

## The Legend of The Ashes

**The Ashes** is a Test cricket series, played between England and Australia - it is international cricket's oldest and most celebrated rivalry dating back to 1882. It is currently played approximately biennially, alternately in England and Australia. If a series is drawn then the country holding the Ashes retains them. The last Ashes series was played in England in 2005 when England won 2-1, the first time they had won The Ashes in 18 years. An Ashes Test series is currently underway in Australia 2006-07 with Australia leading 1-0; the next series in England will be held in 2009.



The series is named after a satirical obituary published in *The Sporting Times* in 1882 following the match at The Oval, in which Australia beat England in England for the first time. The obituary stated that English cricket had died, and *the body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia*. The English media dubbed the next English tour, to Australia (1882-83) as *the quest to regain The Ashes*.

A small terracotta urn was presented to the England captain Ivo Bligh by a group of Melbourne women at some point during the 1882-83 tour. The contents of the urn are reputed to be the ashes of an item of cricket equipment, possibly a bail, ball or stump. The urn is not used as a trophy for the Ashes series, and whichever side holds the Ashes, the urn normally remains in the MCC Museum at Lord's because it was bequeathed to the MCC by Ivo Bligh upon his death.<sup>[1]</sup> Since the 1998-99 Ashes series, a Waterford crystal trophy has been presented to the winners.

