

Bill Alley

1919-2004

- Played 1st Grade for Petersham and 12 matches for NSW
- Professional boxer, winning his first 28 fights
- Played County cricket for Somerset
- Umpired 10 Test matches

Bill Alley was a “legend” as a cricketer. Strangely for this left hand batsman and right arm medium pace bowler, his legendary status was earned in England after a solid grounding playing 12 times for New South Wales scoring three centuries.

William Edward Alley was born at Hornsby on 3 February 1919 and went to school at Brooklyn near the Hawkesbury. His first job was on an oyster farm. He joined the Northern District Club and made his 1st Grade debut in 1938-39. After five seasons transferred to Petersham.

In his early days with Petersham, he travelled to Sydney each Saturday morning returning on the paper train later that night or early Sunday morning. He was also an outstanding boxer who won his first 28 fights when he turned professional. A mishap in the nets while practising with Petersham where he sustained a broken jaw put paid to his boxing career however, and he thereafter concentrated on cricket.

In his first season in 1943-44 with Petersham he scored 1,413 runs which remained the Sydney 1st Grade record for 63 years. He scored six centuries that season including tons against University (141*), North Sydney (119), Wests (100) and Mosman (111*) in successive matches. His best score was against Randwick when he hit 230 not out including 12 sixes and 21 fours with his first 100 coming in 59 minutes. He then took the ball and finished with 6-52 to record one of the great all-round performances in the history of Sydney Grade Cricket let alone Petersham DCC. Against Mosman that same summer at the Sydney Cricket Ground he hit 111 not out and took 5-35 to record yet another outstanding all-round performance. Apart from topping the Petersham and competition batting that season he also took out the club bowling honours with 57 wickets at an average of 15.12 with 6-39 against Waverley his best performance.

Over the next four seasons Bill totalled another 1,485 runs with five centuries and five fifties for Petersham. During this period he played 12 times for NSW scoring three centuries as an opening batsman. When his wife died tragically and he missed selection in Bradman’s 1948 Ashes “Invincibles” team, he moved to England and played in the Lancashire League with Colne Cricket Club for five years where he topped 1,000 runs each season, had an average of 107 while scoring 20 centuries and taking 179 wickets.

In 1957 at age 38, he made his County debut with Somerset after his application to join Lancashire was rejected because of his age. When he completed his Somerset stint, 11 years later at age 49, he had accumulated 19,612 runs and taken 768 wickets with 31 centuries and 92 half centuries. At 42 he scored 3,019 runs in the English season (his testimonial year after only four seasons with Somerset) while a year earlier he had bowled 14 successive maiden overs in an innings taking 4-17 off 27 overs with 21 maidens.

In 1969, Bill turned to umpiring after rejecting Somerset’s offer of a contract for one day matches only. Within five years he umpired the first of his 10 Test matches when Australia played England at Nottingham.

In his time with Petersham he scored 3,040 1st Grade runs with 11 centuries and nine fifties. He also took 115 wickets. His total Sydney Grade Cricket 1st Grade record stands at 5,954 runs with 16 centuries and 22 fifties. With the ball he took 155 wickets.

William Edward Alley died on 24 November 2004 at Taunton, Somerset, England aged 85.



