

The Historic 1867 Aboriginal Cricket Match

The Parramatta (Cumberland) Club participated in a celebrated and historic match on 9th – 11th April 1867 at their Parramatta home-ground against the famous **Aboriginal Team**, that was to become in 1868, the *first Australian cricket team to ever tour England*.

The Aboriginal Team was coached and organised by Tom Wills and Charles Lawrence, and they arranged for their team to undertake a preliminary tour of NSW in 1867, to improve their match experience and skills in preparation for the pioneering excursion to England. Tom Wills was a splendid Australian sportsman, he attended Rugby school in England (captaining them in cricket and football), as a fiery fast bowler he dominated inter-colonial cricket 1856 – 1876 and is acknowledged as one of the inventors of ‘Aussie Rules’ football – purportedly to keep the then Victorian cricketers fit over winter. Charles Lawrence was a former professional cricketer who toured Australia with the first English team in 1861-62, he decided to accept the lucrative playing and coaching opportunities offered by Sydney clubs and played a significant role in lifting the playing standards of local cricket. Lawrence went on to captain the Aboriginal team on the England tour and Tom Wills didn’t go on that famous trip.

The match against Cumberland proved to be a very even contest with the Parramatta men triumphing, against expectations, by a mere four runs – batting 16 players has its advantages. The game was reported to have been played in very unstable conditions, the match days were subjected to bleak, wet fields, alternative heavy rains and high winds kept spectator numbers down until the last day.

Several of Parramatta’s old stalwarts featured in this game – J. Booth, T. Ashby, G. Gilbert, R. Dunn, R. Rutter, and A. Brown. For the Parramatta team **Bob Rutter** turned in a strong all-round performance, top scoring for the match (**24 & 15**), whilst the reliable **George Gilbert** captured **six wickets** in the Aboriginal team’s second innings. The talented Lawrence and Wills completely dominated proceedings for their team, Wills’ fast bowling accounting for **16 wickets**.

A highlight of matches played by the Aboriginal Team (that later proved immensely popular with spectators in England) was that after the conclusion of the cricket matches the team engaged in exhibitions of athletic sports - Boomerang throwing, foot races, backward sprints, cricket ball hurling, dodging cricket balls, spear-throwing, and stock-whip cracking. These events were conducted until dark at the Parramatta oval to the great enjoyment of the local participants and spectators – it is reported that the visitors “*carried off the laurels of the day*”.

Cumberland 16

1st Innings			2nd Innings	
J. Forster	b. Wills	0	b. Wills	0
F. Beames	lbw	0	b. Wills	0
J. Booth	b. Lawrence	5	b. Lawrence	0
G. Gilbert	Run out	0	c. Paddy b. Wills	12
Shepherd	Run out	20	b. Wills	0
T. Evans	lbw	4	c. Lawrence b. Wills	11
Wearne	b. Wills	2	c. Lawrence b. Wills	0
R. Dunn	st. Lawrence	2	b. Wills	0
Bailey	b. Lawrence	2	b. Wills	1
T. Ashby	b. Wills	0	b. Wills	3
J. Foulkes	b. Wills	2	Not out	0
R. Rutter	b. Wills	24	c. Lawrence b. Wills	15
J. Vallack	lbw	4	b. Wills	0
J. Williams	Not out	1	b. Lawrence	0
Blake	c & b Wills	2	c. Cuzens b. Lawrence	4
A. Brown	c. Dick-a-Dick	2	b. Wills	1
Byes / wides		10		3
Total		80		50

Aboriginal Team

1st Innings			2nd Innings	
Bullocky	c. Brown	2	c. Booth b. Gilbert	3
J. Cuzens	c. Rutter	1	c. Sheppherd b. Rutter	1
C. Lawrence	c. Gilbert	7	b. Evans	21
J. Mullagh	Run out	2	c. Forster b. Gilbert	5
T. Wills	Not out	18	Run out	9
Dick	b. Evans	1	b. Evans	1
Jellico	c. Wearne	0	b. Gilbert	0
Paddy	b. Rutter	11	b. Gilbert	13
Peter	b. Evans	1	b. Gilbert	0
Dick a Dick	b. Evans	2	Not out	3
Tarpot	b. Evans	2	c. Bailey b. Evans	0
		13		0
Total		60		56



The Aboriginal Team with Tom Wills

[By Tom Wood – Parramatta District Cricket Club Historian]

