

SAMPLE EDITION

38

SUMMER 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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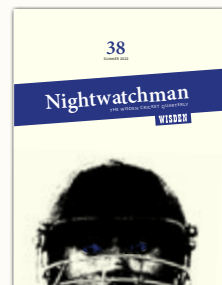
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## ISSUE 38 – SUMMER 2022

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# OPENERS

I like this time of year. Summer's a-comin', the cricket season is starting to beat out its rhythm, the Almanack has appeared, county cricketers get their chance to make a name for themselves before the international stuff takes over and monopolises the headlines. Early season feels authentic, worthwhile. Full of possibility.

And it's also the issue of the *Nightwatchman* where we publish the commended short stories from the Almanack's annual writing competition. It is always a treat to read through these, to see the names of writers as yet unknown, of vastly different ages and backgrounds, who have sat down and consciously crafted their 500 words, give or take, about our beloved sport. It is a time of hope and of renewal.

The June issue is also where we showcase *Wisden's* photography competition, featuring the best cricket photos from the last 12 months. We always get in touch ourselves with the photographers to ask them to add a few lines about the what, the why and the how of their photographs and we hope this gives a bit more context to the pictures.

Elsewhere in this issue we have our usual range of pieces. Sir Geoffrey Boycott has let Jon Hotten get inside his head to talk about that over from Michael Holding (under Fairfield

Books we are publishing Geoffrey's record of his 108 Test matches and this is just a sneak preview); Souvik Naha wonders what really went on in 1945; we've got two stories out of New Zealand; updates from South Africa and Pakistan; we get to ride on the underground in the 1930s; and we even travel back to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Italy and forward to a post-apocalyptic world where, you'll be pleased to know, cricket is still played thanks to the chance discovery of a set of Almanacks. Naturally.

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**, June 2022



## LAHORE'S LONG WAIT IS OVER

*William Dobson was there to witness the long-awaited return of Test cricket to the city*

Najum Latif and Mueen Afzal first watched Test cricket in Lahore in 1955. Then, it was played at the Gymkhana Club - where Latif now runs Pakistan's first cricket museum and Afzal spends much of his (semi) retirement on the club's golf course.

That match in 1955 was drawn after Pakistan had crawled to 328 off 187.5 overs in the first innings; Maqsood Ahmad becoming the first Pakistani to be dismissed for 99 and Subhash Gupte returning the remarkable figures of 5-133 off 73.5 overs. For good measure, he bowled a further 36.3 overs in the second innings, taking two more wickets, and was even more parsimonious this time, conceding just 34 runs. The game may have been turgid by today's standards, but Latif and Afzal were both completely hooked.

Four years later, Test matches moved to the Lahore Stadium (renamed

the Gaddafi Stadium after the Libyan colonel gave a speech in 1974 supporting Pakistan's right to develop nuclear weapons). They were both there for its inaugural fixture when Pakistan hosted Australia, a match won by the visitors despite an epic rearguard 166 by Saeed Ahmed, whose name now adorns one of the enclosures at the ground.

They went regularly for the next 54 years until the 2009 terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan team bus forced Pakistan to play their home matches in the UAE. Eventually, after a 13-year-absence, Test cricket has returned to Lahore, and I had the extraordinary privilege of joining Latif and Afzal for the historic match against Australia, where I was generously hosted by PCB board member Mr Arif Saeed in his box.

Bedecked in their MCC ties - they are both longtime members - they

spend hours discussing the various permutations that the match might take, desperately trying to envisage a scenario which ends in Pakistan's favour. In between, they reminisce about the great names they've seen grace the field in this fascinating city; names such as Hanif, Imran, Sobers, Kanhai, Miller, Lara.

As a home victory begins to look increasingly unlikely, Afzal announces that, just by coming to Lahore, "the Australians have won the hearts and minds of the people here - so perhaps we should want them to win... as the good hosts that we are..."

Indeed, while Pakistani supporters have a reputation for being particularly partisan, never have I experienced an atmosphere during a Test series which so transcends the mere winning and losing. All over Lahore, there is an overwhelming sense of gratitude and joy. People whom I should be thanking for their hospitality, thank me for my support. Others approach me in the street to say the same. On a WhatsApp group including attendees to the match, Zain, who wasn't born the last time a Test was played here and has enjoyed the match in the company of his grandfather, tells us "these were the best five days of [his] life". In an age where we seem to have decided that young people don't have the patience for the longer form, it feels incredibly heartening.

After play on the first day, Afzal takes me to the roundabout where the attack on the Sri Lankan team happened. He had just completed his three-year term on the PCB board and was on the third tee at the

Gymkhana Golf Club when he heard the news. He was planning on playing the front nine and then returning to the match. In the aftermath, he wondered if international cricket would ever return to Lahore. In the hustle and bustle of daily life, it's near impossible to imagine the terror of that day.

Ahsan Raza, the Pakistani umpire who was shot twice in the back that day and survived only by some miracle, is officiating in this Test match, but there are countless other stories without such fairytale endings. Latif tells me he was with Hanif Mohammad the evening before the attack. At 7pm it was time for Hanif's medicine - Johnnie Walker Black Label - and, after finishing their drinks, they had agreed to watch the last two days of the match together. Hanif, the country's first great (and perhaps still greatest) batter was absolutely distraught after hearing news of the attack and took the first flight back to Karachi. He died in 2016, dreaming of Test cricket's return to Pakistan.

On the last day of the match, Michael Thompson, headmaster of Lahore's prestigious Aitchison College and a former Australia under-19 cricketer, joins us in the box. It is the first time he has seen his native country play in Pakistan.

Afterwards, he invites me to visit the school, which has produced so many greats of the game. A heady mix of oriental and colonial red-brick architecture that instantly transports one back in time, their cricket facilities surely match any school (or even university) in the world.

Along with Arif Saeed, they have set up an annual PCB scholarship to provide a world-class education for three talented cricketers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. From the inaugural intake in 2021, there is already hope they've unearthed the next Pakistani great. If so, there's huge joy that, unlike Azhar Ali, he won't have to wait 94 Tests to play on his home ground.

On my last day in Lahore, slightly worse for wear after a rather surreal evening drinking single malts in the company of former PCB chairman Najam Sethi, Latif has invited me to see Gymkhana.

Just across the road from Zaman Park, a notable talent pool of Punjabi cricket, it is an oasis of calm in this teeming metropolis. It harks back to an age when this part of Lahore was still more jungle than urban jungle, teeming with wildlife.

And yet, as Latif explains, this urbanisation has helped preserve and expand cricket's popularity and accessibility in Pakistan. In its simplest form, the sport lends itself to being played in alleys or maidans in a way that football, needing a greater expanse, does not. This becomes evident as, driving through the city, I see a two-lane highway that has become one lane - the second overtaken by a game of tape-ball cricket.

Back at Gymkhana, the honours board of the original 19th-century pavilion (founded in 1880, it is the second-oldest cricket ground in the subcontinent after Eden Gardens, and certainly the most picturesque) reads like a veritable who's who of world cricket. For Latif, there's one name in

particular that stands out - the great Fazal Mahmood.

In the last years of Fazal's life, they became friends. Latif tells me he had the distinction of facing the last delivery he ever bowled, here at the Lahore Gymkhana. Well into his 70s by then, Fazal was still able to impart enough backspin on the ball to make it fizz through the air. But while Latif heard the ball, he didn't see it. Much like Bradman's explanation of having tears in his eyes when he played down the wrong line to Hollies' googly, Latif couldn't take his eyes off the man he had fallen for some 50 years previous. In the corner of the ground, there's a bench dedicated to Fazal, at the exact spot where he used to sit and watch the games.

It is Latif's everlasting hope that Gymkhana hosts another Test match, and he laments how much the game has changed. "Modern cricket is missing the characters, the stories," he says. "Character has left an everlasting impression which we still dream about now."

As if to emphasize that point, he introduces me to the great Majid Khan. "The classroom is the most competitive and unfriendly place in the world," Khan tells me. "It's not a place for collaboration. But sport is where you encourage the poorest sportsman in your team. It's where you learn to live together. To learn to understand people. This is the greatness of sport. It forces us to become more civilised and better people. But at the same time, one must study. All one's life one must read books."

Over the course of our conversation he touches on subjects ranging from

the effects of the Yom Kippur War, 12th and 13th century Persian poetry, how the rise of Islamic fundamentalism is linked to authoritarianism and underdevelopment, and the linguistic history of the region. He quotes Einstein: "If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

Yet it's cricket he keeps coming back to. He recalls first watching Test cricket at Gymkhana as a 13-year-old when he was inspired by watching a helmetless Imtiaz Ahmad repeatedly hook the fearsome Wes Hall while spectators feared for his life. I can't help but wonder how much watching

...

cricket here must have inspired him to achieve such greatness.

Later that evening, I have dinner with Amna. She's 25 and Pakistan's self-proclaimed biggest Australian cricket supporter - rather poignantly inspired by her dad's obsession with Shane Warne, who died only a couple of weeks before the Lahore Test match. Amna was aged one the last time Australia visited Pakistan and she's just watched all 10 days of the Tests at Rawalpindi and at Lahore, her first experience of a live Test match. Still beaming two days later, she's already counting down the days until they come back.





## EXTRACTS

*The over that you are about to face will become a mythic thing. It will live on. The TV footage that survives does not quite do it justice. First of all, the Kensington Oval is fuller than any ground looks like it should be. There are 15,000 people inside, and 15,000 more who will say that they were. There are people sliding through a gully under one of the stands. There are people jumping over the pitch-side fence. There are people climbing onto the roof of the Hall & Griffith stand and perching like birds on the raked tin. Every seat, every row, every aisle of every stand is full. The noise is unreal. The air itself seems to vibrate.*

### SIR GEOFFREY BOYCOTT

• • •

Former Essex and England all-rounder turned writer Derek Pringle, now 63, now works only occasionally, giving his opinions on today's game for *Metro* and *The Cricket Paper*.

He's at an arts centre, situated next to a quintessentially English duck pond and real ale pub, in Barnes, alongside the Thames in south-west London. Pringle is talking to ex-cricket magazine editor Duncan Steer, who now earns a crust interviewing old players on stage about their memoirs. Pringle is a must-see, he liked Half Man Half Biscuit, never married and had an ear stud.

### MATT APPLEBY

• • •

Given their cricketing heritage, it may seem that the Kerrs' success in the game was pre-destined. Both their parents represented Wellington, and subsequently forged post-playing careers in the game. Their grandfather, Bruce Murray, played 13 Tests for New Zealand. A teenage Sophie Devine, now Jess and Melie's captain in the national team, was once their babysitter. But dig a little deeper and there are even more strands to the family's cricketing journey.

### TREVOR AUGER

• • •

Quite what had gone wrong with JT Newstead is a mystery. Lord Hawke, generally never short of an opinion or two, is strangely silent on the topic. Unlike the unfortunate Kevin Emery, Newstead remained fit and brimming with stamina. As Old Ebor observed he simply "seemed to lose all at once the perfect length and virility of pace and spin." The more Newstead tried to overcome his problems, the harder he strained, the worse things got. At some point fear must have gripped him as it did all professional cricketers when things were going wrong, tightening his muscles and throwing him off his game.

### HARRY PEARSON

• • •

When Denis Compton was batting on 94 or 100 (depending on who tells the story) for East Zone against the Australian Services in Calcutta in 1945, a hostile Indian crowd invaded the field and stopped play. One of them told Compton, as the batsman recalled in his autobiography *End of an Innings*, "Mr Compton, you very good player. But the game must stop." Numerous biographers of Compton and his good friend Keith Miller (who turned out for the Australian Services XI), including Tim Heald and Roland Perry, later wrote that the cricketers found the comment funny enough to be joking about it for the rest of their lives. But was the statement really made?

### SOUVIK NAHA

• • •

A grinning kangaroo points a finger at a mustard yellow lion, who raises his palms as if to say: "Who? Me?" Wearing caps, boots and pads, they sit behind two sets of stumps with their tails framing the picture. A cricket ball lies between them and winks.

### ANDY RYAN

• • •

“I put myself on to bowl at the Vatican end.”

This immortal line was uttered to my father and myself sometime in the 1960s by our dear friend Tom Outhwaite. Tom was chairman of Richmond CC where we played our club cricket but, in this instance, he was reporting in his capacity as captain of the Law Society CC on his return from a cricket tour to Rome.

#### FRANCIS NEATE

• • •

The cloud's an airship and the sun peeps out  
– that's when the cloud flotilla lets it shine.  
After the winter lull  
I've felt the age-old pull  
to the county ground. Make the field mine!

#### TIM CAWKWELL

• • •

When I sat down to pick my life's team, some selections were more obvious than others – Fleming, Stead, Richardson, Bond, Flower. But I also wanted some who had left the game behind them and now walked a different path. I can't remember who suggested John, but it was with some shock that I heard he was one of the hosts of Australia's Married at First Sight. I had never seen the show and it didn't compute with my memory of John Aiken.

#### JUSTIN PAUL

• • •

Sid Barnes was enjoying himself. It was the second match of the 1948 Australian tour of England. In a three-way run-off with Arthur Morris and Bill Brown for the two Test opening slots Barnes needed big runs and he needed them now. The traditional tour opener at Worcester had been won by an innings and a scratchy 44 by Barnes was not the start he had hoped for. Still, at Leicester, against a tiring county attack, he was 78 not out, with every chance to put down a significant marker. He intended to do so.

#### JOHN STONE

• • •

Paul Adams, who so bamboozled England's tourists in 1995 that their Christmas dinner was postponed to watch videos of him in an attempt to divine his secrets ahead of his debut Test, was one of several high-profile witnesses before Ntsebeza. He recounted how the Proteas dressing-room at the time was hopelessly old-fashioned. After a day's play the dressing-room door would be slammed and the fines-master – often Boucher – would hand out beers and dispense fines. Songs were sung, banter flowed, foul nicknames exchanged. The words of Boney M's *Brown Girl in the Ring* – South African cricketers have never been famous for their music taste – were adapted to 'Brown Shit in the Ring'. The song was applied specifically to Adams.

#### LUKE ALFRED

• • •

Aftab and Jaymes walked out to the pitch. It was hot today. Aftab could feel the heat on his face despite the sun having not long risen. The pair cast long shadows ahead of them as they moved towards the centre of the field. The pitch, such as it was, ran North to South to avoid the sun being directly in the batter's line of sight as it moved across the sky. Jaymes had read about that in one of the books he'd found. The pair of them checked everything was in place, the bails on the stumps, the white lines painted. Aftab gave a thumbs up to others stood waiting around them.

The fielding team all took their places. The wicketkeeper stood behind the batter. The bowler with the ball in her hand. They had all been practising for this moment. The first ball of Test match number 3027.

#### STEPHEN CONNOR

• • •

“Dad, why's Staffordshire a minor county?”

“Don't really know son, look it up.”

“Dad, can Staffordshire be promoted to the County Championship?”

“No son, it doesn't work that way.”

“Why Dad? S'not fair! Has any county gone from being a minor county to playing in the County Championship?”

“Glamorgan did, I think, but you'd better look it up.”

“Dad, Staffordshire has five clubs in the Football League, Warwickshire has three, Derbyshire two, Leicestershire one and Worcestershire hasn't got any! (*Figures accurate for the late 1960s!*) We must be better at sport than those counties but they're in the County Championship and we're not! Why?!”

“Go outside and play cricket with your brother, son.”

#### MARTIN WYNN

• • •

Take the A3 over the South Downs and before you reach the Hampshire village of Clanfield, you will come to the top of an ancient ridge that connects to Salt Hill. Slip onto Hayden Farm Lane, cross the road and step into history, for your feet will lie on Broadhalfpenny Down, a few acres of land forever known as “the cradle of cricket”. The Bat And Ball Inn that stands opposite, once home to the Captain of Hambledon Richard Nyren (and to his son John, who would, in the lamplight of memory, write *The Cricketers Of My Time*), is now owned rather more prosaically by Fuller’s, but you can still experience the timelessness of looking across the Down to the sharp slope that gives the feeling of the field slipping off the edge of the world.

Like the “smooth expanse” discovered by the cricketers of *In Certamen Pilae*, cricket’s earliest work of literature, Broadhalfpenny Down was once the village sheep common, probably the reason it first became playable around 1753, its usefulness extending to hare coursing and horse racing along with cricket. But it was the game between XIs of Hampshire and All England on 24 and 25 June 1772 that would cement its place at the heart of the sport’s early history. That contest, 250 years ago this summer, became the first first-class match ever played. It’s a history and an anniversary that we explore here through the stories of a handful of matches over those years...

**JON HOTTEN**

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