

## Fred 'Scotty' Watsford

Throughout its lengthy history the Parramatta District Cricket Club has had in its playing ranks many talented wicketkeepers, players such as Wally Loveridge (captain of the club's 1899/00 First grade Premiership winning team), Harold Webster (member of the 1912 Australian U.K. touring team), Joe Anderson, Greg Beisler, Gavin Ridley, Kristian Griffith-Jones, Jaimie Williams, Darrell Smith, Michael Stretton, Nick Bertus and club record-holder Allen Turrell have all stood behind the stumps with distinction.

One hundred years ago this important job rested safely in the gloved fists of Fred 'Scotty' Watsford. He was very highly rated by contemporary players of his era, in 1924/25 Cumberland captain and NSW player Edgar 'Gar' Waddy stated that he regarded "*Watsford second only to Test legend Bert Oldfield*" amongst the then Sydney First grade wicketkeepers – high praise indeed.

Fred's career with the Parramatta Club was another link in a family change that dated back to the founding pioneers of the club in 1843 – James Watford Senior and Junior. He gave outstanding service as a wicketkeeper for 22 years, maintaining a consistently high standard of skill across the entire two decades. Watsford stuck loyally to the Parramatta based club through the troubled pre and post-World War I days and he remained a rock-solid stalwart during the club's bleak time in the 1920s.

Fred made his First grade debut with Cumberland in **1906/07**. After hearing about his talent on the local cricketing grapevine he was recruited directly from the Auburn junior ranks, and during that first season, he appeared in First grade for three matches. But over the ensuing three years he played mainly in the Second eleven, eventually becoming the regular First grade wicket-keeper in 1910/11. This role remained firmly clenched in his trusty hands until retirement at the close of the **1927/28** season.

In 1912/13, he represented **NSW Colts** against Victorian Colts, and in the following decade he won a great reputation within the grade community for consistency, smart catching and stumping, and his economy in saving byes.

During the **1921/22** Fred was selected to represent NSW against South Australia in the **Sheffield Shield** competition. But unfortunately, he was unable to gain leave from his employers, and so the opportunity to obtain the coveted Baggy Blue NSW State cap eluded him. However, fortunes change, and in the same season he played for the **NSW Second Eleven** against the Victorian Second Eleven in Melbourne, scoring 32 runs. **The Melbourne Press praised the quality of his wicketkeeping and stated that it was a highlight of the game.**

Right the way through his long secondment behind the wickets for Cumberland constant references were made in club reports, not only of his brilliant catching and stumping, but also of his uncanny ability at saving byes, in an era of uncovered and sometimes spiteful pitches this was a valuable skill – in fact, there were numerous mentions of matches in which no bye was recorded against Fred.

Normally he featured as a useful tail-end batsman, without be a noted run-scorer. But between seasons 1922/23 and 1925/26, when the Cumbos First grade team was short of a reliable opening batsman, Fred '*answered the call to arms*' and filled this important role quite creditably.

The **1923/24** season saw Watsford at his all-round best, as an opener he compiled a fine **472 runs @ 22.50** (strong performance on uncovered wickets) – his consistency has reflected in scores of 74 v. Wests, 55, 52, 45, 42, 36, 35. With the gloves he snapped up 9 catches and 13 stumpings.

In a First grade career that spanned from 1910/11 through to 1927/28 his wicketkeeping yielded **224 victims – 106 caught and 118 stumped**. His stumping ratio of **52.60%** of total victims is the highest recorded by any Parramatta District Cricket Club First grade wicketkeeper – his stumpings were rated as matchless. Fred's career output with the bat produced **2,208 runs @ 12.13** (H.S. – 74).

Fred Watsford was Parramatta District Cricket Club (Central Cumberland) – First Grade Player **Number – 99**.

Fred died aged 73 years in 1959

The club honoured Fred with **Life Membership** in **1929** as a reward for his outstanding career and staunch loyalty to the Parramatta (Central Cumberland) District Cricket Club.

**[By Tom Wood – Parramatta District Cricket Club – Historian]**