

Cricket Society and MCC Book of the Year 2020

Date: Thursday 1 April 2021

Release time: Immediate

- Duncan Hamilton's book about Neville Cardus and Christopher Sandford's look at the cricketing summer of 1939 shared the spoils at this week's Cricket Society and MCC awards ceremony
- A virtual audience of several hundred saw 2019 winner Geoff Lemon announce the result from Melbourne. The short-listed authors attended and spoke at the ceremony
- The six books on the short list for the 2021 competition were also announced

Duncan Hamilton and Christopher Sandford are the joint winners of the Cricket Society and MCC Book of the Year 2020.

The competition, run by the Cricket Society since 1970 and in partnership with MCC since 2009, is for books nominated by MCC and Cricket Society Members, and is highly regarded by writers and publishers.

The Great Romantic: Cricket and the Golden Age of Neville Cardus by Duncan Hamilton shares the 2020 prize with Christopher Sandford's The Final Innings: The Cricketers of Summer 1939.

2019 winner Geoff Lemon announced the winners for 2020, recalling how his own award had brought home to him his success in connecting with readers: "It's a joyful thing to learn that that connection has happened, and that's why we labour over it as writers."

Duncan Hamilton said: "I'm also accepting this award on behalf of Neville Cardus himself. The award started in 1970 – had it started in the 1920s he would probably have won it six or seven times."

Christopher Sandford, joining from the west coast of the United States, added: "A note of respect to all those cricketers who fought for their country, in some cases never to return, but in other cases who did gloriously return to continue this most glorious of sports."

The 2021 shortlist reflects contemporary foci on race, gender, match-fixing and short form cricket with books about the legacy of the 1970 South Africa tour and the fates of West Indian rebels, the 2010 spot betting scandal, women's cricket in Britain and the IPL. The recollections of an English cricketer turned commentator complete an eclectic list.

Chair of Judges Robert Winder said: "The judges were spoiled for choice this year, which means that some excellent books were, with reluctance, left out. The resulting shortlist does, however, reflect the many ways in which modern cricket – and cricket writing – is changing."

The 2019 winner was Geoff Lemon's Steve Smith's Men: Behind Australian Cricket's Fall, Hardie Grant.

Notes for editors

The six books on the 2020 shortlist were (alphabetically by author):

Berkmann's Cricket Miscellany: Marcus Berkmann, Little Brown

Alastair Cook: The Autobiography: Sir Alastair Cook with Michael Colvin, Michael Joseph

The Great Romantic: Cricket and the Golden Age of Neville Cardus: Duncan Hamilton, Hodder and Stoughton

Cricket Country: An Indian Odyssey in the Age of Empire, Prashant Kidambi, OUP

Original Spin: Misadventures in Cricket, Vic Marks, Allen and Unwin

The Final Innings: The Cricketers of Summer 1939, Christopher Sandford, The History Press

The six books on the 2021 shortlist are (alphabetically by author):

A New Innings – How the IPL's reinvention of cricket provides lessons for the business of sport: Manoj Badale and Simon Hughes, Clink Street

The Unforgiven, Mercenaries or Missionaries?, The untold stories of the rebel West Indian cricketers who toured apartheid South Africa: Ashley Gray, Pitch Publishing

The Thin White Line, The inside story of cricket's greatest scandal: Nick Greenslade, Pitch Publishing

'Oi Key', Tales of a Journeyman Cricketer: Robert Key, Pen and Sword Books

Ladies and Lords, A History of Women's Cricket in Britain: Rafaele Nicholson, Peter Lang

Barbed Wire and Cucumber Sandwiches, The controversial South Africa tour of 1970: Colin Shindler, Pitch Publishing

The 15 other books long listed were:

The Hollow Crown, England Cricket Captains From 1945 to the present: Mark Peel, Pitch Publishing

Gunner, My Life in Cricket: Ian Gould, Pitch Publishing

Cricketing Caesar, A Biography of Mike Brearley: Mark Peel, Pitch Publishing

If Not Me, Who? The Story of Tony Greig, The Reluctant Rebel: Andrew Murtagh, Pitch Publishing

Kent County Cricket Grounds, 150 Years of Cricket Across the Garden of Eden: Howard Milton and Peter Francis, Pitch/Kent CCC

That Will be England Gone, The Last Summer of Cricket: Michael Henderson, Constable

Ted Dexter, 85 Not Out: Ted Dexter, Quiller

Bob Willis, A Cricketer and a Gentleman: David Willis, Hodder and Stoughton

One Long and Beautiful Summer: Duncan Hamilton, Riverrun

Spirit of Cricket, Reflections on play and life: Mike Brearley, Constable

The Breadth of Sadness, On Love, Grief and Cricket: Ian Ridley, Floodlit Dreams

Beyond the Pale, Early black and Asian cricketers in Britain 1868-1945: Andy Carter, Troubador Matador

Men who Raised the Bar, The evolution of the highest individual score in Test cricket: Chris Waters, Bloomsbury

Commonwealth of Cricket: Ramachandra Guha, HarperCollins

Morgan's Men, The Inside Story of England's Rise from Cricket World Cup Humiliation to Glory: Nick Hault and Steve James, Atlantic Books

The competition's judges are Robert Winder (Chairman), Chris Lowe, Emma John, John Symons and Mike Selvey. Nigel Hancock, Chairman of The Cricket Society, is the competition's administrator.

About the Cricket Society

The Cricket Society – www.cricketsociety.com and Twitter @CricketSociety is 75 years young this year. It encourages a love of cricket through playing, watching, reading and listening. It supports young cricketers, makes annual awards, holds regular meetings, publishes an acclaimed Journal and Bulletin and has its own cricket team.

It is a national organisation with 1,700 members across the UK and beyond. It also has branches based in Bath, Birmingham and Durham.

Notes to editors:

About Marylebone Cricket Club

There are few clubs in the world that have made as big an impact on any sport as MCC has made on cricket. From its iconic ground in north-west London, MCC has led the game for over 200 years and helped take it from a national pastime to a global obsession.

At our heart is Lord's, the Home of Cricket. Taking care over every detail, we're dedicated to growing its reputation as the most celebrated and admired venue in cricket. Everything we do is for the good of the game; from working with local communities to growing cricket's global influence.

Founded in 1787, MCC is recognised as the sole authority on the game's Laws. There are approximately 18,000 Full and 5,000 Associate Members of MCC.

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