



Australian Heritage Database

Places for Decision

Class : Historic

Item: 1

Identification

List: National Heritage List
Name of Place: Melbourne Cricket Ground
Other Names: MCG, The G
Place ID: 105885
File No: 2/11/033/0159
Primary Nominator:
Nomination Date:
Principal Group: Recreation and Entertainment

Status

Legal Status: 02/11/2005 - Indicative place
Admin Status: 15/11/2005 - Under assessment by AHC--Australian place

Assessment

Assessor:
Recommendation: Place meets one or more NHL criteria
Assessor's Comments:
Other Assessments: Heritage Victoria : Entered in State Heritage List

Location

Nearest Town: Jolimont
Distance from town (km):
Direction from town:
Area (ha): 7
Address: Brunton Av, Jolimont, VIC 3002
LGA: Melbourne City (Current) VIC

Location/Boundaries:

About 7ha, Brunton Avenue, Jolimont, being that area entered in the Victorian Heritage Register on 12 April 2001 and identified as:

1. All land marked L1 on Diagram 1928 held by the Executive Director being all of the land contained in Crown Grant Volume 5925, Folio 828.
2. All the buildings and features marked as follows on Diagram 1928 held by the Executive Director: B1 Members Pavilion, B2 Northern (Olympic) Stand, B3 Western (WH Ponsford) Stand, B4 Great Southern Stand, B5 Light Towers (6).

Assessor's Summary of Significance:

The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) was established in 1853 when Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe provided 10 acres of land in Yarra Park to the Melbourne Cricket Club. In the intervening 150 years the MCG has developed into one of the largest, most recognisable and modern sports stadiums in the world.

The MCG is the home of the Melbourne Cricket Club, the first cricket club in Victoria and a major contributor to the development of cricket in Victoria and Australia from the middle of the nineteenth century. The Melbourne Cricket Club organised the inaugural inter-colonial first-class cricket match between Victoria and New South Wales on the MCG in 1856. The first test match between Australia and England was also played on the MCG in 1877.

In 1858 Tom Wills and other members of the Melbourne Cricket Club devised the rules of the Melbourne Football Club, which became the codified rules of Australian Rules football. Football was played on the MCG for the first time in 1859 and since the late nineteenth century the MCG has been the symbolic home of football, first in Victoria and, with the establishment of the Australian Football League, in Australia as a whole.

The MCG has become associated with many of the finest sporting achievements of Australia's, and many of the world's greatest athletes. It was the site of the 1956 Olympic Games, the first in the southern hemisphere.

There is a continuity of use of the MCG for domestic cricket from 1856, international cricket from 1877, and Australian Rules football since the 1880s. Spectator and playing facilities at the ground have evolved to support on-going use and contemporary standards. Of the little remaining pre-1992 fabric, approximately 30% of the wrought iron fence around the playing arena, dating from 1884, is in situ and is a significant aspect of the place.

The significance of the MCG extends far beyond that of a mere sports stadium. It is an integral part of the fabric of Melbourne and the nation, and has gained an egalitarian image as 'the people's ground'.

Draft Values:

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Rating</i>
A Events, Processes	The first inter-colonial cricket match was arranged by the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) on the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) in 1856, and in 1858 the club drew up the codified rules of Australian Rules football. In 1877 the MCG was the venue for the first test match between Australia and England. Cricket has broad appeal to Australians and, of all the football codes played in Australia, Australian Rules football more broadly encompasses the whole of Australia than any other code of football. The MCG is associated closely, both historically and in the public mind, with the development and history of both of these sports in Australia.	AT

The staging of the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, the first in the Southern Hemisphere, centred on the MCG, was a highly successful event which was significant in raising Australia's international profile and drawing Australians together.

There is an identifiable continuity of use of the MCG for domestic cricket from 1856, international cricket from 1877, and Australian Rules football since the 1880s, first for Victorian football competitions and later for the national competition. Spectator and playing facilities at the ground have evolved to support on-going use and contemporary standards. There is little remaining fabric dating back before 1992. Approximately 30% of the wrought iron fence dating from 1884, which surrounds the arena, remains and is the only physical link with this era.

Sport has played an important role in the social fabric of Australia. The MCG is a place that Australians associate with some of the greatest moments in Australian sporting history. The significance of the MCG extends far beyond that of a mere sports stadium. It is an integral part of the fabric of Melbourne and the nation.

G Social value	<p>The MCG is one of the most nationally recognisable landmarks in Australia. It has been the venue for major sporting events of both international and national significance for 150 years, and is strongly identified with the beginnings and continuing tradition of national and international cricket and Australian Rules football. It has strong associations for the sporting community in Melbourne, Victoria and the rest of Australia.</p>	AT
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The important association of the MCG for the sporting community is evidenced by very large attendances to events at the ground. Boxing Day cricket, a tradition since the earliest days of the MCG, is now firmly established as an annual event, the 'Boxing Day' Test. Significant sporting events at the MCG, particularly AFL football, attract a high number of people, including several occasions where attendances of over 100,000 have been recorded.

The MCG is closely identified with the MCC, the biggest sporting club in Australia and one of the biggest in the world, with a membership in March 2005 of 91,200 and 156,200 on the waiting list for entry. The membership extends beyond Melbourne, to the country, interstate and overseas. As well as access to sporting events at the MCG, the attraction for its members is the historical and social associations of belonging to one of Australia's oldest clubs.

The MCG has assumed an identity beyond that of a sporting venue. Government and the commercial world utilise the status of the MCG to promote the city and the state. Its importance for the community lies in participating in events as well as experiencing the place itself. The writer Brian Matthews has noted that the MCG has long since gone beyond its status as a site, or architectural entity, or even major sporting stadium, and is now part of the Melburnian, Victorian and Australian mental and imaginative world.

H Significant people	Sport plays an important part in Australian cultural life and Australia honours the achievements of its sporting champions. The MCG has been the stage for some of the finest performances by nationally recognised Australian sports people. The MCG has a particular association with cricket, Australian Rules football and the 1956 Olympic Games.	AT
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Among those closely associated with the MCG are the nineteenth century sportsman Tom Wills, Secretary of the Melbourne Cricket Club and Victorian cricket captain, who was influential in organising the first inter-colonial cricket match, played at the MCG in 1856, and also devised the rules for Australian Rules football in 1858. Australia's greatest cricketer, Sir Donald Bradman, scored nine centuries in 17 test innings at the MCG. Melbourne Football Club premiership captain Ron Barassi has been elevated by the Australian Football League to the status of 'Legend' of the game. Australian sprinter Betty Cuthbert won three athletics gold medals on the MCG during the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and is Australia's most successful Olympian in athletics.

The MCG is associated closely with the development and history of the two most popular spectator sports in Australia, and with many of Australia's most celebrated sportspeople.

I Indigenous tradition	The current site of the MCG was used for Aboriginal gatherings, recorded in the 1840s. Three Aboriginal scarred trees (canoe trees) located in Yarra Park occur outside the nominated area. Places where Aboriginal people gathered for ceremony, exchange and other activities are common throughout Victoria and Australia and many are documented in and around Melbourne.	BT
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There is insufficient evidence available about the gatherings at Yarra Park to assess their importance in a regional, state or national context, or to conclude that the place has outstanding heritage value as a part of Indigenous tradition.

Historic Themes:

Group: 08 Developing Australia's cultural life

Themes: 08.01 Organising recreation

Sub-Themes: 08.01.01 Playing and watching organised sports

Group: 08 Developing Australia's cultural life

Themes: 08.05 Forming associations

Sub-Themes: 08.05.04 Pursuing common leisure interests

Nominator's Summary of Significance:**Description:**

The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) is the largest sporting arena in the city of Melbourne and has the highest seating capacity of any outdoor stadium in Australia. It is used principally for international and domestic cricket and Australian Rules football. It was the main stadium for the 1956 Olympic Games and in March 2006 will be the centrepiece of the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

The MCG playing surface is an oval, 160 metres long and 138 metres wide at its centre. It is a natural (grass) surface and a turf cricket pitch is prepared and dropped in to the playing arena for international and domestic cricket. The oval is surrounded by a metal railing fence.

A major redevelopment of spectator facilities at the ground commenced in 1990. Current spectator facilities consist of the Great Southern Stand, completed in 1992, and the new Ponsford and Northern Stands which commenced in 2002 and have been progressively opened for public use. The final stage of construction, the Northern Stand, is due for completion in January 2006.

The redevelopment has involved demolition of the Western Stand (Ponsford Stand), the Members' Stand and the Northern Stand (Olympic) to allow for new stands on the western and northern sides of the ground. When the new Northern Stand is completed in January 2006, the capacity of the stadium will be restored to 100,000 seats. The new grandstands incorporate many of today's most advanced design features and provide world-class viewing facilities for spectators. The Great Southern Stand won the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Sir Zelman Cowan Award for public buildings and the RAIA Victorian Chapter Award in 1992.

The erection of six lighting towers, first used in February 1985, has enabled both cricket and football to be played at night.

Analysis:

Criterion (a) The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history

The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) is a place that Australians associate with some of the greatest moments in Australian sporting history. Sport has been an

important part of Australian social life. Sports historian Brian Stoddart has referred to '... sport's power in Australia ...' and noted that '... the activity has long been accorded major social status ...' (*Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3/1, May 1985: 136-137).

It may be argued that, historically, cricket is the sport that has the broadest appeal to Australians. The Ashes series between Australia and England is arguably the sporting contest that has, for over a century, most captured the interest of Australians. The victory, at the MCG, by the combined New South Wales-Victoria team over the All-England XI in the first cricket test in 1877 created overwhelming joy throughout the two colonies (Dunstan, 1988: 47).

Of all the football codes played in Australia, Australian Rules football attracts the highest attendances and the national competition more broadly encompasses the whole of Australia than any other code of football. The MCG is widely regarded as the symbolic 'home' of Australian football (Heritage Victoria, www.heritage.vic.gov.au, 239). Furthermore, the MCG is more closely associated with the origins of Australian Rules football than any other place in Australia (The People's ground, <http://www.mcg.org.au>).

The staging of the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, centred on the MCG, was a highly successful event which was significant in raising Australia's international profile and drawing Australians together.

There is an identifiable continuity of use of the MCG for domestic cricket from 1856 and international cricket from 1877. The MCG has been in continuous use for Australian Rules football since the 1880s, first for Victorian football competitions and, since the expansion of the competition in 1987, for the national competition. The inaugural first-class cricket match at the Sydney Cricket Ground did not occur until 1878, the first test at the Adelaide Oval was in 1884, and Sheffield Shield and test cricket did not commence at the Gabba until 1931. With the exception of the Adelaide Oval, where Australian Rules football was first played in 1876, football came to all the major cricket grounds much later than it did to the MCG.

Spectator and playing facilities at the MCG have evolved to support on-going use and contemporary standards. There is little remaining fabric dating back before 1992. Approximately 30% of the wrought iron fence dating from 1884, which surrounds the arena, remains and is the only physical link with this era.

The foundation stones of the 1906 Grey Smith Stand and the 1968 Ponsford Stand have been relocated to the new Ponsford Stand. It is intended that items from areas in grandstands demolished since 2002 will be reinstalled. Historic items from the former Members' Pavilion Long Room and other rooms will be installed in the members' area in the new grandstand. The Australian Gallery of Sport and Olympic Museum, which is also housed at the MCG, will be situated in the new Northern Stand.

However the significance of the MCG extends far beyond that of a mere sports stadium. It is an integral part of the fabric of Melbourne and the nation. As Brian

Matthews says in his book *The Temple Down the Road*:

‘The MCG from its early days was one of those places that increasingly became, in the minds of Melburnians, part of the city’s essential identity, its personality, in much the same way that Notre Dame is indistinguishable from ideas of Paris and Parisians...’ (Matthews, 2003:6)

‘[The MCG] has long since gone beyond its status as a site, or architectural entity, or even major sporting stadium. It is now part of the Melburnian (and Victorian and Australian) mental and imaginative world’ (Matthews, 2003:7-8).

The MCG has outstanding value to the nation because of its importance in the course of Australia’s cultural history.

Criterion (g) The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

The MCG is one of the most nationally recognisable landmarks in Australia. It has been the venue for major sporting events of both international and national significance for 150 years. It has strong associations for the sporting community in Melbourne, Victoria and the rest of Australia.

The sports historian Richard Cashman asserted in 1997 that ‘Cricket, the first team sport to be played in Australia, is the sport which comes closest to being the national game’ (Cashman, *Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, 1997:115). By 2005, however, the influential Sweeney Sports Report referred to Australian Rules football and cricket as ‘our national winter and summer sports’ (Sweeney Report, 2005: 8).

Surveys of the Australian population have found that the two spectator sports in which Australians have the greatest interest are cricket and Australian Rules football. This is borne out by both attendances and television viewing figures. A far greater percentage of the Australian population attends Australian Rules football (29%) and cricket (26%), than any other sport (Sweeney Report, 2005: 8). More Australians also watch Australian Rules (49%) and cricket (46%) on television than watch any other sport. More Australians listen to cricket and Australian Rules on the radio and read about them in the press than they do any other sport (Sweeney Report, 2005: 10-13). Since 2000 the percentage of people in Brisbane in particular, and Sydney, which are not traditionally Australian Rules cities, both attending Australian Rules football and watching it on television has increased (Sweeney Report, 2005: 88), lending support to claims for its status as the national football code. The MCG is strongly identified with both cricket and Australian Rules football and has been since the earliest days of these sports in Australia.

The MCG is central to the beginnings and continuing tradition of national and international cricket. The important association of the MCG for the sporting community is evidenced by attendances to events at the ground. For example, Boxing Day cricket, a tradition since the earliest days of the MCG, is now firmly established as an annual event, the ‘Boxing Day’ Test. Average Boxing Day attendance since

1981 is almost 55,000 and total attendance at the matches is regularly in excess of 160,000 (www.mcg.org.au, The People's Ground, *MCG Boxing Day Test history*).

The MCG is also strongly identified with the beginnings and continuing tradition of Australian Rules football. Attendances at the MCG for AFL football matches in 2002 exceeded 2.44 million and averaged nearly 44,500 per game. In the three seasons 2003 to 2005 the average attendance was nearly 41,000 despite the reduced capacity due to the ground redevelopment. The football clubs most closely associated with the MCG, the Melbourne Football Club and Richmond Football Club, had a combined average annual membership of over 46,500 from 2000 to 2003 (Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, *Annual Survey of AFL Clubs Financial Reporting*, September 2003: 12).

The MCG is closely identified with the MCC, to which land for the ground was granted in 1853. The club competes in Victorian Premier Cricket, a competition for district clubs from Melbourne and other Victorian cities, yet the MCC is Australia's largest club and one of the biggest sporting clubs in the world, with a membership in March 2005 of 91,200. Another 156,200 people were on the waiting list for entry to the club. The membership extends beyond Melbourne, to the country, interstate and overseas, and the club recognises this distinct category in its membership (MCC Media Centre, *MCC to streamline waiting list*, August 14, 2003). The attractions for its members are access to events at the MCG, one of the world's great stadiums and oldest sports grounds, and the historical and social associations of belonging to one of Australia's oldest clubs. Membership of the MCC entitles members to reserved entry to the MCG for all international and domestic cricket matches and Australian Football League matches played there, admission to other special sporting events and club functions, and reciprocal rights at clubs and stadiums around Australia and overseas.

The MCG has assumed an identity beyond that of a sporting venue. Listing the MCG on the state heritage register, Heritage Victoria, in its statement of significance, stated that 'The MCG is socially significant as a living icon, a focus of attention in which importance lies in participating in events as well as experiencing the place itself' (Heritage Victoria, Heritage Register, *Melbourne Cricket Ground Statement of Significance*, 2001:2). Brian Matthews wrote that 'The MCG ... has long since gone beyond its status as a site, or architectural entity, or even major sporting stadium. It is now part of the Melburnian (and Victorian and Australian) mental and imaginative world' (Matthews, 2003:7-8). Government and the commercial world utilise major sporting events at the MCG, 'festivals' of sport such as the Boxing Day Test and AFL football finals, to promote the city and the state. For example, Invest Victoria, the Investment Promotion Agency for the State Government of Victoria, utilises the iconic status of the MCG in its national and international promotions.

The great Australian cricket all-rounder Keith Miller, who was also a Victorian Football League player, believed that the MCC had built the MCG into an international symbol of Australia equal to the Sydney Opera House (Matthews, 2003:117). Matthews notes that 'The 'G' has been a presence in the city long before its growing physical size made it visibly so....The MCG is a place of ritual, worship, exultation, mystery, wonder and comfort' (Matthews, 2003:55).

The MCG has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of its strong social

association for the sporting community.

Criterion (h) The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history

Sport plays an important part in Australian cultural life and Australia honours the achievements of its sporting champions.

The MCG has been the stage for some of the finest performances by Australia's nationally recognised sports people. The MCG has a particular association with cricket, Australian Rules football and the Olympic Games.

Tom Wills

Among mid-nineteenth century Australian sportsmen, Tom Wills had the most influence in both cricket and Australian football (Garrie Hutchinson, in *Giants of the G*, The People's Ground, <http://www.mcg.org.au>). At the age of 24 he was Victorian cricket captain, captain of the Melbourne Football Club and the most influential sportsman of his time.

Wills grew up in the Western District of Victoria playing cricket with European and Aboriginal cricketers and may have also played an Aboriginal version of football. A member of the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC), Wills is said to have been influential in organising the first inter-colonial cricket match between Victoria and NSW at the MCG in 1856. He was Secretary of the MCC in 1857-58.

In 1858 he wrote to the Melbourne sporting paper *Bell's Life*, calling for the formation of a football club to keep cricketers fit in winter. With three other MCC members, Wills devised the nine 'Melbourne Rules' of the Melbourne Football Club which were to form the basis of the Australian code of football, later known as Australian Rules football. He umpired what is ceremonially regarded as the first game of Australian football in 1858, and played over 200 games of 'first class' Australian football. The Melbourne Football Club, formed by MCC members, participated in the first football match played on the MCG itself in 1859.

Sir Donald Bradman

Don Bradman played 52 tests for Australia from 1928 to 1948, scoring 6996 runs at an average of 99.94. He was appointed Australian captain in 1936. He is Australia's greatest cricketer and is generally regarded as the best player of all time.

Bradman's record at the MCG is remarkable. In the 11 tests he played there he scored nine test centuries in 17 innings, averaging 128 runs-per-innings. He also made 19 centuries in domestic first-class cricket at the MCG (The People's Ground, *The MCG: a walk through time*, <http://www.mcg.org.au>). Bradman's testimonial game at the MCG in December 1948 drew more than 94,000 people.

He is the only Australian knighted for services to cricket. Among other honours he

has received are Wisden's cricketer of the 20th century and nomination by International Who's Who in the 100 people who most shaped the 20th century (Bradman Museum web site, <http://www.abc.net.au/btn/australians/bradman.htm>).

Ron Barassi

The MCG is the home ground of the Melbourne Football Club. Ron Barassi played for this club from 1953 to 1964, and is widely regarded as the club's greatest player. He was inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame in 1996 and elevated to the status of 'Legend' of the game.

In his career with Melbourne, Barassi played 204 games. He was captain from 1960 to 1964 and played in six Melbourne premiership teams, two as captain. He won the club best and fairest trophy in 1961 and 1964, was the club's leading goalkicker twice, and won All-Australian selection in 1956, 1958 and 1961.

He later coached both Carlton and North Melbourne to two VFL premierships (AFL Hall of Fame web site, <http://www.aflhalloffame.com.au>).

Betty Cuthbert, AM, OBE

Australian sprinter Betty Cuthbert won three gold medals on the MCG during the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games.

Competing in the athletics program, she won the 100 metres, the 200 metres and was a member of the 4x100-metre relay team. She returned from retirement to win the 400 metres at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and has won more Olympic track and field gold medals than any other Australian Olympian (Australian Women's Archives Project, www.womenaustralia.info/biogs).

Betty Cuthbert held the world record over 60 metres, 100 yards, 200 metres, 400 metres and 440 yards. In 1965 she was awarded the MBE and in 1984 the AM, for services to sport. She is one of only 23 Australian sportspeople honoured as a 'legend' in the Sport Australia Hall of Fame (Sport Australia Hall of Fame, www.sahof.org.au/hall_of_fame/legends).

The MCG has outstanding heritage value to the nation as a place associated closely with the development and history of the two most popular spectator sports in Australia, and with many of Australia's most celebrated sportspeople.

Criterion (i) The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance as part of indigenous tradition

The current site of the MCG was used for Aboriginal gatherings, recorded in the 1840s. Three Aboriginal scarred trees (canoe trees) are located in Yarra Park, however these occur outside the nominated area. Places where Aboriginal people gathered for ceremony, exchange and other activities are common throughout Victoria and Australia (refer Mulvaney, 1976). Clark *et al* (2004:28-31), for example, document many areas in and around Melbourne where Aboriginal people camped and

gathered, and Howitt (1904) recorded a great tribal meeting of the Kulin nation at Merri Creek in about the 1840s (Mulvaney, 1976 :86, citing Howitt, 1904:338, 718). There is insufficient evidence available about the gatherings at Yarra Park to assess their importance in a regional, state or national context.

It is therefore unlikely that the MCG site has outstanding heritage value under criterion (i).

History:

The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) has been the scene of many great sporting events, as well as many 'firsts' in Australian sporting history. It is one of Australia's most significant sporting stadiums, dating back to September 1853, when Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe made a grant of the 'Police Paddock' to the Melbourne Cricket Club.

The association of the MCG with the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC), the Melbourne Football Club, and the nation's most popular sports, cricket and Australian Rules football, has extended over more than 150 years.

As well as international and domestic cricket and Australian Rules football, the MCG was the centrepiece of the 1956 Olympic Games, the first Olympics held in the Southern Hemisphere. The MCG was the venue for the athletics competition, as well as the finals of hockey and soccer.

Other major sporting events held at the MCG include international rugby union and soccer, International Rules football, state-of-origin rugby league, cycling and school sports.

The *Wurundjeri-willam*, a clan of the *Woiworung* and part of the Kulin nation, originally lived in this area. Historical documents refer to big Aboriginal gatherings in the late 1830s and early 1840s in this area. William Kyle, who arrived at Port Phillip in 1841 recalled that 'the yarra yarra tribe camped on the site now occupied by the Melbourne and Richmond Cricket Clubs. On this ground they held numerous corroborees, to which the white people were sure to be invited, and many went to witness these war dances' (1906:159-60).

In 1841 Yarra Park was part of the extensive Police Paddocks reserve, and the Native Police lived in the Mounted Police barracks. In 1853 when land was set aside for the use of the MCG, Aboriginal people were still camping nearby (Eidelson, 1997:14).

The MCC was formed in 1838, and was the first cricket club in Victoria. The first cricket match at the MCG was played between the members of the MCC in 1854. The MCC hosted the inaugural Victoria versus New South Wales first-class cricket match on the MCG in March 1856.

Tom Wills, secretary of the MCC and Victorian cricket captain, wrote to the Melbourne sporting paper *Bell's Life* in 1858, calling for the formation of a football club for the purpose of keeping cricketers fit in winter. Wills and others devised the rules of the Melbourne Football Club, which are the earliest known codified rules of

football. The Melbourne Football Club was informally founded in 1858, with membership initially restricted to MCC members.

Wills umpired what is ceremonially regarded as the first game of Australian Rules football, played between Melbourne Grammar School and Scotch College over several afternoons on Richmond Paddock, near the MCG, in August 1858. The first football match played on the MCG itself was a match between Melbourne Football Club and South Yarra in July 1859, although the availability of the MCG for regular football fixtures was limited until the 1880s.

The first appearance by an English cricket team on Australian soil occurred when H H Stephenson's XI played Victoria, beginning at the MCG on New Year's Day 1862. Wills led an Aboriginal team against an MCC team on the MCG before 11,000 spectators in December 1866.

An All-England team of professional cricketers toured Australia from late in 1876 and a combined Victoria-New South Wales XI was selected to play them, on equal terms. The match began at the MCG on 15 March 1877, and came to be recognised as the first test match between Australia and England. Australian opening batsman Charles Bannerman scored the first century in test cricket in Australia's first innings, and Australia won the match by 45 runs (Dunstan, 1988: 43-47).

In March 1890 the Melbourne Football Club affiliated with the Melbourne Cricket Club. The football club, which in earlier years had played on grounds in Yarra Park, close to the MCG, and later at the Friendly Societies Ground, the site today of Olympic Park, abandoned playing its matches at a separate ground and the MCG became its home ground.

The Victorian Football League (VFL), which was founded in 1897, held its grand final for the first time at the MCG in 1902 and, except for a period in World War 2 when the MCG was taken over for military purposes, and two grand finals at VFL Park Waverley when the MCG was being upgraded, every VFL and, later, Australian Football League (AFL), grand final since then has been played at the MCG. From 1942 until late 1945 the MCG was occupied first by United States military personnel and later by the Royal Australian Air Force.

In 1956, when Melbourne became the first Southern Hemisphere city to stage the Olympic Games, the MCG was the main arena; almost 1.1 million people attended the MCG over 15 days to watch the opening and closing ceremonies, the athletics program, and the hockey and soccer semi-finals and finals.

In the Centenary Test played at the MCG from 12 to 17 March 1977, Australia defeated England by 45 runs; remarkably, the winning margin was exactly the same as in the first test match 100 years before.

Other major sporting events which have drawn big crowds to the MCG in recent years include a rugby league state-of-origin match between Queensland and NSW in 1994, the 1997 Bledisloe Cup rugby union test between Australia and New Zealand, men's and women's Olympic football (soccer) in 2000, and World Cup soccer qualifying matches between Australia and Iran (1997) and Australia and Uruguay (2001).

The MCG has been the scene of many sporting 'firsts'. The first bicycle race in Victoria, in 1869, and the first major national cycling event, the Austral Wheel Race, in 1886, were both at the MCG. The first Australasian Athletic Championships were held on the MCG in October 1893.

In cricket, the first test match, Australia versus England in 1877, the first test century, by Charles Bannerman (1877), and the first hat-trick in a test against England, by F R Spofforth (1879), all occurred at the MCG. The first scoreboard showing the batsman's name and how he was dismissed was erected at the MCG in 1882. The first official international one-day limited-overs cricket match, between Australia and England, was played on the MCG in 1971.

Melburnians have always flocked to the MCG for major sporting events. World record attendances which have been set at the MCG include the single-day test cricket attendance of 90,800 on the second day of the fifth test of the 1960-61 Australia versus West Indies series; 86,133 at a one-day international cricket match in 1984 against the West Indies; and an aggregate crowd of 350,534 for the third cricket test in January 1937.

The largest crowd for a football match at the MCG was 121,696 at the 1970 VFL grand final, while a record Australian Rugby crowd of 90,119 watched the 1997 Bledisloe Cup rugby union test between Australia and New Zealand.

Significant non-sporting celebrations, including cultural and religious events, have been held at the ground. Many visits by royalty have occurred, including two by the newly-crowned Queen Elizabeth II in 1954. Religious conventions have drawn huge crowds to the MCG; the all-time MCG attendance record, estimated at 130,000, was set during the visit in 1959 by the American religious leader, Billy Graham. The 1973 Eucharistic Congress finale drew an estimated 120,000. Large crowds have attended open-air concerts by musicians such as the 'three tenors', Paul McCartney, U2, and the Rolling Stones.

(The People's Ground, *The MCG: a walk through time*
<http://www.mcg.org.au/default.asp?pg=history>)

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Condition:

Since the first of the three members' pavilions was built in 1854, there have been a number of pavilions and grandstands built and subsequently demolished. The first grandstand was built on the northern side of the ground in 1876, but was destroyed by fire in 1884.

In all, since 1854 there have been 13 grandstands, including three members' pavilions, built and subsequently replaced prior to the most recent redevelopment beginning in 1990. A great deal of public discussion followed the decision by the Victorian Government in 2001 to approve demolition of the Members' Pavilion, built in 1927, to allow for the construction of a new grandstand on the northern side of the ground, which was designated as a Commonwealth Games project.

There is little remaining fabric dating back before 1992. Approximately 30% of the

wrought iron fence dating from 1884, which surrounds the arena, remains and is the only physical link with this era.

The foundation stones of the 1906 Grey Smith Stand and the 1968 Ponsford Stand have been relocated to the new Ponsford Stand. It is intended that items from areas in grandstands demolished since 2002 will be reinstalled. Historic items from the former Members' Pavilion Long Room and other rooms will be installed in the members' area in the new grandstand. The Australian Gallery of Sport and Olympic Museum, which is also housed at the MCG, will be situated in the new Northern Stand.

The playing surface of the arena is maintained by MCG ground staff. It undergoes constant change, depending on the sporting priorities for the ground. For example, since the 2005 AFL grand final in September, a drop-in cricket pitch has been installed for the Boxing Day Test, and work has commenced on construction of the athletics track for the March 2006 Commonwealth Games. Turf will be placed over the completed athletics field in December in time for the test match, and after the cricket season the athletics track will again be uncovered in readiness for the Commonwealth Games.

Bibliographic References:

Books / journals

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