



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PAPER No. 80

PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY: Grahame Cumming

DATE: 27 May 2002

Bro. ALBERT COTTER  
(1883 - 1917)

Albert Cotter, whose nickname was Tibby, was born in Sydney on 3 December 1883.

He was educated at Sydney Grammar School and was one of Grammar's six former pupils to play test cricket for Australia before the First World War.

Cotter played grade cricket for the Glebe club and joined a 6 am practice group at Jubilee Oval with Warren Bardsley, Bert Oldfield and Charles Kelleway each of whom subsequently played for Australia and each of whom joined a Masonic lodge. During the winter the group ran and exercised with the footballers to keep fit.

Cotter had a strong and powerful physique and he became a great fast bowler. Old time cricket writer, J C Davis said of him:

No more beautifully proportioned man have I ever seen. Those who have never gazed upon Albert Cotter stripped often marvelled how he got the tremendous pace into his bowling when he was at his top. But if they could have seen his deep chest, powerful shoulders, thick, clean-muscled arms, the strength and symmetry of his body and limbs, they would no longer wonder. He was a model for the sculptor.

The New South Wales coach in the 1930's, George Garnsey, wrote:

Cotter's arm seemed to be simply a medium for producing the speed imparted by the great body-swing of a wonderfully muscled torso.

Cotter played in what was known as the 'Golden Age of Cricket'.

He was a right arm fast bowler and right hand batsman and old films show that he had a low, almost round-arm slinging action very like that of Jeff Thomson and, as Thommo did, he crossed one leg behind the other immediately before the delivery stride.

He first played for New South Wales in the 1901-2 season and, during the following season, he was chosen to play in the 4th test against England at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

It was the era of timeless tests and the match, which began on 26 February 1904 was won by England by 157 runs. Cotter took 0 for 44 and 3 for 41 and scored 0 and 34 with the bat.

No wickets and no runs in the first innings of his first test was hardly a conspicuous beginning but in the next test in Melbourne, England were caught on a wet, uncovered wicket and Tibby was in his element.

He must have remembered the damp, dewy mornings at Glebe's Jubilee Oval and he routed the Englishmen by taking 6 for 40 and Australia had an easy victory.

It was common at the time for outstanding cricketers to be given an epithet. Fred Spofforth was known as the 'Demon'; Charles Turner was the 'Terror' and Tibby Cotter was called the 'Catapult'.

He was chosen to tour England in 1905 and, on a team visit to New Zealand before sailing for England, Cotter was successful in matches against Otago and a New Zealand eleven.

In England, he was slow to find his best form but at The Oval, in spite of poor Australian fielding and dropped catches, Cotter took a test career best of 7 for 148. The match was drawn and Cotter, who had raised some eyebrows by bowling two bumpers in one over at the England captain, was accused along with the Australian captain, Joe Darling, of unfair play.

Cotter was one of the players suspended by the NSW Cricket Association for giving a written undertaking to play for the Melbourne Club if they brought an English team to Australia in 1906-7. The dispute was eventually resolved.

Cotter was one of six of Australia's leading players who refused to tour England in 1912 after a disagreement with the Australian Board of Control over the choice of the tour manager.

One of the others who refused to tour was the great Victor Trumper who died on 28 June 1915 at the age of 37. Tibby Cotter was one of the pall-bearers at his funeral.

Tibby Cotter's final test was played at Melbourne on 9-13 February 1912. Australia were trounced by England by an innings and 225 runs. Cotter, who scored 15 and 8 with the bat took 0 for 125 off 37 overs in England's innings.

It was a sad end to the career of a great fast bowler whose fitness enabled him to bowl as fast at the end of a hot summer's day as at the beginning and who gave his all for Australia. He had played in 21 tests, 16 against England and 5 against South Africa and had taken 89 wickets at an average of 28.64. He had taken five wickets in an innings 7 times and he had a batting average of 13.05.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Australians were patriotic to King and Empire and the NSW Cricket Association, among many other organisations, did its best to assist young cricketers to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force.

One of those to join early in the war was Tibby Cotter.

Private Cotter No 924 enlisted in the 12th Light Horse Regiment as a stretcher-bearer. The 31 year old Cotter resided at Glebe Point and gave his occupation as clerk.

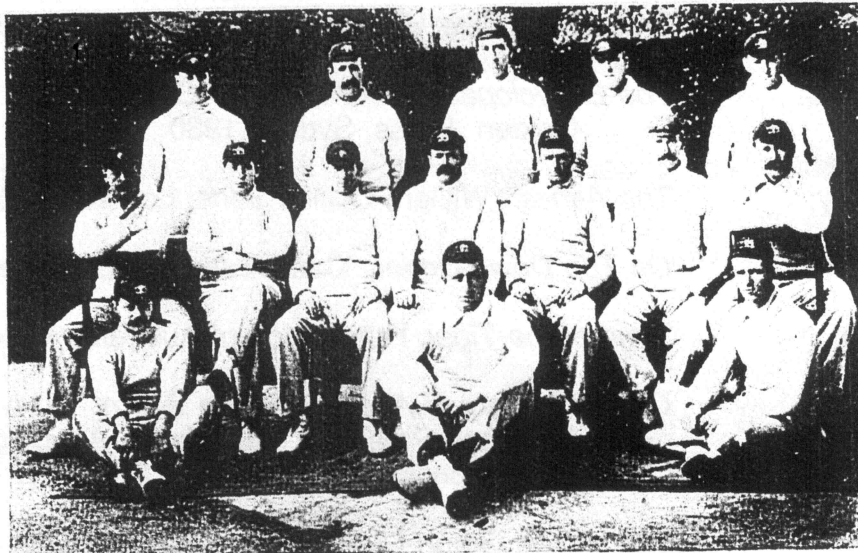
On 19 April 1917, the 12th Light Horse were involved in a bitter day's fighting at Gaza during the Sinai and Palestine campaign and Cotter was mentioned in the *Official History of Australia in the Great War of 1914-18* by H S Gullett as being 'prominent all day among the stretcher-bearers'.

On 31 October 1917, the 12th Light Horse were in Action at the Battle of Beersheba and it was here that Private Albert Cotter was shot dead by a Turkish sniper at close range.

Gullett wrote:

During the Second Gaza engagement he had been singled out for fine work under heavy fire; he behaved in action as a man without fear.

He was buried some 3 km south of East Palestine.



AUSTRALIANS IN ENGLAND, 1905

*Back:* D. R. A. Gellus, W. P. Howell, F. Laver, A. J. Hopkins, A. Catter.  
*Centre:* R. A. Dull, C. Hill, V. Trumper, J. Darling (captain), M. A. Noble, C. E. McLeod, J. J. Kelly. *Front:* S. E. Gregory, W. W. Armstrong, P. M. Newland.

He was the only Australian test cricketer killed in action during the First World War and the New South Wales Cricket Association erected a brass memorial tablet in the Members Pavilion at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Bro Albert Cotter was made a Mason in the original building at 279 Castlereagh Street, Sydney on 25 January 1907 in Lodge Pythagoras No 68 United Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

He was passed Fellowcraft on 22 February 1907 and raised a Master Mason on 22 March 1907.

His name is included on the Grand Lodge Honour Roll of those killed during the First World War.

-----

REFERENCES:-

- John Woodcock [Editor]: *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*,  
Queen Anne Press, London, 1983
- A G (Johnny) Moyes: *Australian Cricket, a History*,  
Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1959
- Philip Derriman: *True to the Blue*, Richard Smart Publishing, 1985
- Malcolm Andrews: *The Encyclopaedia of Australian Cricket*,  
Golden Press, Sydney, 1980
- Ray Illingworth and  
Kenneth Gregory: *The Ashes*, William Collins Sons, London, 1982
- Ray Robinson: *On Top Down Under*, Cassell Australia, Sydney, 1975
- R S Whittington: *Time of the Tiger*, Hutchinson of Australia, Victoria, 1970
- H S Gullett: *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Vol vii  
Sinai and Palestine, 9th Edition, Angus and  
Robertson, Sydney, 1940, pp 327, 401.
- The United Grand Lodge of New South Wales -  
Membership records.