

filaments of the Caribbean. In New Zealand the game's history reveals much about the enduring bonds of imperial deference rather than any tide of independence. Greg Ryan's elucidatory chapter provides a discomfiting corrective to the recent tendency to emphasize New Zealand's growing sense of independence and cultural maturity in the post-war or at least post-1960s years. It was 1978 before New Zealand beat England; Australia did so in 1910-1911 and South Africa in 1905-1906. There are times when New Zealanders, even historians, have reason to feel grateful to rugby union.

As in any collection the contributions are uneven, not so much in quality as in chronological focus and questions asked of the relations between cricket and empire. There is much to say and all have had to condense. *The Imperial Game* provides an engaging and useful distillation of a large and important literature in the knotty culture of imperialism. In the modern organization of the game the language of corporate managerialism prevails: spectators have become the sport's 'customers' or 'clients'. We are offered here, as readers of the history of the game, what would no doubt be described as a one-stop comparative shop.

And for all its unsavoury imperial and distasteful commercial associations, one senses that the contributors are all too aware of the irony of their own nostalgic attraction to a game played over intervals of drinks, lunch and tea by linen-clothed players belting leather and standing at 'fine leg'. Such an attraction, of course, stands in the face of the threat posed by the new empire of media moguls whose missionaries convey the 'word' via cable television and proffer the trade goods of franchised sportswear.

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The Loving Stitch: A History of Knitting and Spinning in New Zealand. By Heather Nicholson. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1998. 308 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 1-86940-188-3.

HEATHER NICHOLSON is a fervent advocate of the art of winding wool. Extensively researched, intelligently organized and generously illustrated, her book traces the history of knitting and spinning from their European origins through to their present-day craft revivals. After a series of chronologically structured chapters detailing the transformation from routine domestic manufacture to creative hobby, she supplements the narrative with topical chapters on the making and selling of yarn, pattern books, knitting education, men's knitting, competitive knitting and protest knitting.

There is a wealth of fascinating detail in *The Loving Stitch*. Time was when being able to turn the heel of a handknitted sock was an essential skill. Now even the most dedicated knitter seldom needs to accomplish that difficult task, reserving the specialist knowledge for babies' booties. The shift in the use of knitted fabrics from underclothing and garments for the lower limbs, like stockings and socks, to the more familiar upper body outerwear of jerseys, jumpers and cardigans was a major watershed in history of modern dress. Depression mend-and-make-do receives due attention. The chapters on the role of knitting in the two World Wars are sensitive and finely drawn. Nicholson notes, for instance, how packing parcels for servicemen overseas became a ceremonial event for women separated from their loved ones. Knitting comforts for soldiers was at once recreation, war work and an expression of tenderness towards absent friends. Obtaining wool for wartime baby layettes was very difficult, but determined women found ingenious ways to express maternal and grandmaternal pride in the form of little woolly garments. Throughout, Nicholson is alert to the emotional significance of

women's routine domestic labour, walking a fine line between nostalgic recreation of the past and sentimental antiquarianism. There is also humour. One of Queen Victoria's 'remarkably unattractive' thick brick-red crocheted scarves, presented to a New Zealand veteran of the Boer War, is featured on p.61. The material on children's crafty efforts is generally comical without being patronizing. On p.226 there is a lovely child's impression of a knitting pattern, 'stitch stitch stithole st oh st bother!! stitch, stitch'.

Nicholson does make some missteps though. More attention could have been paid to translating knitter's jargon for non-knitting readers and to converting pre-metric measurements. How many non-knitters know what a fingering yarn is, for instance, let alone appreciate the effort required to knit 'an ounce of 4-ply in stocking stitch in two hours', or to earn '1s per 1-ounce skein of 2-ply yarn' making baby clothes on number 12 needles (p.106)? In the absence of good evidence for the early period of Pakeha history the author sometimes slips into irrelevancies. The army surgeon Morgan Grace arrived in New Zealand not wearing a knitted jumper (p.58). The book also occasionally displays its origins as a photocopied 'family' history, as at the beginning of Chapter Two where the immigration of the author's great-great-grandmother (who may or may not have knitted) is chronicled. There are also intrusive contemporary asides about how 'almost anything or nothing' has become acceptable wear on television (p.66). Most seriously, the 'rise and fall' narrative structure contains an internal contradiction in that Nicholson wants to acknowledge the hardships that drove her forebears to knit so much and labour so long, while simultaneously lamenting the decline of knitting and spinning into minority hobbies following their liberation from the needle through the advent of cheap, mass-produced clothing. Sights, real or imagined, against the knitters of the world are refuted with vigour. The project was partially funded by a grant from the 1993 Suffrage Centennial Trust and the introduction begins by reliving the criticisms of the Trust's choice from a group of social studies teachers and TV3's now defunct current affairs show, the Ralston Group. She chides those who would dare to laugh at Naomi Lange's pink cardie or Grandma's clacking needles and claims that keeping busy is now in 'our genes' due to thousands of years of selection for marriage on the basis of skill with spindle and needle (pp.7, 274). The defensive tone and the biological determinism let the book down. The text provides eloquent testimony to the historical and social importance of yarncraft; no special pleading was needed.

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Chips off the Auld Rock: Shetlanders in New Zealand. By Susan Butterworth with Graham Butterworth. Shetland Society of Wellington, Wellington, 1997. 251 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-473-046-73-3.

Far Off in Sunlit Places: Stories of the Scots in Australia and New Zealand. By Jim Hewitson. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998. (First published in Great Britain by Canongate Books, Edinburgh, 1998). 308 pp. Aust price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-522-84833-8.

LAST YEAR, as part of their assessed coursework, students of New Zealand history studying at stage one level at the University of Waikato were required to choose and review for their peers a recently published book on any topic mentioned in the course text, provided that the chosen publication met a few basic scholarly criteria. We would have welcomed the Butterworths' book on the history of Shetland Islanders in New Zealand for this class because a discussion of its themes and methods would be