CRICKET BOOKS

VICTOR TRUMPER AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF AUSTRALIAN CRICKET

MARTIN CHANDLER | 8:01AM GMT 21 JUNE 2020

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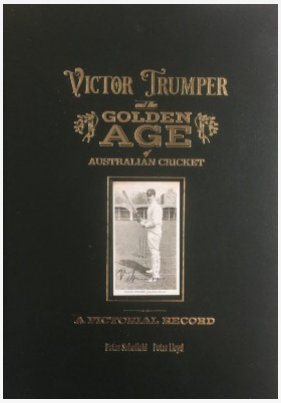

In recent years, particularly since the centenary of his death was celebrated in 2015, Victor Trumper has become second only to Donald Bradman in terms of the number of publications about him that have appeared. We have had Gideon Haigh on the iconic image, Renato Carini with an immensely detailed look at his batting record, as well as a number of publications from The Cricket Publishing Company/The Cricket Press about aspects of his life.

And now we have Peter Schofield and Peter Lloyd weighing in with their two penn'orth. Except it's rather more than two penn'orth, as the cost of this weighty tome is a hefty AUS$300. For that price you get a beautifully produced leather bound book, published in a signed and numbered limited edition of just one hundred and ten copies that, always assuming of course that you enjoy this sort of thing, fully justifies the price tag.

Both authors have previous for producing high quality books. Peter Lloyd's homage to three post war Australian magazines is one that Archie and I reviewed here. I am not entirely sure why we do not have a review on the site of Peter Schofield's *99.94 & Much More,* but can only assume that the Mac and I left it to each other to do. In any event it is, like *A Sporting World*, one that is strictly for the tragics amongst us, and I am sure I need not elaborate as far as its subject matter is concerned.

Thankfully *Victor Trumper and the Golden Age of Australian Cricket* is not an attempt at a biography of the great man, something which I am satisfied is now never going to be possible to do as fully as most of us would like, and nor is it a comprehensive history of Australian cricket in the 'golden age', albeit that that is something which probably could be done. What the book actually is is a chronological journey through Trumper's sadly short life and career, the purpose of which is to showcase a myriad of items of ephemera and memorabilia relating to this wonderful batsman and his teammates.

One masterly touch to the book is the twin forewords from, probably, the most popular writers that there are on Anglo-Australian cricket and its history. Gideon Haigh and David Frith are from different generations, and live in different hemispheres, but each have a foot in both Ashes camps, have unrivalled (except by each other) knowledge of their subject and are also masters of the use of the English language.

As is to be expected from the man who, a mere four years ago, published *Stroke of Genius*, Haigh's contribution is an excellent one. On this occasion however he is just shaded by the old fella Frith, now 83 years young, who demonstrates beyond doubt that the passage of time has not in any way diminished the power he can put in his writing. Even Frith is not, of course, sufficiently venerable to have seen Trumper bat, but as a child he knew some who had, and that is where he begins.

And what of the book itself? It does include a commentary which ties together its contents but this is essentially a pictorial journey and there are literally hundreds of images across the 416 pages. None, in keeping with the book's mission statement, are any of the regrettably few action shots of Trumper that exist, but that apart there is a full range of still photographs, postcards, trade cards and cigarette cards. There are postage stamps, menus, programmes for non-cricketing events as well as a myriad of printed ephemera, scorecards and souvenirs.

The collection of Trumper memorabilia that the two Peters have put together is something to behold, and beyond that they have sought out the original scorebooks for some of the matches in which Trumper appeared and, whilst I would not ordinarily have expected to be particularly enchanted by those, the reproductions of the handwritten pages prove to be just as evocative as many of the other items.

Victor Trumper and the Golden Age of Australian Cricket is a beautiful book. Its images are reproduced superbly on high quality paper and whoever was responsible for the book's design also deserves the highest praise as everything is easy on the eye, including the engrossing narrative that holds the book together. All in all this is, for those who enjoy memorabilia, thoroughly recommended. The only problem is it might already be tricky to obtain a copy as I understand Roger Page may well have sold all his stock, and that accordingly just those copies on their way to Boundary Books are now unsold, and I dare say a number of them may already be spoken for.

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