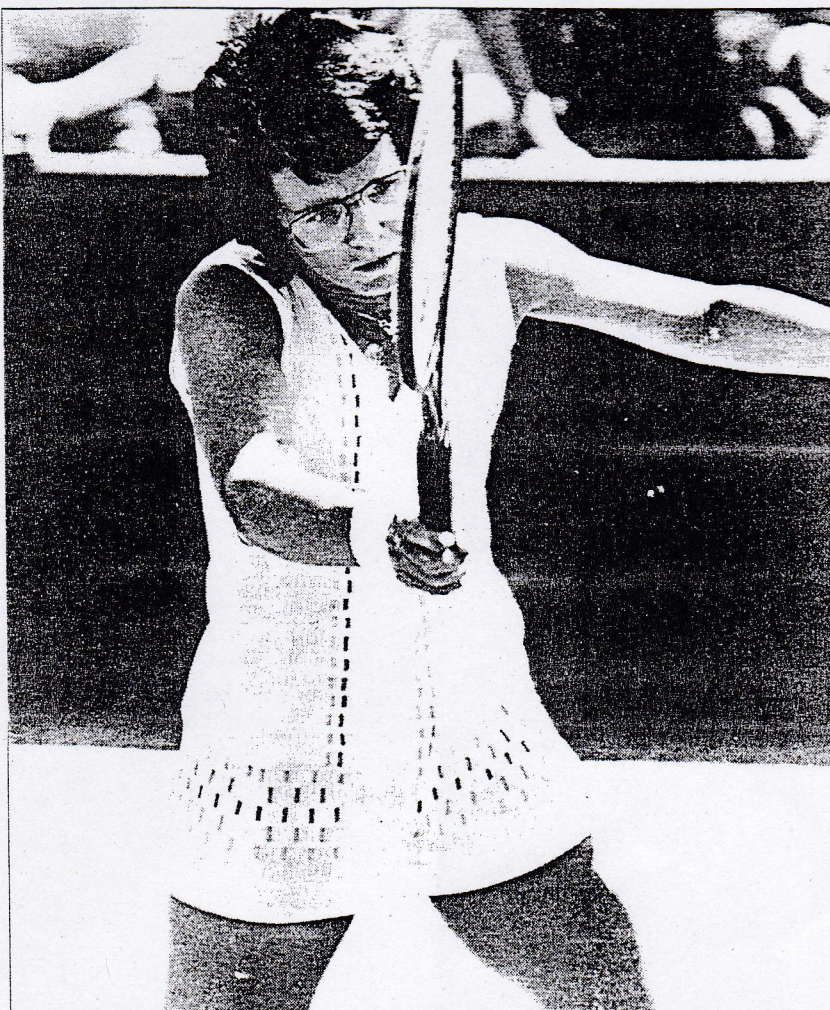


CRITIC'S CHOICE



Billie Jean King, the subject of tonight's *Reputations* (BBC2)

REPUTATIONS: Billie Jean King
BBC2, 9pm

Like all the best documentaries about athletes, this profile of the American tennis player Billie Jean King goes much wider than the field of play. Claire Beavan's film does not neglect King's enormous achievement as a player (her record of 20 Wimbledon titles is unlikely to be beaten) but it concentrates much more on what she did off court, in helping to end the hypocrisy of shamateurism and bringing to women's tennis a previously unheard of status and wealth. In this context the summit of her career was not so much her umpteenth Wimbledon victory but taking on and beating the former world champion Bobby Rigg, in a contest less about tennis than male chauvinism. King herself contributes honestly and revealingly, not least about her sexuality which she describes as the most difficult struggle of her life.

BIRDING WITH BILL ODDIE
BBC2, 8pm

If Bill Oddie sometimes gives the impression that all he has to do is to venture to some remote place, get out of his binoculars, and a little-seen species will fly obligingly into view, the return of his birdwatching series will give much pleasure. Oddie is not only an enthusiast for his hobby but knowledgeable with it and he conveys both enthusiasm and expertise in an engagingly off-the-cuff style. His camera team deserves a bow as well, for excellent work behind the lens. Shetland is Oddie's first location and a very fruitful one. There is a priceless encounter with a group of puffins and sightings of less familiar birds, such as the red-necked phalarope and the blue-cheeked bee-eater.

SECRET HISTORY SPECIAL
Channel 4, 9pm

In 1947 more than 4,500 Jewish survivors of the Holocaust sailed to what they hoped would be a new home in Palestine, only to be stopped and turned back by the British Navy. The story of the *Exodus* was romanticised in Leon Uris's book and a subsequent Hollywood film but this American documentary tries to tell it as it happened. In this endeavour it is greatly helped by the testimonies of refugees and crew members, still vivid more than 50 years after the event. The villains of the piece are the British and particularly Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary. Britain's action in ramming the ship and forcing the refugees to return to Europe was a public relations disaster.

Monday