



## **JACK MARSH LECTURE**

The former Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust (SCG Trust) established the Jack Marsh Lecture to foster innovative scholarly research and interpretation specifically concerning the history of the SCG precinct. Venues NSW is revitalising this annual lecture as part of the SCG Heritage Trust Committee's ongoing commitment to understanding, celebrating, and preserving its heritage whilst documenting the physical, cultural, and sporting history of the precinct. This initiative has been made possible through a generous donation from private supporters of the SCG Trust.

Each year a one-off research grant of \$10,000 is made available to individuals for the preparation and presentation of a Jack Marsh Lecture. The lecture must align with the SCG Museum narrative thematic framework. (Annex A)

Potential subjects for the Jack Marsh Lecture may encompass any aspect of the social, economic, political and sporting history associated with the lands known as the SCG precinct, both past and present. Specifically, The Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney Cricket Ground No.2, the Sydney Football Stadium and the Central Parklands Tramway Oval.

Submissions may focus on, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- A specific topic of interest that aligns with one or more of the seven themes identified by the SCG Heritage Trust Committee (Annex A).
- Historic events, whether related to sports or not; or notable historic figures, including biographical studies.
- Actual experiences of SCG members, the public, or visitors.

Venues NSW will advertise, engage, approach and select the recipient. Research may be presented in various formats, including print and non-print media (such as audio or visual formats), or a combination thereof. Over time, the criteria for selection will be reviewed.

The finalised research papers, presentations, and recordings connected to the lecture are intended for use as reference material for exhibitions and narratives within the SCG precinct heritage interpretation and SCG Museum exhibitions. The researcher will retain copyright and be thus acknowledged; it is conditional that Venues NSW, on behalf of the SCG Museum, will utilise the research for non-commercial purposes and free of licensing fees.

The research will be delivered as the Jack Marsh Lecture and will be hosted within the SCG precinct on a date to be mutually agreed upon. The lecture will likely take place in the M. A. Noble-Bradman Stand at the SCG.

Terms and conditions for the advertisement, selection and procurement of individuals to present the Jack Marsh Lecture will be provided by Venues NSW. A payment schedule is provided in Annex B.

**ANNEX A**  
**SCG Museum Narrative Thematic Framework**

A thematic framework for narrative development has been established through collaboration with the SCG Heritage Trust Committee and insights gathered from knowledgeable individuals and focus group discussions. This thematic framework serves as a foundation for the creation of exhibition narratives and research pertaining to permanent, touring and temporary exhibitions. The themes are:

1. Our Site: from First Nations to the SCG Precinct. Background to the evolution of the site.
2. Our Identity: Sydney's Cultural Growth through sport. The impact politics, sporting heroes and social gatherings have had on services such as transport, fashion and food. How Sydney society embraced sports and the SCG precinct.
3. Our community: the shared experience of gathering through sport and culture that transcends generations.
4. Australia's Sporting Stage:
  - a. Infrastructure, landmarks and milestones for major sport
  - b. Birth & Growth of Foundation sports at the Precinct
  - c. Events & Performances
  - d. Players, Legends and Icons
5. Women in Sport - Sisterhood: Exploring the contribution and achievements of female pioneers, athletes, administrators, members, fans and changing representation.
6. Sports Science: The evolution of performance science. Analytics. Escalate wellbeing. And technological advances across sporting disciplines.
7. Digital Sport, Media and Virtual Experiences: - The rise of digital media, AR/VR, and virtual fan engagement, reflecting the future of how sport is experienced on and off site.

**ANNEX B**  
**Research Grant**

Timeline and payment schedule:

Last date for submission outlining proposed topic 30 April

Formal appointment of research and selected topic 30 May \$ 2,500

First draft submission for review and feedback no later than 15 August \$ 3,000  
(no longer than 14 weeks from appointment)

Delivery of research. No later than 30 October \$ 3,000  
(no later than 28 weeks from appointment date)

Date to be agreed between the parties

Presentation and delivery of the Jack Marsh Lecture \$1,500

## **ANNEX C**

### **Background on Jack Marsh**

The lecture takes its name from Jack Marsh, a Bundjalung man. He was born at Yulgilbar on the Clarence River in northern New South Wales around 1874. His initial sporting talent was in professional athletics. In 1894 it was reported that he ran the hundred yards in 9.8 seconds, equalling the world record. Three years later a cricket official saw him throwing a boomerang at La Perouse and recruited him as a fast bowler.

Marsh became a first-class cricketer who represented New South Wales in six Sheffield Shield matches from 1900-01 to 1902-03 and was considered one of the fastest bowlers of his time. When he played for a Colts XV against the New South Wales state team in a trial match in 1900, he took the wickets of Test players Victor Trumper (for one run), Frank Iredale, Monty Noble, Syd Gregory and of future Test player Bert Hopkins on the first day. He made his first-class debut on 2 December 1900 when he was selected for the NSW team to play South Australia at Adelaide Oval. In a high-scoring match, he took 5/181, all clean bowled.

However, from the beginning of his cricket career, Marsh's bowling action was a source of controversy. He was no-balled multiple times for throwing by some (but certainly not all) umpires. In Marsh's fourth Sheffield Shield game, on Australia Day 1901, Victoria's Bob Crockett called Marsh seventeen times for throwing in Victoria's first innings - still a record for a single first-class innings in Australia. Crockett was widely criticised in the press, because umpire Sammy Jones, who officiated at the other end, did not once 'call' Marsh. Several press critics pointed out that Crockett was a full-time employee of the Melbourne Cricket Club, which organised English tours of Australia and may well have been bowing to strong English pressure to stamp out 'chuckers'.

While there were calls for Marsh to be selected to play for Australia, Monty Noble, the New South Wales selector, refused citing his controversial action. Marsh's first-class career amounted to just six matches in which he took 34 wickets at a bowling average of 21.47.

Historical research since the mid-1980s makes a compelling case that his race was a significant factor in his exclusion from national and state representation. Les Poidevin, who batted for both NSW and Lancashire, commented that he would not be selected for Australia 'because the absurd white Australia policy has touched or tainted the hearts of the rulers of cricket, as it has the political rulers'. The legendary batter and Australian captain Warren Bardsley rated Marsh the equal of great bowlers Fred Spofforth and Sydney Barnes and demanded that he be quoted as saying the only reason Marsh was kept out of Test cricket 'was his colour.'

Marsh played out his cricketing days in the Sydney grade competition, topping the bowling averages from 1901 to 1904. His cricket career ended in 1905, and he returned to professional athletics. Well past his prime, he competed in exhibitions and then travelled around Victoria and South Australia giving exhibitions of boomerang throwing and bowling under the Big Top. By this time, he had become a heavy drinker and in 1909 was jailed for 14 days in Melbourne for assault.

His life after this remains unclear, but it is assumed he worked casually on Victorian farm properties before returning to NSW, drifting between Bathurst and Orange, and obtaining employment as an itinerant farm worker.

He died outside a pool room in Orange on May 25, 1916, after being bashed by two white men when fleeing from them. Both men were charged with manslaughter, but acquitted after the judge ruled, they had been provoked by Marsh's 'drunken behaviour'.

Marsh, then aged around 42, was buried in an unmarked grave. The *Bulletin* wrote in Marsh's obituary that he was '... a darky troubled man with manners which white brothers found impossible to put up with.'

The lecture is named in honour of Jack Marsh for several reasons: he had a strong association with SCG lands, initially playing cricket in the Moore Park competition, then with South Sydney (1897-98) and (following a merger) with the Sydney District Club and playing Sheffield Shield at the SCG; his name is on the NSW 5 wickets in an innings honour board.

It is only through the efforts of dedicated historians that his story has been recorded for posterity. His sporting life is symbolic of the lives of many other gifted Aboriginal sports people of the past who could not achieve their full potential because of political, cultural and racial forces bearing down on them.

The SCG Trust has made extensive inquiries as to whether Jack Marsh has any kin still living to seek their familial blessing for the naming of the lecture after him but found none. If there are indeed kin, we hope they will regard the lecture as a way of honouring his life and his achievements.

### **Further information about Jack Marsh**

Bonnell, M 2003, *How Many More are Coming: The Short Life of Jack Marsh*, Petersham: Walla Walla Press.

Derriman, P 1985, 'Death in Orange', *The Sydney Morning Herald: Good Weekend*, 12 Jan 1985, p 23.

Tatz, C 1987, 'Aborigines in Sport', *The Australian Society for Sports History*, The ASSH Studies in Sport - Number 3, Flinders University.

Whimpress, B 1999, *Passport to Nowhere*, Petersham: Walla Walla Press.