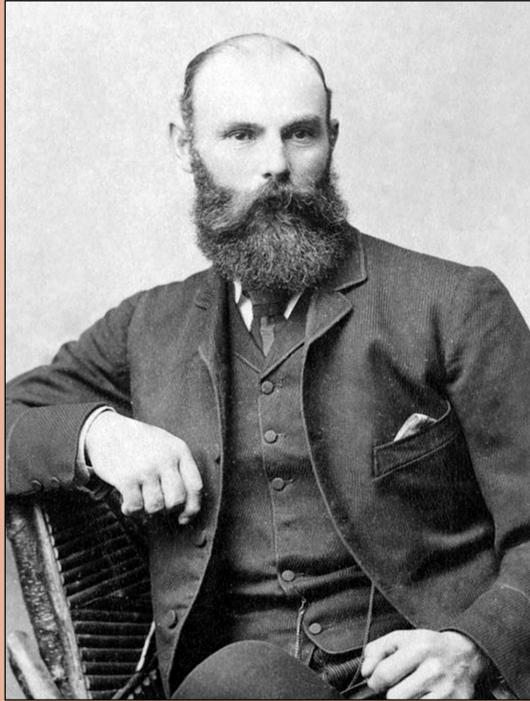


White Star Cricket Ground

From cricket at Lord's to the wilds of Gippsland

“CRACK!” – was the sound of a White Star bat hitting a Richard Merington thunderbolt, that echoed through the bush during the inaugural local cricket derby between Donnelly's Creek and White Star in October 1902.



Harry Boyle

The White Star men had systematically cleared the wild bush over the preceding three weeks to create the White Star Cricket Ground on this flat, regarded by the correspondent of the *Walhalla Chronicle* as “one of the best grounds I have seen in the hills”. The home side was captained by J. Dare, the visitors were led by Richard Merington. It was not the fairy-tale beginning that the locals wanted as Merington ripped through the White Star batsmen claiming seven first-innings wickets for a miserly eight runs. Members of the White Star team included J. Dare, W. Morcombe Junior, Hussey, Turner, Lonsdale, Meagher, E. Dare, Cullen, Binns, H. Dare, Turnbull and Fuller (or Fisher). Donnelly's Creek won on the first innings by 43 runs. The officiating umpires were mine manager, Mr. W.E. Morcombe Senior and former Australian test bowler, Harry Boyle.

‘Old Boyley’ – the Australian test captain who never led his team

Harry F. Boyle was appointed Australian Captain for the 1880 tour of England. However, during the forty-eight-day sea passage, the amiable and mild-mannered Boyle was infamously dumped by his colleagues in favour of the more outgoing Billy Murdoch without leading his side in a match. Nevertheless he was a valuable member of the Australian squad spanning the first 10 years of International Cricket, during which time he took 32 wickets at an average of 20.03.

Boyle's most memorable feat was in 1878 when he and his bowling mate, Fred Spofforth, demolished England's Marylebone Cricket Club twice in one afternoon at Lord's to the dismay of British onlookers. Boyle took nine wickets for 17 runs and Spofforth 10 for 20.

Boyle's first-class career was even more impressive with 370 wickets at 15.38 each, plus a haul of seven wickets with eight balls against an English minor eleven.



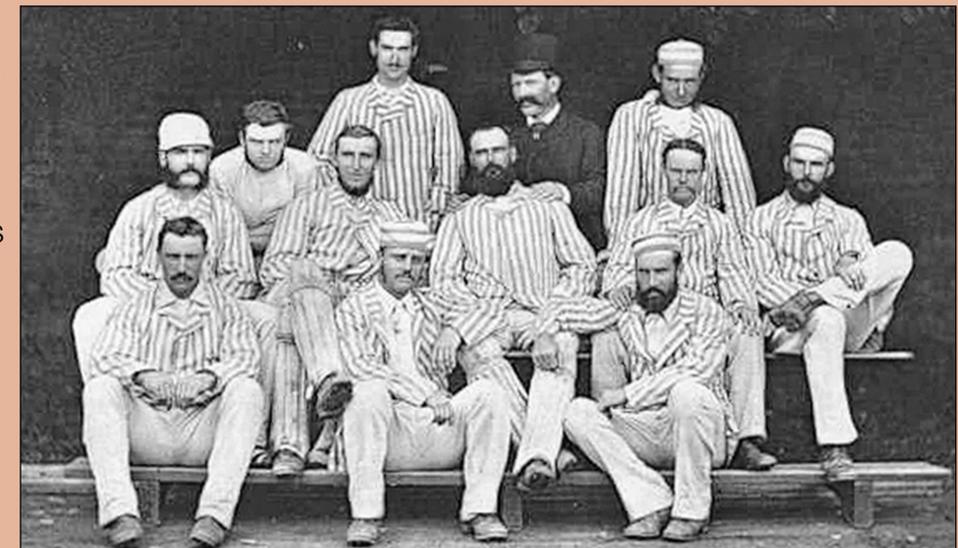
Harry Boyle

At White Star, Boyle was an impartial judge and honorary umpire as a ‘Walhallaite’, who had been supervising the surveying and cutting of mining tracks between Walhalla and Jericho. He was once described in a Melbourne newspaper as living a remote tent life ‘somewhere in thick bush... in the wilds of Gippsland’.

His visit to White Star in 1902 coincided with moves to have a waggon track extended from McEvoy's Track to the White Star mine. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that Harry Boyle would have inspired the local men to create this cricket ground. Affectionately known as ‘Old Boyley’, Boyle loved his cricket and would often travel to Melbourne to be involved with big matches or special events as a sporting hero and celebrity. Reporters knew that he was always good for a newsworthy quote on the current status of the sport, or of his escapades in the Gippsland mountains.

A letter from Harry Boyle:

“We are having a very bad winter here (Walhalla), and plenty of rain, hail, and snow; the latter 3 feet and 4 feet deep. About a month ago I got caught in the dark in the hills, and had to camp before a fire with only an overcoat for 13 hours, with rain all the time. I got out all right in the daylight, but both horse and self were 27 hours without anything to eat or drink, but neither were much the worse for it.” (Bendigo Advertiser, 6th August, 1901).



THE AUSTRALIAN TWELVE

T. HORAN F.R. SPOFFORTH J. CONWAY (Sec.) F.E. ALLAN
G.H. BAILEY T.W. GARRETT D.W. GREGORY (Capt.) A. BANNERMAN. H.F. BOYLE
C. BANNERMAN. W.L. MURDOCH J. MC C. BLACKHAM

Source: Research by Luke Steenhuis, author of ‘Donnelly's Creek – From Rush to Ruin of a Gippsland Mountain Goldfield’.

This sign and project was funded by the West Gippsland Relic, Mining and Heritage Protection Incorporated.

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Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints.