

SAMPLE EDITION

37

SPRING 2022

THE
Nightwatchman
THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY

WISDEN



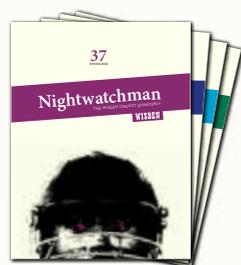
THE Nightwatchman

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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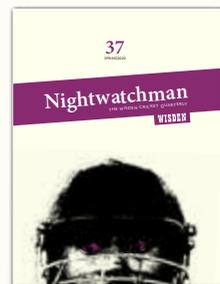
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ISSUE 37 – SPRING 2022

Matt Thacker introduces issue 37 of the Nightwatchman

Richard Edwards is in awe of Ash Barty's multi-sporting genius

Daniel Gallan recounts the extraordinary story of Solomzi Nqweni

Garry White on great courage after New Zealand's most deadly rail disaster

Rod Edmond wonders if village cricket fiction will ever go beyond cosy nostalgia

Steve Menary looks into the troubled waters of the European Cricket League

Sam Dalling found that Somerset offered sanctuary and security

Santokie Nagulendran considers the Caribbean's convoluted relationship with spin

Jacob Sweetman meets an Indian scientist making a big bang in Germany

Auni Akhter looks at Britain today through the lens of his grandfather

John Taylor on a controversy that ended a Test career

The World at War – photos of cricket from 1914-18

Um-E-Ayemen Babar gives a first-hand view of institutional racism

Abi Slade on a forgotten Bristolian hero

S.J.Litherland on the season that never started

Richard Willmet dissects MCC's muddled plans to open up

Kaiser Mohammad Ali talks to the man at the centre of an international incident

Richard Heller imagines what the great philosophers would have made of cricket

Timothy Abraham and James Coyne uncover the untold story of George Headley

David Woodhouse takes us back to the MCC tour of West Indies in 1953/54



OPENERS

It's print day, coming towards the end of February. It should be that time of year when we're excitedly poring over fixture lists, planning a trip to that outground we've never visited, seeing if we can afford to splash some cash on a day out at an international, maybe even take in a Hundred double-header. But no. Putin has decided to invade Ukraine and things are not looking good. It makes focusing on the game, let alone our little cricket quarterly, seem absurd. The hand-wringing and hair-tearing about England's recent travails on the pitch rather ludicrous.

But we soldier on of course, while thinking about the actual soldiers. Another day, another week, another month, another issue. And we keep trying to entertain and to inform, to provide new voices with a place to say their piece, to give old hands the chance to remind people just what they can do.

I think this issue is a really nice mixture. Of writers, of styles, and of content – taking in cricket-playing nations from all around the world. Among the subjects our diverse band of contributors address are: a train crash in New Zealand, an Indian official averting a crisis in Australia, the burgeoning cricket scene in Germany, West Indian spinners, George Headley's childhood in Panama, Australia's cricketing tennis star, a tragic tale of a promising cricketer from South Africa struck down by a rare disease, Britain seen through a Pakistani's eyes, and a troubling report from European cricket. It's all in here, promise.

And that, incredibly, is just the half of it. The *Nightwatchman* would not be the *Nightwatchman* without a generous helping of whimsy, provided here by Richard Heller, who rattles through a philosophical history of the game. And for those of you interested in cricket's place in literature – which I would guess is most of you! – there is a fascinating piece about the rise and fall of the village cricket story from Rod Edmond.

All that said, I'd like to point you in particular to the last piece in this issue, an extract from David Woodhouse's superlative book *Who Only Cricket Know*, which documents MCC's tumultuous tour of the Caribbean in 1953/54. 70+ years ago it may have been, but as England prepare to take on the West Indies this month, the themes of selectorial whim, player behaviour and racial abuse took centre stage back then just as they do today. If David's book does not win awards, I'll eat my cricket cap.

As ever, if you would like to write for us or just let us know what you think about the *Nightwatchman*, good or bad, please get in touch at editor@thenightwatchman.net. We read every submission (but promise nothing) that fulfils our criteria: that articles should touch on cricket (however tangentially) and are original, well written and thought-provoking.

Matt Thacker, March 2022



EXTRACTS

It was George Orwell who wrote that all animals were equal but that some were more equal than others.

It's an analogy that could just as easily be attributed to those with an almost unearthly ability to turn their hand to whichever sport they fancy. Just ask those who watched on as Ash Barty, the world's No.1 female tennis player, turned a cricket whim into a full-time contract with the Brisbane Heat in the Big Bash in the Australian summer of 2015/16.

RICHARD EDWARDS

• • •

A few hours before Chris Woakes bowled the first ball of the 2019 World Cup final, Solo woke up with what felt like a hangover. He hadn't been drinking but he had put in a heroic shift with bat and ball the previous day, bagging a couple of wickets across 10 overs before going down swinging in a losing cause having eked out 59 runs in a marathon knock. Naturally, he felt knackered, but it was nothing a strong cup of coffee couldn't fix.

But something was off. His hand couldn't grasp his mug. His fingers were limp. His wrist lacked any strength.

DAN GALLAN

• • •

As he strived for extra pace on a helpful track, and to ignite a career that was still in its infancy, Blair wasn't to know that 8,000 miles away his beloved fiancée Nerissa Love was doomed to lose her life on that 3pm train from Wellington. The New Zealand players were shaken when news came through of the tragedy, but at that stage Blair had no idea that his fiancée had been on the train. The telegram informing Blair of the dreadful news eventually reached him the following afternoon as the New Zealand players celebrated Christmas at their hotel.

The Tangiwai disaster remains the worst rail accident ever to occur in New Zealand. Love was just 19 and the man she left behind only 21.

GARRY WHITE

• • •

Village cricket fiction of the period between the wars is commonly seen as endorsing this understanding of the game, complacently nostalgic at a time of revolutions in Europe and labour unrest at home. But the relation between this genre and the period in which it flourished is more complicated. Macdonell's village cricket match is a riot of comic disorder ending in chaos and, as the exuberant tone of the narrative suggests, none the worse for this. It's the film the Marx brothers never made, *A Day at the Cricket* with Harpo playing Shakespeare Pollock. And elsewhere in the novel the Great War and its aftermath casts a shadow over the countryside.

ROD EDMOND

• • •

In the summer of 2020, perplexed cricket officials were shocked to find hordes of data scouts, often of South East Asian origin, at games. To avoid detection, some hid in cars or up trees. European federations followed ICC rules such as removing player's phones but soon realised which games were on betting markets when some live-streams attracted hundreds of viewers and others hundreds of thousands.

"Where these pop up matches are the only cricket being played it's not a question of maybe corruptors get involved, they will, simple. Sometimes some well known ones. Boards must protect their players and the game with the right education and governance," tweeted Alex Marshall, ICC anti-corruption unit coordinator of investigations, at the time.

STEVE MENARY

• • •

Dad liked to play a game with me. I use the word 'game' loosely; it more closely resembled an experiment. We would be ambling along and suddenly, without warning, he would peel back. Oblivious, I would continue until, usually within a few seconds, I realised. By the time I had spun around to check his whereabouts, blind panic had set in. He was not being cruel; I think he was just astounded at how it affected me.

SAM DALLING

• • •

After the match, Lloyd lays in to the three spinners in the side, Raphick Jumadeen, Albert Padmore and Imtiaz Ali, and vows to utilise a young pace attack going forward. The next Test in Jamaica, Michael Holding leads a four-pronged attack that causes havoc, injuring numerous Indian players with fast bowling that was pitched hard and aimed at the body. Opposition captain Bishan Bedi is so incensed he declares early in both innings as a mark of protest. West Indies win and a golden era is ushered in, one that will bring in unparalleled success over two decades, and cast spinners to the side.

SANTOKIE NAGULENDRAN

• • •

Cricket is not an afterthought in Germany, it is less than an afterthought, an after-afterthought, and if it is considered in the press at all it is immediately linked to immigration and, particularly, the migration of refugees who made their way to Germany in 2017, an influx which underscores a significant upsurge in organised clubs in the country, up to around 400 now, from a high of 70 just a decade ago. One newspaper report said, , "You could hardly believe it is the world's most popular game after football", while another wrote something about how cricketers "often learn the rules in their home countries", as if the idea of throwing and hitting a ball was the strangest thing on Earth.

JACOB SWEETMAN

• • •

Between 1948 and 1970, nearly half a million people moved from the Caribbean to Britain. One of these aboard HMT Empire Windrush was Wes Stewart, the former Middlesex seamer. Stewart arrived in England from Jamaica at the age of 10 and, having spent the next half-century in the UK, was told he was no longer welcome in the country he had called home for 56 years. He died in 2019 without an apology or compensation from the Home Office. The government's "hostile environment" highlights the callousness of the government's policies toward its overseas citizens. In spite of his contributions to cricket and country, Stewart cannot belong and he cannot *not* belong.

AUNI AKHTAR

• • •

After Griffin's first ball, Syd Buller moved from square leg to point. For the third ball, he returned to square leg and called the next three deliveries, from a below half-pace Griffin, as throws, even though Griffin ended up rolling his arm over off two strides. McGlew pointedly asked if Griffin would be allowed to finish the over. Buller replied that he had to see that the Laws were complied with and suggested completing the over underarm. When Griffin bowled underarm, umpire Frank Lee no-balled him for not notifying the batsman of his change of action, although under Law 26 umpires were not obliged to rule that this was "unfair play". Griffin completed the over underarm and did not bowl again. Shortly afterwards the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh arrived to be introduced to the teams between innings.

JOHN TAYLOR

• • •

I was four years old when I first heard my dad being called a "P*ki". He had beer thrown at him and was constantly shouted at by racists. I was 12 years old when it happened to me. I was still a child. 20 years later it is no different.

I wore an England shirt to a party at Cambridge University in 2020. My college's BAME officer said: "Why is a P*ki wearing an England shirt? You're such a f*cking coconut."

I asked him to leave. He came towards me, stood centimetres away from my face and screamed: "Well you are a f*cking coconut."

The response from everyone else in the room? Absolute silence. Not one person stepped in to stop him.

UM-E-AYMEN BABAR

• • •

When considering the history of the United Kingdom, Bristol has always been an important city. It has played a significant role in the progress of both industrial and cultural developments, and is the home to many core parts of English cricketing culture. In Horfield you'll find Gloucestershire County Cricket Club; in Downend you'll find the home of cricketing legend WG Grace; in Keynsham you may bump into *Tailenders* co-host Mattchin Tendulkar, and outside Mbargo on the Clifton Triangle you'll find the site of an infamous incident involving Ben Stokes and Alex Hales. But before all of this, when WG Grace was but a lad, a different man walked these streets and changed the world of cricket forever.

ABI SLADE

• • •

What is beauty but the arc
of the endeavour, *mano a mano*,
the courtliness and the defiance?
the raised bat and the click
before batsmen cross, what game
slows to the tempo of knitting

S.J. LITHERLAND

• • •

To further augment such a drive for inclusion, it would seem sensible for Lord's to only host a single Test per summer. The current approach of hosting two Tests across the season reduces the availability of the ground for use by others not just by the ten scheduled matchdays, but by an additional number of days the ground staff needs to prepare the pitches properly. Taking this idea a little further – and increasing access dramatically – Lord's could take itself out of the Test rotation altogether – thus providing many more opportunities for those unaccustomed to benefiting from the joys that cricket's home brings. It might even be worth seeing if Middlesex could move to Radlett on a permanent basis.

RICHARD WILLMETT

• • •

There is a belief that had both Indian openers walked out of the field and the next pair hadn't reached the crease within a specified time, the umpires might have awarded the match to Australia. "I was dead sure. That is what the rule book said," says Durrani. And, who knows, the incident might have sparked political repercussions between India and Australia, much like those witnessed in the aftermath of the controversy in the same 1980/81 season when Trevor Chappell, on the instructions of captain and elder brother Greg, had bowled an underarm delivery in the third Benson and Hedges Series finals in Melbourne on February 1, six days before India's Test win. Prime Ministers of both countries joined the chorus and the trans-Tasman relations seemed for a while to be threatened.

QAISER MOHAMMAD ALI

• • •

Plato's biggest contribution to Athenian cricket was organising the after-match drinks – or the symposium as they called it then. They went on long into the night, and Plato left a wonderful account of one of them. It is a pity that he had to give his idol Socrates the best lines, but you still get a great sense of the other players: Alcibiades, the fumbling wicketkeeper, the prolific batter Agathon, who became Agaton after scoring the first Athenian century, the posh captain Aristo Demus, and the wonderfully inept Apollodorus, whom they naturally nicknamed Appalling Doris...

RICHARD HELLER

...

The more perceptive of Paraiso's cricketers understood Jackman was the umbilical cord that linked their sport to another era. The roller he used was the same brought over in 1954, when the black community of La Boca moved en masse, just past the Pedro Miguel Locks, to Paraiso – the spot where Captain Henry Morgan is said to have first set eyes on Panama City during his bloodthirsty 17th-century raids on the Spanish Main.

When we visit Paraiso's cricket ground on a sunny Sunday afternoon, the same roller is leaning up against the corrugated indoor sports complex. It has lain stationary for some years: the young men of Paraiso – whose grandfathers were cricketers – are out in the field playing baseball.

TIMOTHY ABRAHAM

...

Two-nil down in the five-match series, the first MCC tour party to be captained by a professional arrived in British Guiana (now Guyana) to find a battalion of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders helping enforce a state of emergency. This had been imposed from London by Winston Churchill's government because of the Communist tendencies of democratically elected nationalist leaders. In this tense atmosphere, the "colony game" before the Test match proved an ill-tempered affair and the press on both sides, already inflamed by previous incidents on tour, dug themselves into entrenched positions. The English complained of poor West Indian umpiring; the West Indians of poor English behaviour.

DAVID WOODHOUSE

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The thirty-seventh edition of *The Nightwatchman* is published at the beginning of March 2022 on a limited print run. So subscribe or order now to ensure that you get your copy.

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