**Aboriginal cricket team**



MWPHS photo, Aboriginal cricket team, shows ‘[Charles] Lawrence, captain’.

In 1866, Charles Lawrence, a former English cricketer, and W R Hayman formed an all-Aboriginal cricket team, which they sent out to various towns to play the locals. They had such success that there was talk of them touring England – this was long before any white Australian cricket team had done such a thing. On 16 February 1867 the first Aboriginal team arrived at Manly, where they were put up at the Pier Hotel.[[1]](#footnote-1) An initial attempt in 1867 fell through, but towards the end of 1867 Lawrence, who was briefly landlord of the Pier Hotel at Manly in 1866-67, and his friend George Smith, a former Lord Mayor of Sydney, who lived at Undercliff in Pittwater Road, brought a re-formed team to Manly for several weeks, while they sorted out the details of the proposed tour.

An unusual one-day match was played on 27 February 1867 between Manly and “The Australians”. Lawrence was in the process of divesting himself of the Pier Hotel, following the sudden deaths of his wife and daughter. Lawrence put up the Aboriginal team on his land behind the hotel, and coached them in the finer points of the game. As a fund-raiser for the forthcoming tour of England, a match was arranged between the men of Manly and the Australian Club, some of the best players in the country at that time. Representing Manly were: Smithers, Cozens, Grey, Wills, Mullagh, Lawrence, G Sly, H Sly, Hart, Johnson and Gould. Cozens and Mullagh were members of the Aboriginal side. Wills would have been Tom Wills, the codifier of Australian Rules football, whose biography has recently been written by Greg De Moore.

A report of the match from the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated: “*The Beachites went first to the wicket, with Smithers and Cozens against the bowling of Sheridan and Howell. The first wicket (that of Smithers) fell for 13, Cozens and Grey for 9 more. Wills made a stand, and kept his wicket intact till the finish of the innings, but with the exception of Lawrence, who, however, was caught when he had scored 8, he obtained little support from his comrades. He was the only one who made double figures. All were out for 53*.”

In reply, the Australians made 107, Blanchard and Sheridan being top scorers; Wills took three wickets. There was no time for a second innings. The pitch came in for criticism: “*its roughness militated against good bowling*.” However the report noted that a good cricket ground would be a very important addition to “*our principal marine resort*.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

On 28 January 1868 the *Sydney Morning Herald* advertised the match to be held that day between the Aboriginal team, including Lawrence, and the Army & Navy team, which included Caffyn and Gregory. The advertisement gave the Aboriginal players by their Aboriginal names, as well as by their nicknames. The match would be played in the presence of Prince Alfred and the Governor, at the Albert Ground, Redfern.

On 8 February 1868 the Aboriginal team sailed from Sydney for England. Charles Lawrence was the only white player on the team, and he went as Captain. The names of the others were given as: Johnny Mullagh, Johnny Cuzens, Bullocky, Red Cap, Twopenny, King Cole, Tiger, Dick-a-Dick, Peter, Charley, Mosquito, Jim Crow and Sundown. They played 47 matches on tour, winning 14 and losing 14. Johnny Mullagh scored 1700 runs and took 257 wickets. The team were fine ambassadors for Australia.

[Ashley Mallett](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashley_Mallett) (2002). *Lords' Dreaming: Cricket on the Run - The 1868 Aboriginal Tour of England*. [ISBN](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Book_Number) [ISBN 0-285-63640-5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/ISBN_0-285-63640-5).

Ashley Mallett, *The Black Lords of Summer: The Story of the 1868 Aboriginal Tour of England and Beyond*, University of Queensland, 2002. [ISBN 0702232629](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0702232629)

Bernard Whimpress (1999). *Passport To Nowhere: Aborigines In Australian Cricket 1850-1939*. Walla Walla Press, Sydney. [ISBN](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Book_Number) [1-87671-806-4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/1-87671-806-4).

John Mulvaney and Rex Harcourt (1988). *Cricket Walkabout: The Australian Aborigines In England*. Macmillan Australia. [ISBN](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Book_Number) [0-333-43086-7](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0-333-43086-7).

1. SMH 16 February 1867, p8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. SMH 28 February 1867 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)