



# DESIGN NARRATIVES *in* / GAWLER

## FIELKE CRICKET BATS

*Summer Time. Cricket Time*

*Cricket bats have been produced in South Australia for almost 120 years. Since 1995 they were handcrafted in Gawler by Robert Fielke, who was the last remaining cricket bat maker in the state. He was an artisan working with wood and a traditional design to create a bat for an artisan to score runs.*

### CRICKET BAT DESIGN

The first cricket bat factory in Australia was established by the Kumnick family in Lobethal in 1894. A variety of timber was used until English willow became the standard. At its peak the business produced 10,000 to 15,000 bats a year and employed 16 men. With the advent of World War 2 however, ships could no longer bring the timber needed for cricket bat manufacture to South Australia, and the business ended.

Fielke cricket bats were established in 1965 by Laurie Fielke at Murray Bridge. He tapped into the knowledge and insight of previous Kumnick employees. He first started using the wood from willow trees that were growing along the creeks of the Adelaide Hills. These trees

had been planted by German immigrants to help stabilize creek beds. He then used poplar to construct the bats until he could access English willow. Fielke went from refurbishing cricket bats to manufacturing them from scratch through the company Fielke Cricket Bats.

### ROBERT FIELKE

In 1995 Bob Fielke (son of Laurie) began crafting cricket bats at his home in Gawler. His workshop was approximately 5 metres by 9 metres and situated in his backyard. Here the entire process of bat making was lovingly handcrafted entirely by Bob. He styled bats for local clubs in and around Adelaide. Bob would individually craft cricket bats taking about three-quarters of a day to produce one.

Fielke Bats gained national prominence in 2001 at the public memorial service for Don Bradman. When the hearse drove past a particular point, a sole cricket bat was help up to salute The Don. It was a Fielke bat.

In 2013 Robert Fielke 'hung up his bat'. The artisan no longer handcrafts the bat.

### GAWLER DESIGN STORIES ARE ALL AROUND US....

*A design isn't finished until somebody is using it*

Brenda Laurel

### RELATED DESIGNS

Adelaide Oval, (War Memorial Drive, North Adelaide)  
Don Bradman bronze sculpture by Riverton...artist...Robert...Hannaford, Pennington Gardens on the eastern side of Adelaide Oval