

**My wife, Lorraine, is encouraging us all to take photographs, to make short videos, to write down what we think, and to generally try and keep aware of what we are doing and the period in which we find ourselves. She uses the phrase, 'when my grandchildren ask me in twenty years, what were you doing in the Great Lockdown? I can show and tell them.' It is a wonderful way to focus the mind on how continually unbelievable all this is, but also how it will pass.**

I grew up with sporting phrases like 'where were you when Botham smashed 140+ at Headingley?' Or 'where were you when England won the World Cup (Football, 1966)' If you take a step into the non-sporting world, Americans still use their whereabouts when Kennedy was assassinated as a life-moment, or when Space shuttle 'Challenger' exploded shortly after take-off. Thatcher on the steps of Number 10, the death of Princess Diana....! could go on.

We are in a time that will only become even more unbelievable in years to come. Try explaining to a future youngster that we couldn't go out for months; we could not see family or friends; nearly everyone could not go to work; we clapped in the streets every Thursday at 8pm to say thank you to the doctors, nurses and carers; a 99-year-old man raised over £30 million pounds for the NHS by walking around his garden with the help of his zimmer frame, and when you consider all of that, we might end up saying to those little wonders listening to our every word (so long as Abbey and Libby get a flippin' move on, I am not getting any younger) that there wasn't even any cricket or football and that is when they might say, 'Wise and Knowledgeable Grandpapa (they will be so respectful these grandchildren of mine), you are kidding us aren't you, you nearly had us that time....'

It might just be that we don't get to see any cricket, I am still optimistic that we will, but no one knows, but normality and routine are essential and when I asked Lawrence Booth if he would take part in our Q & A, not only was I delighted when he said yes, but it gave me the opportunity to ask normal, routine questions about the book and the game we love to the man who is the current guardian of that book.

His responses gave me even more optimism. His honesty and openness refreshing and when he looks ahead, it just brings me back to what Lorraine said, all this will pass and we will remember those who are no longer with us and when next March we will be looking forward to the 2021 Wisden, which will remind us all, that even though it will be different, it will still be Number 158, it will be published and we will have come through this difficult and awful time.

I hope you find this edition of The Virtual Wisdener enjoyable. Along with thanking Lawrence Booth I would also like to thank Bob Bond for the illustrations that appear on the last page. Bob has published some lovely illustrated cricket books and he also illustrated *Desert Island Wisden*. *Once again, please let me know what you think of the VW.*

Bill

## Another poser for you all

Apparently over the weekend Patrick Kidd in The Times was thinking about various team XI's and that prompted a number of you - cheers to Phil, Neil, Andy, Len and Johnny to name but five - to ask the following:

**Can you name the worst XI to represent a country? It could be the worst England XI, Australia XI...etc etc. In fact you could name as many teams from one or more countries as you like. Some guidelines - all players have to have made their debut from 1990 onwards; it has to be a Test XI and all from one country, no mix and match...**

I will choose what I believe to be the Best Worst XI and, this is the first sort of salesy thing for a long time, the winning Worst (???) will receive a £25 Wisdenworld Voucher.

Email address is as follows:  
furmedgefamilly1864@gmail.com

## A little freebie

We have 10 actual copies of the latest Wisden Cricket Monthly to give away. This is issue 31, May 2020. Included is a feature on 'The Five Day War' - an investigation into the present and future of Test Cricket.

The first ten readers to email in with the correct answer to the following question will receive a copy.

Which Wisden was the first edited by Lawrence Booth

- a): 2013
- b): 2016
- c): 2012
- d): 2019

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Back in 2013 the Wisdener reproduced, over four issues, an article written by Murray Hedgcock for Wisden Cricket Monthly in 1992. The article appeared in the December 1992, January, February and March 1993 issues of WCM. Murray - member of the WCC since, has given me permission to reprint it again. Since 2013 our membership has increased five-fold so hopefully older members wont mind seeing it again. The Survival of Wisden Part 4.

**So Fitzgerald Avenue and the works site settled down as the old folk moved on, or died, and a new breed moved in. One man who lived there during the war as a schoolboy says the style of the street has changed distinctly. Geoff Dodkin, known on the motorcycle race circuit since the 1950s for his East Sheen workshop, tuning and preparing Velocettes, arrived at NO. 27 Fitzgerald Avenue in 1940 from Wandsworth. He remembers nothing of the Fitzgerald Works, which perhaps seems odd – or maybe teenagers, in the excitement of wartime, had more entertaining matters to worry about than a shabby old factory.**

He does recall 'quite vividly that the aircraft that bombed us was in a dive – it was definitely high explosive and incendiaries (not doodlebugs as some people had suggested – these did not come till later.) I was interested and I could hear it. It went into a fine pitch, and dived, and dropped stick across White Hart Lane and the Willoughby's. My uncle and I were going towards the front door – and the door blew in. It's permanently burned into my psyche.

Why were the family up at that time (1 o'clock in the morning)? 'You develop a fairly fine tuned antenna as to when the bombing became more intense', Geoff Dodkin commented drily.

He recalls it as part of a fairly heavy raid on London that night: 'The boy I went to school with lost an eye: he was across the road, one of the Biggs family. A lump of glass came through from the bombing & cut his eye.

The whole of our house was rendered "U/S", as they say, so quite a few others and we had to find alternative accommodation. The blast took off the top of the house, and houses opposite were really badly damaged. '

The bomb meant a quick move from Fitzgerald Avenue for the Dodkins and others whose homes were wrecked, but Geoff recalls 'a certain indignity to it': 'My mother was appalled when the council reckoned they had no transport available, and part of the move had to be done on the council dustcart. This was the final insult – far more important to my mother than the bomb. She was very cross about it. Hitler should have known exactly the way to upset our family, because that was it.'

He went to Mortlake Central School, opposite Watney's sports ground, finding enough interests outside school to ignore the Fitzgerald Works, although inquiring youngsters might have expected to peer through gates or scale fences to discover everything in the neighborhood.

David Catford, a businessman now living in Derby Road, a lifelong Sheen resident born in Grosvenor Avenue (two streets west of Fitzgerald Road), and during the war a schoolboy at Palewell Park, made a special visit to the devastated Wisden factory on the morning of Feb 20, 1944.

The scene was of terrible destruction, and the factory was still burning, and the interior totally gutted,' he writes. 'It was not

possible to enter White Hart Lane, which was cordoned off following the destruction of houses there. According to my diary notes made at that time, the sirens had sounded at 12.40am and shortly afterwards aircraft were heard to fly in low amidst a terrific barrage from the anti- aircraft guns in Richmond Park. Red flares were seen floating down, followed by the whistle of falling bombs, and explosions shook the house.

'From an upstairs window I could see a huge blaze with billowing black smoke. Our local church (All Saints in Park Avenue) was silhouetted against the bright red glow from a fire, which was later found to be that in Fitzgerald Road. I recorded the name of the company at the time as Roberts Maclean Ltd, which may well have been the company that occupied the premises vacated by Wisdens.

'In a raid the following day (Feb 20), Watneys's Brewery was hit by incendiary bombs, and Omes Works in Beverley Road was wrecked by high- explosive bombs,' Mr. Catford sums up.

Maurice Mousley, son of Frank Mousley of the Priest's Bridge garage and tennis interests, at 93 still has sharp memories of the bombing. He recalls looking out of his front door in Grosvenor Avenue, three streets from Fitzgerald Avenue, and seeing the flames. 'I was afraid it was the garage. I went up there as soon as I felt it was safe. Wisden was all flaming – I certainly didn't stop off there. I was lucky to get through, but it was safe once the bombers had gone. I paddled through the broken glass of my premises, where there was some damage.

'Fortunately petrol tanks at the garage were intact, or there could have been major fire devastation in the area.

The *Wisden* works were of a more personal significance to a local teenager of another generation: Harry Washington needed job in 1931. Speaking at his home in Rutland Close off Kingsway, he recalled: 'I went to *Wisden* with my mate, old Bill Lloyd I was 14 1/2 or 15 and 76 now so it's about 62 years ago somebody said go down to *Wisden's*, they want some boys – one van boy, and one for sweeping.

'I lived in Sheen Lane, NO. 18 it's a garage now or is it Croxton's? Bill Lloyd lived down West Road; it's been pulled down. We went down and got the job I think I got paid about threepence-ha'penny an hour (a typical mail industrial wage in 1931 was around £3 pounds a week). Up the wooden stairs on a kind of wooden floor they used to do all the stringing of the tennis bats (one side was two-storey). This side you had the machines. The women would polish the racquets and put transfers on with the *Wisden*, the brand name.

On the other side you have the Royal coat of arms (shown a Royal warrant used by *Wisden*, Harry Washington confirmed this was the crest). That's it. We used to make a couple of them and put them on the front about bikes, all nice and posh.'

Harry Washington, riding around Mortlake with the posh Royal coat of arms on his pushbike, had to handle a lowly series of jobs at work: 'The rackets used to go down to the women. It was my job. I couldn't go on the machine because I didn't know anything about them. They used to give me a flit-gun, full of Flit, and I'd go around making fresh air. When I'd come down to the women's section I'd see all their shoes there so I'd squirt it in their shoes. When they got hold of me they'd give me a bleedin' good hiding!'

Was a bit rough, says Harry Washington reminiscently: 'downstairs, they were making tennis balls and cricket balls. Yes, they did make cricket balls. When they used to get out of shape they would put them in the bin and I could take home a nice ball with a bump in it, or the leather split.

'They would put all the good balls in boxes, and then the van - just an old Ford van - would come down the little alleyway, on the gravel. There was no big gate. It was open, and you went straight in. There were fences on either side of the houses, then the entrance. On the left was Taylor-Rolph, where they made the bowls, and through the gate the rest of it was Wisden. This side was a big window where a bloke used to do all the packing.

They used to deliver a lot of stuff to Spaldings along the upper Richmond Road (records suggest this is actually at Putney Bridge Road) tennis balls and so on. Both were real old buildings. The upstairs was held up by girders. Under the girders they used to put all the sacks and sacks of shavings. No, there were no fire precautions. When you through a dog-end out, if it went under the sacks there'd be a big scramble to get it out. In the bottom of the building was this big open space and all the cricket bat willows will cut and stacked, eight or nine going this way and that way, and they went up and up. They stacked them all the way down, rows and rows. There would be hundreds. They would stay out there in all weathers, and then they would bring them in and start again on a machine, cutting them down and cut to the splices in.

How many people worked there? There were men, women and boys working together. In our shop - 1, 2, 3 men in a little cubicle with a big pot of glue on the gas-burner, and all they would be painting the three-ply and snapping the sandpaper discs on, and the rubber discs, and they would stick the cork on the tennis-table bats, for the handle.

'Then you went upstairs and there were stringers - about seven up there. Downstairs you had six or seven girls - all youngsters apart from the foreman. His old man worked there in the little cubby-place; he was the repairman if things broke down. A bloke down the other end had his long lengths of cane. The ball-makers were down the other end where the office was, with the big window. We didn't go in there. He was too miserable, he was.

'They had an inspector looking at everything, and they would sling everything in a big chest, a bin. You go in there and say, have you got any firewood, Guv? And they'd say yes, in the bin. And you look in there and say, look at these. There'd be tennis racquets twisted out of shape - say the word was a big green or they made the strings too tight. They would be all bent and thrown out straight away.

'No, you didn't get given any bats. They were perfect.

'In the bowls, I said to this bloke, got any firewood? He said, go in Taylor-Rolph, and this little old boy there - miserable bloke - he said, yeah, got your sac? I said yeah. There was wood on the end of the bench, so he got this little circular saw whizzing round and this little crane lifting these logs up and he'd got it all marked out, so it just went whiz and he cut the corners off.

Here you are, he said. I put them in the sack, and he said, that's it. And I said what do you mean, that's it? I've only got a little bit in the bottom. So he said well, try to lift it. And I couldn't bleedin' lift it. It was lignum vitae.

*The Wisden Book of Test Cricket*, first published in 1979, is well established as an invaluable and unique source of reference essential to any cricket library. This new volume includes full coverage of every Test match from late 2014 to the end of the 2019 season in England. Each Test match features Wisden's own scorecard, a detailed match report, details of debutants, close of play scores, umpires and referees, with number of appearances, and Man of the Match winners. Also included is a complete individual Test Career Records section and player index.

Edited by Steven Lynch, this new volume brings collectors' libraries up to date, ensuring they have a complete and accurate record - essential for any truly self-respecting cricket enthusiast.

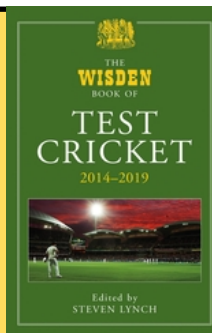
The new volume of *The Wisden Book of Test Cricket* is planned for release in mid-May. That may change, but as with the brilliant efforts of all concerned (not just Wisden, but warehouse and delivery folk) to get the 2020 edition out, let us hope that tall will be well with his new volume.

The RRP of this volume is £40

I am able to offer this edition for the following:

For delivery to within the UK - £35 including postage. For overseas delivery - £ 41.50

If you would like to pre-order a copy please let me know either by email, [furmedgefamilly@btinternet.com](mailto:furmedgefamilly@btinternet.com) or [furmedgefamilly1864@gmail.com](mailto:furmedgefamilly1864@gmail.com) or by telephone, 01480 819272 or 07966 513171



The Virtual Wisdener (VW) has posed a number of questions since we began little under a month ago and the most recent was one that I first asked back in 2015 for a little book called *'Desert island Wisden.'* The aim of the book was fairly self explanatory - given the option of taking just one yearly edition of *Wisden* to a Desert island, which almanack would you choose? I asked the same question again in VW3.

Thank you to many of you who sent in your *'Desert island Wisden'* choice. Some have been printed later in this edition and there will be more in future VWs.

When I picked up my copy of *'Desert island Wisden'* I re-read the foreword, written by *Wisden* Editor Lawrence Booth (Pictured, below) and it gave me the idea to ask Lawrence if he would agree to do a Q & A in the VW. Whilst it might be a little frivolous with concerns for our wider health and well-being to be asking *Wisden* or cricket related questions, it is also important that we all appreciate that we will come through this and normality will resume, so I was delighted when Lawrence agreed. He was courteous and open in his responses and I cannot thank him enough.



**I remember my mum once expressing revulsion at the idea that she could possibly choose a favourite son from the three on offer. I took this to mean that she loved us all equally, and not that she found us all equally trying, though that may have occurred to her too.**

At the risk of referring to *Wisden* like a member of the family, it seems just as invidious to single out a favourite Almanack. Being editor certainly complicates things. If I choose one of the four editions I've been lucky enough to have my name on, I'll stand accused – rightly – of arrogance. Yet if I ignore them, my paymasters at Bloomsbury Publishing may very well ask why it is I believe I've failed to improve standards, and whether I shouldn't in fact be pulling my socks up.

Even more fraught than selecting an individual *Wisden* is selecting an individual piece. You'd be surprised how many people ask for a nomination. This can get especially awkward when the person doing the asking is a contributor. I always try to bear in mind the claim made by Tim de Lisle, my first editor in the days of *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, and a one-time editor of *Wisden*. Most journalists, he said, are shy egotists: they'll feel hurt by the answer, and may let the grievance fester. It's best on these occasions to allow the ball to pass harmlessly through to the keeper. But, well, one *Wisden*. Here I will attempt a couple of strokes.

While I take professional pride in the four I've edited, it's simply not possible to view them in the same light as editions published before I started in 2012. After all, none of us is immune to the idea that the world was a better place when we were young, and I will always have a soft spot for my 1990 *Wisden* – the first I bought. It told the harrowing tale of England's 4-0 thumping in the previous summer's Ashes, but that won't take away from the memory of cycling to Blackwell's book shop on Oxford's Broad Street and deciding that, yes, I could afford £15.50.

I took the book with me to the Parks, and lapped it up as the students were being demolished by some county or other. For me, the 1990 *Wisden* is about teenage schooldays, free time and a complete absence of responsibility. Why would I not cherish it?

You'll have deduced that my collection is far from complete. I have a few stretching back into the 1970s, and my wife recently bought me the 1975 *Wisden*, the year of my birth and the earliest edition on my shelves. So the *Wisdens* I have thumbed most regularly have a modern flavour: the editors are Engel, Wright, de Lisle and Berry rather than Pardon or Preston.

It's hard to ignore 2006, the best-selling *Wisden* of recent times, thanks to the 'boys of summer, the men of the moment', as Matthew

Engel called England's Ashes winners. The pages are filled with wonderment at cricket's realised potential, our summer sport finally asserting itself in a country obsessed with football.

Looking back, I see that I wrote the report of the Trent Bridge Test, where Gary Pratt ran out an enraged Ricky Ponting and England won by three wickets after enforcing the follow-on. To re-read your own work is sometimes to wince, but it is also to be taken back to another time – on this occasion one when an entire nation was on the edge of its seat, and eight million tuned in to the denouement. Ah, the days of terrestrial coverage...

My choice for the desert island, though, is rather more parochial. Overseas readers occasionally complain that *Wisden's* county coverage is too extensive. And if the cathedral at New Road or the castle at Chester-le-Street or the rhododendron at Tunbridge Wells leave you cold, then I can only sympathise.

But the first pages I would turn to in Blackwell's would always be the Northamptonshire section. I knew damn well what had transpired the previous season (it was usually bad news), yet still I craved the *Wisden* perspective. And never did I crave it more than in 1996, the year after Northamptonshire came cruelly close to winning their first County Championship.

'Victory over Leicestershire on June 26 – their sixth successive Championship win, equalling the county's best-ever sequence – left Allan Lamb's side 43 points clear at the top of the table,' wrote Andrew Radd. 'A month later they defeated Warwickshire by seven runs in an unforgettable contest at Edgbaston. Even Northamptonshire's traditionally sceptical supporters began to believe that a first Championship title, the club's holy grail, was within reach.'

Northamptonshire finished third in the end (of course they did!), 47 points behind Warwickshire and 15 behind Middlesex. But, for this *Wisden* reader, 1995 was one of those summers that linger long after they have gone.

'*Wisden*,' wrote Neville Cardus, 'is summer bottled. You only have to turn a page and some magic casement in the memory is opened.' Cardus's words still hold true for me – and, as this wonderful book demonstrates, for many others too.

Lawrence Booth  
2015

Editor of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*



**Was becoming editor of Wisden the fulfilment of an ambition/ lifelong dream?**

Yes and no. I always thought editing *Wisden* would be a dream job, but I didn't consider it an even remote possibility – right up to the moment it was offered to me. I consider myself extremely fortunate.

**What is the highlight of your nine years of editor of Wisden, and do you look back to some of the initiatives and achievements of your predecessors?**

Every time the book arrives in the post sometime in March! It means we've seen another Almanack through to fruition, and can draw a line under all the hard work. But I suspect that's not quite the kind of answer you were looking for.

It was a privilege to edit the 150th edition, in 2013, partly because the media coverage reminded me how much *Wisden* still means to so many cricket lovers. Editing this year's book was a high point too, since it tells the story of England's first men's World Cup win. (One or two people think the best thing I ever did was have a stand-up row with Giles Clarke, then the outgoing ECB chairman, at the 2015 dinner.) I often draw inspiration from the work of my predecessors: John Woodcock wrote beautifully clear prose; Graeme Wright got to grips with the book's structure; Matthew Engel injected wit; Tim de Lisle put a picture on the cover; and Scyld Berry reads the game more originally than anyone still writing about cricket. If I've managed to absorb even a little of all of their skills, I'll be happy.

**Do you ever lie awake at night worrying about something you have put in Wisden - or something you have omitted?**

The week after we hand the book over to the printers can be a bit fraught – there's still time (just about) to make a late change, so I'm torn between re-reading everything in case we've missed an unspeakable howler, or let it lie and get on with my life. I wouldn't say I lie awake at night, but it might be the first thing I think about when I wake up.

**What do you consider to be the most important function of the Almanack? And your most important role as its custodian?**

Good question. We live in an age of snap judgment and instant comment, so I remind myself that – over 157 editions – *Wisden* has come to be seen as the conscience of cricket. Part of my job is to respect that position.

For that reason, it's too simplistic to say that the editor's notes are *my* views, and mine alone. I mean, they *are* my views, obviously. But they are also regarded by the wider public as the view of *Wisden*.

*Wisden* has always been synonymous with accuracy, integrity and independence. I'd be foolish to depart from that. I try to hold the game to account where necessary, while never forgetting to celebrate what is good about cricket. The 2020 edition felt like the most celebratory I have worked on, and I was glad to leave the usual criticism of the administrators until later in the notes. My most important role, I believe, is to hand the book on to my successor in a state of robust health, and with its reputation intact, possibly even enhanced.

**Which of your predecessors do you consider to be the most influential?**

On *Wisden* itself, Matthew Engel, who turned it into a modern book, full of high-class writing and humour. He allowed the

Almanack to enjoy the less serious side of cricket, which it had not always done. He's the bridge between two eras. The most influential on me personally was Tim de Lisle, who was my first editor when I did work experience at *Wisden Cricket Monthly* magazine in 1998. Tim taught me to write like a journalist. I still love reading his work.

**What are you most proud of from your tenure as editor?**

That's a tough one, because I can honestly say I don't think the book is really about the editor. But I like to think I've maintained *Wisden's* traditions while ensuring it keeps up with the times. I'd hesitate to say that the book now has more of a social conscience, but I've tried to relate cricket to the outside world: we now have an annual piece on cricket and the environment, and a dedicated women's section (as well as a Leading Woman Cricketer in the World award). We've also run pieces on transgender and sexism, and this year the notes included an item about unconscious racial bias. That may sound to some like an exercise in box-ticking, but they're all subjects I feel strongly about, and cricket hasn't always dealt well with them. As editor, you have to accept that you won't please all the people all the time: that way madness lies. So all you can do is be true to yourself and your convictions, and hope it doesn't put too many people off.

**What is the most taxing part of editing Wisden? And the most fulfilling?**

The bit of the book that challenges me most consistently is Part One, the comment section. Not so much the editor's notes (though they always loom large, as December gives way to January), but the other front-of-book items, which are usually a mixture of reportage, anniversary writing, subjects pegged to developments in the cricket world the previous year, and the occasional piece of whimsy. Achieving that balance is something I'm juggling with all year, especially as there might be a late but important twist in the cricket story.

For those reasons, Part One is also the most fulfilling: I want to end up with a selection of pieces that are all well written, have something interesting to say, and will stand the test of time. By comparison, choosing the Five Cricketers of the Year is a doddle – and great fun.

**How much of your working year is taken up with editing the Almanack? When do you sign off on each year's issue, and when do you start thinking about the new volume?**

I'm thinking about *Wisden* for most of the year. We sign off on an edition in late February/early March, and publication is in early-to-mid April. (That five- or six-week window is a strange time: we really don't want anything to happen that can undermine what is in the book.) Once we've got the PR push out of the way in April, my thoughts can turn, uninterrupted, to the following year's book, although I'll already have commissioned plenty of match reports, many of them landing before the previous year's book has been published, if that makes sense. So it's an ongoing process, with peaks and troughs. From October onwards, it's pretty relentless, especially if I'm away reporting on an England tour for the *Daily Mail*. There were times in New Zealand before Christmas where I would finish my work for the newspaper at 9pm, then embark on a four-hour proof-reading chat on Skype with my *Wisden* colleagues back in the UK (although one lives in

Latvia...). You have to be prepared for some antisocial hours.

***Wisden 2021 will inevitably face a challenge as there is so little cricket being played this year. It is too early to predict how things will go, and perhaps the WW2 editions may be an example to follow. Have you started to think or give any thought to this?***

It's not too early, no. We always try to get some ideas in the bag in April, and this year the need has been more pressing than ever, thanks to the pandemic. The size of next year's Wisden will really depend on how much cricket, if any, we get this summer. Even the wartime editions included scorecards – from some odd games, it's true, but there was cricket to report. This time, we face the possibility of a wipeout. I'd say the book has changed too much since 1945 for the Second World War editions to have much relevance to the way we'll operate this year. And in all likelihood, the 2021 Wisden will be twice the size of its wartime predecessors, come what may.

***Did Tim Murtagh come close to being considered as a CotY this year?***

He figured in the thinking, and in another year he would have come close; he might even have been chosen. But there were just too many high-class performers to squeeze him in. Which isn't to say I don't admire him hugely: his cheap five-for in the Lord's Test was wonderful to watch.

***How great a threat to the first-class game is the current coronavirus, and what options are there for The Hundred?***

It's a big threat. We face the possibility of a summer without a proper County Championship for the first time in peacetime since the competition was formalised in 1890. It will frustrate plenty of cricket lovers, but we may get to the point where the only option is to ensure the game emerges from the pandemic in something approaching one piece. And that will mean playing the format that brings in the money: Twenty20. The Hundred, I suspect, will be ditched for a year, but Tom Harrison has already emphasised how important he regards it for the future of the game.

***Many traditionalists came to the game through a county connection which is still at the heart of their interest in and support for the game. Can you see how recent developments and plans for the future threaten to undermine these bonds which do so much to foster the game?***

Of course. My main objection to The Hundred, as I wrote in the notes to the 2019 edition, was that it was a needless risk. It's not just the money the ECB have spent on it: it's the threat it poses to the county formats, especially the Championship, which has already been pushed into the margins of the season as it is. Of course, the ECB argue that The Hundred will bring new supporters to the game, and I hope they're right. I just wonder whether they've got the balance wrong: a lot of cricket lovers are angry about The Hundred, and I fully understand why.

***What first inspired you to follow the game and which player made the earliest impression on you?***

It's always hard pinpointing a precise moment. I remember watching TV highlights of England's 1986-87 tour of Australia, and slowly becoming absorbed in the game and its characters and, yes, its stats. Our school library had a few old *Wisdens*, so I'd read about old matches instead of doing my homework. The first

summer I followed closely was 1989 (a bad choice for England fans) and my first hero was Allan Lamb, because of his achievements on the tour of the West Indies in 1989-90. Because of Lamb, I began supporting Northamptonshire, an affliction that shows no sign of abating.

***Harry Gurney (among others) has suggested that 'red ball' professional cricket may be on its last legs and that cricket's future lies solely in the T20 (& presumably 'the 100'). If that comes to pass, will Wisden survive as well?***

First of all, I don't think that will happen. Harry may have lost interest in four-day cricket, but that's not the vibe I get from other players on the county circuit. They know they'll still be judged on their first-class record, even if white-ball cricket pays the bills. But if it *were* to happen, I like to think *Wisden* would live on. We are, among other things, a chronicle of the previous year's cricket, and that won't change.

***If the 100 goes ahead (in 2020 or 2021) will Wisden keep their statistics separate from T20 and other white ball records?***

The Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians have decided to merge the T20 and Hundred stats, which is probably the least bad option – and we're happy to take their cue. I'm not sure the game really wants a fourth set of statistics.

***As the five 'Cricketers of the year' do not, as you say "represent the five best players of the previous summer", but are "a one-off invitation to a hall of fame", how would you respond to the suggestion that there should be a place for the player who has made a significant contribution over a whole career - for example this year for Darren Stevens - alongside those younger players who may have only had a successful a season or two?***

I try to avoid choosing players on the basis of an entire career, though I suppose that – if I couldn't separate two players – I might use longevity as a tie-breaker. But I have to stick to the criteria, which refers to excellence in, and/or influence on, the previous English summer. So if Darren Stevens is among the best five players of those eligible for selection, he gets chosen. If he isn't, he doesn't. I accept there's a quirkiness to the way the Five have been selected, but that's part of the award's charm, and people generally understand how it works.

***The VW recently asked recipients to choose a World XI for players that had actually watched live. What your World XI be? The one stipulation is that it must be a recognisable order, and include a wicket-keeper.***

- 1 Virender Sehwag
- 2 Graham Gooch
- 3 Ricky Ponting
- 4 Sachin Tendulkar
- 5 Brian Lara
- 6 Steve Smith
- 7 Adam Gilchrist (wkt)
- 8 Wasim Akram
- 9 Shane Warne (capt)
- 10 Jimmy Anderson
- 11 Glenn McGrath

*Once again I would like to thank Lawrence fBooth or agreeing to be our Q & A guest.*

**Trevor Bedells**

1948

**As a self respecting and lifelong Middlesex fan (well, I was brought up in Ealing), there are a number of possible years, particularly around the Brearley era, but one edition shines out to me like a beacon - it has to be 1948.** The country was still in austerity following the grim days of wartime, when cricket brought the crowds flooding into grounds and lifted the national gloom, spearheaded by Middlesex whose main contributors became known throughout this land just by their christian names, Denis & Bill, ably assisted by Jack and Sid - with the strings pulled so superbly by RWVR. Surely, no other county has ever matched that annus mirabilis?

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**Christopher Rowsell**

1970

**My choice for the Desert Island would be the 1970 edition. I had been following the fortunes of Glamorgan for a couple of seasons, their attraction being that they were different from the other counties being based in Wales.**

Having been to my first match the previous summer, England v Australia at the Oval, my interest in the game was heightened and I followed the fortunes of my county more than I had before. What a year to choose, the year that they won their second County Championship. There were some extremely exciting close games towards the end of the season and the race between Glamorgan and Gloucestershire had been close anyway.

Glamorgan managed to go through the season unbeaten and they were, I feel, an underrated team. They used very few players throughout the season, which allowed for consistency of performance. So this edition is a reminder of this great year for Glamorgan, but there was much more than that in this edition. For starters there were two Glamorgan players in the 'Five Cricketers of the Year', namely Majid Khan and Don Shepherd. There was a further article on Glamorgan's success penned by J.H. Morgan.

Included in the other articles were appreciations of Freddie Trueman and Ken Barrington, who had both retired for differing reasons, although Trueman was to make a comeback for Derbyshire in the Sunday League.

The tourists were two rather mediocre teams, namely the West Indies and New Zealand, although there was the comfort in the usual format of the almanack, with the tourists scorecards preceding the counties' scorecards.

We also had the first season of the 'John Player's County League', with reports and full scorecards! Finally there was the usual round ups of overseas competitions (full scorecards for Australia's Sheffield Shield, which I would like to see bought back), the obituaries and John Arlott's book reviews, never unkind and unfailingly positive as much as could be possible.

So all in all, a delight for followers' of Glamorgan and the first edition that I received as a present for my 12th birthday.'

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**James Dewar**

1948

**I was in the desert (although in Egypt, not an island) in 1947 as a one-year old. My father's battered copy of the 1948 *Wisden* reminds me of how often he thumbed through it. The article by Robertson-Glasgow on Compton and Edrich concludes with the words that they were "fitting adornments and exponents of a game that was meant not as an imitation of, but as a refreshment from, the worldly struggles," Between them they scored 7385 runs in 1947, with 30 centuries, as well as taking 130 wickets.**

1947 had started with a bitter winter (not in Egypt!), but the summer weather was glorious, and so was much of the cricket. Record attendances at county grounds (280,000 in Yorkshire), numerous close finishes including 3 ties, a good Test series win against South Africa - albeit after a resounding Ashes defeat in an Australian tour which features 29 matches and a reminder from Bradman, averaging 97. that he was still a phenomenal batsman; the portent of things to come in the Public School averages, with May, Sheppard and Cowdrey all prominent - heroes of my boyhood.

There was a century for Hampshire v Kent by John Manners ( who died aged 105 earlier this year) - his first for 11 years, due mainly to gallant Naval service in the War. The New Zealander Martin Donnelly (the Gower of his day) headed the Oxford University batting averages, and crowds flocked to the Parks to watch him. There was also an optimism throughout that *Wisden* that the game (and the nation) had turned the corner after the long years of hardship. And, of course, Princess Elizabeth married Prince Philip.

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**John Baron**

1921

My favourite *Wisden* is 1921 as this was the first copy that I was allowed to read from my dad. In the 1950's he bought me a linen edition each year until I started working in 1960 and then I was able to buy them myself.

The 1921 was very dilapidated and I remember taking it to school at the end of term much to the amusement of the teachers who in the last week allowed us to read books. I was the only one who ever took a *Wisden* to the school. Oh happy days. I have recently bought a hard back copy (rebound) and the results have not changed

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**David Yelling**

1978

My dad bought it for me for getting eight 'O'Levels and deciding to stay on, as he had hoped I would, to 6th form. It was never an argument as to whether I was staying on or not, but I knew that I was keen to leave, to get a job, pay my way etc. He always said that having 'options' would give me more opportunity in life. When I told him I had changed my mind and I was staying on, he took me into town and bought me the 1978 *Wisden* I had said I couldn't afford. Sadly he passed away four months later, he was only 38. He was right about having 'options.'





IT ALL HAPPENED IN 1939...



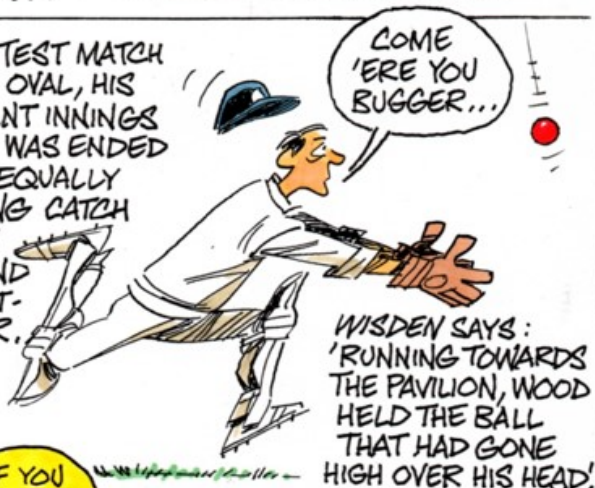
THE WAR SPEEDED THE CONCLUSION OF THE COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP, LANCASHIRE'S MATCH WITH SURREY WAS JUST ONE THAT WAS LEFT UNFINISHED.

HORACE HAZELL WAS BOWLED BY DICK HOWORTH AND SO THE MATCH BETWEEN WORCESTERSHIRE AND SOMERSET ENDED IN A TIE — THE FIRST IN ENGLAND FOR NINE YEARS.



FOR THE WEST INDIAN TOURISTS LEARIE CONSTANTINE WAS THE MAIN ATTRACTION, WITH SOME INCREDIBLE HITTING...

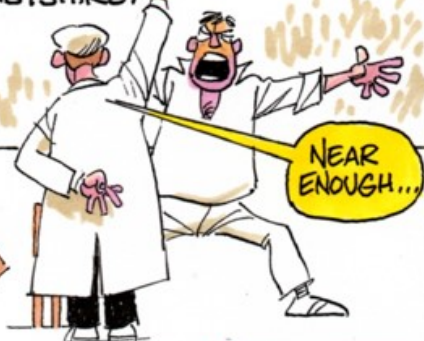
IN THE TEST MATCH AT THE OVAL, HIS BRILLIANT INNINGS OF 78 WAS ENDED BY AN EQUALLY AMAZING CATCH BY THE ENGLAND WICKET-KEEPER.



EIGHT BALL OVERS WERE EXPERIMENTED WITH IN COUNTY CRICKET... FOR THE ONLY TIME.



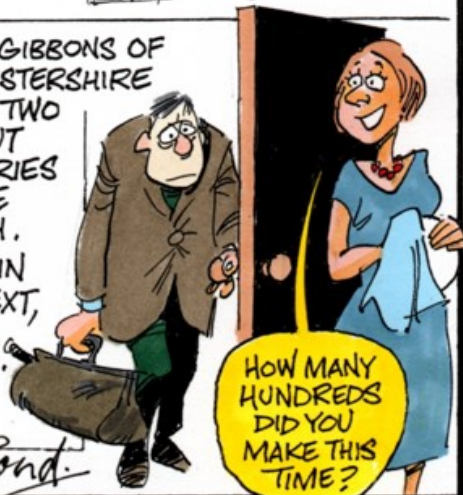
TOM SMAILES TOOK ALL TEN WICKETS IN AN INNINGS FOR YORKSHIRE AGAINST DERBYSHIRE.



YORKSHIRE WON THE COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP AGAIN. **HEDLEY VERITY** TOOK 7 FOR 9 AGAINST SUSSEX. HE WOULD LOSE HIS LIFE IN THE WAR. AS WOULD **MAURICE TURNBULL**, THE GREAT GLAMORGAN BATSMAN. HE MADE A SUPERB 156 ON WHAT WAS TO BE HIS FINAL APPEARANCE...

HARRY GIBBONS OF WORCESTERSHIRE MADE TWO NOT OUT CENTURIES IN ONE MATCH. THEN, IN THE NEXT, TWO DUCKS.

Bob Bond.



Thank you to Bob Bond for allowing us to use the above. We will be using more in future issues of The VW.

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