

State Library games

Warwick Hirst, State Library of New South Wales manuscripts librarian

Visitors to the State Library of New South Wales are unlikely to hear the crack of willow on leather or the thump of boot on ball. Nevertheless the library is a major attraction for sports enthusiasts by virtue of its collections of original sporting material. (An outline of some of the collections in the Mitchell Library appears on the next page).

Sport has always been part of the library's collecting policy, but it is only in recent years that a concerted effort has been made to seek out and collect the papers of individual sports persons and organisations. Over the last decade, the library has made many significant acquisitions in a variety of sports. These include the papers of Australia's second female Olympic medalist, Mina Wylie, who won a silver medal in the 100 metres swimming at Stockholm in 1912 and went on to hold numerous world records. In rugby the library has acquired the unpublished autobiography of AC 'Johnny' Wallace, captain of the famous Waratahs of 1927-28, while a player of more recent vintage, David Campese, has donated his personal collection of scrapbooks, programs and photographs to the library. The Mitchell Library is also home to the records of the NSW Amateur Ath-

letic Association, as well as the Queenscliff Surf Lifesaving Club and the NSW Basketball Association.

Of all the sports it is cricket that has been most consistently collected over the years. Among the library's pictorial holdings are the earliest known images of cricket in Australia — three watercolours of Hyde Park, Sydney in 1842 by John Rae which show, almost incidentally, matches taking place amongst groups of strolling spectators. The Mitchell Library also holds the earliest mention of cricket in a manuscript. In 1821, as evidenced by a letter from the storekeeper of the Sydney Lumber Yard, Governor Lachlan Macquarie gave orders for a set of cricket bats and balls to be made for his young son. Among the library's vast photographic collection are a lovely set of *cartes de visite* of the second English team to visit Australia in 1864, and a



Don Bradman and Jack Fingleton farewell the great English batsman Frank Woolley in his final game for Kent against the Australians.

Central Press Photos 1938

unique signed photograph of the 1888 Australian team.

The library's cricket collections have grown to such an extent that they are essential sources for any student of the game's development in Australia. As with other sports many important additions have been made in recent years. In 1992, the library was able to secure at auction the letters of the Australian-born English cricketer, Gubby Allen, which give a fascinating insider's view of the notorious Bodyline series of 1932-33. In one letter Allen described his autocratic captain, Douglas Jardine, as 'a perfect swine', and in another confirmed his own refusal to bowl Bodyline, the only English fast bowler to do so. One year later, in 1993, came the papers of test batsman and author Jack Fingleton. These comprise over thirty boxes of correspondence, scrapbooks, notebooks and photographs and constitute one of the most complete and significant personal collections now in the public domain.

Oral history has not been neglected as indicated by taped interviews with Arthur Morris and Bill O'Reilly. The library's most recent acquisition is a rare letter written by Victor Trumper in which he outlines his philosophy of cricket to a schoolboy correspondent. Trumper sternly warns him to avoid alcohol and concludes with this sound piece of advice: 'Don't let sport worry you. If it does give it up'.

Australia is undoubtedly a sporting nation and the collection of its historical sporting records is an integral part of the State Library's commitment to the preservation of the documentary heritage of New South Wales in particular, and of the country as a whole. ■

How you can take part in the Sydney 2000 Olympics

The State Library of NSW's marathon task in documenting 'the complete Olympic experience' for the Sydney 2000 Olympics is relying on community support from all corners of the state.

The State Library is looking for 'street athletes' throughout New South Wales to collect locally printed material on anything related to the Games, including special events, protests and the torch relay.

The Library is interested in obtaining menus, tickets, invitations, posters, stickers, postcards and other types of ephemera. Good quality happy snaps, letters and autographed programs of past and present Olympians are also being sought.

According to Alan Tasker, the State Library's field librarian, 'You don't have to be an athlete, or even attend a sporting event, to be part of

the Olympic Games. All materials collected will contribute to a permanent public collection in the Library, and the history of Sydney 2000 will be preserved for generations to come,' Mr Tasker said.

Large organisations, including Nike and other Olympic sponsors, have already pledged their ephemeral material when the Games close.

The State Library has collected more than 2500 items since its Olympic Ephemera Project began in January 1997. The most significant acquisition so far is the set of twelve posters of the official Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Poster Program, designed by some of Australia's leading artists, including Mambo designer Reg Mombassa and Michael Leunig.

The project will continue beyond October 2000 to capture community and 'street' ephemera that result from the Games. ■