



## **BREXIT-BUSTING NEWSLETTER: SUMMER 2021**





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## Project Partners and Supporters



**LORD'S TAVERNERS**  
Giving young people a sporting chance



**SUPPORTING AND  
EMPOWERING  
REFUGEES**



## About the Cover Pictures:

Over land, sea and air, Project Front Foot's Kit Aid is finding its way to increasingly diverse kids and communities around the cricketing world. A theme reflected in this quarter's front cover with our clothing and equipment in action – clockwise starting top left – in France with the Arras CC, with the girls from the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, and in Wiesbaden and Naumburg in Germany.



## Reconnecting Europe

On 22 April, 372 days after it was scheduled to depart the UK – give or take the odd pandemic, several lockdowns, and a positive Bondi of waves – our clothing and equipment donations from last year's kit appeal finally started their journey to Germany. A short first leg saw the kit ferried from the project's Berkshire base camp to a transport hub near Heathrow. The 31 bags were then palletized before heading to Goch in North Rhine-Westphalia. A day or so later we received an email from the logistics company charged with the final leg of the journey to Berlin. There was, you won't be surprised to read, a further document to be completed and scanned for German Customs. Having been assessed for Import Duty by Customs officials the pallets and bags were finally sent on their way arriving bright and early on the morning of 4 May. An immense effort despite the withering effects of Brexit and with it the additional paperwork and taxes on kit which would otherwise have gone to UK charity shops or landfill.



Of the arrival itself: we received a phone call around 9.50 from a lorry driver saying not only was he in Berlin, but waiting to unload. Oops! Time for a spot of good old British PANIC! Heading over at the double I found a white van, a white van man, two pallets, 31 bags, and 341kgs of gear. A remarkable sight for any number of reasons. Battered, bloodied but unbowed we did it. We bloody well did it! At this point I should be thanking a host of good people especially those involved in the logistics of getting our gear from the UK to Germany and then on to Berlin, along with others who patiently encouraged and advised us through the minefield that is the transportation of goods and Customs documentation post-Brexit. All, however, have ticked the No Publicity box. So all I can do is offer sincere thanks – they know who they are – to all concerned without whom none of this would have been possible.





Those with a keen eye for detail will have noticed we have swapped the relative broad Berkshire acres of forecourt and lawn for the confines of a Berlin cellar in which the sorting and packing of kit was not easy. This is reminiscent of an incident prior to the Somerset vs. Surrey fixture at the Weston-super-Mare Festival in August 1920. Having been shown his room at a nearby hotel the Surrey skipper, P. G. H. Fender, complained to the manager that there wasn't enough room in the bedrooms to swing a cat. Experienced in the handling of London swells, the manager told Percy Fender that he didn't know they'd come down to Weston merely for the cat-swinging.



Over the next six weeks – the German cricket season delayed by Covid – bags were emptied, kit sorted, items listed, and bags repacked before being wheeled to a post office on the Kurfürstendamm for onward carriage by DHL. As you might expect of such an operation not everything went to plan. Getting their retaliation in first, DHL protested that Covid had lengthened their delivery times - fair enough - only to then report three bags missing in action. Two have since been recovered, one being returned to sender eight weeks after it left Berlin. Having gallantly and defiantly fought off a pandemic, Brexit and DHL, bags of senior and junior kit were delivered during May, June and July to Hamburg, Kleve, Lippstadt, Naumburg, Dresden, Ludwigshafen, Wiesbaden, Chemnitz, Baden-Württemberg and Berlin.

## 2021 Kit Appeal

Meanwhile, back in the UK, and several months ahead of schedule, we had our first kit donation of the summer on 30 May from Southwick CC in deepest Sussex. Huge thanks to Des and Mark at the club for organising and gathering the kit. Thanks too to Sue and Jan for coming off the subs bench at short notice on the transport and photography front. The bags were ferried to our Berkshire base camp the following day.



Emails for Project Front Foot's fourteenth annual Kit Appeal hit the wires in mid-July with a post-season collection scheduled for early autumn. The emails began with a candid assessment on charity life ...

*I'd normally begin this mail with something like ... it's that time of year again ... but a combination of pandemic and Brexit has turned many a charity/NGO, Project Front Foot included, on its head. So now we make do and mend with what's left. That we're still in the game is no small feat in itself. But even we didn't know until the last six months just how difficult Brexit would make project life. All of which needed a fresh guard, cap pulled low, another stick of chewy, and let's knock these off in tens. A little later than normal then we're set to embark on our 2021 Kit Appeal.*

*As in previous years, we're looking for literally anything cricket-related: helmets to boots and everything in between that's of good enough quality and condition to recycle. This goes for both senior and junior (All Stars and Kwik Cricket) clothing and equipment. There is a growing need on the continent for children's kit as clubs look to start a junior section. Pandemic permitting, we'll look to collect donations during the last week of September. For all UK players, do please put the word around your club and members. All enquiries and offers of kit to be forwarded to Vic at:*

*[projectfrontfoot@gmail.com](mailto:projectfrontfoot@gmail.com)*



## Beneficiaries

### Cricket Lebanon

In early January four bags of donated project kit headed to Lebanon destined for the young Syrian cricketers of the Shatila refugee camp in southern Beirut. In what proved a longer than planned disruption to coaching due to Covid lockdown measures, the shirts and Kwik Cricket equipment were not handed over until April. Thanks to Richard Verity and his dedicated band of coaches we have pictures of the handover; perfect timing for the start of the new season. The balance of shirts – different colours for different teams – will go to support other cricket hubs in the Bekaa.



Following hard on both the start of the new season and the kit distribution was an eagerly awaited match between children of Shatila and the Bekaa. Richard Verity takes up the story. *Important news. Shatila girls played a match against the Bekaa girls. In two years of trying no Bekaa team has ever managed to beat a Shatila team. It has been hard for the Bekaa coaches. Harder still for the Bekaa children. Considerable pride is at stake.*



The backstory to a match highlighting cricketing girl power Beirut-style was decidedly rose-tinted in colour as much of the kit on show was donated by our Friends in the North. Take a bow: Steve Archer of the Yorkshire Cricket Board and Sandy Mitchell of the Lancashire CCC Foundation. Once again, Project Front Foot reaching those kids and communities that others cannot.



## Cricket Germany

Undaunted by the lack of cricket early in this Covid-quarter we nevertheless ploughed ahead with kit distribution. The object, formed by our many years in India, was to get the clothing and equipment out into the community and in use as quickly as possible. To this end, and with a nudge in the right direction from Brian Mantle at the *Deutscher Cricket Bund e.V.*, it was quickly onto the front foot as bags of senior and junior kit were despatched to all parts of the country. Once the delayed season was underway we invited clubs to send images of both players and kit in action.

### Naumburg CC

In May we sent a kit package to Mohammad and the guys at Naumburg CC. Despite a delayed start to the campaign, their season is now in full swing. Community Kit Aid courtesy of Project Front Foot.



### Moorburger CC, Hamburg

One of the first to benefit from project kit was the Moorburger CC in Hamburg. A relatively new club, we despatched both senior and junior kit north as club driving force, Sachin, was keen to promote the game among city youngsters. Below, club players sport NatWest Cricket Force T-shirts ideal for practice and net sessions.





## Ludwigshafen am Rhein

Thanks to Hardik and friends we can report that junior cricket is very much on the front foot in Ludwigshafen. There can be no better sight come the weekend than clear blue skies, concentration and a cap pulled low, and an inviting slow left-armed at the Clubhouse End.



## R. C. Dresden e. V.

Some of the first bags of kit to depart Berlin in May were for the Rugby & Cricket Club in Dresden. Club members and the Kit Aid package were caught on camera soon after by Vivek prior to the start of a training session.



## Kleve

In 2019 we donated kit to a newly formed cricket team at the Hochschule Rhein-Waal (HSRW) in Kleve. Fahad, with the help of twenty friends at HSRW, had resurrected the college cricket team. Keen to follow this up, we were again on hand in May to provide further valuable kit for their indoor sessions.



## Cricket France

In the spring newsletter we launched a distress beacon – more in hope than expectation given these troubled times – for anyone heading to France. Last autumn we packed five bags of kit – three senior, two junior – for cricket projects across The Channel. The senior kit was destined for Louise in Arras and a newly formed team of young refugee cricketers. The junior clothing and equipment were set for Pradeep in La Rochelle and his cricketing initiative with local kids of the Aunis CC. The SOS was answered a couple of days later by two stalwart members of The Forty Club: Barry Aitken and Robert Smith. Robert volunteered to take our bags to Calais in mid-May where a seamless handover took place in Calais with Marie and Jose taking the bags to Louise in Arras. Project diplomacy at its best - and not a politician, gun boat or trawler in sight. *Vive la Cricket!*



## Arras CC

With the new season underway, and team and players eager to make up for lost time, we received the following message and picture from Louise in mid-July.

*Thank you so much! The guys are so happy with the equipment. We are really improving our game and won several matches recently, including one yesterday against the regional champions! Thanks for what you do, Project Front Foot is a very precious association!!*





## Aunis CC

Some 600 kilometres south-west of Arras in the La Rochelle region there was more project kit on view as the Aunis CC juniors were keen to get in on the action. We had donated kit to the club on two previous occasions and were more than happy to offer further support. With Covid restrictions easing, and the youngsters eager to road test the equipment, matches and training sessions were soon on the agenda. While some way off challenging football and rugby union, there is little doubt that Aunis CC youngsters are determined to put cricket and their club firmly on the sporting map of western France.





## Cricket Nepal

Even the most keen-eyed of cricketing enthusiasts – entirely understandable given the current glut of televised cricket – may have missed the result of a little reported International Twenty20 match in mid-April.

Nepal 141-1 (15.0) vs. Netherlands 136-4 (20.0) - Nepal win by 9 wickets.

In mid-October 2019 – thanks to the efforts of Mike Hay in Soest – we donated two bags of clothing and equipment to the German NGO, Jürgen Wahn Stiftung e.V, for their work with children and schools in Nepal.



A few weeks later, shortly after his return from Nepal, we received the following email from Klaus Schubert, Chairman of the *Juergen Wahn* Foundation:

*I want to thank you very much for the great and wonderful cricket equipment you offered to the Foundation ([www.juergen-wahn-stiftung.de](http://www.juergen-wahn-stiftung.de)) for the young generation of cricket players in Devighat, Nepal. I thank also very much my friend, Mike Hay, from Soest who was the important and necessary intermediary between your generous organization and our Foundation.*

*As Chairman of the Foundation, it was a great pleasure and a touching moment to hand over such wonderful equipment. And you cannot imagine the great pleasure and the applause for these moments!! Let me say it in Nepalese language: "Dherai, dherai dhanyabad!" Many, many thanks!*

*On the photo you see members of the Youth Club of Devighat, a small town in the mountains in the district of Nuwakot, about 80kms from the capital Kathmandu.*

*Once more thank you very much. You made so many people really happy!*

On the basis that every little helps, it would seem that Cricket Nepal is on the up and up with Project Front Foot claiming a very small assist along the way.

## Project Rewind

It comes to a pretty pass when the bulk of your social diary evolves around sorting kit in a Berlin cellar, but such is the state of play in these pandemic times. So it was that on one particular Monday morning I noticed a tear in the bag I was packing. With electrical tape and Stanley knife it was time for a spot of make do and mend. Of course, had this been Bombay and not Berlin then it would have been straight to the project's in-house cobbler. Every NGO should have one. His skill set of stitch, glue and tack enabled us, over the years, to repair and restore many damaged items before recycling.

Given that donated kit comes in all shapes, sizes and conditions, he was not without work. His remit – as dispenser of cobbled CPR (Cricket Pad Repair?) – was to restore items, not to their former glory, but simply to extend their sporting life. It could be a bat with a hairline fracture, a distressed kit bag, pads requiring sutures, or a pair of wicket-keeping gloves with a dislocated thumb. I happened upon his micro-business in early 2010. His kiosk was situated on the pavement outside the Andhra Bank on Bhaudaji Road. The bank occupied the ground floor of the curiously named Woodland Nook building.



Trust me, there was nothing remotely woodland or nookish about that part of Matunga, but full marks to architect and landlord for optimism. A hundred yards or so from King's Circle, one of Bombay's busiest roundabouts, the cobbler had plenty of footfall past his kiosk and never seemed short of customers waiting for a sole or heel to be reattached to working and walking order. And then I turned up! On my first visit I brought a pair of wicket-keeping pads in need of a little keyhole surgery. He quickly set about threading needle and we were off and running. Three bats were proffered a few days later all, despite set for a life of tennis ball cricket, in need a spot of glue and a tack or two to keep cracked edges in check.

I never offered an opinion as to the job, but left it to his expertise and nimble fingers. One of the bigger jobs was a Grey Nicholls kit bag which was fine in every respect save for a couple of rips that threatened mayhem if left to their own devices. Once again, barely batting an eyelid, he set to threading and stitching while I sat and photographed. As you might expect of any micro-businessman, his only English was the price. Yet this never amounted to more than 75p for labour and materials no matter the job or equipment involved. With Mumbai particularly hard hit during these Corona times, I hope his kiosk remains open for business and that he's still sitting cross-legged working quietly away on sandal and shoe.

## Front Foot Forum

For all the latest Project Front Foot news and information please click on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/projectfrontfoot/](http://www.facebook.com/projectfrontfoot/).

## Acknowledgements

At the end of a difficult quarter for Project Front Foot there are several people I need to thank for volunteering their time, energy and support. For their part in our version of the *French Connection* I must thank Barry and Robert of the Forty Club and Louise, Pradeep, Marie and Jose for organising collection and distribution post-Calais. In Berkshire the project is indebted to the usual suspects - Tim, Ron and Fred - who gamely ploughed on with yet another Customs-inspired sort and repack of our kit. In Tim's case, the thanks are two-fold as he was solely responsible for overseeing the countless emails, spreadsheets and preparation of Customs invoices as part of our spot of Brexit-busting. To the various logistics companies who helped transport our kit over sea and land, in the process declining any publicity, I offer heartfelt thanks for keeping the project afloat. In Berlin we have Lissa to thank for allowing us to take over her large cellar for storage purposes and then for turning a blind eye as I used passage ways and pallets to sort and repack. The Player of the Project Award for the last quarter, however, goes to the good doctor who singlehandedly oversaw all things administrative including numerous run-ins with carriers DHL. A task she performed with admirable poise and a withering pen.

## And finally ...

On 10 May we farewelled an old and much loved project friend. Both sombre and celebratory, there was no lone piper (thank goodness), no tears or flowers thrown as it made its last journey along Berlin's Ku'damm. An integral part of Project Front Foot, the black Gunn & Moore kit bag proudly proclaiming *MCC Tour to Fiji & Papua New Guinea 2003*, is now set for a new chapter of kit carrying with the Moorburger CC in Hamburg. The bag, as best any of us can remember, was part of our very first kit appeal in the summer of 2009. It could have been part of a club donation or perhaps part of a van load of kit courtesy of a sports company in Eastbourne. Either way, its size, durability, working zips and wheels saw it quickly become the go-to bag in a dozen trips with British Airways to Mumbai and back. Yes, it always came back, even if empty, such was its value to the project.



In the early days its cubic capacity proved ideal for huge amounts of shirts and flannels as we regularly hit the 23kg mark or were cheeky enough to sneak in an extra kilo or two. And when the bulk of our clothing needs were sponsored by Allcargo Logistics in 2015 it effortlessly switched to the more bulky helmets, bats and pads. The nooks and crannies created by the change in emphasis enabled further crucial items to be packed. Helmets in particular provided the perfect space for stowing the bulk of



my MSR (Mumbai Survival Rations) including jars of Marmite, oak cakes, cuppa soups, and bags of Sainsbury's dried fruit and nuts. The bag's size, shape and cubic capacity led to much fun and games in the transporting of our kit to India. It began at Heathrow as the bag was invariably too large to negotiate the conveyor-belt at check-in and so, along with others, had to be wheeled to the over-sized baggage section. But this was only the half of it as the real gilt-edged pandemonium began on arrival at Chhatrapati Shivaji airport in Mumbai. Prior to renovation the old airport used to x-ray bags as you left the arrivals hall. A curious exercise and one guaranteed, given the odd shape and size of our kit, to land Project Front Foot well and truly in the Mulligatawny.



Put yourself in the place of the Customs official behind the x-ray screen. More especially when faced with a large Gunn & Moore kit bag containing two hundred tennis balls. I'm not sure, frogspawn apart, how such a serving of tennis balls would appear on a screen, but you could put your house on the fact that I would be quickly waved to one side and asked to wait. Explanations followed, so too letters of introduction, and the opening and foraging among several bags. Eventually, the officials having had their fun, I'd be sent on my way. The system changed upon renovation with luggage seemingly x-rayed below stairs before being placed on the conveyor-belt for arrivals. Any bag, for whatever reason, that didn't pass muster had an ominous yellow chalk cross added. This being Customs-speak for: 'ello, 'ello, 'ello what've we got ere then?! In the autumn of 2018 all nine project kit bags, with Gunn & Moore leading the way, had a yellow cross. There followed the spectacle of two porters, three trolleys, nine bags and myself bringing arrivals to a standstill as we were hauled off for inspection and explanation.

Over the years and visits, the guys at our partner NGO, Reality Gives, had every good reason to remember the Gunn & Moore kit bag if only for the various back strains it caused. First Krishna then Asim, Mayur and finally Ravi: all at one point or another had a run-in with the prized black bag. The number and volume of kit bags made for some hot, cramped trips back to my temple lodgings in Matunga with the route, a sign of the weeks ahead, taking us through the middle of Dharavi. The Gunn & Moore kit bag made its last journey to Berlin in the autumn of 2019 and, due in most part to the pandemic, has stayed-on waiting its moment to return to action. That came with the arrival of our latest batch of kit in early May. Given its size and capacity, it was always going to be the first bag out of town. Hence the short walk from cellar to post office. Thanks to DHL it is now safely in Hamburg. We wish it well with its new team and surroundings: a giant of a bag in every respect and a great friend and much valued support to Project Front Foot.

Vic Mills. Berlin. August 2021.