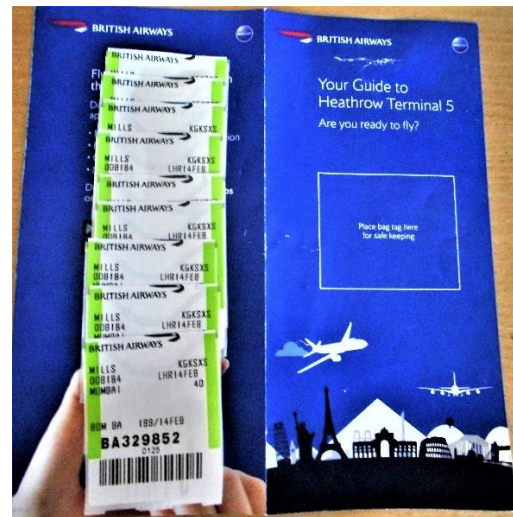


# WINTER 2023-2024 NEWSLETTER





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## Project Partners & Supporters





## About the Cover Pictures

Thanks to our recent reconnection with British Airways, we can again include Air transport to our various means of getting vital kit donations to clubs and communities. The distribution of the bulk of project kit, however, remains the tried and trusted methods of Road and Sea courtesy of van hire and cross-channel ferries.



## Front Foot Finances

### Go Fund Me

We have not made a fuss of finances since our founding in 2009. Self-funding and the support of friends has kept us afloat these past fifteen years. The project sea change from India to Europe, however, moved the goalposts/wickets somewhat. As such, our main expenses now relate to van hire, insurances, fuel, and ferry tickets. All of which continue to climb. Example: from January 2024, the cost of taking a hire van out of the country will hike from £125 to £300! To offset the project's increased expenses we have, for the first time, gone down the route of a funding site: Go Fund Me. Our target is £5,000. If you would like to donate, and in so doing prolong the working life of Project Front Foot, please click on the following link. Do feel free to share both this newsletter and link with your cricket-loving friends.

<https://gofund.me/ce746e33>

Below, project kit being put through its paces by youngsters of the Alsama cricket project in Lebanon.





## Winter Kit Collection

In November, project volunteers (Tim & Ron) completed a successful collection of adult clothing and equipment from Kim and the Surrey Cricket Board at the Kia Oval. The kit was placed in storage for the winter and will form part of our kit distribution road trip to France, Germany and Switzerland in the spring. The Surrey road trip was little helped by a combination of heavy rain and congested roads. The weather also intervened to prevent any pictures of the kit on the iconic Oval outfield. The journey was well worth the effort, though, as it added vital kit to our autumn donations while enabling us to catch up with our friends at the Surrey Cricket Board.



## Spring Kit Distribution

The autumn kit collections, even by project standards, were huge. To this end, we are inviting clubs with refugee cricketers to contact PFF ([projectfrontfoot@gmail.com](mailto:projectfrontfoot@gmail.com)) with a view to receiving a kit donation in March 2024. If you fall into this category or know others who would welcome a donation of kit, please contact Vic on the above email address.







## Project Beneficiaries

After the flurry of late season activity detailed in our Autumn Newsletter, it was a case of seeing out the winter for the majority of our beneficiary clubs. Those with indoor facilities were able to continue with net sessions honing their skill sets along the way. In the main, though, it was a case of battening down the hatches and planning for the 2024 season. Not that all was frost and furrowed brows.

### Cricket UK

#### Refugee Council

One of the first jobs after completing our September Sort & Pack exercise was to contact officials at a cricket project in South London. Run by the Refugee Council and Change Foundation, the project supports a group of around fifty young Afghan cricketers. Project Front Foot has assisted both project and players with donations of clothing and kit over the past four years. In early November, PFF volunteers took a swag of helmets, pads, boots, gloves and thigh pads to a Croydon cricket school for one of the project's indoor training sessions. Once again, Project Front Foot reaching those cricketers and communities that others cannot.



*Refugee children's lives are full of instability, uncertainty, and anxiety. Playing a sport they love in the company of friends is a rare opportunity. It gives them the chance to relax and forget about the challenges they face. This is what the Refugee Cricket Project provides, it has become their surrogate family in a country where they have no-one else.*

*The Refugee Cricket Project offers both weekly cricket sessions and advice to participants, with the latter available five days a week. As well as year-round cricket coaching, we organise fixtures against opposition teams, including the MCC. We also arrange for young cricketers to play in local clubs and take part in an annual summer tour outside London.*

The above extract is courtesy of the Refugee Council website/Refugee Cricket Project.



## Cricket Germany

There was good news and bad news from Germany on the cricket front.

### Berlin Cricket Academy

The good news was supplied by Mo and his colleagues at the Berlin Cricket Academy who have recently secured indoor practice facilities. This is the perfect start to the new year for some of Germany's hardest working cricketers and coaches.



### Siegen

Meanwhile, in Siegen, Henner Jung reported the suspension of indoor winter nets due to another Corona wave. The hope is for a resumption this month with the much-anticipated *Kreismeisterschaft* or district championships.

### Dresden Gladiators CC

By way of insight into the lot of refugee cricketers, we reprise the words and thoughts of Fahad who plays for the Dresden Gladiators Cricket Club.

*The Dresden Gladiators Cricket Club – a remarkable gathering of asylum seekers from Pakistan and Afghanistan – is not just a sports team; it's a symbol of determination, unity, and the enduring spirit of hope. The Dresden Cricket Club is a diverse tapestry of individuals who found themselves far from their homelands, seeking refuge in Germany. However, their shared love for cricket brought them together, transcending language barriers and cultural differences. The club became a sanctuary for these asylum seekers, a place where they could connect with their roots and build a sense of community in a foreign land.*

*Over the years, this club has faced its share of challenges, including competing in T20s and 50 overs leagues. While they might not have qualified for the next round, their journey speaks volumes about the power of sport to transcend boundaries and inspire resilience. Participating in limited over competitions was no small feat for the Dresden Cricket Club. It provided them with the opportunity to showcase their cricketing talents on a competitive stage. The thrill of representing their club and facing off against other teams ignited a sense of purpose and pride among the players*





*Competing in leagues came with its own challenges. Language barriers often made communication on the field difficult, and the players had to work doubly hard to understand each other's strategies. Adapting to the German climate and playing conditions posed a challenge, but the players embraced these with a sense of resilience. The Dresden Gladiators Cricket Club is not just about cricket; it's about the bonds forged and the lessons learned. It's about showing the world that asylum seekers are not defined by their circumstances, but by their aspirations and abilities.*



## Cricket France

### Argentan CC (Normandy)

The progress made by the fledgling Argentan CC can be gauged by the fact that there is already talk of forming a Normandy cricket league. The driving force behind this band of cricketing brothers is Bénédicte. Early in the season, speaking of Project Front Foot's contribution to club and players, she said, '... you gave them back smile, and pleasure, and determination to play.'

Undaunted by the chill November temperatures, a small group of Argentan cricketers invited locals to come and try the game. A brave move given the French passion for football and rugby. But this young club is not short on determination or creative thinking. Qualities that will see Project Front Foot again donate junior and senior clothing and kit to the club in March.

Thanks to Bénédicte for providing the pictures which come with added wind chill.





## Cricket Lebanon

### Alsama Cricket Project (Beirut & Bekaa)

These are difficult times for our friends at the Alsama cricket project in Beirut and the Bekaa. After the exodus in October, international volunteers are slowly returning. So too is the game of cricket as we bring news, courtesy of the Alsama December newsletter, of a resumption in play.

*On Saturday, November 12th, a thrilling cricket championship took place among 14 Hubs across Lebanon. Forty-four teams fiercely competed against each other, drawing enthusiastic cheers and support from the audience. Each player showcased their amazing cricket skills, resulting in five victorious teams being honoured, along with the best players. Among these talented individuals, Alma shone brightly as the final bowler for her team. In a decisive moment where her team relied on her, Alma did not let them down. She ran up quickly like a horse let out into a field, dismissing the batsman three times, securing victory.*



Meanwhile, back at PFF base camp in the Thames Valley, we have two further bags of clothing and junior kit set aside from our autumn sort and pack for the Alsama cricket project. Part of which includes three dozen new Grey Nicholls shirt and flannel sets. The hope is to get these on a flight to Beirut early in the new year.



# Front Foot Forum

## Social Media

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

## Project Rewind

With winter being a slow period for the project after the helter-skelter of spring and autumn, we took the opportunity, through various Facebook posts, to revisit our decade in Mumbai with a series of retrospectives. The months of October and November were reserved for visits to Mumbai to distribute the donated kit and to start the new campaign with the Dharavi kids. As the seasons passed, we were able to expand our kit distribution work through collaboration with various Lions Clubs and our long-term association with the Corporate Social Responsibility team of Galaxy Surfactants.

*The first task on arrival in Mumbai was to visit our Indian Gymkhana ground close to King's Circle railway station for an early pitch report. Indeed, would there still be a pitch? A reasonable enough question for a cricket ground on the wrong end of a monsoon season. Indeed, if you want evidence of climate change, just ask the mali (groundsman). A late and lengthening monsoon season, following our inaugural 2009/10 campaign, effectively put paid to the planting of grass seed thus depriving the project of grass wickets. Year-on-year the monsoon rains wash away the topsoil on the square thereby requiring it to be rebuilt each season. With the Gymkhana resembling The Thames at low tide, nearby tower blocks strike a reflective pose in the standing water at deep (very deep) mid-wicket. In an effort to rebuild the square, local workers shovel, sift and sieve topsoil for the nearby wicket table which, a few weeks earlier, had been swept away on an ebb tide.*





*There was always a delay, mainly down to the condition of the Gymkhana, from arriving in Mumbai to the actual kit handover with the Dharavi kids. Until we secured the funding to buy locally sourced shirts and flannels, the clothing for the kids would depend entirely on what had been donated during the UK summer. This ran the spectrum from club kit to cricket board togs to those situations where a sponsor had changed, and we became the beneficiary of an entire squad kit. The distribution days themselves would guarantee several hours of chaotic fun with staff from our partner NGO, Reality Gives, effectively doubling as outfitters as each of the kids was measured for shirts, flannels and boots. The before-and-after transformation at the next coaching session was nothing short of spectacular as the Dharavi kids proudly sported their new kit.*



*The provision of small packages of kit through our Rural Schools Initiative soon became a key element of our time in Mumbai. These were long, hot, sticky, fun-filled days. And you never quite knew, until driving through the gates, whether it would be a two-room school with fifty kids or a huge complex with 800 students already assembled in the grounds and waiting to greet you with the national anthem. One thing all these had in common, however, was a total lack of sporting equipment in general, and cricket kit in particular. Indeed, the first picture below was the sum total of cricket equipment for a village school with over two hundred pupils. During our decade-long adventure in Mumbai, and with the help of our partners, we were able to support around 150 rural and inner-city schools, orphanages and sporting projects.*







## Project Birthdays



December 7th marked the birthday of PFF stalwart, Tim Gill. Tim has been with Project Front Foot from our first summer in 2009. When we became a registered UK charity in autumn 2011, he was a natural for trustee. In the last fifteen years he has driven thousands of miles either collecting or ferrying kit. His double garage is our 'Southern Storage Facility' in the process denying family use until our kit departs. Sheffield born and bred, he brings much needed Yorkshire qualities of reason, good sense, and balance to my flights of fancy. The go-to all-rounder, Tim continues to



navigate PFF through uncertain post-Brexit waters. Against his better judgement, he was persuaded (above right) to model some of the project's protective equipment. In the interests of balance, the demon left-armer is pictured (above left) in his prime as part of the Lindum's victorious 1976 Pattinson Cup winning XI.

A week later was the the birthday of Project Front Foot's fixer and main man in Mumbai, Mr Vijay Ramachandran. Ramu lives in an apartment block at the back of our former temple base camp. Perfect placement for me to drop in for coffee, breakfast, lunch, gossip, televised cricket, and project planning. Over our decade on the ground in Mumbai, Ramu surpassed himself by finding me a dentist, a GP, and when I was struggling with eye trouble taking me to a nearby clinic. In between time he booked my room at the temple, liaised with Lions Club members for our school visits, and oversaw all country visits with his former Galaxy work colleagues. A man with the right priorities, too, in that his first task before any journey, whether city or country, was to order and collect breakfast! It's fitting then that in the picture below Ramu is caught with bat raised. For no one deserves the applause more than he. Always the first name on the project team sheet: Happy Birthday Mr Ramu Sir.



## Acknowledgements

My thanks, as ever, to Tim and Ron for organising the Croydon kit handover and the Oval collection. In respect of the latter, my thanks to Kim and the Surrey Cricket Board. In support of our current GoFundMe campaign, sincere thanks to Alison, James, Stuart, Kim, Chris, Cath & Sid, Anne, Sue, Solveig, Jon & Jennifer, and Emma for their generous support and to Rob for his above-and-beyond contribution to project funds. Finally, for her support and wise counsel, my thanks to the project's twelfthers ... the good doctor.



## And finally ...

the Project Picture of the Year proved a close-run affair. So tight in fact that, in the interests of fair play, a tie was called. Interestingly, neither entry features kit, clothing, cricketers, or kids.

The picture below relates to our March road trip to the continent. A day of civil unrest across The Channel, the naughty French passport officials at Dover, not wanting to miss out on the fun, and completely unbeknownst to us, stamped our passports, not 23:03:23, but 23:04:24. Cool. Very cool. This caused a degree of confusion on our return to Calais but registered little more than a Gallic shrug on the Richter Scale of Disruption.



The image opposite was snapped on the ferry to Dunkirk three hours after the passport incident. And this, the first afternoon of a four-day road trip with another 1200 miles still to travel, a thousand or more on the 'wrong side' of the road. In defence of Tim and Ron, it had been a difficult few days: sorting our kit amid torrential rain, another early morning start, and a busy Reading to Dover route. As dynamic a charitable duo as you will find, the boys know exactly when to recharge, refresh and reboot with their own version of a strategic timeout.

