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Bicentenary of Lord's

SAMPLE EDITION

# THE Nightwatchman

THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY – LORD'S BICENTENARY EDITION



# THE Nightwatchman

THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY

Cricket's past has been enriched by great writing and Wisden is making sure its future will be too. *The Nightwatchman* is a quarterly collection of essays and long-form articles and is available in print and e-book formats.

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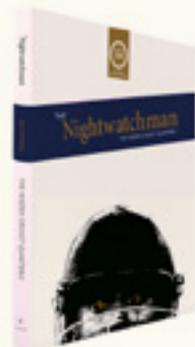
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Issue 6, out in early June, will feature the following:

**Anjali Doshi** reflecting on India's conflicted relationship with Lord's

**James Holland** reassessing the life and times of Keith Miller

**Tanya Aldred** spending a day with cricket's grandest dame

**Ivo Tennant** digging around to unearth the ground's underbelly

**Jonathan Liew** admiring the symbiosis of St John's Wood and its cricket club

**Richard Evans** revisiting the most controversial selection meeting in sporting history

**Steve Neal** on Albert Trott: the only man known to have cleared the Lord's Pavilion

**Lawrence Booth** on the umbilical cord that connects Australia to England

**John Crace** explaining why Lord's and MCC bring out the worst in him

**Jon Hotten** going in search of the unexpected

**Pat Gibson** on the John Barnes Outswingers – and all that jazz

**Steven Lynch** reliving his days as an MCC insider

**Tom Jeffreys** on his home away from home

**Neil Manthorp** describing how South Africa turned awe to their advantage

**Adam Chadwick** curating a behind-the-scenes look at 150 years of history

**In the Frame** ... the pick of the Wisden-MCC Photo of the Year competition

**Stephen McDowell** on MCC's connection to the First World War

**Tony Cozier** getting nostalgic about 50 years of watching cricket at Lord's

**Michael Holding, Mohsin Khan, Angus Fraser** and **Kumar Sangakkara**  
on why they like Lord's (or why they don't)

On the following pages you'll find an article by Tom Holland and extracts from several other pieces





## OF MYTHS AND ORIGINS

*Tom Holland unites Lord's, Piltdown Man and Pope Gregory the Great, contending we're happier believing what we want to believe*

The summer of 1912 was one of the wettest on record. Month after month, rain lashed the cricket pitches of England. Sydney Barnes, whose 69 wickets came that season at a cost of just over 11 runs each, may have enjoyed the damp conditions – but no one else much did. The cricketers of Australia and South Africa, who had been invited over to participate in an innovative triangular tournament of Test matches, had a particularly miserable time of it, dodging torrential downpours whenever they were not being skittled out by Barnes. The entire season, everyone mournfully agreed, had been an utter wash-out.

Meanwhile, in the Sussex village of Piltdown, a solicitor and amateur fossil-hunter by the name of Charles Dawson had been enjoying an altogether more productive summer. Between June and September, he had been busy making a series of remarkable finds in a local gravel pit. Disastrous though the weather had been for cricket, the puddles in the

quarries of Piltdown had done little to dampen Dawson's apparent aptitude for palaeontology. His discoveries, announced to a packed session of the Geological Society of London just before Christmas, appeared little short of sensational. Thick, brown-stained pieces of a hominid skull, together with the fragment of a lower jaw closely resembling a chimpanzee's, pointed to Piltdown having been the home of the oldest known Englishman. *Eoanthropus dawsoni*, the creature was christened: "Dawson's Dawn Man". Half-monkey, half-human, it appeared to be that Darwinian Holy Grail: a missing link.

The rejoicing in British palaeontological circles was certainly immense. That summer, despite all the hours of play lost to the weather, the England cricket team had still managed to record a series of convincing victories, beating Australia 1-0, and thrashing South Africa in all three of the matches scheduled between them. On the field of palaeontological play,

though, it had been a much sorrier story. Britain's two traditional rivals, France and Germany, had long left British scientists scratching around haplessly in their wake. The Abri de Cro-Magnon, a large cave in the Dordogne, had given its name to the oldest known modern humans ever to be found in Europe, while the Neander Thal, a valley just east of Düsseldorf, could boast the find of an entire species of extinct prehistoric humans. No wonder, then, that Dawson's finds were greeted by British palaeontologists with such relief. *Eoanthropus dawsoni*, it was officially announced, dated back almost a million years. This made it the oldest human ever found in Europe. Dawson, it seemed, had racked up a truly significant score for England.

Or had he? Not everyone was convinced. It was noted by some specialists that the skull of Piltdown Man appeared anachronistically large for a creature that – based on the evidence of Dawson's finds, at any rate – had possessed an almost simian jaw. But the most polarising find of all was yet to come. Two years on, and the discovery was announced, not of human remains, but of something even more remarkable: a human implement. Carved from a large piece of elephant bone, and uncovered by Dawson in the very sediment where he had earlier found the fragments of Piltdown Man, it bore an unmistakable shape: that of a cricket bat. Here, for any patriotic Englishman, was a truly stirring possibility: that the age of CB Fry and Sydney Barnes was linked by a bond of fellowship to that of the earliest known human ever to have trodden English sward, almost a million years before. Either that, or the find was a fake.

Amazingly, it would take another 40 years before the elephant bone "cricket

bat" was definitively debunked. Only in England's Ashes-winning summer of 1953 was it at last demonstrated to everyone's satisfaction that the discoveries made at Piltdown had indeed all been plants. To this day, the identity of the forger remains a much-contested mystery – with Charles Dawson, the man who had originally begun prospecting in the gravel pit, the odds-on favourite. The "cricket bat", though, as the most extraordinary and improbable find of all, has long been regarded as a special case. Some have suggested that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who had a house nearby, and was as keen a cricketer as he was supreme a crafter of mysteries, might have planted it. Others have nominated Martin Hinton, a volunteer at the Natural History Museum who would go on to become its Keeper of Zoology, as a possible candidate. Chris Stringer, who is currently the Museum's leading specialist on human origins, has plausibly argued that Hinton had rumbled the Piltdown fraud, and was aiming to tip off the culprit. Hence the cricket bat: he had deliberately planted the most absurd object he could come up with. Hinton, though, had miscalculated. "To his horror, instead of terminating the whole Piltdown saga, this bizarre piece was heralded as the world's oldest bone implement." The British public, it seemed, quite liked the idea of their prehistoric forebears wielding cricket bats.

Play was being made at Piltdown with two mysteries, not just the one. Whether the elephant bone had been planted by a fraudster or by a scientist looking to warn the fraudster that his game was up, its shape had clearly been no accident. *Eoanthropus dawsoni*, unlike Neanderthal or Cro-Magnon Man, had been found not far from the Sussex county ground at Hove, and the discovery at Piltdown of a cricket bat had served subliminally to brand him as all the more English. There



was, however, a further twist. If hardly a puzzle on the scale of human prehistory, the origins of cricket were – and remain – a theme fit to perplex even considerable scholars. The antiquity of the game remains to this day an important aspect of its mystique – and the proof of this antiquity is precisely that so much of its early history is lost in the mists of time. Cricketers who take the field at Piltown do not need to believe that *Eoanthropus dawsoni* had once taken guard there as well to know that they are engaged in an activity with roots much older than themselves. Even in the early 19th century, when a wicket was laid out at Britain's most famous prehistoric monument, it was not merely the resemblance between stumps and the nearby sarsens that made the cricket there seem in perfect accord with its setting. "Near where Stonehenge uprears its head," ran a poem published in the *New Sporting Magazine* in 1833,

*"In antiquated grandeur*

*A cricket ground's been lately made,*

*Which to the scene adds splendour."*

Cricket and ancient stonework: a match made, so it seemed, in heaven.

In the event, the ground at Stonehenge was abandoned in the 1860s – and even though the Chief Druid of Wiltshire, a notable off-spinner, petitioned John Major in 1995 to have it restored, the request was turned down. "The two bails," so the Druid had helpfully explained to the Prime Minister, "as a man and woman, are balanced on their fates to make up the fivefold wicket which must be defended against the fiery red sun." It is hardly surprising that Major should have been less than convinced by this. A man of decidedly un-mystical temperament, he was also a notable

historian of cricket's early years – and knew perfectly well that the sport was not remotely as ancient as some enthusiasts liked to think. A decade after leaving office, he published a book on the topic, in which he surveyed various references to the game supposedly made by medieval authors, and found them all wanting. The claim made by an eighth-century monk that a sport with bat and ball was being played in Florence; by a twelfth-century poet that young men enjoyed a leisure activity called "cricks"; by a clerk in the reign of Edward I that the Prince of Wales, the future Edward II, was passionate about a game called "creag": all were dismissed by the former Prime Minister as evidence for the existence of cricket in the Middle Ages. Wielding Occam's Razor as deftly as a great batsman might execute a late cut, Major convincingly dispatched any attempt to demonstrate that the sport might have been played before the Tudor period. "Things not known to exist should not be postulated as existing."

Nevertheless, an intriguing question is left hanging: why the desire, evident both at Piltown and in the array of bogus references compiled by Major, to push back the origins of cricket? As Lord's celebrates the 200th anniversary of the first match known to have been played on its current pitch, a clue is to be found, perhaps, in a phrase originally applied to it by Australia's longest-serving Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies. The ground, so he declared in a tone of reverent anglophilia, was nothing less than "the Cathedral of Cricket". MCC, as well they might have been, were delighted by the epithet. Sir Pelham Warner, the nearest to a pope the club has ever possessed, was particularly thrilled. In his dotage, short-sighted and forgetful, he once demanded to know of Menzies himself the identity of the man "from the colonies" who had coined the phrase. It has stuck ever since.

Nevertheless, had the epithet appealed merely to MCC's sense of self-worth, it would never have achieved the undoubted resonance that it has done beyond the purlieu of St John's Wood. No other sports ground in the world, perhaps, can rival Lord's for sheer ecclesiastical ambience. The great towers of the Pavilion; the walls of the Long Room, adorned with memorials to the greats of yesteryear; the bitter arguments over whether women should be permitted into the inner sanctum: the resemblance to Canterbury Cathedral is unmistakable. In AD 601, four years after the arrival of St Augustine's mission to Kent, the man who had sent him, Pope Gregory the Great, wrote to the local pagan king, urging on him a Christian code of behaviour. "Strengthen the morals of your subjects by outstanding purity of life, by exhorting them, terrifying, enticing and correcting them, and by showing them an example of good works." In 2000, in a similarly ex cathedra manner, MCC issued a preamble to the Code of Laws, officially declaring the existence of what it termed "The Spirit of Cricket". The game, so cricketers were sternly reminded, "owes much of its unique appeal to the fact that it should be played not only within its Laws but also within the Spirit of the Game. Any action which is seen to abuse this Spirit causes injury to the game itself." Much diminished though MCC's role in cricket may now be – with India controlling the game's purse-strings, and the headquarters of the ICC relocated to the tax-friendly shores of the Persian Gulf – the club still affects a certain moral leadership. Lord's remains, in that sense, what Canterbury is to Anglicanism: the Mother Church of a worldwide communion.

"It's not cricket." No other sport has a phrase quite like it. The polychrome glitz of Twenty20 notwithstanding, let alone

the running sore of betting scandals, there is still to this day a certain metaphorical value that attaches itself to a pair of cricket whites. Humbug or not, the distinctively sacral character of Lord's, together with the moral pretensions of MCC, play crucial roles in affirming this. Just as Canterbury serves to anchor English Christianity to the inheritance of its past by virtue of the long line of its archbishops – unbroken since the sixth century – so does Lord's, as the oldest Test ground in the world, provide even the owners of IPL franchises with the reassurance that cricket, amid all the cheerleaders and the Yes Bank Maximums, still retains a certain measure of class. Simultaneously, steeped in tradition though the ground is, it draws in turn for its aura of sanctity on a history even older than itself. Just as the cathedral which stands today in Canterbury is not the building originally founded by Saint Augustine, so is the ground which still bears its founder's name one that had migrated via the nearby St John's Estate from Dorset Fields in Marylebone. Lord's arrived in St John's Wood already trailing a back-story.

Yet to walk through the Long Room, and gaze at paintings which date from a time well before Thomas Lord had made his first deal, is to be reminded that even the founding of Lord's is merely a punctuation mark in a much longer story. The great Victorian Pavilion itself, of course, is only one of several that have stood on the site – and the very first, a rough wooden structure that burnt down back in July 1825, took with it a good deal more than the Pavilion itself. Lost to the flames was the greatest collection of cricket memorabilia that had then been assembled in one place: papers, scorecards, and records of the very earliest days of the sport. The damage was irreparable – and the effect has been enduring. It has ensured

that our knowledge of cricket in the centuries before the founding of Lord's is – to a far larger degree than it would have been otherwise – a thing of shreds and patches. Our understanding of its evolution is regrettably dependent upon the vagaries of fortune: much that we would like to know has been lost; much that has survived inevitably serves to give us a limited perspective on what may actually have happened. Lord's, with its incomparable museum and its venerable traditions, has certainly preserved for us much of what we know about cricket's past – but, inevitably, it has served to freeze and distort it too.

Augustine, when he landed from Rome in Kent, was not the first to bring Christianity to Great Britain. Many shades and varieties of the religion already existed on the island. What a bishop sent by the Pope possessed, though, to a degree that not even the abbots of great monasteries such as Iona or Lindisfarne could rival, was the heft of prestige: a prestige that derived from the authority of the Roman Church as the guardian of Christian orthodoxy. In like manner, the establishment of Lord's as the one and only “Cathedral of Cricket” would never have happened had MCC not already provided the sport with a definitive body of laws; nor would their codification of what had previously been a fluid and varied set of rules ever have been accepted had they not been quite so aristocratic. The influence of MCC's seizure of the commanding heights of cricket was to be not only on the future, but on the past. Just as the line of descent traced by the Christian authorities of Augustine's day had no place for

gospels and beliefs long since branded as heretical, so did the founding of Lord's emphasise one particular understanding of what cricket had been, at the expense of numerous others. As a result, the version of its history that we have is, in every sense, canonical.

Yet it is the measure of a great tradition, perhaps, that beyond such sources and records as we do possess, it will inspire fantasy. In “Jerusalem”, the hymn that for over a decade now has been serving the England cricket team as its entrance anthem, a particularly haunting myth is evoked. That long before ever Augustine travelled to Britain, Jesus had travelled there as a young man, accompanying his uncle to Glastonbury, is a story the English have always yearned to believe.

*“And did those feet in ancient time*

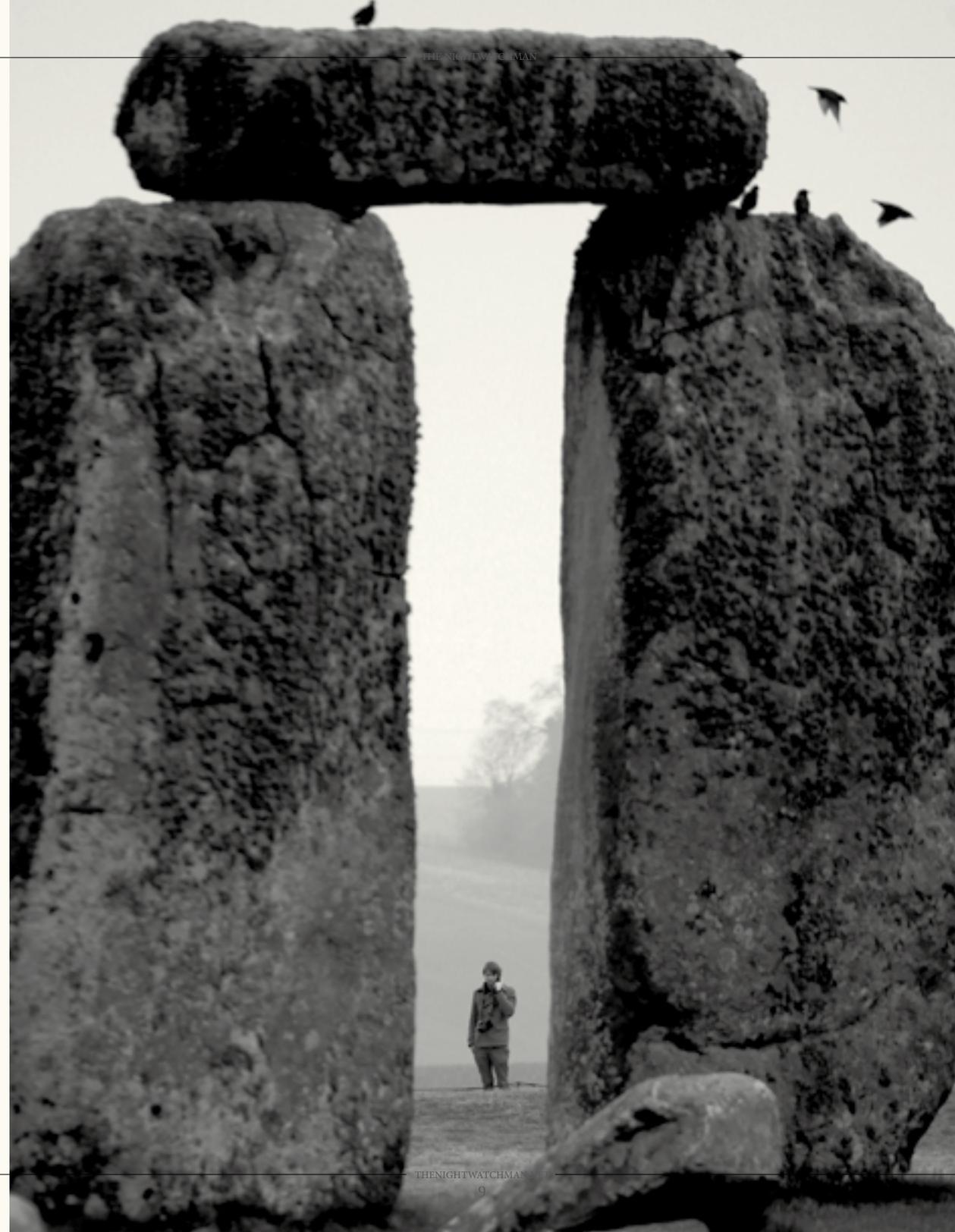
*Walk upon England's mountain green?*

*And was the holy Lamb of God,*

*On England's pleasant pastures seen?”*

To which, of course, the answer is no. The Countenance Divine no more shone forth upon our clouded hills than did proto-hominids in prehistoric Sussex develop a prototype of the Gunn and Moore out of elephant bone. Yet Blake's poem, like the Piltown cricket bat, bears witness to our desire to believe in things that cannot possibly be true: less in what might have happened than in what should have happened. Ancient and modern: it is the mark of cricket, more than any other sport, that in our imaginings it can simultaneously be both.

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**ANJALI DOSHI**

For years after, I would hear about that day. A rampaging Viv Richards, Kapil Dev running backwards to catch him, Jimmy Amarnath's man-of-the-match performance, and thousands of Indians invading the pitch – these vignettes were narrated over and over, embellished with every telling. It was many years until I actually saw a replay of Kapil's catch, but I could have sworn I had watched it on a loop. No father in the Eighties ever tired of talking to his children about that magical, morale-boosting win.

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**JAMES HOLLAND**

His second mission could so nearly have seen his end. "Low-level attack on Schleswig-Jagel airfield carrying two 100 gallon Napalm Gel drop tanks," notes the squadron operational record book dryly. "One tank hung up and brought back to base." The details were more chilling. Miller approached the target, swooping in at 900 feet, anti-aircraft tracer hurtling towards him. In moments, he found himself locked in searchlights but, by diving down, freed himself from their glare and began his low run towards the airfield. Over the target he pressed the bomb release, but only one fell away; the other remained clamped under the wing. Immediately, this knocked the plane, so that Miller had to fight to control it and rectify the imbalance. At the same time, flak burst dangerously close; had the Mosquito not dipped a wing, he would have been hit. Glancing behind him, Miller saw the third Mosquito preparing to drop its napalm behind him and a moment later it was hit and exploded into the ground. Miller managed to escape the fray, but still had to get back to base in Norfolk, an exhausting business because of the strain of keeping the Mosquito level when one wing was carrying the extra weight.

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**TANYA ALDRED**

The long-awaited one-day international against Australia was only scheduled to happen at the ground if Middlesex failed to make it to the Gillette Cup quarter-final, which they duly did. On 4 August, a beautiful day, the England and Australia teams arrived in NW8. "I had never been more nervous," Heyhoe Flint says. "There was a huge media interest, and seven and half thousand spectators, and I just didn't want anything to go wrong, having spent years in effect trying to market women's cricket.

"I won the toss and nobody had actually told me whether we could walk through the Long Room out on to the pitch, and when I came down the stairs with the England team behind me I thought, 'Oh my god, do I go through or not?' So I led the team instead out of that side door, and along the back before going on the pitch. Apparently everyone was inside waiting for us." England won the game and the Pavilion walls didn't fall – though the team are still waiting to play a Test at Lord's.

**IVO TENNANT**

The tunnels, built by Victorian craftsmen, were – and remain – in excellent order. No rubbish, dampness or even inebriated MCC members lie within them. Merely some long-discarded rubble. Artificial and, appropriately, rather ghostly lighting reveals curved brickwork. Occasionally a train rumbles by but otherwise there is no sound of the 21st century, not even leather on willow. The sole entrance was – and still is – from the adjacent Wellington Hospital, whose recently retired chief executive, Keith Hague, was keen to use the space for safe storage of nuclear medicine imaging of cancer patients.

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**JONATHAN LIEW**

Ground and environment continued to reinforce each other. While St John's Wood would often resemble a bucolic village fête taking place in the middle of a smoggy metropolis, similarly Lord's developed as a cricket ground unlike any other. Thomas Lord, a marketing genius decades before the concept even existed, conceived of his premises not merely as a sporting amphitheatre, but as a social hub. So you would pay your sixpence admission fee, clack through the turnstile, and not know what you were about to see: a foot race, a wrestling match, a balloon launch, a military parade. Lord's was the original multi-purpose sporting venue, fully two centuries before The Ageas Bowl was hosting a Barry Manilow concert.

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**RICHARD EVANS**

Prior to the selection meeting, Cowdrey told MCC's media officer Jack Bailey: "It looks as though we shall have problems with South Africa ... They can't leave Basil out of the team now." Bailey readied himself overnight for the South African backlash, but the next morning found Griffith and Carr "clearly not quite themselves" with "a nervous uncertain air about the place". Dolly had not made the cut. Radio commentator Brian Johnston delivered the sour news to the Worcestershire dressing-room, after D'Oliveira had notched another century. Tom Graveney recalled: "Basil just fell apart. He put his head in his hands and wept."

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**STEVE NEAL**

On 30 July 1914, Mrs Crowhurst, landlady of Albert "Alberto" Trott, found the body of her lodger on his bed. He had shot himself in the temple, a Browning pistol still resting in his right hand – the great hand that had bowled 71,549 balls in first-class cricket, the hand that had gripped the bat and hammered the ball over the Lord's Pavilion. He was 41 years old and had lived in Denbigh Road, Harlesden, for the last two and a half years.

## LAWRENCE BOOTH

So, yes, Australian cricket can't help hide its affection for Lord's, because Lord's appeals to the sense of order and tradition that lurks beneath every Aussie larrikin (a passer-by in Adelaide once shouted at me for crossing a deserted road because the green man was still red). When Australian cricket fans tell me they're unconventional, I look at their matching yellow hats and green shirts, and smile indulgently.

But their relationship with Lord's goes deeper than that. Succeed there, and you are ruffling the feathers of English cricket. It's like making off with a bearskin helmet from a guard outside Buckingham Palace. Part of the thrill resides in its naughtiness. And for all but one day of the 20th century, Australia were very naughty indeed.

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## JON HOTTEN

It was to be a contest for the ages, a grand challenge of the kind popular throughout England for sport and wager.

The fad had begun in 1809, when Captain Robert Barclay Allardice walked one mile every hour for a thousand hours, watched by almost 10,000 people. Ada Anderson covered the same distance by walking a quarter-mile every quarter-hour. There were a number of well-known "Centurions", so-called because they had covered 100 miles in 24 hours. Now James Dark, the new owner of Lord's, had devised an event that would push the endurance of its competitors to a new and crueller limit. For a prize of 200 sovereigns, Townsend and Drinkwater were to engage in a shuttle run from hell. They had to pick up 300 stones, placed a yard apart, one at a time and return to a baseline with each. The combined distance of the shuttle was 51 miles 540 yards, and the champion pedestrian Townsend was free to collect his stones by hand. Drinkwater had to pick his stones up and return them in his mouth.

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## JOHN CRACE

I know it's my problem. No one at Lord's has ever been rude to me or treated me as less than an equal. Quite the reverse in fact, but I have even found a way of turning that into a slight. An MCC friend of mine – nameless for obvious reasons – had found a way of getting me into the Warner Stand that relied entirely on the unquestioning politeness of the stewards for its success. "Just wave this pass and look as if you own the place, John," my friend had advised me. It worked a treat, though it always niggled that a sense of entitlement could be so effective.

## PAT GIBSON

They became known as the John Barnes Outswingers and they were soon attracting a crowd for their two sets, one before the start of play, the other during the lunch interval. Their makeshift bandstand was to be found under the huge tree in front of the Harris Garden, between the Grace Gate and the Pavilion. But it is a busy thoroughfare at such times and they have been moved to various other locations – such as a building site at the Nursery End when the Media Centre was being built, and the grassy mound behind the Warner Stand – on the grounds that ambulances might not be able to get through in an emergency. However, the jazzmen assured the authorities that if they laid down their instruments and hopped over the wall into the garden the crowd would quickly disperse, and they were soon back in their favourite spot where the sound bounces back nicely from the Allen Stand in front of them.

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## STEVEN LYNCH

All the repairs were undertaken by what seems now to be a remarkably small band of painters and handymen. Any electrical problems were solved by Sparky Dave and his trusty adjustable spanner. There were parts of the ground that were almost a secret. Whole corridors in the Grand Stand didn't seem to lead anywhere. There was an ancient tunnel to the Pavilion from the Mound Stand, where the catering office was housed. And under the Mound there was apparently a reservoir, the size of a swimming pool, for water drained off the playing area.

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## TOM JEFFREYS

Almost everything has rounded-off edges – ventilator grills, door frames, even the brushed steel door handles. It is as if the primary concern of the architects was for the safety of the world's cricket journalists should the whole thing pitch violently in a sudden squall. It even has portholes in the doors. Most striking of all, however, is that the entire interior has been painted a mildly disorientating shade of sky blue: floors, walls, ceilings, everything. It's like standing beneath the ocean or, more accurately, above the clouds.

Along with this award-winning, cutting-edge architecture, there is also another Lord's: a Lord's of picnic hampers and geriatric jazz bands, white picket fences and ties fit to spill breakfast on. It is this Lord's that insists on fiddly white marquee tops to adorn the top of Hopkins' Mound Stand, and curtails the height of both the Compton and Edrich Stands: the members, I'm told, must be able to see trees from their Pavilion. The cricket match: ever a rural event, even here in the billionaire environs of St John's Wood.

**NEIL MANTHORP**

On the first day of training on the Nursery Ground, Fanie de Villiers could not contain his enthusiasm and headed straight for the “real thing” – just to set foot on the hallowed turf and experience the ambience and atmosphere that he had heard and read so much about.

“Oi! Get off the bleedin’ grass!” The bark came from one of the infamous stewards, shattering the Afrikaaner boy’s fulfilment of a dream. “But I’m a player, from South Africa...” replied a startled de Villiers.

“Don’t care who you are, mate – get off the grass!”

De Villiers swore right then and there that the “Poms will pay for this.” And they did. In a heavy, painful and glorious way by being hammered inside four days, not just by a massive margin but in a manner that was deeply humiliating as England were dismissed for just 99 in the final session.

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**JON HOTTEN**

“About half past one yesterday morning fire broke out in a large building called the Pavilion, erected in the cricket ground near the school of the orphans of the clergy, on the St John’s Wood Road. From the nature of the materials, which were chiefly of wood, although lately enlarged and beautified at great expense, the fire in a very short time defied the power of the fire engines and water... So strong was the fire that the wooden rails round the building were partly destroyed. There was a very valuable wine cellar well stocked in the Pavilion... which shared the same fate with the building.” *The Times*, 30 July 1825

So perished the early history of MCC and the early fabric of Lord’s: scores, minutes and even the names of the early presidents (which have never been rediscovered). It is clear too that the major loss was the wine cellar; this was perhaps not as great a disappointment as it should have been to its speculative tenant Tom Lord, who supplied Club members through his wine shop at the entrance to the Ground. But it must have been felt hard by the inaugural secretary George Aislabie who was himself a wine merchant.

**STEPHEN MCDOWELL**

It is unfair to talk about a hierarchy of heroes, but the last two of our VC winners were certainly among the most spectacular of the holders of the honour as well as, without doubt, the poshest. Both Old Etonians and both aristocratic, they seem to be set apart by a swagger and panache familiar to fans of swashbuckling cricketers whose walks to the wicket through the Pavilion bring a thrill of anticipation to spectators’ hearts.

Geoffrey Keyes was only 24 when he died. Already the holder of the Military Cross, at the time of his death he was the youngest Lieutenant Colonel in the British Army. And it is quite possible that the letter informing him he had been elected to the hallowed ranks of MCC membership lay unopened on his desk.

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**TONY COZIER**

As schoolboys in Barbados, our impressions of Lord’s had been formed through John Arlott’s lyrical radio commentaries. There was no need to describe it as the home of cricket; to our fanatical imaginations, it materialised as some cricketing Valhalla that awaited aspiring West Indian cricketers. Ignoring our limited talent, George and I were convinced that we would eventually be among them.

Instead, we had to be satisfied with playing at various make-believe Lord’s. Our school house matches were at “Lord’s”. So were pick-up games in someone’s backyard, in the road, in Subbuteo cricket. You batted as Worrell or Weekes, bowled as Ramadhin or Valentine, but, wherever the venue, it was usually “Lord’s”.

# THE **Nightwatchman**

THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY

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