

BAT, BALL AND FIELD

Bellerive Oval and Tasmania's cricketing heritage

Tasmania is well known as the Cinderella state of Australian cricket – the most recent graduate to interstate first-class competition. But this conceals a long and proud cricketing heritage stretching back to the very first years of European settlement on the island. At Bellerive Oval, some of Australia's best sporting facilities blend with the traditional, on display at the Tasmanian Cricket Museum, to provide patrons with a unique cricket experience.

Tasmanian cricket reaches 200 not out

Europeans came to settle Tasmanian shores 200 years ago. With them came a sport that was already old in the 'Mother Country' – its English history dates back to the middle ages. Cricket in Australia's island colony was sufficiently established by 1814 to rate a mention in the diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood, colonial chaplain, recording a social match at Rokeby. It is fair to say that as European settlement in Tasmania passes its 200th anniversary, so too does cricket on the island.

Tasmania's first organised match appears to have been in Hobart Town in 1825, between a Military Eleven and a team of civilians. The colony's first cricket club, Hobart Town, was organised in 1832. During the next decade the Launceston Cricket Club was formed, reflecting a parallel development of the game in Northern Tasmania which was to be a unique feature of Tasmanian cricket for most of its long history. Launceston is today Australia's oldest continuously-functioning cricket club.

In 1850 a group of Launceston-based Tasmanians was to play a team from across Bass Strait, but a club official forgot to dispatch the invitation. When the Port Phillip team failed to arrive, a match was hastily arranged with a Southern representative team in Oatlands. The match, won by Northern Tasmania by 12 runs, was the beginning of 127 years of fierce intrastate rivalry. Matches between South and North (and later North-West) were to be the focus of representative cricket for an island community starved of interstate competition.

Born in Tasmania: Australian first-class cricket

Australia's inaugural first-class match was staged in Launceston in 1851, between a representative team from the island colony and the Port Phillip Bay settlement, soon to be named Victoria. The ball dominated the bat in a closely fought battle. The home side, needing 37 second-innings runs to win, reached their target with only three wickets left to fall. A ball retained from that historic encounter is now on display at the Tasmanian Cricket Museum.

For well over a century, along with the odd match against other colonies, states or visiting teams, Victoria was to be Tasmania's main outlet for representative cricket. The standard of cricket on the island steadily fell behind that of the Victorians, who for many years treated Tasmania as second-rate opposition by fielding second elevens and even club teams. But this lesser competition was better than no competition at all.

In late December 1861 a commercially-sponsored English representative team descended on Australia for the first cricketing tour of the colonies. Southern Tasmanian cricket officials negotiated a visit to the island which resulted in the first England-Tasmania encounter, a match in Hobart featuring 22 Tasmanians against an England XI. Despite their numerical disadvantage the English won by four wickets. A bat from that match, presented by the English to Tasmania's leading run-scorer, Thomas Whitesides, is on display at the Tasmanian Cricket Museum.

A big achievement for the small colony was the 1884 Tasmanian tour of New Zealand's South Island, organised by cricketer and newspaper proprietor John George Davies. The tour was a mixed success, with two wins, two losses and two drawn matches against provincial sides. It

was the first overseas tour by any Australian colonial representative side, but although other colonies were to repeat the effort, a Tasmanian team did not venture outside Australia again for over 100 years.

Out in the cold

The late 1800s saw Tasmanian cricket begin to take on a more formal organisation. In 1866 the Southern Tasmanian Cricket Association (later the Tasmanian Cricket Association) was formed, to be followed in 1886 by its Launceston-based counterpart, the Northern Tasmanian Cricket Association.

With the New Zealand tour under its belt Tasmanian cricket had reason to be optimistic about its future. By 1900 Tasmanian representative teams had played 14 matches against England, three matches against Australian XIs and 27 against other colonies – 24 of them against Victoria.

But the island state was already becoming isolated from the Australian cricket mainstream. The Tasmanian cricket administrator J.G. Davies had been a strong advocate of an Australasian Cricket Council, but when the council was formed in 1892 Tasmania, perhaps nervous about cost and competitiveness, decided not to join.

As a result of this, the island colony was excluded from the inaugural Sheffield Shield competition. This made it increasingly difficult to attract representative state teams to the island. By 1947, when Western Australia joined the Shield competition, Tasmania was the only state left out.

For most of the 20th century, Tasmanians were denied the opportunity to see cricket at the highest levels. The final humiliation came in 1963, when an encounter between a Tasmanian team and the visiting English tourists was cut to two days and given second-class status. Faced with a permanent slide into cricketing oblivion, Tasmania's cricket administrators determined that something had to be done.

The first application to get Tasmania into the interstate Sheffield Shield competition was rejected in 1964, starting a campaign to marshal the required resources – playing skills, public support and money. It took nearly 13 years but success finally came. In January 1977 the Australian Cricket Board decided to admit Tasmania on a two-year trial basis, playing only five games each season as against the 10 of the other states.

First-class ups and downs

January 1979 saw Tasmania pass two milestones. It won the national one-day competition on 14 January 1979 (see **A cricket landmark: the TCA Ground**), and recorded its first Sheffield Shield win a fortnight later, on 30 January 1979, when a memorable 172-run partnership between Roger Woolley and Jack Simmons gave Tasmania a historic four-wicket win over Western Australia at Devonport. Steady improvement saw Tasmania rewarded with full partnership in the interstate competition in 1982-83. Within a year it had its first modern-era Test representative – batsman and wicketkeeper (and Tasmania's captain) Roger Woolley.

Things were looking good. But victories remained scarce for the island state through the 1980s and early 1990s – in most seasons Tasmania could manage no more than a single victory. Finally, at the end of a season in which the Tasmanians had lost only once and achieved three outright wins, the Tigers reached their first Sheffield Shield final. The 1993-94 final, in Sydney in March 1994, resulted in an emphatic win by New South Wales, but the Tigers had made their point.

Tasmania had an outstanding season in 1997-98. The Tigers scored a remarkable six outright wins in succession to reach the final against Western Australia in Perth. The team was more competitive than in its previous final, but again Tasmania lost. In 2001-02, after the team had won five of its last six matches, Tasmania's final against Queensland in Brisbane brought a similarly disappointing result.

But the Tasmanians had proved they could compete with Australia's best. Their achievement was due in no small measure to a new hero of Tasmanian cricket, David Boon, who showed it was possible to achieve success at the highest level of Test and one-day-international cricket while remaining firmly attached to his island home.

The clubs: crucibles of champions

Organised cricket in Tasmania began with the clubs. Hobart Town (founded 1832), Derwent (1835) and Launceston (1843 and now the State's oldest surviving club) set the scene. Tasmania's early Test players Kenny Burn and Charlie Eady cut their teeth on club cricket. It was in a Hobart club match (Break O'Day versus Burn's club, Wellington) that Eady set his world individual batting record of 566 in 1902.

Top-level club cricket was organised by regional organisations – in Hobart by the Southern Tasmanian Cricket Association (later the TCA), formed in 1866. The TCA now administers a competition involving clubs based throughout the Greater Hobart metropolitan area. But over the years, the TCA has been only one of many suburban and country cricket associations involving many hundreds of players and officials.

A love of the game and its traditions by people of all ages is the basis of the continuing strength of Tasmanian club cricket. Many clubs have survived for generations – some dating back well into the 19th century. Others came and went, but the spirit lived on down the years. The clubs have provided the environment for youngsters to develop their skills under the guidance of veterans who themselves learned the trade in the same way. The dedication of loyal club supporters all over Tasmania has been the foundation for the success of our home-grown champions.

Women get into the act

Women have always been participants in Tasmanian cricket. As team supporters they provided refreshments and support at club matches, but in the colony's early years were also frequently called on to make up the numbers as players.

Some of the young women enjoyed the experience enough to set up teams of their own. Women had been competing against each other in England from the 1700s and the first known Australian women's cricket match was at Bendigo in 1874. An early Tasmanian competition for women involved girls from Hobart colleges from the early 1890s, and competitions in the north and north-west were started around the same time.

Five years after Australian federation, Australia's first interstate women's match was played in Melbourne in 1906 between a Victorian side and a Tasmanian women's team captained by Mabel Hocking. But Tasmanian women's cricket languished after this early promise, despite several efforts over the years to revive girls' competition in different parts of the state.

The establishment of the Tasmanian Women's Cricket Association in 1980 (in 1982 affiliated with the Australian Women's Cricket Council) was a sign of a more assertive attitude by players and supporters. The association lasted only until the early 1990s, but it had opened the door to the possibility of a stronger, better coordinated competition.

In the meantime, women's cricket around Australia – especially in New South Wales and Victoria – was going from strength to strength. Australia, one of 11 countries involved in international competition, has been even more dominant in the women's form of the game than the men's, winning four World Cups between 1978 and 1997.

Around 27,000 Australian women and girls now play cricket at club and school level. Acknowledging the growth of women's cricket and the need to foster interest among girls, Women's Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricket Board (now Cricket Australia) agreed to begin a trial integration of the two organisations from 2001.

In Tasmania, a current girls' under-age competition is a forerunner for a planned revival of a women's competition under the umbrella of Cricket Australia and the TCA. Tasmanian women combined with Northern Territory representatives to field a senior team in the 2003 Cricket Australia Cup for Women, and early in 2004 Bellerive Oval hosted Tasmania's first women's cricket international, a one-day match between Australia and New Zealand.

Icons of the Tasmanian game

Tasmanian cricketers have long suffered by their isolation. The island has produced outstanding talent with both bat and ball, but few have made it to the top because they never had the opportunity to play regularly against Australia's best. Ted Windsor, Norman Dodds, Ron Morrisby, Emerson Rodwell and Terry Cowley are some of those who could have played for Australia – had they only lived in another state. 'A Test cricketer in the making' was Morrisby's billing at the start of an Australian tour of India in 1935-36. Morrisby performed well, but the tour did not have Test status.

Two early successful Test cricketers who made their homes in Tasmania were initially selected for Australia from other colonial teams. Tom Kendall was a wily Victorian spin bowler who took 14 wickets in the first two England-Australia Tests in 1877, but came to Tasmania soon afterward. Joe Darling, an aggressive left-handed batsman, was captain of Australia in the early 1900s while resident in Tasmania, having moved from South Australia. Both made a major contribution to Tasmanian cricket, and lived out their lives in Hobart.

Some who represented Tasmania in their formative years took the big step of moving interstate to further their careers. Of these, a select few made it to the top. C.L. ('Jack') Badcock was selected for Australia from South Australia on the basis of a fine interstate batting record, and aggressive all-rounder Laurie Nash, after being selected for a single Test while playing for Tasmania, continued his career in Victoria.

Launceston-born Ted McDonald, a fast bowler for Tasmania before settling in Victoria, was Tasmania's most accomplished Test export before the modern era. He and Jack Gregory were a formidable opening attack in the early 1920s, with McDonald averaging nearly four wickets a match. Though never a senior representative of his home state, Max Walker was another expatriate Tasmanian bowler who made it to the top in the Test arena in a distinguished career through the 1970s. Like McDonald, Walker was selected from the Victorian state side.

Two other Australian Test representatives were born in Tasmania. Sam Morris, born in Hobart of West Indian parents, has the double distinction of being the first West Indian and the first person born in Tasmania to play Test cricket; he played for Australia in 1885. Doug Ring, also born in Hobart, was a leg spinner for Australia in the years after World War II. Both Morris and Ring were selected while playing for Victoria.

Tasmania's recent period at the top level of Australian cricket has uncovered a wealth of cricketing talent. The sterling performances, among others, of Danny Buckingham, Dene Hills and (especially) Jamie Cox might have brought Test selection at another time, but they were up against a settled and increasingly successful Test team and some outstanding emerging talent throughout Australia.

Reaching the top

Resident Tasmanians who have been selected for Australia and played in Tests make up a very select list. Ken Burn was the first, in 1890. Between the inauguration of the Sheffield Shield in 1892 and Tasmania's entry into the competition in 1977, only two cricketers played for Australia in Tests while Tasmanian residents: Charles Eady (in 1896 and 1902) and Laurie Nash (in 1932).

In the modern era, some names have been obscured by time and circumstances. Roger Woolley, State captain, batsman and wicketkeeper, represented Australia in Sri Lanka and the West Indies just before David Boon began his illustrious career. Fast bowler Greg

Campbell played four Test matches and 12 one-day internationals for his country after being selected to tour England in 1989, and talented all-rounder Shaun Young played one Test for Australia in England in 1997.

Melbourne-born Colin Miller represented both Victoria and South Australia before arriving in Tasmania in 1992, but he was selected for Australia on the basis of his outstanding record over many years for Tasmania. His 1997-98 season tally of 67 wickets remains the largest ever for any bowler for any state in the history of Australian interstate competition. Selected for Australia in 1998, Miller continued to confound international batsmen and take wickets with his mix of spin and medium pace. In 18 Tests he took 69 wickets and was named Australian Test player of the year in 2000-01.

Over the long history of cricket in Australia, four Test players stand out for their contribution to the Tasmanian game.

Ken Burn (1862-1956) Two Tasmanians were selected for Australian touring sides before 'Kenny' Burn – John Arthur and, after Arthur's premature death, George Bailey, in 1878 – but Burn was the first Tasmanian who actually played for his country in a Test match. Burn was a batsman, but a squabble between selectors for the 1890 England tour saw him chosen as the team's second wicketkeeper, though he had never kept wickets in his life. Burn's short Test career was not outstanding, but his performances for Tasmania as leading batsman and captain were legendary. At a time when 20 runs was considered a good individual score and team innings totals rarely exceeded 200, his average was over 30 in a representative career spanning 27 years. After retirement Burn continued to serve Tasmanian cricket as a TCA official.

Charles Eady (1870-1945) Eady was the first Australian to score a century in each innings in a first-class match, for Tasmania against Victoria in 1895. He was selected for Australia in 1896 for his outstanding all-round skills, making a mark by taking wickets as a fast-medium bowler in Tests in England in that year, and again in Australia in 1902. Eady has the distinction of a world record – the highest individual run total in officially-organised cricket, a massive 566 scored for the Break O'Day Club in Hobart in 1902. In the 20 years he represented Tasmania, Eady took 110 wickets at an average of only 20.38. As a State batsman he was one of the few rivals of Ken Burn, with an average of over 33. Eady was a naturally gifted sportsman, a champion in Australian football and tennis as well as cricket. As well as being a cricket administrator (he was Tasmania's representative on the national cricket board for some years), Eady went on to a distinguished career in law and politics.

David Boon (1960-) A youthful David Boon first represented Tasmania in 1978, playing a big part in Tasmania's success in the Gillette Cup one-day interstate competition in January 1979. He broke into the national Test team in 1984 after a string of outstanding performances for Tasmania in both forms of the game. Boon's great achievement was to become a mainstay of Australia's Test batting through difficult times. He showed his true mettle against the mighty West Indies, consistently displaying a special ability to play the world's best fast bowlers. In 107 Test matches he scored 7422 runs with 21 centuries, in addition to nearly 6000 runs in one-day internationals. Fittingly, Boon was captain of his State in his later cricketing years, leading Tasmania to a final in 1998 before bowing out of top competition in March 1999 with over 8000 runs in 119 Sheffield Shield and Pura Cup matches. David Boon's commitment to his home state is emphasised by his subsequent career with the TCA as its Media and Public Relations Manager and his contributions to Tasmanian sporting and charity causes.

Ricky Ponting (1974-) Appointed to lead Australia's one-day team in March 2002 and to become the national Test captain from early 2004, Ponting is the first Tasmanian to reach these twin pinnacles of Australian cricket. By December 1995, when he embarked on his Test career, he had scored 2601 first-class runs in three years for Tasmania, at an average of nearly 60. His Test record is no less impressive. Following David Boon's precedent, he is now firmly ensconced in the Australian team's premier batting spot of No. 3, averaging over 50 an innings in a total of well over 5000 runs for his country. In the calendar year of 2003 he scored more Test runs than any other player in the world. Australia's one-day international

performances since Ponting took over the captaincy have been close to miraculous, winning a record 21 successive matches including all of its 2003 World Cup encounters. In the World Cup final against India, at Johannesburg's Wanderers Stadium on 23 March 2003, Ponting led from the front with a magnificent 140 not out off 121 deliveries in an unbeaten partnership of 234 with Damien Martyn. Ricky Ponting's Australians scored a record total of 359, crushing the Indians by 125 runs.

Early Hobart cricket grounds

Records suggest that the first organised cricket match in the island colony of Tasmania was played in 1825 in a paddock known as Stanley's Field, off Elizabeth Street close to Hobart's business centre. But already the growing community was dictating other uses for this venue, so cricket organisers were forced to look for a playing arena further out of town.

A year later, an Easter holiday match between a 'Sussex and Kent' eleven and 'others' was played at the 'Government Paddocks', where in 1832 the newly-formed Hobart Town Cricket Club had been granted tenancy. The 'Lower Domain Ground', as it became known, was later the site of the Hobart Railway Station, now transformed into the ABC's Hobart radio and television studios.

The Lower Domain Ground was the venue for Hobart Town's first inter-colonial game, between Tasmania and Victoria in 1858 – seven years after the first in Launceston. This was also the venue for the island colony's first international match, against England in 1862, but military demands to use the area for drill practice saw a move to a location on the Queen's Domain near today's Cenotaph.

A cricket landmark: the TCA Ground

Further England visits in 1874, 1879 and 1883 gave the sport the lift it needed to justify government support for ground improvements. In Hobart, the Southern Tasmanian Cricket Association with government help established a new ground higher on the Queen's Domain. This became the TCA Ground, the home of Tasmanian cricket for over a century.

At the TCA Ground in March and April 1902, Charles Eady played a truly epic innings for his club, Break O'Day, against Wellington Club, captained by Ken Burn. Eady hit a world record individual innings of 566 not out, including 12 fives (the score at the time for over the fence) and 69 fours. The bat used by Eady on this memorable occasion is on display at the Tasmanian Cricket Museum.

The TCA Ground was the venue for virtually every major representative match played in southern Tasmania for 100 years. With the entry of Tasmania into interstate competition from 1969 (one-day) and 1977 (Sheffield Shield), there was a marked rise in the number of major matches at the TCA Ground. Tasmania hosted 10 Sheffield Shield matches at the venue. The ground's big Shield occasion was in December 1983, when Brian Davison belted 171 not out to steer his adopted home state to an innings victory over Victoria.

The TCA Ground had innumerable grand occasions, but is best remembered for a one-day match in 1979. Tasmania, which had entered the national one-day competition a decade earlier, had reached the 1978-79 final against Western Australia after a stirring one-wicket win over Queensland in Brisbane. On 14 January 1979 a packed house cheered the Tasmanian team, led by Jack Simmons and including a talented youngster named David Boon, to a 47-run victory. The Gillette Cup won on that memorable summer afternoon is now a prize exhibit at the Tasmanian Cricket Museum, Bellerive Oval.

Bellerive Oval's humble beginnings

The lands along the Derwent's Eastern Shore were the domain of the Moomairementer people for thousands of years before the first European settlers arrived at Risdon Cove in 1803. Risdon Cove was soon abandoned in favour of Sullivans Cove across the Derwent.

But a few hardy individuals again settled the Eastern Shore over the next few years. They planted crops at Kangaroo Point, later called Bellerive (meaning 'beautiful riverbank'). In early times the favoured venue for community sport was a large field on the shores of Kangaroo Bay, to the north of today's Bellerive Oval.

The land on which Bellerive Oval was to be developed was part of a grant to James McCormack, who established an orchard there in the mid 1850s. 'Beachside Estate', as it became known, was bought in 1913 by Clarence Council, which set aside 8.5 of the 14 hectares for recreational purposes.

A local sporting centre

Until 1943, when the Derwent River was finally bridged, Eastern Shore sport was very localised. The Bellerive Recreational Ground, featuring an east-to-west concrete wicket, was used mainly for community ball sports and athletics. It was the home of the local cricket and football teams playing against clubs from South Arm to Geilston Bay.

A photograph from the 1920s shows two paths crossing the ground. It was said the Catholics used one to get to Corpus Christi convent school while the Protestants used the other to walk to Bellerive Primary School.

The oval was nothing special. Grass was sparse in summer as Bellerive didn't have a town water supply. The rough and stony surface was partially levelled and top-dressed in the late 1930s. As well as having a north-south slope, the oval sloped down from the middle – one could only see the upper torso of a player on the opposite side of the oval. A tin shed served as a change-room, but there were no spectator facilities.

Improvements in the 1930s included a cinder track for cycling and trotting. (A Bellerive football captain was killed while training a horse there.) The former Rose Bay ferry jetty pavilion was relocated to the ground to serve as a shelter and change shed. Situated just off Derwent Street near the present 'Field of Fame', for many years the pavilion was a landmark for both footballers and cricketers.

Joining a bigger league

The new floating bridge saw a push in the 1940s to involve the Eastern Shore in Hobart-wide competitions. Senior football came to Bellerive Oval in 1947 with the formation of the Clarence District Football Club. The oval got an improved playing surface and some basic facilities, as well as a perimeter fence.

There was a problem: football authorities would not allow the football club to overlay the concrete cricket pitch with sand and loam, which meant club footballers had to remove the concrete before their season started and replace it for the new cricket season. Needless to say the strength of the cement deteriorated as the years progressed.

The cricketers took a little longer than the footballers to enter senior club competition but in 1956 the Clarence District Cricket Club was admitted to the TCA. Turf wickets were officially opened by the Warden of Clarence on 19 January 1957.

In the same year the new Clarence football captain-coach, Stuart Spencer, started a push for better facilities which culminated in new brick clubrooms by 1962. In 1965 the oval got a new surface, floodlights on four 22m towers, a stand for 500 people on the western side, and parking for cars along the eastern flank in the area known today as 'The Hill'.

When the cricket club embarked on an ambitious clubroom development in the early 1980s, and additional stands added, the oval started to shape up as a reasonable suburban sporting facility.

A new home for Tasmanian cricket

In the mid-1980s the Tasmanian Cricket Association unsuccessfully sought support to upgrade facilities at its century-old ground on the Queens Domain. More promising was the idea of making a new headquarters at Bellerive Oval. With assistance from the Tasmanian Government and the Clarence Council, the TCA made a historic move to Hobart's Eastern Shore in 1986.

In 1987 Bellerive Oval was resurfaced and levelled. 'The Hill' replaced the original gravel car park and 'drag strip' on the eastern side of the ground and additional stands were erected at each end of the Oval. A new building, the AGC Pavilion, was completed in December 1987 to accommodate members and officials. Now called the Players' Pavilion, the AGC Pavilion also provided the Oval's first entertainment venue, seating 120 diners in comfort.

All this was completed in time for the first international fixture to be played at Bellerive – a one-day International between New Zealand and Sri Lanka on 12 January 1988. The success of this match and perseverance by the TCA encouraged the Australian Cricket Board to allocate a Test match to Bellerive. From 16 to 20 December 1989, Australia played Sri Lanka in Tasmania's first Test match, won by Australia by 173 runs.

Fit for any occasion

There have since been many improvements to the ground, temporary and permanent. One early 'improvement' – now just a memory – was the most televised toilet block in the cricket world, a sandy coloured brick building always in the action because of its strategic location at the southern end of the ground.

The biggest changes were the result of a 10-year plan from the early 1990s. They included major new training facilities: one of Australia's best-equipped indoor practice centres along with new practice wickets for home and visiting teams. Electronic aids include the traditional-styled scoreboard and a full-sized video replay screen, both operated by match officials in the scorers' rooms opposite. The video screen was relocated from Sydney, where it had been used for the Olympic Games.

The TCA overcame some complex legal and financial hurdles before it finally signed the contract in May 2001 to begin work on the most significant developments in the Oval's history, costing in total over \$18 million.

The new Southern Stand seats 5800 people in comfort, with full under-cover refreshment facilities. It also houses world-class television broadcasting facilities including three studios and accommodation for outside broadcast vehicles. Beneath the spectator seats are fully-appointed change-rooms meeting top national standards for sports other than cricket. They were first used for Australian football (the VFL competition) in July 2003.

At the northern end of the ground is the Members' Pavilion, opened late in 2002, which provides members and guests with Tasmania's best sporting-ground facilities for dining and entertainment. The Members' stand accommodates 600, while in the Century Room 300 guests can enjoy top-level dining with a magnificent view over the Oval and Derwent River.

The highlight of Bellerive Oval's short history as an international cricket venue came on 11 January 2003. A total of 16,719 people packed in to see the opening of the new facilities before watching the Oval's first Australia-England encounter, a one-day international game.

A close match was won by the Australians, fittingly led by Tasmania's Ricky Ponting and including the Tasmanian all-rounder Shane Watson, who bowled the day's final over to ensure victory. The festive day included a cavalcade of 'greats' of Tasmanian cricket, led by Jack Simmons, captain of the Tasmanian team which won the Gillette Cup in 1979, and David Boon.

Let there be light

In keeping with the need to progressively upgrade facilities, and a fear that the future of international cricket at Bellerive was under threat, the installation of four light towers was initiated during 2009 and the lights were officially switched on in February 2010 when Tasmania hosted its first T20 International (Australia v West Indies). Bellerive's lights not only assure Tasmania's future as an international cricket arena but open the door to attract other major events including all the football codes and the attraction of community events like Carols by Candlelight. The potential of other major sporting fixtures at Bellerive has hastened plans to expand the seating capacity to accommodate increased spectator interest.

Fighting above her weight

Since the major redevelopment at Bellerive was completed Tasmanian cricket has enjoyed a level of success previously considered impossible – a pipe dream. During the first decade of the 21st century the Tasmanian Tigers won three domestic one-day titles and of course the “jewel” – the state's first Pura Cup/Sheffield Shield when the Tigers defeated the NSW Blues at Bellerive in March 2007 by 421 runs. The following season, also at home, produced a nail-biting one wicket Ford Ranger Cup against Victoria and the sweetest of victories came in 2010 when Tasmania was victorious over the Bushrangers at the MCG.

The team success tells only part of the story – since 2009, in addition to the Australian captain Ricky Ponting, nine other Tasmanian players have been selected in various Australian teams; Tim Paine, Ben Hilfenhaus, George Bailey, Travis Birt, Jason Kreja, Xavier Doherty, Brendan Drew, Brett Geeves and Ed Cowan, while young James Faulkner waits in the wings. Behind the scenes several others have been filling important coaching and support roles for the Australian team – everywhere one looks there is a Tasmanian.

Celebrating Tasmania's cricketing heritage

Tasmania's cricketing heritage is on show at one of Australia's foremost sporting museums: the Tasmanian Cricket Museum in Bellerive Oval's new Members' Pavilion. The Museum tells the story of the sport in Tasmania from the early European settlements 200 years ago to the modern era, with hundreds of mementos reflecting a long, rich and varied history.

Displays in the Museum feature icons of the sport in Tasmania. Major figures of the modern era such as Ricky Ponting and David Boon are represented alongside the pioneering heroes, including Kenny Burn, Charles Eady and Jack Badcock. One of the very few posed portraits of Donald Bradman, by an artist who lived in Tasmania during the 1930s, J.C. Goodhart, is on permanent display in the Museum.

Mementos of the big events in Tasmanian cricket history on show at the Museum include balls, bats and photographs from colonial-era representative matches, Charles Eady's record-breaking bat from that 1902 club match at the TCA Ground, and the Gillette Cup, won by Tasmania in 1979 at the start of its resurgence as a cricketing state.

State-of-the-art interactive technology provides a unique cricketing experience. Visitors can test their skills against various bowling speeds in a simulated cricket arena, experience what it's like to umpire first-class cricket, and learn about the big names of Tasmanian cricket back into colonial times. A Tasmanian-developed cricket database provides all the facts about the game's top international stars and Australian domestic matches and players.

A feature video tells the story of Tasmanian cricket from the early days down to Ricky Ponting, with stars from the 1950s onward telling the story, illustrated by historical footage, of their involvement with this unique sport. Other videos look at what is needed to get become a first-class player and to umpire at the highest level.

Cricket's international appeal is acknowledged in the TCA's Cricket Library collection, which includes thousands of books and other written material on the sport world-wide. The Library's

extensive information resources are available to TCA members and to students undertaking research into the history of the sport.

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