

Following my comments on The Hundred in VW 6 I have received a lot of correspondence. One response from Murray Hedgcock particularly gave me food for thought. Murray's dilemma was that " (The Hundred).. went against the grain to wish failure on any cricketing activity, not least one that was seeking to expand its popular appeal. But this is such an ill-judged proposal, with huge investment that could be spent much better in other areas - not least in boosting the sadly declining grassroots game..."

It made me think about wishing ill on the new competition but then I reverted to type and in my response to Murray I wrote, " Sometimes I find it odd when a sport tries to reach a new audience. To give you a simple example: I have never watched a TV soap show, Coronation Street, Eastenders, Emmerdale etc. I know they exist, but there is absolutely no way on this planet that I would sit down and watch any of them. If the BBC decided to film episodes of Eastenders at Lord's with the backdrop being an England v Australia Test, I still would not watch it. So why does the ECB believe that creating another form of a game that 99% of the population do not normally go to watch is a good idea?

The vast majority of my friends and family (I am seriously in the minority) find cricket boring and of absolutely no interest, if upon arriving at a game of The Hundred they were given £50 cash just for turning up, it still would not be a big enough incentive.

The sad reality is that they want to give the same people who go to Twenty20 another form of the same game to get more money out of them. But rather than being honest, they hide behind the garbage of 'seeking a new audience.' Just because Warner, Stokes, Roy, Butler or Kohli might hit 24 in an over, with the ball flying everywhere, does not mean that someone who cannot see the point in the game of cricket, actually pays to watch.

Whilst I feel like I am betraying the game by wanting it to fail, I agree with Murray.

Lorraine opened our front door on Friday morning and a bottle of Spitfire Beer (Proof, right) sat proudly on the doorstep. All the neighbours either side also had a bottle and when we did our Social Distancing 3pm outdoor drink, no one knew who had done it. I have since found out who was responsible, but it was another example of the many many acts of kindness and community spirit that are still happening up and down the country. The beer was lovely!



It is all go in the Furmedge household. Games day had to be postponed because Libby set Abbey a challenge at the end of Friday - to write a play for our family and another to perform on Sunday. Nine characters, two days notice...not only did she do it but we all had to send in 'video auditions.' It was either the strength of the idea or the amount of alcohol consumed by both families (at different VE remembrance days 60 miles apart) that led us all to audition. On Sunday via Zoom we did our play. Naturally I was the Narrator and I did it in the character of Olivier doing Hamlet at Stratford. I could feel the great man's admiration and respect from behind the grave, or that might have been next door banging on the wall in disgust...

Keep safe and Thank you all

Bill, Mrs F (The Beer Finder), Abbey (The next Tarantino) and Libs (Without whom, there would have been no play)

Your next Challenge

Over the last couple of months I have asked for your various favourite XIs and they have been rolling in, well arriving via email actually, but now something a little different.

With lockdown essentially continuing and no likelihood of any cricket until Just 1st at the earliest I would appreciate your response to the following.

When you think of watching cricket, choose one ground anywhere in the world at which you would like to be and which two bowlers and which two batsmen would you love to be watching. It can be a ground and players from any era and players not necessarily from the country of the ground you are in - mine would be Antigua, watching Bradman and Steve Smith facing Larwood and Holding.

As usual, please send your replies to:

furmedgefamily1864@gmail.com

Another little freebie

I have a copy of Wisden India 2019-20 to give away to the first two people who answer the question below correctly - and who Libby (who is also studying Spanish don't you know) will draw out of the 'hat' and there really is an actual hat.

Who said this in 1996

'I thought that was the day I had to resign when Jimmy Tarbuck told me to go'

- a): Michael Atherton
- b): Graham Gooch
- c): Kim Hughes
- d): Margaret Thatcher

As usual, please send your replies to:

furmedgefamily1864@gmail.com

The correct answer for the VW 6 poser was Geoff Boycott

One of the finest books, of any genre, I have read is Duncan Hamilton's biography of Harold Larwood. Hamilton is an exceptional writer and I am about to begin his biography of Neville Cardus. Over the next couple of pages I have reproduced with the permission of John Wisden & Co the obituary of Harold Larwood that appeared in the 1996 almanack and The Guardian's the review of The Great Romantic, Hamilton's 2019 book on Cardus.

LARWOOD, HAROLD, MBE, who died in hospital in Sydney on July 22, 1995, aged 90, was one of the great fast bowlers of all time. This will forever be overshadowed by his role in the cricketing controversy of the century, the Bodyline Affair. It is a dispute that retains its extraordinary potency even though nearly all the participants are now dead. It came close to rupturing cricket; indeed, it might have ruptured relations between Britain and Australia. But it was in the nature of cricket that Larwood should eventually settle happily in Australia, the country whose batsmen he once haunted.

Harold Larwood was a miner's son from Nuncargate outside Nottingham. He left school at 13; at 14 he was working with the pit ponies at Annesley Colliery near Nottingham and would doubtless have become a miner himself had he not already been showing promise at cricket; at 18 he had a trial at Trent Bridge. This was the classic instance of a county whistling down the nearest coal mine when they wanted a fast bowler.



In 1924, at 19, Larwood was starring in the Second Eleven and making his Nottinghamshire debut; in 1925 he was a first-team regular; in 1926 he was in the England team at Lord's and, more significantly, the one that regained the Ashes at The Oval. In that match he took six wickets, all front-line batsmen, and consistently troubled everyone with pace and lift from short of a length. The word was already going round that "Lol" Larwood was the quickest bowler seen in years. In 1927 he came top of the national averages. By 1928 he was in harness with the left-armed Bill Voce and together they would become the world's most feared pair of opening bowlers.

Larwood began the 1928-29 series in Australia with a match-winning six for 32 on the old Exhibition Ground in Brisbane (in addition to scoring 70). The only batsman in the top seven that he did not get out in that match was the debutant D. G. Bradman and, though England comfortably retained the Ashes, Bradman asserted his authority as the series progressed. By the time he came to England in 1930, he was almost unassailable.

Larwood played only three of the Tests that summer, and took just four wickets. Australia regained the Ashes. The combination of shirt-front wickets and the greatest batsman of all time was enough to break the spirit of any bowler. Larwood's urge to find something, anything, that would enable him to defeat Bradman, was crucial in rendering him a willing instrument in the crisis that was to come.

Bodyline, or leg-theory bowling, with bowlers aiming at the body with a ring of predatory leg-side fielders, was not unknown at this stage; Arthur Carr, the Nottinghamshire captain, would sometimes unleash Larwood in that manner in county matches. Several batsmen were carried off unconscious after being hit by Larwood even when he was

bowling normally. Carr used Bodyline as a tactic. Douglas Jardine, who led England in Australia in 1932-33, elevated it into a strategy. But Larwood was not just his dupe. "The game had become so biased in favour of the batsmen, there was no pressure on them at all," he said in 1983. "If we got four wickets down in a day, we'd done a good day's work. If we got five we had an extra drink. Our way was the only way to quieten Bradman. I knew that if we eased up, we'd have to pay for it."

The controversy reached boiling point in the Adelaide Test when Larwood hit Bill Woodfull over the heart and Bert Oldfield over the temple. "Larwood again the unlucky bowler", as the newsreel commentator famously said. It was the feeling that Larwood, far from being unlucky, had achieved his side's objectives by inflicting injury that incensed the Australians. However, when he made 98 as a night-watchman in the final Test in Sydney he was, according to Wisden, "loudly cheered".

Larwood damaged his foot while bowling in that match, though Jardine made him stay on the field until Bradman was out. The foot injury meant he could bowl only ten overs in the 1933 season, and by the time the Australians came to England in 1934 the full implications of Bodyline had sunk in. A combination of poor communications, inadequate newspaper coverage and imperial arrogance, especially at Lord's, had prevented English cricket understanding immediately what had been going on in Australia. But once opinion had changed, Larwood is understood to have been given a letter of apology and told to sign. He refused and never played another Test match, alienating MCC once and for all by giving frank opinions on the subject to the Sunday Express. At the time he paid the penalty rather than Jardine, who captained MCC again in India in 1933-34. History has reversed the judgment, and Jardine is usually painted as the villain. Larwood's loyalty to his skipper remained unshaken until he died.

He continued to play county cricket to devastating effect and topped the national averages for the fifth time in 1936, two years before he finally retired. Bodyline had almost disappeared after Jardine's tour and was formally outlawed two years later. Larwood, though, was good enough, even if he was slowing down, to achieve success without it.

He was only about 5ft 8in, less than 11 stone, and his training regime seemed to consist largely of beer and cigarettes. But he was stocky, and his technique was magnificent: "He ran in to bowl with a splendid stride," wrote Neville Cardus, "a gallop, and at the moment of delivery his action was absolutely classical, left side showing down the wicket, before the arm swung over with a thrillingly vehement rhythm." Later generations, observing only a few newsreel clips, have wondered whether Larwood threw; contemporary critics

echoed the Cardus line -- and in any case his Australian victims might just have raised the subject if there was any doubt at all.

His bouncer was truly terrifying to unprotected batsmen, but it was employed only sparingly for most of his career. Of his 1,427 first-class wickets, more than half--743--were bowled. Larwood's average was 17.51, which was outstanding in a batsman's era; in his 21 Tests he took 78 at 28.35. His batting average was close to 20, and he scored three centuries. After retirement, he went into eclipse and was living in Blackpool with his wife and five daughters, running a sweet shop, when he decided to emigrate to Australia. In 1949, he sailed on the *Orontes*, the ship which had taken him there, more famously, 17 years earlier. Encouraged by a former opponent, Jack Fingleton, and helped by a former Australian prime minister, Ben Chifley, Larwood settled in an obscure Sydney suburb, got a job on the Pepsi-Cola production line, and worked his way up -- "not because I was a cricketer but because I could do the job" -- to managing the lorry fleet.

It was possible to hear the noise of the Sydney Cricket Ground from his bungalow when the wind was right, and it became a place of pilgrimage for visiting Englishmen with a sense of history; Darren Gough delighted the old man by calling there in 1994-95. By then Larwood was blind, and long before that visitors were baffled by the idea that this shy, stooped, kindly man could ever have terrorised cricket. There was never a hint of animosity in Australia, and Larwood had no regrets either, although he repented of his old view that Bradman was frightened of him. "I realise now he was working out ways of combating me." John Major signalled the British Establishment's forgiveness by awarding him the MBE in 1993. Larwood was most proud of the ashtray given him by Jardine: "To Harold for the Ashes -- 1932-33 -- From a grateful Skipper."

The Great Romantic - by Duncan Hamilton, by David Kynaston *The Guardian* July 2019.

The interest never falters in Duncan Hamilton's life of the colourful Guardian cricket correspondent Neville Cardus, who rose from poverty to invent literary sports reporting.

Neville Cardus's death in early 1975 coincides in my memory with getting hold of two hotly desired things: Bob Dylan's new album *Blood on the Tracks*, at last another masterpiece after a long, long wait; and John Fowles's *The Ebony Tower*, "only" a collection of stories, unlike his zeitgeist-defining novels *The Magus* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, but still hugely exciting to a 23-year-old. Well, more than 40 years on, Dylan's reputation remains largely intact, but not so those of the others. "For a long time Sir Neville Cardus was regarded as cricket's greatest writer," according to the sports journalist Gideon Haigh. "Then he wasn't."

Haigh introduces a new selection of Cardus's essays and reportage with the appropriately evocative title *A Field of*

Tents and Waving Colours (it is published by Safe Haven without an editor's name). Thoughtfully arranged, and covering a span from the honeymoon 1920s to the often grumpy-old-man 60s and 70s, it includes many of Cardus's greatest hits. "By Three Runs", for instance, that still haunting account of how poor old Fred Tate had potential glory thrust on him at Old Trafford in 1902 but cruelly missed the moment; or "The Defeat at Eastbourne", as the veteran Archie MacLaren masterminded the first win in 1921 over the hitherto all-conquering Australians; or "Bradman, 1930", an early draft of history about "this remarkable boy" who was changing cricket's very terms of trade.

These and other pieces nicely complement Duncan Hamilton's new biography of Cardus. The *Great Romantic* has a strongly personal flavour, especially its tour de force of a prologue, relating in affectionate detail how John Arlott in the 70s, by this time occupying Cardus's old post as the *Guardian's* cricket correspondent, tutored the young author (working as a local sports reporter) in an appreciation of Cardus. Thereafter the interest seldom falters, the tone is mainly admiring but far from hagiographical, and there is less of the self-consciously "fine" writing that has occasionally marred Hamilton's otherwise terrific run of books in recent years about sporting history. It is a shame perhaps that he does not take us match by match through a typical Cardus season during his golden years between the wars, or compare more forensically his reports with those of other cricket journalists of the time; there is also the odd slip (MacLaren's "last hurrah" was not at Eastbourne but the following year at Wellington, as he took a majestic 200 not out off the New Zealand attack; Chamberlain returned with his infamous piece of paper not from Berchtesgaden but from Munich). But with its verve, insight and generosity of sympathy, this is by some way the best full-length life of a cricket writer, perhaps even of any sports writer.

Cardus's early years are a biographer's gift. The absentee blacksmith father, the mother and aunt who make ends meet by working as part-time prostitutes, the mean streets of Manchester around the turn of the last century, leaving school at 13, the endless autodidact hours (no influence greater than Dickens), the array of different jobs before finally landing a bits-and-pieces berth on the *Manchester Guardian*. Then the breakdown in the spring of 1919, the inspired decision at the start of that summer's cricket season to give him some fresh air by sending him to Old Trafford to report on Lancashire's first peacetime match. Hamilton does it very well, but in truth no one has told the story better than Cardus himself in his bestselling (and infinitely moving) *Autobiography*.

Instead, where Hamilton really scores is in his candid treatment of Cardus in the years after he won almost instant fame for his cricket writing (followed in due course by considerable acclaim for his music criticism, including teaching the English about the virtues of Mahler). This makes, for his loyal admirers, somewhat uncomfortable reading. Cardus took more than he gave in relation to the women of his life; his conversational tendencies became increasingly



egocentric; the charged politics of the interwar period almost completely passed him by; and, going beyond a social inferiority complex – understandable in what was still a very hierarchical and class-based society – he seems to have craved establishment recognition and approval. Though a knighthood in 1967 was very acceptable, in cricketing terms recognition meant above all full membership of the MCC – which, grotesquely enough, was denied to him until 1972, the price of being born not only on the wrong side of the tracks, but to a real-life version of EM Forster's Jacky Bast.

In the end, of course, it is the work that counts. Cardus was a wonderful and innovative cricket writer for many reasons – evocation of atmosphere, a rich aesthetic sense, heightening the drama of the contest, an almost uncanny grasp of what the spectators were thinking and feeling – but above all because he understood and made human, as rich, three-dimensional characters, the cricketers themselves, especially the Lancashire team of the 1920s that he followed around the country, together with a starring role for Yorkshire's indomitable Emmott Robinson. No one before Cardus had remotely conceived in this way of cricket's literary possibilities; and for all the excellence of disciples like RC Robertson-Glasgow and Alan Ross, as well as Arlott, no one has quite matched him since.

So what's the problem? Why, to come back to Haigh, has he been dethroned? In essence, apart perhaps from the vagaries

of changing literary taste, the accusation is that he made things up, indulging in deliberate fabrication.

Hamilton faces the issue square-on, citing for instance the Cardus-written version of a conversation after a Lancashire fielder, Dick Tyldesley, had in a bitterly contested Roses match announced to the umpire that he had not quite taken a catch cleanly and ensured the departing batsman was recalled. "A fine piece of sportsmanship, Dick," Cardus said, eliciting the understated reply, "Thanks, Maister Cardus". That was the actual conversation, but Cardus subsequently put an extra – and immortal – sentence in the cricketer's mouth: "Westhoughton Sunday School, tha knows". Over the years there were many other such examples, and Cardus himself would unashamedly call it "the higher truth". Hamilton's own conclusion is clear. "The admissions Cardus made about tampering with quotes damages him irreparably as a scrupulous nuts-and-bolts news reporter, but never as a critic – and certainly not as a master of descriptive prose." That was also Arlott's view; and it is mine, too. "Nice customs curtsy to great kings," was how Wisden, quoting Shakespeare, once sought to exonerate WG Grace's avaricious shamateurism. And in his own way, largely creating modern literary sports writing, Cardus was as much a great king as the original bearded wonder.



In 2013 The Wisdener published the following:

In times when the antics and behaviour of some of our leading sportsmen are dubious to say the least The Wisdener is grateful to Edward Walker who recalls a tale from a by-gone era

While working as a newspaper reporter in Sussex during the 1970's I was lucky to meet up with a local councillor who shared my passion for cricket, he also loved cricket books and was an avid Wisden collector. In fact it was he who started me off by giving me some spare soft backs from the 1960s. He had become an MCC member in 1924 and after buying his yearly almanack direct from Wisden was surprised to learn that from 1949 his membership of the MCC qualified him for a free hardback edition.*

Apparently he had watched the Lords and the Oval Test Matches against Australia in the glorious summer of 1948 and been present when the tourists hit 721 in a day against Essex at Southend. Like most cricket lovers around the world he was besotted with Bradman and expressed genuine sorrow that the great man had failed in his last Test innings, thereby not achieving the Test career average of 100

As a memento of the Australian score against Essex this chap had put together a scrapbook, with newspaper reports and the fly-leaf scorecard that he had picked up at the game and filled in by taking the information from the newspaper a day or so later. He had already collected a number of England signatures during the season and after the Australians left for home his father suggested that he write to Lord's to find out if they had the contact details of anyone in Australia who might be able to put him in touch with any of the Australian players or officials, who could supply signatures.

Within a couple of weeks he received a reply from a Colonel Kerr from the MCC who gave him the contact details of the secretary of the Australian Cricket Board and so, he duly wrote a letter, six months later a sturdy envelope arrived and within was one of the most amazing notes.

His original letter to Australia had found its way to Don Bradman who had personally written to his team-mates in the Oval Test of 48 and asked them to put their signature on the back of a photograph he had of the Oval XI.

On the back of the photograph my friend counted ten signatures and the accompanying note on headed notepaper read "Sorry I could not get all eleven, but Johnston now lives as far from me as Moscow is to London and it proved difficult" and signed, Don Bradman

To correlate, post and organise a photograph to be signed by a group of players is noteworthy enough, to do it across Australia and at the bequest of a young man from England speaks more than anything I can bring to mind of the generous nature of probably the greatest batsmen to have lived

There was a smaller envelope within the package that contained my friends' original letter to the MCC, along with a note which read, "I believe you will hear from the above young man in due course, any assistance you can offer would be appreciated, RK" The 'RK' at the MCC had also tried to help further by forwarding the original letter

It has been suggested many times that the MCC supplied the hardback edition as a part of the members' yearly subscription - many beneficiaries perceive this as being 'free' when in reality, the annual subscription paid for it.

We print this in memory of its author, Edward Walker who sadly succumbed to the Covid-19 virus on April 27th. A lovely friend of the WCC.

Tony Mock:
 England XI
 Jason Gallian
 Darren Maddy
 Alan Wells
 After Habib
 Ben Duckett
 Gavin Hamilton
 Richard Blakey
 Mason Crane
 Amjad Khan
 Martin McCague
 Paul Taylor

Tony Mock:
 Australia XI
 Nic Maddinson
 Wayne Phillips
 Callum Ferguson
 Aaron Finch
 Graham Manou
 John Hastings
 Phil Emery
 Xavier Doherty
 Clint McKay
 Joe Mennie
 Chad Sayers

Bob Gordon:
 England XI
 Mark Lathwell
 Neil Williams
 Owais Shah
 Craig White
 Tim Ambrose
 Richard Blakey
 Ian Salisbury
 Simon Kerrigan
 Darren Pattinson
 Chris Schofield
 Jon Lewis

Alan Newman
 England XI
 H.Morris
 B.Duckett
 J.Gallian
 Ian Ward
 A.Wells
 I.Blackwell
 R.Blakey +
 Amjad Khan
 Neil Williams
 Darren Pattinson
 S.Kerrigan

John Lear:
 England XI
 Mark Lathwell
 Richard Blakey (wk)
 Darren Maddy
 Aftah Habib
 Usman Afzal
 Min Patel
 Ian Salisbury
 Darren Pattinson
 Martin McCague
 Amjad Khan
 Gavin Hamilton

Mohammed Keshar:
 Pakistan XI
 Mohammed Hafeez
 Nasir Jamshed
 Azhar Ali
 Younis Khan
 Misbah-ul-Haq
 Asad Shafiq
 Sarfraz Ahmed
 Umar Gul
 Saeed Almal
 Junaid Khan
 Rahat Ali

Stephen O'Brien:
 England XI
 Nick Compton
 Adam Lythe
 Jason Gallian
 After Habib
 Ronnie Irani
 Ravi Bopara
 Derek Pringle
 Richard Blakey
 Ian Salisbury
 Simon Brown
 Darren Pattinson

Al Rycroft
 England XI
 Darren Maddy
 Jason Roy
 Aftab Habib
 Jason Gallian
 Gavin Hamilton
 Mike Watkinson
 Warren Hegg
 Saj Mahmood
 Ian Salisbury
 Paul Taylor
 Martin McCague

Neil Nelson:
 England XI
 Steve James
 Jason Gallian
 Mark Lathwell
 Alan Wells
 Aftab Habib
 Gavin Hamilton
 Richard Blakey (wk)
 Dermot Reeve (cap)
 Neil Williams
 Paul Taylor
 Mike Smith

Christopher Rowsell:
 England XI
 Jason Gallian
 Darren Maddy
 Ed Smith
 Alan Wells
 Aftab Habib
 Ian Blackwell
 Warren Hegg (wkt)
 Dermot Reeve (capt)
 Paul Taylor
 Simon Kerrigan
 Mike Smith

Phil Edwards
 England XI
 Keaton Jennings
 Adam Lythe
 Graeme Hick
 Mark Ramprakash
 Neil Fairbrother
 Ronnie Irani
 Derek Pringle
 Richard Blakey
 Steve Finn
 Simon Kerrigan
 Phil DeFreitas

Hilary Richardson
 England XI
 Jason Roy
 Nick Compton
 Aftab Habib
 Ben Duckett
 Gavin Hamilton
 Alan Wells
 Samit Patel
 John Emburey (Capt)
 Richard Blakey(W/k)
 Simon Brown
 Joey Benjamin

Comments on Team selection:
Mohammed Keshar - 'While working in Johannesburg in early 2013 I went to see my first ever days play of a Test match. On this day, South Africa bowled out my team, Pakistan, for 49, we were 9-0 and then 36-3 at one stage - the whole team will always be my Worst XI'

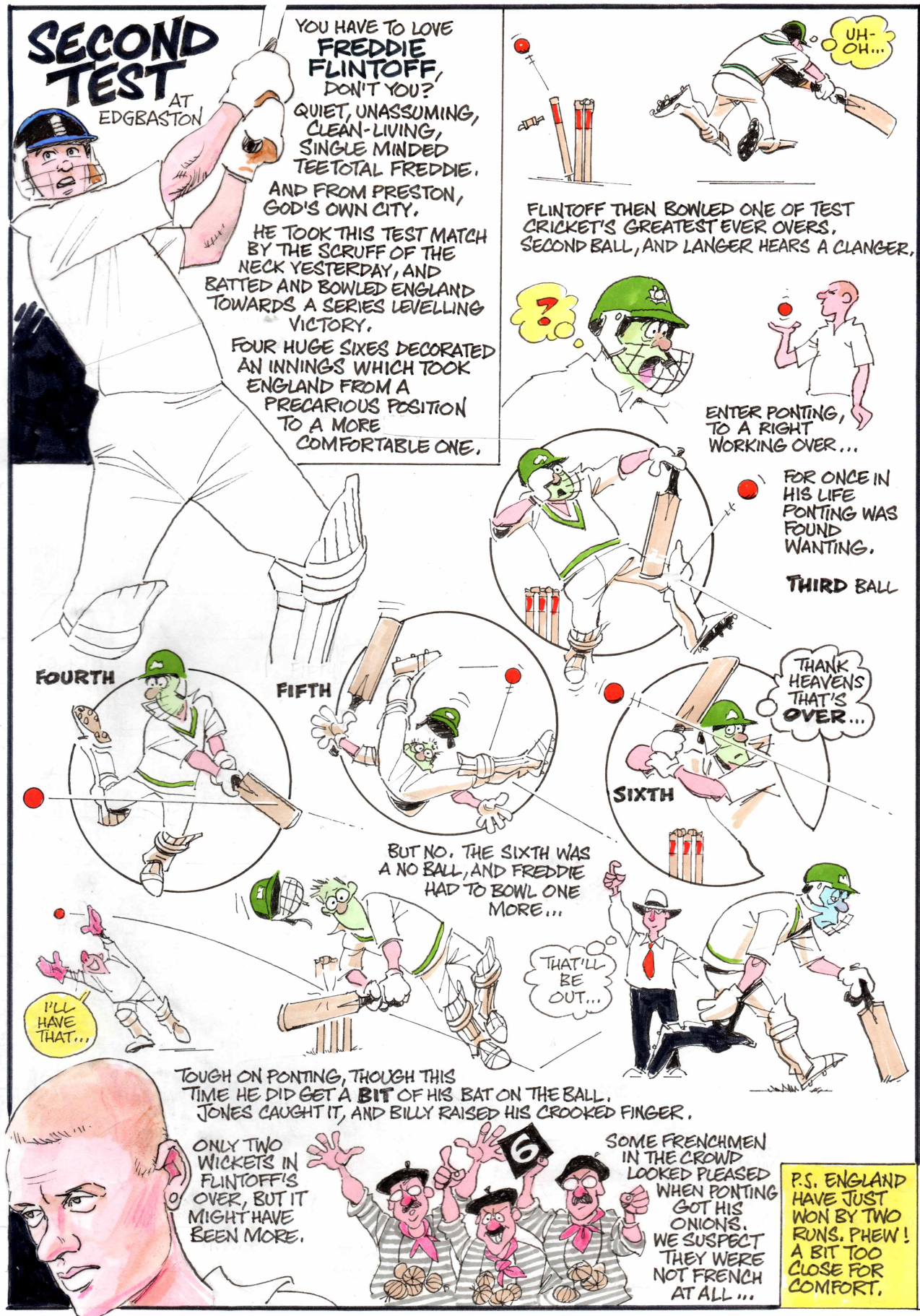
Phil Edwards - Mine is a mix of those given plenty of chances and persistently faltering and those who I do not understand why they were given a chance in the first place.'

Charles Foster - It was difficult cramming around 120 (West Indies) players into the final XI, can I choose 11 more teams please?'

Bob Gordon - Schofield, Kerrigan and Salisbury, what a forlorn search for a quality spinner!

Christopher Rowsell:
 Australia XI
 Rob Quiney
 Mike Veletta
 Alex Doolan
 Wayne N Phillips
 Nic Maddinson
 Hilton Cartwright
 Cameron White (capt)
 Graham Manou (wkt)
 Beau Casson
 Dan Cullen
 Paul Wilson

Charles Foster:
 West Indies XI
 D Ganga
 K.O.A. Powell
 R.S. Morton
 S Chattergoon
 R.N. Lewis
 D.Williams
 A. Sanford
 G.R. Breese
 P.T. Collins
 J.S. Jaggernaut
 R.Rampaul



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

Contact details are as follows: Telephone - 07966 513171 or 01480 819272:
Email: - furmedgefamilly1864@gmail.com or furmedgefamilly@btinternet.com