

## The Tom Vernon Garrett Story

Throughout its long history the Parramatta District Cricket Club has had a multitude of intriguing tales to tell, and the story of **Tom Vernon Garrett** certainly fits that classification.



Between 1904 and 1911 Tom, a busy all-rounder (right-hand middle order batsman and medium-pace bowler), took the field for the Parramatta club (then known as Central Cumberland), in both First and Second grade – some of his playing contemporaries were club legends like Les Pye, ‘Mudgee Cranney’, E.L. ‘Gar’ Waddy, and internationals W.P. Howell and G. Hazlitt.

His playing statistics were:

- ◆ **Batting – 1,056 runs @ 20.71** [H.S. – 86 v. Waverley (1<sup>st</sup> grade), 78\* v. Redfern (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)].
- ◆ **Bowling – 32 wickets @ 30.84** [B.B. – 6/36 v. Redfern (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)].

During his time with Parramatta his brother John also played first and second grade with the club.

The Garrett family featured some notable members, Tom’s Vernon’s father Tom W. Garrett played 19 Test matches for Australia, including the famous first-ever Test played against England in Melbourne in 1877, and his grandson is famous Midnight Oil singer and Federal Politician Peter Garrett.

After the end of World War 1 Tom V. Garrett undertook a significant adventure, by settling in the then pioneering island of New Britain (PNG) where he purchased and managed the copra and cocoa plantation ‘Varzin’ in Kokopo southeast of Rabaul.

In 1941 the Daily Mirror Newspaper reported that Tom Garrett was still turning out on the cricket field playing for the Kokopo club in Rabaul.

Sadly, fate turned wretchedly for Tom V after the fall of Rabaul to the Japanese, during World War II, when he became a forced passenger on the ill-fated Japanese merchant vessel Montevideo Maru. This prison vessel was hunted and sunk by the American submarine USS Sturgeon on the 1st of July 1942. This event represented Australia’s greatest single wartime loss of life, 1,000 people perished that day. The sunken vessel was jam packed with prisoners of war soldiers and civilians previously captured by the Japanese Army on Rabaul.

Peter Garrett wrote the Midnight Oil song ‘*In the Valley*’ about his grandfather’s demise.

[By Tom Wood – PDCC Historian]