

Geoffrey Moorhouse, *Lord's*. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1983. Illus., pp.256. \$29.95.

Much travelled author Geoffrey Moorhouse, who has written on a wide range of topics from an account of a camel trip across Sahara to a book on Indian mysticism, has now published his second work on cricket, a book which is written in the best literary traditions of the game.

Chapter one, which explores the institution of Lord's, is an exceptional and evocative study (a model for those who want to write club or institutional studies) literally from the grass-roots up. There is information about the grass breeds on the Lord's wicket, the clay content, the famous ridge, the 18 strips prepared each summer, the Lord's haze, the 'almost rural' character of the ground, its stands, gates and trees, the groundsman, the nooks and

crannies of its committee rooms and the 'decided respectability' of its neighbourhood. Moorhouse, however goes beyond the smell and sight of Lord's to look at its meaning for players, politicians and people in England and overseas,

Throughout the book there are many vignettes about how things work at Lord's from an author who spent a couple of years, off and on, prowling the corridors of power. There is information, for instance, about feeding a typical Test crowd and the number of meat pies, doughnuts and strawberries that will be eaten, and the amount of liquor consumed and the Club policy to slow down the pace of drink consumption by either reducing the serving staff (who are told to take a longer meal break) or of closing the bar. Moorhouse also provides information on facilities in the Long Room where members are provided with wash-basins, soap and nailbrushes but have to eat hot lunches off narrow ledges while standing up. He also discusses the changed character of the Lord's crowd and concludes that, while the West Indians are the noisiest spectators, they have a much better sense of crowd control (and interest in the cricket) than some of the 'young larrikins from Earl's Court'. The reader is also introduced to some of the characters of Lord's including Nancy Doyle, who runs the dining room, and popular commentator Brian Johnston who gives out 'copious earfuls of rather Old Etonian (circa 1925) humour'.

This is more than a book about a ground, a club or even institution because until 1968 Lord's (and the MCC who ran Lord's) were the political establishment of cricket. Much of the book focusses on how Lord's (the MCC and its members) dealt and coped with the progressive transfer of their power to other institutions from 1968, notably the TCCB. There are many illuminating examples of the convoluted manner in which a host of committees dealt with changing political realities. Moorhouse also suggests that rather than being an 'unmitigated bunch of fuddy-duddies', a popular stereotype of the MCC, the club has entered a period of great turbulence in recent times and has a greater diversity than ever before.

Moorhouse makes no efforts to hide his biases. He refers to the 'reticent grandeur' and 'graciousness' of Lord's and he quotes, with some relish, Jack Fingleton's comment about its 'calm

and peaceful majesty'. Nor does he disguise his antipathy to what he sees as the Americanisation of the game in Australia and the defilement of the SCG by 'totems of commerce' (lighttowers) which he hopes will not be introduced at Lord's. However, his views are always forthright and independent and he takes Pelham Warner to task over Bodyline and suggests that his role then 'offers the outstanding example of that humbug which too often in the past coated the English cricketing establishment'. He is also critical of the unwillingness of the MCC to contribute to Ken Mackay's benefit in 1963, although it had a tradition of providing largesse for needy cricketers in the same way that a squire patronised his tenants.

Even a well produced book - which this is - can contain the odd typographical error. There is a footnote reference to an Eton versus Harrow match in 1876 which 'was played in temperatures which varied between 142 degrees in the sun and 90 degrees in the shade'. I've heard of mad dogs and Englishmen but...

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