

Confirming Tradition: Confirming Change – A Social History of the Cricket Tours to New Zealand in the 1930s

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Abstract:

This study examines the eight tours to New Zealand by visiting cricketing teams between 1930 and 1939. There were four tours made by the Marylebone Cricket Club along with inaugural visits by the West Indies, South Africa, an England Women's XI, and lastly the Julien Cahn XI. These tours were major events for contemporaries, attracting large crowds and much attention in the press. They are a focus for an examination of New Zealand's relations with other parts of the world, specifically other parts of the Empire. The tours were major sporting events, but also prompted wider popular and public discussion of nationhood, race, gender and the role of sport in society and the Empire.

For the New Zealand public in the 1930s, cricket was a game that connected them with their British and imperial heritage during a period of uncertainty. For the cricket community of New Zealand the tours were massive undertakings due to the substantial financial commitment required and poor results, but the tours continued because of the strong associations and core beliefs that cricket nurtured and because of a love of the game. Though these tours contained few moments of on-field achievement for the hosts they say much about how New Zealanders of that decade viewed themselves and others.

Drawing primarily on the dense contemporary press coverage 'Confirming Tradition, Confirming Change' examines cricket's capacity to operate as more than a game - it acts as a conduit for understanding the broader social attitudes and beliefs of the time. Each of the tours contains an internal narrative concerning entrenched traditions and bonds and their interplay with newer realities and considerations. Cricket was largely administered by bodies that emphasised the traditions and conservative structures of the game, but the teams themselves represented and engaged with the changing expectations and realities of sport in this decade. Cricket was changing from within, exemplified by the expansion of test cricket but also influenced by external elements such as the growth of radio commentary and cinema. This study examines the eight tours in three chronologically bracketed chapters focusing on issues of race in the tours by the MCC of 1929-30, the West Indies in 1930-31 and South Africa in 1931-32; the issue of gender and identity in the tours by the MCC of 1932-33 and the England Women of 1934-35; and issues of professionalism/commercialism and differences in player and public expectations in the tours by the MCC in 1935-36, 1936-37 and the Julien Cahn XI in 1938-39. Throughout the eight tours there were tensions between tradition and change, sometimes exhibited between New Zealand crowds and visiting teams, sometimes between administrators and players. The tours may have reflected the weakness of New Zealand cricket, but the local players' and spectators' commitment to Empire is apparent through the continued perseverance at a sport that at the time represented imperial loyalty and global British communality.

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Cricket is a bat-and-ball sport contested by two teams, usually of 11 players each. A cricket match is played on a grass field, roughly oval in shape, at the center of which is a flat strip of ground 22 yards (20.12 m) long, called a cricket pitch. At each end of the pitch is a construction of three parallel wooden stakes (known as stumps) driven vertically into the ground, with two small crosspieces (known as bails) laid across the top of them. This wooden structure is called a wicket. Cricket has This is a concise textbook on New Zealand history, designed so it can be read by virtually anyone wanting to find out more about New Zealand history. The textbook covers the time span of human settlement in New Zealand. It includes: The discovery and colonisation of New Zealand by Polynesians. Maori culture up to the year 1840. Discovery of New Zealand by Europeans. Early New Zealand economy and Missionaries in New Zealand. The Treaty of Waitangi. European colonisation, and conflict with the Maori people.