

# Parramatta District Cricket Club – ‘The International Matches’

(By Tom Wood – Club Historian)

A matchless piece of the Parramatta District Cricket Club’s history, is that it is the only NSW Premier Cricket Club to have played against **six** touring English International Teams. In the 1880s and 90s the visiting English teams used to traditionally open the New South Wales leg of their Australian tours in Parramatta, locking horns with the local club’s combinations of either 18 or 22 players. The matches shone as quite a social occasion for the good folk of the town.

The Parramatta District Cricket Club’s officials showed great planning and enterprise to acquire these important matches for the town. The club progressively worked on developing their home-ground to a standard that made it suitable for staging international games and then made the necessary overtures and financial offers to the English tour management, that ultimately led to securing the events. The **Cumberland Argus Newspaper** had this to say on this subject in 1881 – *“To the Parramatta Club (who control the ground) must be given the credit of inducing the visitors to come to our town, and that club is entirely responsible for the expenses in connection with these far-famed cricketers, and it is hoped that the public will bestow a liberal patronage”*.

It was quite a feather in the cap of the Parramatta club to present these highly prestigious matches, and it stood as a testimony to the Club’s growing status within the colonial cricket fraternity.

A brief outline of the six matches Parramatta contested against the visiting the English International teams is highlighted below.

In the first **five** of these matches the local teams were captained by **W.A. Brodie**, the premier all-rounder and senior Club Official – he was one of the driving forces behind the club’s advancement – serving as either club secretary or treasurer for two decades as well as being a prodigious performer on the playing field. The **1891** game saw another high profile regional identity and handy bowler **Nelson Kirby** captain the Parramatta line-up, he was destined to become Mayor of Dundas and have a Street and Park in in the Rydalmere area named in his honour.

- **Game 1: England v. 22 of Cumberland on 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> December 1881. Won by Cumberland by 5 wickets.**

After winning the toss England’s captain Alfred Shaw elected to bat on a ‘*sporting pitch*’ and they struggled against Parramatta’s bowling combination of Albert Evans (brother of Test bowler Edwin) who grabbed a sensational (**8/27**) and the emerging Percy Maybury (2/34) – being routed for just **61** runs. Unfortunately, the Parramatta locals didn’t fair much better managing **78** runs, routed by England’s bowling stars Peate (**12/41**) and Barlow (**8/23**).

England’s second visit to the crease was again destroyed by Evans (**6/35**) – match figures of **14/62** – and Maybury (3/28), seeing the pride of England dismissed for a total of **64** runs. Requiring 47 runs for an historic victory Parramatta made heavy weather of the task losing 16 wickets for **48** runs, captain Bill Brody led the way with a hard fought **19** – Peate claiming **8/23**.

- **Game 2: England v. 18 of Parramatta on 28<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> November 1884. Won by England by 9 wickets.**

The All-England team made a second visit to Parramatta to do battle with the best 18 local cricketers again led by the formidable W.A. Brodie. The match commenced in warm sultry weather, with rain interruptions on day 2 causing a delayed start. By mid-afternoon over 2,000 spectators were in attendance to see England victorious by 9 wickets.

Parramatta found it tough in both innings against the strong English attack making **85** runs first up (Oval curator Tom Boon made 24) and **95** runs in their second dig (Tom Docker scored a bright 43). England’s first innings effort of **173** runs set them up for victory and they were only required 9 runs to win in their second knock.

The game’s highlight was the bowling performance of England ace Bobby Peel who snared **9/62** and **9/37**, Parramatta fast bowling spearhead Percy Maybury bowled brilliantly to grab **9/81**.

- **Game 3: England v. 18 of Parramatta on 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> November 1886.**

After a delayed start, due to a rain damaged pitch, W.A. Brodie won the toss and sent England in to bat. The spicy wicket made batting a nightmare and the visitors crashed for **67** runs. NSW inter-colonial swing bowler James Cleeve ran riot seizing **7/20**, he was well backed by left-handed paceman Harry Thorpe (2/27). After a disastrous start (9/13) Parramatta resumed on day 2 to finish with **73** runs – S.R. Walford (13) and George Spurway (23).

Second time around England fared marginally better making 78 runs, Thorpe (3/30) and Cleeve (2/14) again in good form. Requiring 72 runs for victory Parramatta folded for just **49** runs, George Lohmann, rated as one of the world's finest bowlers, backed his first innings **9/55** with an incredible **12/21** to sink the Parramatta men.

- **Game 4: England (Shrewsbury's Team) v. 18 of Cumberland** (Parramatta) on **4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> November 1887**.

The 1887 season was unique with two separate England teams touring Australia. One generally known as **Arthur Shrewsbury's** eleven – sponsored by Lillywhite, Shrewsbury & Shaw, and the NSW Cricket Association. The other team was George **F. Vernon's** eleven, later in the tour the two teams combined, and the England side was selected to oppose Australia in February 1988 in a timeless Test – won by England by 126 runs.

The match started in warm conditions in front of over 1,000 fans, and what was described as a splendid wicket. After winning the toss and electing to bat the Parramatta batsmen failed to capitalise on the good deck and crumbled for **72** runs – English stars Lohmann (**8/35**) and Briggs (**9/33**) the demolishers. In their only visit to the crease England amassed a huge **272** runs (James Cleaves 4/71).

In the second innings Parramatta gave the local supporters plenty to savour by rattling up **241** runs (F. Rice 36, H. Thorpe 32, G. Spurway 24). England recording a first innings victory.

- **Game 5: G.F. Vernon's English Team v. 18 of Parramatta** on **2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1887**.

The second of the English teams to play Parramatta in 1887 was greeted by heavy rain on the match eve, the start of the game took place under leaden skies, and at 1.00pm strong downpours disrupted play for an hour.

Parramatta batted first and thanks to the 'old firm' of Bill Brodie (39) and Syd Walford (37) the team finished with a competitive total of **144** runs. English bowlers Atwell (**7/55**) and Peel (**5/42**) proved to be a handful for the locals. The English batsmen struggled from the outset against the brilliant bowling of left-arm paceman Harry Thorpe (**7/41**) to be all out for **116** runs. Parramatta led by 28 runs.

After taking to the crease again Parramatta raced to a commanding **6/166** – Syd Walford struck a chanceless **51** and Fred Price produced a 'rock solid' **62** to guide Parra to a first innings victory.

- **Game 6: England v. 20 of Cumberland** **9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> December 1891**.

This English team was captained by the legendary Doctor W.G Grace and Nelson Kirby held the reigns for Parramatta. England won the match on the first innings.

Left-arm medium-pacer Joe Wilson (a local Bank officer) won lasting fame when he clean-bowled the English champion Grace for **duck** – this performance later earned him selection in the NSW Inter-Colonial team – and star Parramatta bowler continued his harvesting of English wickets by capturing **5/44**.

Parramatta could only total **67** runs in their first innings (J. Broad 16), destroyed by J.W. Sharpe (7/22) and J. Briggs (12/38). England countered with a score of 113 runs.

The Cumberland team were much more effective in their second turn to bat, making a respectful 141 runs – P.S 'Percy' Waddy a 16-year-old Kings School student top-scored with 34 and Dowell O'Reilly stuck 19. Percy Waddy later became Principal of The Kings School and O'Reilly became a State Member of Parliament in 1894.