



ANZAAB *Aspects of Book Collecting*

Collecting Cricket Fiction

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Background: Cricket fiction may seem a small subject, but a collection could rapidly and relatively cheaply grow to several hundred items dating from 1820 to 2008. Among the earliest items would be *In School and Out of School* (1825) which contains a description of the game and an illustration, and Mary Mitford's *Our Village* (also published in the 1820's). A contemporary example (published in 2008) is Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*, which is based around cricket in New York.

Range: The range is vast, taking in not just those books where cricket is the main theme—such as *Death Before Wicket* (Nancy Spain, 1946) and *Malleson at Melbourne* (William Godfrey, 1956)—but those where cricket or a cricket match has an important place in the story. This category would include Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* (1837; Dingley Dell v. All Muggleton), L. P. Hartley's *The Go Between* (1953) and Anthony Trollope's futuristic novel, *The Fixed Period* (1882), which is set on an island in the South Pacific and features an amazing cricket match with a steam powered bowling cannon. Many school stories contain cricket matches, and there are a huge number of short stories with cricket themes in magazines such as *Chums*, *Boy's Own Paper*, *The Captain* and *Young England*. There are also many paperback thrillers dating from the 1920's and 30's with such evocative titles as *The Schoolboy Test Match Player* and *Six Hit Sansom's Chinese Puzzle*.

An expansive collection would also include religious works such as *The Cricket Field of the Christian Life* (c1900) and *Baxter's Second Innings* (1892), the first edition of which is bound as a pair of pads. Another rich seam is poetry, and there are even operettas such as *The Batsman's Bride* (1957).

Availability: It would be difficult to find a general bookseller without something to fit into this category—be it a novel with cricket references, a school story, or a children's annual from the 1930's with a short story.

Price Range: Many items can be found for \$10-\$50 but, at the more expensive end, a first edition of *In School and Out of School* could cost \$1200 and a first edition of Trollope's *The Fixed Period* \$2500.

Footnote: Gerald Brodribb produced the first short bibliography of cricket in fiction in 1950. This was superseded by E. M. Padwick's *Bibliography of Cricket* (1977), which is considered the definitive work; a second, expanded edition was published in 1984 and a supplement in 1991. However, neither of these can claim to include everything in this category and part of the fun of collecting cricket fiction is finding items which are "Not in Padwick".