Bill Brown

1912-2008

"His rise was most romantic and a tribute to his singleness of purpose and determination". This was how the Marrickville club in its annual report of 1933-34 described Bill Brown's selection in the Australian team to tour England in 1934. It went on to say that Brown's selection was the great moment in the history of Marrickville District Cricket Club as it had accomplished what was the aim and objective of every club—having a representative in the Australian XI.

William Alfred Brown was born in Toowoomba, Queensland on 31 July 1912. He showed promise from the time he joined Marrickville in 1929-30 after completing his schooling at Dulwich Hill and Petersham High schools. He first played in the Shires team where he scored 347 for the season including an innings of 97 against Petersham in a partnership of 167.

The following season the right-hander hit an even 100* against North Sydney in the first Shires game and was immediately promoted to 3rd Grade where he played seven games scoring 233 runs including a knock of 75*. A club record of 172 against Randwick in Poidevin Gray followed which saw him elevated to 2nds where he scored 51 in his only innings before making his 1st Grade debut the following match. At just 18 years of age he scored 80 in his first innings in the top grade opening the batting against Paddington. He had gone from Shires to 1st Grade in a season.

While he scored 93 in an opening stand of 162 with Oliver Jones against Cumberland at the SCG in his second season, it was not until his fourth in 1933-34 that he scored his maiden 1st Grade century. And it was made in style with a massive 165 against Randwick. The following season he hit 148 playing Balmain at Marrickville Oval to become the first to score a 1st Grade century on the ground.

The youngster made his first-class debut in November 1932 when he played for NSW against his birth state Queensland at the 'Gabba. He opened the batting but was run out without facing a ball. Just 15 months later at the SCG against Victoria, Brown scored 205 batting most of his innings in a 294 runs partnership with the great Don Bradman who scored 128. With a score of 154 against Queensland Brown ended 1933-34 with a first-class batting average of 75.

Brown and Bradman 1st Test at Notts. 1948

In 1934 Bill toured England with the Australians and made his debut in the 1st Ashes Test at Nottingham where he scored 22 and 73. He went on to play all five Test Matches in the series scoring 300 runs. The highlight was his 105 at Lord's in the 2nd Test. He showed his liking for the ground when he scored 206* (Australia's 100th century against England) in the return Test Match four years later when he carried his bat throughout the innings. That followed 133 in the second innings of the 1st Ashes Test a fortnight earlier. The following game against Derbyshire he rattled up 265, his highest first-class score.

With Australia's regular openers Bill Woodfull and Bill Ponsford retiring after the 1934 tour, Brown and Jack Fingleton took over. On the 1935-36 tour of South Africa they showed their wares with an opening partnership of 233 which was Australia's first double century opening partnership. Bill's top-scored with 121.

With WWII upsetting the Test Cricket schedule, eight years elapsed between 1938 and 1946 until Bill resumed his career in a one-off Test against New Zealand in Wellington in March 1946. It was the first Test match between the countries. Bill captained the Australian team and top scored with 67 opening the batting.

Bill Brown entered the record books in unusual circumstances in the Second Test against India at the SCG in December 1947. Backing up too far, he received a warning from bowler Vinoo Mankad. When he tried it again Mankad removed the bails without warning leaving Brown well out of his ground at the bowler's end to be run out for 18. That was a repetition of an identical dismissal when the two had met previously at the SCG in an Australian XI match. That infamous tactic became known as "Mankading" with Bill Brown its first (and second) unfortunate victim.

With the war interrupting first-class cricket it wasn't until 1948 that Bill Brown returned to England with Don Bradman's Invincibles. Although aged 35, he made eight centuries on that famous tour.

In 1936 Brown accepted a coaching offer to return to Queensland where he played a major role in building up the strength of cricket in that State in the years which followed. He represented Queensland from 1936-37 and the next season was appointed captain. During the war he served in the Pacific with the RAAF as a flight lieutenant. After the war he was not the dominating player he had been before and he had lost possibly his most productive cricket years. He retired from first-class cricket in 1950 after totalling 13,838 runs from 189 matches at an average of 51.44 with a mammoth 39 centuries. In his 22 Test Match career spanning 14 years Bill Brown scored 1,592 runs at the impressive average of 46.82. His imposing record included four centuries and nine fifties. In 1939 he was one of Wisden's five Cricketers of the Year.

Bill Brown was a Queensland selector from 1950-51 to 1959-60 and an Australian selector in 1952-53. In 1992 the Queensland Cricket Association elected him a life member. A likeable, popular and modest man he was awarded Medal of the Order of Australia in 2000 for services to cricket. He had the distinction of being the oldest surviving Test cricketer for a number of years before he died on 16 March 2008, aged 95 after being ill for a few months.

In his seven seasons with Marrickville, Bill Brown scored 1,825 runs including 1,537 in 1st Grade where he scored two centuries with 165 his highest score. He also scored 547 in Poidevin-Gray and another 447 in Shires for an overall total of 2,819 runs. He played 10 of his 22 Tests while a member of Marrickville.

Bill Brown shortly before his passing in 2008

MANKAD AGAIN TRAPS BILL BROWN

By "GINTY" LUSH

Australia's opening batsman Bill Brown was run out in the Second Test at Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday for the second time this season—while backing up at the bowler's end.

Indian left - hander Vinoo Mankad, who trapped Brown in the match against an Australian Eleven in this manner, again got him yesterday.

Australia has lost one wicket for 28 in its first innings, in reply to India's total of 188.

Brown's dismissal caused heated discussion in the members' stand.

Even the Pressbox was the scene of a debate as to whether Mankad was guilty of a sporting breach.

The history of the Brown-Mankad duel is:

- Brown warned by Mankad for backing up too smartly in the India v. An Australian XI match at the S.C.G.
- Brown run out by Mankad in the same match for offending again
- Brown run out for the second time by Mankad yesterday.

When Brown was trapped yesterday it was obvious that he was disgusted with himself.

When the umpire gave him out Brown raised his arm and swung it through the air in disgust.

Although a run out in this fashion is permissible, it is not regarded as a sportsmanlike thing under ordinary circumstances.

Foot Gained

But in the light of a previous warning, and a dismissal, Brown was foolish to take liberties with Mankad.

And a foot gained at the bowler's end is still a foot gained at the wicketkeeper's end

However, Brown's backing-up was not as exaggerated as when he last played in Sydney.

Mankad can scarcely be called a bad sport for trapping Brown.

As Mankad bowls left-hand round the wicket, he has an excellent view of anyone trying to get a "lead out" from the popping-crease.

The first time he had Brown at his mercy he beckoned the batsman back with a crooked finger when Brown was a yard out of his ground.

This was hailed as one of the most sporting acts ever seen at the S.C.G.

Yesterday there was no warning—just lightning-like action.

Newspaper article covering Brown's "Mankad" dismissal
13 December 1947 Second Test Australia v India at SCG