

**D**id he fall on his sword or was he gently nudged into a corner? It did seem a little odd that Joe Root waited until three weeks after the West Indies tour before resigning and just a few days before Rob Key was installed. We shall probably never know.

But that's old news and in fact a lot of what is in this newsletter could be deemed old news - I have tried to get it out before the announcement of the new England captain but then maybe I am being a bit too hasty as the ECB probably need to do a report, followed by a meeting of the Who Should Be on the Committee to Choose the England Captain committee, and once they recommend the people to be on the Choosing the England Captain Committee, they need to do a report on why that have chosen said committee members just in case anyone anywhere has an objection, which they would then ignore.

But moving on, how wonderful is it now that the County Championship season has started. Three great rounds of matches and thankfully very few impacted upon by bad weather — which obviously convinces me that the domestic CC season should begin in February.

Early season form can be misleading but it is great to see Lancashire near the top of Division One, but already it looks like our double centurion (231 v Gloucs) Josh Bohannon will be taken from us, put in an England bubble and lost to the side - I fear the same will happen to some other promising players — lost to the county game until the new England discards them — cynicism is something I do not like, but it's hard not to be when it comes to English cricket. A poor start to the season for both Somerset and Sussex, but congratulations to Surrey, Hampshire, Notts and Derbyshire who have started well.

The 2022 Wisden has hit the shelves, or rather the postie has delivered it and there is much to digest within its back-to-some-kind-of-normality 1,536 pages (the same number as 2020). For those of you who haven't opened your Wisden or know of its contents, look away now (I have always wanted to say that).

Wisden is once again wonderfully put together and it is a joy to open. For me, a lot of the content is exceptional. This year it has raised eyebrows!

Should Ollie Robinson have been chosen as one of the Five Cricketers of the Year? Maybe this is me but I was a little confused, maybe unsettled by his inclusion and I was also unsettled by the articles around Azeem Rafiq and Yorkshire - I use the word 'unsettled' deliberately. There are many sides to all of this and I am not an expert, but trying to unravel it, trying to

change attitudes and learn from what has gone on (*and probably still goes on*) are crucial but I am not sure if I want to be educated by my yearly cricket book.

Simon Heffer wrote an article in the Telegraph on April 26 entitled 'Wisden has become a depressingly woke political pamphlet' — very strong words and don't worry if you don't know what 'woke' means, I had to ask two different people.

I have put a link [here](#) to this article. It is a link to the Telegraph web page, and I believe you have to accept a free months trial to read it if you don't have a subscription. I am not advocating doing this, but I understand it is the only way to see the article. I found the article fascinating but also, again, unsettling. The 2022 Wisden contains an abridged version of the MCC Cowdrey Spirit of Cricket lecture given by Stephen Fry - I would suggest reading this (page 122) before reading Heffer's comments on it.

As always I went straight to the Lancashire section of my Wisden, then I read the Ashes section: I looked to see if there was a mention of Murray Hedgcock in the obituary section and there was - Murray was a lovely man whom I got to know almost as The Wisdener was launched in 2011, a sad loss. I also went to John Woodcock's obituary - Mr Woodcock for six years prior to his passing bought two new Wisdens from me each year and always asked if they could be delivered to the same two young players he knew. I often wondered why as a former distinguished editor of the almanack they couldn't give him two courtesy copies.

And then I went to the Cricketana page — more in hope than expectation and again I am baffled and actually angry as to why each and every year I have to read in a WISDEN about non-Wisden memorabilia. We have just gone through a sea-change in collecting, the pandemic has caused it and NOT A BLOODY mention. I will get into trouble for saying this, but the Cricketana section is awful. If Wisden thought it important why not do a regular Cricketana section on the advertising blog they send out — oh I know why because people would unsubscribe.

Do not let anyone tell you otherwise but Wisden collecting is growing, and finding certain Wisdens (and I do not just mean the rarer ones) is becoming increasingly difficult, but the almanack won't talk about this or if it does it would ask the same old people who, in my experience, continuously understate the buoyancy of the market and know little as to what is really going on, especially with that new fangled t'internet.

## Two Ashes Series

**N**ot the least of the benefits of Wisden Collectors' Club membership is access to the occasional book sales, where assorted cricket books are offered for little or no cost. I have benefited from this to the tune of several books, and in order to justify these acquisitions to myself I have undertaken to write my thoughts on two recent ones for the newsletter. The latest to be added to my collection are two Ashes tour books from distinguished former players who were at least as formidable in the press box as they were on the field of play: Bill 'Tiger' O'Reilly and Bill Bowes. Both are fine writers, whose output in book form is perhaps smaller than their merit deserves.

In Cricket Task-Force O'Reilly tells the story of the 1950-51 tour of Australia by Freddie Brown's team, following up an earlier well-received volume on the 1948 Invincibles. Despite the fact that Australia won the series 4-1, O'Reilly sees in the series, and especially the first two Tests, clear signs of the decline of Australia as a world-beating force, with the batting in particular showing significant weaknesses. At the same time, he sees evidence of a resurgence of English cricket, with Hutton as the best batsman in the world and Bedser in particular showing promise as a bowler.

Although O'Reilly's match reports are not reproductions of his articles for the Sydney Morning Herald, they are written with an immediacy and a vividness that avoids too much hindsight. The exciting second Test at Melbourne, for example, which England so nearly won, is reported until late on as if the result was in doubt, rather than with the inevitability of one who knows how it ended. So after reporting that England's bowlers on the third day had placed their side in 'an almost unassailable position', he describes Bailey's catch to dismiss Hassett as 'a match-winning catch if ever...' This approach captures something of the tension of the match.

The vivid writing is accompanied by firm and insightful comments on the tactics adopted by the two captains. O'Reilly challenges the decision to promote Bailey in the second innings of the second Test, on the grounds that it sent the wrong signal and allowed Hassett to give his slow bowlers long spells. Conversely, Hassett's decision to take the second new ball in that innings is described as a 'risky' move that was nonetheless the 'deciding factor in the Australian victory'. O'Reilly is also highly critical of the Australian selectors, commenting that Archer, selected as twelfth man for the Brisbane Test, he suggests, because he was a good fielder and from Queensland, should not on this account have been selected to play in the second Test when the selectors dropped Moroney. As one would

Richard Lawrence has been contributing to The Wisdeners for over ten years and for that I am exceptionally grateful. His series 'Leaves From The Past' was one of the most popular features over the years and there are plans afoot for something more — but in the meantime Richard has kindly written this article, reviewing a couple of wonderful books.

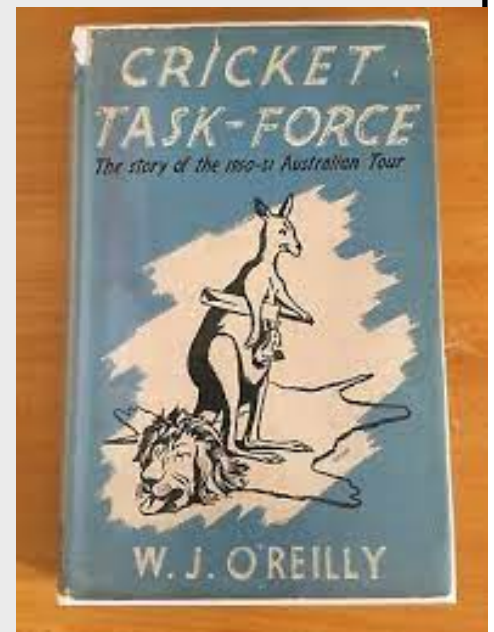
expect, his views are often trenchantly expressed. An amusing story of a press match in which an announcer mistook Bill Bowes for O'Reilly is used to illustrate his belief that while public address systems 'may be valuable instruments for haranguing a crowd into submission, at cricket matches they are certainly de trop'.

For all that Australia went into the final Test with a 4-0 lead, which would cause most English commentators to reflect on the impending doom of cricket in this country, O'Reilly presents the progress of the series as leading towards the English victory at Melbourne, the first over Australia since 1938, and moreover a result that was immeasurably good for cricket everywhere, including Australia. With the benefit of hindsight, of course, O'Reilly was right: English cricket was on the up in the early

1950s, leading to a period of world dominance, and Australia was experiencing the inevitable decline that one would expect after the retirement of the greatest batsman in history. The truth of his judgement underlines his status as a

cricket writer, and it's a shame that he did not write further volumes on subsequent Ashes series.

The 1961 Ashes series is not one that has gone down in history as a classic, at least on this side of the world, possibly because of the rather turgid play that characterised English batting in particular during the period, not to mention the fact that England lost the series. Nonetheless, Bill Bowes' account of the tour, *Aussies and Ashes* (Stanley Paul, 1961), is an enjoyable and memorable book.

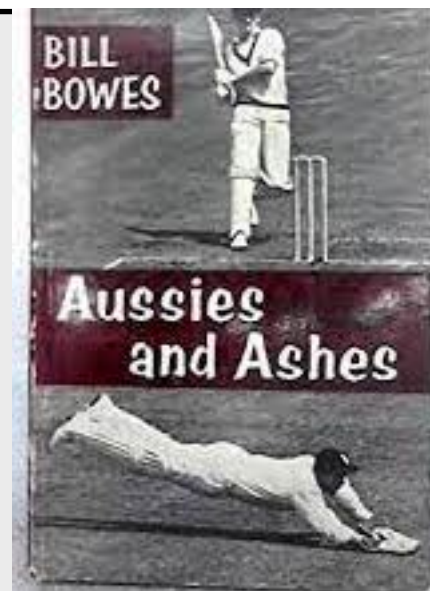




In a masterly introductory section setting the scene for the tour Bowes authoritatively analyses the issues of throwing and dragging that were predominant at that stage. He brings to bear his deep experience of the game in England, recalling how as a callow youth he eagerly anticipated bowling on the green surface of Edgbaston and Emmot Robinson's amused reaction, to illustrate the fact that appearances can be deceptive. And he is not afraid to be outspoken, observing that for many years he had considered Lord's to be 'the worst Test-match pitch in the world'.

While the series is now half-forgotten, certainly in comparison to its predecessors in 1953 and 1956, it contained one of the all-time great Ashes matches, the Old Trafford Test in which Australia won after conceding a 177-run deficit on first innings, thanks to masterly bowling into the rough by Benaud and that noble and venerable English tradition, the calamitous collapse. Interestingly, Bowes interprets Benaud's bowling as a defensive measure to keep England behind the clock on the last day, whereas Benaud's own account presents it as an attacking gamble. Those of us who have seen the late Shane Warne bowling into the rough will perhaps see both sides of this argument.

During this period Bowes was writing the Test reports for The Cricketer, a role he filled between 1953 and 1962, displaying great insight and understanding. While these qualities are replicated in the book, it is not simply a replication of these match



reports and has the feel of a book that was written separately and consciously as a full account of the tour. In his obituary in the 1988 Wisden it was noted that 'every word he wrote was worth reading'. It's a shame that more of his writing is not available in book form, but it is worth getting hold of back copies of The Cricketer from the 1950s for no other reason than to read his Test match reports.

*Richard Lawrence*

## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

The Wisdener appreciates that you all love a good competition. Well, this is probably the hardest competition we have ever run and it was prompted by a couple of emails from one of Wisdenworld's and The Wisdener's longest supporters. Now, I hope Rob Swannell doesn't mind me using his real name (drat, I just have)...but he sent me one image on March 8 and then another one on March 9 - Can you Spot the difference between the two?

If anyone enters then the youngest Furmedge - Libby (currently still in Valencia) — will potentially fly home, possibly randomly pick a winner and that winner may or may be invited to a private dinner with Piers Morgan, Donald Trump and Pritt Patel - or they may not, who knows. All entrants will be possibly charged £13,523 to enter and every penny will possibly be spent on red wine.

Just to give everyone a slight clue, as I know you may need one — the bookcase is the same in both photographs — it did not grow overnight. For those of you who don't want to win any possible, maybe, ish, prize — the answer is below.



ANSWER - The difference is that in the second photo, a book is missing from the bottom row of the right-hand section.

## Riot Stops Play

**The New Year started badly when a violent clash between the police and thousands of disappointed cricket enthusiasts turned the Eden Gardens into an inferno.**

This lovely ground formerly known to foreign cricketers for its quiet surroundings will now bear different memories. The immediate cause was of course the invasion of the ground by unruly spectators, who being unable to obtain a seat for which they had paid started scaling over the fencing to occupy the circular strip between the boundary line and the railings. The police suddenly went into action. The angry mob retaliated by throwing brickbats at the police, and there was complete chaos. In the thick of the fray a police officer was hit on the head and had to be carried away on a stretcher.

Meanwhile, the players who had reached the ground had to return to the pavilion, as the situation was getting out of hand. Tear gas shells were fired, and there was pandemonium in the stands and all over the field. Several policemen in the centre of the arena who had pounced on an innocent well-meaning gentleman aroused the ire of the 80,000 spectators who started hurling brickbats, stones and wooden planks at the police. The mob set fire to all the wooden structures, and the stands were soon ablaze.

The root cause of the trouble was of course the sale of tickets far in excess of the 57,000 sitting capacity of the ground. A little tact and intelligent handling of the situation could have saved Calcutta's prestige rather than the harsh means resorted to.

Skipper Garfield Sobers and several other West Indies players broke open the fencing round the pavilion and sped across the maidan. Pedestrians on the way tried to help them to find their hotel about half a mile away from the ground, but they refused to stop or to listen. Clive Lloyd lost his way in the melee. Meanwhile Griffith, with tears in his eyes—perhaps due to the tear gas—reached his hotel in a bit of a temper at having lost his bearings. The Indian players too had to run back to their hotel.

After such unusual and unheard of events, the match surprisingly continued on a peaceful note and ended most amicably, thanks to the co-operation of the visitors and on account of the excellent security measures adopted on the remaining three days of the match.



The Wisdener is grateful to WCC member Michael Aicheson for recommending this article, taken from the pages of Playfair Cricket Monthly in February 1967 and penned by Ron Roberts - detailing the extraordinary second Test match between India and the West Indies played in Calcutta

### Fantastic Effort

India were beaten in the second Test at the Eden Gardens by an innings and 45 runs in just about 17 hours' play, one day being lost by the disturbances which broke out. A fantastic effort indeed.

It may be interesting to know that in 1958/9 the West Indies beat India on the same ground by an innings and 336 runs. The wicket as at Bombay, was closely cropped. Whereas in Bombay the turf was speckled with brown spots, at the Eden Gardens there were white spots on the wicket which rather resembled pockmarks. The wicket, even in the early morning on the first day, was slow with no life in it whatsoever. Later on, as the game progressed, the ball spun but not dangerously. Both captains were eager to win the toss. Sobers won it and was in a commanding position throughout the duration of the match.

It seems that the pressure of being world champions is beginning to tell on this gay band of cricketers from the Sunny Isles. Several half volleys were simply patted back to the bowler instead of to the ropes, and in 330 minutes the West Indies scored a meagre 212—4, on the first day.

B. S. Bedi (Pictured, Below) making his Test debut bowled well. He takes a few gentle steps, then a hop followed by a nice easy delivery. He should get rid of his slightly round-arm action, and try to keep his arm higher up like Vinoo Mankad, who achieved the quickest double of scoring a thousand runs and taking a hundred wickets in the history of international cricket. Whereas Vinoo Mankad took only 23 Test matches to achieve this feat, M. A. Noble achieved the same in 27 and K. R. Miller in 33.





The statistically minded might be interested to know that Sobers has now equalled John Reid's record of playing in 58 consecutive Test matches. I maintain that Sobers coming in to bat at No. 6 is a great blunder. As the greatest batsman in contemporary cricket, Sobers must bat higher up. Whoever heard of Bradman, Hammond, Compton or even May batting at No. 6?

That Sobers scored 722 runs against England last summer going in fourth wicket down is not a convincing answer. In the Lord's Test, when West Indies were 95—5 with 86 runs in arrears on the first innings, had Holford got out cheaply, Sobers would have surely run out of partners. But then to quote Sir Neville Cardus: 'Fortune runs after competence in this world more often than not.' I can find no convincing justification for Sobers going in so low down in the batting order with assorted tail-enders as Hendricks, Hall, Griffith and Gibbs. In fact, in the Calcutta Test he came in at No. 7!

#### The Art of Batting

Though (Seymour) Nurse (Pictured Top, Centre) batted beautifully, Sobers stole the limelight scoring 69 runs in 75 minutes. He gave a superb exhibition in the art of batting, revealing his versatility and class by adjusting his game to suit the occasion. Some of his strokes off his toes were out of this world. Kanhai on the other hand was disappointing. Though he scored 90, he never inspired confidence.



victim was the Nawab of Pataudi. He looks a useful back-of-the-hand leg spinner.

The Indian batting was disappointing. The wicket did take spin, but not to the extent the Indian batsmen made it out to be. The wicket was not vicious or dangerous at any stage. The thing to do on a track like this was to get on top of the bowling. Instead, the Indian batsmen allowed the West Indies bowlers to dominate throughout. The Indian debacle could

only be attributed to rank bad batting, especially by the two leading batsmen Pataudi and Borde who made a gift of their wickets in both the innings. From the Indian side the best innings came from Hanumant Singh. He hit the half volleys and anything that was short, and blocked the good ones presenting a dead bat. Surti and Kunderam played the fast bowlers well but against the spinners they unnecessarily checked their natural game, and never looked really comfortable against either Gibbs or Sobers.

Some people harboured misgivings about having under-prepared wickets against the West Indies. Unfortunately, we never seem to learn from history. But I hope that at least India will take a lesson from this game and have fast true wickets at all levels. After all class batsmen are reared on fast true wickets, and odd as it may appear fast bowlers too are a product of such wickets.

January 5 seems to be an unlucky date for the Indian skipper, though it also happens to be his birth date. He lost his father on the same day in 1952. India lost against Ceylon under his captainship at Ahmedabad on January 5, 1965, and suffered an inning's defeat against West Indies also on the same date!

India v West Indies: Second Test.

Eden Gardens, Calcutta: December 31 (no play), January 3, 4, 5, 1967.

Toss: West Indies

West Indies 390

(RB Kanhai, 90. G St A Sobers, 70. SM Nurse, 56. Chandrasekhar, 3-107. Bed, 2-92).

India 167

(BK Kundera, 39. ML Jaisimha, 37. Gibbs, 5-51. Sobers, 3-42)

&

178

(Hanumant Singh, 37. Sobers, 4-56).

West Indies won by an innings and 45 runs.



After bowling out the West Indies for 390, India made a good beginning and were 89—1 at one stage. The slow wicket frustrated Hall and Griffith. They could not extract any pace from the wicket. But (Lance) Gibbs (Pictured, Left) and Sobers bundled out India for 167 in the first innings and 178 in the second. Gibbs bowled extremely

well. His variation of flight and spin was indeed commendable. And on a slightly helpful wicket he kept the Indian batsmen guessing all the time. Sobers bowled mostly the orthodox stuff, left-arm round the wicket, instead of 'chinaman' and googlies. Lloyd the baby of the side also plunged into the fray, and his first

# The Tea Interval

**The only time** I have seen an Australian walk is when he's run out of petrol.

Barry Richards (Hampshire and South Africa).

**To watch the** West Indian captain laying into the demoralised English bowlers is like watching Martina Navratilova playing Little Orphan Annie.

Tony Cozier.

**In the years** 1910 and 1911 I had fifty-one innings, with ten not outs, and an average of nineteen. This I consider quite a creditable average for a poet.

Siegfried Sassoon (Poet)

**'She (Monica Seles)** has so much control of the racket with those double-handed wrists."

Virginia Wade.

**Fred Perry** - "It's all a question of did he (Agassi) or didn't he practise?"

Dan Maskill - "And I think the answer is, did he?"

**"There is a very-sad** looking Stephen Hendry, but you'd never know to look at his face."

Ted Lowe.

**"If England lose** now they'll be leaving the field with their heads between their legs."

Geoff Boycott, SKY TV.

**"Ah yes, in** the days before the microphones on the pitch, we got that blind MP chap up into the commentary box to lip read..."

Brian Johnston.

**'My cricket's all** been played in a triangle of about two or three square miles."

Phil Carrick.

**"Here he comes** - racing in like an express train down the runway."

Rob Key, SKY TV.

**Dougie Donnelly:** "John Lowe, you're now three

times World darts Champion, what does that mean to you?"

John Lowe: "It means I'm three times World Darts Champion."

**"The British public** sees with blinding clarity"

Michael Heseltine.

**"My father drank** so heavily, when he blew on the birthday cake, he lit the candles."

Les Dawson.

**"I was in my** car driving back from work. A police officer pulled me over and knocked on my window. I said, 'One minute I'm on the phone.'"

Alan Carr

**"I worry about** ridiculous

things, you know, how does a guy who drives a snowplough get to work in the morning... that can keep me awake for days."

Billy Connolly

**"I used to go** out with a giraffe. Used to take it to the pictures and that. You'd always get some bloke complaining that he couldn't see the screen. It's a giraffe, mate. What do you expect? 'Well he can take his hat off for a start!'"

Paul Merton

**"Two fish in** a tank. One says: 'How do you drive this thing?'"

Peter Kay

**"If I was an** Olympic athlete, I'd rather come in last than win the silver medal. You win the gold, you feel good. You win the bronze, you think, 'at least I got something.' But you win that silver, that's like, 'Congratulations, you almost won! Of all the losers,

you came in first! You're the number one loser! No one lost ahead of you!'"

Jerry Seinfeld

**"You know you're** working class when your TV is bigger than your bookcase."

Rob Beckett

**"Winning doesn't** really matter as long as you win."

David Lloyd



**The Romance of Wisden, the Cricketer's Bible, is a story in itself, but first let us look at its founder, John Wisden, one of the personalities of the game nearly 150 years ago.**

John Wisden was born at Brighton on September 5, 1826, just nine months before the first Oxford and Cambridge match was played at Lord's on June 4, 1827. His father was a builder and died when his son was quite young, so John went to live with Tom Box, a famous wicket-keeper, as a pot boy. Box played for Sussex from 1832 until 1856 without missing a single match.

Wisden grew up in cricket with Tom Box. A hungry lad Wisden stood only 5 feet 4 inches and he was glad for someone to give a sixpence. As a bowler and as a batsman Wisden entered important cricket at the age of 19 when he played for Sussex against Kent at Brighton in July 1845.

Wisden played for Sussex regularly for eighteen years, 1846 to 1863. He was a neat little figure. He weighed only 7 stone and was reckoned easily the smallest fast bowler to make history.

Bob Thomas, the leading umpire of those days, dubbed him "The Little Wonder," but really he would be termed a medium fast bowler today. In those days round arm bowling was the fashion. The bowler was not allowed to raise his delivery arm above his shoulder.

Wisden had a beautifully smooth and rhythmical action and no bowler of his pace could surpass him in sustained accuracy and straightness.

Popularly known as Jack Wisden he averaged 225 wickets a season for 12 seasons when between 1848 and 1859 he took 2,707 wickets. In 1851 he played in no fewer than 43 matches and his haul was 455 wickets that year, which was an astonishing achievement, though one must bear in mind that most of the pitches were rough and even at Lord's nearly every other ball was a shooter.

It was at Lord's on July 15, 1850, that Wisden accomplished the unparalleled feat of taking all ten wickets in the same innings, all clean bowled. He was playing in North against South and it was in the South's second innings of 76 that Wisden achieved his memorable feat.

In 1849 Wisden and George Parr, subsequently Captain of the all England XI, became proprietors of a ground at Leamington, now known as Victoria Park.

The Wisdener is grateful to Charles Williams who sent in this article. It first appeared in the 'Official Souvenir Publication of the Australian Cricket Board' for the Centenary Test. Given the recent 'comments' regarding some of the content in the 2022, Mr Preston's remarks do seem rather apt.

Parr, "The Lion," of the North whose name is perpetuated by Parr's tree which stands behind the square leg boundary on one side of the Trent Bridge ground was a lob bowler, a commanding captain and a powerful hitter, particularly to square leg.

Leamington became a rallying point for cricketers from all parts of the kingdom. The club was called "Messrs Parr and Wisden's Cricket club" with a subscription of one guinea. It consisted of nine acres and was a beautiful piece of flat turf that was maintained in excellent condition.

The beneficial influence of John Wisden as a player and organiser was already considerable and he still had further ideas and contributions for his favourite pastime. His next venture brought about the first overseas tour by English cricketers and was the forerunner of all the big cricket tours as we know them in this day and age.

In 1859 Wisden and Parr joined forces again and arranged a voyage by England to the United States and Canada. They took 12 of the leading players in the country; half were all England and half from The United England XI, a breakaway professional team formed by Wisden.

*HH Stephenson, Julius Caesar, Tom Lockyear and William Caffyn (both Surrey); George Parr, James Grundy and John Jackson (all Notts), Tom Hayward Snr, Robert carpenter and A Diver (Cambridgeshire); John Lillywhite and John Wisden (Sussex).*

They were complete cricketers. Every player could bowl and they were accompanied by Fred Lillywhite as the first touring cricket reporter and he took with him his scoring tent and printing press for the scorecards.

Two years later HH Stephenson took the first England side to Australia and they played their first match at Melbourne on January 1, 1862.

A sprain kept Wisden out of cricket in 1860 and painful attacks of rheumatism, which led to his retirement when he was only 37 in 1863, no doubt prevented his taking part in that tour to Australia. It was not a truly representative side that went because several of the leading players of the time found the terms unattractive.





When (John) Wisden (Pictured, Right) first went into business at Leamington in 1849 he also began his career as a sports outfitter. Six years later he opened his cricket and cigar depot in the middle of London's prosperous West End at 2 New Coventry Street, Haymarket. There, it is said, Wisden, "radiant with watch and chain of gold" became a well-to-do and courteous business proprietor. His business instinct compelled him to think about the need to advertise his goods

So on giving up first-class cricket as a player in August 1863, Wisden hit on the idea of a Cricketers' Almanack that has kept his name before the public for more than a hundred years.

Already, for about twenty years, Fred Lillywhite had issued a Guide To Cricketers; Later John Lillywhite sponsored Cricketers' Companion from 1865 to 1885 and James Lillywhite brought out a Cricketers Guide 1872 to 1900. And in more recent years there have been cricket handbooks.

So, in 1864, quoting from the first edition of Wisden, all respectable booksellers in the United Kingdom were invited to offer for sale -

*The Cricketer's Almanack, being the 28<sup>th</sup> year of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, containing the Laws of Cricket as revised by the Marylebone Cricket Club, the first appearance at Lord's and the number of runs obtained by Many Cricketing Celebrities; Scores of 100 and upwards from 1850 to 1863; Extraordinary matches: ALL the matches played between the Gentlemen and Players; and the All England and United England XI's, with full and accurate scores taken from authentic sources; together with the Dates and Results of the Oxford and Cambridge Rowing matches, The Winners of the Derby, Oaks and St Leger; Rules of Bowls, Quoits and Knur and Spell, and other interesting information. Price one shilling.*

The first issue ran to 112 pages. 1864 was indeed a notable year for cricket.

It was also in the year 1864 that over-arm bowling was legitimised. At the age of 15 WG Grace came upon the scene by scoring 170 and 56 not out for the South Wales Cricket Club against the Gentlemen of Sussex at Brighton.

So, the book Wisden was born at the beginning of a new epoch for cricket. A year after the official formation of Yorkshire CCC, WG Grace revolutionises the game and cricket boomed.



The almanack, despite lean periods, found favour with the public. Increasing circulation and some revenue from advertisements enabled the price to be kept at one shilling for 50 years, until 1915, the beginning of the First World War although by that time the number of pages had increased to 792.

During the two world wars Wisden contracted into leaner editions. By 1921 the price had actually risen to five shillings and there it remained for 23 years, until 1943.

For the past 50 years Wisden has generally run to about 1,000 pages in peace time. The record was established in 1963 when the Centenary edition contained 1,180 pages and cost 22/6 in the limp linen

cover. Twice it was reprinted, the sales rising to roughly 50,000\*, compared to the usual 20,000-25,000.

A main contributory factor to Wisden's success was the founding in 1880 of the Cricket Reporting Agency which flourished until 1865 when it was integrated with the Press Association with which it was always closely allied.

Charles F. Pardon founded the CRA and was Wisden Editor from 1887-90. Then his younger brother Sydney held the office for 35 years. They had a fairly large staff of cricket reporters and it was easy to organise the work in a not too arduous way, but over the last 50 years the expansion of Overseas Cricket and Test Match tours has increased considerably the labour entailed.

Fortunately willing and enthusiastic lovers of cricket can be found everywhere, but on the Editor now falls mainly the task of collating all the material required from roughly 60 correspondents.

This year (1977) will see the 114th annual edition. I have no idea as to the number of complete sets of Wisden that exist, but I think there are more than even the experts would imagine.

The first fifteen are the most rare and in 1961, a limited facsimile reprint of those issues was published at three guineas a volume or £40 the set and these are now sold out. A full set of Wisden I consider would fetch nearly £1000 today.

The Editor of Wisden holds a responsible position in the cricket world. His voice can be most influential and therefore he should weigh his opinions carefully before committing them to paper.



When Charles F. Pardon took over in 1887 he raised the Almanack from merely being somewhat better than its contemporaries to a new exalted position where it earned the title of The Cricketer's Bible.

The Five Cricketers of the Year were introduced as a feature in 1897 and with a few exceptions they have appeared in every issue since. Only Sir Plum Warner and Sir Jack Hobbs have appeared twice and nowadays it is the unwritten rule to accord the honour only once. Space is now found elsewhere to do justice to the careers of the great players. I am often asked: Who selects the Five?

Wisden had had only ten Editors. I was brought up in the Pardon tradition and was virtually born into the book. My father Hubert Preston joined the Cricket reporting Agency in 1895 and had an appreciable part in the production of Wisden 60 years-until he was 83, so between us we have had an unbroken span of 78 years and since 1944 as editors.

The editor of Wisden receives a fair amount of correspondence. Readers of the Almanack usually

write kindly; some even humbly apologise when they have spotted an error because however much one strives for accuracy, mistakes seem inevitable, for no human is perfect.

The copy passes through many hands before it eventually goes into the printed page via the scorers, the scoreboard and the telephone, and if from abroad, the cable office

Occasionally the copy itself from the reporter does not come up to standard. I remember receiving a letter some years ago praising the description of matches in one particular section. The writer wanted to know why I did not attain such perfection in my efforts, I had not the heart to tell him that when that section first came into my hands I was so disappointed with it that I had rewritten the whole lot

\*Preston may have been unaware of the actual print run for 1963, recent research suggests that the figure would have been nearer to 35,000

## The latest Wisden Collectors' Club Auction

After a few initial hiccups the latest auction seems to be working well and thank you so much to everyone who has placed a bid. The auction will end on **Monday, May 2** and the lots are staggered so that each one ends at a different time, usually a minute or so apart.

A REMINDER - If you win a Wisden or Wisdens **PLEASE DO NOT PAY** until you receive an invoice from me.

The auction can be found [here](#)

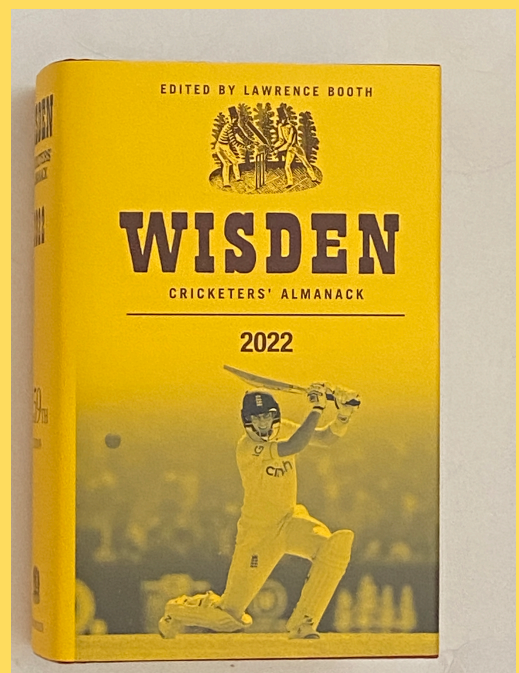
If you cannot bid for any reason please contact me by email. I am away for a few days until Sunday so I apologise if I do not get back to you before then.

## The 2022 Wisden - Your thoughts - What Do you think of it?

When I sent out the survey on the next England captain it was the first time I had sent out such a survey and now the first one is out of the way, I will do some more, but relevant and infrequent will be the aim.

I will be sending out a survey/questionnaire on the 2022 almanack, so get reading and as always your views are greatly appreciated and of great interest.

The 2022 can still be bought on [www.wisdenworld.co.uk](http://www.wisdenworld.co.uk) by clicking [here](#)



## 'Awful England' - Your thoughts

*The following was asked in a recent email from me: —*

*\*Are England any better than a year ago?*

*\*Which England players, with the exception of Joe Root, have enhanced their Test career in the past 12 months?*

*\*If Joe Root was not the captain, who should the England captain be?*

### **Richard Seeckts**

I went to Grenada, a wonderful place to watch our brave boys capitulate again, but long ago learned that to travel in expectation of an England win is a fool's game and it's best to enjoy the location which, in the case of Grenada, is easy.

England were truly awful, the batsmen abject, the bowlers impotent, Root's captaincy on the third morning atrocious and Foakes' run out utterly brainless. To celebrate the first occasion since 1885 that Nos. 10 and 11 top scored in the first innings sums it up.

Teflon Tom Harrison has led us to this pitiful state — the case for the prosecution has been made by many respected writers time and again but still the bonus grabbing, ego driven, catastrophic failure keeps his job because there isn't a chairman of the ECB to sack him. Cricket lovers should never forget Harrison and never forgive the destruction of our game he has presided over. To f—k everything up and then tell us it's an "opportunity" to put things right sums up his arrogance and state of denial.

### **Sandra Tracey**

England men don't seem capable of improving. As soon as they meet a pitch with any life, they fall apart. (physically, in the case of Mark Wood). Or, if bowling, seem unable to get the ball in the right place.

Someone on Facebook suggested getting rid of central contracts! At least the women have made the final of their World Cup.

The only one to show promise has been Mahmood. Stokes is showing signs of getting nearer his best, but we already know what he can do. The rest resemble the proverbial "curate's egg": good in parts.

Most players have no chance to develop captaincy skills at County level, so England needs to develop this in whoever they identify as the heir apparent. As a short term fix, they could try Broad or Sam Billings, or (a real wild card!) David Willey.

### **Mike Hall**

I think the England selectors should select Sophie Ecclestone as our main spinner. Of course it will never happen but she is a far better spinner than Jack Leach!

Posing any kind of negative question can lead to a lot of correspondence — some asking me to be more positive, some in agreement and some who can see both sides...but the question on the current state of the England Test side and how awful the side is, provoked very few of you to argue against it. On the following pages I have put together some views that reflect the vast majority of the replies I received.

Since I asked for our readers' opinion, Joe Root has stood down and Rob Key has an important job — not as important as someone defending their country, but important enough to get on the BBC evening news.

I do not apologise for being negative about the state of the England Test team but the complete lack of comment from the ECB regarding the structure and future of the county game is arrogant, deceitful and downright disrespectful. When those who run the game can stop counting the money and begin to treat the game with dignity, then I will reconsider my position of not caring one jot about the England Test side (Bill).

### **Paul Goodyear**

The England team is worse than a year go and the sad fact is that when the squad left for Australia, it was patently obvious how awful it was. Bluntly, no England player enhanced his reputation — with the exception of Root, but as a player, not at all as a captain.

The reasons are obvious, the solution not so. But one thing is certain, respect the county championship or accept we are and will continue to be a poor Test side.

### **Keith Adams**

Some England players do have potential. Zak Crawley and Ollie Pope are not bad cricketers but they cannot learn the game in the nets. Josh Bohannon of Lancashire has started the season brilliantly and surprisingly, he was actually playing for his county and if he is called into the England set-up, he wont play for his county so his only opportunity to play any kind of first-class cricket once in the England system will be if he is chosen in the Test match...bloody stupid!

Can anyone name the last England bowler to have bowled 500+ overs in an English season? No, nor me without looking in Wisden.

If Butler, Livingstone and the others want the IPL then make them a part of Englands' one-day squad only — and I include Stokes in that too.

The England Rugby Authorities did not select players who played their rugby outside the UK - more people watch rugby than cricket, yet we allow the mercenaries to do whatever they want.

**Bryan Ricketts**

I do not think England awful, I think they are a disgrace.

**Melanie Grayson**

There is potential. If Jack Leach bowled throughout the summer, if the batsmen (I will not call them 'batters') and the bowlers played county cricket in between Tests, if, if if...surely they would develop and become more experienced and accomplished players. But I could be wrong, as the money poured into the game has obviously proven the current system is advantageous to the Test side.

**Ethan Gordon**

Every team goes through bad periods. England will re-group and come back, there is too much talent around so let us not be too negative

**David Bown**

The very short answer is a resounding "NO". Certainly not judged by results but let me analyse a bit further. Opening 'batters' (still doesn't sound right): Are Lees and Crawley looking more capable of providing the oh so crucial solid foundation than Burns and Sibley? Not yet, and in my view probably never will do. Crawley's worth persevering with but at three. This coming summer provides a perfect opportunity for he and Dan Lawrence to 'come of age'. Until then, they are no better than the found wanting Malan and Pope. Root and Stokes should bat four and six respectively. It is hard to imagine Joe Root batting as successfully in 2022 as he did in 2021. We shall see and Ben Stokes' fitness remains a concern.

As for wicketkeeper, Ben Foakes had a disappointing tour of West Indies, which means that England could pick any one from ten wicketkeeper batters, who would all do a similar job. Personally, I'd stick with Foakes for this coming summer. What of Jonny Bairstow? He's been in and out of the side for ten years now. Not quite good enough as either a batter, or wicket Ykeeper.

Pace/Seam Bowling: England seem to have got themselves in to a right pickle here. Anderson and Broad are still clearly our best bowlers and want to play. So, why don't they? Don't England want to have the best chance to win every Test match that they play?! It is in this area, more than any other, that England, due in part to a flawed selection policy and to the absence of the injury prone Wood and Archer (remember him)?, have demonstrably declined during the past year. Having said that, whoever gets trundled out this coming summer will probably do an adequate job.

Spin Bowling: Well, there's Jack Leach and, oh yes, there's Jack Leach. Jack's one of my favourite cricketers

and can't be faulted for effort. It will do both him and England good if the Parkinson twins and Sam Carson (if he doesn't choose to play for Ireland) can put pressure on Jack for his place.

"Which England players, with the exception of Joe Root, have enhanced their Test career in the past 12 months?"

Joe certainly has enhanced his Test career as a "batter" but as a captain? Umm. Dan Lawrence is, to me, an obvious choice and so too are Alex Lees and Saqib Mahmood because they didn't have a Test career before and have probably done enough to deserve to start in the New Zealand series.

Regarding Root: Goodness knows. If Joe really does want to carry on (and I'm not convinced that he does) then I can see him still being in post this summer. What are the alternatives? Ben Stokes has done well enough when he's stood in but it may be expecting too much for him to do the job permanently. Having said that, I'm a great believer in choosing a captain from the first choice Eleven. What does that leave us with? Exactly! That's why Joe's still captain. I read an article the other day suggesting Sam Billings. He'd be one of those ten wicketkeeper batters that I mentioned earlier who could all do a job. The best candidate on paper has to be Will Rhodes (Pictured, Right). England could do worse if the policy is to pick the captain first

**Richard Mills**

Are England any better than last year — no, they are still exhibiting all of the same problems as they did a year ago. Batsmen with faulty techniques or batsmen who try to play beyond their capabilities.

Bowlers who get injured repeatedly or who simply don't look good enough.

Which England players have enhanced their reputations — possibly Bairstow, possibly Lawrence, but from a very low early reputation? Possibly Leach, but very minor improvement and from a very low base.

England captain — only candidate is Stokes - only because I feel he is the only other team member certain of selection. Only other choice would be to go for the best available county captain, who cannot make any less runs than batsmen already selected. Root deserves a rest from captaincy and to be able to concentrate on scoring runs, each series he tails off in the latter end due to stresses and strains of captaincy.





**Jamie Grant**

England - even worse than they were a year ago? Yes.  
Mark Wood is the only player to have enhanced his reputation, but then he broke down.

Ben Stokes could be England's captain, but he would need to give up bowling to avoid breaking down in mid-Test. The fact that he is not an Englishman might count against him.

**Graham Colbourne**

I cannot see any compelling evidence that the England team is any better now than a year ago. Given the recent performances in Australia and the West Indies there appears to be a long way to go before things will pick up.

There are of course a number of imponderables. Will Broad and Anderson now be put out to grass and will their replacements such as Stone, Archer, Wood and Robinson ever be fit enough to sustain the rigorous demands of five day cricket or will they end up like Tymal Mills as 20/20 specialists?

It seems to me that none of the newcomers to the side have done enough to enhance their prospects of a lengthy Test career. Unfortunately some of the more established players have similarly not impressed. Assuming that Joe Root either gives up the captaincy or is dismissed, my preference for a replacement would be Tom Abell, the current captain of Somerset. Abell has impressed me on the few occasions when I have visited Taunton. He would fit neatly into the middle order where the competition is pretty thin and can also bowl some useful medium pace. I certainly would not appoint Ben Stokes given his well documented mental health issues and the enormous work load he already bears.

**Steve Coleman**

Root should call it a day and place himself available to continue as England's premier batsman's  
Joe Root IS STILL the best batsman in the England side  
There are strong opinions regarding Stokes as captain, may I refer them to Botham and Flintoff, not exactly at their best after being made captain, although in Botham's case he was hampered by the fact that the majority of his games as captain were against the powerful (at that time) West Indies.

It saddens everyone to watch England Test players getting out to one-day shots and bowlers not being able to bowl simple line and length - Baffles me to what causes such rubbish  
Jeff 'tongue-in-cheek' Lonergan.

To mis-quote Cardus - There is no English cricket without an English Test side  
Arthur Healey

We need a fit and strong Stokes not burdened by captaincy.  
Should ALL the background staff be moved on? They are responsible to ensure all the players are fit and ready to produce their best. In most cases they failed.

The new Coaching role is only between two men, I believe, one is Peter Kirsten and the other is Justin Langer, whether they fit the MCC's or ECB's vision is a sticking point. Furthermore, the idea of putting up Collingwood as Coach is laughable, should he be given a post, make it for the White ball.

As regards, the new Manager, I honestly think that Kumar Sangakkara would be a bold step to take, but with his background of playing and his administrative and

his diplomacy skills, he could be a good fit  
I would make Stuart Broad, Interim captain and call up Tom Abel into the side as Vice captain so Stuart could pave the way for him to take over.

Even with the so-called revamped County Championship, there will be NO County games from 26 July until 5 September to make way for the £ games. Not really enough to practise and play the longer form of the game.

A point which I have not seen mentioned is that the Ashes and against the West Indies losses were NOT caused by 90-100mph bowlers nor by World class spinners.

The main damage was affected by bowlers who persisted with English styles of bowling, Line and Length



Scott Boland (Pictured, Below)  
18/172

Kyle Mayers 7/31

England had no answer. Until the ECB properly support and plan for Test match cricket, we shall always be answering the same question.

**Hilary Richardson**

England? I feel the day may be coming for players who want to be

considered for the test team to be in four day county squads and those who want to play white ball for England to play one-day only.

I know this sounds like you are creating two separate games, but it's a way forward.

**Jordan Kenny**

As a Kiwi, I am looking forward to a very one-sided Test series in England.

### **Christopher Rowsell**

Are England any better than a year ago

To be honest, I would say that they are worse. We had a promising tour to Sri Lanka and whilst the trip to India was a disaster in the end, this was due to the hosts providing turning tracks, after being heavily beaten in the First Test. Knowing that spin bowling was our weak area, both playing it and bowling it, it wasn't really a fair contest. So it wasn't all doom and gloom. Again in the summer he series against New Zealand, whilst being a losing one, was not a disaster and they did end up being the World Test Champions. Again the 'unfinished' series against India wasn't too bad, being 2-1 down, but with an even chance in the 'postponed' last chance. We seem to have found one or two players who might go well in Australia and make it a competitive series.

Unfortunately this is where it goes wrong. We were completely outplayed in Australia, not helped by some appalling batting and some strange selection decisions. Silverwood seemed out of his depth and Root is not a good captain. He does odd things and is very conservative. I don't think leaving selection down to the coach and captain has helped and this has led to some strange selections. They certainly didn't follow a horses for courses policy. The eventual debacle has probably led to the ending of a number of players Test careers

We then come home and it is decided that we will go the West Indies without our two best and most experienced bowlers. We have seen how this worked out, especially as Wood broke down and Robinson was never fit. Whilst the batting showed an improvement on that seen in Australia, the captaincy was again cautious and at times odd. You sometimes have to risk losing to win. We still do not have a settled opening partnership, our quickest bowlers are never fit and our spinners are average at best. We are where we are in the World Test rankings, because we deserve to be.

Which England players, with the exception of Joe Root, have enhanced their Test career in the past 12 months?

You would have to say very, very few. It was good to see Ben Stokes seemingly somewhere near his best in the West Indies. He looked fitter than for a long time. Mark Wood performed well in Australia, but once again his fitness let him down in the West Indies. Johnny Bairstow had a decent winter and looks to have re-established himself in the team, when it looked like his Test days may be behind him. Our various opening partnerships have been a major disappointment and I don't think Zak Crawley is an opener, more of a 'David Gower' type in the middle order. Our wicket keepers have been poor. Buttler was very poor in the Ashes and everybody was keen to see

Foakes in for the West Indies tour and seemingly for the immediate future, but I felt he was a bit of a let down, given his usual high level of performance. Everybody has bad days, so hopefully he will get another chance in the summer to prove his worth. Spin bowling is an area where we are weak and Jack Leach was fed to the lions in Australia, but performed better in the West Indies, but he is never going to run through a batting line up. I think we missed a trick by not giving Matt Parkinson a run out to see how he took to Test cricket. Other than that no one springs to mind. Any players, in the early rounds of the forthcoming County Championship, who can show good form will be in with a chance of being selected. It is going to take a while for our performances to improve and in the short term, we may have to try players who are actually in form and see whether they sink or swim in the test arena.

### **Owen Miller**

Each year I pay my fee to Gloucestershire County Cricket Club and each year I manage to get to around half of the CC matches. I cannot afford and I also have no inclination to go to the limited-over matches. I sit in various parts of the ground - I like to mix things up but I also enjoy chatting to whomever sits near by. I would say that I am not a nuisance nor a pest — indeed my wife thinks I am too mellow and easy going sometimes.

But on the subject of England and the Tests side I am in the majority (by all accounts, the vast majority of county cricket fans) who are disgusted by the marginalising of the county game.

A few years ago I left the Association of Cricket Statisticians (I joined with a vague interest and just carried on paying) because I met a chap at. Meeting who was on the committee or one of the important people who expressed his complete dislike for Test cricket or the long game.. 'You can't beat getting it over and done with in a day' was his remark. 'IT' meaning the game that allows his society to exist.

His view was abhorrent to me as is the attitude to the county championship — at every match throughout the season there are thousands of people who say hello to each other in April and goodbye in May, re-engage in September and over hot chocolate and thermals say goodbye again three to four weeks later — that has to be wrong.

My understanding is that the counties including my own don't want the structure of the fixtures to change, so the chances of more championship cricket throughout the summer are very slight. If that is the case I will not, after 31 years be renewing my membership in 2023.

The CC needs to change and be played throughout the season, not just for inoffensive chaps like me, but for the good of the Test side and the good of cricket.

# Who Should be the Next England Captain?

I don't know about you, but Joe Root's decision to stand down as England captain came as a surprise to me. If he was going to resign then I expected it to be within a short time of the Ashes debacle.

Touring the West Indies, losing the series and then waiting a further three weeks did seem odd, or maybe when the new structure (I am presuming there might be a new structure, or 'another' new structure, depending if like me, you have a continuous apathy about England) was put to him, he felt he didn't want to be a part of it — who knows and we probably won't know until his autobiography (or biography really) comes out three days after he retires.

Root is a phenomenal player and England should relish the years ahead with him in the side — sadly the captaincy came at a time when the team was at an alarming low ebb, he was not completely to blame although his captaincy at times was poor.

Forgive my cynicism and negativity around anything to do with England, but there really is very little room for positivity. Once again an ex-player has secured a top job — a player who as far as I can remember did not have an illustrious international career — and if memory serves me right, had a lack of trophy success as a county captain, but hey ho, he wears a nice suit, looks good in photographs and won't offend too many sponsors for he knows where his bread is buttered.

Your response to my first ever 'online' survey took my breadth away. I now realise that I made a bit of a mistake when I ticked the box in the admin part of the survey which effectively meant that when a vote was cast I received an email notification — to give you some idea of the response, over 8,000 cricket lovers from around the globe (48 different countries) receive anything I send and being completely honest, the 'open' or 'read' rate is usually around 65% — 70% — which I am told is unbelievably high — on this occasion the 'open' rate was 65% and over 3,400 of you voted...I cannot for one second comprehend those numbers. I am truly astonished, grateful and utterly flabbergasted

What is even more astonishing was how agonisingly close the vote was. Thank you to those of you who took the trouble to drop me an email giving your reasons as to why you voted for someone or indeed, a desire for someone else, not on the list, to be given the England captaincy.

I have printed a selection of comments over the next couple of pages and forgive me for not including all of them, I am embarrassed to say that I do not have the

time, nor the space to do so.

Here are the results of the survey — interesting!.

Stuart Broad	1,152 votes
Ben Stokes	1,101 votes
Alastair Cook	345 votes
James Vince	342 votes
Tom Abell	313 votes
Moeen Ali	228 votes
Rory Burns	39 votes
Jimmy Anderson	14 votes

**Choosing someone like Broad could be a very positive choice** — his experience and knowledge would be invaluable, but you wonder how much impact and positive influence he had when he was involved in the Test side. The same could be said for Stokes. So I would go outside and go for Tom Abell - but stick with him and allow him to make mistakes. There is no need to cram the side with players such as Broad or Anderson...lets be thankful they played and move on.

*Kevin Stevenson*

**Pick the best eleven players based on the first rounds** of the County Championship and then choose a captain from them...so it looks like Josh Bohannon of Lancashire.

*Greg Porter*

**Someone with County captaincy experience** - possibly Chris Dent.

*Richard Saunders*

**I would like a captain who takes chances. I would like a captain who doesn't declare and leave the opposition 260 or 270 in 65 ish overs to win on the last day of a Test.** I would also like a coach who had a track record of winning. With those thoughts in mind I would go for Stokes as captain and Justine Langer as coach, but no doubt the cronies at the ECB have had dinner with the cronies at the ACB and been told 'off the record' of course, that JL is not a good egg.

*Ellen McKenzie.*

**Anyone but a member of the failed team of the past few years** — so cheerio and thanks messers Broad, Anderson, Stokes, Ali and Burns. Come forward Tom!

*Brian Wilkinson*



**This is an incredibly difficult question to answer. The** obvious answer is Ben Stokes, but I am not convinced he wants the job and with his injury and mental health issues, is he going to be available all the time. You could say Stuart Broad, who has the knowledge, but limited captaincy experience. He is also not getting any younger and again is not guaranteed to play all the time. The majority of county skippers either have no international experience, are getting on in years or are overseas players.

My solution would be to pick a man who is a very good county captain and has been, I feel, unfairly treated by the selectors and that is James Vince. He is only 31 and could have a good 3/4 years leading the team. What I would also do is pick somebody to be his successor and train them up, on the job so to speak, to take over in a few years. The person I would choose for this is Tom Haines of Sussex. He looks a prospect to open and is only 23. He is doing a good job of leading a very young Sussex team and scoring good runs as an opener. Provided all went well he could take over after the 3/4 years and would still only be 26/27.

Anyway that is my thoughts on the matter, although as a really radical suggestion, with a lack of suitable candidates, we could employ a non playing captain who relays instructions from the sidelines. A chance to recall Mike Brearley, an excellent captain.....only joking.....although Christopher Rowsell

**Your question of captain gave me a problem, although I** choose Tom Abell, a more easy choice would be Stuart Broad as interim and bring Tom into the fold to settle in and then take over. I cannot see why the "Sky Joker" has been chosen. He just joins a growing band of managers who were average players, Silverwood , etc.  
Steve Coleman

**Just thought I'd drop a line with my thoughts on the** England captaincy and more than that the County Cricket system and cricketer development in the UK. Just to disclose, I am an Australian, living in Sydney, who has followed cricket all my life (I'm 62). I love cricket, esp. Test cricket, and especially the Ashes rivalry which our 2 countries have. Yes, I love it when Australia beat England convincingly in an Ashes series, as do the England supporters when it is the other way around. I am not writing to "bash" English cricket, as I realise things can turn around quite quickly. However, I cannot believe that England's recent lack of consistent form is the result of Joe Root's captaincy. The captain is generally only as good as the players around him. In fact we can count many times when the only batsman to hold his end up and make decent scores was Root himself. What the captain needs is batsmen who can consistently score 300 plus runs in an innings, with contributions from everyone who has been picked as a specialist batsman, and bowlers who can take 20 wickets. Surely in the English county system there are young players coming through who can succeed at Test cricket, and if there is not, it is maybe time to take a long hard look at the County system, and just as importantly, coaching systems and youth development. Is there too much short form cricket being played which does not adequately prepare cricketers for Test cricket?? Yes, I realise

that there are multiple competitions taking place at the international level in T20 and 50 over cricket, and England have very good sides here, however, to me they are a slight distraction to the main event, which is, and always has been Test matches, esp. the intense rivalry between Australia and England.

Glenn Johnson

**Have looked at your list of 8 names, Tom Abell an** interesting inclusion, what about Tom Haines of Sussex if we are going outside the box ? From within the established group, I would have thought Jonny Bairstow would be an experienced choice for the next 2/3 years until an obvious skipper appears. If not Jonny then perhaps Jos Buttler?

**History has proven that our best player does not always** make the best captain (think Messrs Botham & Flintoff) Or as a long shot, how about Furmedge W. ? Obviously has a keen knowledge of the game !

My choice is therefore Jonny Bairstow.

Trevor Bedells

*(I am afraid that Furmedge W would only take up the role if he was promised that in the 2023 season County Championship matches were played throughout May to early September and all England players had to play county championship cricket when there was no test, oh and the IPL money-grabbers were not selected for England - Bill).*

**I should be the next captain. Unfortunately at 75 I don't** think thy will let me !

Leonard Courts

**The answer is None of the above. I fear that Stokes will get** it, but the record of giving the captaincy to fast bowling all rounders is not good at all. The best England qualified county captain is Sam Billings, but to put him in would mean dropping Foakes, which seems silly. You haven't mentioned Bairstow, a left field choice which just might work.

Bring back MJK Smith, say I.

Jo Rice

**A few thoughts regarding my vote in favour of Stuart** Broad.

There seems a fixation in thinking an England captain should be a long term appointment? Why? In the past we have had 4 captains in a home series of 5 Tests. There are many examples over the years of short term appointments.

I fear Ben Stokes would be overburdened as a leading all rounder and end up having a similar experience to that of both Ian Botham and Andrew Flintoff - both abject failures as a captain.

Let him concentrate on his own game and continue as a very able vice captain.

The captain needs to earn his place on merit. An interim captain such as Broad would give a bit of breathing space to see who comes through and establishes his/their place on merit and may be possible candidates in the future.

So long as Broad is not allowed to ask for 3rd umpire reviews off his own bowling and leaves his vice captain to make that decision!

Richard Reardon

## County Championship Competition - Results and a new one

**T**hank you to everyone who took part in the first County Championship Competition based around the first set of county games.

On the previous occasion that The Wisdener has run CC competitions in the same format there have been an average of 260 entries, well, there must be something in the early season water because this one had 302 entries and I hope you all accept my apologies for not confirming the results earlier.

I have given the answers and how points were gained and some of you may query your score, but may I politely, in advance, apologise if your score is incorrect, if you are right and I have no doubt you will be and it means you missed out on a prize, I will arrange for you to be given the prize you missed out on due to my error/s.

The Top 20:

First Prize - a £100 High Street Book Voucher

Carl Stone with 138 Points

Second Prize - £50 M & S. Voucher

Stephen Last with 132 points

Second Prize - £50 M & S. Voucher

Pauline Ingle with 129 points

Third Prize, each receiving a Yearly Subscription to The Nightwatchman

David Smith. 132 points

Richard Holt. 130 points

Diane Reece...128 points

Peter Forbes. 119 points

John Duncan. 116 points

Nick Howard. 112 points

Dominic Mills 112 points

Jonathan Forwood 111 points

Debbie Ward. 110 points

Christopher O'Keefe 108 points

Sam Sheraton 106 points

Will Sutherland 104 points

Geoff Freakley 103 points

Michael Hugman 97 points

Hugh Apperley 97 points

Arthur Dobson 95 points

Nigel Giffin 91 points

); In the **Essex v Kent** match how many individual scores of 50 or more will be scored in the match (if a player scores two fifties that counts as two).

**Answer - 9** ( a hundred counted as one)

I awarded one point for 0-8 and a bonus of 5 points if you answered 5.

2): In the **Hampshire v Somerset** match which side will score the most runs in the first innings?

**Answer - Hampshire**

5 points.

3): In the **Northamptonshire v Gloucestershire** match how many batsmen will be out LBW?

**Answer - 9**

I awarded one point for 0-8 and a bonus of 5 if you answered 5.

4): In the **Warwickshire v Surrey** match how many wickets will fall in each county first innings before 100 runs are scored?

**Answer - 4**

5 points.

5): In the **Glamorgan v Durham** match how many total extras will there be in the first innings' of each side?

**Answer - 25**

If your answer was spot on you got 20 points.

If you got within 10 - 5 Points

6): In the **Leicestershire v Worcestershire** match how many scores of 5 or below will there be in the match?

\*\*\*I did not state if the innings needed to be completed so the answer was 11 or 12 as one batsman was \*not out.

In fairness I also gave a point for each answer up to 11 or 12 and a bonus of 5 points if you guessed 11 or 12..

7): In the **Middlesex v Derbyshire** match how many batsmen will score between 20 and 40 runs?

**Answer - 12**

8): In the **Sussex v Nottinghamshire** match how many maidens will be bowled in the match?

One point for each one, but if you forecast more than the actual number of maidens you get no points.

**Answer - 55**

The tie-breaker was not needed, but seventeen entrants got it spot on - 223 wickets fell across all matches.

By allocating the points as I did, no one actually gained a place nor did anyone lose out.

The latest County Championship Competition is on the next page and I have made it a little different — some might say, simpler.....

## County Championship Competition - For the round of matches beginning on Thursday, May 5

**All matches are due to be played between May 5th-8th**

**1 - Essex v Yorkshire** at the County Ground, Chelmsford

Which County will score the Most Runs in a Completed Innings in this match?

Correct Answer - 5 points

**2 - Glamorgan v Leicestershire** at Sophia Gardens, Cardiff.

How many batsmen in the first innings will score less than 10 runs and be out?

One point for each you guess right and a bonus of 5 if you forecast the exact number — no points at all if you go over the exact number.

**3 - Hampshire v Gloucestershire** at The Ageas Bowl, Southampton.

How many bowlers will take 4 or more wickets in the match?

One point for each you guess right and a bonus of 5 if you forecast the exact number — no points at all if you go over the exact number.

**4 - Lancashire v Warwickshire** at The Emirates Old Trafford, Manchester.

How many batsmen will score between 50 and 75 runs in a single completed knock in this match? (Examples: - If a player scores 75 in each innings that counts as two, if a player scores 40 and 15 then that counts as none.)

**5 - Surrey v Northamptonshire** at The Kia Oval, London.

In the first innings' of the match (either innings does not have to be completed) how many maidens in total will be bowled (Total, you do not need to give a number for each innings).

One point for each you guess right and a bonus of 5 if you forecast the exact number — no points at all if you go over the exact number.

**6 - Sussex v Middlesex** at The First Central County Ground, Hove.

Across the match, which county will have the best opening stand (completed or unbroken)  
5 points if you get this one right.

**7 - Worcestershire v Durham**, at New Road, Worcester.

In total, how many Run Outs will there be in this match (you do not need to give a number for each side)?

One point for each you guess right and a bonus of 5 if you forecast the exact number — no points at all if you go over the exact number.

**Tie Breaker** - What will be the highest completed innings be by any one county

The tie-breaker will only come into play if two or more people are on the same number of points that qualify for the first prize. If more than 2 or more than 3 people are on the same points for the second or third prizes, then an extra prize or prizes will be given.

**Please send in your answers to**  
**[furmedgefamly@btinternet.com](mailto:furmedgefamly@btinternet.com)**

I think the prizes for the last competition were very well received so it is the same again, with one little change.

First prize — £100 High Street Voucher of your choice  
2 x Second prizes of a £50 M & S Voucher

3 x Third Prizes - A subscription to a monthly magazine of your choosing, up to a value of £40.

All entries to be received by 10am GMT on May 5 2022.

The Virtual Wisdener: Contact details.  
By email: [furmedgefamly@btinternet.com](mailto:furmedgefamly@btinternet.com)

By Telephone: 01480 819272 or 07966 513171

By Mail: PO Box 288, Buckden, Cambridgeshire PE19 9EP

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