

NEWCASTLE'S VETERAN CRICKETER

WILLIAM TRACEY PASSES.

A FINE BOWLER WITH DRILLIANT
PERFORMANCES.

(By "The Referee and Arrow" Correspondent.)

The death took place in the Newcastle Hospital on Monday morning of William Tracey, one of the oldest cricketers in the Northern district. The veteran was only taken to the hospital a week earlier, and his death came as a great shock to everyone, for he was as well known as Nobbys.

"Old Bill," as he was familiarly called, was a general favorite with the cricket-loving public. In his day he was the greatest bowler in the Northern district. During the whole of his career, which lasted nearly forty years, only two batsmen ever made a century against the side for which he bowled. These two were H. Roberts, of Wallsend, and the late Tom Sunn, of the old Carlton Club, of Sydney.

It is nearly half a century since Tracey first played cricket for Newcastle. He was included in the Newcastle Cricket Club's team for the first time in a match played at Braxton. He was selected solely for his fielding, no one having any idea that he could bowl, as he had only taken part in one game previously, and then only as a substitute, excellent fielding in that capacity giving him his trip to Braxton. When all the regular bowlers had managed to get only six Braxton men out, the late Mr. J. L. Henson, who captained Newcastle,

STANLEY MOORE,

The North Sydney batsman, who scored 205 runs in 23 fours against Petersham.

asked Tracey to take the ball. He took the last four wickets in two overs, and this was his debut as a bowler.

From that day till his dissolution, Tracey was closely connected with the Newcastle Cricket Club, and his many great feats for his side would require pages to record. For many years he was the mainstay of the club in bowling, and was always about the first man chosen to represent the district in big matches.

At the end of 1876, Lillywhite's team of English cricketers played in Newcastle, being the first English team to visit the city. Tracey was thus called upon to face some of the greatest batsmen of the Old Country. He came through the ordeal with flying colors, taking 10 wickets for 71 runs. The English team included such great players as Harry Jupp, Tom Emmott, George Hiyott, Allan Hill, Charlwood, E. Selby, and the sprinter Greenwood. Tracey's performance speaks for itself. He was presented with a ball, and a purse containing £10, collected by the late Mr. Clarence Hannell.

On the strength of his splendid bowling in this match Tracey was invited by the New South Wales selection committee to go to Sydney to practice, with a view of possible selection in the New South Wales team to meet the Englishmen. "Old Bill," of course, went, and, according to eye witnesses and newspaper reports, bowled splendidly at practice. In one practice match he took several wickets, and the "Evening News" remarked that "the bowling of Tracey and Evans was decidedly the feature of the afternoon's play."

Still, he was not selected to take part in the match. Great indignation was expressed in Newcastle, and probably the newspapers were right in stating that his exclusion was due to the fact that he hailed from the country.

Playing for 22 of Newcastle against the first Australian Eleven at the end of 1877, Tracey took four wickets for 51. But it was against the 1881 Australian team that he excelled himself. For 22 of the Northern district against them, he took five for 50 in the first innings, and in the second, on a wicket which helped him a little, he got eight for 14. Amongst his victims were Charles Hannerman, then the greatest professional batsman in the world, George Hesser, W. L. Murdoch, and Percy McDunnell.

After touring England, the Australian team visited Newcastle again. Rain fell the day before the match, and made the wicket a little queer, and Tracey simply "went through" the Australians, nine wickets for 21 being his record in the first innings, and four for 45 in the second.

Shaw and Shrewsbury's English team came to Newcastle the following year, and Tracey secured four for 10. He bowled against subsequent English and Australian elevens, with more or less success, but the above figures show his best performances.

In club and district cricket he was wonderfully successful. Considering that his cricket was practically confined to Saturdays and holidays, his figures are remarkable. For his club alone in one season he took 122 wickets at an average of five, in another 112 at four, and in another 91 for five.

At the age of about 65 years he played his last match, having been induced to take the place of a bowler who had not turned up. He wound up a great career by bagging seven for 22.

As a batsman Tracey often made useful scores, and when necessary could stonewall like a Boston or an Allick Hannerman. No matter how the game was going, "Bill" never lost heart. Full of pluck and grit, he strove hard till the last ball was bowled. He had a very safe pair of hands, and very few batsmen had a second chance after shying the ball in his direction.

