

## A CONTINUING TRADITION

**MGS V SGS**

**SINCE 1876**

By James Cattlin

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*"The cricket you play at school will be the most enjoyable of your lives, don't forget it".*

Alan McGilvray, SGS and NSW cricket captain, legendary broadcaster and first President of the Old Sydneians' Cricket Club, spoke these words when he was addressing a reception for the two schools' teams. This book celebrates the feats of players from both schools in this historic and oldest continuing inter-colonial (interstate) cricket match in Australia which started in 1876.

The words of Alan McGilvray ring true for a 'Grammar boy' who captained SGS in 1960 and 1961. James Cattlin is truly inspired by his passion for cricket and his participation in the rivalry between these two schools and the life-long friendships it has garnered. Researching the games and writing the history has truly been a most enjoyable interesting experience.



*SGS team and touring party in Melbourne 1909*

The scene is set with a short history of both schools then an overview of the development of cricket in the colonies.

Somewhat predictably the challenge for the first match in 1876 was disputed after the captain of the SGS team, SW Webb, wrote an article in *The Sydneian* in 1926 giving his recollection of how it unfolded. According to Webb 'The Old Chief' AB Weigall wrote to his counterpart and friend at MGS Dr Morris and suggested a challenge to be played in Melbourne. Not so said HM Ross, who played for MGS in the match, 'we invited them to visit us' and so the rivalry commenced.

Travel for the visiting team in the first four matches was by ocean, which is a little hard to believe these days. Neither school had their own ground so major grounds in the two capitals were used – MCG and East Melbourne Ground in Melbourne; Albert Ground and Association Ground in Sydney. After four successive wins by SGS there was a break for, as *The Melburnian* stated, ‘in every match we have before played with the sister school of New South Wales we have been defeated, and for this reason, chiefly, a continuation of the matches was disallowed’.

A welcome return to the series commenced in 1883, after the train link through Albury was opened, with a first win to MGS. After missing the next year, ‘for various reasons’, 1885 saw the start of an annual match right through until 1914 when World War I intervened. Other breaks were made during the Depression 1929-1938 and World War II 1942-44 however since then the series is unbroken making it overall the oldest inter colonial (interstate) schools match in Australia that is still contested.

There is a description and scoresheet for almost all of the 121 matches played, sourced from *The Sydneian*, *The Melburnian*, local newspaper reports and the players themselves. It is interesting to compare the terms and language of yesteryear with those used today. Following the progress of each match gives the reader a feel of the rivalry and effort put in by the players in an annual match that was regarded by both schools as the real test of their strength, the pinnacle of their season’s effort with the reputation of the school on the line. It’s a cricket book for cricketers and a permanent record of their achievements and failings for all to read in one volume.

This narrative, which includes photographs scattered throughout the text, is presented in the following periods –

- Beginnings 1876 – 1889
- The Golden Age 1890 – 1914
- Between the Wars 1918 – 1941
- Post War 1945 – 1959
- Times of Change 1960-1979
- Six ball overs 1980 – 1997
- Since Tri-Grammar 1998 – 2015
- Extras – Grounds, Statistics, Those Who Missed Out, Coaches, First Class Reps

The descriptions are interspersed with *profiles* of several important early representative players such as the enigmatic RC Allen, SP Jones, Tibby Cotter, WM Bruce, Ted a’Beckett and the Barbour family as well as coaches such as Noel Austin and Peter Young. *Brief profiles* are given at the end of many chapters about other prominent players and their careers on and off the field after leaving school. The chapter Those Who Missed Out - gives short profiles of players who did not play in the annual fixture because of various circumstances, for example, Beal, Charlton, Donnan, Iredale, Spofforth, Box, Clark, Conway, Guest, Kimpton, Ledward, Newton and Parish.



*1959 SGS XI takes the field in Melbourne*

Two record breaking matches from the Golden Age that were not played between the two schools are also featured – SGS v Shore in 1909 and MGS v Geelong College in 1915.



*1954 match at Weigall - N Carlyon (MGS) batting*

The chapters Lest We Forget remember the players who served their country during the two World Wars, those many talented cricketers who made the supreme sacrifice. Of all the schools in Australia the highest number of old boys who went to World War I came from SGS and MGS.

Statistics of Performances, Century & Best Partnerships as well as lists of Coaches, First Class Reps and all players in the series and a summary of the results complete the book.

There are many team and informal photographs included throughout the book, gathered from many public and private collections. Many of these photographs have not been previously published and they not only represent a lasting memory but also give a feeling for the times and the fun to be had on tour.



*1955 Picnic at Mt Martha*

*Foreground: D Alcock, J Cameron, N Carlyon (MGS), Background: J Vicars (SGS)*

Cricket is the national game of Australia and both SGS and MGS, as long established schools in their respective cities, have played and continue to play a large part in development of the game. It is hoped that current school boys will learn of the rich history of past teams, players and their performances and look on this work as an inspiration to make their own contribution to the long history of the schools' games and to continue the tradition.

Details of the book as envisaged are:

- Approximately 500 pages with more than 120 photographs
- Soft cover with illustrated colour cover flap and high quality paper
- Cost – under \$50 (plus postage)

If you would like to pre-order a copy, further information about the book or wish to contribute a memory you have of the match in which you played please email [jamescattlin@bigpond.com](mailto:jamescattlin@bigpond.com)



*'The Bat' presented in 1976 by John Crawford (OS) at the centenary MGS v SGS match.  
The winning team is presented with this traditional 'Bat' each year*

