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## Baseball's Earliest Reference?

by Martin Hoerchner

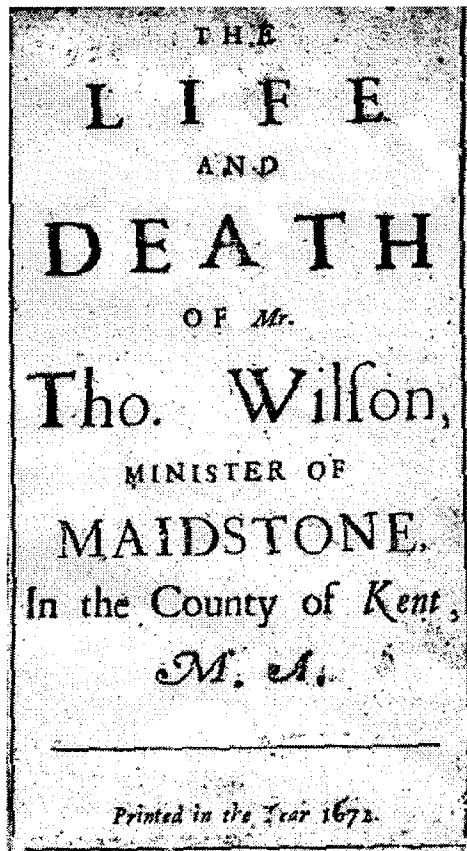
I've always thought that SABR members in the U.K. were uniquely placed to investigate the origins of the game we call baseball, because we live in the land that most probably nurtured the early games that gave birth to baseball. For instance, I've always been interested in Robert W. Henderson's account of the earliest known baseball reference.

Robert W. Henderson is the Father of Baseball Genealogy. In his seminal 1947 book, *Ball, Bat and Bishop: The Origin of Ball Games*, he writes:

*"The earliest mention of a game called baseball so far located was made by the Reverend Thomas Wilson, a Puritan divine at Maidstone, England. He wrote reminiscently in the year 1700, describing events that had taken place before that time, perhaps during his former years as a minister. 'I have seen', he records with disapproval, 'Morris-dancing, cudgel-playing, baseball and cricketts, and many other sports on the Lord's Day.'"*

This reference has been accepted and repeated many times over. But to me, something never seemed quite right about it, for a few reasons:

1. I have never seen the word 'divine' used as a noun.
2. I know there is a 1 in 100 chance that an event will take place in a year ending in 00, but it just seemed to me to be an estimate, a 'circa' date.



3. I wouldn't expect such an early reference to use the term "baseball". I would expect either "base ball" or "base-ball".
4. There is no hint regarding the source of the quote, whether a book, personal letter, etc. Unfortu-

nately this is a general failing of Henderson's usually impeccable research.

- 5. According to my knowledge of British history, the Puritans were a spent force after the Restoration (1661), after twelve years of the theocracy of Cromwell and the Roundheads. I can't imagine someone claiming to be a Puritan in 1700, at least openly.

A further clue was discovered when I was researching stoolball, and was going through the papers of Major Grantham, stoolball's twentieth-century re-inventor, in Lewes in Sussex. I came across a copy of the Sussex County Magazine for July 1928, which contained the article "Stoolball in Sussex" by M.S. Russell-Goggs. It contains a series of early references to stoolball, including this one:

*"About 1630 a Puritan records that 'Maidstone was formerly a very profane town, where stool-ball and other games were practised on the Lord's Day.'"*

This really got my interest, because it seemed very similar to the Thomas Wilson comment, quoted by Henderson. But it gives a much earlier date than Henderson, and baseball is not one of the games mentioned. Still, 1630 is a much more reasonable date for a Puritan minister; in fact, that was the year the Puritans founded the American city of Boston.

So I was more puzzled than ever, but I didn't know exactly where to start to track down the exact quote. So I let it simmer for years, but

## Baseball's Earliest Reference? (con't)

then, last week, in a sudden burst of inspiration, I vowed to try to solve the mystery. After all, Maidstone isn't far from me, about 20 minutes by car. I pictured myself discovering the quote on a yellowed letter in a dark cobwebbed corner of the Kent County Historical Society Headquarters.

Maidstone, in fact, is the County Town of Kent (where I live), so it's equivalent to a U.S. state capital. It's a busy town of 140,000 people, about 20 miles southwest of London. At least I think it's a town. In Britain cities and towns are official designations; for instance, a city has to have a cathedral to be a city. Cityships are of high status and are handed out like prizes on the Queen's Jubilee years. Maidstone sits on the River Medway, which snakes right through the centre of town. Despite its proximity, I haven't spent much time there, probably due the lack of parking spaces. It's got a jumble of bridges and roundabouts in the middle of town, with a hundred signs whizzing around; the kind of traffic maze where you have to know what lane you want to be in about six turns in advance. My fondest memory of Maidstone is driving through it once during a summer festival, which I later found out was an annual event called the River Festival. The streets were full of people, the river was full of brightly-decorated party boats, makeshift barbecues served food all over, and the sound of music was everywhere. And yes, it was on a Sunday.

I was at a loss as to where to start to find the quote, because Henderson didn't give a clue to the source of the quote. So to start, I entered "Thomas Wilson" and Maidstone in Google, and to my surprise got quite a few hits! I felt guilty doing research by Internet, but salvaged my consciousness by telling myself it was only a pointer to finding the original document, and seeing for myself the wording.

The first reference that caught my attention was from the Canterbury Christ Church University College Bookshop. To my great joy I found a write-up of a book that they carried, written by Jacqueline Eales, a Reader in early modern history at the University. The book was entitled "Community and Disunity –

Kent and the English Civil Wars, 1640-1649". It was a collection of four different lectures, number three of which was entitled "Thomas Wilson and the 'Prophane Town' of Maidstone". So there was a whole chapter based on the quote! And my suspicion was reinforced of an earlier date. I phoned the bookshop immediately to see if they had the book in stock so I could drive to Canterbury to pick it up that day (I love visiting Canterbury, if you can overcome – yes – the lack of parking spaces). But it was a Bank Holiday, and the shop was closed. So I contacted them the next day and ordered the book, which was not in stock, and I eagerly await its arrival.

Back to the Internet, the second reference that grabbed me was on a website about "the 1911 Encyclopaedia", which was a really excellent reference site and taken verbatim from the 1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica. The listing was for 'Cricket' and it ran into screenfuls, very exhaustive and complete. The section of interest was at the beginning, where, like the stoolball article, they ran a catalogue of early references to the sport. One of the earlier references was this:

*In The Life of Thomas Wilson, Minister of Maidstone, published anonymously in 1672, Wilson, having been born in 1601 and dying in or about 1653, occurs the following passage (p. 40): "Maidstone was formerly a very profane town, in as much as I have seen morrice-dancing, cudgel-playing, stool-ball, crickets, and many other sports openly and publicly indulged in on the Lord's Day."*

That was really a Eureka moment! This reference gave the source I'd always wanted. If it was Henderson's baseball quote, it would set the date of the earliest baseball reference back at least 28 years, and maybe even 47 years, and maybe even more. The quote was taken from a book about Thomas Wilson, published in 1672. I was thrilled to discover it was in a book, because I could possibly see it in the British Library. Now I even knew on which page the quote was.

So I immediately went to the British Library website – sorry, doing research on the web again. You can search their catalogue, and I hoped

against hope, and bingo! It was there. The title of the book was given as "The life and death of Mr. Tho. Wilson, Minister of Maidstone, etc." It was indeed dated 1672, and ran 99 pages. The book had no author but there was a comment that the preface is signed G.S., i.e. George Swinnock. I immediately ordered the book for my perusal in two days' time.

From the moment I first got the idea to check the Internet for the quote till I found the British Library catalogue listing for the book, took about a half-hour.

So I had two days to mull things over. One of the first things that came to me was that the 1911 cricket quote didn't mention baseball either. It was stool-ball where Henderson had baseball. This tallied with the stoolball article, which mentioned stoolball "and other sports". I was at odds as to how to reconcile these discrepancies. Unless... there are SABR UK members, sometimes including me, who believe, in one form or another, that there has been a certain level of suppression of baseball in this country, including suppression of baseball's importance in the history of sport, because they wanted to diminish its importance to give precedence to British sports. It smacks a bit of paranoia, conspiracy theories, etc, but I honestly thought that it was the most likely explanation for the difference in the quotes. Seeing the source will reveal all.

I had this fantasy of coming across the baseball reference on page 40, and running my fingers over the word, and proving all the conspiracy theories. I would feel like Howard Carter opening Tutanhamen's tomb – I would be the first person in history ever to specifically search for an original baseball reference and find it in a source that can be definitely dated to a year in the 1600's.

When I got to the library, they handed me the book, which was very small – it was 3" x 5 ½" – and fit in the palm of my hand. I hurried to my desk and hurried to page 40, and this is how it read (preserving the original spelling):

# Baseball's Earliest Reference? (con't)

## "Chap. XVIII

*The Reformation which was wrought by his means and Ministry in Maidstone.*

"Maidstone was formerly a very prophane Town, insomuch that I have seen Morrice dancing, Cudgel playing, Stool-ball, Crickets, and many other sports openly and publickly on the Lords Day; I have heard them jeer, and deride and mock at those who professed Godliness and went to hear a Sermon on the Lords Day abroad, when they had none at home."

It mentioned stoolball, not baseball. King Tut's tomb collapsed around me, and my chance at baseball history immortality vanished in a puff of dust. *Sic transit gloria mundi*, as I always say (actually, I've never said it). After the realisation that life doesn't always meet your expectations sank in, I started to look deeper into the book.

It is a short book, more like a hardcover booklet. It tells Rev. Wilson's life story, and the unnamed writer of the book is full of praise of the late Reverend. He must have been a remarkable character, because the book was published about 19 years after his death! Thomas Wilson was born in Cumberland, and after he started his ministry was transferred a few times, finally coming to Maidstone. The book isn't strong on exact dates.

There is a handwritten note on the inside cover, "by George Swinnoek". I don't know whether this applied to the whole book or only to the preface (as the British Library public catalogue listing stated). George Swinnoek certainly is a likely candidate to be the author of the book. His name appears in the text of the biography, mentioned as Rev. Wilson's patron. I looked his name up - yes, on the Internet - and came up with many references, including a five-volume set of his writings currently in print! The publisher of the set said that Swinnoek was among the most readable of the Puritan writers.

An interesting point is that the "prophane Town" quote is not

presented as a quote from Rev. Wilson. The book glided along from the start in the third person talking about Rev. Wilson, and at the beginning of Chapter 18, it switches to the first person in enunciation of the former sins of profane Maidstone. It looks very much like these were the observations of the author, not Rev. Wilson's. Most likely they are George Swinnoek's. The thrust of that chapter was that Rev. Wilson made Maidstone a less profane place because of his minis-

( 40 )

## CHAP. XVIII.

*The Reformation which was wrought by his means and Ministry in Maidstone.*

**M**aidstone was formerly a very prophane Town, insomuch that I have seen Morrice dancing, Cudgel playing, Stool-ball, Crickets, and many other sports openly and publickly on the Lords Day; I have heard them jeer, and deride, and mock at those who professed Godliness, and went to hear a Sermon on the Lords Day abroad, when they had none at home. Commonly after the Evening Service, many of them went to the Ale-house, many to walk idly in the Fields. It was their constant custom to ply the conduits on the Lords Day for the drawing of water. The former vain sinful customes of sports were reformed before his coming, but by his preaching he prevailed with them to forebear vain walking, idling at their doors, also to draw their water on Saturday night, which they should have occasion for on the Lords Day. Though the Town was large and full of people, yet you should hardly see one person in the street after the Sermons on the Lords Day, and I have known when the Mayor hath searched the Innes and Ale-houses

try, so Swinnoek sets the scene by telling how worldly Maidstone was before Rev. Wilson's arrival.

As for the sports mentioned, I can't explain what cudgel playing is. It must be some sort of mock fight, because a cudgel is a weapon. For anyone living outside these fair isles, an explanation of Morris dancing would be in order. It still exists and is quite popular in some rural places. It is a form of ancient folk dance, done in a group of dancers with very traditional outfits, to me a bit reminiscent of Bavarians and Tyroleans with their

lederhosen, and with a string of small bells around their ankles. It's the kind of hobby that comedians find tremendously humorous (read: geek factor), but others are generally fascinated and appreciative with the link to a much simpler past. When I've ever come across Morris dancers, I always stop and watch for as long as I can.

I needed to address the bottom line, why is the Henderson quote different from the Wilson book? Why does Henderson say baseball when the book says stoolball?

What is really puzzling is that the Henderson section is wrong on almost every level. The original mentions stoolball, not baseball. The date is 1672, not 1700. It is not Rev. Wilson's memoirs, it is his posthumous biography. And the quote about Maidstone was not Rev. Wilson's, but by the author of the biography.

How could this happen? I can come up with three possibilities:

1. Maybe the book exists in another edition, dated 1700, which mentions baseball instead of stoolball.
2. Maybe there is another similar quote either by Thomas Wilson or George Swinnoek which mentions baseball instead of stoolball.
3. Henderson got the quote second or even third hand. I have in mind an American academic, coming across the stoolball reference, and saying to him/her-self, "Stoolball... that's what they called baseball in 17<sup>th</sup> century Britain, isn't it?" I'd like to trace Henderson's original source for the quote.

The third option certainly seems the most plausible, but we may never know. I still have a few more paths to tread in my search to clear up this mystery. I'll see what Jacqueline Eales' chapter on "the profane town of Maidstone" will bring. I'll write her to see if she knows anything more. If I have to, I'll buy the five-volume Swinnoek set to see if I can find a variation of the Maidstone quote, maybe one mentioning baseball.

I'd like to find an answer. I don't like being puzzled.

# Henderson's Historical Method

by Jim Combs

Mr. Robert W. Henderson's work entitled *Ball, Bat and Bishop: The Origin of Ball Games* is rightly regarded as an important work for historians of baseball, tennis and indeed many other ball games. In his introduction to *Ball, Bat and Bishop*, Mr. Will Irwin writes:

*"the early critics of the Doubleday tradition base their scepticism mostly on observation and common sense. What they lacked was a thorough investigation undertaken in the scientific spirit. Mr. Henderson has supplied that."*

Whether or not Mr. Irwin's accolade is deserved is not the subject of this short piece. I have quoted Mr. Irwin, however, to note that Mr. Henderson's place in the history of ball games – not just baseball – is generally regarded as important. Indeed, my colleagues and I in the Bobby Thomson Chapter of SABR UK here in the UK generally regard *Ball, Bat and Bishop* as the authoritative source as to the origins of ball and bat games. I suspect that our view is shaped mainly by the expansiveness of the work, which ranges from Egyptian times to the present replete with references and pictures. For example, when Mr. Henderson quotes Jusserand's description of the game *La Soule* on p.39 of *Ball, Bat and Bishop* we assume that the quote is accurate and that Jusserand's description is based on convincing evidence. None of us has to my knowledge began a painstaking analysis of Mr. Henderson's work which would, I submit, be quite a daunting task since he does not footnote his quotations.

## **JEU DE BOULES TAPESTRY AND THE STORY OF GOMBAUT AND MACEE**

An opportunity to verify one of the facts in *Ball, Bat and Bishop* presented itself to me fortuitously when the Chairman of our Chapter, Mr. Mike Ross, gave me a picture of a tapestry on display in New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Mike had noted that the tapestry showed a group of young persons playing some sort of ballgame. He asked me to translate the inscriptions. (Not unlike a modern day comic strip, each of the persons had their remarks set forth in a cloud shaped circle in close proximity to their heads.) The medieval french proved too difficult for myself and my French friends, so I wrote to the Metropolitan Museum and received in return a very helpful letter complete with an extract from a work by Edith Appleton Standen entitled *European Post-Medieval Tapestries and Related Hangings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (hereinafter referred to as "Met Tapestries Work.") Prompted by this article, I began a search of the British Library's works on tapestries to see if I could find any similar



tapestries. Eventually, I discovered that the tapestry seen by Mike Ross was indeed the same subject as the tapestry, which appeared in *Ball, Bat and Bishop*. Here at last was a chance to analyze the accuracy of one small part of Mr. Henderson's seminal work.

## **GROUND BILLIARDS (BILLIARDS DE TERRE)**

Opposite p.133 of *Ball, Bat and Bishop* is an illustration which Mr. Henderson calls Ground Billiards, France, 1460 (From St. Lô tapestry, in J.M.J. Guiffrey, *Les Amours de Gombaut et de Macee*, Paris, 1882) This tapestry is quite similar to the one that Mike Ross saw in the Metropolitan Museum. A comparison of Ms. Standen's discussion of these tapestries with that of Mr. Henderson should afford us a chance of determining whether Henderson's conclusions drawn

from the tapestry are consistent with those of a noted scholar on tapestries.

Henderson states on p.121 of *Ball, Bat and Bishop* that billiards, like hockey, football, and tennis "... is a direct descendant of the old Egyptian fertility rites, a close relative of the other games." According to Henderson, the source of both croquet and billiards (through the game of *jeu de boules*) is a game of *jeu de mail*. On p.114 Henderson describes *jeu de mail* as a game which developed in southern France during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was, he continues, on p.114 a game in which "...two sides strove to drive a ball to a given mark in the least number of strokes. ... The boxwood ball, about the size of a lawn tennis ball, was driven with a mallet, a stick

with a wooden head." (p.114)

On p. 115 Henderson writes that in England "*Just as la soule had been reduced to ground billiards, so pall mall (the name of jeu de mail in England) was played on a definite 'ground' and the ball had to be driven through an iron ring suspended in the air. The earliest rules of jeu de mail were published in Paris by Joseph Lauthier in 1717, some forty years before the earliest rules of golf.*"

Returning to Henderson's discussion of billiards, I note

that on p. 121 of *Ball, Bat and Bishop* Henderson mentions a famous French tapestry known as "*Les Amours de Gombaut et de Macee*" which was made in about 1460 and was first inventoried at St. Lô in 1532. On pp.21-2 of *Ball, Bat and Bishop* Henderson writes

*"This tapestry portrayed scenes around the country-side at St. Lô, two of which show a game called jeu de boules or de tiquet. A small ground is enclosed in a low wattle fence. Within the enclosure, at some distance from each other, appear an arch, or low hoop, later called a "port", and a small cone-shaped marker, later called a "king". Three players and three balls indicate that each played his own ball, and each player carries a mace, or cure, which appears to be a long wooden stick with a spade-shaped, slightly curved end."*

".... *Jeu de boules* is none other than the link between *jeu de mail*, as played on the ground, and the modern game of billiards, played on a table. The game was also called *billard de terre*, or ground billiards, a name which indicates a definite relationship. One other feature of this fifteenth century game justifies the claim that it was an ancestor of billiards: the ball could be caromed off the sides of the enclosure, which were commonly made of planks of wood."

Henderson concludes his case on pp. 121-2 by stating that the next step was to put this game on a table. He notes that some claim that this was done by Henrique de Vigne in about the year 1571 for Henry III for his summer palace in Blois, but that this claim is not too well substantiated. On p. 122 Henderson notes that as late as 1674, in a portrait of Louis XIV playing billiards, there is still a port and a king with no change in the mace. "By 1700 the port and king had disappeared and by 1734 the modern cue began to displace the spade-shaped mace. The earliest rules of billiards known to us today appeared in Cotton's *Compleat Gamester* which was published in 1674."

Edith Standen's work discusses the various versions of the "Jeu de Boules" tapestries and confirms as Henderson claims that the *Jeu de Boules* tapestry was indeed a familiar one in France and the Low Countries. Ms. Standen also gives us more information about the subject. She mentions that the game is being played by teenage boys and girls of presumably humble origin and that the dialog clearly indicates that the game is part of the courtship rituals, since it is played between boys and girls and the language is quite suggestive. For example, the remarks in the last scroll translate as follows according to the Met Tapestries Work of Ms. Standen:

"Gombaut, thy hand is too free, and then it is not good manners to smack the behind of a girl without promising to marry her."

#### **DATING THE JEU DE BOULES TAPESTRIES**

Ms. Standen attributes the version of *Jeu de Boules* which is hanging in New York's Metropolitan Museum to Bruges and on stylistic grounds

assigns it a date of 1600. Henderson assigns the date of about 1460 to the version of *Jeu de Boules* hanging in St. Lô and states that it was first inventoried in 1532. On the otherhand, Ms. Standen in footnote number 13 of her work states that "none of the existing pieces can be assigned to so early a date (as 1532)." As authority for this proposition, Ms. Standen cites Guiffrey (*Amours*, p. 14.) This is somewhat surprising since Henderson has also most probably relied upon Guiffrey, *Amours* for his date of 1460 although one cannot be sure because Henderson does not footnote. Thus, according to Standen, Henderson's date is probably about 100 years too soon.

#### **GUIFFREY'S STORY OF THE LOVES OF GOMBAUT AND MACEE**

Somewhat surprisingly, a reading of Guiffrey, *Amours* appears to support Henderson. In referring to the St. Lô Tapestry Guiffrey writes on page 1 of *Amours*:

"Evidement, l'execution de la tapisserie remonte a une date anterieure a l'inventaire de trente ou quarante annees au moins. Ce document souffrait a lui seul pour faire attribuer a la fin du 15<sup>th</sup> siecle l'invention du roman qui nous occupe."

"Clearly, the execution of the tapestry goes back to a date which is at least 30 to 40 years prior to the inventory. This document alone is sufficient to attribute the invention of the story (which is the basis for the tapestries) to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century."

In his work (*Amours*) Guiffrey is seeking to date the story of Gombaut and Macee. He notes that this country tale was very popular in the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Indeed, it is averred to in Moliere's *Avare*.

"Harpagon veut faire accepter pour mille ecus a son client: ....; plus une tenture de tapisserie des *Amours de Gombaut et Macee*."

Guiffrey also notes that the name of Gombaut was frequently in the poetry of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century and that Macee (the feminine form of Mathieu) was common in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. (p. 54 of *Amours*.) Guiffrey in the end conjectures that a poet named Henri Baude had probably popularized the story.

#### **HENDERSON'S USE OF JEU DE BOULES VINDICATED**

What do we make of Henderson's use of the tapestry to illustrate the development of table billiards? In balance, he seems to have used the tapestry *Jeu de Boules* quite legitimately to support his conclusion that, although table billiards was claimed by some to have been played in 1571, this claim has not in fact been "too well substantiated" (p. 122 Henderson.) It would perhaps have been better to attribute the tapestry to the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century than to refer to a particular year ("about 1460"), but this is only a quibble. He seems to have dated the tapestry consistently with the information contained in his source, Guiffrey's work *Les Amours de Gombaut et Macee*. Ms. Standen's argument about the dating, if she is indeed including the St. Lô tapestries in what she refers to as "existing tapestries," would appear to put the tapestry of St. Lô at 1600. Even this date would not cast significant doubt on the chronology which Henderson is advancing for the development of table billiards.

This brief attempt to assess the accuracy of the scholarship employed in the writing of *Ball, Bat and Bishop* would not seem to call into question Mr. Henderson's research methods. Indeed, if the tapestry *Jeu de Boule* is in fact 100 years older than he asserts, this is a mistake which was made by his source, J.M.J. Guiffrey in his *Les Amours de Gombaut et de Macee*, Paris, 1882. Indeed, even if the 20<sup>th</sup> century fine arts scholar, Edith Appleton Standen, has discovered a 100 year mistake in Guiffrey's dating of the St. Lô tapestries, this mistake does no serious damage to Mr. Henderson's analysis of the emergence of the game of Table Billiards nor to Henderson's reputation for scholarship. Ms. Stanton appears to be questioning the conclusions of Guiffrey based upon her analysis of various tapestries as being of a style much later than 1532, because of the design and style of the St. Lô version of *Jeu de Boules*.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Our first attempt to assess the scholarship of Henderson's work, *Ball, Bat and Bishop*, suggests that in this work Henderson is faithful to his sources.

# The Dinosaur Hunters II :

by Martin Hoerchner

I've written previously about how a coincidence helped me discover an ancient bat and ball game previously thought extinct. This story can be seen as an adjunct to the stoolball story, but it has enough interest to stand on its own.

The stoolball story started when I received a letter from a SABR member in Japan, asking if stoolball was still being played in England. I was ready to send back a negative answer. By coincidence I was working on a meeting report for the latest AGM, and came to Allen Synge's report, where he stated that stoolball definitely was being played, particularly in Sussex. This led to a trail of exploration through the south of England, in search of information on stoolball as it is currently played. Eventually my story was printed in "The National Pastime".

If the first story started with a coincidence, then the second story must too. Four years ago my wife and me were blessed with our first child, a son. After that life became too busy, and SABR seemed a bit irrelevant. But time passes and Jack has become very independent and life doesn't 100% revolve around him like it used to. It's more like only 85%, but that's a big difference. So lately I've been thinking about how to expand my horizons, and a few weeks ago my wife is at work on Sunday, so I'm driving around with my son, and only a few miles from my home I see a sign "Bat and Trap fun day - Halstead".

"Bat and trap" is the modern name for trapball, a very old game played in England since the Middle Ages. It is definitely older than cricket, and probably older than stoolball. The Canterbury & District League traced trapball back to a monastery in Canterbury in the 1300's; currently occupying the grounds is "Ye Olde Beverlie" pub, which became one of the founding members of the league.

It is in the "Little Pretty Pocket Book" of 1767 (and probably earlier editions), right next to the first illustration of a game called "base ball". By the time "The Boy's Own Book" was published in 1828, it was considered to rank next to cricket in popularity.

I've seen bat and trap being played before, along with Mike Ross and Allen Synge, at the Black Lion pub in Gillingham before my life got so complicated. Allen provided the lead that the game was still being played, just like he'd put us onto the stoolball matches.

We learned that bat and trap was a Kent game, and uniquely a pub



game, played in the beer garden just behind the pub. The month was May and the match started at 8 p.m., so we watched them play in declining sunlight, until the 2 100-watt lamps mounted in the conifers kicked in. We mused about how trap ball and stoolball might be linked to cricket and baseball in the grand scheme of things, but more about that later.

For the longest time none of this was important, but this sign I saw a few miles from my home drew me in. I knew Bat and Trap was a Kent game, but what was it doing on my doorstep? Of course I had to rush home and get my camera and rush back to Halstead.

Being a small village, there was no parking, and I had to park miles away. The event was held on a school playing field, across from a pub where no doubt bat and trap is played. I was with Jack, and he was

fascinated by the crowds and mix of sights, sounds, and smells.

The first thing I saw was a huge bouncy castle, for the kids. There was an information desk on bat and trap. There were a line of stands where you could purchase snacks, hot sandwiches, or the occasional beer. But on the far field, in a line stretching 100-200 yards, was a series of bat and trap pitches set up, one next to the other, and all frantic with activity and the whizzing of balls right and left. Behind the pitches was a row of seating for the players, and behind that was a large open area to mill about and watch the action.

I was fascinated, like a kid who had only read about baseball coming across all seven games of the World Series happening at once, foul-line to foul-line. I frantically took pictures while trying to keep my third eye on Jack. I bought him an ice cream. At one point I couldn't find him and panicked, until I found him chatting up a girl 6 months younger than him.

I left after I found that they had run out of

hot dogs, but my appetite had been whetted. I felt I had to complete my trapball story before the end of season, and it was approaching fast. So I hit the internet, and found a number of trapball websites - just enter "bat and trap" in any search engine. I contacted the Canterbury & District Bat & Trap league, and I was put in touch with Peter Guise, the Press Officer for the League. He informed me that the season was pretty much over, but that there was a makeup game due to take place in Whitstable in a few days. Great, I said, we'll be there.

I arranged a journalistic expedition with Chapter Chairman Mike Ross. We set off from my home at 4.00 to avoid the rush, and it took about an hour to get there, down the M2 through numerous roadworks that have been going on since 1066.

Whitstable is a charming seaside town which I've managed to miss in

# Trapball Found Alive!

my seventeen years in Britain. Driving into the town you come down from a hill and hit a spectacular panorama with the town in the foreground and the sea consuming the background. We found a car park right next to the shingle beach. A long line of land hung on the horizon – I took my wife there the next weekend and she said “Is that France?” to which I replied “No, it’s Essex”. (Is this heaven? No, it’s Iowa.) I’m not sure if it’s the Thames Estuary or the North Sea, but it was pleasant and calming watching the boats on a sunny day.

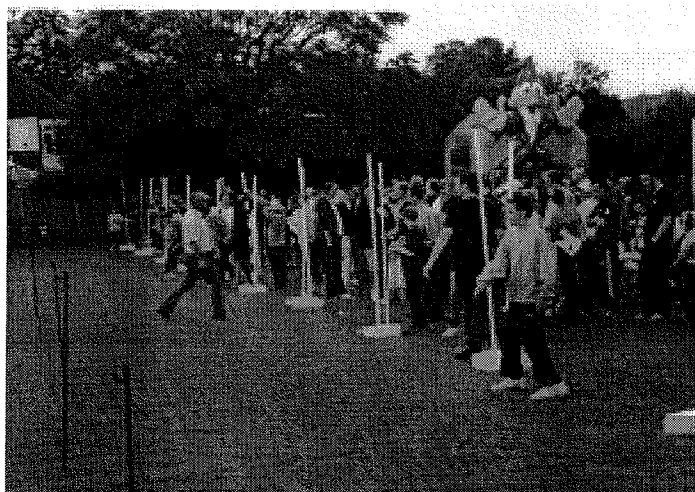
We were early, so we were hungry, and Mike was out for the famous Whitstable oysters. We sauntered down numerous alleys in search of the perfect meal. Many of the white wooden houses seemed distinctly New England to me. Our only problem was that it was 5 minutes past high season, and it was 5.30 which is on the cusp between lunch and dinner. You may use different terms for the noon and the evening meals, but all the restaurants we came across were closed for the next hour. The only place we could find that actually served food was a pub not far from the harbour. Mike sampled the fish and chips, and me being an unrepentant Californian I had probably the only tacos available in Whitstable. Not completely accurate, but tasty nonetheless.

Thus refreshed, we set out for the pub, which was named the Four Horseshoes. It was easily found, and I squeezed the car into a tight parking space next to the pub. As we parked Mike said “Let’s be low-key about this; I don’t want to attract too much attention”, but the minute we got inside the pub, he started telling everyone that we had just flown in from the States to watch this game! I was confused. Then I tried to pass myself off as a “Kentish Man”, but I’d only lived in Kent for 8 years, and part of the “London Borough of Bromley” at that. But I tried.

But after that shaky start, we quickly engaged the locals in

conversation, and it turned out most of them were there to play bat and trap. The first thing we found out about Whitstable was that Peter Cushing lived there before he met his fate in the Death Star.

But the Force was with us, and we soon had a player volunteer to explain the game to us. His name was Kevin, and he took us to an adjoining room overlooking the game pitch. Bat and trap is played on a rectangular pitch, long and narrow, measuring 63 feet by 13 1/2 feet. What makes Bat and Trap unique is of course the trap, which is a wood and metal device. The batsman hits the trap with his bat



and the ball pops up, fungo-style, and the batsman hits the ball towards the narrow end of the pitch. If the ball goes right or left before then, the batsman is out. On the far end of the pitch, the eight members of the opposing team stand, ready to field the ball. If the ball is caught on the fly the batsman is out. Besides that, how they field the ball really doesn’t matter. What matters is how the bowler returns the ball. The person that catches the ball isn’t necessarily the one that returns the ball. Each team member becomes the bowler, who rolls the ball towards the trap and tries to hit it. If he hits the trap, the front part of the trap (a 5 inch square) falls down so everyone can see the out is registered.

The term bowler is used differently from cricket. In cricket the bowler is the one who delivers the ball to the batsman, the equivalent of the baseball pitcher. But in bat and

trap, the bowler is the one who rolls the ball towards the batsman, and tries to get an out by hitting a tiny target.

Kevin explained the format of the match. Each team was on offence and defence 3 times each. I expected them to be called “innings” (like in cricket and stoolball), but instead they were called “legs”. In fact, they were different games. The team that won 2 out of 3 legs was the winner, independent of the scores of the individual legs. If leg one was 32-0, and leg two is 4-5, the overall score is still 1-1. “A bit like the 1960 World Series” I said, but no-one paid attention.

We mused over the implications of the game. The key skill of the game seemed to be rolling the ball along a long pitch, trying to hit a the trap, a very small target. A bit like lawn bowling. Except that the pitch was not as finely groomed, meaning that the bowler should know the hills and dales as well as a PGA golfer. Mike deduced that home field advantage would be very great, because the local team would know

their own pitch much more than the visitors.

The game was played by both men and women, but never women-only, unlike stoolball. It was organised into leagues within districts, and uniquely in the county of Kent.

We asked Peter if there was any connections with teams in other countries, and he said they sometime played international matches. We started to get interested, and then he explained it was between English vs. the Welsh or the Scots living in the Whitstable area. In other words, in the opening ceremonies of the international matches, there was no dispute on which anthem to play.

The game was played by a wide range of people, from their 20’s to their 70’s, sharing only two things – love of bat and trap and love of beer. This being a pub sport, every-

## The Dinosaur hunters II (con't)

one had a pint in their hand, including the players. But it wasn't drunk too much to excess, because the players still had to roll a ball to hit a tiny target 21 yards away.

Peter joined us after batting, and explained that a batsman can only lose, and a bowler can only gain. We understood. The chore of the batsman (i.e. to hit a ball straight ahead without too much deviation, without defensive intervention) was so easy that it was taken as a given; whereas the chore of the bowler (i.e. to roll a ball to hit a tiny target 12 leagues away) was so unlikely it was considered a fluke when it happened. An interesting split of responsibilities. But because they rotated, each player would get his hand at both roles.

I supposed we could add to that the role of the fielder, which is nothing. All the person that retrieves the ball does is pass it to the bowler whose turn it is. Whether he catches it in an Ozzie Smith-style catch, or dropped it six times before shovelling it up, it really doesn't matter. It doesn't affect the scoring.

A lot of the players actually fielded the ball with their feet. They would kick it to a stop before picking it up. Mike theorised that it was because they were used to football as the dominant sport, and I suggested it was because they didn't want to spill their beer. Both valid viewpoints.

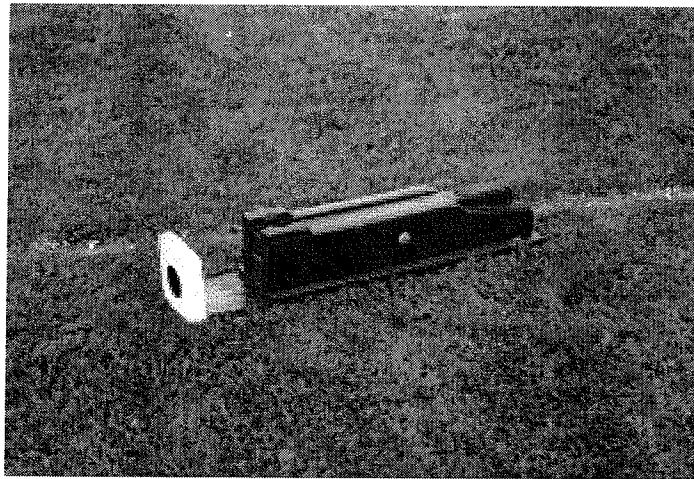
Of course, this mirrors the long association between baseball and beer. A new league was formed in 1882 when the National League banned beer in ballparks. Breweries have a long history of owning ballclubs, and a hot dog and beer is what really tops off the baseball experience. In fact, when San Francisco started serving wine, it just didn't seem right. What year is the best vintage? 1985? No, they lost 100 games that year.

Being a pub game, it was amicably low-key, with no high-fives and no one doing the Dirty Bird in the end

zone. Comraderie was more important than victory. But Peter assured me that in the first division, games get very serious and very competitive.

It got late and we had a long drive home, so after the first leg Mike and I politely excused ourselves. We bounced ideas back and forth as I drove.

For instance, which was older, stoolball or bat and trap? Stoolball goes farther back in the historical record, but it would be difficult to pinpoint which features of which game were derived from which features of the other game. An interesting point, though, is that bat and trap has the concept of foul territory and foul lines, which is only shared with baseball.



We discussed the skill level needed to play the game. Being a pub game, comraderie is obviously more important than winning (except in the higher echelons as Peter explained). Or to paraphrase him, batting is easy and bowling is hard. I suspect bowling is very hard. It combines a steady hand and an eagle eye with the ability to read the hills and dales of a hundred or so yards of possibly unfamiliar turf.

We talked about comparisons with stoolball. Stoolball recruits children, is taught in schools in Sussex and maybe surrounding areas. Bat and trap is a pub game, and thus has a completely different player base. Yet, as we observed the age range, there is little danger of the game dying out because of lack of interest.

Maybe the most important point we discussed was the possibilities that could have sprung from such a game as bat and trap. Admittedly it is a very simple game.

We especially found more room for the development in the role of the fielder. Balls were hardly ever hit on the fly, and besides that, it is the role of the fielder only to retrieve the ball and give it to the bowler. Maybe they could make scoring dependent on whether he fields the ball cleanly, or something like that. We didn't like the fact that the position had become totally relegated. Also, there was no running element. No one ever had to move faster than a slow saunter. The batsman stood his ground until put out, and that was it.

We wondered why the game didn't evolve. But then again, maybe it did evolve. Maybe it became cricket.

But then what struck us was the fact that a simple game made us ponder who to make the game more interesting. This is the same process used by children throughout the ages to make things more interesting as they grew older. Not just with their games, but with their lives. Children would get bored and start changing the

game. Why wouldn't adults? I guess it's because children are moved keyed to growth and having a constantly-changing world. Bat and trap has been played for so long, the rules seem to be set in stone. The fact is, the minute you codify a game, you start to stifle it.

It may sound corny, but the growth in bat and ball games from informal and/or amateur games to finely codified professional sports mirrors the human growth from childhood to adulthood.

Perhaps we were over-analysing. Besides, the night air was clear and the night blossoms were fragrant.



# Buena Vista Baseball Club

by Mike Ross

## CUBA MISSION

In case there is some doubt, baseball and antique American autos are doing just fine in Cuba. The Cubans generally appear to love Americans and it is quite certain that baseball has been our charm, despite the fact that Cuban politics has been prickly toward us, and vice versa.

My first adventure was in the main square situated between the old city and central Havana, within view of the National Capitol. There I came across a heated baseball discussion by a large ruckus of Cuban men, a majority of whom acted as Lou Piniella taking up a rules complaint with an umpire. To a stranger, with the apparent rage and gesticulations, there was cause for alarm – but not really. I learned that this was talking baseball Cuban Style and an alarming style of debate for a most simpatico of people. A few baseball cards did not go amiss with these good folk either.

Going to Cuba as a baseball envoy and handing out baseball cards as seeds of friendship helped make the trip purposeful and honourable; the kids were overjoyed with their Palmeiro's and Canseco's. Although I went to the island blind, not knowing what and where to find the baseball genie, four events tied up my short visit nicely: 1. Walking the city and seeing the kids invent ways of playing baseball was a treat. Action on every block. 2. Got to a big league ballgame at the Havana ballpark. 3. Discovered the exact room in Havana which housed Babe Ruth on his 1921 tour of the island, and later, in an antiquarian bookshop, found an English/Spanish booklet commemorating the tour. 4. Lastly, visiting the main cemetery I found a pantheon for baseball

players, dated 1942. Whether this counts as serious conclusive SABR research I wonder; however my hope is that the findings open up other avenues and assist another researcher in perhaps turning a double play.

## STREET BALL

Ill equipped with sticks and paper cups, the children somehow managed, reinventing foul and fair territory depending on the lay of the land, just like it was in America with stick ball when few inner city playing fields were available. Walking through the main parts of Havana, you will come across all sizes of children playing with sticks and a paper cup ball, and in some locales one or two will have a glove



and a real wooden bat or a rubber baseball. Each had his particular stance, that of Julio Franco being most obvious but clearly those kids knew what they were doing and who they wanted to be. It was interesting to observe that nowhere in Havana Central did they play lengthwise in the street, rather across ways. Or in alley spaces between streets, mostly with scrub rules with a first base only; make it to first and back and you stay at bat. Countless times passers-by will be obliged to retrieve the ball and toss it back. Of course trying to look cool. My wearing a White Sox cap for protection from the sun was a sure-fire way of winning friends and unsolicited exchanges of conversation, the first question always being "Are you American?" The Cuban people love Americans.

On the ride back to the airport I asked my driver to go via the Buena Vista district. With its newly acquired fame it was worth a look, maybe to find The Buena Vista Social Club, though it turned out to be terribly poor and run down. A game was going on, softball, flat pitch, tricky pitching, played longways because the streets were wider and there was less street activity in this suburb. Four kids, all with gloves, were at it; the batter looked good choking up on a big wooden bat. He had his glove down for home plate. A vital detail was that there was an adult man umpiring and calling pitches. The driver stopped to let me take a quick snapshot. I was unable to communicate my desire to find out how the game worked with the added complexity of balls and strikes... And so another research chore lingers.

## BALLPARK

Politicos and propaganda go hand in glove with sporting events in Cuba: "Our freedom is non negotiable" is the motto boldly written on the front of Havana's modern stadium, built for the most recent Pan-American Games.

Unfortunately, the big league games are staged in a ballpark of a much more modest calibre. I had wanted to witness Cuban baseball since reading a Roger Angell article many years earlier; he reported his pleasure when the baseball stadium was shipshape. On this occasion things were not as good: and the state of the structure was dilapidated, peeling paint, poor lighting, and the facilities were rough and dirty. There were no programs. As for the ballpark food: if Cubans can afford it, you do not want it. They are on an average wage of about \$20 a month, and for them tickets are virtually free. For us \$3.

I was partly distracted but amused as my newly acquired companion, a Canadian who made arrangements, spent the middle innings of a

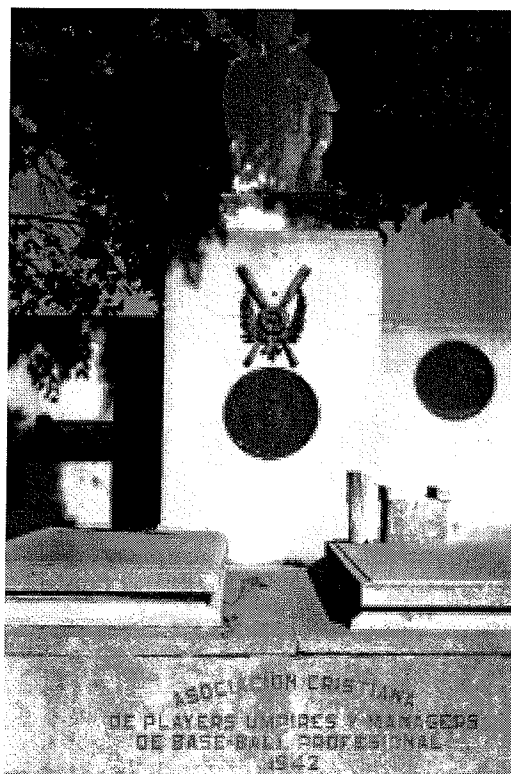
## Buena Vista Baseball Club, con't

thrilling contest negotiating with an usher for a signed jersey by the home team, as well as a ball and whatever else 20 dollars could buy, which was a great deal for him and for the players who would have joyfully received probably a buck and a half each. The game was the most exciting one could devise if inclined to invent it. Angell had mentioned the fervour of the fans. So, it was bad luck when the visiting team scored four runs in the first and took the fans out of the game, aided by the Havana first baseman dropping a routine pop-up. The fielding looked sloppy until suddenly the quality transformed and Havana started playing big league ball. The crowd came alive as gradually the home team clawed back to tie in the seventh, take a one run lead in the eighth, and win in the top of the ninth on a play from deep left for the final out on a close call at the plate. You root for the home team and when they win you share in the joy of the crowd.

### THE RITZ

I was in the market for a room change in case my current reservation could not be extended. I walked across the square to the Ritz, now in decay since its days of glory. The one available room was enormous. I saw there were two foldout cot beds which nixed the place for me. I turned to leave and found the reason the baseball gods had placed me in that particular room; upon examination I was faced with what I would describe as a shrine to Babe Ruth. It was set up on one wall just inside the main entrance, explaining why I did not see it on entering. Four large framed photos of the Babe in action hung on the wall in front of a raised glassed enclosed display case holding a bat, various articles and a ball with indications that Babe Ruth had indeed slept there. I was not at once aware of the significance until a few days later. I have reason to believe that Cuban baseball fans are not aware of this shrine to the Babe. In fact my first reaction was "These Cubans really are baseball crazy". I did not realize

the significance until a few days later. While preparing to leave for the airport I strolled into Chinatown for lunch (where else?). Afterwards just down the street I spied a street stall selling antiquarian books. This is where research does the work for you: As I was searching through a pile of old baseball cards (hoping to find the Honus Wagner big ticket), the vendor handed me a yellow booklet which was of course was nothing less than English/Spanish account of Babe Ruth's 1921 tour of the Island conducted and promoted by



none other than John McGraw. Muggsy's picture along with a shot of the Ritz Hotel was a main spread.

The text was confusing and shabbily edited. Nonetheless I telephoned the author Yuyo Ruiz in Puerto Rico when I got back to London. I told him about the Ritz shrine. He said, surprised if not shocked, "I didn't know about that". He had credited Cuban baseball sources in his book and they too were obviously unaware of the shrine. Yuyo was not forthcoming or of a generous nature, and I suppose the shrine is still our secret.

### NECROPOLIS CRISTOBAL COLON

Again by chance, on the outskirts of Havana, I found yet another baseball shrine described in Spanish as a "pantheon" situated outside the up-market central placements of this grandest of graveyards. It is laid out as a little 'city of the dead' with a grid of streets. In fact to get to the placement indicated in the guide map, which I spotted simply by the word *baseball*, I was obliged to take a taxi from the entrance. It was an astonishing edifice, perhaps 14 feet at its highest point, with an effigy of a ballplayer in uniform towering over. The bigger-than-life figure is truncated a foot below the crotch, with his left hand resting on the knob of a bat. Before him, just where the three-quarter length statue ends, is a ball in a catcher's glove laying flat, above eye level. It is fronted on its pedestal by an unidentifiable round moustached head carved as part of the overall piece. Below on a granite supporting pedestal, about 8 feet high, are two bronze crossed bats with a catcher's mitt and ball in the middle, surrounded by a laurel with a large round bronze portrait beneath, engraved "Emilio Sabourin - annos 1878-1895". It is not clear as to whether this inscription relates to the main figure, however it is clear that a representation of a catcher is intended as a featured detail.

On the main supporting base of the edifice, probably 200 square feet, upon which all the sections stand, are several raised stone graves, and beneath centred at the bottom is the main inscription: "ASOCIACION CRISTIANA DE PLAYERS UMPIRES y MANAGERS DE BASE-BALL PROFESIONAL, 1942" Without an acute grasp of Spanish it is still clear the grave honours an Association of Christians, and the various names listed are of those who sponsored and financed the site. Above, on the front of one of the raised stone graves off to one side is a prominently displayed white stone plaque carved in black letters the heading: "SECUNDARON EFICAZMENTE LA CONSTRUCCION DE ESTE PANTEON", followed by 14 names. Loose translation: *Pantheon built by for these gentlemen: "Los Senores:*

## View from the Chair by Mike Ross

Horacio Alonso, Jose Sosa, Antonio Mosa, Antonio Ma de Cardenas, Alfredo Suarez, Paul J. Miller, Pedro M. Bauza, Rafael Inclan, Miguel Angel Gonzalez, Euslaquio Gutierrez, Alfredo Menendez, Manuel Alonso, Tomas Miquillon, Jose Ma Fernandez." On the end of the main platform is another white and black plaque with a list of men inscribed: "ESTE PANTEON SE CONSTRUYO POR INICIATIVA DE" (and below in smaller letters): *Los senores: Alberto Azoy, Manuel Alonso, Gonzalo Sanchez, Antonio Chavez, Emilio Hernandez, Jose Castener, Manuel Padron.* This would represent and earlier sponsorship. What is obviously a much later addition is a plaque with a bust carved in relief, beneath which is the name "Dr. Antonio Mesa, 1959". This plaque is positioned on a raised pedestal portion of the grave, level with the crossed bats of the centrepiece. On the plaque itself inscribed beside the bust is the inscription: "Dr. Antonio Mesa Valdes". With the inscription: "FUE GRAN CUIDADANO Y DE BUEN DE DEPORTISTA. GRAN ABOGADO Y HONORABLE PRESIDENTE DE LA ASS. C. DE U. Y M. DEL BASE BALL PROFESSIONAL" translates as: "A good citizen and sportsman... a lawyer and honorable president of the Association [C.de U. y M] of professional baseball." On the raised portion on the other side of the crossed bat centrepiece is a round bronze plaque with a portrait inscribed "ANTONIO MARIA DE CARDENAS".

This amazing site sadly has been vandalized and it appears that at least two plaques have been removed. Various pieces of salvaged stone have been assembled informally on or beside the graves. With only token searching, I have indication that many of these names are typical of northern Spain, where many emigrated to Cuba in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The name of Rafael Inclan, perhaps by coincidence perhaps relates to a well known Spanish writer, Suarez Inclan (could he be a Cuban Roger Angell?). The conclusion is: There is much to be discovered with to baseball in Cuba.

I shall ramble and get a few isolated Hail Mary observations ready for the brutal Hoerchner deadline:

Regarding the UK Europe committee and its chores, I feel we here differ from other committees inasmuch as we have literary and intellectual intrigues surrounding the game, which would make for a good story if anyone here cared about it. Unlike the other SABR committees, the sources for making their discoveries, while often deeply buried, are seemingly endless; with us the sources are endless and buried so endlessly deep, with hardly a clue to set us out with pick and shovel. Little has happened here in the past century that does not lead to endless dead ends; hence we have little opportunity to celebrate any meaningful discoveries.

However, in this issue, we feast on Jim Comb's astute assessment of Henderson's book *Ball, Bat and Bishop* to a point where in a truly cooperative - yet separate effort - Martin Hoerchner raises the bar even further to open up the Henderson story to new heights, albeit with a different result. I feel we have achieved a step in a forward direction that suggests our work is not all in vain here. There are so few places to dig, we are often found to be digging in similar ground.

At the very centre of all our fun and games, we are always obliged to play the cricket card if we are to get anywhere with an understanding of baseball, its origins and the English. Cricket is a English upper class game and that is that, and that is where baseball stops. It is the preserve of the landed gentry, not one of whom have I ever known to speak a complimentary word on baseball. Baseball is a biter enemy, a taboo word that can clear a room in minutes. So on we search to figure it out and wonder if the American Revolution had anything to do with the right to play baseball. Baseball is a symbol of freedom, and let's leave it at that.

Softball has succeed for the same reasons that all bat and ball games throughout history grew up, that being the mating game so much encouraged by the church here. Hardly surprising that Oliver Cromwell's Roundheads took aim and smashed a stained glass window at Gloucester cathedral depicting a man with bat and ball. Of course those Puritan rowdies and their inspired ethos were adverse to all fun and games, especially on Sundays. That bat and ball made it to the stained-glass window indicates a comparison today with the cover of Vogue magazine. That was real publicity for bat and ball.

I will leave you with one poignant tale which recently sent my head reeling. Having a few short years ago entered the stately home of cricket under the auspices of its librarian curator, the learned Stephen Green, with privileges far beyond my station to take a place in the sacred Long Room at Lords Cricket Ground. You have to be a member to sit there and becoming a member has much to do with who your great-grandparents were. All members have one thing in common, land wealth and influential forebears. When a player comes to bat, a turn that can last for three days or three seconds, he must pass through the *long room* and this player, after having struck out for a *duck* (out on the first ball), he is rather hangdog coming back through the *long room* to the changing rooms to an awful silence. So in my wandering around the Lords Pavilion, bars, eateries, lounges, terraces and picnic areas, I chanced to spot a large painting in one of the member's rooms which I pointed out to Allen Synge, our Bobby Thomson cricket attaché, that this painting was, on careful investigation, not of a cricket player but of a boy with a trap and ball and bat. When same was pointed out to Green, the painting was suddenly removed for cleaning. However I was subsequently informed that the same painting was 'in storage south of the river'. I doubt if this revisionist notion on canvas will ever again grace the glorious light of Lords cricket ground. That painting was indeed not cricket; it was signifying the start of hardball...

# THIS SABR'D ISLE by Martin Hoerchner

A while back I saw something on TV that made my mouth drop down in disbelief and my blood pressure rise in horror. No, it wasn't the sixth game of the World Series. More about that later. It was an episode of the Steven Spielberg mini-series "Taken", which is about alien abduction.

This episode took place in 1962, and in the background of a very dramatic scene, was a radio playing Game 7 of the World Series. It was the bottom of the ninth, two out, the Giants were trailing by a run, Willie Mays was on second, Matty Alou was on third, and Willie McCovey was at bat. Ralph Terry was pitching for the Yankees – the same pitcher that had given up the series-ending home run by Bill Mazeroski two years earlier. 1962 was a year that the Giants had to defeat the Dodgers in a three-game post-season series, just like 1951, except they were both on the west coast now.

The Spielberg series on TV was in the middle of a very dramatic scene, life and death type of thing, but I didn't hear a word they were saying. My ears were glued on the radio commentary. This was maybe the closest World Series ever, and it would end in Yankee victory and Giants defeat. If McCovey had hit a single he would have won the game. But he lined out to shortstop Bobby Richardson. If the ball had been hit a few feet to one side, the Giants win. But it was not to be. That small radio clip brought a whole wave of sad memories and disappointment back to me – thanks a lot, Steve!

However, that was not the heart-stopper. What really shocked me was the attribution in the end credits, stating something like "World Series radio compliments of Major League Baseball, New York

Yankees vs. New York Giants 1962". I couldn't believe what I was seeing! Especially in a production associated with Mr. Spielberg, who is synonymous with quality in film. So didn't he know that in 1962 the Giants were spending their fifth year in San Francisco?

So I got this idea that I should write my Senator and propose a new law, that any copyrightable work (book, radio program, TV show, film, etc.) – if they have a reference to baseball more than 40 years in the past – should have a SABR member on staff as technical advisor. I think we can get this law passed and it might mean work for some of us!

When I talked about the bad memories that came flooding back, of course I was talking about the 1912, 1917, and 1924 World Series, which share with 1962 as being the closest MLB championships ever. All were lost by the Giants in sudden death in the seventh game due to incredibly fluky circumstances.

Game 7 (actually 8, because of an earlier tie) of the 1912 World Series took place in Fenway Park, in its first year, with Giants legend Christy Matthewson pitching in relief in the bottom of the tenth inning. A series of really strange happenings, including Snodgrass' muff and an easy popup that went unfielded, gave the Red Sox final victory in the bottom of the 10th inning.

Game 7 of the 1917 World Series is known for "Heinie's dash". The White Sox won their last Series in a fluky play in Game 7 in which they had a runner at third and the catcher had gone off to cover another play. With the plate unguarded, the runner bolted for home, with Heinie Zimmerman, the Giants third baseman, running after him with the ball comically

extended in his outstretched fingers.

Game 7 of the 1924 World Series was won by the Washington Senators (their first and only), after an easy ground out hit a pebble and bounced over the head of the Giants shortstop (future Hall of Famer), not once but twice, and the Giants catcher, fielding an easy popup, tripped over his mask that he had thrown down earlier and let the ball roll away harmlessly. One of the Senators later suggested that God had played a hand, to let a fine fellow like Walter Johnson finally win a World Series ring.

Those of you who know me, know that everything I've written so far is about the 2002 World Series. After the eighth inning of Game 6, I knew the Giants would fulfil their destiny and lose another World Series. The Giants have won a few – five in total, not counting 1888 and 1889 – but have lost 12, which ties the Yankees and Dodgers as being the most of any franchise, but with fewer wins. It was an exciting World Series, with the momentum shifting three times. After Game 5, the greatest single game World Series victory, I was on such a high, up until the eighth inning of Game 6. Then when things started unraveling, it all came into focus. I was horribly disappointed, but not horribly surprised. I knew the Giants were merely fulfilling their destiny.

Someday the hurt will ease, and I'll be able to watch the videos. It was a great Series, with lots of great moments. I have to be proud that the Giants did as well as they did.

Still, you have to ask yourself who they traded in 1920 that cursed them so much.

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