



Heathcote Williams Shield - History

The Heathcote Williams Shield was presented to the New Zealand Cricket Council in 1908 to be played for by all the secondary schools of New Zealand. The man who presented this shield was Edward Heathcote Williams, known to most as Heathcote Williams. The grandson of James Busby - the first 'British Resident' of New Zealand and the man known for drafting the Treaty of Waitangi, Heathcote began his career in Wellington as a barrister and solicitor where he worked for ten years before moving to Hawke's Bay to set up his own practice.

Besides practicing law, Heathcote possessed a true passion for cricket and was described as the "Father of New Zealand Cricket". Heathcote, as the President of the Hawke's Bay Cricket Association, was a source of strength, often providing loans and monetary gifts to the association out of his own pocket. He was also elected as the first president of the New Zealand Cricket Council in 1894, a role which he would fill on subsequent occasions (1913-1914 and 1919-1924).

As one of New Zealand's keenest supporters of cricket, Heathcote wanted to see New Zealand playing at the top level of world cricket, up with the elevens of England and Australia. To do this he saw great value in supporting and teaching young cricketers. He was very willing to use his own money to do this, by providing funding for coaching, and was always exploring ways to increase the interest and skills of promising players, such as by the Heathcote Williams Challenge Shield. He believed that by providing a challenge shield to play for, young cricketers would be encouraged to play good cricket and, in turn, would learn how to be obedient, courteous, and unselfish young men.

The presentation of the Shield to the New Zealand Cricket Council in 1908 created a slight headache. A new challenge shield meant new rules and new problems. A new set of regulations were created in line with the traditions and circumstances of New Zealand Schools. The Council were initially hoping to make the Shield open to both primary and secondary schools, but this never eventuated due to practical issues. However, the rules emphasised that the Heathcote Williams Shield is open to all schools across New Zealand. Eleven rules were drafted for the Challenge shield. Rule two of the challenge shield stated that:

"The New Zealand Cricket Council shall allot the shield to the school, being winner of a competition to be arranged in Christchurch during the season 1908-1909".

A tournament was set but it was soon apparent that schools across the country, such as Otago Boys' High School, Wanganui Collegiate School, and Kings College, were finding it difficult to be able to attend the tournament and would not be able to compete. Christchurch Boys' High School and Christ's College had a gentleman's agreement that the winner of the last grade match would have the opportunity to compete in the tournament against the other schools that entered but no entries were received. It was eventually decided by the NZCC that Christ College and the Boy's High would compete for the shield in its inaugural game. Christchurch Boys' High School were the first holders, winning by three wickets.

It was December 17th 1909, when Christchurch Boys' would have to defend the Shield for the first time. Their opponent would be Auckland Grammar who had gone unbeaten in their local schoolboy competition, winning six from six. Grammar went into bat first and their confidence in their ability to take the Shield showed as they scored 276 in the first innings. A very impressive 120 run partnership

by RC Somervell and FE Sutherland was the highlight of the innings. Somervell, who later represent New Zealand, scored freely and made 123. Christchurch Boys got off to a shocking start losing wickets early and cheaply but a hard fought 97 not out by WS Wallis saw them make 213. Grammar's first innings success did not carry, and they were bowled out for a mere 47 runs in their second. This meant Christchurch Boys needed 93 runs to win, which they managed to secure. Christchurch Boys' won by five wickets in the Shield's first ever challenge.

The Heathcote Williams Shield would be played for regularly over the next 75 years until it fell to the wayside and was not challenged for anymore. The shield was then presented to the New Zealand Cricket Museum in mid-1987 for safe keeping and this is where it has slept for the past 30 years. Throughout the life of the Heathcote Williams Shield many notable men have had the privilege to play for it.

Sir Edward Denis Blundell: represented Waitaki Boys' High school in their challenge against Christchurch Boys in the 1922-23 season. Sir Denis Blundell took five wickets in the match but did not perform with the bat only making five runs across the two innings. This was the case with Waitaki's batting as a whole – only 3 batsman made double figures across their two innings. Sir Blundell went on to play First-Class cricket for Cambridge University, Marylebone Cricket Club, Wellington, and New Zealand. After his playing career was finished, Sir Blundell went onto become President of the New Zealand Cricket Council from 1959 to 1962. After his tenure at the NZCC, Sir Blundell became the High Commissioner for New Zealand in Britain. Upon his return from London, he was appointed as the 12th Governor General of New Zealand.

Sir William Henry Cooper: competed for the shield in 1927 as part of Auckland Grammar. Sir Henry Cooper went onto play three First-Class matches for Auckland. Sir Cooper is best known as as the headmaster of Auckland Grammar School, and as the manager of New Zealand's first cricket tour to India in 1955-56. When Sir Cooper retired as headmaster at Grammar, he was named the Pro-Chancellor and, later, Chancellor at the University of Auckland. It was his services to education that gained him his Knighthood.

Ian Burns Cromb: Played in more than one Heathcote Williams Shield match and never disappointed in his appearances. His first match in the 1921 season saw him take 6 for 54 but his best performance came the next season when he scored a century (156) and took 10 wickets for the match, including 6 for 6 in the first innings against Napier Boys' High School. Cromb played 54 games for Canterbury with a batting average of 32.81 and a high score of 171 and a bowling average of 28.93, taking a total of 131 wickets. Cromb also played five Tests for New Zealand making his debut against England at Lords in 1931. He played all three Tests on that tour before playing his final two tests against South Africa in their first tour to New Zealand in 1932. Cromb also captained New Zealand in three of their four representative matches against ERT Holmes' MCC side in 1935-36. Cromb played club cricket into his 50s, amounting over 13,000 runs and taking nearly 700 wickets. After he retired from the game, he went into administration becoming the President of Canterbury Cricket from 1972-75 as well as being a selector and coach. Cromb was also a keen golfer, winning the South island title and several Canterbury championships throughout his life. He played a major role in launching Sir Bob Charles' golfing career – that resulted in Charles being New Zealand's most successful male golfer to date.

Martin Crowe: Crowe played as a 17-year-old at Auckland Grammar, being run out for 3 in the first innings of one Shield match before hitting 71 in the second. Alongside him was a future New Zealand teammate in Mark Greatbatch. Crowe is seen as one of New Zealand's greatest batsmen and he was selected for his Test debut as a 19-year-old – just two years after competing for the Heathcote Williams Shield. Crowe scored a record 17 centuries for New Zealand with a high score of 299.

Rupert George Hickmott: Played for Christchurch Boys' High School where he featured in the first XI for five seasons, including three as captain. Hickmott was a very promising cricketer and in his second-last Heathcote Williams Shield appearance he scored an impressive 111 while also taking 10 wickets for the match. Sadly, he died of wounds sustained in battle during World War One. Read more of Rupert's story [here](#).

Milford Laurenson Page: best known as 'Curly', Page was an impressive sportsman, playing at representative level in both rugby and cricket. Curly attended Christchurch Boys' High School where he was the senior tennis champion four years running, was a member of the 1st XV, and the Captain of the 1st XI. He also performed off the field, being the Deans Memorial Scholar for 1921. His First-Class cricket career extended from 1920 to 1943, after making his debut for Canterbury as an 18-year-old. Page went onto represent New Zealand and became New Zealand's second Test captain. Page played in all 14 Test matches that New Zealand were involved in leading up to World War Two. His most famous knock was in a Test against England in 1931 where he scored 104 alongside partnerships of 188 with CS Dempster and 142 with RC Blunt. These partnerships made it possible for New Zealand to earn a hard-fought draw in their first full Test in England. Besides a very impressive career in cricket, Page also played rugby for New Zealand. Page was, at best, a small man weighing a mere 60 kilos, which saw him play half-back or first-five. He played only one match for the All Blacks against a New South Wales touring side in 1928 which the All Blacks won 11-8. Page was unlucky to never play a Test for the All blacks.