

Apsley's connection with...

“Australia's First Touring Cricket Eleven – The Aboriginal Team of 1868”

Murrumgunerrimin ~ Jimmy Tarpot ~

Compiled by Maureen Reader 6th May 2010

From the time of settlement cricket seemed to be a social part of station life. It was young Tom Hamilton of Bringalbert Station near Apsley, in 1864, a good humoured sports lover with a great deal of affection for the local aboriginal station workers, who first recognised their natural sporting ability and began tutoring them in the art of batting, bowling and the fundamentals of cricket.

Soon his friend, William Hayman from the Lake Wallace South Station at Edenhope, started doing the same with his aboriginal workers.

By 1865 cricket was so popular on the pastoral runs spread across South Western Victoria that the pastoralists arranged a match between the Europeans and the Aborigines, the contest held on the dirt near the Bringalbert Station woolshed. This match the Aboriginal team won.

After this, Hamilton and Hayman encouraged the aboriginal players to come to Edenhope to train with the local Edenhope Cricket Club, formed in 1862.

One of these talented players selected was a young aboriginal named Jimmy Tarpot. Some years earlier, his people, following an altercation between the Benayeo Station workers and a group of aborigines, left this young boy (Jimmy) behind and it was Mr Hugh McLeod, the station owner, who rode in front of the workers and rescued him from being shot and killed. Mr McLeod, himself a well-educated man, saw that Jimmy was reared and educated alongside his station workers' children.

The players camped and trained on the banks of Lake Wallace and one of their first matches, arranged by Hamilton & Hayman against the Hamilton Cricket Club was in March 1866. The local team captained by Tom Hamilton won easily.

Spurred on with success and the offers of sponsorship, the Edenhope Cricket Club employed T W Wills in late 1866 to coach a team chosen from an area spread over Western Victoria with one player coming from NSW.

Word was spreading rapidly and soon a match was arranged to be played on Boxing Day 1866, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, between a Melbourne team and the Aboriginal team. Around 8,000 to 10,000 people turned up to watch. Overawed when faced with the vast audience, this team of players from the country, many miles from the city and who trained on the banks of Lake Wallace at Edenhope lost the match.

Apart from cricket, the crowd were also entertained with an athletics exhibition of boomerang and spear throwing as well as various other events. On this occasion, Jimmy Tarpot thrilled the crowd with the unusual feat of running 100 yards backwards in 14 seconds.

In the summer of this year, Wills and Hayman took the team to Sydney, which turned into a fiasco, with both losing their money and leaving the team stranded there.

An English gentleman, Charles Lawrence, stepped in and organised matches in Sydney and Melbourne to raise enough money for them to return home to the Edenhope district.

A plan to take the team to play at Lords and on a tour of England in 1868 was devised with Charles Lawrence as the coach. The recently married Jimmy Tarpot is reported to have left the ship prior to its departure due to ill health and returned home. The press report stated, "The team were robbed of a great drawcard on the tour".

Thanks to Hugh McLeod, a well-educated Jimmy Tarpot became a highly respected and much sort after Wool Classer in the Apsley district. As well as employed by the local settlers, season after season he classed the fleeces of wool at the large Wool Store belonging to WT Hoare in Apsley. Jimmy and Jenny Tarpot lived in Apsley during this period.

In 1869, the Aboriginal Protection Act in Victoria passed by Parliament saw most aboriginal people, generally against their wishes, transferred to reserves from the pastoral properties. Records show that Jimmy left the Ebenezer Reserve in 1876 and that he and his wife Jenny lived at Brippick Station in 1882.

Jimmy Tarpot died at Brippick Station, Boorooopki in April 1900.

Local historian, the late Allan Oliver told owner of Brippick Station, Mr Mac Hawkins (many years previously) that Jimmy Tarpot had been buried on the property.

Another suggestion is that he may be buried in an unmarked grave in the Apsley Cemetery. He is not listed amongst the Apsley Cemetery burial records.

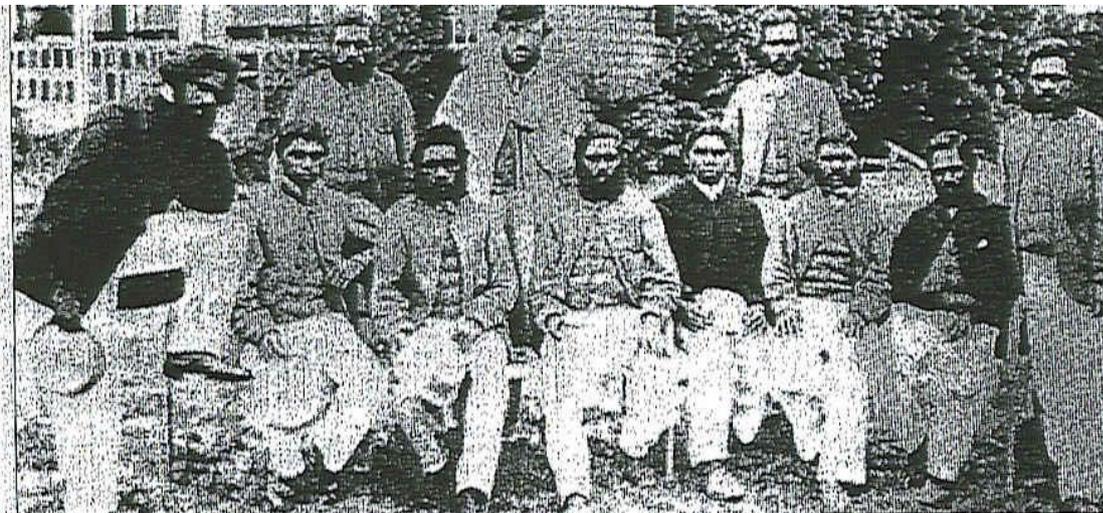
Acknowledgements:

"Benayeo at the Border"-

"Apsley at the Crossroads"- Judy Murdoch

"The Romance of a Selection" – William Ruth

"Cricket Walkabout" - Professor Mulvaney & Rex Harcourt



Pioneers: The Aboriginal team at Melbourne Cricket Club in 1867 — (left to right, standing) King Cole, Tarpot, Tom Will, Johnny Mullagh, Dick-a-Dick; (seated) Jollico, Peter, Red Cap, Harry Rose, Bullocky and Cuzens.