

Preface

This book is my second multi-biography about Australia's lost generation of World War I, following *Farewell Dear People*, which was published in 2012. The aims and approach of the two books have been similar. They both contain a collection of interwoven family stories highlighting some of the exceptional individuals who did not survive the conflict. Each story establishes the outstanding prewar potential of one of the main characters, describes what happened to him during the conflict, and underlines the profound sense of loss for his nation as well as for his family in the aftermath.

The extraordinary Australians in *Life So Full of Promise* are unknown today. Their names and their achievements, as well as their radiant but unfulfilled promise, are unfamiliar to later generations. The deeply researched and revelatory stories in these pages seek to rectify this unawareness, while also illuminating what the war was like for Australians at home and at the sharp end, as the families and friends of the main characters are also conspicuous in the narratives.

A feature of the book is its coverage of cricket and cricketers of the era. One of the main characters is a cricketer who accomplished a stunning feat that became a unique record. Also prominent is a popular doctor, whose fate was mourned more fervently by his nation than any other Australian casualty in the whole war; two of his closest friends were on the verge of playing cricket for Australia. Moreover, in researching another of the family stories, which is mainly about a brilliant graduate who was such a remarkable and inspiring leader

that the AIF historian Charles Bean predicted that someone might one day write a novel about him, I unexpectedly came across an unknown tale of a relative of his who was chosen in an Australian Test side to tour England—but did not go, and for an intriguing reason. As a result, this book not only emulates *Farewell, Dear People* in providing insights into the experiences of Australians in the period before, during and after the war—whether they were combatants or civilians, or soldiers’ wives or parents—but is also revealing about high-level cricket in that era.

The extensive stories in *Life So Full of Promise* are the product of immense research. As explained in *Farewell, Dear People*, each of the main characters has been depicted ‘in depth, to make it clear why he was special and why his death was a grievous loss to his nation. Retrieving these elusive stories, amending posterity’s neglect, has been an exacting task. But such extraordinary and inspiring Australians of rare potential should not be forgotten.’