 November 1860	Letter	Emily	Brothers
29 December 1860?	Letter	Anne Brake	Boys
2 August 1860?	Letter	Dr Pilgrim	Mr Vanderbyl
1860	Letter	Elizabeth	Horatio
1861	Telegrams		
7 January 1861	Letter	HS Wills	Boys
8 February 1861	letter	HS Wills	Elizabeth
28 February 1861	Letter	HS Wills	Elizabeth
30 March 1861	Letter	HS Wills	Emily
1 May 1861	Letter	Van der Byl	Cedric
13 July 1861	Letter	Horace	Parents
15 July 1861	Letter	Horace	Parents
18 July 1861	Letter	HS Wills	Elizabeth
1 May 1861	Letter	Vanderbyl	Cedric
3 May 1861	Letter	Pockley	HS Wills
17 May 1861	Letter	Emily	Brothers
7 July 1861	Letter	Elizabeth	Emmy
13 July 1861	Letter	Horace	Parents
15 July 1861	Letter	Horace	Parents
21 August 1861	Statement		
6 October 1861	Letter	HS Wills	Elizabeth
15 October 1861?	Letter	Unknown	Emily & Pussy
18 October 1861	Statement	Edward Kenny	
23 October 1861	Letter	J Jardine	Unknown
24 October 1861	Letter	Tom Wills	HCA Harrison
26 October 1861	Letter	Tom Wills	Colonial Secretary
12 November 1861	Letter	Herbert	Tom Wills
12 November 1861	Letter	Herbert	Rocky Mayor
13 November 1861	Letter	Archibald Crawford	Elizabeth
20 November 1861	Letter	Elizabeth	Boys
21 November 1861	Letter	Emily	Boys
1861	Letter	Herbert	Mayor of Rockhampton
21? December 1861	Letter	Elizabeth	Boys
23 December 1861	Letter	Emily	Boys
6 January 1862	Letter	Tom Wills	Colonial secretary
13 January 1862	Letter	L Landel	Tom
19 January 1862	Letter	Cedric	Parents

19 January 1862	Letters	Horace & Egbert	Elizabeth & sisters
20 January 1862	Letter	Cedric	Emily
20 January 1862	Letter	Manning	Tom Wills
22 January 1862	Letter	Philip Vanderbyl	Cedric
1862	Letter	Alexanders	Mr Thomas
17 February 1862	Letter	Cedric	Tom Wills
8 March 1862	Letter	Secretary of State for the Colonies	Governor Bowen
8 June 1862	Letter	Tom Wills	Elizabeth
17 June 1862	Letter	Tom Wills	Elizabeth
26 July 1862	Letter	Tom Wills	Elizabeth
16 September 1862	Letter	Tom Wills	Attorney General
1 October 1862	Letter	Emily	Cedric
30 October 1862	Letter	Tom Wills	Attorney General
1 December 1862	Letter	Emily	Tom Wills
18 November 1862	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
11 December 1862	Letter	GlennCross Smith	Cedric
25 December 1862	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
28 December 1862	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
30 December 1862	Letter	Horace	Cedric
3 January 1863	Letter	Horace	Elizabeth & Emily
7 February 1863	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
11 February 1863	Letter	GlennCross Smith	Cedric
February 1863	Letter	Emily	Cedric
10 March 1863	Letter	Cedric	?Mother & sisters
30 March 1863	Letter	GlennCross Smith	Cedric
1863	Letter	Tom Wills	Cedric
1 May 1863	Letter	GlennCross Smith	Cedric
19 May 1863	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
26 May 1863	Letter	Horace	GlennCross Smith
5 June 1863	Letter	Egbert	Cedric
14 June 1863	Letter	Elizabeth	HCA Harrison
5 July 1863	Letter	GlennCross Smith	Cedric
21 July 1863	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
5 August 1863	Letter	Emily	Cedric

14 August 1863	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
18 August 1863	Letter	Elizabeth	Tom Wills
2 September 1863	Letter	Egbert	Tom and Cedric Wills
3 September 1863	Letter	Emily	Cedric
3 September 1863	Letter	?Horace	Tom and Cedric Wills
10 September 1863	Letter	GlennCross Smith	Cedric
3 October 1863	Letter	Thomas Wills	Ducker
3/5 October 1863	Letter	GlennCross Smith	Cedric
20 October 1863	Letter	Emily	Cedric
9 November 1863	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
17 November 1863	Letter	Norcott	Cedric
19 November 1863	Letter	Pussie?	Cedric
13 November 1863	Letter	A Anderson	Tom Wills
13/15 November 1863	Letter	J Anderson	Tom Wills
24 November 1863	Letter	James Alexander	Tom Wills
11 December 1863	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
17 December 1863	Letter	Emily	Cedric
Approx 1863	Letter	J Anderson	Tom Wills
1863	Letter	Emily	Cedric
1863	Letter	Emily	?Cedric
1863	Letter	Pussie	Cedric
21 December 1863	Letter	Tom Wills	Cedric
12 January 1864	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
24 January 1864	Letter	Horace	Cedric
24 January 1864	Letter	Egbert	Cedric
3? February 1864	Letter	Horace	Elizabeth
10 February 1864	Letter	Cedric	Emily
20 February 1864	Letter	GlennCross -smith	Horace and Egbert
20 February 1864	Letter	Ducker	Cedric
21 February 1864	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
29 February 1864	Letter	Pussie	Cedric
29 February 1864	Letter	Horace	Cedric
2 April 1864	Letter	Tom Wills	Cedric
3 April 1864	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
4 April 1864	Letter	Ducker	Cedric
11 April 1864	Letter	Pussie	Cedric
April 1864	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
14 April 1864	Letter	Sarah Alexander	Tom Wills
25 May 1864	Letter	Glenncross Smith	Cedric

31 May 1864	Letter	Pussie	Cedric
10 June 1864	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
5 August 1864	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
18 August 1864	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
24 September 1864	Letter	Tom Wills	Cedric
26 September 1864	Letter	Emily	Cedric
18 October 1864	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
30 October 1864	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
14 November 1864	Letter	Tom Wills	Cedric
21 November 1864	Letter	Tom Wills	Handfield
28 November 1864	Letter	Tom Wills	Biddle
1864	Letter	Elizabeth	?Cedric
1864?	Letter	Elizabeth	?Cedric
1864	Letter	Emily	Cedric
21 February 1865	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
7 May 1865	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
8 May 1865	Letter	Tom Wills & others	Biddle
16 October 1865	Letter	Egbert	Cedric
15 December 1865	Letter	Egbert	Horace
26 January 1866	Letter	Unknown	Cedric
3 March 1866	Letter	Egbert	Cedric
3 May 1866	Letter	Marshall	Biddle
16 May 1866	Letter	Elizabeth	Horace
24 June 1866?	Letter	?Emily	Cedric
11 September 1866	Letter	Tom Wills	Horace
26 September 1866	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
15 November 1866	Letter	Handfield	Newbury
4 December 1866	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
10 January 1867	Letter	Elizabeth	Horace
13 January 1867	Letter	Horace	Cedric
22 January 1867	Letter	Horace	Cedric
30 January 1867	Letter	Handfield	Greaves
21 September 1867	Letter	Handfield	Tom Wills
13 January 1868	Letter	PJ Fay	Handfield
25 March 1868	Letter	Handfield	Tom Wills
31 December 1868	Assets		
20 September 1869	Letter	Ducker	Cedric
2 February 1870	Letter	Tom Wills	Elizabeth
26 February 1870	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
May 1870	Letter	Tom Wills	Cedric
12 June 1870	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
1 August 1870	Letter	Ducker	Tom Wills
13 August 1870	Letter	Ducker	Cedric
19 August 1870	Letter	Ducker	E Harrison
27 October 1870	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
12 November 1870	Letter	Ducker	Cedric & Horace

30 November 1870?	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
26 December 1870	Letter	Horace	Sarah
4 January 1871	Letter	Elizabeth	Horace
24 May 1871	Letter	Elizabeth	Horace
18 June 1871	Letter	Horace	Elizabeth
16 November 1871	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
10 February 1872	Letter	Horace	Sarah
24 March 1872	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
4 December 1872	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
?1873	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
27 January 1873	Letter	Tom Wills	Handfield
2 February 1873	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
4 July 1873	Letter	Emily Wills	Berry
8 September 1873	Letter	?Egbert	Cedric
2 January 1874	Letter	Elizabeth	Sarah
16 April 1874	Assets	Ducker	Cedric and Horace
8 December 1874	Letter	WH Handfield	Tom Wills
15 June 1875	Letter	WH Handfield	Fitzgerald?
10 August 1875	Letter	WH Handfield	RA Fitzgerald
2 October 1878	Letter	Curteis Reid	Tom Wills
19 September 1877	Letter	Tom Wills	Handfield
15 October 1878	Letter	Curteis Reid	Tom Wills
7 March 1879	Letter	Cedric	HCA Harrison
10 September 1879	Letter	Cedric	HCA Harrison
15 March 1880	Letter	Tom Wills	Cedric
15 March 1880	Letter	Tom Wills	Horace
3 May 1880	Inquest	Death of Tom Wills	
9 May 1880	Letter	Egbert	Horace
9 May 1880	Letter	Mary Wills	Bella
16 June 1880	Letter	S Cosstick	BJ Wardill
18 August 1880	Letter	Cedric	HCA Harrison
2 August 1881	Letter	Ducker	Cedric
8 December 1883	Letter	C Roope	Horace
9 September 1905	Letter	Elizabeth	Horace
Unknown date	Letter	Egbert	Horace
Unknown date	Letter	Egbert	Tom and Cedric Wills
Unknown date	Letter	C Roope	Cedric
?Early 1870's	Letter	Elizabeth	Cedric
Undated	Letter	HS Wills	Elizabeth
Undated	Notes	Names and	

		dates of children	
Unknown date	Letter	Tom Wills	HS Wills
Unknown date	Poem	HS Wills	

Australian Natives Association

Australian Natives Association, Geelong Minute Book, 1875-76.

Ararat Genealogical Society

Items in the Banfield Filing Cabinet, including, Manuscript on Horatio Wills by Peter Banfield, Librarian, Ballarat Library, 1984 (a. 1-29)

Boroondara Cemetery

Details of the grave location for Sarah Theresa Barbor and Sarah Heddle.

Brownless Medical Library, University of Melbourne

Victorian Doctors in the Nineteenth Century, Dyason, Diana J. GMF 107/Box 1.

Death and Baptism Certificates

Baptism paper for Thomas Wentworth Wills, Number 3071 Vol 45B. Issued 21 December, 1987.

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Death certificate for William Handcock.

Death certificate for Thomas Wentworth Wills.

Death certificate for William Hammersley.

Geelong Heritage Centre

RateBooks at the Geelong Heritage Centre 1850-1880.

Heidelberg Cemetery

Handwritten description of Tom Wills' burial plot. Computer print out of burial plot.

Heidelberg Cemetery Map, Banyule Cemeteries Trust.

Kew Historical Society

'Horatio Spencer Wills' by D.R.(undated)

Melbourne Cricket Club Archives

MCC Letter books: 1863-1883
1891-1901

MCC Minute books: 1847-1852
1859-1881
1891-1893
1922-1925

Minutes of the IC committee 1859-61.
Member applications 1868-1870.
Membership Book 1878-1881.
Membership Address Book – 1880-1884.

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Box marked 'Collection Documents – Letters'.
Boxed marked 'Correspondence'.
Box marked 'General Correspondence'.
Inter Colonial Cricket Committee Minutes – 1859, 1860.

Letter, R. C. Hayman to E.E. Bean, 20 December 1933, Melbourne Cricket Club archives.

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Archives Authority of New South Wales, AO Reel No. 5016, Register of Baptisms, Burials and Marriages. Registry Vol. 45, No. 3071 and AO Reel No. 5017, Registry Vol. 47, No. 258.

Curr, Edward, Recollections of squatting in Victoria: then called Port Phillip District, (from 1841-1851), 994.54/31.

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Gregory, Albert. Cricketers and their historic deeds (newspaper cuttings), Mitchell Library.

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Letter, W. L. M. Redfern to Horatio Wills, 31 October 1832, from 'The Redfern Family correspondence, 1828-1833'. Photocopy: MLMSS 7230.

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Letter to Governor Latrobe from HS Wills, concerning attacks by the Blacks and asking for increased protection. G. Gipps despatch; March 1842; A1228. p. 243 and p. 267-74.

NSW Despatch from Sir Richard Bourke dated 23rd November, 1835. List of Applications and Assignments of Male Convicts during the Year 1833, vol. 25, A1214, p. 760.

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Thomas, William. Collected Papers, Amusements and War Implements. 15 June 1858. ML MSS 214/24. Microfilm CY3131.

Wills, Thomas. Granting of Land (Norton, Smith and Co. Papers - clients documents). Item no. 74. 1834.

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1 October, 1866 to 10 May 1875
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Littlewood, FE. A memorable year (1887).

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Box 181

Newell, Andrew, letters.

'Physiological aspect of Intoxicating Drink', Victorian District Independent Order of Rechabites. Manuscripts from 1870-80s. Royal Historical Society of Victoria, No. 874, Box 58/4.

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The Thirty Third Annual report of the Committee of Management of the Melbourne Hospital, Melbourne: Fergusson and Mitchell, 1881.

Medical admission notes of Tom Wills. The Melbourne Hospital, Dr Moloney, Males, No. 21 Ward, from 2/1/1880-1/5/1880, p. 190.

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Rugby School Lists 1850-1855. Rugby, printed by Crossley and Billington.

The Meteor, (school magazine), 1867, 1868, 873, 1874, 1880, 1881,1898.

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The Crescent, Rugby: An Arnoldite Publication, Third Series. Part 1. 1867.

The Rugby Miscellany, London, Whittaker and Co., 1846. No single author.

The Rugby Magazine. 1835, 1836.

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Agreement between WR Hayman Esq, Unamurriman and others, and WEB Gurnett relating to engagement of cricketers on 8 January 1867.

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Harpur, F. M., Cricket Footprints on the Sands of Time, Manuscript, Box 305/1.

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Box 29/1 (b) MS 7679
 Box 103/6
 Box 2698
 MS 9139, MSB 455
 MS 9140 MSB 453
 MS 8951, MSB 447
 MS 9140, MSB 455
 Box 94/1, 94/2.
 MS 8854, MSB 439

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 GRG 78/49 Admission Register for Adelaide Hospital 1840-1900,
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 Minutes of the South Australian Cricket Association,
 31 May 1871-5 February 1875 SRG Series 1

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James Southerton diaries, Trent Bridge Library.

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 VPRS 28P Unit 1332 File 102/963.

Heidelberg rate books,
 VPRS 3823.

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Letter, from R Brough Smyth to The Honourable Chief Secretary, 14
 October, 1867.

Letter, From Thomas Kennedy to HR Barclay, Superintendent of Police,
 Portland, 15 August, 1867.

Letter, 12 February, 1867, from R Brough Smyth to The Honorable
 James McCulloch, Chief Secretary,

VPRS 3991/PO Unit 283 File 10514,

Letter, F.W. Chesson to Aboriginal Protection Society, 1 August, 1867
VPRS 3991/PO Unit 283 File 10554.

Passenger List VPRS 7666, Passengers to Victoria from British Ports,
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Probate Tom Wills
VPRS 28/P2 Unit 847 File 107.728.
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Probate Sarah Theresa Barbor
VPRS 28p2 Unit 803 File 102/963.

Unassisted Passengers from UK. To Victoria, 1852-1923. Ship Lillies
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VPRS: 7666,

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VPRS 7591/P2 Unit 9 File 10/560.
VPRS 28/P2 Unit 12 File 10/560.

Thomas Wills, Supreme court files: Equity,
VPRS 259 Unit 23 File 634.

Will of Sarah Theresa Barbor,
VPRS 759/P2 UNIT 408 FILE 102/963.

Will of Thomas Wentworth Wills, 22 February, 1877, PRO, VPRS
7591/P2 Unit 422 File 107.728.

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Inquest on Watty, 15 May, 1867, VPRS 24/P Unit 190 File 1867/373.

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Cooke, Simon, 'Secret Sorrows: A Social History of Suicide in Victoria, 1841-1921', PhD thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1998.

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Hess, Rob, 'Case Studies in the Development of Australian Rules Football, 1896-1908', PhD thesis, School of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance, Victoria University, Melbourne, 2000.

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Hibbins, Gillian. Melbourne Cricket Club.

Kelaart, Ivo for material on the history of the Richmond Cricket Club

Liston, Carol. University of Western Sydney on the early period of the female orphan asylum where Elizabeth Wills was schooled.

Maclean, Rusty. Rugby School archivist.

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O'Hara, John University of Western Sydney on the history of the role of public houses in sport.

Rose, John on the personal history of William Handcock.

Simpson, Kenley, for material on the settlers of the western district of Victoria.

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Webster, Ray. Melbourne Cricket Club on the history of intercolonial cricket.

Whimpress, Bernard. South Australian Cricket Association, on the history of the 1866-7 aboriginal cricket tour.

Wills Cooke, Terry, for history of the Wills family.

Wills Cooke, Lawton, for history of the Wills family.

Wills, Tom, for history of the Wills family.

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(Note that *Bell's Life* was published in several cities in Australia, largely copied from its London namesake. There were additional phrases added to the basic title *Bell's Life* in these cities and these titles varied slightly over time. For simplicity I have named most of these papers using the only the basic title in the text of the thesis, eg. *Bell's Life in London*, *Bell's Life in Victoria*.)

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London Times,
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18 July 1857-20 August 1857

Midlands Sporting Chronicle and National Register of Sports
19 November 1852-31 December 1853

Midland Counties Illustrated News
16 June 1855-25 August 1855

The Rugby Advertiser and Central England News,
1852, 1853

The Rugby Recorder and Local Advertiser,
4 July 1857

The Sheffield Times,
August 1868

The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent,
14, 15 August 1868

New Zealand

The Daily Southern Cross,
February 1864

Lyttleton Times,
2 February 1864-20 February 1864

The New Zealand Herald,
February 1864

The New Zealander,
February 1864

Otago Daily Times,
5 January 1864-29 February 1864

Otago Witness,
23 January 1864-27 February 1864

The Press,
1 February 1864-20 February 20 1864

The Weekly News,
28 November 1863-12 March 1864

Tasmania

Cornwall Chronicle,
27 February 1858-14 April 1858

Hobart Mercury,
January-February 1867

South Australia

Adelaide Advertiser
2004

The Adelaide Observer
31 January 1874-21 March 1874

Bell's Life in Adelaide and Sporting Chronicle
6 April 1861-1 March 1862

Chronicle
November-December 1874

Express and Telegraph
November-December 1874

Illustrated Adelaide Post
April 1871

The South Australian Register
April 1860
April 1872
September 1873
6 March 1874-13 April 1874
11 November 1874-12 January 1875

The South Australian Advertiser
24 April 1860-4 May 1860
30 August 1866-31 October 1866
30 August 1873-10 October 1873
3 February 1874- 7 April 1874
31 October 1874-2 January 1875

The Walleroo Times and Mining Journal,
January-May 1874

Yorke's Peninsula Advertiser and Miners' News
January 1874-28 April 1874

Queensland

Brisbane Courier
September 26 1862
2 November 1861-10 November 1862

Daily Record, Rockhampton
8 November 1912.

The North Australian Ipswich
1 October 1861-1 February 1862
1 October-1 November 1863

Queensland Guardian
1 July 186-18 March 1864

Queensland Times
1 November 1861-1 March 1862

Rockhampton Bulletin
1 October 1861-20 February 1864

The Toowoomba Chronicle and Queensland Advertiser
1 November 1861-1 March 1862

New South Wales

Bathurst times
14 December 1867-9 December 1868

Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer (till Oct 1860) then Bell's Life and Sport Chronicle(till Dec 1870)
February 2 1856-December 31 1856
March 7 1857-January 12 1861
January-February 1863
January 1 1866-December 31 1867
January 1 1869-March 19 1870.

The Bulletin
January-October 1958
February- October 8 1908

The Currency Lad

25 August 1832-18 May 1833.

The Empire

15 January-20 January 1857
 15 January-26 January 1858
 February 1860
 November 1861
 January 1863-February 1863
 February 1865
 December 1866-May 1867
 December 1867-January 1868
 March-April 1869
 February-March 1870
 1871
 December 1872-January 1873

The Evening News

1 November 1869-14 March 1870
 1 March 1871-17 April 1871
 January 1873
 21 February 1876-8 March 1876

The Era

January 31 1857

The Field

April 1891-October 1891

The Illawarra Mercury

November 1864- June 1869

The Illustrated Sporting Life and Pastoral Register, Sydney (Sept 1866-June 1867) this changed its title to The Sydney Sporting Life from September 1, 1866 to June 8, 1867.

28 July 1866-27 April 1867

Life

1878

Maitland Ensign

January 1867- April 1868

Maitland Weekly Post

May 1880

Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser

22 December 22 1866-31 January 1868

Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners Advocate

May 1880

The Newcastle Pilot

October 1867-December 1868

Newcastle Despatch

January-May 1880

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December 1866

The Newcastle Chronicle

1867-February 1870

NSW Government Gazette, 1834-1839, 1866-1867.

Northern Times (Newcastle)

January 1857-May 1860

Sydney Gazette

1 January 1834-9 May 1840.

The Illustrated Sydney News

1854-1855

1864-1880

The Sydney Afternoon Telegram

January-April 1870

The Sydney Mail

1 July 1860-22 June 1867

28 September 1867-25 April 1868

January-May 1880

August 11-October 13 1883

The Sydney Morning Herald

1834-1835

3 May 1844

20 May 1844

5 June 1844

17 June 1844

1 December 1856-26 January 1857

January 1858

January 1859

January-February 1860

November 1861

29 January-1 March 1863

February 1865

1 October 1866-July 1867

1 February-15 April 1872
 December 1872
 7 January 1876-15 March 1876
 May 1880
 21 March 1914

Sydney Punch

May 1864-June 19 1880

Town and Country Journal

4 November 1871-30 April 1872
 1 November 1872-31 July 1874
 January-July 1877
 8 May 1880

Victoria

The Age

1 May 1855-8 February 1856
 1 November 1856-1 December 1858
 1 December 1872 – 31 January 1873
 May 1880
 6 January 1892

Argus

28 February, 1850
 26 December 1856-10 May 1880
 27 May 1890
 11 March 1908
 3 September 1929
Argus Passenger Index 1846-1851.

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October 1864-12 June 1880
 16, 20 November 1886
 14 January 1888
 24 October 1885
 20 November, 1886
 4 February 1893
 1 August – 1 September, 1908
 December 1923

Australasian Sketcher

1 April 1873-1 July 1889

Ballarat Courier

5 August 1878
 25 October 1871

13 November 1871
May 1880

Ballarat Evening Post
August 1878
May 1880

Ballarat Star
August 1878
4 November 1871
May 1880

Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle
3 January 1857-1 January 1868

Bendigo Advertiser
May 1880

Bendigo Independent
May 1880

The Daily Telegraph
3 May 1880-12 May 1880)
1 January 1876-14 March 1876
31 March 1872-4 April 1872
28 December 1872

Evelyn Observer
1875-1881, odd issues that exist at State Library Victoria

The Evening Star
14 October 1867-1 April 1868

The Evening Sun
16 November 1923
7 December 1923

The Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News
26 June 1858

The Geelong Advertiser
1 December 1840-20 June 1845
1 January 1857-1 May 1880
1 April-30 September 1908
1 May 1958-31 August 1958

Geelong Chronicle
1 March 1861-1 December 1865

Geelong Register

3 April 1865-1 January 1868

The Gippsland Mercury
May 1880

Gippsland Times
May 1880

The Hamilton Spectator and Grange District Advertiser
June 1860-23 February 1870

Herald
3 January 1876-18 March 1876
January 1863
25 December 1856-December 1857
January 1858-18 May 1858
May 1880
July 1908-September 1908
1, 21 July 1958

The Illustrated Melbourne Post
January 1862-December 1868

The Illustrated Australian News (Melbourne)
May 8 1880

Leader
1 July 1908-1 August 1908
3 April 1858-1 May 1880

Lee's Pictorial Weekly Budget. Police News.
1876-1877

Melbourne Punch
July 1855-October 1881

The Mercury and Weekly Courier (Collingwood and Fitzroy)
October 1878-May 31 1880

The Mount Ararat Advertiser
1857-March 1861
May 1880

The News of the Week
1 April 1856-3 September 1858
1 April 1908-1 October 1908

The Observer, City and Suburban Advertiser (Collingwood)
October 1878-31 May 1880

Pleasant Creek News(Stawell)
May 1880

Port Phillip Gazette
5 September 1840-1 October 1846

Port Phillip Patriot
14 December 1843-30 December 1848

The Port Phillip Herald
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