

SAMPLE EDITION

21

SPRING 2018

THE  
**Nightwatchman**

THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY

**WISDEN**



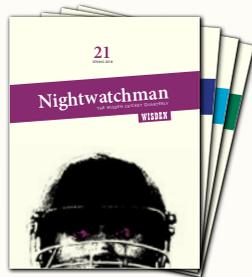
# THE Nightwatchman

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.

Co-edited by Anjali Doshi and Tanya Aldred, with Matt Thacker as managing editor, *The Nightwatchman* features an array of authors from around the world, writing beautifully and at length about the game and its myriad offshoots. Contributors are given free rein over subject matter and length, escaping the pressures of next-day deadlines and the despair of cramming heart and soul into a few paragraphs.

There are several different ways to get hold of and enjoy *The Nightwatchman*. You can subscribe to the print version and get a free digital copy for when you're travelling light. If you don't have enough room on your book case, you can always take out a digital-only subscription. Or if you'd just like to buy a single issue – in print, digital or both – you can do that too. Take a look at the options below and decide which is best for you.



**Full subscription**  
Annual print  
subscription (with  
free e-book versions)  
**£27 (+P&P)**

[Click to Buy](#)



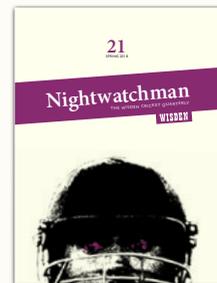
**Digital subscription**  
Annual e-book only  
subscription  
**£10**

[Click to Buy](#)



**Digital single copy**  
Single issue  
(e-book only)  
**£4**

[Click to Buy](#)



**Single copy**  
Single issue (with  
free with free  
e-book version)  
**£10 (+P&P)**

[Click to Buy](#)

## ISSUE 21 – SPRING 2018

**Matt Thacker** introduces issue 21 of the *Nightwatchman*

**Harry Pearson** presents the waggiest fielder of them all

**Jon Harvey** breathes his brother's sporting legacy

**Steve Menary** laments the demise of cricket in Morocco

**Kate Laven** investigates the changing path to cricket journalism

**Ben Jones** explores the noise that defines a season

**Paul Edwards** on the glorious summer of 1976

**John Taylor** saw Wally Grout's lasting legacy

**John Crace** spent the winter reading

**Matt Thacker** sends back some holiday snapshots

**The dashing glovemen** – finders keepers

**Benjamin Brill** on when the past was a long time ago

**Raf Nicholson** examines the father-daughter axis

**Isabelle Westbury** looks at English cricket's relationship with its South Asian diaspora

**Donald Zec** on living in the nervous nineties

**Andy Donley** asks whether the spirit of cricket still matters

**Daniel Rey** explores his grandfather's wartime game

**Dave Edmundson** recalls the golden age of the Lancashire League

**Peter Prendergast** on cricket's selfish gene

**Samanth Subramanian** is an Indian playing in Ireland

**Jonathan Rice** recalls his sushi years

**Alex Book** on life, love and cricket





## FOUR SHORT LEGS AND A WAGGING TAIL

*Harry Pearson on the dog days of cricket*

People will speak in wonder of the outfielding of Derek Randall, Jonty Rhodes or perhaps even of Colin Bland, but by far the greatest cover I ever saw was a short, stocky, grey-bearded fellow from County Durham. He rejoiced under the unlikely name of Charlemagne Commondale, but was known to teammates simply as Ingo.

Ingo was so swift across the ground he could be entrusted with patrolling the entire off side between point and mid off. His lack of height helped him to scoop up even the most firmly struck drive, while his gravity-defying leaps into the air saw him pull off many an outrageous catch. No batsman dared chance a second run to Commondale; his return – always to the bowler's end – was swift and deadly accurate largely because he eschewed throwing the ball in favour of sprinting to the stumps with it

full tilt. He had the stamina to keep going all day long, his concentration never wavered. Despite the fact that he couldn't bowl and had not the faintest idea even how to hold a bat, he was considered by one and all to be worth a place in any side for his fielding alone.

I had known Ingo since he was a nipper and took a proud paternal attitude to him. It would be nice to think that his brilliance as an outfielder was somehow picked up from me. Yet while it is true I had helped hone his skills by throwing a powerball against an uneven sandstone wall for him to catch for hours on end during long summer evenings, the fact was that his talents – the judgment of angles and distances, the speed across the ground, the unwavering focus and unquenchable stamina – were purely genetic. His ancestors, originally from

the hills of Southern Germany, had for centuries plied their trade as livestock herders and rat-catchers. It was in his blood. Ingo, you see, was a Standard Schnauzer. He was by far the greatest cricketing dog I have ever played alongside. And there have been many. Indeed, during days out with friends on the Northumberland coast in the early years of parenthood we could often field an entire XI of them.

Ingo's oldest friend, Stanley, a cavalier King Charles Spaniel, was a patrician feature of our team. Like a blue-blooded amateur of the Edwardian era, Stanley refused to run or jump. Instead he stood at first slip, a position from which he surveyed proceedings with the barely disguised aristocratic disgust of one who should rightfully have been sitting in the lap of a perfumed courtesan in a luxurious carriage trotting through the streets of a bustling city rather than standing in the lashing wind on a northern beach. Whenever the ball came near him, Stanley flinched, not I think from fear, but from revulsion at its vulgarity. Stanley did not bring much to the team playing-wise, but he certainly added tone.

A Border Collie named Jess was another regular in our starting lineup. Jess was quick and active, yet essentially useless, except when the pre-school members of the fielding side decided that standing around waiting for the ball was totally boring and it would be far more fun to discover what getting washed out to sea felt like. At which point Jess would plunge into the waves after them and drive them back to the shore, barking and occasionally snapping at their

ankles – how Trevor Bayliss could have used Jess in Australia this winter.

My first cricketing dog was a West Highland Terrier who came from Berwick Hills on Teesside. He had short legs, several missing teeth and a minatory attitude that often ended in violence. He answered to Doogie, but his character and his preferred position of wicket-keeper led my friends and I to nickname him Rodney in honour of the great Australian stumper. It should be said, however, that though they shared many traits, Rodney Marsh never bit my father's thumb when he tried to take away the ham bone he was chewing under our dining-room table. Although I don't doubt that he would have done had the situation arisen.

Doogie's position behind the stumps was less to do with his talents than because it afforded him a good view out of the garden gate, the better for yapping at postmen, door-to-door salespeople and anyone else who threatened to violate his personal space. Occasionally a delivery would beat the bat and rebound back onto the stumps off his rump, allowing us to mark the wicket down as a stumping.

In an attempt to interest Doogie more in the game I once experimented by rubbing the ball with a beef-stock cube. It worked, rather too well. Prising the meaty cherry from his grasp was like trying to get Dennis Lillee to relinquish the ball when he was on a hat-trick against England at the WACA. Although to be fair I expect even DK would have stopped short of burying the ball under a rose bush and snarling if Ian Chappell went within a yard of it.



My auntie Bertha's dog Rascal also made a contribution to our games in the garden, though mainly by peeing on a length just outside off stump and then scuffing it up with his powerful back legs, after the style of fellow Yorkshireman Bobby Peel. More than once the umpires warned him about his behaviour, but since he was a Jack Russell Terrier he took even less notice of them than Peel himself would have done. Local knowledge dictated that the minute Rascal appeared it was time to bring on the spinner.

There were others too: Fred the psychotic Lakeland Terrier who refused to wait until victory was sealed before grabbing a stump and running off with it; Bungle the Basset Hound who prevented dozens

• • •

of boundaries one afternoon simply by lying down and falling asleep at midwicket; Misky the golden Labrador who contributed little to the cricket but could be relied on at the close to howl along semi-melodically to a harmonica rendition of Booker T and the MG's "Soul Limbo".

When it came to actually playing the game, though, none of them could match Ingo. What a fieldsman he was. Any captain would have wanted him in their side. Indeed, had it not been for an unfortunate habit of attempting to have sex with spectators during play he would certainly have been a multi-million-dollar signing for an IPL franchise. And yes, I know what you're thinking, but I reckon we should leave Shane Warne out of this.





# EXTRACTS

RI'd do it in Dan's memory, to celebrate our unalloyed love of every sport in the world and wrap myself in the comfort blanket of our shared passion, as I began something that should have been unthinkable: my first sporting adventure without him. The spectre of grief still towered over me, but instead of allowing myself to be dominated by the past, perhaps I could use it to help chart my days ahead and keep my head from dipping too low. Over the next 12 months I wasn't just going to be the avid supporter I've always been. Now I needed sport to support me. And this is how I found myself at Lord's

**JON HARVEY**

• • •

Sheep roam in the nets. A piece of heavy machinery squats on the outfield. The rest of the pitch is dug up or concreted over. Like the game of cricket in Soussi's country, the Tangier Oval is derelict. The unlikely but sad tale of Moroccan cricket involves tragedy, World Cup winners, millions of dollars of wasted investment and, ultimately, the death of a dream.

**STEVE MENARY**

• • •

Look around any international cricket press box these days and you will see pretty much what you saw a zillion years ago. A type of white, middle-class, well-educated, highly intelligent male who at some stage may have worried their mothers with a mild strain of autism.

Their heads will be bowed over laptops and they will be in a cricket bubble, entranced by a daily dose of repetitive patterns and statistics. They may seem tense but there is no real need for them to interact with others. So they don't, until food is served.

**KATE LAVEN**

• • •

Hovering over its head at all times, the men's game is weighed down by history. The anxiety of influence looms large, blown up by the cynicism of voices with overs in their legs. Stokes is no Botham. Lyon is no Warne. Kohli is no Sachin. Where's Lillee? Thommo? Miandad? Wasim? Gavaskar? Waqar? Waugh? Border? Willis? Bedser? Holding?

In the shadow of all this history – just one bloody thing after another – distinct, sharp moments are harder to achieve. Their excellence comes with caveats. Best since then. Best since them.

**BEN JONES**

• • •

I could have asked Reg what it was like to play in the Test where Len Hutton and Denis Compton made their first centuries against Australia. Hedley Verity played in that match, as did Bill O'Reilly. I might have asked about Stan McCabe's 232, an innings so fine that Bradman called his players onto the balcony at Nottingham to watch it. I should have asked about playing county cricket in the same side as Wally Hammond or bowling in tandem with Charlie Parker, one of the game's few Bolsheviks. I did none of those things, none of them.

**PAUL EDWARDS**

• • •

Presumably most spectators were as puzzled by the hiatus as I was. Why should it take this long to decide who was run out? What was, or was not, happening? Then someone in the Grand Stand called out:

"Remember Wally Grout '64!"

Of course! The first Test of 1964. Trent Bridge. Titmus, called for a run by Boycott, collided with the bowler, Hawke, who was running to field the ball. With Titmus sprawling in mid-pitch, the ball was returned to wicket-keeper Grout who, in an act of exemplary sportsmanship, chose not to break the wicket.

**JOHN TAYLOR**

• • •

So as my interest in this winter's Ashes faded almost as soon as it had begun, I drifted back in time. Beginning with the winter of 1956 and Alan Ross's Cape Summer. Not an obvious choice as the cricket itself didn't appear to have been very remarkable, but one which appealed for a number of reasons. The first was that I had not read it for many, many years and second because I was curious to relive what it must have been like to follow a cricket tour during the Apartheid years. It's been almost 30 years since the South African white nationalist government fell and it felt timely to remember just how much it has changed.

### JOHN CRACE

• • •

Nearly 30 years on British Asians have still not been fully accepted into English cricket. However, the next 18 months offer an excellent opportunity for change – a chance to build on the events of last year: Pakistan's victory over India in the Champions Trophy and India's bold run in the Women's World Cup. With the India and Pakistan men's teams touring the UK this summer, and a World Cup to follow in 2019, more subcontinental cricket is coming to these shores than ever before. What more can be done to ensure that cricket in this country really is a game for everyone who lives here – including the three million South Asians who make up almost five per cent of the population?

### ISABELLE WESTBURY

• • •

We're blokes, so we've not planned this well. Or at all. We arrive at 5am. We can check into our place at 3pm. It doesn't matter how you play the time-difference game, that's a long wait. I text Aussie journo-genius Geoff Lemon. I'm not mad enough to call him at that hour. He's up of course. But not just up. Also up for driving 45 minutes to pick us up, stopping off at the supermarket to buy provisions (including cheese-and-Vegemite scrolls), cooking us said provisions, then directing our tired bodies to cosy corners of the family home. A strange and wonderful man. We've been in Oz a couple of hours and we've already ticked off most of the lyrics of "Down Under" by Men at Work. Dozing, I hear birdsong the like of which I've never heard before and I am vaguely listening to Geoff claiming koalas are never sober and that they love fighting. I close my eyes. I've got nets tonight and I need to rest.

### MATT THACKER

• • •

A left-arm tweaker  
With a size six bat  
Sold his wicket at a price  
That made up for a lack  
Of attacking flair

Curtained hair  
Borrowed kit  
A watchman, ever guarded  
As back and forth names flit

Michael Richmond  
Phil Rakusen  
Then "Sully: you're at three"

### BENJAMIN BRILL

• • •

There are no gender barriers to inheriting a love of cricket. When I first saw Ian Shrubsole's tweet, it took me back to a dearly held memory of my own. I will never play in a World Cup final at Lord's, but I do share one experience with Anya Shrubsole: our dads first took us to the Home of Cricket. I was 11. Middlesex were playing Sussex at Lord's in a Championship game. Owais Shah was being touted as the next big thing in English Test cricket. We watched him dance around, then be dismissed for 11. Somebody called Andrew Strauss went on to make 48, though. I still have the scorecard.

### RAF NICHOLSON

• • •

No – what I shrink from is the question, "what does it feel like to be 99 years old?" I just don't know how to answer it. Is it a medical question, a philosophical one, or simply a polite display of bare-faced indifference? Moreover, friends and others keep telling me I am "amazing". I wish they would not – it induces dark thoughts and a hustle to "put my affairs in order".

### DONALD ZEC

• • •

One man well placed to pass judgment on the attitudes of young cricketers, in North West England at least, is Gary Yates, academy director at Lancashire CCC. Yates enjoyed a 12-year first-class career as an off-spinning allrounder and has gone on to fill a multitude of roles at the club since his retirement, working with young players as second XI captain, spin-bowling coach as well as in his current position.

“Traditional values are related to respect, and the respect is not there as much as it was,” he told the Nightwatchman. “I think young players have a sense of entitlement. It’s now more of a duty of the coaches and ex-players and current players to keep reinforcing these traditional values. It has to be a constant message that is passed down through the system.”

But what is that message? What exactly is the spirit of cricket?

#### **ANDY DONLEY**

• • •

Late one afternoon in 1944, Private Hugh Chamberlain of the Royal Engineers, stationed in Jerusalem, received an urgent summons. “Chamberlain,” said the voice on the other end of the telephone line. “We’re one short for tomorrow’s game in Amman. We need a batsman. We leave at first light.”

As the sun was rising in the Levant, 11 cricketers jumped into a military vehicle. Chaperoned by a convoy of trucks released by the army, they sped down the dusty Palestinian roads to Transjordan. The land was hardly flowing with milk and honey, but for those who made the trip, tea alone was worth it. “They were the most delicious ham sandwiches I’ve ever had.”

#### **DANIEL REY**

• • •

Collie Smith, Burnley’s West Indian professional, is battling for his life today. He is in Stoke-on-Trent with a suspected spine fracture received in a car accident. Smith, who is 25, was travelling with two other West Indian cricketers, Tom Dewdney, Darwen’s professional, and Garfield Sobers for Radcliffe, when their car was in a head-on crash with a cattle wagon near Stone.

Three days later the Telegraph revealed the full extent of the tragedy:

Tears were shed by many Burnley people, as news of the death of Collie Smith hit town. Round the bedside when he died were his three cricketing friends, Frank Worrell, Sonny Ramadhin and Cec Pepper.

#### **DAVE EDMUNDSON**

• • •

A couple of years back I received a call from one of my kids. He was outraged because he was down to bat at No.10. Never mind that he was an under-15 playing in an under-17 game. Or that he was a relative beginner, having taken up the sport a little more than a year earlier. He was boiling at the injustice of it, positively steaming, when all of a sudden there’s a cheer in the background and he says: “Great, someone’s out. At least that’s one of them out of the way.”

#### **PETER PRENDERGAST**

• • •

Not long after moving to Ireland, it turned out, Brendan had found himself in a pub on 17 March 2007, when Ireland famously beat Pakistan in the World Cup. The uproar of cheer had been terrific, and Brendan found himself sucked in enough to start watching: an Ashes here, a few YouTube videos there, the usual stray hits that build the addiction. Then a friend told him about a club that played in an informal league in Dublin. He invited Brendan to join; now Brendan was inviting me.

#### **SAMANTH SUBRAMANIAN**

• • •

Cricket in Japan has always been a somewhat eccentric pastime. There are records of the game being played there in the 1860s, even before the final treaties opening up the country to the outside world were signed. The British cannot travel far or for long without getting out their bats, pads and balls and pitching a wicket 22 yards long. What the top-knotted, kimono-clad, double-sword-carrying samurai of feudal Japan made of these strange foreigners wielding large sticks and throwing balls at each other across a field in which rice could not be grown is not fully recorded. But even a century and a bit later, cricket had not really taken hold in the Land of the Rising Sun.

#### JO RICE

...

To be honest I thought I was doing all those things already, but they clearly aren't enough. So I will double my efforts. Because I have to win. I need to score runs. Otherwise I am a failure, and I've been a failure for far too long. In case I ever forget this, the voice is there to remind me.

You're a failure. And you're going to fail again. You're going to get out this ball.

So, of course, I don't win. I don't score runs. I do often get out that ball. I shout, I swear, I hit things, I throw my kit across the changing room. I go for furious marches around the ground, angrily berating myself for failing again. My average in the low teens becomes a source of mirth; if you don't laugh, you'll cry. I think my teammates know how frustrating and soul-destroying it has all become. They try to help with extra throw-downs in the nets or good-natured piss-taking, but it only makes things worse.

Yet I persist. Season after season, every time starting with an optimism that inevitably drains away, to be replaced with angry resignation. This cruel, stupid game, which I love. Which I hate. Which I love.

#### ALEX BOOK

...

## THE Nightwatchman

THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY

The twenty-first edition of *The Nightwatchman* is published at the beginning of March 2018 on a limited print run. So subscribe or order now to ensure that you get your copy.

Click to visit  
[thenightwatchman.net](http://thenightwatchman.net)

