

Playing cricket across the globe

CAROLINE STOK, ARCHIVIST

“High adventures and the charms of cricket re-captured” (GWS 1964)

For the cricket tragics, playing on the famous English cricket grounds might be a dream. But for some OGCs it was a dream that came true. The legend of the Australian Old Collegian (AOC) Cricket World Tour inspired many OGCs to pack their gear and hop on a plane.

In 1959 Graeme Wallace Smith OGC 1946 held the first Old Geelong Collegian cricket world tour. Inspired by his own experience on the South Australian XI UK tour in 1956, Graeme saw the opportunity for something grander.

At College, Graeme had served on the 1st XI from 1948-1951, including three years as Captain. After his 1956 UK cricket tour, he envisaged a cricket team of old collegians from across Australia playing competitive cricket around the world, playing against local clubs and groups. Over 3300 letters and circulars travelled around the globe, coordinating the tour. An advertisement for the trip appeared in the Ad Astra as early as December 1957.

A team of 42 were selected for Graeme's first tour in 1959 managed by the College's Ken Nicolson. Ken had been the Headmaster of the Preparatory School 1921-1927 and returned to the school in 1942 to teach in the Senior School. He would coach the cricket team for many years. A skilled cricketer and footballer, Peter (Joe) Falconer OGC 1952 was one of the 42 players.

Following Graeme's itinerary, at the end of April the team travelled first to Singapore, then India, Pakistan, and on to West Germany to play the British servicemen. After two games in Paris, the team arrived in England to begin a thorough tour of the UK's cricket grounds. Two months and over 40 matches later, the team travelled to Bermuda and the US. Their final game was against the Southern California Cricket Association at the end of August.

Overwhelmed with potential cricketers for the first tour, Graeme quickly started organising a second tour for 1960.

Tales of the tours soon reached cricket clubs around Australia. Many college boys returned home to play in local tournaments. At the local club in the Western Plains Cricket Association, Scott Fletcher OGC 1963 heard stories of the world tours and “he must get on one.” Michael Knox OGC 1958 had always dreamed of playing cricket in England one day.

Michael was selected for the third World Tour in 1964. Along with him were other College boys: Graeme Wallace Smith, Jim Funston OGC 1954 and Rodger Mulligan OGC 1955. The fixture included four weeks in London and touring England.

London was “another world for a country boy from Lismore,” Michael remembers fondly.

When Scott was selected for the 1974 world tour, it was a “hell of an excitement.” Despite being “stone-broke” at the end of the trip, it was a “great opportunity to see the world.”

Highlights for many was setting foot and playing a game of cricket on





grounds they had only ever heard about. They played against village, club and county teams and attended functions in the club rooms after the match. Their common interests forged lifelong friendships amongst teammates and hosts.

Lords Cricket Ground was the pinnacle of many tours. Scott recalls watching Paul Sheahan OGC 1959 playing for the Australians when the AOC visitors were given tickets to the game. In 1963, Michael was excited to learn the team would become honorary members of the Marylebone Cricket Club (this was the last year membership would be gifted to the visitors).

In New York, Scott didn't know who they would be playing against, "they could be from anywhere... Pakistanis, Indians, even fellow Aussies."

Another Old Collegian, Jock Bromell OGC 1950 went on a similar trip to the UK in 1961. The South Australian Country Cricket Tour that Graeme had been on had become the Australian Country Cricket Tour.

With his parent's blessing (and sponsorship), Jock travelled to the UK via ship. He disembarked with a friend in Italy and they found their way to meet the team in England, going via Pompei, Florence, Milan, Rome and Paris.

Like the early AOC trips, Jock played in West Germany. The East Moseley Cricket Club was also a highlight, as their Australian timber pavilion had been opened by Sir Robert Menzies.

For many of these old collegians, the impact of these trips comes from the excitement and pleasure of playing in England. Playing on grounds they had only heard about. Playing in conditions so far from their Australian experience. The effect of the wet English wickets and humidity was a completely new playing experience.

They played in another world. It may have been their first and only trip overseas, at a time of postcards and letters home. For the love of cricket they made friends for life.

You can read more at
www.aoccricket.com/past-tours



OLD BOYS' CRICKET TOUR.
 GRAEME WALLACE SMITH (51) is organiser, and former cricket coach KEN NICOLSON manager, of a world cricket tour to be undertaken in 1959 by an Australian Old Collegians' XI. The team is to be drawn from Old Boys of universities, agricultural colleges and public schools. An outline of the proposed tour is given below, and any Old Boy who wishes to make enquiries should write to Graeme, c/o Brooklyn Pastoral Company, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.

OUTLINE OF TOUR.
 DURATION—4 months. May 1st—September 1st, 1959.
 TEAM WILL TRAVEL BY AIR at special

CARS to be MADE AVAILABLE by leading car manufacturers in England and the U.S.A. British Oil Company assisting in KEEPING TRAVELLING COSTS DOWN.
 FARE to be paid on TIME PAYMENT, if so desired.

GAMES TO BE ARRANGED EN ROUTE TO THE U.K. include:—One-day Matches at—Singapore, Colombo, Bombay, Karachi; Two-day Matches against the British Army of the Rhine at Dusseldorf, Occupation Forces in Berlin and finally, One-day Match against the British Embassies in Paris.

FOLLOWING two months of cricket in England and Scotland, the team departs via Ireland for U.S.A. and Canada where the team will play a series of matches and join in Cricket Centenary Celebrations.

EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY for SIGHT-SEEING afforded e.g., a week from Rome to Dusseldorf, via Monte Carlo; 3 days in Paris, a week in London, 3 days in the Lake District, a week in Scotland and three days in Honolulu. Reserved seats will be available for the Second Test against India at Lords and the Wimbledon final. Official visits will be made to all Test grounds.