

Forgotten Heroes: The 1945 Australian Services Cricket Team

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On Whit Monday, 21 May 1945, just thirteen days after VE day and watched by more than 30 000 people, Plying Officer Graham Williams walked slowly to the wicket in the middle of Lord's Cricket Ground. An Australian prisoner-of-war since 1941 and released from a German camp only days earlier, Williams had been gulping glucose to give himself energy before he batted. When he appeared the huge crowd, knowing of his war-time experiences, stood and applauded. The flamboyant Keith Miller who in a long cricket career knew all about applause, later wrote 'this was handclapping with a difference. I have never heard it before or since . . . magical, heart-felt handclapping.'¹ Why, then, was Williams at Lord's?

Two days beforehand play had begun in the first of five 'Victory Tests', a series between teams referred to at the time as England and Australia. Probably no international sport resumed more quickly than cricket, but the motivation was not necessarily an eagerness to resume activities of a more gentle kind than those which had preoccupied the world since 1939. Rather it was symbolic, emphasising the discontinuity with the immediate past, a return to values cherished by British people scattered throughout the world. It could not have occurred without Australia's 'forgotten heroes', fourteen cricketers who proudly represented their country against far more prestigious opposition. Their carefree cricket did much more than entertain the crowds who flocked to see them: Norman Preston wrote in the 1946 edition of *Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack* of the way in which all matches were contested 'in a spirit of fellowship and goodwill, which I, among many, would like to see continue when the real Tests come round again'.²

More than forty years later Ross Stanford, one of the Services batsmen, stated that 'no-one remembers us now or what we did'.³ He was correct. At the end of January 1946 when the team was disbanded

after ten months of cricket in England, India, Ceylon and Australia, it apparently slipped from cricket's capacious memory of its past. Yet besides playing an important part in boosting civilian morale and becoming the catalyst for the speedy revival of post-war cricket in four countries, the team should also be remembered for the treatment it endured at the hands of the various authorities controlling its existence. The significance of the Services team may be understood by examining the social and political milieus of which it was part, the players' performances, and the problems confronting it on and off the field from April 1945 to January 1946.

The Role of Cricket in Post-War England

The British people needed cricket in 1945. During the war there had been one and two-day matches, and in winter soccer flourished; however in the summer of VE and VJ Days something more was required. People were still enduring stringent food rationing, and the pay for a 47-hour week was only £4.80.⁴ Not surprisingly victory unleashed powerful social and political forces which had been slowly building up for more than six years. Collectivism was the spirit of the age; people wanted to turn their backs on the mass unemployment and social problems of the 1930s, and in their eagerness for change they defied all predictions by electing a Labour government in July 1945. Similarly they needed something different from the grim contests of attrition which cricket provided in the era of timeless Tests. Like the general election, cricket gave people hope that the world could quickly return to a more pleasant reality than that which existed in 1939.

Richard Holt believes that after World War I 'there was a special need for reassurance, to know that the essence of England had survived'. Cricket's revival was at the core of this: 'more than any other game [it] was bound up with the ruralism of an England overburdened with great cities'.⁵ It evoked the pastoral in English life, and in 1919 the Australian Infantry Forces (AIF) team helped provide the necessary reassurance by playing first-class matches around Britain, before crowds far exceeding expectations. Cricket in 1945 provides an obvious parallel. Along with VE Day the Victory Tests signalled the end of war-time gloom. Britain's civilian population had endured far more intense 'total war' than in 1914-18, particularly in those cities which had borne the brunt of the bombing. Like their 1919 counterparts people sought tangible evidence

of returning normality. The revival of cricket partly satisfied this, although to do so the game needed to progress beyond its war-time casualness.

The contrast between soccer and cricket in war-time England was very marked. Eighty-two of the eighty-eight clubs in the English Football League participated in regular season competition, the only difference being the grouping of teams in regional associations to minimise travel time and costs.⁶ Attendances remained high, popular London teams such as Arsenal attracting crowds of 50 000 or more. Furthermore, throughout the war there was no shortage of international football, between England, Scotland and Wales. For one of the matches between Scotland and England at Hampden Park, 133 000 squeezed into the ground, the biggest war-time gate. Ninety thousand watched England play Scotland at Wembley in 1944. Hence soccer continued to provide much needed entertainment for the working classes in winter, leaving cricket to fill the summer sporting gap.

Unfortunately it failed to do so. For a start the seventeen first-class counties found it impossible to retain their professional staff for the traditional three day first-class matches. One afternoon per week for soccer was very different to requesting three or four days leave from the Army or Air Force—on a regular basis. Also many of the grounds were requisitioned by the Services and there were labour problems with pitch preparation. Thus the substitute was one-day games, a traditional form of cricket played in English villages for almost a century. The program of matches at Lord's, London's only major cricket venue available, was organised by the MCC's Deputy Secretary Sir Pelham Warner because 'it was realised by the Government, and by the Services, that cricket provided a healthy and restful antidote to war strain . . . ' Warner also explained that 'I had the feeling that if Goebbels had been able to broadcast that the War had stopped cricket at Lord's, it would have been valuable propaganda for the Germans'.⁷ Cricket's symbolism, its centrality in British life, was clearly uppermost in Warner's mind.

Churchill's war-time coalition government too was very conscious of the boost organised cricket could provide for civilian morale. During the 1943 summer Ernest Bevin, Minister for Labour, asked that the game be encouraged in every way.⁸ Great energy was shown in promoting cricket in London and elsewhere, particularly Lancashire and Yorkshire: 'Civil authorities and Town Councils welcomed cricket as an aid to their "Holidays at Home" efforts, and the public of all types, many new to the

game, found it entertaining . . .⁹ There were appeals to those involved in the game to ‘keep the flag flying’ at every match, ‘a small matter but helpful in showing the zeal of all concerned in providing an antidote to war gloom’.¹⁰ Nevertheless the one-day games were no more than entertainment. They lacked competitive ‘edge’, because there was no organised substitute for the County Championship, nor any truly international matches—until 1944/45.

The change occurred because a talented Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) side captained by the New South Wales batsman Keith Carmody, and including a nucleus of capable cricketers, showed it could challenge the best English teams. In May 1944 the *Times* remarked on this, adding ‘many remembering the incentive given to cricket by the Australian Imperial Forces team at the end of the last war will follow the history of the present RAAF team with interest’.¹¹ Australia’s cricket-loving Prime Minister John Curtin was in London at this time, attending the Dominions Conference. Accompanying Curtin was General Thomas Blamey, Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces. Curtin twice visited Lord’s, firstly on Saturday 13 May, one week after the season began, to see the Civil Defence Services play the Army (15 000 people attended), and again on 27 May when Australia played The Rest, the Australians winning on the third last ball of the match.¹²

On one of these occasions Curtin referred in a speech to the symbolic significance of cricket for both countries.¹³ Probably he and Blamey were reminded by their hosts of the achievements of the AIF team in 1919. Not only did that team emphasise the coming of peace for the English population, but in the field of international sporting relations it forced the issue of resumption of formal tours between the two countries. This was obviously worth duplicating when World War II ended. So by early 1945 steps were being taken by the Australian Army and Air Force to accomplish the same goal. Hitherto elite cricket had been confined to one or two days, the original planning for the three matches between Australia and England in the summer of 1945—Lord’s at Whitsuntide, Sheffield (Bramall Lane) in June, Lord’s in August—was that each would be two days. Just before VE Day the *Times* suggested 1945 would be a season of recovery and development, ‘but it is to the Australians, gathering in menacing force to whom we look to follow the path of the AIF team of the last war . . .’¹⁴ Soon afterwards it was announced that three days had been allotted for the first Lord’s match in order to fully accommodate the cricket-loving public.

The next step was a decision to extend the series to five matches, three at Lord's, one at Bramall Lane and the other at Old Trafford, Manchester.¹⁵ Whatever the official status of the matches, this looked like a typical England versus Australia five-Test series. The MCC and the Australian Army were certainly right in anticipating the popularity of the Victory Tests, for almost 400 000 men, women and children watched the matches.¹⁶ The average daily attendance exceeded 25 000, suggesting the importance of the matches and particularly their identification with peace. All were closely contested, four producing a result and the series was eventually drawn. This was cricket as people wanted to see it played. The England batsman Bill Edrich thought the games were 'marked by a mood of good temper, challenge, excitement, and a thoroughly happy spirit'—instead of the 'somewhat sombre average ridden and loss-haunted design of the inter-war period'.¹⁷ Ronald Mason referred to 'the gay uninhibited gusto with which the full-sized game was once more set going', satisfying the public's need for cricket 'unhobbled by hurry and necessity and the little lurking fear'.¹⁸

Origins of the Services' Team

What were the origins of the Services team? As mentioned earlier it was drawn from two different sources: firstly, Carmody's RAAF team which regularly played at Lord's in 1943 and 1944; secondly, an AIF team built around a nucleus of cricketers such as Lindsay Hassett and Dick Whittington who had played in North Africa. According to Chris Harte, after Curtin's visit to England in 1944 action was taken early in 1945 to form an 'AIF Reception Group'. Ostensibly this 'was to help welcome home the thousands of prisoners-of-war and organise victory celebrations'.¹⁹ But it quickly became apparent that the cricketers involved were to be transformed into a Services team.

Arrangements were made for a full season of matches for the AIF, a commitment which was kept. At almost the same time the best players in the RAAF side merged with them to form the Services (that is, the Australian) team which appeared in the first Victory Test. On 22 June, the day before the second match of the series, it was announced that the two constituent teams would amalgamate under the title of Australian Services, with a 'fixture list to be arranged'.²⁰ Meanwhile both the RAAF and AIF teams also continued to play matches as originally planned, drawing upon others apart from the seventeen who played in the Victory Tests or toured India, Ceylon and Australia.

Who then were the team members? Since 1945, only two names are generally recalled, Lindsay Hassett the captain and all-rounder Keith Miller. Their role in, and importance to the Services seems to have been magnified because of their post-war cricket fame, rather than reflecting the realities of 1945/46 when Hassett's batting and Miller's bowling were far from outstanding. Many have forgotten that Keith Carmody who captained the RAAF team until he became a prisoner-of-war in June 1944, was a serious rival to Hassett, especially as the eventual combined team was predominantly RAAF personnel. However, Carmody was happy to stand aside for Hassett, one reason being the latter's pre-war Test experience. As for Miller, although he quickly demonstrated he was a fine batsman, he was far from being the team's key all-rounder.

Altogether fourteen players appeared in the Victory Tests, only the captain having Test experience. Cec Pepper, Keith Carmody, Ross Stanford, Albert Cheetham, Keith Miller, Bob Cristofani, Stan Sismey, Dick Whittington, and Graham Williams played Sheffield Shield cricket before 1940, while Reg Ellis and Jack Pettiford each played for their states after 1945. Jim Workman and Charles Price played no first-class cricket other than for the Services. When the team proceeded to India in late September 1945 it did so minus its original opening bowlers, Cheetham and Williams. Their replacements were Eddie Williams and Mick Roper, and for the India, Ceylon, Australia tour the team also had a reserve wicketkeeper, Colin Bremner. Thus a total of seventeen players represented the Services. Eight were from New South Wales, four from Victoria, five from South Australia, these three states being the one-time heartland of Australian cricket.

A careful study of the match scores and the averages reveals the Services' strengths and weaknesses. Overall the middle order batting was consistent, there were three quality all-rounders, Pepper, Cristofani and Pettiford (all leg-spinners), plus Miller's potential as a bowler, and the tirelessly effective left arm spinner Reg Ellis. The weaknesses were the lack of a reliable opening batsman to partner Whittington, and an effective seam attack. With their reliance on spin—sometimes as many as five spinners were included in the side—away from England the Services always struggled in the field. How then did they manage to win two of the Victory Tests, and twice work their way into a winning position against India?

The answer lies in the ability of individuals to rise to the occasion.

In the eight Tests', one or two players produced timely performances to support the consistent Miller, Pepper (the outstanding all-rounder) and Ellis. For example in the second Victory Test won by England, Carmody, Whittington and fellow opener Workman kept Australia in the match, Workman's second innings 63 being the highest score in either side's second innings. The team's Third Test win owed much to Bob Cristofani's match figures of 9/92, and in the Fourth three weeks later, wicket keeper Stan Sismey and all-rounder Jack Pettiford did most to support Miller's century in the first innings. The final match, won by England by six wickets, was remarkable for Cristofani's second innings 110 not out, at a time when no other Australian batsman scored more than 23. The story was much the same in India with Pettiford, Workman, Whittington and Carmody finishing above Hassett and Miller in the batting averages for the Representative matches. Conversely the bowling weakness was fully exposed, only the wonderfully consistent Pepper (16) taking more than seven wickets.

When the complete first-class averages are examined they illustrate an important point too often forgotten. The team did not rely heavily on Miller and Hassett. Pettiford, Pepper, Whittington, Carmody and Stanford all averaged more than 30 with the bat, while Pepper and Ellis took twice as many wickets as anyone else. What also is remarkable is Pepper's consistency in each country; it seems astonishing that his talents were lost to the relative backwater of Lancashire League cricket. Cristofani had moments of brilliance, wicket keeper Sismey often scored useful runs, and among the remainder most enjoyed days of success.

Undoubtedly many of the team often played above themselves. When the Victory series began they were filled with trepidation. According to Whittington, 'in their hearts was a deep and haunting misgiving—almost extinguishing hope—a misgiving that they might all make fools of themselves'.²¹ After all, being realists, the fourteen knew they were outclassed in terms of skill and experience. Seventeen of the twenty England players selected in the series played Test cricket either before or after World War II. Some, like Walter Hammond and Len Hutton, were outstanding performers. It was the same story in India: Vijay Merchant, Vijay Hazare, Vinoo Mankad, Lala Amarnath, and Rusi Modi were proven Test cricketers while most of the remaining thirteen who appeared in the representative matches played at some time for their country. The Services did extraordinarily well to be so competitive.

In Australia the six matches provided Miller with another opportunity to display his batting skills, especially when he made an unbeaten century against O'Reilly in Sydney. Opening batsman Whittington scored freely along with Hassett, Stanford and the ever reliable Pepper. Fittingly perhaps, at the end of such an arduous tour Pepper and his spin partner Ellis remained by far the best of the bowlers. Today, Pepper's prodigious talents have been all but forgotten and very few people have heard of Reg Ellis; Whittington is best remembered as a journalist and author; Carmody as the inventor of the so-called Carmody or umbrella field for fast bowlers. Less than a handful know much about Stanford, Cristofani, Sismey, the two Williams, Albert Cheetham or Charles Price (who topped the bowling averages in the eight representative matches). Nevertheless they were the heart of a very successful team, talented battlers who collectively were a match for their talented opponents.

The Organisation of the Services

From the outset the Services team was confronted by two problems, one the conflicting demands of various authorities who governed its existence and itinerary, the other the circumstances and playing conditions peculiar to each country. From April 1945 the team was the victim of many masters, probably too many. The MCC's Warner was instrumental in duplicating the original post-World War I AIF team. As the organiser of war-time cricket at Lord's he very likely played some part in planning the itineraries for the Hassett-led AIF side, the RAAF, and later the combined Services. Warner was also a driving force behind the concept, organisation and promotion of the Victory Tests, so the MCC's role was obviously important. Yet nothing would have eventuated without the co-operation of the Australian Government, beginning with John Curtin, the Prime Minister.

The 1944 visit of Curtin and General Blamey to Lord's appears to have been the springboard for what followed. Curtin was a confirmed cricket follower who, when he was at home in Perth, Western Australia, was known occasionally to sit quietly by himself at Claremont Oval watching first-grade games.²² An intense nationalist too, he must have been stirred by the sight of an 'Australian' team playing at Lord's in May 1944. As he said at the time 'Australians will always fight for those twenty-two yards. Lord's and its traditions belong to Australia just as

much as to England.²³ Almost exactly one year later, by this time ill and in hospital, Curtin cabled Stanley Christopherson, President of the MCC, when the five non-official Tests were about to begin: 'I cannot forbear tendering my warmest good wishes to English cricket in the coming season, and particularly to all those gracious people who will assemble at Lord's, where tradition so richly nourishes and perpetuates our great game.'²⁴ In his message Curtin revealed that he had a deep attachment to the game and its cultural importance.

Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the Services team came into existence. At various times other members of Curtin's war-time cabinet became involved in the team's activities. For example, by mid-September, as its England program was concluding, there were no further plans other than for the AIF and RAAF components to return separately to Australia. Then Blamey was contacted by Lieutenant-General E K Smart in London about a suggestion made by Australia's Minister for External Affairs Dr H V Evatt. His idea was that the team should tour India and Ceylon.²⁵ Evatt a Trustee of the Sydney Cricket Ground and at one time a Vice President of the New South Wales Cricket Association, shared his late Prime Minister's passion for the game (Curtin died on 5 July 1945). Blamey recommended to the Minister for the Army, Frank Forde, 'that the Government approve the above suggestion [for the tour] and issue directions that the team should be kept together and moved to Australia as a unit'.²⁶ Forde agreed to this, so did the Minister for Air. By the end of September the tour was approved without the players being consulted.

Meanwhile, in Australia other independent proposals were surfacing. The various Australian cricket authorities believed the Services team could be an attractive addition to the 1945/46 season. Dr Morton, President of the Victorian Cricket Association (VCA) and a member of the Australian Board of Control, approached Blamey asking that the team be kept together 'to play one match in each state during the current season'.²⁷ This resulted from an earlier request from the VCA to the Secretary of the Air Board, prompting the Board of Control's secretary Bill Jeanes to write to the Minister for the Army about the team's possible involvement in Australian cricket. Jeanes argued that:

First class cricket, as doubtless you know, has not been played in Australia for several years and it is felt that matches against the services side which has played so well in England

would do much to re-establish first class cricket in Australia, in preparation for the continuation of the Test matches against England.²⁸

Meanwhile, from England the team's manager Keith Johnson, who had been appointed by the Board of Control, contacted the New South Wales Cricket Association about the team being involved in the forthcoming Australian summer.²⁹ Presumably Johnson had taken this step with the knowledge of the players, but of course this was before Dr Evatt entered the picture. Hence the team could have played the Australian states and been disbanded before Christmas. Such a commitment must have been far less attractive when it was organised to follow two months in India.

To say that the team became enmeshed in a web of red-tape would be an understatement. Evatt's India proposal not only had ramifications for the Australian Government, it also put the Indian cricket authorities on the spot. Not until 28 September did they issue an invitation, leaving Hassett and his players only six days before they sailed from Liverpool.³⁰ When the team disembarked in Bombay they found they remained on normal Services pay, the expenses of the tour being paid out of gate receipts. Any profit arising from the tour would be handed over to the Australian High Commissioner General Sir Ivan McKay, for distribution among Indian charities.³¹ Furthermore, they would also have been informed (for by now the two Ministers' approval had been given) that after Ceylon a program of matches was being arranged for them in Australia. It was fortunate that they were probably unaware that at one stage South Africa was interested in hosting the team!³²

The air of organisational uncertainty continued until the team's departure from India and later Ceylon. Transport to Australia was arranged only at the last moment (an RAF Skymaster flying via Cocos Island), and arguments about the Australian matches were unresolved. A proposal for four-day matches was rejected—they were reduced to three; a match in Canberra was on, then off.³³ Hobart was excluded from the original itinerary then included, and to cap everything New South Wales suggested a match between the Services and the Rest of Australia. It, too, was rejected. The tour itself was organised by the Australian Army Amenities Service together with the Board of Control—a case of the team once again being at the beck and call of several masters.

By mid-December when team members arrived in Perth to enjoy a memorable sojourn at the Palace Hotel, most of them were fed up and

exhausted.³⁴ Since early September, they had been treated like puppets, rarely asked for their opinions, and yet were constantly made aware that they were representing their country. Evatt, Forde, Blamey, the Board of Control and others seemed oblivious to the stresses and strains endured by the players, especially as the length of the tour had no parallels in Australian cricket history. It can be argued that in many ways the Services team was treated no differently to any other sent overseas by the Board of Control until the 1970s. In a master-servant relationship they were left in no doubt they were the servants. But these players were different: they were not members of an official side, and rather than leaving home for a comfortable well organised tour, many of them had been fighting overseas for several years, one of them had been in a prisoner-of-war camp, and all had expected their cricket to end in England. While in Perth, Johnson pleaded for greater consideration for the players. Hassett pointed out that they were suffering from 'cricket exhaustion'. The Board of Control ignored them.³⁵

Financially, there were no inducements whatsoever—their Services pay was what they received throughout. It was ironic that they should be sent to India, because for decades Australian cricket had steadfastly refused to encourage the game's development there. Instead of being treated sympathetically as sportsmen who willingly helped revive the game and lift morale in war-torn Britain, the services players were ultimately subjected to the worst of both worlds—services organisation and discipline and Australian cricket's historical indifference to the welfare of its leading players. Add the understandable frustration engendered by such a prolonged tour, and it is not surprising the players felt jaded when they returned to Australia.

Besides the uncertainties arising from the 'political' context surrounding the team's existence, there were the changing cricket conditions and new challenges, beginning with the three-day 'Tests' in England. Like their opposition the Australians found that one-day games were not ideal preparation; however, unlike the England players several of them were relatively inexperienced on English wickets. Furthermore, the England sides against which they played were just that—mostly cricketers who had represented England before 1940. This was an enormous psychological challenge for the Australians but one they overcame very successfully.

India was different. To begin with all matches (with one exception)

were three or four days, a much tougher proposition. Only one was not first-class, thus in general the opposition was first-class too, cricketers either striving to establish themselves or maintain a hard earned reputation. The planned Indian tour of England in 1946 was an added inducement for the local players. The Indian team, as Ian Woodward noted, had 'an awesome array of batting talent—Vijay Merchant, Lala Amarnath, Mushtaq Ali, V.S. Hazare, M.H. ('Vino') Mankad, R.S. Modi, Abdul Hafeez Kardar, Imtiaz Ahmed and others—[and] they proved formidable opponents'.³⁶ The Services aimed to win their matches but Hassett was being realistic when he explained to a Bombay journalist, 'we are just a collection of cricket-loving Servicemen and we do not pretend to represent the cream of Australian cricket'.³⁷ As it turned out the cricket was the opposite to the 'happy-go-lucky attitude of Hammond's England team'. According to Harte the Services 'were crushed by a lack of adventure, defensive captaincy and appallingly biased umpiring'.³⁸ He could have added gruelling train travel (for example the 4000 kilometre journey from Bombay to Lahore) and the inevitable sickness. It was therefore hardly surprising that the players struggled to produce their best form.

Their difficulties were far from over when they reached Perth in December, by which time they had been playing cricket almost continuously since late April. Having enjoyed great success in England, then grimly defending their reputation in India, the Services were now cast in the role of revivers of Australian cricket. As far as they could judge, the jaded players felt they had everything to lose. Nothing was clearer than that they would struggle, because their lack of penetrating seam bowlers would be constantly exposed on the faster Australian wickets. Under those circumstances bowling out the opposition twice would be a problem. Only once did they come close to doing so, against Tasmania. Because of the impending Australian tour to New Zealand each match, like those in India, would be highly competitive, rather than a carefree celebration of the war's end. Numerous Australian players would be keen to impress the selectors and the competition would be razor sharp.

Tough, uncompromising first-class cricket was the result, the Services being reluctant victims. Of course this was exacerbated by the team's well publicised successes in England. Ray Lindwall later wrote of the team's 'fine work' overseas.³⁹ Controversial Sid Barnes contended

that 'the Services Team returned with a big reputation. They were supposed to be full of brilliance and were thought to be on the verge of revolutionising the game back in Australia.'⁴⁰ Even allowing for a degree of hyperbole, Barnes's opinion suggests there were the usual sceptics waiting in each state—and why not? After all, it was well known that with three or four exceptions the Services players struggled in the 1930s to earn regular place in their respective state sides.

Australian cricket was also going through a revival: each state seemed to have produced a new generation of promising young players, spinners Bruce Dooland (South Australia), Ian Johnson and George Tribe ('Victoria), Colin McCool (Queensland), plus pace and seam bowlers such as Ray Lindwall and Bill Johnston. In addition two of the greatest pre-war cricketers, Bill O'Reilly and Don Bradman, were likely to be among their opponents. The latter, even if only a shadow of his old self, would surely slaughter the mediocre Services attack, while O'Reilly on a turning wicket would be equally formidable.

Each of these potential problems became reality during the six-week trek from Perth to Hobart.⁴¹ The matches against New South Wales and Victoria were lost, the remainder being drawn. Bradman made a century in Adelaide, Ian Johnson's off spin bewildered the Services batsmen at the St Kilda Cricket Ground, while O'Reilly and Lindwall helped NSW to victory, along with batsman Sid Barnes, Bill Alley and Ken Grieves. Then in Brisbane it was Colin McCool's turn to tease the batsmen, taking eleven wickets with his leg spinners and googlies. For the Services there was little joy, only Whittington, Miller, Hassett and Stanford batting consistently. Among the bowlers, Ellis and Pepper, as they had been since April 1945, were a class above the rest. The averages show they each took nineteen wickets at roughly the same cost as they had throughout the long tour. Unfortunately their support was minimal; Miller rarely bowled and Pettiford's leg spinners lacked penetration.

Sid Barnes believed that 'they [the Services] were greatly overboomed'.⁴² On the basis of their Australian form they probably were, but it was an unfair judgement given the circumstances of the tour and the calibre of the teams they had played against. After ten months the players were physically and mentally tired. They wanted to be reunited with their families, and get on with their peace-time lives. Despite this the Services achieved the objectives of the national Government, the Board and the Army Amenities Fund. In each state they attracted good

crowds on the Saturday of their matches—5000 in Perth, 11 500 in Melbourne, 16 000 in Sydney, 10 000 in Brisbane. Almost £1500 was raised for the fund.⁴³ It was ironic that after all the cricket they had played compared to their Australian based counterparts, only Hassett and Miller were selected for the New Zealand tour. A clash with Bradman ruined Pepper's chances and Ellis, his partner, played only once for South Australia before disappearing from big cricket. Pettiford, Cristofani, Carmody, Stanford and Sismey had varying successes in Australia and/or England (Pettiford and Pepper returned to India with a Commonwealth team in 1949/50). But the team itself was quickly forgotten.

Evaluation

Judging the success or otherwise of the Services team is not easy because success may be measured in various ways—match results, the goals of the organisers and the verdict of history. The team seems to have suffered from superficial comparisons with its AIF predecessor. Few serious studies of Australian cricket neglect mentioning how the nucleus of 1920s Test teams emerged from the AIF side. Collins, Gregory, Oldfield, Taylor and Pellew were fine players, whereas by comparison only Miller was in a comparable category post 1945. The AIF team played first-class matches in England and South Africa, enjoying great success, whereas Hassett's team had an inferior record.⁴⁴ Such comparisons overlook different circumstances and attitudes. For example in 1918/19 almost all Australian soldiers were in England, so the reservoirs of talent were very deep. This was not the case in 1945 when most of those who enlisted or were conscripted were in Australia or the Pacific and several outstanding young cricketers such as Arthur Morris and Ian Johnson were prevented from travelling to England to join the side.

Casting aside these inappropriate comparisons, especially the puzzling view that the 1945 team was obviously inferior because so few of its players continued to build careers in Test cricket, on several important criteria it must be judged to have been highly successful. No-one has denied that the Victory Tests and accompanying England tour did much to ease war-time tensions by signalling the resumption of 'normal' summers. The renewal of the longstanding England-Australia contests, even if the Tests were unofficial, emphasised how rivalries of a different kind could divert popular attention from more serious matters. Although there is no direct evidence to prove the point, the Services

Although there is no direct evidence to prove the point, the Services team was the catalyst for the speedy resumption of international cricket, for example India's England tour in 1946, and the MCC's visit to Australia in 1946/47. The Services team's Indian visit, the first by a Board sanctioned Australian team, also helped to thaw cricketing relations between the two countries. Furthermore it assisted the revival of first class cricket on the sub-continent. Similarly, in Australia the game received a crucial boost from Hassett's men, despite their mediocre performance.

Yet the less tangible achievements were probably the most important. Just as the English people rejected the colourless, austere governments and politicians of the 1930s when in 1945 they elected their first Labour government, so they voted with their pockets on the type of cricket they were prepared to watch in 1945. The timeless Tests of the inter-war period, the sense of attrition between teams, needed to disappear if the game was to retain its popularity. People flocked to the Victory Tests because they were played in a spirit reminiscent of cricket's Golden Age. Dick Whittington wrote later that they provided 'an example in chivalry and in eager, though friendly will to win 'that rarely has been seen since in an official series'.⁴⁵ Consequently the crowds returned in even greater numbers in the ensuing post-war summers.

Most remarkable of all was the way a team of 'battlers' took on some of the game's finest players in post-war cricket over an incredibly long tour. Throughout sixty-four matches in five countries they always 'had a go'. The travelling, constantly changing playing conditions, and the responsibility for upholding the traditions of Australian cricket imposed unique strains on the team, yet they were successful beyond most people's expectations. Undoubtedly the 1945 Services team deserves a prominent place in the pantheon of Australia's sporting heroes.

APPENDIX: AVERAGES OF THE AUSTRALIAN SERVICESTEAM

AUSTRALIAN SERVICES 'VICTORY' AND REPRESENTATIVE MATCH AVERAGES (Against England and India)

Batting

	Matches	Innings	Not Outs	Runs	Highest Innings	Average
F/O KR Miller	8	15	4	550	118	50.00
F/O J Pettiford	5	9	1	376	124	47.00
Sgt CG Pepper	8	14	2	463	95	38.58
F/O DR Cristofani	5	7	1	206	110*	34.33
W/OAL Hassett	8	15	0	512	143	34.13
Flt-Lt DK Carmody	6	11	0	358	113	32.54
Capt RSWhittington	8	15	0	478	155	31.86
Flt-Lt RM Stanford	3	5	1	108	49	27.00
Flt-Sgt JA Workman	6	10	1	228	139	25.33
Sqd-Ldr SG Sismey	7	11	1	218	59	21.80
Sgt CFT Price	4	7	1	108	35	18.00
W/O RG Williams	5	7	1	82	53	13.66
F/O EA Williams	3	4	1	30	20*	10.00
Capt AG Cheetham	3	6	1	42	18	8.49
F/O RS Ellis	8	11	6	26	10*	5.20

Also batted: Flt-Lt AW Roper, 1

* Not out

Bowling

	Overs	Maidens	Runs	Wickets	Average
Sgt CFT price	76.4	11	241	14	17.21
Capt RSWhittington	7	2	23	1	23.00
F/O DR Cristofani	124.3	19	352	15	23.46
W/OAL Hassett	6.1	0	28	1	28.00
Capt AG Cheetham	75.1	11	213	7	30.42
F/O KR Miller	184	34	439	14	31.35
F/O J Pettiford	59.2	10	199	6	33.16
Sgt CG Pepper	361.3	66	1032	30	34.40
F/ORS Ellis	332.4	66	787	20	39.35
W/O RG Williams	152	37	402	10	40.20
F/O EA Williams	90.2	19	257	5	51.40
Flt-Lt AW Roper	27	6	76	1	76.00

Also bowled: Flt-Lt DK Carmody, 2-1-3-0

**AUSTRALIAN SERVICES
AVERAGES, ALL FIRST-CLASS MATCHES
(England, India, Ceylon, Australia)**

	Batting					
	Matches	Innings	Not Outs	Runs	Highest Innings	Average
F/O KR Miller	20	34	5	1447	132	49.89
W/O AL Hassett	18	31	2	1434	187	49.44
F/O J Pettiford	14	22	2	768	124	38.40
Sgt CG Pepper	18	29	2	987	168	36.55
Capt RS Whittington	18	32	2	1054	155	35.13
Flt-Lt DK Carmody	15	27	1	809	113	31.11
Flt-Lt RM Stanford	13	20	3	521	153	30.64
F/O DR Cristofani	14	22	2	558	110*	27.90
F/O EA Williams	12	19	4	388	100*	25.60
Sqd-Ldr SG Sismey	14	21	1	479	78	23.95
Flt-Sgt JA Workman	16	28	1	532	76	19.70
Sgt CFT Price	14	20	3	327	55	19.23
W/ORG Williams	6	10	1	115	53	12.77
Flt-Lt AW Roper	9	11	-	87	28	7.90
Capt AG Cheetham	5	8	1	49	18	7.00
F/O RS Ellis	19	24	11	46	10*	3.53
F/O CD Bremner	6	7	4	7	4	2.33

* Not out

In the six Australian matches the leading batsmen were Miller (463 runs at 57.87), Stanford (329 at 47.00), Whittington (364 at 45.50), Hassett (312 at 39.00), Sismey (167 at 27.83), Pettiford (54 at 27.00) and Pepper (241 at 26.77).

	Bowling				Average
	Overs	Maidens	Runs	Wickets	
Flt-Sgt JA Workman	1	0	6	1	6.00
W/O AL Hassett	28.1	7	88	4	22.00
F/O RS Ellis	682	142	1802	72	25.02
Sgt CFT Price	183.4	18	643	24	26.79
F/O KR Miller	308.3	62	840	29	28.96
F/O DR Cristofani	296.3	35	1045	34	30.73
Sgt CG Pepper	690.1	101	2306	71	32.47
Flt-Lt AW Roper	117	22	372	11	33.81
Capt AG Cheetham	87.1	12	263	7	37.57
W/ORG Williams	183	42	513	13	39.46
F/O J Pettiford	232	23	921	22	41.86
F/O EA Williams	220.2	36	717	15	47.80
Capt RS Whittington	16	2	67	1	67.00
Flt-Lt DK Carmody	22.5	3	80	1	80.00

Also bowled: Sqd-Ldr SG Sismey, 5-0-24-0, Flt-Lt RM Stanford, 3-0-25-0.

In Australia the leading bowlers were Ellis (19 wickets at 28.68), Miller (6 at 31.83), Pettiford (8 at 32.37, Pepper (19 at 32.63) and EA Williams (5 at 55.6).

NOTES:

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- 2 *Wisden cricketers' Almanac*, 1946, p. 155.
- 3 Chris Harte, *A History of Australian Cricket*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1993, p. 391.
- 4 John Ezard in *Guardian Weekly*, 7 May 1995, and Paul Addison, the *Weekend Australian*, 6 May 1995, 'VE Supplement'.
- 5 Richard Holt, *Sport and the British*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 264.
- 6 The information in the paragraph is derived from Jack Rollin, *Soccer at War 1939-45*, Willow Books, London, 1985.
- 7 Sir Pelham Warner, *Lord's 1787-1945*, Pavilion Books, London, 1987 ed., p. 245.
- 8 *Wisden* 1944, p. 59.
- 9 *Wisden*, 1944, p. 59.
- 10 *Wisden*, 1944, p. 59.
- 11 *Times*, 5 May 1994.
- 12 *Times*, 15 and 29 May 1944.
- 13 Referred to in Warner, *Lords*, p. 246.
- 14 *Times*, 3 May 1945.
- 15 *wisden*, 1946, p. 155.
- 16 Attendances are included in *Wisden*, 1946.
- 17 W J Edrich, *Cricket Heritage*, Stanley Paul, London, 1947.
- 18 Ronald Mason, *Walter Hammond*, Hollis and Carter, London, 1962, p. 199.
- 19 Harte, *History of Australian Cricket*, p. 386.
- 20 *Times*, 22 June 1945.
- 21 R S Whittington, *The Quiet Australian: The Lindsay Hassett Story*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 81-2.

- 22 *Times*, 22 June 1945.
- 23 Warner, *Lord's*, p. 246.
- 24 Warner, *Lord's*, p. 248.
- 25 Australian Archives (AA), Melbourne, MP742/1, Austarm, London to Landforces. Melbourne, 6 Oct. 1945.
- 26 Blamey to Ford, 21 Sept. 1945, AA, MP742/1.
- 27 Blamey to Ford, 21 Sept. 1945.
- 28 W H Jeanes to Secretary to the Minister for the Army, 3 Sept. 1945, AA, MP742/1.
- 29 W H Jeanes to Secretary to the Minister for the Army, 6 Oct. 1945.
- 30 W H Jeanes to Secretary to the Minister for the Army, 6 Oct. 1945.
- 31 Lieut Gen. E K Smart to Capt. J G Mallyon, 29 Sept. 1945, AA, MP742/1.
- 32 Minutes, Australian Board of Control for International Cricket, 11 and 12 Oct. 1945. A summary of the minutes was kindly provided by R J Parish of the Australian Cricket Board.
- 33 Woodward, *cricket, not War*, p. 83.
- 34 Whittington, *The Quiet Australian*, p. 145.
- 35 Woodward, *Cricket, not War*, p. 83.
- 36 Woodward, *Cricket, not War*, p. 77.
- 37 Woodward, *Cricket, not War*, p. 77.
- 38 Harte, *History of Australian Cricket*, p. 389.
- 39 Ray Lindwall, *Flying Stumps*, Arrow Books, London. 1957. p. 42.
- 40 Sidney Barnes, *It Isn't Cricket*, Hamilton & Co., Stafford, 1955, p. 88.
- 41 I am indebted to Ray Webster who provided me with scorecards and other details of each Australian match.
- 42 Barnes, *It Isn't Cricket*, p. 88.
- 43 Information provided by Ray Webster.
- 44 Harte, *History of Australian Cricket*, pp. 269-72.
- 45 Whittington, *The Quiet Australian*, p. 80.