

SAMPLE EDITION

46
SUMMER 2024

THE
Nightwatchman
THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY

WISDEN



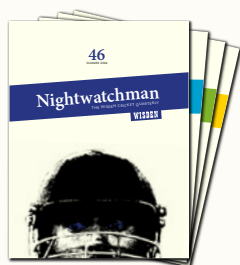
THE Nightwatchman

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.

Edited by Matt Thacker, *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)
£29.95 (+P&P)

[Click to Buy](#)



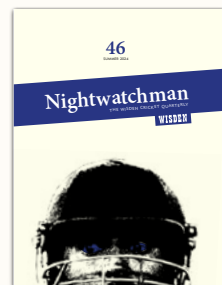
Digital subscription
Annual e-book only
subscription
£15

[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 46 – SUMMER 2024

Matt Thacker introduces issue 46 of the *Nightwatchman*

Richard Edwards on memories of the miners' strike 40 years on

Trevor Auger tells the tale of John Sparling on the road

David Woodhouse explains how cricket and literature lead to fantasy XIs

Nicholas Hogg takes a catch

Oliver Price discusses Arthur Gilligan, England captain 'of very strong fascist views'

Matt Appleby surveys the various spin-offs from the big yellow book

The 2023 Wisden Almanack Shorts

Steve Menary reports on how cricket is thriving on a remote island

Saurabh Nagpal investigates vestiges of the past, and destructors of the same

Christopher Sandford charts the remarkable life of an incredibly resilient cricketer

James Thellusson on WG the bowler

John Drew remembers his debut at Lord's

The Wisden 2023 Photograph of the Year

Sherisa Gumbs looks back at some of the obstacles she has faced

Luke Alfred imagines Jardine and Bradman at Headingley in 1953

Tim Brooks's hero continues his quest for willow, unaware he is being followed...

Andrew Young talks to Fawad Ahmed about bowling wrist spin in the Caribbean

Tim Beard takes a look at the history and future of Eton v Harrow

Melanie Verwoerd says Tabraiz Shamsi has given her hope for a better world





FALLING APART AT THE SEAMS

Richard Edwards on cricketing memories of the miners' strike 40 years on

It wasn't your average team bonding exercise. But it was a timely one.

The miner's strike had just reached its conclusion after 11 months, three weeks and four days, when Kevin Sharp and his Yorkshire teammates were given a first-hand experience of life underground. It's one that has stayed with him.

"We went to a colliery near Doncaster," says the former Yorkshire batter. "We did it as a club, so there were players there, and coaches. We crawled along one of the tunnels for about 30 yards – it was unbelievable. We were at the coal face and there was just a little tunnel that the miners would have to crawl through on their hands and knees.

"Mate, it was scary. We were all in a line and you just wanted to get through to the other end. One or two of the boys panicked. It was very, very claustrophobic. You were on your hands and knees in a black tunnel. There were some little lights on the

side, but you basically wanted the person in front of you to just get on with it. I remember thinking, how the hell can you do this for a living."

A similar view was shared in the corridors of power in Westminster, as then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher prepared to take on Arthur Scargill and the National Union of Miners (NUM) in a power battle that would change the landscape of the country and decimate previously thriving communities across the north of England.

The West Indies' 5-0 "Blackwash" of England that summer, played out against a toxic backdrop of hostility between striking miners, flying pickets, "scabs", the police and a Government that was determined not to give an inch to the unions. The violence that erupted in some areas of the country as a result made facing Malcolm Marshall look like a tea party.

•••

The relationship between sport, the mining industry and the communities that were dependent on it, is a deep one.

In football, the pits and the relentlessly grim nature of physically demanding work underground, helped to nurture some of the finest talents the game has ever seen.

Take Manchester United legend and Busby Babe, Bill Foulkes, as just one high-profile example.

In *The Busby Babes*, Men of Magic, Foulkes describes how his entire life was shaped by his experience of working deep underground in conditions that are now almost impossible to imagine.

"I was assistant manager in a coal mine – earning much more than I ever did for Manchester United," he said. "I would do a full shift down the mine, starting at 5.30 in the morning and finishing at 2.30 in the afternoon. I would take a shower at the pithead, grab a bite to eat and then frequently have to dash for a train to Manchester. With a life like this I was fitter than many full-time professional footballers."

Teams like Barnsley's FA Cup finalists in 1912, meanwhile, were made up primarily of footballers who spent their working days not on the training pitch but 800 metres underground at the coal face.

"Clubs like Barnsley, fed by miners from the nearby coalfield, abounded in stories polished in the telling of men working double shifts and walking 20 miles to play a match," wrote David Winner in *Those Feet, An Intimate History of English Football*.

The impact of mining and the communities that were forged as a result of it were no less pronounced in cricket.

Harold Larwood and Bill Voce – possibly the best-known pair of England opening bowlers behind Stuart Broad and Jimmy Anderson – worked in the same mines at Annesley in their teens. The Derbyshire team of 1936 once fielded a side featuring that included 10 players from the county's mining stock.

The industry even dictated when games would start and finish. Club matches involving colliery cricket teams would routinely start at three and finish after eight, to fit in with shift patterns. In short, the links between mining and county and club cricket, ran as deep as the seams of coal that sustained so many areas.

By 1984, though, the industry's entire existence was under threat.

•••

"It was always a bit odd, 'the scab county' was how we were characterised by the supporters," says Andy Afford, the former Nottinghamshire off spinner who made his debut for the county in the summer of 1984.

"They would shout it at you – even though I was from Lincolnshire! Playing in my first season, it all felt a bit uncalled for."

Afford was particularly close to the unfolding enmity between Nottinghamshire – where the majority of the county's miners had voted to continue working in the



absence of a national ballot – and Yorkshire, where the overwhelming majority were on strike. The police, meanwhile, focused their efforts on attempting to stop flying pickets from joining striking miners on the picket line in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

“I was going out with a girl from Clipstone [a mining village around 20 miles outside of Nottingham] at the time,” he says. “I was trialling at Trent Bridge back then, and so would have to get on the bus to get the ground. She lived on one of the avenues in the village – you would leave the house and get stopped by the police and asked where you were going.

“I was a bloke around the sort of age of a lot of those who were joining the picket line, so I could have easily been doing the same. But the whole thing was just really weird. It really manifested itself in the Bassettlaw League, which basically included towns and villages all the way up the [A]614. All the mining communities had cricket teams and they were all impacted in one way or another.”

While Afford was merely an interloper in Clipstone, former Nottinghamshire pace bowler David Millns grew up in the village and, alongside his brother Paul, was working at the colliery at the time of the strike.

“There were pickets every day – I know because I would walk past them on my way to the pit,” he says. “There were people there trying to bully and dictate. I can’t stand being told what to do. If someone says ‘do this’, then I need a reason. If I agree with them, then I’ll crack on. If I don’t agree with them? Well, I won’t do it.”

Millns was in Clipstone the day that 3,000 Yorkshire miners turned up to bolster numbers on the picket line. “There was a lot of noise,” he says with some understatement.

The now umpire signed his first contract at Trent Bridge later that summer, despite missing out on a place in the county’s under-19 side. For a kid from a colliery village that wasn’t unheard of. The Nottinghamshire squad for the 1984 season clearly wasn’t short on quality. Indeed, it included some of the county’s most well-known and best-loved characters in the form of Tim Robinson, Richard Hadlee, Derek Randall, Clive Rice and Bruce French, but there were plenty of other talented cricketers who never got a look-in.

“I’d been offered a few quid to play semi-pro football at 19, I was sort of thinking I was going to be the next Bobby Moore – but I was crap!” says Millns. “I had been looked over for the Notts under-19 side so Clipstone Cricket Club put my name forward for a ‘Find a Fast Bowler’ competition at Trent Bridge, which I won. The prize was to play against a Notts XI for a Celebrity XI at Sir John Starkey’s estate in Southwell.

“I tootled off there in August on a Sunday. It was a beautiful ground, and it was packed. I opened the bowling and Bruce French was opening the batting with Kevin Cooper. I didn’t understand the protocol – the pros were there to have a nice Sunday afternoon with a couple of glasses of wine. I was a young tearaway and I was charging in at two players who weren’t wearing helmets. After three balls, they stopped the game and ran some out to them.

“Sir John was our skipper and after two overs of trying to bowl as fast as I could he came and asked me if I didn’t mind slowing down. I said I wouldn’t be doing that as it was my chance to impress whoever was watching. I ended up getting substituted for the Sale of the Century’s Nicholas Parsons. He came trotting on and I went trotting off.”

Stood on the boundary with his parents, watching the game unfold without him, he was approached by Ken Taylor, the cricket manager at Notts.

“He asked me if I had just moved to the area,” says Millns. “I told him that I was born and bred in Clipstone and he turned round and said ‘how the hell have I never seen you’. Unfortunately, that was the kind of prejudice that existed.”

Millns kept his job at the colliery, getting up at 5am and heading straight to the pit. He would surface at two, have a sleep and then drive to Trent Bridge for squad nets on a Wednesday night. Incredibly, he took a pay cut of £7,500 to turn professional, his wage being £2,500 at Nottinghamshire, a quarter of what he was on at Clipstone.

• • •

As the bitter dispute continued more and more miners began breaking a strike that was bringing families and communities to their knees, but not Thatcher’s widely vilified government. As cricket continued peacefully enough at Trent Bridge and Headingley – although in the case of Yorkshire everything is relative – the Battle of Orgreave, in June 1984, became a symbol of state-sponsored brutality,

as picketing miners suddenly came up against massed-ranks of police, who had arrived from all over the country.

As skewed news coverage hit the nation’s screens that evening, the miners were portrayed as the perpetrators of a day of violence. In all, 95 people were arrested. The ramifications of that day still reverberate 40 years on. In 2016, Alan Billings, the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, said that his force had been “...dangerously close to being used as an instrument of the state”.

In a recent interview with the *Guardian*, Jim Beachill, the chairman of Elsecar CC, revealed that some of the club’s players were at Orgreave. Others from neighbouring teams were doubtless there too. None could have foreseen what was to follow. The trials of those arrested quickly collapsed as a result of unreliable police evidence. Michael Mansfield QC described Orgreave as the “worst example of a mass frame-up in this country this century”. Given the competition, that’s quite some statement. Calls for a public enquiry into the events of that day have continually fallen on deaf ears.

Further south, as Clive Lloyd’s West Indies continued their demolition job of England, the Bassettlaw League provided some welcome relief for those workers who suddenly found themselves front and centre of a strike that continued to dominate Fleet Street headlines and local and national news bulletins.

But if players hoped that a game of cricket would serve to ease tensions between the striking miners and those still working, they were sometimes left disappointed.

David Griffin, Derbyshire's photographer, was in his first year in the police back in 1984. Some 36 years later, with the country attempting to manage its way out of another national crisis, this time in the form of Covid, he sat down with a number of league cricketers to discuss club cricket in that miners' strike summer.

Phil Matthews and Bob Davis of Glapwell Colliery Cricket Club had vivid recollections of a clash which reflected just how high emotions were running in the county.

"Halfway through a game, some of the local lads from the village who weren't involved with cricket came up to cause some aggro with the Nottinghamshire team, who were all working," says Davis. "Two of the lads who were playing for Shirebrook chased these guys in the middle of the game off the ground with a stump apiece in their hand. They chased them down into the village.

"They knew them because they had grown up with them. They eventually got their revenge away from the cricket pitch."

The Bassettlaw League became a melting pot, pitting - if you'll forgive the pun - "Scargill's men" from South Yorkshire against Nottinghamshire's mining communities. For many of the clubs up and down the A614, life would never be the same again.

"These places were decimated," says Millns. "You take the main source of income from a village and it's not just the people who worked down the mines, it's all the add-ons. It's the local shops and the local businesses

that relied on customers who, by and large, were miners.

"Clubs like the one I grew up playing for struggled massively for years. Once the colliery closed, the Miner's Welfare, which was the main source of income for the club, pulled its funding. The cricket club had to stand on its own and that impacted everything - the maintenance of the ground, paying the groundsman. The impact was huge."

• • •

As the sun set on an almost unprecedented summer of discontent - and with no sign of movement on either the side of the NUM or a Government still reassured by its mass stockpiles of coal - Essex celebrated winning the title. Nottinghamshire finished second. Yorkshire fourth from bottom.

"Not great," is Sharp's summation of that season. The same could be said for the one-eyed news coverage of some broadcasters and some newspapers, in an era when weekday circulation figures totalled over 63 million.

As summer turned to autumn and winter loomed, a trickle of miners began returning to work. On 20 August, Paul Wilkinson returned to the Easington Colliery, becoming the first miner in Durham to break the strike. He blamed the absence of a national ballot that the NUM continually refused to sanction.

Reality was biting. In some areas, soup kitchens were sustained with food that was being sent from mining communities in the Soviet Union - an irony given the Cold War was at its height, and Thatcher had addressed

parliament to warn of the "enemy from within".

As players packed up their kits and prepared for whatever their winters held in store - a spell with the local water board was as glamorous as it got for some - the futility of the NUM's stance was becoming clearer.

By early March 1985, the strike was all but over. The real struggle, though, was about to begin.

• • •

"The main problem was that the mines and the railways were the life of the village and both were closed down with nothing to give work to the young guys," said Enid Bakewell in her biography *Coal Miner's Daughter*, by Simon Sweetman. "I saw grown men trying to find pieces of coal from the fields where their supplies for the power stations had been stored."

Research carried out by Sheffield Hallam University estimated that the UK's coal industry workforce was around 221,000 at the time of the strike, already considerably lower than the estimated one million who were employed at the industry's height. Shortly before Australia arrived to compete for the 2005 Ashes, that number had dwindled to just 7,000. Kellingley Colliery, the country's last surviving deep coal mine, closed down its lifts for the final time in December 2015.

The communities that were based around the coal industry were left to fend for themselves. There was no contingency put in place for what would follow once the mines were closed. The cricket clubs bearing colliery names, by and large, remained. But their decline was irreversible.

"The colliery grounds were always really well maintained," says Afford. "Mining was a prosperous industry. The blokes always had a few quid, there was always the Welfare to have a drink in after a game. And that just changed. There just wasn't the money for it. You could see it all the way up the 614.

"Those cricket grounds are probably emblematic of the decline of the industry. Those grounds would have had pride of place within those villages - it was a massive part of village life. To some degree, a lot of the colliery sides have continued but they have dropped down the leagues because the money just isn't there."

As the summer of 1985 dawned, towns and villages, families and friends still bore the scars of the strike. Even now, 40 years on, the ill feeling in some parts of the country remains resolutely frozen in time.

"It rumbled on," says Afford. "You would hear it for years and I think it's still there. You probably don't have to scratch too far underneath the surface, even now."

• • •





EXTRACTS

There was no gentle introduction to the touring life. The day after arriving, the team went to Simpson's of Piccadilly where they were *measured for DAKs trousers - 2 pairs on the house - 1 cream and 1 grey. Had a look around - lovely store - had drinks set up in the club rooms - we're truly treated like lords here.* After lunch they were guests at Stuart Surridge - *wonderful afternoon selecting and helping ourselves.* And at 5pm there was the New Zealand High Commissioner's reception at New Zealand House, where Sparling was introduced to former Governor-General Lord Freyberg, amongst a guest list reading like a who's who of English cricket. Before returning to the hotel for a 10pm dinner, there was a show at the Windmill Theatre. The next day there was cricket.

TREVOR AUGER

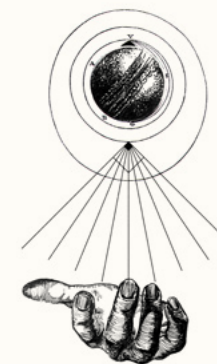
...

Cricket prides itself on being the most literary of sports. It has generated by far the most books, unless chess is counted as a sport (and the vast majority of books about chess are technical in nature). Although football has been outselling cricket for about 30 years in Britain, this has not been the case in the broader Commonwealth - Sachin Tendulkar's autobiography reportedly attracted 1.5 million pre-orders. Even if baseball, boxing and bullfighting can boast a literature of roughly equal vintage and richness, devotees of cricket are confident that theirs is the noblest. Benny Green, jazz saxophonist and *Wisden* anthologist, pointed for instance to the "curious symbiotic relationship between cricket and the writing of good English".

DAVID WOODHOUSE

...

a twitching in the brine
that multiplied
bone and nerve,
wings and fur, to a biped stride on a sunlit field,
the force of ball
in a closing palm



NICHOLAS HOGG

...

The Australian historian Andrew Moore has examined some of the material in archives and argues that whilst there is no definitive proof, Gilligan and Toone almost certainly played a key role in the formation of British Fascists branches in Australia. "On balance," he writes, "it seems likely that Gilligan simply followed the advice issued by the BF's Recruiting and Propaganda Department - 'talk about the movement to everyone you meet' and 'always carry at least one enrolment form and one of each of the other pamphlets with you wherever you go'." "BF leaflets," Moore states, "probably arrived in the luggage that Gilligan and Toone brought to Australia in 1924."

OLIVER PRICE

...

"For me, *Wisden* is like Dr Who's Tardis," says Furmedge. "Reading 1934 transports you back to the 1932-33 Bodyline series; the language of the day, the world at that time. It captures the mood fantastically. In 1940 the last round of Championship matches was 'suspended due to outbreak of war'. You relive that time."

Furmedge claims most people who get the new *Wisden* don't read it, they collect it - "They put it on the shelf with all the others. They don't value it as much as older ones when they were growing up." These *Wisden* fans would rather read about the first county match they went to in 1976 than T20 or The Hundred.

MATT APPLEBY

...

Cricket might have been played on tricky terrain from the Antarctic to the Brambles sandbank that appears off the Isle of Wight at low tide, but nowhere has the sport endured, survived and prospered like the remote South Atlantic island of St Helena.

Until an airport finally opened in 2017, St Helena's only link to the outside world was a mail ship from the UK that sailed every three months via Tenerife and stopped on the island before journeying on to Cape Town.

STEVE MENARY

• • •

It's 2014 and cricket's bubbling existential crisis isn't as existential yet. You're watching good old Test cricket at Port of Spain; Denesh Ramdin's West Indies are playing a New Zealand side led by the 'Baz' of Bazball. Darren Bravo creams James Neesham through the covers to move into the 90s, and you think for a beat: "What is Brian Lara doing here?"

It's a déjà vu moment.

SAURABH NAGPAL

• • •

Appleyard was just seven when his mother left home; when he was 12 he lost a beloved younger sister to diphtheria; and when he was 14 he came home from school one day to find his railwayman father – apparently depressed at the prospect of war with Germany – his stepmother and his two little half-sisters lying dead in the bath with the gas turned on. Appleyard was still barely a teenager, and everyone he loved was gone. He spent the rest of his childhood, such as it was, with his grandparents, despite or because of what had happened to him finding comfort in a Christianity he never relinquished, and to which he again turned for consolation when in later years both his son, Ian, and grandson, John, predeceased him of leukemia.

CHRISTOPHER SANDFORD

• • •

WG told God he was not out.
Two giant beards glared at each other.
God blinked first, lowered his finger.

JAMES THELLUSSON

• • •

WG would have loved the Olympics. He was a gourmand at the smorgasbord of sport with an appetite as insatiable as Mr Creosote's love of wafer-thin mints. Grace loved athletics, beagling, curling, fishing, footie, golf, hurdling, shooting and walking. The only sport he didn't like was tennis, which he thought effete.

If he had a spare moment, Grace would pack it with a game of something or other. When he travelled to Trent Bridge to play Notts he would get up extra early, not to practise in the nets but to fish for barbel – a fish famous for its fighting qualities – in the nearby river Trent.

JAMES THELLUSSON

• • •

Out of the blue I received an invitation to attend a cricketing event in the Long Room at Lord's. Accepted instantly before it could vanish. No matter that it wasn't on a match day. Who'd have thought I'd ever get closer to the pitch and its players at Lord's than sitting up in one of the stands?

The invitation, I came to know later, had been the result of a poet friend in distant Dhaka mentioning my interest in cricket to an old classmate of his who was launching a history of Bangladesh cricket at Lord's. The old classmate's innings of 78 against a visiting MCC side fifty years previously had helped his country gain admission to the international cricket circuit.

JOHN DREW

• • •

I remember several panel umpires' condescending comments. They would ask if it was my first time opening, offer unsolicited advice, and even suggest bowlers go easy on me – not something I ever heard from female umpires. These belittling remarks, never directed at my male partner, undermined my abilities and infuriated me. I always felt I had something to prove; I wanted to be seen as a cricketer, not just a girl.

SHERISA GUMBS

• • •

We already knew Bradman was coming. The letter come through in the second week of January. We passed it around when it arrived, like something from Buckingham Palace. One of the groundstaff didn't bother to read it: he put it to his nose.

"Pure 'Essence of Bradman', that's what this is," he says.

We all had a good laugh.

LUKE ALFRED

• • •

He had no joy at all in Copenhagen. There were no leads from hardware shops and the wood merchants made their living from supplying large volumes of construction timber. It had become clear that willow was not in general circulation in the timber trade. He had begun to question whether there was any willow growing in Denmark at all. By the end of the first day he had concluded that he wouldn't be able to source commercially. He had to first establish whether any willow was grown in Denmark and, if so, where.

TIM BROOKS

• • •

"What I learnt was that there are two completely different kinds of cricket over there," he explains. "During the daytime it turns big, real big when it is hot and muggy. At nighttime, it gets so wet with the dew and the wickets become very skiddy."

This will be the second consecutive Men's T20 World Cup where dew will play a role – perhaps it is nature's answer to the IPL's Impact Player – and Fawad cites The Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Trinidad and Guyana's Providence Stadium as the two "wetttest" once the sun sets.

ANDREW YOUNG

• • •

If there were Old Etonians playing cricket against the rest of Cambridge University in the 1700s there must have been Etonians playing cricket at Eton. And there were – William Godwin's 1705 poem *In Certamen Pilae* (in his collection *Musae Juveniles*) proves it. Horace Walpole records in 1726 that among his friends at Eton "playing cricket as well as thrashing bargemen was common". The schoolmasters of the day took great pride in not interfering with the activities that the boys engaged in outside of Latin, Greek and sermons, believing that this laissez-faire attitude led to character building. It certainly led to rat-racing, bird-killing and stone throwing as sports. Boys would riot if they felt an adult had crossed the line to interfere with their pursuits. A favourite of the rioters was to steal the beating block, and return it through a window. It was no different at Harrow.

TIM BEARD

• • •

After the first innings, the players headed up the stairs. My eye was caught by three little boys standing next to the railings hoping to get autographs from the passing players. They wore *kippahs* (the little head coverings) and had *tzitzis* (knotted prayer fringes) attached to their clothes, so were clearly from orthodox or observant Jewish households.

The boys' growing disappointment was visible as all the players rushed past them. Then joy of joy, one stopped. It was Tabraiz Shamsi. He patiently signed their shirts, bats and pieces of paper while chatting away to them. They then asked for his cap. He explained that he needed it, but they pleaded. After a game of rock, paper, scissors (his suggestion) one little boy walked away beaming, cap in hand.

MELANIE VERWOERD

• • •

THE **Nightwatchman**

THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY

The forty-sixth edition of *The Nightwatchman* is published at the beginning of June 2024 on a limited print run. So subscribe or order now to ensure that you get your copy.

Click to visit
thenightwatchman.net

