

New Exhibition: No Foreign Field: MCC and the Empire of Cricket



The display on the D'Oliveira Affair

Recently I was given the opportunity to visit MCC's new exhibition *No Foreign Field: MCC and the Empire of Cricket* in the company of the Chief Librarian at Lord's, Neil Robinson, and one of the exhibition's curators, Dr Prashant Kidambi. The exhibition tells the story of MCC's role in cricket's global development from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. Neil explained that, together with others running concurrently (one on cricket in the Jewish community and the other portraits of black cricketers), this exhibition is part of his initiative to make Lord's 'the home of cricket for every cricket fan and to make every cricket fan feel at home wherever they are from.'

Prashant told me that his role as curator was to bring a non-MCC perspective to the Museum's collection in order to create a display that reads against the grain of established (or establishment)



Bodyline, with Bradman's bat and two balls used by Larwood and Voce

narratives. It's an exhibition of two halves. The first uses the unrivalled cricket archive at Lord's to tell the fascinating story of the export of the game to all four corners of the world, from the USA to the South Seas, and begins with the visit of the Australian Aborigine tourists in 1868. This section demonstrates how Lord's was the centre around which cricket developed in an analogous way to that of imperial London and the British colonies and superheroes of influence. The second half focuses on how Lord's grip on the administration of the game was loosened as the twentieth century progressed, with MCC shifting from being an imperial to a post-imperial institution.

If all this sounds rather cerebral, fear not. The scholarship is first class but this is no dry academic exercise. The argument is illustrated with a galaxy of significant objects, documents and films from cricket's history - among them balls used in the Bodyline series (as well as Bradman's cap), a panorama of portraits of the Australian Aboriginal cricketers, manuscripts of tour diaries, the minutes of the infamous selectors' meeting for the cancelled 1968 MCC tour to South Africa, shirts from World Series Cricket and the IPL as well as memorabilia from the women's game. These are just a small number of the items that will delight and entertain any cricket fan no matter what prior knowledge they bring.

The exhibition continues for the rest of the year and can be visited on match days or as part of a tour of Lord's. A symposium inspired by the exhibition will be hosted at Lord's on the 26th July 2023 with a host of distinguished cricket historians in discussion, keep an eye out for an announcement on how to get tickets.