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INTRODUCTION

THE NORTHERN CRICKET UNION OF IRELAND PAPERS

November 2007

The Northern Cricket Union of Ireland Papers (D4213)

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Introduction

The Northern Cricket Union of Ireland papers comprise 71 minute books, audited accounts, affiliated clubs subscription books, scorebooks and printed pamphlets, 1915-1998, relating to the organisation, principle figures and the playing of cricket in Northern Ireland. The papers are of particular significance to those researchers examining the social and cultural history of Northern Ireland as well as those sporting historians charting the changing course of cricket.



Cricket in Ireland

The Northern Cricket Union of Ireland was founded in 1886, however the umbrella organisation was predated by clubs such as Lisburn which was formed in 1836. Cricket had already been exported to Ireland by regiments of army garrisons and the sons of millowners, etc, who had been educated in England. The earliest reference to this sport in Ireland was in 1656 when Cromwell's Commissioners proscribed all 'sticks and balls' by the common hangman. The first recorded match was in 1792 when Dublin Garrison defeated an All Ireland team. There are reports of matches in the Downpatrick area and Killinchy, Co. Down, in c.1820. In 1867 a N.I.C.C. XI (Belfast based team) defeated an All England XI at Ormeau, and in 1870 they defeated M.C.C. at Lords.



Formation of the Northern Cricket Union

Despite the absence of leagues or cup competitions, clubs were able to arrange a programme of local derbies and matches between groups of their own members e.g. Married -v- Single. Despite the disparate nature of the game, club secretaries met in Belfast every spring to arrange fixtures. The convenor of these meetings, J. Cormac, sent letters in 1884 asking each club to elect a member to represent their club on a 'County Committee'. At a meeting on 22 February 1884, it was agreed unanimously to form a Northern Cricket Union for the purpose of establishing County Cricket, interprovincial and other matches and promoting the interests of cricket generally. On 25 February 1884, Cormac describing himself as Honorary Secretary of the N.C.U. sent a further letter to clubs inviting them to join the Northern Cricket Union. In 1886, the newly formed union inaugurated a knock-out competition for its member clubs to stimulate public interest in cricket and to counter the increasing attraction of football (Association). The first cup competition was held in 1887 and the competing clubs were N.I.C.C., Carrick, Cliftonville, Whiterock, Holywood, North Down, Ulster, Clarence, Banbridge, Armagh and Bessbrook. North Down were the first winners of this tournament.



The Andrews family of Comber

The impact of the Andrews family of Comber upon the N.C.U. was quite considerable. They contributed to the Belfast shipbuilding industry (Thomas Andrews was designer of the Titanic), and were flourmill and flaxmill owners (John Andrews & Co., Irish Flax Spinners of Comber). John Miller Andrews who was to become Prime Minister of Northern Ireland was Chairman of the Junior Committee from 1895-1909. Other family members dominated the top posts in the senior committee, including James Andrews who was Lord Chief Justice, 1937-1950, and was the 7th president of the N.C.U. in 1927-1928. His brother, William Andrews (b. 1886 at Ardara), was Chairman for the period, 1948-1966. In 1925, the two brothers were responsible for significantly revising the rules of the Union and formulating the direction of the game. William was a fanatical enthusiast and ambassador for the sport and served in numerous administrative roles over a 60 year period. He further captained North Down for 39 successive seasons, playing in a record 20 Senior Cup finals. Other collections relating to the Andrews family include: Andrews family papers, D3655; Andrews Mill papers, D4189; and a cricket ledger in D4209/A/1-14.



The papers

The papers of the Northern Cricket Union of Ireland include an unbroken run of 13 minute books, 1915-1996, chronicling the development of the game during the 20th century; a single volume of letters, 1980-1982, containing correspondence with the National Cricket Association, the Sports Council of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Cricket Association, 30 audited accounts of the N.C.U. by McIlveen, Howard & Co., 1968-1997; 4 volumes recording subscriptions and fees of clubs affiliated to the N.C.U., 1959-1990; 4 scorebooks recording statistics of matches from 1965-1995; 18 printed fixture books, 1976-1998, outlining the rules of the game; and a centenary brochure, 1986.

