

**Gerald Howat, *Cricket Medley*. Sports History Publishing, Great Britain, 1993. pp. 125. \$15 including postage from The Editor, ASSH.**

This slim volume, published on behalf of the British Society for Sports History, is the first monograph published by this society. *Cricket Medley* consists of a variety of short pieces previously published in newspapers, magazines and journals by noted cricket biographer and author Gerald Howat. These essays, written over the past decade or two, provide the opportunity to explore some of Howat's enduring themes and interests.

Howat has a keen eye for the spread of the game world-wide. His work on Constantine took him to the West Indies, while research on Hammond and Parsons involved him in a study of South Africa and India respectively. The author has also observed cricket in Australia and the United States, played cricket in Bangkok and umpired in Gambia, and presumably in many other far-flung places. Howat has a good feel for the role of cricket in the colonial world. Soldiers constructed the wicket at Bathurst (or Banjul), Zambia, he informs his readers, right in the middle of town 'surrounded by trees and those impedimenta of British colonialism, the Anglican Cathedral, the colonnaded Army barracks, an ornamental Victorian bandstand, and memorials to those who had fallen in battles' (p. 28).

The author has a special affinity for cricket in the Victorian era and the role of the clergy in promoting the game. Many clergyman, including Canon Pickles - who regarded cricket as his second religion - were prominent both as players and as definers the moral world of cricket.

Cricket enthusiasm is another recurring theme. Canon Pickles, John Mitford, Charles Absolom and C T Studd are cited all interesting examples of cricketing passion bordering on eccentricity. Charles Absolom, who was prominent in the game in the 1860s and 1870s, took off at the age of

thirty-three to become a wanderer, who lived with the Indian tribes of Montana and the Columbia Valley, then became a ship's purser before he was fatally injured by a crane carrying sugar in the West Indies ten years later.

As the former Secretary of the North Moreton for twenty-eight years (and now the President), Howat has a keen interest in cricket at the grass-roots level, notably at the village level. There are also a number of pieces on school cricket, a much neglected area of research.

The volume also contains some practical advice for those who may wish to write cricket biography. To get a 'feel' for Constantine Howat listened to BBC tapes, conducted interviews and generally immersed himself in the world of his subject. Publishing *Cricket Medley* as the initial BSSH monograph was an excellent idea as Howat is an accomplished writer, who has mastered the art of writing short but telling essays. Howat writes with economy, grace and wit and has a good eye for the telling phrase and the striking anecdote. I like his story about C T Studd, who played cricket at the highest level, but gave it up when in his cricketing prime to become a missionary in China. When on furlough Studd played the occasional game clad in Chinese costume and sporting a pig tail.

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