

A Word With Arthur Gilligan

"WHEN doing cricket commentaries, just say the first thing that comes into your head. Once you start trying to think what you are going to say next you dry up." And because he, himself, acts on his own advice, no doubt that is why the commentaries of Arthur Gilligan are so delightfully natural. And does he find the work difficult? "Oh, you get used to it," he told *The Listener* in an interview recently.

Mr. Gilligan has had plenty of time to do that. He has given commentaries on the 1945-46 and the 1950-51 tests in Australia and the 1938 tests in England. During this last M.C.C. tour of Australia he has been doing commentaries for the ABC. Because of his experience, we asked him a question which is often discussed both in broadcasting circles and among cricket listeners: Should a commentator stick to what the bat and ball are doing, or should he mention the heat, the dog that trots on to the field, the people on the embankment? Mr. Gilligan's answer was quite clear. "Every ball bowled and every stroke made should be described, with other information like the position of the field, the state of the pitch, and so on, also given. When that has been done, by all means give some colour to the broadcast. A humorous incident will often break up a tedious spell. But the cricket should come first."

Mr. Gilligan told us about a certain commentator who was describing a certain match during a certain tour of Australia. This commentator had a habit of describing everything from a passing aeroplane to the women's frocks. Not very far away sat a spectator listening to the commentary on a portable radio. Suddenly for some reason there was a pause in the flow of description, the commentator seemed to have described everything describable, even at the expense of missing out the occasional ball. In the silence, the voice of the spectator drifted up and into the microphone. "Say, how about them perishin' sea-gulls?"

"I nearly fell off my seat laughing," added Mr. Gilligan.

Mr. Gilligan is a strongly built man who looks as pleasantly English as he sounds—blue eyes, ruddy complexion, thinning grey hair, Old School . . . sorry, Free Foresters' tie of green, maroon and white. But if you think from all this that he is what is supposed to be the typical stiff-necked Englishman, you can try again. He is very easy, friendly—as he himself described one of his fellow commentators in Australia, Alan McGilvray, he is altogether "a jolly nice chap."

The Listener sat alongside while Pat Earnshaw interviewed Mr. Gilligan. As we sat there chatting, waiting for the red light to go on, we were surprised to



A.P.S. photograph

"The Australians are missing Bradman badly"

see Mr. Gilligan exhibit traces of nervousness. Or maybe those small beads of sweat on the upper lip were solely due to the heat; perhaps those occasional glances at the microphone were just to see what one looked like.

Whether we were right or wrong about this, once Pat had asked his first question we had the pleasure of seeing, as well as hearing, a skilful broadcasting personality in action. As captain of the English side which toured Australia in 1924-25, Arthur Gilligan knows his cricket and was prepared to make off-the-cuff but sound comments on any question Pat asked.

Why is English cricket on the upgrade? Mainly because of the fillip given it by England winning the ashes in 1953.

What was wrong with the Australian batsmen this tour? They played too much off the back foot, hence the number of lbw's and caught-in-slips. They are missing Bradman badly.

Are all-rounders dying out? Yes, and they shouldn't be.

Who was the most outstanding batsman of the tour? Cowdrey.

Arthur Gilligan has other interests besides cricket (which, incidentally, he no longer plays, not even in Sunday matches since "it doesn't help when you can't see the fast bowler"). He is a director of two firms in England one of which makes canned goods and the other "jam and stuff like that." He belongs to numerous sporting clubs and bodies but his favourite active sport now is golf, which is a popular sport with a great number of cricketers. His handicap is eight—it used to be three but "they gave me some back for old age." Other cricketers who belong with him to the County Cricketers' Golf Society are Hutton (whose handicap is five or six "though if anyone out here asks him he'll say ten"), Cowdrey, Godfrey Evans, Compton and Graveney (with a handicap of one).

Mr. Gilligan will, while in New Zealand, visit his brother, Mr. Frank Gilligan, a former headmaster of Wanganui Collegiate School.



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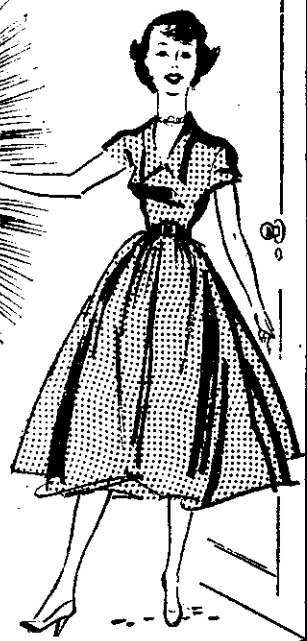


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