**David Scott**

***The Almanac***

***Written by Peter MacIver***

Bendigonian David Scott or *The Almanac* as he was known should be remembered for his contribution to cricket in Victoria and his writing on cricket which was published in many newspapers including *The Bendigo Advertiser*, but he also wrote a wonderful series of articles for *The Addy* called *Reminiscences of Bendigo* between October 1908 and March 1909.

David Scott was born in Montrose on July 21, 1847. His father (also David Scott) was a wheelwright by trade, but like many others at that time caught gold fever and brought his family to Australia, landing in Melbourne in 1854. After two weeks in Melbourne, the family set out for Sandhurst (now Bendigo). In those days, the trip was made on foot or by horse/bullock cart and the journey took the Scott family eighteen days, including several stuck in the Black Forest. The family settled in Peg Leg Gully which is now part of Eaglehawk where David Scott Senior, operated a puddling machine.

It was in Bendigo that David formed his most important friendship and one that certainly defined his life. In an article for the *Chronicle* published in1907 at the time of Harry Boyle’s death he wrote, “In I857 I was told there was a wonderful boy cricketer in Sydney Flat, a few miles from Eaglehawk. That was Harry Boyle. I was living in Peg Leg, a gully about between the two, and I often used to go and see him spreadeagle all the other boy cricketers.” This was the start of their lifelong friendship.

Harry Boyle was one of Australian cricket’s early greats and of course bowled the last ball of the game at Kennington Oval in August 1882 which got out Edmund Peate and created the legend of The Ashes. Whilst history has largely forgotten the players of this era, their importance in helping create a national sense of identity in Australia should not be underestimated.

The young David Scott had many adventures in and around the goldfields of Bendigo which are recounted in his *Reminiscences of Bendigo* articles which appeared in the *Bendigo Advertiser* in late 1908 and early 1909. In one of these he tells of how he managed to see the visiting English Cricket Eleven captained by H. H. Stephen in 1862 who were playing in Bendigo. This involved him disobeying his father (whom he was supposed to be helping to build a fence), to bunk off and watch the cricket. He snuck into the ground, but was seen and chased by the stewards. To avoid being caught, he ran onto the field and up to the two captains who were inspecting the pitch. Stephenson recognising Scott from the welcoming party the previous night shook his hand and said, “You must be my guest for the day.” Thus David Scott had the time of his life at the cricket, but earned a sound thrashing from his father.

After spending time on the goldfields, Dave Scott entered the employment of Henry Jackson the largest ironmongery and sporting warehouse in Bendigo. He stayed there until he had finished his apprenticeship and then moved to Melbourne where he worked for James McEwan and Company in charge of their Government contract section. In Melbourne despite working twelve hour days, he maintained his interest in cricket, playing in junior competitions and joining East Melbourne (one of the top Metropolitan teams) in 1872, where he played in the second and third elevens for some years.

Perhaps Scott’s most important contribution to East Melbourne was in finding young players for the club. His two major captures were his friends from Bendigo, Billy Midwinter and Harry Boyle. Both would go on to great fame representing Australia. Around this time David Scott had his nickname of “The Almanac” bestowed upon him by Jack Conway who managed the first Australian team to tour England in 1878. This is not of course counting the aboriginal team that toured in 1868.

Following the great success of the 1878 tour, Harry Boyle and David Scott set up Boyle and Scott’s Australian Cricket, Football and Sports Warehouse. The importance of this business in the development of cricket in Victoria and the early Australian teams cannot be overstated. Scott’s obituary in *The Argus* stating that, “Their place of business soon became the regular meeting place of all cricketers, and it was their establishment of the Boyle and Scott Cup for junior cricketers which did so much for the game.” This competition regularly used to attract crowds of 14000 and produced at least four future Australian Eleven players, Harry Trott, James Kelly, Bob and Charlie Macleod.

Even more importantly, Boyle and Scott played a very important role in organising the tours of the Australian Eleven throughout the 1880s. In those days, cricket tours were essentially financial speculations where players and investors receiving a share of any profits from gate receipts. As a result, the tours were organised by individuals, rather than a national cricket body. Further to this important role in organising tours, David Scott was also a long time member of the Victorian Cricket Association as a representative of Bendigo United Cricket Club.

During this period, Scott also formed an occasional cricket team called *The Almanacs* who would play games around Victoria. This team would often feature some of the greatest players of the day such as W. L. Murdoch (Australian captain and son of a Scottish immigrant), Alick Bannerman (Australian team member) and Tom Horan (Australian team member and Australia’s first great cricket writer) to name three.

It is for his encyclopaedic knowledge of cricket that David Scott will be most remembered. His work was published in papers in both Australia and England. He was held in such regard that he was asked to contribute stories for *The Memorial Biography of W. G. Grace*. Boyle and Scott also published *The Australian Cricketer’s Guide* which was influential in both Australia and England for the tips it gave to junior cricketers.

David Scott died in September 1922 with his contribution to the game of cricket in Australia recognised in the press. He left a wife, a daughter two sons and several grandchildren.

This story was researched using TROVE, the National Library of Australia’s digitised newspaper archive. Any mistakes are my own.