

Christopher Douglas, *Douglas Jardine; Spartan Cricketer*. George Allen and Unwin, London and Sydney, 1984. Illus., \$19.95.

Douglas Jardine was a highly complex character; unfortunately Christopher Douglas's new biography does not do him justice. Only rarely does the reader catch a glimpse of the man beneath the harlequin cap.

For obvious reasons Jardine and bodyline have become synonymous, but this cannot justify a biography that devotes one-third of

its pages to that one tour. Douglas adds nothing new to the body-line story and simply repeats previous less well-informed chroniclers. At times he attempts to be even more jargonian than Jardine himself and goes so far as to claim that Jardine was tactically correct to employ a bodyline field after Woodfull had been hit over the heart. Yet Jardine himself came to regret that ill-fated decision.

In the book's opening paragraph Douglas writes that 'in almost every respect - intellect, morality, even appearance - he was a nineteenth century man.' Douglas wants to claim Jardine for the Victorians but this hypothesis is flawed and the debate over bodyline highlights the point.

Formally bodyline bowling did not break the laws of cricket but it did contravene the spirit of the game. For a real Victorian like Plum Warner, co-manager of the 1932-33 tour and a member of the MCC Committee, bodyline was not cricket. Shortly after he arrived in Australia in 1932, Warner made a speech which summarised the Victorian notion of cricket's social values. He stated 'the very word cricket has become a synonym for all that is true and honest. To say "that is not cricket" implies something underhand, something not in keeping with the best ideals.'

In his determination to win at all costs Jardine challenged Warner's notion of fair play. As Neville Cardus wrote at the time Jardine was 'the dour exponent of realpolitik in cricket'.

International cricket reached a watershed in 1932-33 and bodyline marked a turning point in the business of serious cricket. There were 'friendly tours' after that but they were the exception rather than the rule. In his approach to captaincy and cricket Jardine was far from being a Victorian.

Jardine was an amateur whose circumstances were such that he could never afford to devote himself totally to playing cricket. Business invariably had to be put before pleasure and much the same can be said of his approach to the game. Despite being one of England's most successful captains Jardine never fitted into the Lord's establishment. Like C.B. Fry and Archie MacLaren he was too much of an individualist.

Douglas comments that Jardine could never be accused of being narrow-minded, that he read widely and had a busy social life. But beyond that comment his life remains something of a mystery. An intriguing aspect that has only just surfaced - but which Douglas ignores - was Jardine's interest in mysticism and Hinduism. A letter after his death from a relative in *The Times* told of Jardine's antipathy to Christianity.

In 1934 after bodyline bowling had been banned, Lord's made Harold Larwood a scapegoat and effectively ostracised Jardine. When he was married not a single well-known MCC figure attended the ceremony. Although he qualified as a solicitor, Jardine preferred to work as a bank clerk and later as a journalist. Details of the rest of his life are sketchy; war service with the Expeditionary Forces, a job as a company secretary with a major paper manufacturer and as director of the Scottish Australia Company. In 1953 he visited Australia and like so many other Test cricketers lunched with Sir Robert Menzies. In 1957 he caught tick fever in Rhodesia and died of cancer the following year.

Christopher Douglas's biography marks a belated but unsuccessful attempt to rehabilitate Douglas Jardine who, as the author so poignantly remarks, was like a 'star leaving the stage to the sound of his own footsteps'.

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