

## Liettres Challenge 1478 : French invented Cricket !



*Interview of Philippe Dethoor, president-player of Lille Cricket Club, about Liettres Challenge 1478, Lille CC and french cricket.*

**Philippe, could you tell us a bit about the Liettres 1478 Challenge (for instance, how it came about, the clubs involved, the latest news,...)?**

In fact, one of our members – Maxime Parent – who has a passion for both cricket and History, first came up with the idea for the Liettres Challenge several years ago, but for one reason or another, the idea was not elaborated upon until recently.

The project resurfaced again in May 2014 when we were contacted by an inhabitant of the village of Liettres (Isabelle Marcotte), who also happens to be the local correspondent for the *Pays de la Lys Romane* Tourist Office, to which this little hamlet in the Pas-de-Calais is attached.

Isabelle wanted the LILLE CRICKET CLUB to put on a demonstration at their September 2014 Heritage Days event, and it was on that occasion that we were able to meet the Mayor of Liettres and the Head of the Festivities Committee and put forward the idea for this tournament, which immediately excited the interest of our local counterparts.

In terms of involvement, we have invited 2 other clubs to take part in the tournament, i.e., WHITSTABLE CC from Kent, U.K., and the ARCADIANs from Ghent, Belgium.

Over the last 8 years, LILLE CRICKET CLUB has developed very close and friendly sporting ties with both of these clubs in particular. The spirit of sportsmanship is still strong on all sides and I'm sure that both will be fielding their best teams for the tournament.

Currently we are busy fine-tuning the details of the Challenge, which means addressing issues like logistics, the tournament rules, public facilities, safety and so on.

Obviously LILLE CRICKET CLUB will not be managing the event alone, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Liettres Festivities Committee, the Mayor of Liettres and the Director of the *Pays de la Lys Romane* Tourist Office, Ms ANNE DEBOSQUE, for the remarkable work they are all doing to make this not only a cricketing event but also a festival for the village of Liettres and its inhabitants.

The tournament has attracted a lot of media attention throughout the English-speaking cricketing world. What are your feelings about this? Aren't you concerned about jeopardizing the "Entente Cordiale"?

As a matter of fact, we were extremely surprised by the scale of the media attention that followed the announcement of the tournament and the story of the first mention of cricket in Liettres. Our press-book is filled with articles from around the world (England, India, the United States, Jamaica,...), but the icing on the cake definitely has to be the report broadcast on the Indian channel, INDIA TODAY, in between the results of the INDIA-SRI LANKA match and USAIN BOLT's performance at the last World Athletics Championships in Beijing!

As for the "Entente Cordiale", despite a few instances of "French bashing" in some British newspapers, we are sure that the warm Franco-British friendship will in no way be affected by this issue.



On the other hand, the tournament has received no media attention whatsoever in France. Disappointed?

With the event just 2 weeks away, the French media is beginning to take an interest in the Challenge.

Reports on the event have already been run in the local press, and other media outlets (radio, television) are expected to confirm their interest within the next few days.

If the tournament is a success, do you see it becoming an annual event? Or even a major fixture for French and European cricket?

We certainly hope so.

We don't see this as a one-off publicity stunt. LILLE CRICKET CLUB and all of the local stakeholders are fiercely determined to make this a permanent competition which could possibly one day be open to other European clubs, and eventually become a MAJOR fixture in the European cricketing calendar.

### Lille CC was recently awarded the “Club dynamique” label by France Cricket. What are the club’s plans/projects for the future?

LILLE CC is now 8 years old and still going strong. This is a source of immense pride for our members.

Today, we are at a turning point in our history since further development is closely tied to our securing a proper ground. This would allow us to take part in official France Cricket competitions and develop the club even further by forming a youth team and – why not – even a female team.

The project to secure a cricket field that meets official standards is currently being pursued in the Nord – Pas-de-Calais region, and we are keeping our fingers crossed that a solution will be found within the coming 2 years.

### Your club’s members are from a various backgrounds. In France, cricket is still the privilege of individuals from cricket-playing countries (the U.K., India, Pakistan), which sometimes leads to it being perceived as a “community” sport or a sport for the “initiated”. How can this situation be changed with a view to popularizing cricket among the French and Non-Commonwealth foreign residents?

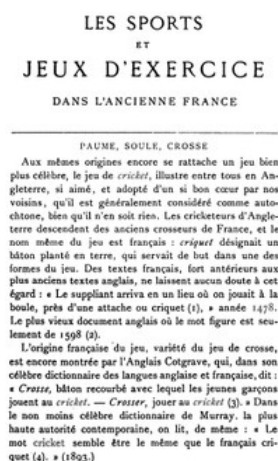
The Liettes 1478 Challenge is, of course, one way of opening up our sport to as wide an audience as possible, but obviously this is not enough.

Continuing the development of cricket in France is very important, and I know for a fact that France Cricket’s current management team is working hard at this.

Developing cricket in France also involves introducing young people to the game at an early age, in schools and clubs, for instance, but doing so requires resources that are still sadly lacking in our cricket clubs.

As cricket develops, the media will begin taking more of an interest in the game, which in turn will help to encourage more people to come and play our sport.

So we have a bright future ahead of us!



Le jeu n'est, en effet, autre chose qu'une variété du jeu de crosse ou de soule à la crosse. Le but qu'il s'agit d'atteindre ou de défendre, le guichet, le *micket* des Anglais, est une réduction du but dont on se servait dans certains jeux de soule proprement dits et qui figure dans la représentation de ce jeu donnée plus haut.

Une preuve décisive peut être fournie de l'identité, estampe moins célèbre de Gravelot, qui figure dans son *Petit Cahier d'images pour les enfants*. L'artiste français a représenté toute sorte de jeux : la balançoire, le cheval fondu, le sabot, le cerceau, les quilles, l'arbalète, enfin « le jeu de la crosse ». La gravure est également reproduite ici; qu'on veuille bien comparer les dessins; on constatera, à l'évidence, que les deux jeux n'en sont qu'un. Un joueur lance la boule; un autre défend, avec sa batte, le but, qui consiste en deux petits bâtons fichés dans le sol et réunis par une traverse; un troisième joueur, un genou en terre derrière le but, s'apprête à saisir la balle au cas où elle le dépasserait; d'autres surveillent le champ.

Les deux jeux sont bien le même, puisque cette unique description rend compte à la fois de la scène que représentent les deux gravures. On reconnaît dans les joueurs le *batteur* ou lanceur, le *batteuse* ou batteur, le *wicket-keeper* ou garde-guichet du cricket moderne. Dans les deux dessins, le même genre d'instruments est employé: même boule, même sorte de guichet, même espèce de batte. Il faut remarquer, et le point est d'importance, que dans les deux gravures, chez les joueurs anglais comme chez les joueurs français, la batte consiste en une crosse. L'estampe de Gravelot est accompagnée de ces vers peu poétiques, mais qui indiquent clairement la nature du jeu :

Cotgrave avait donc bien raison : « *Crosser* — to play at cricket. »

Jusque dans le cours du dix-huitième siècle, le jeu fut pratiqué, en Angleterre comme en France, surtout par des enfants ou de tout jeunes gens qui, pour l'ordinaire, étaient loin d'appartenir à la haute société. Mais alors une différence se manifeste : la période est, pour les jeux d'exercice, une époque de décadence chez nous et de progrès en Angleterre. En France, ils parviennent tout juste à se maintenir dans la province; en Angleterre, ils gagnent de proche en proche, remplissent le pays, envahissent les villes; les plus populaires : le cricket, le football, conquièrent la haute classe, qui, chez nous au contraire, et comme on verra, s'intéresse de moins en moins au sport. Les fêtes sportives se multiplient dans la campagne anglaise; le *Spectator* d'Addison, qui est sur les mœurs une influence si marquée, les encourage (1). C'est le moment où le cricket devient, en Angleterre, le jeu de tout le monde, depuis les pairs du royaume jusqu'aux ouvriers des faubourgs; le jeu de toute la nation, le « jeu national ». A ce titre, à cette date, mais non pas à d'autres, il mérite cet honorable nom.

De la main de petit Jacques  
Ce globe va partir; un autre enfant s'apprête  
À l'écarter du but; ainsi, dans tout projet,  
Souvent nous éprouvons un choc qui nous arrête (1).