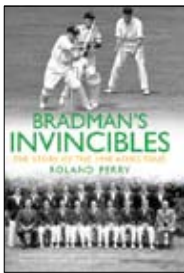
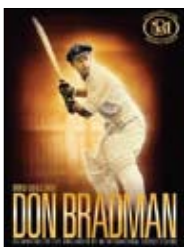


“Batsmen like to think they are the intelligent ones but I don’t see it like that. You bowl in the right areas to them and they are always liable to get bored, do something stupid and nick the ball” Answer on page 97



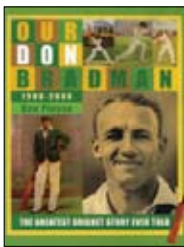
Gideon Haigh reviews  
**Bradman's Invincibles: The Story of the 1948 Ashes Series**

by Roland Perry Aurum Press, hb, 464pp, £20  
UK publication: May 2009



**Icons of World Sport - Don Bradman**

edited by Rod Nicholson  
Roving Eye Publishing Group, hb, 288pp, £28.95 (plus £6.50 p&p) from www.heraldsun.com.au/shop/books



**Our Don Bradman 1908-2008**

by Ken Piesse  
ABC Books, hb, 208pp, £24 (inc. p&p) from www.cricketbooks.com.au



# The least said the better

Another flurry of books on Don Bradman reveals an economical approach to be of greatest value to the reader

FOR SOME TIME books about Sir Donald Bradman have been following a law of inverse proportion: the books have been getting larger as their worthwhile content has been diminishing. Thus *Bradman's Invincibles* by Roland Perry, a prolix and repetitive account of Australia's 1948 Ashes tour, as flat as it is thick. This is a Timeless Test of a book: a long slog for no result.

Readers are better served by the less-is-more text and lavish illustration of *Icons of World Sport - Don Bradman*, which carries the official endorsement of the Bradman Museum and makes use of its collection to pleasant and sometimes arresting effect. The most startling artefact is a signed card dated December 12 1928 bearing the handwritten inscription:

*'If it's difficult  
I'll do it now  
If it's impossible  
I'll do it presently.'*

As the editor Rod Nicholson notes, this was composed after Bradman's unsuccessful Test debut and shortly before his only demotion to 12th man for Australia. New South Wales chief Dave Gilbert, who acquired the card at auction three years ago, has had the words retraced over the door to the home dressing room at the Sydney Cricket Ground. As an Australian inspirational text, given their provenance, the card reminds me of the famous self-declaration found among the effects of the country's foremost industrialist, Essington Lewis: "I am work."

Sections on the early Bradman are most appealing, including doggerel called 'The King of Games' copied on to a leaf of his mother's commonplace book: 'Be the wicket ever so sticky, too hard, too soft or too slow/There's joy to be found in cricket that only cricketers know.' Also to be admired is the elegant penmanship of Bill Ferguson's scoresheet for the 1930 Lord's Test, and the foresight that made him crib space in the dismissal column on the first line of Bradman's eventual 254 rather than go immediately to a second line. The

renowned rubber stamp that Sid Barnes had made of his own autograph on the 1948 tour is in evidence on page 155.

Genueflecting contributions from greats, such as Graeme Pollock and Imran Khan, are the least interesting features. The best is from Shane Warne who says it is in emulation of Bradman that he tries answering all fan mail personally; he also expresses a disarming regard for Bodyline's perpetrators: "I respect Douglas Jardine for coming up with such a plan." The connections to Bradman of Imran and Ranjan Madugalle, say, seem distant at best while the anecdotes of Arthur Morris, Sam Loxton and Neil Harvey have acquired a cloying familiarity.

Ken Piesse's *Our Don Bradman* is a conventional recitation of the 'Greatest Cricket Story Ever Told'. There is no Warnesque respect here for the summer of 'Evil, Insidious, Brutal Bodyline'; instead the garbled judgement that "it wasn't cricket and almost caused a temporary cessation of Anglo-Australian relations". The presentation, however, is colourful and one feature repays the investment: extracts from the correspondence between Bradman and his friend Chappie Dwyer, a New South Wales delegate to the Australian Board of Control and a fellow selector.

The extracts, mainly on merits of cricketers, are shrewd, unvarnished, sometimes peevish, always pithy. It

is a pity only that they are not better annotated. A fascinating passage from a letter of October 1956 expressing annoyance with Keith Miller - "He has accused me of a breach of confidence in my official capacity as a selector. That is a lie too and I am still a selector" - seems to pertain to the great allrounder's comments in *Cricket Crossfire* about his initial omission from Australia's 1949-50 tour of South Africa. But the necessary explication is lacking.

The letters also confirm that

“I respect Douglas Jardine for coming up with such a plan as Bodyline”

Bradman was intent at one stage on standing out of the 1948 Ashes tour. Dwyer sent a solicitous letter expressing his disappointment and sympathy: "I am sure everybody in the game appreciates the sacrifices you made during the last season and realise you cannot keep jeopardising your future and keep making sacrifices which are not appreciated by some people." Had Bradman remained fixed in his resolve, of course, it would have been one of cricket's great losses. Mind you, at least mankind would then have been spared a book like *Bradman's Invincibles*.



PA PHOTOS

Focus of attention: Bradman at Worcester in 1948 but he almost stood down from the tour

The Wisden Cricketer Bookshop offers discounted prices on many sports books, including the titles listed on the right. Delivery is free.

To order, or for more information

☎ 0870 22 00 266 (quoting The Wisden Cricketer)

✉ The Wisden Cricketer Bookshop, PO Box 60, Helston TR13 0TP

🌐 www.wisdencriketer.sparkledirect.com

- **Bradman's Invincibles** by Roland Perry rrp £20 offer £18
- **The Way It Was** by Stephen Chalke rrp £17 offer £15.30
- **Life Beyond the Airing Cupboard** by John Barclay rrp £15 offer £13.50
- **Starting Out: My Story So Far** by Alastair Cook rrp £19.99 offer £17.99
- **Flight of the Martlets: The Golden Age of Sussex Cricket** by Bruce Talbot and Paul Weaver rrp £16.99 offer £15.29



Paul Coupar reviews  
**Life Beyond the Airing Cupboard**  
by John Barclay Fairfield Books, hb, 240pp, £15



## Out of the darkness

*John Barclay was a nearly man as a player but absolutely makes it as a writer of memoirs*

JOHN BARCLAY'S was a career of almosts. As an offspinning allrounder he fell just short of Test class. As a talented, unorthodox captain of Sussex he ended 1981 a fingernail short of their first Championship. As manager of England tours in the late 1990s he left just before the Duncan Fletcher renaissance. But there is no 'almost' about this memoir.

The closest he came to Test cricket was in that bitter-sweet summer of 1981, when he captained the TCCB XI, in effect a national 2nd team. Addressing the squad in front of Alec Bedser, the chairman of selectors, Barclay's speech reached its rousing climax. With the words still hanging in the air, he turned to his left, opened the door to toss up – and walked directly into an airing cupboard. The dressing room fell about; Bedser looked startled; Barclay never played for England.

For many cricketers those near-misses

would have produced a bitter, score-settling sort of memoir. But these moving reflections on cricket and life glow with a winning, almost Hobbsian, generosity of spirit, soaring above petty rivalries to approach, at times, the level of spiritual meditation.

Barclay the cricketer presents himself as a kind of offspinning Bertie Wooster, bumbling through a career of occasional lucky successes and many routine failures. These included the key role his captaincy played in bringing Sri Lanka to the public's attention and catapulting them into Test cricket, when a ploy to let the opposing batsman set the field went wrong for the TCCB XI.

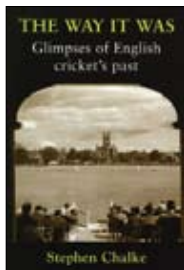
However, as well as laughter, we find a moving human story of quiet courage in the face of an enemy more formidable than anything he met on the field.

From his first days as an outstanding public-school batsman he knew "the fear and insecurity that accompanies talent". The airing cupboard of the title was his refuge, into which he disappeared to calm himself

before games. Nerves became crippling anxiety and depression. While smiling in front of his team, he secretly took anti-depressants for most of his career. Trying to come off them he ended up spending a long period in a hospital for the bewildered, a place of dressing gowns and shuffling silence from which he periodically tried to escape. For years he played on, disguising his illness as 'glandular fever'. It is a moving story, the more so for its lack of showy self-dramatisation.

The book comprises 30 episodes, each carefully evoked. This eliminates dreary stretches of routine reportage – a format other publishers could fruitfully investigate. What emerges is a rounded portrait of a quietly remarkable man.

The last scene is a contented portrait of his garden, with a lawn for football and cricket, and rabbits for the Jack Russell to chase. Perhaps that is the real secret of Barclay's lack of rancour: a man who, against the odds, has learnt to tolerate himself perhaps finds it easier to tolerate everyone else too.



DJ Taylor reviews  
**The Way It Was: Glimpses of English Cricket's Past**

by Stephen Chalke  
Fairfield Books, hb,  
288pp, £17



## Before the spotlight age

*Stephen Chalke recalls days when a county player might combine cricket with tromboning on Sunday evenings*

REVIEWING Edmund Blunden's *Crickets Country* in the *Manchester Evening News* a small matter of 64 years ago, George Orwell welcomed a series of dispatches from the heart of the rural game: the kind of cricket matches, as he picturesquely put it, where the village blacksmith is likely to be summoned from the wicket to an urgent job at the forge and a four, sweetly struck through the twilight, is liable to kill a rabbit on the boundary.

*The Way It Was*, a collection of Stephen Chalke's articles for *The Wisden Cricketer*, *Wisden Cricket Monthly* and *The Times*, is the Blunden standpoint moved forward to the English county game in the quarter century or so after the Second World War. It is high on idiosyncrasy and local colour and wears its elegiac gloss like an I Zingari blazer. It is the kind of book where a player with no telephone is called to a Test match by a bicycling policeman and a diffident skipper who has just performed a Herculean bowling feat puts his head into

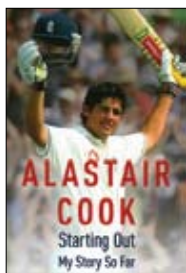
the opposition dressing room to murmur, 'Gentlemen, I do beg your pardon'.

The Herculean bowling feat comes courtesy of Leicestershire's Charles Palmer, who, on a damp Saturday afternoon in 1955, bowling the gentlest of seamers with a 10-pace run-up, sailed through a Championship-winning Surrey side that included Peter May, Mickey Stewart and Tony Lock, to record figures of 8 for no runs in 12 overs. Some of the team suggested he take himself off and keep what was then a world record but Palmer persisted, enticed Jim Laker into three streaky mis-hits that went uncaught and finished with 8 for 7.

Palmer's near-heroic lack of self-regard is several times equalled, if not surpassed. Laker, having taken his 19 wickets against Australia at Old Trafford the following year, "jogged off the field as if nothing very much had happened" and celebrated with a bottle of lemonade and a sandwich in a crowded pub whose patrons – all avidly discussing the game – failed to notice he was there. Tom Graveney recalled that the best money he ever got was a cheque for £27.10s for signing some cricket bats while Arthur Milton, the last man to play both

football and cricket for England, occupied his retirement with a newspaper round over the Bristol downs and remarked: "I don't really agree with professionalism."

*The Way It Was* is full of such things – fast bowlers taking winter jobs beating for grouse, the England team who toured India in 1951-52 being flown from game to game in a twin-engined Dakota piloted by their manager, Geoffrey Howard. Yet Chalke's portrait is never sentimental, and some of his glances at the forelock-tugging world of the old-style professional game can still take the breath away. I was struck by the case of Lancashire's Frank Parr, who combined stints behind the wicket with Sunday night tromboning with a Liverpool jazz band and enraged his captain, Cyril Washbrook, by turning up at a House of Commons dinner in a blue shirt. There was talk of a transfer to Worcestershire, until that county's committee received Washbrook's reference: "I hear that you are thinking of taking in Frank Parr ... I should inform you that he can be a grave social risk." Judged by these criteria, most of the modern game's ornaments would be lucky to play cricket at all.



**Patrick Kidd reviews**  
**Starting Out: My Story So Far**  
by Alastair Cook  
Hodder & Stoughton, hb,  
242pp, £19.99



## Looking back aged 23

*Alastair Cook's autobiography comes early but contains at least some points of interest*

LESS THAN three years ago a promising batsman barely past his 21st birthday boarded a flight from Antigua to India to join the England Test team. When the plane took off Alastair Cook was flying as cover for the injured Michael Vaughan. By the time he landed in Heathrow to change planes Marcus Trescothick had withdrawn from the tour and Cook was on the threshold of a Test debut. He made 60 and 104 not out in his first Test and looked immediately at home.

Fast-forward to November 2008 and an older, more established Cook made the same journey from Antigua to India. Between those two flights he had made seven Test hundreds, become the youngest Englishman to reach 2,000 Test runs, played in a humiliating Ashes defeat, been part of diplomatic rows over ball-tampering with Pakistan and sweet-lobbing with India and most recently was in the squad for a Twenty20 match for \$20m for the winners (even if the Stanford series was more notable for Cook's girlfriend being pawed by a Texan).

There is plenty of meat there to write a book, though the reaction on learning that Cook has an autobiography at the age of 23 is 'Why?'. After all, he is not

known for his enlightening post-match quotes. Like many modern players (not, praise be, the new England captain) Cook has been coached in ECB-speak. I expected this book to be a string of bland clichés about taking positives out of defeat and being focused, with perhaps the odd anecdote about when Belly and Strauss hid his thighpad.

That this offers a bit more is a tribute to Cook's relationship with Paul Newman, who helped with the writing. Some insights into Cook's character and the England dressing room are provided. The chapters on his childhood are interesting, particularly his time as a choirboy at St Paul's, which revealed an early ability to perform under pressure. The revelation that last summer England arranged for Cook to have a three-hour chat with Mike Brearley about captaincy suggests that there are plans for the young Essex batsman, although his admission that he was given a copy of *The Art of Captaincy* 10 years ago and has still not read it does not raise hopes.

"Not as bad as I thought it would be" is possibly not a review line that will be used to promote the paperback edition but this is a reasonable, rattle-along chronicle of the past three years in English cricket. Certainly you do not get to the end regretting the wasted time but then I did not part with 20 quid to read it.



Local colour: Cook and Monty Panesar visit an orphanage on the 2005-06 tour to India

GRAHAM MORRIS, PHILIP BROWN

### dvd review



**Edward Craig reviews**  
**England's Summer of Cricket 2008**  
2 Entertain, 682 mins,  
£29.99

### Five go off in a highlight package

ANY DVD called *England's Summer of Cricket 2008* should be a seminal record of the game's shifting sands: helicopters landing at Lord's, players auctioned for millions of dollars and bitter power struggles between governing bodies. The problem is it has to contain the cricket. It can be only as good as the material it has to choose from – and bore draws at Lord's, an awful lot of rain and England losing do not help. There were good games and great moments. The trouble is that England were on the wrong end when it mattered.

Despite this the DVD is compulsive viewing. And that is because it is put together by Sunset and Vine, the company that produced Channel 4's coverage and still does Five's daily highlights. This is essentially Five's highlights of all the internationals edited and slung together. Mark Nicholas gushes his way through the summer, Geoff Boycott is brutal and accurate and Simon Hughes is fantastic. As *The Analyst* on Channel 4 Hughes offered insight that Sky fails to match.

Additional details knit it together well. The news-round before each Test explains what happened off the pitch: Stanford's millions, Pattinson's selection, Vaughan's resignation. As a refresher it is priceless. How good was England's comeback at Old Trafford against New Zealand? How poorly did Ryan Sidebottom bowl (the end-of-day summaries constantly refer to him as "off-colour")? How good was Graeme Smith's knock at Edgbaston? Who played the innings of the summer? (Answer: Ross Taylor, 154 at Old Trafford – the flair of Lara, the technique of Tendulkar.)

You might not want to see Daniel Flynn's tooth slowly dislodged from his mouth but then the same goes for much of England's summer.



# Read them and reap

Benj Moorehead distils a year of reviews in *The Wisden Cricketer*

EACH SPRING the new *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack* hits the shelves. It is a rare certainty in the annual cricket book lottery. Who would have predicted an American cricket novel? That one author would try "to persuade Marxists of the joys of cricket"? That another would call itself *If It Was Raining Palaces I'd Get Hit By The Dunny Door: The Ashes Travails Of A Whingeing Pom?* And two ghosted autobiographies by people with something interesting and worthwhile to say?

Perhaps first mention should go to another player-writer Ed Smith. His third book, **What Sport Tells Us About Life**, is a psychological analysis of what controls the crucial moments in sport, from Zinedine Zidane's head butt to his own fortunes as a cricketer. Matthew Engel (TWC, April) thought it had "the whiff of a potential classic" and recommended it to "anyone who wants to understand what is really going on out there". "For administrators," said Engel, "it should be made compulsory."

Another book aimed in the direction of the powers-that-be is William Buckland's **Pommies – England Cricket Through an Australian Lens**, an unforgiving attack on the structure of English cricket. "This should be read by every chief executive in the land," wrote Andrew Miller (TWC, June). The author, for whom "tradition is just another word for self-interest" according to Miller, believes the root of the problem is that the 18 counties govern the game. They are accused of soaking up profits without providing the sort of stadia seen in Australia. "Rarely have all the gripes been stitched together so analytically to form such a bleak tapestry," said Miller.

**Netherland** took us away from frank assessment and into a cricket novel that is also a novelty: it is set in America. Joseph O'Neill's book, which was long-listed for the Booker prize, was celebrated

loudly in American literary circles for exploring the subculture of outsiders in post 9/11 New York. "One of the most remarkable post-colonial books I have ever read," said the *New Yorker* while, in a review headlined "The Ashes", the *New York Times* described it as "the wittiest, angriest, most exacting and most desolate work of fiction ... about life in New York and London after the World Trade Center fell". But by using cricket as a medium it was, according to TWC's reviewer in August, Miller again, "first and foremost a cricket novel".

Autobiographies with some feisty lines for the red tops bring us into more familiar territory. First there was Duncan Fletcher's **Behind The Shades**. "Pumped-up man confronts Henry Blofeld in a restaurant and is told to eff-off in return is the kind of juicy material that a typically bland sporting memoir will simply not accommodate," concluded Simon O'Hagan (TWC, January). Then there was Marcus Trescothick's **Coming Back to Me**. What interested Patrick Kidd most, and many others besides, was Trescothick's candid detailing of his "neurosis". "When doubts and homesickness appear, Trescothick cannot let go." Trescothick's line for the papers? Using mints to help the England bowlers in the Ashes. Australia was not happy.

Earlier in the year (TWC, May) DJ Taylor rustled through the layer of statistics – "fascinating though they are" – to cherish the human detail in "this groaning 1,600-page assembly of fact, opinion, elegy and rapt prognosis" – **Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 2008**. Scyld Berry, editor for the first time, was celebrated for his "abrasive" approach, in particular his criticism of the ECB. Taylor happily concluded that "cricket remains a civilising influence". *Wisden* also published a book to mark the centenary of Don Bradman's birth, **Bradman in Wisden**. It contains each of

*Wisden's* reports on the Don's Test innings, reminding us both of his enduring importance to the meaning of Australian identity as well as of RC Robertson-Glasgow's sober judgment that "he was no laughing matter".

The attributes of the modern cricket writer were discussed by **Sweet Summers: The Classic Cricket Writing of JM Kilburn**. Both the editor, Duncan Hamilton, and Geoffrey Boycott, who wrote the introduction, complained that today's correspondents are over-reliant on players' quotes rather than their own opinions. Our reviewer Stephen Fay (TWC, October) was not so sure and thinks Kilburn himself might have enjoyed many of the current writers. Here are crafted warnings on the shadow of television and sponsorship that was emerging in Kilburn's day.

Fay also enjoyed (TWC, January) Dave Renton's biography of a contemporary, **CLR James: Cricket's Philosopher King**, which will leave readers "better acquainted than they ever imagined with bitter disputes between [James'] fellow Trotskyites."

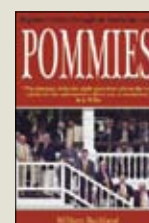
Neither Kilburn nor James – nor the rest of us – could have foreseen an Australian horror movie which features "disembowelling with a keeper's gloves" and a "nail-studded box". **I Know How Many Runs You Scored Last Summer**, due for general release next year, is "well-made, fast-paced and fun – good harmless trash, in fact, a bit like *Twenty20*," reckoned Patrick Kidd (TWC, November).

Still off the page but truer to tradition was Richard Bean's play, **The English Game**, given five out five (TWC, July). It is a tale of a disjointed cricket team that will please "everyone who has ever devoted his life to this frustrating but delightful English game". The play was well-received but sadly there are no plans for it to be staged again in the near future.

## TWC's literary XI



★★★★★



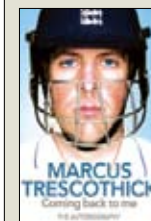
★★★★★



★★★★★



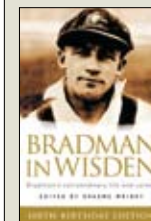
★★★★★



★★★★★



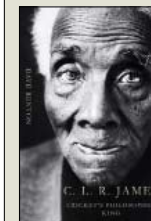
★★★★★



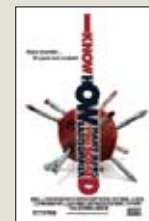
★★★★★



★★★★★



★★★★★



★★★★★



The English Game ★★★★★



Christopher Martin-Jenkins reviews

## Flight of the Martlets – The Golden Age of Sussex Cricket

by Bruce Talbot and Paul Weaver Bredon Books, hb, 192pp, £16.99



# Where did it all go right?

*An explanation of the circumstances which brought Sussex belated success six years after the 1997 rebellion*

SUSSEX HAVE changed their coach, their chairman and two chief executives since winning the County Championship for the first time in 2003. Whether they will survive the loss of both Mushtaq Ahmed, the catalyst, and the captaincy of Chris Adams, the solid leader in the dressing room and on the field, will be one of next season's most interesting features. The re-signing of virtually everyone else on the staff and the return of Yasir Arafat, such a success in 2006, suggests that they will be trophy-hunting again.

Published in the middle of last season, the well-titled and handsomely produced *Flight of the Martlets*, the follow-up by Paul Weaver and Bruce Talbot to their first collaboration, *The Longest Journey*, is very much the work of two industrious journalists rather than that of historians. It could have done with more cohesion and, perhaps, a certain standing back from the ebb and flow of recent events, but it is nonetheless absorbing, especially for most of the 3,500 club members who grew up believing that Sussex and success were never likely to be regular bedfellows.

In the end the authors get to the heart of what turned Sussex into winners after 164 years of what might be summed up as entertaining and

well-meaning amateurism. Particularly revealing are interviews by Talbot with the coach, Mark Robinson, and by Weaver with the maverick, Robin Marlar. In alliance with Jim May, now chairman, and Tony Pigott, the visionary chief executive who lost his job in circumstances that remain unexplained, Marlar, county captain for five years in the 1950s, led the rebellion that unseated the old Sussex committee in 1997. Further embarrassments followed but the combination of Adams as captain and Peter Moores as coach got the ball rolling in the right direction. "The whole point was that in my day we wanted to have fun and play as well as we could

“We have been successful with Chris, Mushy and Murray, not because of them”

but we weren't killers" recalled Marlar. "I didn't mind if we won or lost."

Robinson, who describes himself as a coach through the winter and a man manager in the summer, has been able to maintain the professional focus upon which Moores insisted but he has retained a sense of enjoyment that has brought the best out of junior and senior players alike. Brought up in East Riding, Robinson enjoyed his playing days for Northamptonshire and Yorkshire but particularly relished being part of the rebuilding of Sussex under Moores in 1997. "From the first day it felt right," he said. "Peter and the senior pros who were left stood for the same things as me: loyalty, hard work and respect for the game and everyone at the club, from the chairman down to the cleaner." Looking back on three seasons in which four major trophies were won, Robinson concluded: "I think we have been successful with Chris, Mushy and Murray Goodwin – not because of them."

Goodwin remains under Michael Yardy's captaincy next season. As Australia have found since the retirements of Warne, McGrath and Gilchrist, winning may be harder but there will be other ways to achieve. "It is a magnificent place to work," says Robinson of Hove and, while the club retains its family values, that should be reflected in performances on the field.



Second title, 2006: not all the martlets have flown

## In brief



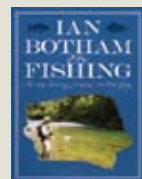
**Lives in Cricket: Bill Copson – More Than Miner Interest** by Kit Bartlett, ACS Publications, pb, 92pp, £10 and



**Lives in Cricket: Richard Daft – On a Pedestal** by Neil Jenkins, ACS, pb, 148pp, £12

The sixth and seventh books in the Lives in Cricket series feature a 1930s coalminer turned Derbyshire seamer and a 19th-century captain of Nottinghamshire. Bill Copson's career spanned 1932-50 and earned him three Tests for England in which he took 15 wickets at under 20. In 1936 he won the County Championship with Derbyshire, for whom he managed over 1,000 wickets at 18.96. Then there is Richard Daft, a distinguished figure in the game and eminent batsman before the time of WG Grace. As a businessman and captain at Trent Bridge Daft oversaw a period of considerable transition, including the onset of overarm bowling.

Copies can be obtained from ACS Sales, Blue Bell House, 2-4 Main Street, Scredington, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 0AE. 01529 306272.



**Ian Botham on Fishing: At Sea, Being Coarse, on the Fly** by Sir Ian Botham, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, hb, 237pp, £18.99

In a passionate aside to his cricketing expertise Ian Botham puts into print his knowledge and love of fishing in a bright and intriguing format.

