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FOUR AUSTRALIAN MASONIC CRICKETERS

W. BARDSLEY (1882-1954)

Warren Bardsley was born on the 7th December, 1882 at the western New South Wales township of Nevertire. His birth was registered at nearby Warren and his parents chose the name of the town for their son. His father taught at the public school at Forest Lodge, an inner Sydney suburb and it was at the nearby Glebe Cricket Club that Warren began his career.

Warren was the leading figure at the 6 a.m. practice at Jubilee oval along with Bro Bert Oldfield. After breakfast he walked the four kilometres into the city to his job as a clerk in the Crown Law Office.

It was that batting practice after a morning dew that made him the most successful Australian to tour England until Bro Don Bradman came along.

Bardsley was a stylish left-hander of medium build who wore only one batting glove on his left hand secured with an elastic band to his thumb.

He always carefully inspected the pitch and spoke with the groundsmen and was cautious in his approach to the opposition bowling.

He was not a big hitter and there was the occasion in England when, having scored a century in a County match, his captain Monty Noble instead of congratulating him said: "Lets' see how you are at hitting sixes".

Bardsley was first selected to play for New South Wales in the 1903-4 season and won selection in the Australian team to tour England in 1909.

He became established as an opening batsman and topped both the aggregates and averages with 2180 runs at 46. He was named one of "Wisden's" cricketers of the year.

During the test match at "The Oval", he made 136 and 130 and became the first player ever to make a century in each innings of a test. His opening partnership of 180 with Syd Gregory stood as a record for over 50 years.

Bardsley made three further tours of England in 1912, 1921 and 1926. On the 1912 tour he again headed the aggregates and averages with 2441 runs at 51 and, on the 1926 tour he carried his bat at Lord's for his highest test score of 193.

On this tour he had the honour to captain Australia in the tests at Headingley and Old Trafford.

His best test series was in 1912 in South Africa where he scored two centuries in the three tests played and finished with an average of 113.66.

In 1914, Bardsley was a member of a team which toured the United States of America and Canada during which he made 117 against the Gentlemen of Philadelphia.

In all, Warren Bardsley played in 41 test matches and made 6 centuries. His test batting average of 40.47 stamps him as one of the great Australian batsmen.

He retired from first-class cricket at the end of the 1926-7 Australian season having compiled 17031 runs at an average of just under 50.

Bardsley served briefly as a New South Wales and Australian selector and was one of the four who saw the young Bradman relegated to twelfth man for the second test of the 1928-29 series against England.

Warren Bardsley did not smoke, shunned liquor and, as a vegetarian, used to eat out if the family had a meat or chicken meal.

A week before his death he was one of a group at lunch with cricket loving Prime Minister, Bro Sir Robert Menzies who said across the table: "Warren, your name will go down in history and be remembered by people when poor politicians are forgotten".

He married in September, 1945 and died on the 20th January, 1954.

Warren Bardsley was initiated in the Leinster Marine Lodge of Australia No 2 on the register of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales on the 20th February, 1909.

As he was about to depart for his first tour of England, he was passed and raised by special dispensation on the same night as his initiation.

L V MADDOCKS (1926 -)

Leonard Victor Maddocks was a very good wicketkeeper who played for Victoria and Australia.

Whilst he was not numbered among the greatest of Australia's "Aunt Sally's"; with men like O'field, Tallon and Grout, worthy Freemasons All, he was nevertheless a capable wicketkeeper and competent lower order batsman.

The smart, trim 28 years old Maddocks had played second fiddle to South Australia's Gilbert Langley when spinner Jack Wilson bowled Queenslander Ron Archer and drove up a ball which split Gil Langley's eye.

The accident occurred on the eve of the 1954-55 third test against England and the two possible replacements for Langley were Wally Grant from Queensland and Victorian Len Maddocks. Grout was confident but Maddocks was selected.

Maddocks had a damaged little finger but did not report it to Australian selector, Jack Ryder. Jack had his suspicions and, being an absolute stickler for fitness, took every opportunity to give Len a very firm handshake. Although each grip was sheer torture, Len didn't crack and he played his first test against England in front of a total home crowd of 300,270 at Melbourne in 1955. The match caused some controversy over the infamous "watered pitch" incident.

Maddocks did well enough to be selected for the fourth test after picking up 3 catches and 47 runs despite keeping wickets with his damaged finger in a wire cage inside his glove.

The fourth test was played at Adelaide and, with Langley now completely fit, the crowd barracked Bro Sir Donald Bradman then an Australian selector.

Good work by Maddocks and a good innings of 69 gave him selection for the fifth test. When Gil Langley made a fighting 53 for South Australia in a Sheffield Shield match, the Adelaide crowd gave him a tremendous ovation of the type usually reserved for a Bradman double century.

Maddocks toured the West Indies in 1955 but played in only the first test, Langley being preferred for the remainder of the series when he established world records making it difficult for Maddocks to regain his place.

Next year he toured England as Langley's deputy but played in two tests one of which at Old Trafford was the match in which England's Jim Laker took 19 wickets for the match.

He was now being plagued by finger trouble and, although he continued to play for Victoria, he declared himself unavailable for a short tour of New Zealand in 1957.

His place was taken by Barry Jarman from South Australia.

Maddocks again declared himself unavailable for the 1957-58 tour of South Africa, putting his accounting career ahead of his love for cricket. His place was filled by Bro Wally Grout.

Len Maddocks, a Bachelor of Arts, contributed that professional accounting skill to the game when he helped with Robert Parish to prepare the retirement benefit plan for the Australian Board of Control for International Cricket.

Bro Len Maddocks, at the age of 21, was initiated in Lodge Fortitude No 443 Victorian Constitution on the 25th September, 1948.

HEDLEY BRIAN TABER (1940 -)

The diminutive Brian Taber was a very good wicketkeeper and competent batsman.

He became the regular 'keeper for New South Wales after Wor Bro Doug Ford decided to call it a day.

His opportunity to play for Australia came when Barry Jarman was unavailable for the 1966-67 tour of South Africa.

Taber quickly stepped into Jarman's shoes and forced his way into the record books. He totalled twenty dismissals for the test series, including five in one innings and eight in a match at Johannesburg. His eight dismissals in a test were among the best in the world and his five in an innings have only rarely been bettered.

Jarman regained his test place and toured England as Vice-Captain to Bill Lawry in 1968. Brian Taber toured as the second wicketkeeper. He played his only test against England at Edgbaston when he replaced the injured Jarman. In this match, he made two dismissals and was the fourth highest Australian scorer with 16 runs. The match was drawn.

Back in Australia during the 1968-69 season he set a world record for all first-class matches when, while playing for New South Wales, he dismissed 12 South Australian batsmen with 9 caught and 3 stumped, including 7 in one innings.

During the same season, Jarman was again injured and he played in one test against the touring West Indies side. Again, he dismissed five batsmen in one innings.

In 1970 he was chosen as the number one wicketkeeper for the tour of India and South Africa. The tour proved a disaster since a number of players were seriously ill in India and the team, after a gruelling series, went straight to South Africa.

Taber again dismissed five batsmen in an innings in the fourth test at Port Elizabeth. Australia took a hammering. They were soundly beaten in all four test matches which, unfortunately, were to be the last against South Africa because of the political influence of apartheid.

It was also to be Brian Taber's last test. Although he figured in 18 dismissals in the four tests, he also unfortunately dropped several vital catches.

Although he didn't score heavily in the tests, his batting approach to the short-pitched deliveries of Peter Pollock and Mike Proctor was generally better than some of his team mates higher in the order.

Back in Australia, the selectors dropped him in favour of Rodney Marsh who performed so badly against the touring Englishmen that he was nicknamed "Irongloves".

Taber toured England in 1972 as deputy to Marsh and he retired from first-class cricket after the 1973-74 season.

Brian Taber played in 16 tests during which he dismissed 60 batsmen and scored 394 runs at an average of 16.04.

In 129 first-class matches he dismissed 394 batsmen including 50 stumpings. He later became coach of the New South Wales Sheffield Shield team.

Bro Hedley Brian Taber was initiated into Lodge Cricket No 931 on the register of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales on the 4th July, 1960. He was aged 20 and he was admitted as a lewis. He gave his occupation as health inspector.

In 1966 he served his lodge as steward and in May, 1973 he was invested as Junior Warden.

WILLIAM HAROLD PONSFORD M.B.E. (1900-1991)

If Don Bradman had preferred tennis to cricket, there is little doubt that Bill Ponsford would have been regarded as the greatest batsman of his time.

"Ponny" was born in the Melbourne suburb of North Fitzroy on the 19th October, 1900. He showed an unusual aptitude for cricket from his earliest years and he played in the Pennant competition for St. Kilda.

He made his first class debut for Victoria in 1920-21 against Douglas's M.C.C. team.

He had strong forearms and wrists and quickly developed into a formidable all-round batsman with great strength on the on-side. He used a very heavy bat, known to his fellow players as "Big Bertha", which enabled him to produce fierce drives in front of the wicket.

Australias' two outstanding bowlers of the period, Bill O'Reilly and Clarrie Grimmett, both rate him as the most difficult batsman they encountered. O'Reilly said: *"I always gave myself a chance against Bradman, but Ponsford seemed to be a different proposition. Like the elephant he never forgot. He was ready for every little trick I had up my sleeve"*.

Bro. Sir Robert Menzies wrote of him: *"I think that he was the most devastating batsman against slow spinners that I have ever seen"*.

Ponsford amassed huge scores. In his fourth innings for Victoria, he scored 429 in 477 minutes against Tasmania.

One of many successful opening partnerships with his Victorian and Australian captain, Bill Woodfull was their 375 against New South Wales over Christmas 1926. The Victorians posted the record score of 1107. As the New South Wales team were leaving the field, Bill Ponsford opened the gate for them and, with his dry sense of humour, said: *"Goodnight, chaps. See you tomorrow"*. He did.

Team-mates dubbed Woodfull and Ponsford as 'Mutt and Jeff' after the slap-stick movie and comic strip characters.

Ponsford is the only player to have scored over 400 twice in first class cricket. His 437 against Queensland was topped by Bradman's 452, also against Queensland.

In January, 1928, he scored 336 against South Australia. It was his eleventh consecutive first-class century in Australia.

In 1935, Wisden named him 'Cricketer of the Year'.

Of his consistently large scores, Ponsford said: *"I don't think I had the intention of big scores at the start of an innings, but when runs did come along I guess I thought to myself that this same opportunity might not happen again and that I would do well to make the most of it"*.

The fitness required to stay at the wicket for long periods under a hot Australian sun took its toll and Ponsford retired from first class cricket at the age of 34.

Just about any book of cricket records will feature Bill Ponsford. He scored centuries in his first two tests and made a highest test score of 266 in his 29 tests.

He totalled 2122 runs with 7 centuries at an average of 48.2. He was also a good fieldsman and held 21 catches.

His first class tally was 162 matches with 13,819 runs at an average of 65.2.

He shared a benefit match of 2084 pounds with his old partner Bill Woodfull.

William Harold Ponsford was initiated into Freemasonry in the Rechab Lodge No. 224, Victorian Constitution on the 11th September, 1922. He became a foundation member of the Lodge of Sportsmen No. 543, Victorian Constitution on the 28th July, 1941. This lodge amalgamated to become Sportsman Cremorne No. 383 in October, 1984.

Bill Ponsford, the bank clerk, was awarded the M.B.E. in January, 1982 and he died at Kyneton, Victoria on the 6th April, 1991.
