

THE BIRTH OF WOMEN'S CRICKET



Early village matches tended to be 'one-offs', played for prizes including plum-cake and ale. These games could attract a lot of interest and in 1747, a match in Sussex had to be abandoned due to a pitch invasion by an overly rowdy crowd!

Between 1890 and 1918, 140 women's clubs were formed. A lot of women's teams were made up of aristocratic ladies and girls from wealthy families. However, some employers offered cricket as an activity for their female workers, including Cadburys, Rowntree and Boots.

Cricket has traditionally been viewed as a "male" sport, even though women have played the game for just as long as men. Women have played cricket for centuries.



1745

The first recorded women's match took place in 1745 in Surrey between (according to the Reading Mercury) "eleven maids of Bramley and eleven maids of Hambledon".



<1900

Before 1900, women usually played in long skirts and blouses, sometimes paired with a bonnet. International players continued to play in skirts until 1997.



1914-1918

During the First World War, women working in munitions factories formed cricket teams while men were away fighting on the front. As women's role in public life grew after the war, so did the wider acceptance of women's cricket. Progress, however, was a hard-fought battle.

From its earliest days, women's cricket has struggled to gain public acceptance and it was viewed as entertainment, rather than sport.



Zena Dare, an Edwardian musical comedian dressed as a cricketer.

1926
For a long time, most people agreed with W.G. Grace's assessment that it was "not a game for women". Although a lot of women's cricket was played, it often took place behind closed doors.

*W.G. Grace's mother, Martha Grace, helped teach W.G. how to bat!

The formation of the Women's Cricket Association in 1926 was a significant step for the sport and was closely followed by further milestones including the first match on a first-class county ground at Worcester in 1932.



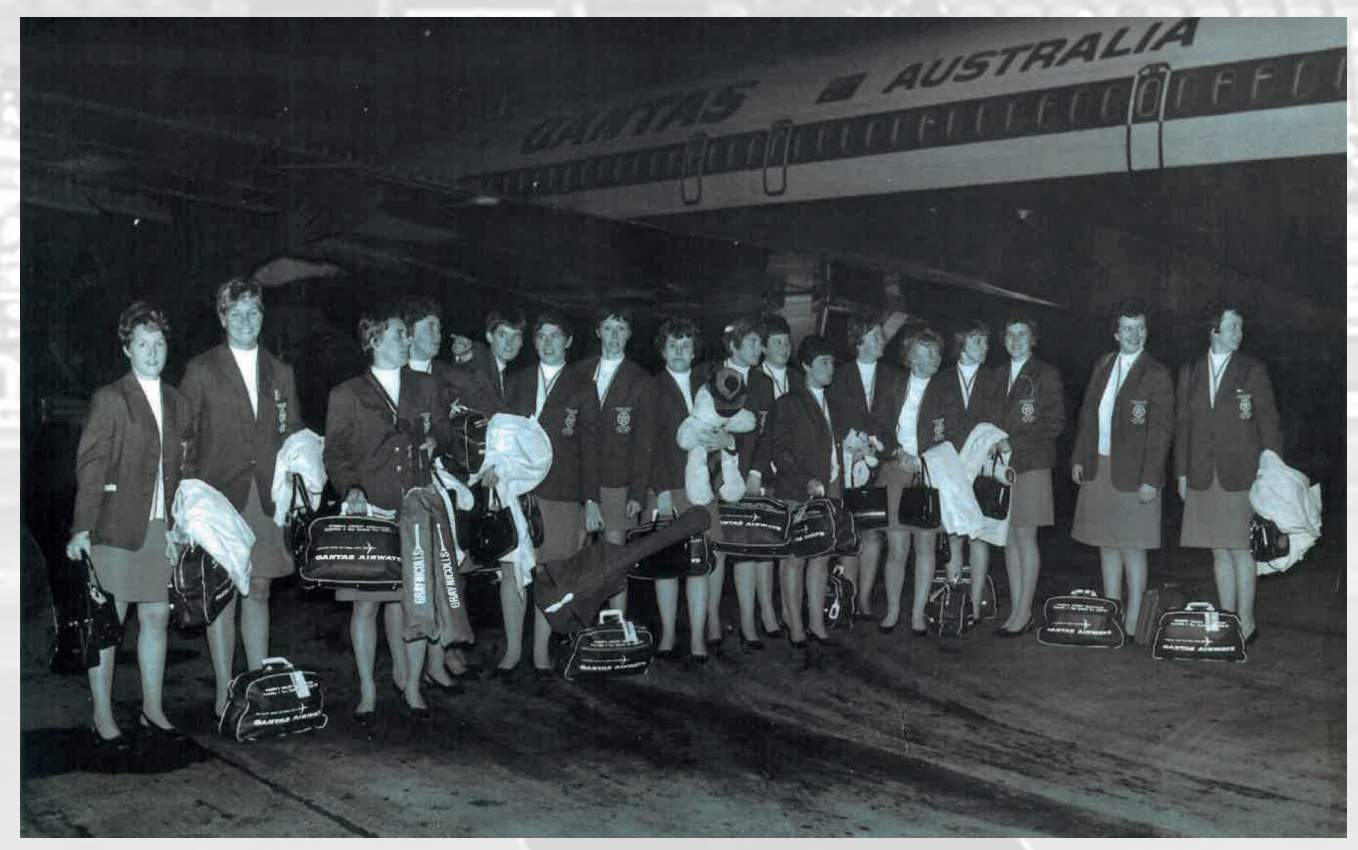
Betty Snowball and Myrtle Macgalan at Blackpool 1937.



1976
Trying to find places to play has always been a challenge for female cricketers, due to the fact that cricket grounds are generally owned by men. It took 47 years before the MCC finally allowed the England team to play at Lord's in 1976.

In 1931, the formation of the Australian Women's Cricket Council (AWCC) created the first opportunity for a global women's cricket tour.

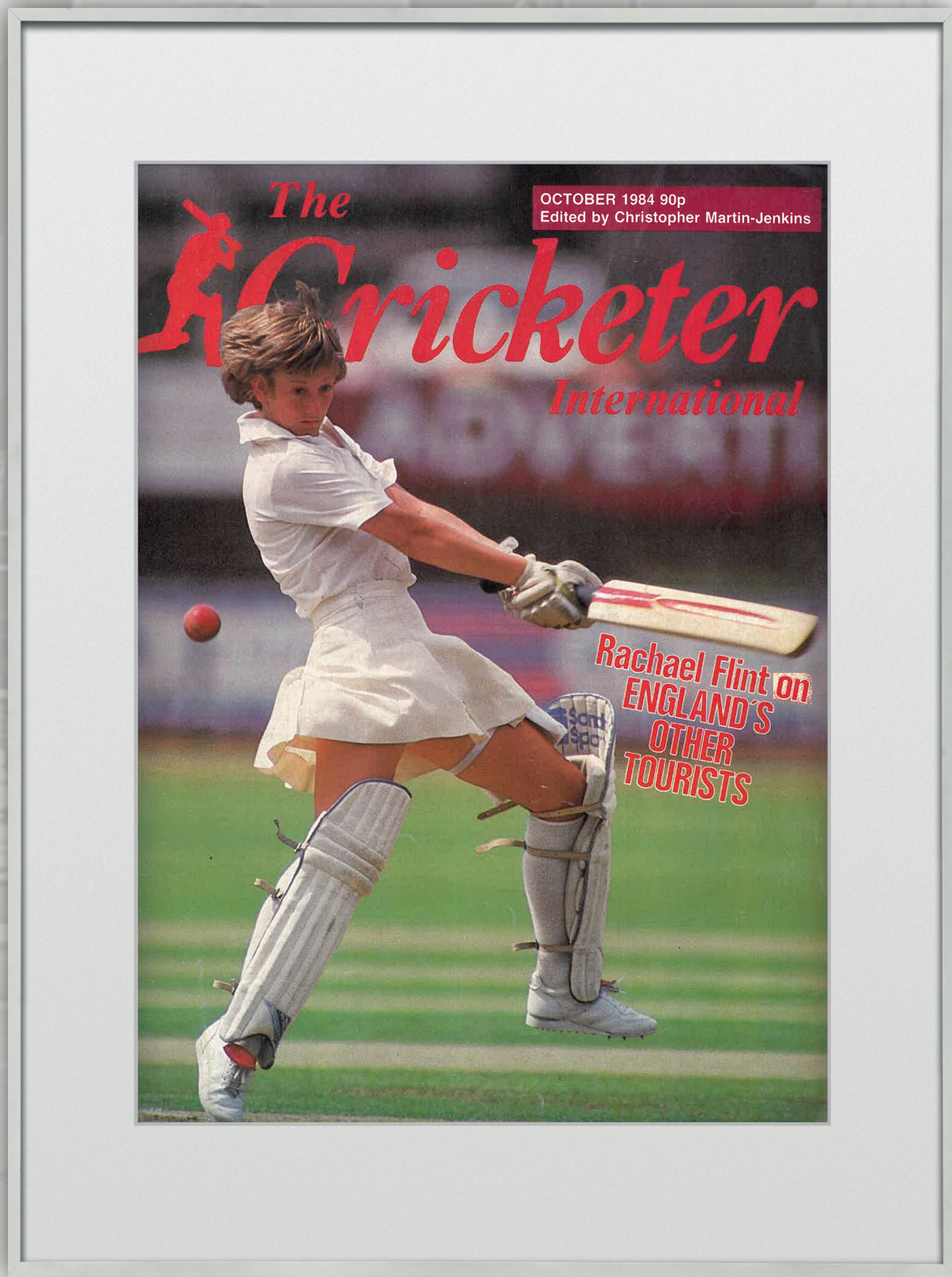
1934
The English team set sail for Australia on 19 October 1934. The players on the 1934-35 tour had to pay for their own boat tickets to Australia (£94 and 10 shillings, roughly £4,800 in today's money). This team was made up of women who could afford to travel, rather than those with the best cricketing skill. The games attracted large crowds and the English players were treated like VIPS.



“
Everywhere we went we were recognised.
England's Myrtle Macgalan.



Lyn Larsen and Carole Ann Hodges.



1973
The first ever Cricket World Cup was played by women in the summer of 1973 - two years before the men's version. In 1971, Rachael Heyhoe Flint persuaded Jack Hayward to stump up £40,000 to fund England for a World Cup competition. England beat Australia in the final to become World Champions. They were invited by Prime Minister Edward Heath to 10 Downing Street to celebrate their achievement.

NOTABLE MATCHES HELD AT EMIRATES OLD TRAFFORD

1934

England v Rest (The first WCA match played at a Test Ground).

1936

Lancashire v Kent



1937

Lancashire v Australia



1938

Lancashire v Middlesex



1946

North v Midlands

1951

North v Australia



1976

England v Australia



1999

England v India (ODI)



2004

England v New Zealand (ODI)



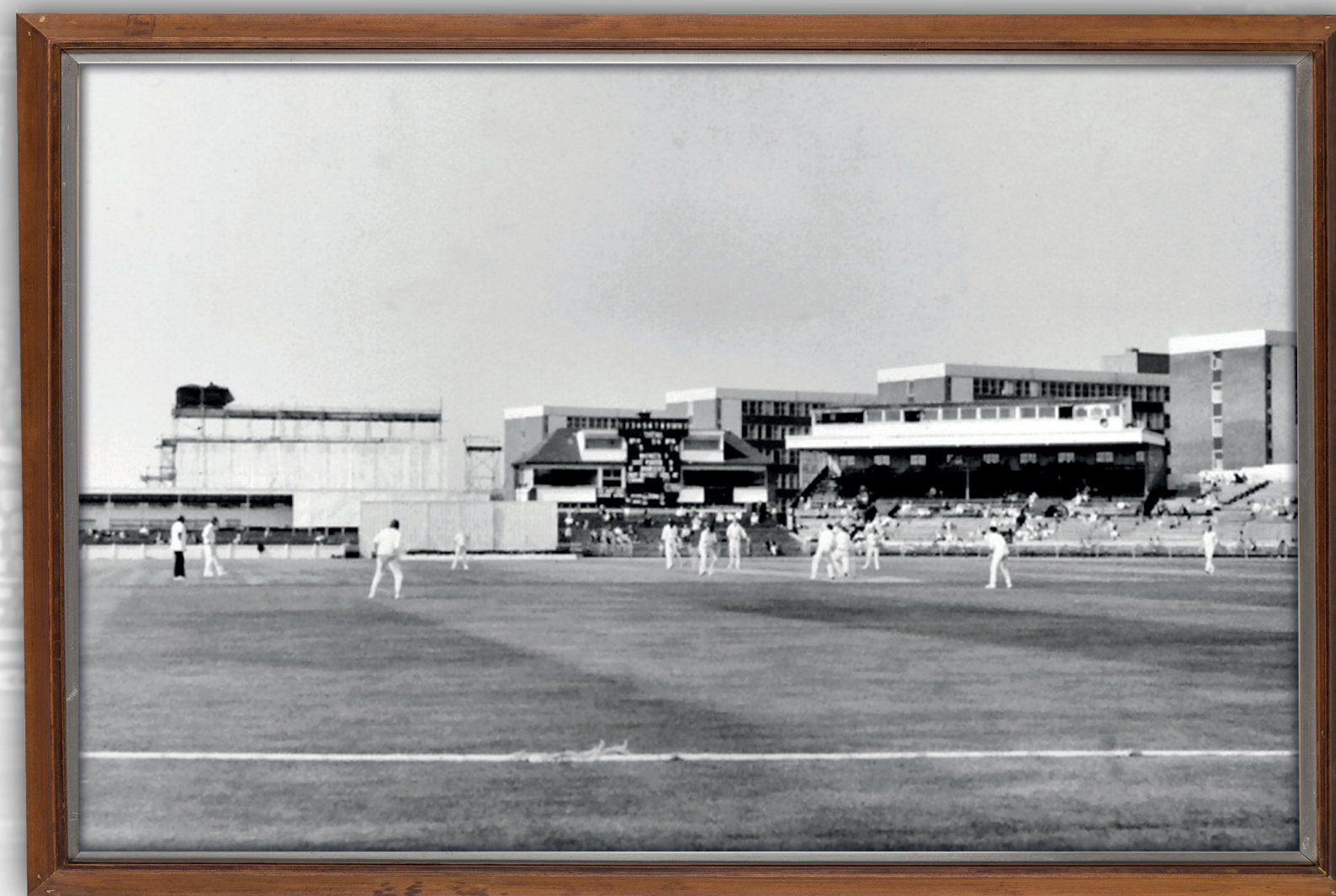
2012

England v West Indies (T20)



2016

Thunder v Diamonds
(First KIA Super League match at Emirates Old Trafford).



2021

Manchester Originals v Birmingham Phoenix (First Women's Hundred match at Emirates Old Trafford).



2021

Thunder v Sunrisers
(First Charlotte Edwards Cup match at Emirates Old Trafford).



2022

Thunder v Central Sparks
(First Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy match at Emirates Old Trafford).



2023

Thunder take the headline slot at T20 Double Header.



CAROLE ANN HODGES

Carole Hodges was the **first woman to be inducted into the Lancashire Cricket Hall of Fame**. She scored 3,975 runs with ten centuries for the Lancashire and Cheshire team between 1974-1993. **She also took 133 wickets.**

As a talented all-rounder, Carole appeared in 18 Test Matches and 47 One-Day Internationals for England between 1982 and 1993. She was part of the England team that won the 1993 World Cup, defeating New Zealand in the final at Lords. She has held the positions of Captain, President, Hon. Treasurer and Chair of Lancashire Women's cricket.



SOPHIE ECCLESTONE

Sophie Ecclestone is **known for her remarkable skills as a left-arm orthodox spinner**. She has made a significant impact on women's cricket since her Lancashire debut in 2015, inspiring aspiring female cricketers around the world.

Ecclestone's career has been outstanding. At a young age, she quickly rose through the ranks and showcased her talent on the international stage. Her consistent performances earned her numerous accolades and established her as one of the best spinners in women's cricket.

Sophie has **played over 130 games for England since her international debut in 2016**. Her best bowling figures are 6 for 36 against South Africa in the 2021/22 World Cup semi-final, but probably her most impressive performance was taking 10 wickets in the Test match against Australia in 2023. Ecclestone's impact on women's sport extends beyond her on-field achievements. She has been an inspiration to young girls aspiring to play cricket professionally, breaking barriers and challenging stereotypes along the way. I got all the boys out, and I bowled the headmaster first ball. He said to me afterwards:

“So, you're OK at cricket? He was so nice to me for the rest of school after that. I don't think he realised I could actually play cricket... My mum told him I could play and he said: Yeah, she can join in.”

A LONG WAY TO GO

There is still a long way to go before women's cricket can be seen on an equal footing with the men's game. Women's cricket still receives less media coverage, less funding and lower salaries than their male counterparts. Men also hugely outnumber women in umpiring, coaching and governance roles.

Lancashire Cricket have committed to 'supercharging' the growth of women's cricket by providing extra funding to our Lancashire Women and Thunder.

KATE CROSS

Kate Cross made her **domestic debut for Lancashire Women's Cricket Team in 2005 at the age of 13**. Cross quickly established herself as a talented fast bowler and became a key player for Lancashire.

She has **played over 70 games for England since her international debut in 2013**. Her notable performances include 5 for 24 against New Zealand in 2014/5, and 5 for 34 against India in 2021. Her most memorable batting performance was scoring 19* to help beat Australia by 2 wickets in the first ODI of 2023. Kate Cross has received several accolades for her outstanding performances, including being named the Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA) Women's Player of the Year in 2015.

Throughout her career, Kate Cross has demonstrated her skill, dedication, and passion for the game. She continues to be a valuable asset to both Lancashire and the England Women's Cricket Team, leaving a lasting impact on the sport.



We would like to thank **Charlotte Goodhew** from Lord's for help with the text and also the loan of some of the exhibits and photos. Thanks also to **Malcolm Lorimer, Rosie Corner, David Masey, Jen Barden, Katrina Lees and Bonnie Cliff** for help with this exhibition.