

Michael Rundell, *The Dictionary of Cricket*. George Allen & Unwin, London, 1985. Diagrams, illus. pp.272. \$34.95.

This is a very handy volume as I found out when I took a friend to the Test and she asked me the meaning of the word 'yorker'. Momentarily I was stumped but then I discovered that Rundell has almost two pages on 'York' and 'Yorker'. The original meaning of this word, like many other cricket words, is uncertain but it probably came into the rich language of cricket because Yorkshiremen were fond of bowling this ball in the nineteenth century.

Rundell has explored carefully the various meanings of some of the central words of cricket. He has also scoured through cricket literature to provide suitable quotations to establish some of the contextual nuances of the language of cricket. In the process he reveals some interesting variations in the meanings of cricket

words. In Australia 'chinaman' refers to the left-arm bowler's googly, which breaks from leg to off, whereas the word has the opposite meaning in England, it refers to the left-handers stock ball which turns from off to leg. The Chinese also feature in the 'Chinese cut' which is a variation of the 'Harrow drive' or what is known in Australia as the 'French cut', which surprisingly is not mentioned in the *Dictionary*.

In exploring the various meanings of cricket words Rundell throws considerable light on their history. The earliest dictionary reference to 'Chinaman' is in 1937 and the word was probably named after Ellis Achong, a Trinidadian left arm bowler of Chinese descent who played in six Tests from 1929-33.

Particularly valuable for historians is the inclusion of some nineteenth century words which are no longer used such as a 'lobster' (a bowler of lobs); a 'booth ball' or a 'boother' (a hit to the booth, that is, boundary); a 'tice' (yorker); a 'palm-break' (cut achieved by the movement of the palm) and an 'air-break' (swing), 'long slip' (short third man), a 'goose game' (stonewalling) and a 'cricketress' (female player).

While Rundell has researched the language of cricket carefully and produced an impressive work, which is enhanced by several diagrams, it is flawed in several respects. It's clear, first of all, that this book has been written by an Englishman who has not plumb-ed the rich language of Australian cricket and for that matter most other Commonwealth countries. In fact outside England the best collection of terms comes from Corfu cricket which has eleven entries. It's true that Corfu cricket has added some very colourful terms to the game - 'how'dat' (howzat); bombada (full toss) and 'pintz' (yorker) - but whether it deserves more entries than New Zealand, South Africa, West Indies and Pakistan combined is a matter of some doubt. I think Rundell has also erred in including 'slang' because while there are some colourful entries (the South African 'brain bucket' for helmet and the English term for a turning wicket, 'bunsen wicket' from the rhyme, bunsen burner = raging turner), his collection is singularly inadequate. It's quite clear that Rundle is not familiar with the work of Barry Andrews as there is no mention of a 'guzunder', a 'gozzer', 'getting rissold' and

'tugging four bits off the deck at the WACA'. Absent are also some of the more prosaic 'doctor' terms: 'going for the doctor' and the 'Fremantle doctor'.

There are also some curious Australian entries such as the reference to a 'Molly Grabber' which is defined as a 'fast ball which fails to rise significantly from the pitch', which I think is a very polite way of referring to a 'mully grubber' known to every boy, or for that matter girl, who has played just an over or two in the schoolyard.

Rundle's discussion of the word 'barrack' includes only one of its possible origins: that is, from the Aboriginal word, 'borak', meaning 'to ridicule'. Others have suggested that the word might originate from the closeness of Victoria barracks to the Sydney Cricket Ground. The definition of barracking, 'to shout sarcastic or abusive comments' is also too narrow. Some barracking is humorous and supportive; the word also is used to support a team.

While this is not the definitive dictionary of cricket, it is a very valuable and useful book, with an interesting mixture of history, etymology and social analysis.

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