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SUMMER 2020

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.

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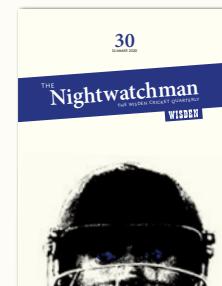
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## ISSUE 30 – SUMMER 2020

**Tanya Aldred** introduces issue 30 of the *Nightwatchman*

**Eleanor Oldroyd** soars to the choral cricketing heavens

**Jonathan Wilson** on memory and love

**Paul Edwards** praises the knights of the West Country

**David Owen** recalls Northamptonshire's field of dreams

**Siddhartha Vaidyanathan** gives his version of England's 1992–93 tour of India

**Mumbai's maidans** – the photographs of Emma Levine

**Charlie Burgess** on a private affair in the Upper Edrich Stand

**Snehal Pradhan** talks to the South African couple whose love is frowned upon

**Dave Edmundson** paints Jimmy the younger

**S.J.Litherland** Unbound

**Nicholas Brookes** on Jardine's Ceylonese disgrace

**Photo special** – the Wisden-MCC photographs of the year

**Ben Lerwill** asks for a thousand autographs

**David Tossell** searches for Lawrence Rowe

**James Wallace** finds solace in cricket

**Chris McMillan** follows a multi-cultural thread





# A COVER DRIVE IN E-FLAT

*Eleanor Oldroyd sings a hymn to cricket*

It happens at the start of every day of every England Test match, home and abroad. The Barmy Army stand to sing a work by one of the pre-eminent choral composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a man who influenced Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Holst, and who went on to become head of the Royal College of Music.

We're talking, of course, about "Jerusalem". Whether the Barmies might consider taking on one of Sir Hubert Parry's other works - "I Was Glad", perhaps, or "Blest Pair of Sirens" - is stretching it a bit, unless Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad were having a particularly good day.

Sir Alastair Cook will probably have sung all three pieces, as well as many others by Parry, Stanford, Howells and other giants of the British choral tradition. As a former choir boy at St Paul's Cathedral, England's greatest Test run-scorer is the most distinguished proponent of the cricket-choir crossover. It's hard to think of anyone else who has managed to look

equally indomitable with bat in hand and angelic in a surplice and ruff.

But how many other cricketing choristers, or choral-singing cricket-lovers, are out there? As someone who defines myself as the latter, I am sure there are plenty, although my personal twin passions took a while to develop.

Growing up in the 1970s in a vicarage in South Shropshire, summer Sundays meant three things: church, my mum's roast potatoes and John Player League cricket on the TV.

Church attendance in the morning was compulsory, largely for childcare reasons. My dad, Vicar of Cleobury Mortimer, had to be there. Mum was also required to be there, as the supportive vicar's wife; she had her own professional life as a modern languages teacher but there would have been much tutting in the congregation if she hadn't taken a pew. So my two brothers and I, too young to be left home alone, were co-opted to join the choir. Gradually the rhythms of

liturgical life became imprinted on my consciousness; the words and tunes of hymns, the precise intonation required for psalm-singing, the ability not to shuffle and fidget during duller parts of the service.

The cricket also tested my powers of concentration. My sporting preferences in my early teens were for football, athletics and rugby - *Grandstand* took over Saturday afternoon in the same way that the John Player League did on Sunday - and cricket, even the 40-over version, seemed as interminable as one of my dad's sermons.

Gradually, though, inspired by the feats of the great players of the time - the likes of Viv Richards, Ian Botham and Joel Garner in that Somerset title-winning team of 1979 - I realised that cricket was a sport superior to all others (and that actually my dad's sermons were better, shorter and definitely funnier than most). If there was a danger of a clash between Evensong and the Sunday League, Dad would generally find a compliant curate, or member of the resident retired clergy, to take over the service.

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My cricket-watching outings were to Worcester, our nearest first-class ground, or Canterbury, near my grandparents. And I'm sure it's not a coincidence that they, as so many of the most evocative locations - like Taunton, where Beefy, Viv and Big Bird thrilled the Somerset faithful - have a close association with, or even a backdrop of, churches or cathedrals. My bucket-list ground was the Adelaide Oval. Paying my first pilgrimage there, during the 2017-18 Ashes, it was a relief to discover

that the towering redevelopment of the stands hadn't obscured the iconic view of St Peter's Cathedral.

Lord's, of course, is known by some as the "Cathedral of Cricket", the outfield as "the hallowed turf". You'd imagine that walking beneath the chandeliers of the Long Room for the first time wouldn't have intimidated a young Alastair Cook, who'd spent his formative years performing under the magnificent Christopher Wren dome of St Paul's. While all he and his brothers wanted to do was play sport, his musically minded parents were also keen for them to sing, so a deal was done in which tennis, badminton and cricket went alongside choir practice on a Friday night.

"Eventually I was spotted by the choirmaster who said I should audition for London choir schools," Cook explained in a 2019 interview with BBC Radio 3. "At seven [years old], you don't know what that is, but it is a day off school. Before you know it, you get offered a place; it couldn't be further from what I was used to."

The relentless round of practising and performing - daily Choral Evensong, plus sung Mattins and Eucharist on Sunday, plus special services, plus choir tours - is a tough regime for an adult, let alone a small boy, but it was character-forming for the young Cook.

"It was a brutal regime in one sense, but I had experiences you would never normally have. I sang in the VE Day 50th anniversary celebration, the first night of the Proms a few times. I went to Brazil on choir tour. Singing in St Paul's Cathedral had a major impact on my life; as a result I went to Bedford



School on a music scholarship, which gave me access to the facilities at Bedford for cricket."

Cook believes the chorister life gave him a headstart on his cricketing contemporaries and set him up for a professional life of crease-occupation.

"It taught me discipline, the art of concentration, of performing in front of people, working hard, all these things. You get used to standing up on stage and getting it right, you're learning to perform under pressure. That probably separated me quite a lot as a 14-year-old from my friends and fellow players at the time."

It may also have hardened Cook to the demands of the more exacting coaches he would come across in his cricket career. For Andy Flower, read St Paul's director of music John Scott.

"He was fiery, he certainly kept you on your toes. He demanded excellence, it didn't matter if you were nine years old, 13 years old, or in the Vicars Choral [the men in the choir who sing the lower parts]. If you weren't making the music as good as you could, you were in trouble."

Ben Collingwood also started his musical life as a choirboy at St Paul's; his younger brother Dominic was a cricketing teammate of Cook. Although a fellow cricket obsessive, Ben's career took him away from sport and along the musical route, via a choral scholarship at Exeter Cathedral, into the BBC, where he produces the weekly Choral Evensong on Radio 3, among other major religious services.

Collingwood sees similarities in the dynamic of choirs and cricket teams. "In a choir you are performing as part of a group for much of the time; but then there will be moments when you might have a solo, and in that moment you come to the fore and become the centre of attention."

There is an element of tribalism, too, between the great cathedrals.

"At St Paul's the game we wanted to win every year, without fail, was against Westminster Abbey," says Collingwood. "They were our great rivals, in and out of the choir stalls. When I was a student in Exeter the big grudge match was against Wells Cathedral. Some took it far too seriously, but my greatest moment ever on a cricket field was bowling Malcolm Archer (organist and master of the choristers at Wells) first ball."

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At King's College, Cambridge, Alex Stobbs completed an elite double; he started out as a schoolboy chorister and returned a few years later as an undergraduate and choral scholar, the singer's equivalent of getting on the honours board at Lord's as a batsman and a bowler.

Balancing his passion for cricket with the demands of singing in possibly the most famous and prestigious choir in the world didn't usually throw up problems, until one particular Wednesday when an under-11s match was scheduled for the same day as a live broadcast of Choral Evensong and cricket whites had to be swapped pretty rapidly for cassock and surplice.

"The ground was about a mile down the road from King's Chapel," says Stobbs. "We batted first. I'd never scored a fifty and was not out just before tea. My mate, who was captain, was also a chorister and I had to persuade him to let us carry on batting after the break. Then we absolutely had to leg it; we declared, and dashed to sing Wesley in E or something like that."

Choir tours took Stobbs around the world, and he remembers ticking off the cricket grounds of Australia in between concerts and services in 2001. Through secondary school and university days, sport took second place to music, particularly as much of his physical energy as he grew up went into managing the debilitating lung condition cystic fibrosis. Stobbs's musical exploits at Eton College and then at Cambridge, depicted in two life-affirming Channel 4 documentaries, included conducting two Bach masterworks - the "Magnificat" and "St Matthew Passion" - which raised money for cystic fibrosis charities.

But the love of cricket was always there; after graduation he read *Penguins Stopped Play*, Harry Thompson's book about a wandering cricket team, and was inspired. "I've always wanted to have my own team, so I sent the suggestion out to a couple-of-dozen friends and family, mostly former choristers - and everyone was very keen."

And so Faire Is The XI was born, playing a clutch of games a season, generally in highly picturesque locations such as Chiswick House, Ascott Park in Bedfordshire and the Nevill Ground in Tunbridge Wells. The name has bemused opponents - "only a handful of people have got it" - but it's a classic

choral pun on the anthem "Faire Is The Heaven" by William Henry Harris. (The original team name riffed on Bainton's "And I saw a New Heaven" but, says Stobbs, "Faire is a far better name, and incidentally a better anthem.")

Faire's star player in recent seasons has been professional tenor and fellow former King's man Ruairi Bowen, described in his biography as "much in demand as an interpreter of Baroque repertoire in the UK and abroad" and by one rueful opponent as "a young and angelic-looking quick bowler who decimates us every time".

Stobbs, who captains the side, is careful to not to overuse Bowen, who has opened the bowling for Addiscombe CC in the Surrey Championship. "I tend to put him on third-change so he doesn't bowl everyone out too quickly. I don't want all the best players to play in all the games or it gets a bit too serious. It's nice to have someone who loves the game but is a bit crap really. We have a few people who played for their university first or second teams and are competent cricketers, but it's not about winning; it's about having a great day and if we win it's the icing on the cake."

Captaining and managing a cricket team, says Stobbs, takes considerable diplomacy. "You have to manage egos. It's like being a choral director and dealing with chorister parents - you have to give their darling child a solo or two, and in cricket you have to give a chance to your prima-donna bowler who thinks he's God's gift to spin bowling and then gets punted for about 36 off two overs."

It's enticing to think that, over a post-game pint, Faire Is The XI might break

into a motet or madrigal or two. If they were looking for cricket-related repertoire, though, they might struggle. Unless you could read the words of the popular hymn "Oh Worship the King" as a choral tribute to Ben Stokes:

*Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days*

*Pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.*

If they were looking for composers with a cricketing name, Faire could turn to the much-performed works of Stanford – that's Charles Villiers rather than the disgraced, helicopter-landing American financier Allen – or even Sir Edward Cuthbert Bairstow, born like his namesake Jonny in West Yorkshire and composer of a number of anthems – including "Blessed City Heavenly Salem" – as well as service settings in D, E-flat and G. And former South Africa captain Dean Elgar always inspires pun-loving commentators to remark on his enigmatic approach, or the lack of variation in his shot-making.

Cricket has been immortalised in song many times and in a variety of musical genres: pop ("Dreadlock Holiday" by 10CC), calypso ("The Lord's Calypso (Cricket, Lovely Cricket)" by Lord Kitchener), folk/rock ("When an Old Cricketer Leaves the Crease" by Roy Harper), indie ("Fuckin 'ell, It's Fred Titmus" by Half Man Half Biscuit), and Neil Hannon's "Irish concept album" *The Duckworth Lewis Method*. But there's not a great deal you could define as classical or choral.

A 2011 CD called *Songs of Cricket* probably comes closest to filling the gap. Recorded by the a cappella

quartet Cantabile, with contributions from Rory Bremner and Sir Tim Rice among others, it includes "The Rules of Cricket: A Psalm Chant"; "The Andy Flower Duet" – a spoof of Delibes' popular piece from his opera *Lakme*; and a doo-wop version of "Soul Limbo".

Also featured is the now almost-forgotten (probably for very good reasons) final joint composition of Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber – *Cricket (Hearts and Wickets)*. Commissioned for the Queen's 60th birthday celebrations in 1986, it's an evocation of a muscular, masculine version of the sport, with a "sweet English rose" watching on from the boundary edge, as described in "The Summer Game":

*Bat on ball, the manly thwack of blade on leather,*

*Players all, so worthy of the crowd's acclaim.*

*And, although protected in their regions nether,*

*Batsmen know the dangers of the summer game.*

The musical debuted at Windsor Castle with a cast including Ian Charleson, Alvin Stardust and Prince Edward, who had been responsible for the commission. After two more performances, including one at the Lord's Taverners' Ball, it was shelved, never to be seen again, although Lloyd Webber cannibalised it for his later musicals *Aspects of Love* and *Sunset Boulevard*, re-using a number of the tunes.

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If one thing links the life of the chorister and the life of the cricketer, it is the times when nothing much happens – for hours in the nets, read note-bashing of new anthems. For a post-lunch session in which 56 runs are added in two wicket-less hours, try "Psalm 78", all 73 verses of it, which takes around 15 minutes to sing. And spectators needing distractions during dull passages of play would sympathise with the tactics of the Vicars Choral at St Paul's in Ben Collingwood's time: "Before the service they would go into the choir stalls and conceal a Sunday paper under their seat. They'd sneak it out to read during the sermon, then take it away at the end, processing out with it tucked – sometimes not very discreetly – into their folders with their music."

But above all, lovers of cricket and choral music are linked by the joyous moments; the communal raising of voices, in song, or in praise of a scintillating catch; the aesthetic appreciation of a fan vault, a stained glass window, or a bank of trees behind a row of striped deckchairs; the transcendent beauty of a soaring treble solo or a sumptuous cover drive; a nerdish obsession with batting or bowling figures, or with selecting the best sets of Evensong responses, canticles and anthems. An enjoyment, in both cases, of a beer or two at close of play.

As Alex Stobbs puts it: "My favourite day looks like this: a roast lunch, a good game of cricket, and to sing Evensong afterward. And then the pub."

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THE INDIA WATCHMAN.NET



## EXTRACTS

In dementia we die a thousand deaths – and the last is not the worst.

You were fucking proud of that, the intro to your eulogy for your mam. It's a good line. It's accurate. It scans. It has some understated alliteration and assonance. In its virtuosity there is an illusion of control. Look at me, the journalist, doing words. Look at me, so in command I can turn grief into passable sub-Larkin pastiche.

Is that the best you've got? Fuck you, Death. Fuck you, Disease. Fuck you, Dementia. Come and have a go, sunshine, and I'll fucking do you with an intro. Fuck youse all.

In dementia we die a thousand deaths – and the last is not the worst.

### **JONATHAN WILSON**

• • •

The white wooden desks in the old press box at Taunton could hardly be described as custom-built. Unless one was sitting on the front row they barely allowed room for anything more than a notebook, so when laptops were introduced space became even more cramped. Each desk – they might be called “workstations” now – had at its front a curious wooden frame above or around which one peered at the cricket. At the back of the room an old tea urn grumbled through a day’s play like a church caretaker doing unpaid overtime; and in a white plastic box there were tea bags that might have interested the experts on *Antiques Roadshow*. I often wondered where Somerset acquired these media facilities; I like to think they came in a job lot that included the cinema seats above the Stragglers’ Bar at the Pavilion End. It was, you might suppose, no wonder that some of us climbed the narrow ladder the roof and joined the radio chaps who, when the wind was rude, broadcast to the nation from a box little bigger than a coal shed. “Mind your head, boy!” cautioned a sign at the top of the ladder.

### **PAUL EDWARDS**

• • •

Captain Richard Henry “Dick” Hawkins was one of those upper-class Englishmen for whom verbs were largely optional.

“Elephant dung,” he replied, when asked the secret of producing such a first-rate square in the rolling South Northamptonshire countryside.

“Rhinoceros too dry. Cowpats too wet. Elephant just right.”

Having recently moved to the area, my wife and I had stumbled on Dick’s Everdon Hall ground during a New Year’s Day walk along the Nene Way. The sightscreens and the thatched pavilion, surmounted by a weather vane featuring a fox pursued by a portly scarlet-jacketed huntsman on a white steed, betrayed the purpose of the field. The resting square felt reassuringly firm even in the January mizzle.

### **DAVID OWEN**

• • •

You may think Hick and Lewis underachieved. Or that Salisbury and Jarvis weren’t world-class. But in one tiny corner of India, for those two months in 1993, these four players were near invincible. They broke several records. They helped England trounce India in their own backyard. And they dealt mighty blows to a 12-year-old’s ego.

### **SIDDHARTA VAIDYANATHAN**

• • •

Margaret, two seats away from us, married a man who didn’t like cricket. He hadn’t noticed that their daughter’s initials were LBW. Barbara and her pals in front of us, were in the rock business. When not doing PR for the likes of Madonna or The Duckworth Lewis Method band, they were to be found discussing Chelsea, world tennis, or lunching in the Warner Stand restaurant.

Terry and Marion to our left ran a heating/engineering company in Essex. We met and shared picnics with their daughter and future son-in-law, both cricket-mad in general and Essex-mad in particular, when they were courting. We saw them married, gave them a book of aerial pictures of the cricket grounds of England for their wedding, and visited Teresa in hospital the day she gave birth to the FEC (future England captain).

### **CHARLIE BURGESS**

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The first time I interviewed Marizanne Kapp, during the 2016 Women's World T20 in India, I had just heard about her engagement to her South African teammate Dane van Niekerk. As I congratulated her, two things shone through: the wide smile of joy on her face, and the glint of the tiny cross that dangled from a chain around her neck.

As I followed her career in recent years, I often wondered how those two aspects co-exist. Both she and van Niekerk, now married, are unafraid to express their love and profess their faith. Just look at their social media; interspersed between photos of each other and their families (and dogs) are verses of scripture and posts offering religious motivation. I was amazed at this. Most religions are not kind to those who choose to be in same-sex relationships.

Last September, when South Africa toured India, I got a chance to ask Kapp about it. Before the team left for a training session we sat down in the restaurant of a posh Vadodara hotel for a conversation almost a year in the making. The question of religion came first.

Her answer wasn't what I expected.

"I believe there is no small or big sin. So I do believe it [being in a same-sex relationship] is wrong," she said.

#### SNEHAL PRADHAN

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Behind every cricketing great there is a story, something or someone who has ushered the player from the wings into the spotlight. That might be the environment, such as the beaches of the Caribbean where the knights of the West Indies developed their lightning reflexes, or the Bowral water tank and hard earth where Bradman honed his technique. Usually, though, the player will credit a guru who spotted their potential before anyone else did.

Step forward John Stanworth, former Academy director at Lancashire and now head coach of England Women's Academy. English cricket owes a considerable debt of gratitude to Stanworth for nurturing and developing England's all-time leading Test wicket-taker: James Anderson.

#### DAVE EDMUNDSON

...

The figure floodlit in the gloom, twilight

cloaks him when only boundaries will do.

The chase at a stretch. The century pinnacle

behind him the old firm had delivered.

#### S.J. LITHERLAND

...

To find a sporting villain who truly endures, you have to step back nearly a century. Enter Douglas Jardine. Few series live as long in the memory as the Bodyline tour of 1932-33. The world watched aghast as Australia's batsmen were brutally targeted, shocked that the gentleman's game could be played without mercy. Even some in the England camp couldn't stomach it. Manager Plum Warner was found sobbing in his hotel room. When the Nawab of Pataudi – who scored a century on debut in the first Test – refused to assume his position in the leg-side cordon, he was derided as a "conscientious objector" by Jardine, who remained remorseless. Bodyline is Jardine's legacy, but perhaps not his lowest point.

#### NICHOLAS BROOKES

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Within a couple of years I looked back at our impiety with dismay. We lived in Essex and by then were regular visitors to Chelmsford's County Ground. This was the era of Gooch, Border, Pringle and JK Lever: giddy times for any fan. I get a tingle when I remember the clatter, the split-second delay, then the roar that greeted a wicket. As badged-up junior members (an annual privilege which then went for around £15), we had unfettered access to the areas directly around the pavilion. It meant being able to get centimetres away from real-life, hoary-handed cricketers. It meant nearly barrelling into the midriff of an off-duty Neil Foster when you were running behind the Tom Pearce Stand to buy chips. And, as we wasted little time in noticing, it also meant being able to obtain autographs.

#### BEN LERWILL

...

A few weeks after the Super Bowl, was staged in Rowe's hometown, it was the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of his Test career, one that began with talk of greatness and concluded amid feelings of missed opportunity. In his first 13 Test matches he scored 1,266 runs at an average of 70.33 – which effectively made him the best since Bradman. He'd scored four centuries, a double-hundred and a triple. He is still the only player to score a double-century and century on his Test debut and one of four West Indians to pass 300 in an innings. Yet in his next 17 Tests he mustered 781 runs at an average of 26.93 and failed to reach three figures until his penultimate match in New Zealand. In the time between Rowe's last two Test hundreds, Viv Richards scored six centuries and two double-hundreds and became the Caribbean hero Rowe was supposed to have been. A respectable final Test batting average of 43.55 merely creates a pang for the career that got away.

**DAVID TOSSELL**

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I'm in a robust discussion with a bloke at a social gathering. Remember them? I think the guy is someone's mate or date and they've wisely done a bunk and he is yet to twig. Even after some low-level Poirot-ing, everyone is still at a loss to know who he is. Rogue room meat. Orphan offal.

He's belching word-guff into the mid-summer evening air. A few of us have started to refer to him as "Chernob-head" and are taking it in turns to tag-team conversation with him until he realises his lonesome fate and skulks off. It's my turn. It has been for an hour.

**JAMES WALLACE**

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Brick Lane is, for now, home to cricket supporters from a host of South Asian neighbourhoods. In the Spitalfields and Banglatown Ward in which Brick Lane is located, 41 per cent (5,121 residents) are of Bangladesh descent. Some might regard themselves as British but few would support the English cricket team or call themselves English. Nor do many of Britain's 3.5-million-strong South Asian population, a demographic that is expected to grow to 6.2 million by 2031.

Throw in the half-a-million British residents of Black Caribbean descent – along with 115,000 Australians, 62,000 New Zealanders (of which I am one), 140,000 South Africans and 100,000 Afghans – and the World Cup becomes a celebration of migrant identities. Or an exemplar of the failure of British immigration policy.

Cricket is a game of empire but the colonies have found a way to beat their former rulers at their own game. Now, these Commonwealth diasporas are looking forward to flying their flags with pride. After all, it's Britain and everyone is supposedly welcome.

England's first World Cup since 1999 is a festival of national identity. Just not always England's.

It is everything that Conservative MP Norman Tebbit feared.

**CHRIS MCMILLAN**

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